**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES
OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LECTURERS
AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY**

by

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ABSTRACT

As a consequence of globalisation, English language teaching (ELT) has been identified as one of the key emphases of the national education reforms in Vietnam. Professional development (PD) of teachers attempts to enhance the quality of ELT. However, there is a paucity of research investigating English as a foreign language (EFL) lecturers' perceptions towards their experiences of PD in order to understand how PD currently functions and could potentially function within the context of Vietnamese higher education. My project has sought to address this gap by contributing insights into tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences.

More specifically, this study has drawn on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory as theoretical frameworks for understanding how tertiary EFL lecturers experience PD as adult learners and the contextual factors which influence their PD experiences. A phenomenological research design as proposed by Moustakas (1994) enabled lecturers' lived experiences of PD to be explored through phenomenological interviews with 12 EFL lecturers across the three groups of *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* and four academic managers at one Vietnamese university. The recruitment of the participants from the three groups aimed to examine lecturers' experiences of PD at their different career stages. The inclusion of both lecturers and academic managers was considered essential in collecting multiple perspectives on the PD experiences. In addition, document analysis was used to collect information from national and institutional documents in order to better understand the contexts within which lecturers experienced PD.

Evidence from this study highlights that lecturers' PD is a multidimensional and dynamic activity. Influenced by the national language reforms and important projects such as Project 2020 and Project 911, EFL lecturers had been exposed to a wide range of formal PD activities (e.g., seminars, workshops, and conferences) and job-embedded PD activities (e.g., research projects, textbook and teaching material development, and professional meetings) in the three years prior to data collection. Lecturers expressed their need for further PD activities that were content-focused, on-going, collaborative, and specific to their career-stage. EFL lecturers' involvement in PD activities was positively influenced by enablers (e.g., the status of English as a global language, national policies

and projects, student outcomes, occupational prestige, and personal responsibility), but there were also barriers hampering lecturers' career development (e.g., top-down national requirements, inappropriate institutional policies, insufficient collegial and managerial support, and time constraints). This study demonstrates that PD initiatives for Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers need to be reformed. At the national level, it is important for the Vietnamese government and MOET to understand lecturers' real needs for PD when implementing any PD activities. At the institutional level, a comprehensive framework with specific requirements and guidelines regarding lecturers' engagement in PD activities would bring greater coherence and consistency. At the individual level, a proactive role by EFL lecturers would further foster their professional growth along with fulfilling the national and institutional requirements.

The findings of this study are represented through an integrated framework of effective PD for tertiary EFL lecturers which combines three main aspects of content, context, and process. This representation helps to shed light on what PD planners and academic managers need to focus on when planning, organising, and implementing PD activities in the setting of Vietnamese education reforms. Implications are drawn for PD planners, academic managers, and EFL lecturers as these groups need to closely collaborate in order to promote lecturers' PD and improve the quality of ELT in Vietnam. Implications for future research are also discussed. The study makes significant contributions to current literature related to tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD within the Vietnamese higher education context and may be applied to other international contexts.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DEPISA	Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FD	Faculty Development
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
INSET	In-service Training
JEPD	Job-embedded Professional Development
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Community
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VSTEP	Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency
VUW	Victoria University of Wellington
VUWHEC	Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In recent years, education systems around the world have undergone enormous educational reforms due to the impact of economic, political, social, and knowledge change. Since professional development (PD) of teachers, particularly, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, is seen as key to successful educational reforms, teachers are expected to experience continuous PD in order to keep abreast with the constant change taking place in the education system (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In a broad sense, Guskey (2002) conceptualised PD as an intentional, on-going, and systemic process which includes three main goals: (1) changing the classroom practices of teachers, (2) changing their attitudes and beliefs, and (3) changing the learning outcomes of students. He argued that teachers need to take part in PD activities not only to improve their individual and professional growth, but also to enhance student learning, institution improvement, and the quality of the education system. Thus, change is mainly an experientially based learning procedure for teachers.

A general consensus exists about PD as an important and positive influence on teachers' beliefs and practices, student outcomes, and on the implementation of educational reforms. As explained by Day (1999), on-going PD is vital for all teachers in order to catch up with change and update their own knowledge, skills, and visions for effective teaching. Opfer and Pedder (2010) argued that PD is integral to teacher career growth because it can lead to three groups of benefits:

- PD that leads to changes in pupils', teachers', or school practices seen as desirable by either teachers or head teachers is understood as having direct impacts.
- PD that enhances a teacher's status or career prospects, and even salary, is considered as imparting indirect benefits to teachers.
- PD that increases recruitment or retention is considered as imparting indirect benefits to the school. (p. 414)

In a report named *Building a high-quality teaching profession: Lessons from around the world*, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

(2011) emphasised the necessity of continuous PD in relation to updating teachers' knowledge and skills through several main purposes of PD:

- updating individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area;
- updating individuals' skills and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances, and new educational research;
- enabling individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
- enabling schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice;
- exchanging information and expertise among teachers and others (e.g., academics and industrialists); or
- helping weaker teachers become more effective. (p. 24)

In the context of higher education, Austin and Sorcinelli (2013) stated that PD is an important tool because it is considered a fundamental strategic lever in order to assure institutional quality and support institutional change. These authors indicated that if teachers' PD is approached through collaborative, community work within and beyond the institution, it can help fulfil individual and institutional needs. In the same vein, Rajab and Silman (2017) clarified that PD plays a crucial role in teachers' growth and students' achievements because one of the main objectives of PD is to enhance effective teaching that results in high quality outcomes for all students.

More specifically, in the field of English language teaching (ELT), PD is essential to enable EFL teachers to help their students "develop proficiency in the target language and an understanding of the cultures associated with that language" (Díaz-Maggioli, 2003, p. 3). Kohl (2005) described PD as "any activities in which a language teacher participates with the goal of improving teacher practice and/or student achievement under the guidance and/or approval of the school and/or school system in which he or she is employed" (p. 12). Thus, PD is viewed as an important and valuable duty for teachers to engage in from the first day until the last day of their teaching career.

It is also evident that teachers' PD has become one of the most central interests in educational research over the past several decades, and numerous studies conducted all

over the world have shown that PD activities within and outside the educational setting influence teachers positively (e.g., Joshi et al., 2018; Krille, 2020; Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017; Özgehan & İrem, 2019). Through his review of the literature, Bayar (2014) stated that PD activities potentially help both novice and experienced teachers in enhancing their existing skills and obtaining new ones.

However, teachers' PD may differ greatly across diverse environments, and even within a single setting, so there is not one form or model of PD better than others and which can be applied in any institution, area, or context (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In support of this idea, Avalos (2011) argued that teachers' PD is a complex procedure that brings together a wide range of different aspects. Under the Vietnamese higher education setting, Tran (2016) stated that PD is seen as a complex, political, and culturally situated activity that plays a prominent role in promoting the professional growth of lecturers. Consequently, how teachers experience PD is important to investigate. As little empirical research has addressed diverse aspects regarding teachers' experiences of PD, particularly, those of tertiary EFL lecturers in Asian countries, this study provides in-depth insights into how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers experienced PD and the contextual factors that influenced their PD experiences within the context of higher education reforms in Vietnam.

1.2. The Vietnamese context

Located in the Southeast Asian region, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is bordered by Cambodia and Laos to the west, China to the north, the South China Sea to the east and south, and the Gulf of Thailand to the southwest. Vietnam is the 15th most populous country in the world with more than 96 million inhabitants as of 2019 (Thang, 2019). In 1986, *Đổi mới* (Renovation) economic reforms were launched by the Communist Party in an effort "to uplift the country from its 'muddy days' of economic malaise, famine, limited foreign aid, and illiteracy through free-market reform" (Bui & Nguyen, 2016, p. 365). Since then, Vietnam has experienced remarkable economic development and moved from one of the world's poorest countries to a lower-middle-income nation, with per capita gross national income (GNI) of US\$2,800 in 2019 (Minh, 2019).

This section introduces the broad context for my study, with a particular attention on the status of EFL teaching as well as the national policies for EFL teachers' PD in

Vietnam. This is important given this research's focus on how EFL lecturers experienced PD and the contextual factors that impacted their PD experiences within the context of Vietnamese tertiary education reforms.

1.2.1. The status of EFL teaching in Vietnam

Influenced by Confucian traditions, Vietnam has always placed considerable emphasis on education. With the development of English as a global language, ELT has been identified as an important part of education in Vietnam where English is used as a foreign language. According to Richards (2008), ELT is understood as “a career in a field of educational specialization, it requires a specialized knowledge base obtained through both academic study and practical experience, and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards” (p. 160).

After the inauguration of *Đổi mới* (Renovation), Vietnam has opened up its economy to the world, and promoted international relationships with the West (Lam & Albright, 2018; T. N. Nguyen, 2017). In addition, Vietnam has participated in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 1997 and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) since 2007 (Lam & Albright, 2018; Le, 2020). Together with the economic and political moves towards globalisation, Vietnam has launched a range of educational campaigns such as *Giáo dục là quốc sách hàng đầu* (Education is the national priority) since 1996 and *Xã hội hóa giáo dục* (Socialisation of education) since 1997 (Bui & Nguyen, 2016). As a result of these prominent policy milestones, Vietnam has witnessed a high increase in demand for English in all facets of life.

Nowadays, English is recognised as the most common foreign language (*lingua franca*) in the Vietnamese education system (Ho & Nguyen, 2020). It is taught as an obligatory subject across primary to tertiary education. In acknowledgement of its important position in the economy and international communication, the Vietnamese government has regarded ELT as a keystone to the national education reforms. According to T. M. H. Nguyen (2017), the growth of EFL education in Vietnam has reflected the development of Vietnamese society and economy in reaction to globalisation. In agreement with T. M. H. Nguyen, Le and Chen (2018) stated that “Within Vietnam's economic, political, and cultural global integration and engagement, English is a means to connect Vietnam with the world” (p. 23).

The installation of numerous foreign-owned universities in Vietnam (e.g., the Asian Institute of Technology from Thailand in 1993, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology from Australia in 2000, Vietnamese-German University from Germany in 2008, and Fulbright University Vietnam from America in 2016) has promoted the use of English as a medium of instruction at these university campuses. The development of transnational education with many foreign countries has turned Vietnam from an educational importer into a partner in educational collaboration (Lam & Albright, 2018). In addition, because the number of Vietnamese students undertaking tertiary education in English-speaking countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States has increased significantly, their need for English proficiency has become higher (Le & Chen, 2018). As a consequence, these opportunities have led to the prevalence of English for international integration in Vietnam.

However, the rapid increase in the popularity of English has also generated more concern about the quality of the teaching and learning that happens in the educational system. Although EFL education has made remarkable progress, available studies show that there have been numerous barriers affecting ELT in Vietnam. In a research project conducted in Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, Vietnam, Nguyen et al. (2015) found some negative factors weakening the ELT quality (e.g., insufficient time for English subjects, lack of a speaking component in tests and examinations, students' unequal English abilities, large class sizes, limited support from university leaders, and students' limited efforts and motivation). Trinh and Mai's (2018) study was undertaken at English-major and non-English major institutions in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. The findings indicated several significant challenges faced by the participants in their teaching of tertiary English. These challenges included teaching and learning culture, large EFL classes, lack of teaching facilities, inappropriate English teaching and learning materials, students' low motivation, testing-oriented system, cultural factors, time constraints, students' low and uneven English proficiency, and teachers were not trained to teach English for specific purposes (ESP). The findings from these empirical studies signify that the lack of teacher training and PD may be identified as negative effects diminishing the quality development of ELT. In particular, Nguyen (2018) commented that the levels of English language competence of Vietnamese learners are far from sufficient due to the lack of qualified teachers. Therefore, he suggested that more adequate training programmes and PD opportunities for EFL teachers should be provided.

Overall, EFL education in Vietnam has experienced a significant change in recent years as clarified by Nguyen (2018): “The stimulus for change derives from the country’s rapid economic development and, in particular, the growing demand for a skilled, efficient, and well-educated professional labour force, which provides the necessary impetus for the nation’s success” (p. 95). Within the Vietnamese education context, ELT has been considered one of the key emphases of the national education reforms, and teachers’ PD plays an important part in order to promote the quality of ELT. The next section reports on the government’s strategic policies regarding PD for EFL teachers in Vietnam.

1.2.2. National policies for EFL teachers’ PD

Recognising the vital role of ELT in the national education system, in the last two decades, the Vietnamese government and Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) have proposed many strategic plans and guidelines in order to promote professional learning for EFL teachers. In 2008, a national foreign language project named *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System from 2008 to 2020* (Project 2020) was launched with an investment budget of approximately US\$443 million (Nguyen, 2018). More particularly, 80% of the total budget was designated for teachers’ PD in relation to language proficiency and teaching methodology. In general, Project 2020 aimed to make significant changes to language education in Vietnam as explained by Le (2020): “targeting English proficiency as a comparative advantage in successfully facing the economic challenges of a globalised, multilingual, and multicultural world for all Vietnamese school-graduates and university graduates by 2020” (p. 9). This project has been considered the most ambitious and prominent effort made by the Vietnamese government in order to enhance the quality of EFL education (Nguyen, 2018).

Alongside Project 2020, the MOET has initiated numerous fundamental activities in EFL education. At primary level, since the academic year 2010-2011, English has been officially introduced as a mandatory subject at Grade 3 in several big cities of Vietnam. Since the academic year 2018-2019, English has been compulsory for all students throughout the country from Grade 3 onwards. At secondary and tertiary levels, English has been piloted as a medium of instruction in both the private and public sectors since 2008, so teachers and learners in these programmes must achieve sufficient levels of English proficiency (Lam & Albright, 2018; Le, 2020). Furthermore, there have been

other activities as part of Project 2020 such as standardizing the English curriculum for content-based English medium courses; redesigning English programmes; developing a new series of textbooks; integrating computer-assisted language learning into English teaching; and undertaking action research across the education sectors (Nguyen & Bui, 2016; Nguyen, 2018).

In the first six years of Project 2020 implementation, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), a six-level proficiency framework¹, was chosen as a national reference framework “to assess language proficiency, design curriculum, course materials development and syllabus, teaching and learning plans, and evaluation to ensure the compatibility of different stages of foreign language teaching and learning in the education system” (T. M. H. Nguyen, 2017, p. 3). However, there was a general concern that the CEFR might not precisely evaluate test-takers’ language proficiency. As reflected by Nguyen and Hamid (2015), the use of the CEFR in the Vietnamese context is “mainly for accountability and administrative purposes rather than an effective remedial solution to the current language problem in its language educational system” (p. 71). Therefore, since 2014, CEFR has been substituted by the Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) (MOET, 2014a). VSTEP, a modification of the CEFR, is the locally developed assessment tool used to evaluate English language proficiency of teachers and students at different levels of education in Vietnam.

As one of the most important outcomes of Project 2020 requires all EFL teachers in different parts of the education system in Vietnam to achieve an appropriate English proficiency level on the VSTEP by 2020, it is regulated that all English teachers are required to reach Level 4 (B2) of proficiency on the scales of the VSTEP to teach at the primary and lower secondary school, and Level 5 (C1) for upper secondary and tertiary level. However, several scholars have thought that this focus on English teachers’

¹ Six levels of English proficiency within the CEFR and VSTEP (MOET, 2014)

CEFR	VSTEP	
A1	Elementary	Level 1
A2		Level 2
B1	Intermediate	Level 3
B2		Level 4
C1	Advanced	Level 5
C2		Level 6

proficiency is insufficient. Particularly, Nguyen and Mai (2015) suggested that instead of merely focusing on enhancing teachers' English language proficiency "to soothe the surface cut without touching the deep root of the problem" (p. 1840), the MOET should undertake a more holistic approach with better cooperation among various stakeholders at different levels. In the same vein, Nguyen et al. (2018) believed that in order to promote the quality of teaching, both language and pedagogical training for teachers should be implemented following teachers' needs analysis.

In the context of higher education, through Plan No.808/KH/2012 on *The implementation of Project 2020 at tertiary institutions, period 2012-2020*, the MOET highlighted the importance of PD for EFL lecturers by proposing some specific strategies related to lecturers' PD activities. These strategies included implementing international collaborations and exchange programmes with other foreign institutions in order to enhance lecturers' language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge:

By 2020, 100% of the core language teaching staff at tertiary institutions are provided with an opportunity to visit, study, and foster their professional expertise or qualifications in a foreign-language country that corresponds to the language that they are teaching. (MOET, 2012b, p. 1, author's translation)

In this plan, the MOET also directed tertiary institutions, PD planners, and academic managers to carry out several tasks and procedures responding to the Project 2020's requirements (e.g., building curricula and textbooks, organising training and refresher courses, enhancing lecturers' competencies, promoting the quality of training, and establishing policies for evaluation).

As stated in Official Dispatch No.7274 issued in 2012, the MOET established new national standards related to English language proficiency requirements for EFL lecturers at tertiary institutions, approximately C1 level of CEFR or Band 7.0 of IELTS. As a result, since November 2012, the MOET has gradually carried out an English language proficiency test throughout Vietnamese universities in order to check whether EFL lecturers have reached the new standards or not. After the test, if lecturers cannot reach the C1 level of CEFR or Band 7.0 of IELTS, they must take part in a refresher course organised by the MOET. In addition, based on the results of the test, the MOET expected tertiary institutions to propose their own strategic plans for recruiting new staff and

developing EFL teaching staff in order to meet the national requirements. Another new requirement stipulated by the MOET was that, since 2012, all tertiary EFL lecturers must hold a certificate on pedagogical and professional competencies for language teaching. If lecturers have not received the certificate, they must attend a refresher course to fulfil this compulsory requirement. This document also indicated that tertiary institutions would be offered annual funding by the government in order to support the core EFL teaching staff to attend short-term training courses (under three months) or long-term training courses (from six months to 12 months) in foreign countries (MOET, 2012a). Thanks to these sources of funding, lecturers at tertiary institutions in Vietnam have been offered numerous opportunities to take part in PD activities.

Nevertheless, Project 2020 was unable to achieve its goals because according to the Minister of Vietnamese Education and Training, Phung Xuan Nha, there had been inconsistencies in EFL teachers' levels of expertise, teaching materials, and implementation processes (Linh, 2016). Thus, through the Decision No.2080/QĐ-TTg issued in 2017, the MOET replaced Project 2020 with the new project entitled *Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2017-2025*. In this project, the MOET has revised the Project 2020's goals and strategies with an expectation of fostering English competency and developing sufficient numbers of high quality EFL teaching staff. In order to promote teachers' foreign language proficiency as well as pedagogical competencies, specific activities and procedures were also proposed by the MOET. For example, the MOET has put more emphasis on developing teachers' competencies related to applying information technology into their classrooms in order to foster teaching practices, develop innovative teaching, and promote further PD (Vietnamese Government, 2017).

Collectively, as well as the initial Project 2020, the Vietnamese government and MOET have lately proposed a number of language reforms with an aim to enhance the quality of EFL education. These policies and initiatives highlight that the Vietnamese government has made substantial efforts to support both school and tertiary EFL teachers' PD in order to achieve the general objectives of the national education reforms. More specifically, the Vietnamese government has provided significant levels of funding to support many PD activities for EFL teachers across several important national projects. Through these national plans, it is evident that EFL teachers play an important role in carrying out the changes in language learning and language policy (Nguyen et al., 2020).

As indicated by Nguyen (2018), “In the policy documents, PD is described as a means to enable EFL teachers to further develop effective practices that support student learning and enhance their achievements” (p. 102). Although these initiatives reflect a top-down² approach and their extensive effects on teachers’ professional growth have not been brought to light yet, they have aided in informing teachers, PD planners, and academic managers about the government’s strategic plans and expectations to develop the quality of ELT in Vietnam. More detailed information regarding the national professional policies for Vietnamese tertiary lecturers (e.g., requirements on lecturers’ qualifications and expertise, expectations of their responsibilities for PD, and goals and strategies for their PD) will be presented in Chapter Four on findings from document analysis. The following section explains the rationale for conducting my study.

1.3. Rationale for the study

The emergence of English as an international language has greatly affected language teaching policies in Vietnam. Despite the frequent implementation of PD activities for EFL teachers in both formal, structured and informal, less structured programmes, these PD opportunities have not received sufficient analysis and assessment. This lack of evaluation raises the question of whether the existing PD programmes have any influence on EFL teaching quality and whether they provide EFL teachers with valuable experiences or not. Although the topic of teachers’ PD has drawn considerable attention from different stakeholders in the Vietnamese education system (e.g., Le & Nguyen, 2012; Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Phuong & McLean, 2016), most of the studies have concentrated on issues such as the current status of teachers’ PD or the advantages and challenges influencing teachers’ PD. The number of research projects, particularly, focusing on tertiary EFL lecturers’ perceptions of PD experiences and the contextual factors affecting their PD experiences, is still very limited within the Vietnamese context. Therefore, more empirical studies are needed to further understand how tertiary EFL lecturers experience their professional learning in order to assist policymakers, PD

² A top-down approach to teacher development means that “the school is the primary source of professional development and the focus is on meeting the needs of the institution and not necessarily the needs of the teachers” (Anderson, 2018, p. 3).

planners, and academic managers in planning and implementing high-quality PD programmes under the setting of higher education reforms in Vietnam.

Another stimulating reason for my study to be undertaken comes from the institutional context. In this research, *Star University* and *School A* were used as pseudonyms for the university and the school within which my study was conducted in order to protect their identity. The central mission of Star University is to become an outstanding institution for education, research, and technology transfer in the country; make important contributions to the advancement of high-quality human resources; and enhance the talents and the growth of science and technology in order to support the regional and national socio-economic development (Star University, 2018). In order to complete the proposed mission, ELT has played a key part contributing to the overall strategic development of Star University.

School A has taken accountability for teaching English language to both majoring and non-majoring students from different degree levels in Star University. While there have been a number of changes to ELT within School A in recent years, there remains a commitment to continue to improve the quality of ELT further. Thus, promoting PD activities for EFL lecturers is one of the significant objectives that School A has recently established in order to ensure the quality of EFL education and achieve the Project 2020's requirements. However, because Star University is the governing organisation of School A, lecturers' PD activities in this school mainly rely on the institutional and national goals recommended by the MOET and Star University. School A has not set up its own policies for PD initiatives of EFL lecturers. Instead, it has been only responsible for proposing annual plans concerning lecturers' PD and directly reporting to Star University through annual reports. Therefore, it is unclear whether lecturers' needs for appropriate PD opportunities have been fulfilled because the majority of PD activities in School A have largely followed a top-down approach as explained by Le (2020):

Vietnam's highly centralised education system is characterised by the flow of reform initiatives from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) down through the schools and then into the classroom, while contextual complexity tends to be ignored. (p.

14)

Having worked as a full-time EFL lecturer at Star University for more than 12 years, I am really interested in issues related to lecturers' PD and adult learning in higher education because of their evident impacts on my teaching career. I strongly believe that on-going PD is the most effective way to assist lecturers who are adult learners to update their professional knowledge and improve teaching quality. Nevertheless, since the start of my teaching career, I have recognised that EFL lecturers in Star University have spent many hours a week focusing on teaching and had little extra time to take part in PD activities. My colleagues from other tertiary institutions have also been in similar circumstances. For example, Pham (2002), an English teacher from Hue University, Vietnam, noted that the heavy workload of EFL teachers is a barrier to the enhancement of teaching quality. In the same vein, Le (2020), another English teacher from Vietnam National University, Hanoi, reflected that "Teachers suffer from heavy teaching schedules and do not have access to appropriate social situations that are supportive of the reconceptualization of their teaching" (p. 17). Also, I have realised that the popular forms of PD activities that EFL lecturers have been involved in mainly include seminars, workshops, and conferences organised by the university or foreign organisations, and these activities frequently run over short timeframes. Therefore, it is important to conduct an investigation into EFL lecturers' perceptions of their PD experiences with the aim of understanding how PD currently functions in Star University. Through this research, I can gain insights into the EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD and the influence of contextual factors on their PD experiences in order to address gaps in the current literature and propose an appropriate framework for PD improvements in Vietnamese tertiary education.

1.4. Significance of the study

The aim of this study is to deeply investigate how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers experience PD. More specifically, the research uses a phenomenological approach to focus on issues related to EFL lecturers' PD experiences as well as the contextual factors affecting their PD experiences. This study is expected to contribute to the research field by providing in-depth insights into Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' perceptions of their PD experiences. The findings enable the researcher to identify key issues to consider in order to support planning, anticipating, organising, and delivering effective PD programmes for EFL lecturers within the context of higher education reforms in Vietnam.

1.5. Overview of the thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. This chapter, Chapter One, has presented a short introduction on the importance of teachers' PD and the necessity for empirical research related to teachers' PD. Then, the Vietnamese context for this study has been examined through an overview on the status of EFL teaching and national policies for EFL teachers' PD. Next, the rationale for undertaking this study and the significance of the study are explained. Finally, this section outlines the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews the literature in order to position this study within a broader theoretical and empirical perspective. The chapter is organised into five sections. The first section describes the theoretical constructs of PD in education. The second and third sections review the key empirical studies on teachers' PD experiences and contextual factors influencing teachers' PD in the field of ELT. The fourth section explains the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study: ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980). The final section introduces the research gaps and questions that guide the study.

Chapter Three begins with a review of qualitative research and methodological decisions to employ phenomenology, particularly, transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), as a research approach. Next, the research setting, participant selection, and the role of the researcher are introduced. Then, the investigative tools employed to collect data including semi-structured interviews and document analysis are described. The chapter ends with discussion of data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapters Four through Six report the findings from document analysis and the interviews. In particular, Chapter Four describes the findings from the national and institutional documents in order to gain insights into the current situation and important policies related to the PD of EFL lecturers in Vietnam, and therefore enable a better understanding of the contexts within which the participants experienced PD. Chapter Five presents individual descriptions of the 16 participants with the aim of providing background for understanding the thematic analysis to be presented in the next chapter. Chapter Six reports the findings from semi-structured interviews with the 16 participants concerning their PD experiences and how the contextual factors affected their PD

experiences. The chapter also provides a summary of the findings through composite textual and structural descriptions of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD.

Chapter Seven discusses the significant findings of the study through a textural-structural synthesis of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD organised by the two research questions. The chapter ends with a discussion related to the essence of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD.

Chapter Eight introduces an integrated framework of effective PD for tertiary EFL lecturers. Implications of the study for PD planners, academic managers, and EFL lecturers and for further research are also explained. After that, limitations of the research are identified and discussed. Finally, the chapter presents a summary of the contributions of this study.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is “to position the research in context” (Davies, 2016, p. 4) through examining relevant literature regarding theoretical frameworks and related empirical studies. This chapter is constructed in five sections. The first section presents main issues of PD in education including concepts of PD, models of PD, and characteristics of effective PD. The second and third sections review key empirical studies concerning teachers’ experiences of PD as well as contextual factors impacting their PD experiences in the field of ELT. The fourth section introduces two theoretical frameworks underpinning this research including ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980). The fifth section explains the gaps that this study aims to address and the research questions that guide the study.

2.2. Professional development in education

This section focuses on three main issues of PD in education starting with concepts of PD, followed by models of PD, and characteristics of effective PD.

2.2.1. Concepts of professional development

Reviewing the literature in the field of education, professional development (PD), teacher professional development (TPD), continuing professional development (CPD), in-service training (INSET), and faculty development (FD) are typical terms which can be used interchangeably to refer to a diverse range of activities designed to contribute to the learning of teachers, who have finished their initial training (Craft, 2000). Although differences of terminology still exist, throughout my study, I employ the term *professional development* (PD) because this term has received widespread acknowledgement (e.g., Coldwell, 2017; Krille, 2020; Mitchell, 2013; Postholm, 2018; Richter et al., 2011; Wong & Bautista, 2017).

Over the years, the theoretical and empirical literature has presented numerous definitions and conceptualisations of what is meant by PD. According to Guskey (2000), PD includes the processes and activities designed to promote the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers so that they might help improve the student outcomes.

Similarly, Díaz-Maggioli (2004) highlighted PD as “a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs” (p. 2). In a review of publications on teachers’ PD in *Teaching and Teacher Education* over ten years (2000-2010), Avalos (2011) argued that PD is related to teachers’ learning, learning how to learn, and transferring their knowledge into practice for the purpose of their students’ achievement. Through these definitions, Avalos, Díaz-Maggioli, and Guskey emphasised that one of the key purposes of teachers’ PD is to enhance student outcomes.

In his definition, Day (1999) focused on the importance of PD activities throughout the teachers’ professional life because they provide teachers with both individual and organisational benefits. Day clearly defined PD as consisting of:

All natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. (p. 4)

Saberi and Amiri (2016) stated that PD is viewed as an on-going process focusing on planned and systematic activities designed to stimulate and enhance teachers’ growth. Especially, Saberi and Amiri explained that in recent years, the traditional image of teachers has substantially changed from mere transmitters of knowledge into transformative agents who recognise new aspects of their profession in the process of developing professionally as individuals. From a broader perspective, Labone and Long (2016) indicated that one of the prominent changes in the conceptualisation of teachers’ PD is the movement towards institutional responsibility that requires PD to contribute to the development of both the individual teacher and the institution. Having the same idea as Labone and Long (2016), within the context of Vietnamese higher education, Phuong and McLean (2016) argued that because of the influence of globalisation, PD has become an important factor in lecturers’ career development. According to these Vietnamese authors, PD for tertiary lecturers refers to “all activities, either individually directed or institutionally organized, that are designed to enhance faculty overall performance and organization development in which faculty are included” (p. 599). One of the strengths of the definitions conceptualised by Labone and Long and Phuong and McLean is that they not only focus on the active role of individual teachers in their on-going learning, but they also address the importance of the context in which teachers work. As explained by Lawler and King (2000), “Faculty development does not occur in a vacuum. The

social, political, and financial context of the academic institution has been found to influence the success, not only of programs, but also of effecting change” (para. 6).

More specifically, in the field of ELT, Díaz-Maggioli (2003) conceptualised PD for English language teachers as follows:

Professional development is an ongoing learning process in which teachers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. Professional development is not a one-shot, one-size-fits-all event, but rather an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection, and growth that yields the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice and when focused on job-embedded responsibilities. (p. 202)

Through this definition, Diaz-Maggioli acknowledged the importance of sustainability in teachers’ PD and stated that PD means different things for different people and organisations.

In summary, the above-mentioned concepts provide an overall picture of scholarly definitions of PD. Under the setting of higher education in Vietnam, PD plays a vital role in lecturers’ career growth and is influenced by various contextual factors (e.g., globalisation, national education reform policies, and cultural values). Therefore, it is grounded in lecturers’ individual motivation and commitment together with fulfilling the national and institutional goals. In my study, PD is conceptualised as a series of complex, planned, and on-going opportunities undertaken by Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers to improve their professional expertise and experiences so that their individual, institutional, and national objectives can be achieved.

2.2.2. Models of professional development

Even though PD can be structured and arranged in many diverse ways, and for many different purposes, this section specifically focuses on the review of prevalent PD models in the field of education. As explained by Villegas-Reimers (2003), “Models are specific processes and opportunities that are planned to provide PD to teachers from the beginning of their preparation” (p. 16). Guskey (2000) proposed seven major models of PD including (1) training, (2) observation/assessment, (3) involvement in a

development/improvement process, (4) study groups, (5) inquiry/action research, (6) individually guided activities, and (7) mentoring (p. 22). Guskey provided the evidence that these models are different in their assumptions, expectations, and beliefs about professional growth, and argued it is impossible that any single model will be effective for all individuals under all circumstances and situations. As a result, applying any particular model varies depending on the goals, the content, and the context for implementation.

In a different approach, Villegas-Reimers (2003) classified models of PD into two main groups including (1) organisational partnership models (e.g., professional-development schools, other university-school partnerships, schools' networks, or distance education) and (2) small group or individual models (e.g., workshops, seminars, and courses, self-directed development, reflective models, action research, or coaching/mentoring). At this point, Villegas-Reimers agreed with Guskey (2000) when she commented that although there are numerous PD models presented in the literature, it is important to monitor the characteristics of the context in which these models are conducted and other related factors when employing these models.

Kennedy (2005) argued that PD models should not stand alone, so she grouped nine models of PD into three broad categories: (1) transmission (training model, award-bearing model, deficit model, and cascade model), (2) transitional (standards-based model, coaching/mentoring model, and community of practice model), and (3) transformative (action research model and transformative model). In particular, a transmission group includes models that aim to fulfill the purpose of preparing teachers to carry out education reforms. A transitional group consists of models that help teachers in order to contribute to and shape education policy and practice. A transformative group contains models that have the ability to support underlying agendas congruent with the two purposes of the transmission and transitional views. As commented by Kennedy, this framework for analysis of PD has the capacity to support professional autonomy and transformative practice at both individual and professional levels.

In another article published nine years later, Kennedy (2014) proposed an updated spectrum of PD models in which she emphasised the purpose of specific models rather than the categorisations of the models themselves. In this new framework, she replaced some terminologies such as action research by professional inquiry. Kennedy also made

several changes in the arrangement of the nine models of PD and re-grouped them into three broad categories of (1) transmissive (training model, deficit model, and cascade model), (2) malleable (award-bearing model, standards-based model, coaching/mentoring model, and community of practice model), and (3) transformative (collaborative professional inquiry model). As explained by Kennedy, because the original labels of categories could not actually transfer the essence of the meaning as her intention, it is more appropriate to label the transitional category as malleable and change the first category into transmissive instead of transmission. This author further clarified that because there is no one specific model that could fit a particular purpose of PD, the design of the categories aims to analyse patterns and trends in teachers' PD experiences as individuals and to analyse institution-wide and system-wide approaches. This is why both individual models or experiences of PD and the wider policies within which these experiences are situated should be considered simultaneously.

Overall, there are many existing PD models recommended by different scholars. As explained by Postholm (2012), PD activities may be organised in different ways, both formally and informally:

Teachers can learn through participation in various courses, in school when they reflect on their own teaching and in observation of and reflection on others' teaching in co-operation with colleagues. Learning can occur in planned reflection meetings between teachers, or teachers can learn from unplanned conversations with other colleagues before or after teaching, or in parent-teacher meetings" (p. 406).

It is suggested by Villegas-Reimers (2003) that designers and administrators should plan and implement PD activities and programmes that meet teachers' professional needs, their personal and professional interests, and the stage of career at that specific time. As a result, PD planners and academic managers should draw from a range of models in order to meet the varying and complex PD needs of teachers. The next section briefly reviews two common models: (1) formal PD and (2) job-embedded PD (JEPD) because they are widely accepted in international literature and typically employed within the Vietnamese education setting.

Formal PD vs. Job-embedded PD

Over the last few decades, PD has varied from formal workshops and conferences where teachers are passive recipients of information to models that provide JEPD and actively engage teachers in learning (e.g., Cavazos et al., 2018; Desimone & Garet, 2015). However, formal PD is still the most dominant form of PD activities all over the world (e.g., Kennedy, 2005; Mohan, 2016; Richter et al., 2011).

Formal PD, also named as traditional PD, represents a main part of the “training model” (Little, 1993). According to Joshi et al. (2018), formal PD includes workshops, conferences, meetings, and courses. Smith and Gillespie (2007) stated that formal PD has been viewed as a teacher-centred approach because the main goal of this model is to develop individual participants’ general knowledge, skills, and teaching competency; and introduce new instructional models or methodologies. Ling and Mackenzie (2015) identified formal PD as a one-way, didactic approach that transfers knowledge between the sender (PD provider) and the receiver (the teacher engaging in the PD activities). Ling and Mackenzie argued:

This PD approach may lead to an increase in a teacher’s information or knowledge, but rarely leads to any real change in practice, and in many cases there is little if any transfer of knowledge or practice from the PD participant to their colleagues. (p. 266)

In contrast to formal PD, Joshi et al. (2018) indicated that JEPD consists of observing demonstration lessons, coaching or mentoring, study groups, reflecting specific classroom practices, action research, planning lessons, and sharing of best practices. The goal of JEPD is to enhance student outcomes and support teachers with particular teaching problems they encounter. These PD strategies can help update teachers’ knowledge and skills as their original qualification becomes outdated over time because of the on-going emergence of new teaching approaches.

In a book entitled *Job-embedded professional development: Support, collaboration, and learning in schools*, Zepeda (2015) clearly expressed her view on JEPD as follows:

Job-embedded learning occurs in the context of the job setting and is related to what people learn and share about their experiences, reflecting on specific work incidents to uncover newer understandings or changes in practices or beliefs. Job-embedded learning

occurs through the ongoing discussions where colleagues listen and learn from each other as they share what does and does not work in a particular setting. Job-embedded learning is about sharing best practices discovered while trying out new programs, planning new programs and practices, and implementing revisions based on the lessons learned from practice. (p. 3)

Borko et al. (2010) revealed their support of JEPD instead of formal PD by commenting:

These traditional approaches are generally viewed as overly fragmented, not connected closely enough to classroom practice, and out of alignment with current theories of learning and school reform. They are being replaced by approaches that are more closely aligned with constructivist and situative theories and reform efforts; specifically, they are grounded in classroom practice and involve the formation of professional learning communities. (p. 548)

In the same manner, Cavazos et al. (2018) stated that JEPD is considered as a useful model that could assist teachers to improve their levels of knowledge and experience in order to meet their students' diverse needs.

In summary, the formal and job-embedded models of PD can be distinguished based on different goals, forms, and content. Within the Vietnamese higher education context, although formal PD activities still play an important part in teachers' career development, in recent years, the government and MOET have begun putting more focus on encouraging the growth of JEPD activities among teachers. Therefore, this study seeks to understand specific aspects that determine effective PD in different contexts so that PD planners and academic managers can decide which is the most appropriate model of PD for their teaching staff. The next section discusses some prominent characteristics of effective PD.

2.2.3. Characteristics of effective professional development

So far, this section has reviewed two main issues regarding PD in education including concepts of PD and models of PD. It now moves to focus on the characteristics of

effective PD proposed by scholars and researchers in the field of education in general and in ELT in particular in order to provide insights into which core features of PD should be taken into account. As suggested by Guskey (2000), more in-depth study on the effectiveness of PD should be conducted to offer greater guidance to practitioners to improve the quality of teachers' PD and enhance student learning. Since then, many scholars have responded to Guskey's call leading to the identification of a number of characteristics that underpin effective PD. This section explains four key characteristics of PD including (1) content-focused, (2) collaborative, (3) on-going, and (4) improving student outcomes as they appear to be universal features that are likely to make it effective.

Content-focused PD

The first feature that characterises effective PD is content-focused. As explained by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), content-focused PD refers to the activity that focuses on "teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content [and] supports teacher learning within teachers' classroom contexts" (p. v). Borko et al. (2010) suggested that the content of high-quality PD should be situated in practice and focused (at least in part) on students' learning. Beavers (2009) argued that in order to educate teachers effectively, it is essential to actively view adult teachers as unique learners. By applying adult learning principles, she proposed several guidelines in relation to teachers' needs for PD such as creating opportunities for teachers to present their PD content needs, choosing realistic and applicable topics rather than theoretical and philosophical ones, and providing appropriate strategies to support different learning styles. In her project, Jeannin (2016) employed a descriptive case study to explore faculty members' needs for PD in an international university in Thailand. Data were gathered from full-time faculty members through a focus group of five participants and eight individual face-to-face and email interviews. The findings reported faculty members' need for learning specific content (e.g., classroom management strategies, pedagogical skills for teaching undergraduates, testing and assessment design, and instructional technology). Furthermore, the findings showed that relevant PD programmes might help enhance faculty members' pedagogical skills and improve student learning experiences in multicultural settings.

Collaborative PD

The second characteristic of effective PD is collaboration. Hunzicker (2011) confirmed that teachers often appreciate opportunities to learn from and share professional experiences with one another regarding instructional planning, analysing student work, and peer observations. Therefore, collaborative PD is more interesting for teachers than working individually. In the same vein, Bates and Morgan (2018) argued that “Establishing a trusting relationship is instrumental to creating a support group that works together to solve problems of practice. Such collaborations allow teachers to take risks and address instructional issues or dilemmas with one another” (p. 624). In Norway, Svendsen (2016) used a case study approach to examine how teachers perceived the impact of collaborative design on their PD. A total of 11 science teachers took part in this study. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and field notes. The findings revealed that because teachers assisted each other during the process of designing their PD, the implementation of collaborative design for teaching was perceived as constructive and expansive and this implementation influenced other departments at the school.

On-going PD

As well as content-focused and collaborative, the on-going nature of PD is the third important characteristic of effective PD. According to Guskey and Yoon (2009), PD is not a short-term process that teachers only do while in their teacher education programme or at the beginning of their teaching career, so it requires an on-going commitment. In order to promote teaching, PD must be long-term and include relevant content. Similarly, Bates and Morgan (2018) stated that “Sustained focus over time is a hallmark of effective professional development and should be considered in terms of weeks, months and years” (p. 625). When PD is on-going, teachers have the opportunity to recognise an actual problem of practice and figure out relevant solutions. Zepeda (2015) explained that on-going PD happens in the context of the job environment and is connected to what teachers learn and share about their experiences, reflecting on specific teaching situations to discover updated understandings or changes in practices or beliefs. In her study, Goodyear (2017) explored the impact of a sustained school-based, tailored, and supported CPD programme on physical education (PE) teachers’ practices and students’ learning. Data were collected from six case studies of individual teachers who participated in a

year-long CPD programme focusing on cooperative learning. The findings showed that three characteristics of individualized (external) support, departmental (internal) support, and sustained support influenced teachers' practices of cooperative learning. In addition, the sustained and collaborative CPD programme had a positive impact on teacher and student learning. This study emphasises the necessity of a sustained PD effort to promote teaching outcomes and contributes to international literature on effective CPD.

Improving student outcomes

The fourth characteristic of effective PD is improving student outcomes. As stated by Patton et al. (2015), "Professional development is too often planned and conducted based on a new teaching practice or other ideas rather than the consequences of its impact on student learning" (p. 35). Therefore, these researchers suggested that effective PD should positively influence student outcomes. In Missouri, America, Akiba and Liang (2016) conducted a state-wide longitudinal survey to examine the influence of six types of teachers' PD activities on student achievement growth over four years. Data were collected from 467 middle school mathematics teachers in 91 schools combined with 11,192 students' mathematics scores in a standardized assessment. The results showed that teacher-centred collaborative learning activities on mathematics teaching and learning (e.g., teacher collaboration and informal communication) were more effective in enhancing student achievement than individual learning activities (e.g., PD programmes, university courses, and individual learning activities). Teacher-driven research activities through professional conference presentation and participation were also identified to have a link with student achievement growth in mathematics. Akiba and Liang's project indicates useful implications for my study of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers.

Together with the above-mentioned significant characteristics of effective PD, researchers have also identified other characteristics such as active learning (e.g., Borko et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), emphasizing individual and organizational change (e.g., Borko et al., 2010; Guskey, 2000), and using models and modelling (e.g., Bates & Morgan, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In his study, Bayar (2014) investigated Turkish teachers' perceptions towards components of effective PD activities. In order to collect data, interviews with 16 teachers, a brief survey (brainstorming), and document analysis were employed. Ultimately, this study found that effective PD activities should include the six following components: (1) a match to existing teacher

needs, (2) a match to existing school needs, (3) teacher involvement in the design/planning of PD activities, (4) active participation opportunities, (5) long-term engagement, and (6) high-quality instructors. This study provides an insight on several features of effective PD that can help enhance teachers' professional growth and student outcomes.

In the field of ELT, Almuhammadi (2017) recommended that effective PD should focus on three concepts of (1) context, (2) content, and (3) process which are presented as follows:

Context is the environment where professional development takes place while accounting all components of socio-political matrix. The content focus is on the generic knowledge that is provided in professional development programs. Finally, the process, is how these professional development programs are presented. (p. 118)

From a more specific perspective, Anderson (2018) suggested five principles as an interactive framework of effective PD for language teachers including (1) purpose, (2) personalisation, (3) priority, (4) passion, and (5) professional learning community. First, the purpose of PD for both individuals and institutions should be identified clearly. Second, personalization means that PD should focus on teachers' needs for their own development. Third, teachers need to understand their PD priorities so that they are not overwhelmed with a lot of PD opportunities at the same time. Fourth, teachers have to be passionate about what they are doing to become better teachers. Fifth, when taking part in a professional learning community, teachers can gain a lot of benefits and achieve positive outcomes. In general, Anderson confirmed that when the institution and the individual follow an interactive approach for teachers' PD, both the institutional and individual needs can be met, and student outcomes can be improved.

In the context of Vietnamese education, there is a shortage of literature on effective features of PD with only two studies located. In her study, Ngo (2014, p. 25) suggested that "the models of delivery; the considerations of the needs of teachers and schools as well as the government and MOET's directions; and the certain involvement of teachers in designing their own PD activities" are several important issues that need to be considered in order to identify characteristics of effective PD for teachers. Truong (2017) proposed 12 research-based characteristics of effective PD for the Vietnamese

ELT teaching context comprising: (1) content and pedagogy, (2) situating needs in multiple contexts, (3) focusing on student learning, (4) addressing teacher change, (5) duration, (6) collaboration and school-based PD communities, (7) self-regulation, (8) technology-mediated input, delivery and PD activities, (9) voluntary participation, (10) PD management unit, (11) follow-up, and (12) leadership and school support (pp. 160-162). Truong argued that these characteristics could assist in enhancing more effective and school-based PD activities in the field of ELT in Vietnam.

Overall, the theoretical and empirical evidence from both international and Vietnamese literature can serve as a useful reference for my study when analysing and proposing effective characteristics of PD for tertiary EFL lecturers. Although it is evident that some of the above-mentioned prominent features of effective PD (e.g., being content-focused, collaborative, on-going, and improving student outcomes) are relevant in my study, there is little attention in the literature to the influence of contextual factors on these effective features of PD. As mentioned by Patton et al. (2015), there are many different ways to define effective PD due to the context and institutional culture within which it is located. Thus, it is important to consider the impact of contextual factors on Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' experiences of PD within my study. The next section reviews relevant literature related to the empirical studies concerning teachers' PD experiences in ELT.

2.3. Empirical studies on teachers' PD experiences in ELT

This section reviews significant research into PD for school and tertiary teachers and administrators in the field of ELT. In particular, the first half of the section provides insights into empirical research findings concerning ESL/EFL school and tertiary teachers' PD experiences from different nations all over the world (e.g., Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Mexico, North Sudan, Pakistan, Thailand, the Republic of Benin, and Turkey). The second half of this section presents key empirical studies in the Vietnamese education context within which my study is located.

2.3.1. International contexts

According to Hill et al. (2013), the focus of research on teachers' PD has changed considerably over the past few decades: firstly, the growth of more objective research

approaches with which researchers can evaluate PD results; secondly, instead of evaluating specific programmes, some PD researchers have compared the effects of programme features; and thirdly, research on teachers' PD has focused on designs that highlight random assignment of teachers or schools to treatment condition. Reviewing the recent literature in the sphere of PD, there are numerous studies with various research approaches including quantitative, mixed-method, or qualitative focusing on the PD experiences of ESL/EFL school and tertiary teachers. Empirical literature using these varied research designs is now reviewed, beginning with a focus on studies regarding teachers' participation in PD, and followed by teachers' needs for PD. Most literature selected reports on projects that were undertaken in countries where, firstly, English is used as a second or foreign language instead of a first language, and secondly, ELT is a developing area of teaching. Thus, these studies help inform my research question which aims to investigate the lived PD experiences of tertiary EFL lecturers in Vietnam.

2.3.1.1. Teachers' participation in PD

There is an increasing interest in research concerning EFL teachers' perceptions of their participation in PD. Five empirical studies were found. The first of these, Roux and Valladares' (2014) project, examined Mexican secondary EFL teachers' previous PD experiences, their perspectives on PD content and formats, and their dispositions to engage in inquiry-based PD. A forty-nine-item questionnaire was delivered to 297 teachers. As reported in the results, degree and non-degree courses were the only PD opportunities that half of the participants had been involved in the previous year while the other half did not engage in any PD activities. Most of the participants valued the positive effect of training courses on teaching, but some of them did not recognise the influence of other different PD opportunities on their teaching (e.g., mentoring, peer observation, attending conferences, and networking). In addition, a high number of participants were not familiar with PD activities such as mentoring, peer observation, attending conferences, or networking. The majority of participants also showed interest in enhancing their research capacities and engaging in classroom research. Roux and Valladares proposed that more reflective types of PD should be promoted in order to support teachers' participation in PD, and more empirical research should be undertaken

in order to investigate the impact of the different bottom-up³ PD activities on teaching practices.

In the Republic of Benin, Agbayahoun (2016) conducted a survey with 157 secondary EFL teachers in order to explore their views on PD, the models of teacher development they were familiar with, and their experiences in the area. The results reported that the PD activities teachers frequently engaged in were one-shot courses that followed top-down models, so these activities could not assist teachers to enhance their skills in reflection and action on practice. It was evident that teachers were not accustomed to other PD activities such as action research, reading research findings in the field, peer observation, mentoring, or networking. The participants also reflected that although top-down PD activities gave them exposure to informative input, these opportunities had an insignificant influence on their teaching and student outcomes.

As well as empirical research employing a quantitative approach to investigate EFL teachers' engagement in PD, two mixed-method studies were located. Dayoub and Bashiruddin's (2012) project integrated both self-study research and case-study method to explore the PD of two teachers from two developing countries, Syria and Pakistan. The findings revealed that the participants were self-directed learners, who learnt from different in-service experiences and teacher education training and workshops; from an encouraging environment and opportunities in school; and by receiving support from family. Dayoub and Bashiruddin recommended that PD programmes at the school level should be of sustained duration, and English language teachers needed both pre-service and in-service teacher education.

One of the most relevant for my research is Mahmoudi and Özkan's (2015) project. This study compared the differences in the perceptions of 28 novice and 32 experienced Turkish language teachers regarding which PD programmes (e.g., courses/workshops, education conferences or seminars, or qualification programmes) were more useful. Mahmoudi and Özkan found that both novice and experienced teachers gained benefits from PD opportunities, but their perceptions about PD activities were completely different. For example, most experienced teachers indicated that they

³ In contrast to the top-down approach, a bottom-up approach to teacher PD refers to "an approach that is directed and guided 100% by an individual teacher. The teacher decides the approach he/she want to take to his/her own PD" (Anderson, 2018, p. 4)

frequently took part in mentoring or peer coaching, reading professional literature, conferences, and seminars while less experienced teachers reported their regular participation in courses/workshops, professional communities, and reading professional literature. Mahmoudi and Özkan also explained that PD opportunities helped teachers explore new roles, foster new instructional techniques and teaching methodologies, and enhance their practice and develop themselves both professionally and individually. Thus, they argued, the fundamental characteristics of PD activities should be clarified in order to explore their positive effect. This research can serve as a useful reference for my study on differentiating the PD participation of *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* EFL lecturers in order to draw out feasible strategies for implementing effective PD.

Besides the above-mentioned quantitative and mixed-method research, one empirical study employing a qualitative approach was found. In Indonesia, Hartono (2016) examined EFL teachers' experiences of PD by conducting interviews with six teachers from four different universities. The study reported that teachers had a variety of conceptualizations of PD and showed a mixed understanding of PD. They defined and perceived PD as an activity that could help them become a more competent teacher. In addition, several PD activities that the participants frequently experienced were attending seminars, conferences, and workshops; writing scholarly articles, conducting research, and having publications; joining professional organizations; reading and finding sources, and developing teaching methods; and becoming a coach, adjudicator, examiner and a teacher trainer. Through their participation in different PD activities, teachers could gain more knowledge that supported their professional growth. Hartono also found that the participants had personal responsibility to develop professionally, and they had to determine their own ways to be involved in PD. EFL teachers' participation in on-going PD became part of individual efforts rather than institutional requirements. The evidence on teachers' personal responsibility for PD serves as a useful reference for my study concerning the individual influence on EFL lecturers' experiences of PD within the Vietnamese context.

Collectively, the five studies reviewed here indicate that, in different countries, PD activities for EFL teachers have been promoted both within and outside the institutions. They may follow a top-down or a bottom-up approach, or both. These empirical studies provide insights into what is known about EFL teachers' participation in PD as well as their recommendations for relevant PD initiatives that inform the analysis

of the Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences around this aspect in my study.

2.3.1.2. Teachers' needs for PD

As well as the empirical research investigating teachers' participation in PD, five studies regarding teachers' needs for PD were also found. In Hong Kong, Mak (2010) explored current practice and future needs for PD of 56 primary and secondary ESL teachers within the context of implementing educational reforms. The survey results showed that experienced, well-qualified ESL teachers perceived the needs for PD from a broader perspective than their less qualified, less experienced colleagues who had more immediate needs. However, Mak revealed that one of the weaknesses of this study was the small number of participants, so it was unable to explore other unrevealed factors influencing the PD choices and needs of ESL teachers. Although this research was conducted in Hong Kong, where English is used as a second language instead of a foreign language, its finding can inform my study regarding the differences in the needs for PD among novice and experienced lecturers under the context of educational reforms.

Similarly, Eksi and Aydın (2013) examined Turkish English instructors' perceptions towards PD programmes in order to identify their PD needs. A total of 79 full-time and 13 part-time instructors took part in a questionnaire survey. The results revealed that instructors' perceptions of the PD programmes were mostly positive. Instructors expressed their highest need was for "New theories and practices of ELT", followed by "Use of technology in ELT" while their lowest need was for "Lesson planning" and "Classroom management". The study found that only length of teaching experience was prominent in predicting PD needs. This study could be replicated in other universities in order to investigate whether contextual differences impact instructors' perceptions of PD and their needs.

Together with the above-mentioned quantitative research concerning teachers' needs for PD within the international contexts, three empirical studies employing a mixed-method approach were located (Abbott & Rossiter, 2011; Hazaea, 2019; Zein, 2016). The first study, Abbott and Rossiter's (2011) project, investigated the perceived PD needs and interests of Canadian ESL instructors and administrators. In this study, quantitative data were gathered from a group of 36 diverse participants including instructors, programme coordinators, and tutors. Qualitative data were collected through

focus-group interviews with 27 participants from four communities and seven programme administrators from five rural centres. The findings highlighted the necessity of PD designed to meet the specific needs of rural instructors and to facilitate effective ESL teaching and learning in their communities. Abbott and Rossiter stated that drawing upon both the instructors' and administrators' viewpoints, this study offered some useful suggestions for designing PD programmes for English teachers in other educational settings including prioritising both short-term and long-term PD goals based on a complete needs analysis of the organisation and instructors, and seeking assistance from professional experts and resources in the development of the curricula or materials.

In another study, Zein (2016) investigated the PD needs of Indonesian primary EFL teachers from the perspectives of both teachers and teacher educators. This study gathered data through semi-structured and focus group interviews with 20 participants. The findings supported the idea that strategies to fulfil teachers' PD needs should be constructed based on a framework of active learning through collective participation and inquiry-based learning that underpinned high-quality PD activities. The study provided a needs-based PD model for teachers that illustrated the relationships between EFL teachers' profile and their specific needs. Even though the researcher thought that mixed-method research should be used in future research in order to explore both the visible and invisible aspects of teachers' need, this study is quite relevant to my research thanks to its needs-based PD model.

In the same line, Hazaea (2019) explored the PD needs of EFL faculty members and determined effective ways to address such needs within the higher education context in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected through a questionnaire using fixed-response and open-ended questions delivered to 32 faculty members. The findings identified faculties' needs for PD in three dimensions: teaching and learning, research, and university and community service. Teaching and learning activities were identified as the highest need for PD which could be implemented through workshops, short courses, webinars, and emails. The participants also expressed their need for research activities, which could be implemented through research groups, while activities in relation to university and community service were reported by the participants as their lowest PD need and could be met through outdoor cultural activities and exhibitions. Hazaea suggested that more studies on language assessment literacy, language skills, integrated skills, and action research should be undertaken in order to identify the PD needs of EFL faculty members.

The empirical evidence from the five studies reviewed above indicates that teachers' needs for PD are very diverse, and those needs may be affected by contextual factors including at the individual, institutional, national, and global level. Compared to the individual and institutional factors influencing teachers' needs for PD, these studies show less evidence of the national and global factors. Nevertheless, they provide useful insights for my study related to the perceived needs for PD of EFL lecturers in order to propose a workable framework of effective PD in the Vietnamese higher education setting.

Overall, the aim of this section has been to review the empirical evidence regarding the different PD experiences of school and tertiary ESL/EFL teachers in international contexts. A number of studies focusing on teachers' perceptions towards their experiences of PD across quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research designs and using a variety of methods for data collection were located. Although there are similarities and differences between the PD experiences of EFL teachers in Vietnam and other countries, it is significant that the role of teachers' PD is highly valued in most countries. The above-mentioned studies have addressed diverse aspects of teachers' PD experiences including teachers' participation in PD and their needs for PD. As a result, these studies provide insights into what is known about teachers' PD in the field of ELT that informs the analysis of tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences in my study. However, one major limitation of these studies is that they mostly investigated the PD experiences from the perspectives of school and tertiary ESL/EFL teachers with minimal focus on the contextual factors impacting their PD experiences. Furthermore, although these studies used various approaches of qualitative, quantitative, or mix-method research design, none of them employed phenomenology, particularly, transcendental phenomenology, in order to uncover the phenomenon of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD within a tertiary education setting. Therefore, they suggest both empirical and methodological gaps that my study intends to address.

2.3.2. Vietnamese context

The previous section has reviewed empirical studies on school and tertiary teachers' experiences of PD in a range of international contexts, and this section now turns to a review of research in the Vietnamese context. In a recent systematic literature review to

examine the current interests and trends of faculty development in Southeast Asian higher education, Phuong et al. (2015) reported that alongside Singapore and Malaysia, Vietnam is one of the leading contributors of empirical evidence about PD activities in the region. To some extent, this suggests that there is high interest in PD within Vietnamese education. However, a search of the recent literature found only three empirical studies that specifically focused on school and tertiary EFL teachers' experiences of PD in Vietnam.

The first of these, Vo and Nguyen's (2009) qualitative study applied the Critical Friend Group (CFG) model of teachers' PD to explore the experiences of a small group of Vietnamese EFL teachers during their engagement in a CFG over one semester. Observations and interviews were used to collect data. The findings showed that the CFG model achieved some initial success and popularity in the context of EFL teaching in Vietnam. In addition, the research indicated that more CFG should be carried out as a frequent PD activity because this model could lead to the improvement of teacher performance and student outcomes. These findings provide my research with insights into the CFG model and its possible usefulness within a framework of effective PD for tertiary EFL lecturers.

In another study, Phan (2017) carried out a qualitative case study to investigate the procedures of an innovative professional learning activity, recognised as professional learning communities (PLCs). To collect data for this study, the researcher undertook 10 observations of the meetings of four PLCs, four semi-structured interviews with three PLC leaders and an EFL consultant, and 20 semi-structured interviews with seven school English language teachers after observing their lessons. One of the significant findings of this research was that although teachers' engagement in the PLCs was impacted by some factors including a lack of collegial support, cultural expectations on their social roles in directing professional learning, and time constraints, these teachers took part in PLCs actively and thoughtfully. Phan's study offers suggestions for enhancing collaborative PD activities in the Vietnamese context.

Together with the two above-mentioned studies, another piece of research on EFL teachers' experiences of PD in higher education in Vietnam was located. In the context of educational reforms, Tran (2016) explored EFL teacher educators' PD experiences, implications of PD, and influence of government and institutional policies and initiatives

in Vietnamese higher education using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework. A case study approach was employed to investigate in-depth information related to teacher educators' perceptions and experiences of PD. The study was conducted at three public universities in Vietnam, with 55 participants who were lecturers and academic managers. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire survey in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of EFL lecturers' PD experiences. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, observations of PD sessions, and policy document analysis in order to examine different insights concerning the EFL teacher educators' experiences in their academic environment, and to investigate the meanings they adhered to their experiences. Tran (2016) found some prominent findings as follows:

- PD was a complex, political, and culturally situated phenomenon that played various roles in supporting the professional aspirations of teachers.
- Different stakeholders perceived the roles and functions of PD differently.
- Lecturers were involved in many PD opportunities including formal, collaborative, and informal, and they highly valued the importance of those opportunities.
- Educational reforms offered good PD opportunities for lecturers, but educational reforms and the socio-cultural and political context also put pressure on the lecturers' career growth.
- PD opportunities had positive impact on lecturers' profession.

Ultimately, this study resulted in a model of PD that raised critical questions about how higher education institutions and policy makers might provide a supportive PD environment to better encourage teacher educators' capacity to bring about changes at both individual and institutional levels. In this model, teacher educators' engagement in PD and their individual and professional growth could be positively or negatively influenced by sociocultural, political, and contextual factors. In general, although there are several differences between Tran's (2016) project and my research in terms of the theoretical frameworks used, participants, research approaches, and designs, the empirical evidence from this study can signal useful aspects for consideration in my study concerning the tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences as well as the contextual influence on their PD in the context of Vietnamese educational reforms. The model of PD for EFL

tertiary teacher educators proposed by Tran can also provide useful insights for the framework of effective PD that my study aims to develop.

To sum up, the area of EFL teachers' PD has received considerable attention from researchers and scholars around the world. However, this review reveals the lack of previous research that has investigated how tertiary EFL lecturers experience PD in non-English speaking countries. Even though PD has been regarded as one of the emphases of the Vietnamese educational reforms, few empirical studies have been carried out to explore EFL lecturers' experiences of PD in order to support their further development. Therefore, my research aims to address gaps in our knowledge of EFL lecturers' PD experiences in tertiary education. In particular, my study will add to the previous work undertaken within the Vietnamese context due to the different theoretical frameworks and research design used to investigate the PD experiences of Vietnamese EFL lecturers. The next section examines empirical studies concerning the impact of contextual factors on teachers' PD in ELT.

2.4. Empirical studies on contextual factors influencing teachers' PD in ELT

According to Guskey (2000), "Context characteristics refer to the '*who*', '*when*', '*where*', and '*why*' of professional development. They involve the organization, system, or culture in which professional development takes place and where the new understandings will be implemented" (p. 74). All these characteristics play an important part in deciding the quality of teachers' PD. As a result, understanding context is vital when it comes to understanding teachers' PD (Koffeman & Snoek, 2019). This section starts with a review of empirical studies related to contextual influences on teachers' PD from international contexts, followed by several empirical studies undertaken in the Vietnamese context.

2.4.1. International contexts

Over the years, many scholars and researchers have addressed how contextual factors affect teachers' PD activities from a variety of standpoints. For instance, Caffarella and Zinn (1999) presented a conceptual framework of four domains that may strengthen or hamper PD for faculty in higher education consisting of (1) people and interpersonal

relationships, (2) institutional structures, (3) personal considerations and commitments, and (4) intellectual and psychological characteristics. These domains are believed to be relevant when accounting for supports and barriers to PD and career success for higher education faculty. This section examines empirical studies regarding the contextual influences on EFL teachers' PD experiences undertaken in various countries (e.g., Columbia, Iran, Iraq, Nepal, Thailand, and Turkey). These studies with different research approaches including quantitative, mixed-method, or qualitative help inform my research question which aim to explore the positive and negative factors impact the PD experiences of tertiary EFL lecturers in Vietnam.

2.4.1.1. Positive influences on teachers' PD

Four empirical studies addressing EFL teachers' perceptions of the positive factors affecting their PD were found. The first of these, Alfaki's (2014) quantitative study explored North Sudanese teachers' perceptions of PD in today's world in order to find out the best opportunities and activities. A total of 40 English teachers took part in the survey. The research hypothesised that teachers' PD could result in higher achievement in education. The data from this study showed that PD was very important and indispensable. Teachers had positive beliefs towards PD. Alfaki suggested that PD activities should be highly valued because they helped promote teacher professional career and student achievement.

In Iran, Mohammadi and Moradi's (2017) mixed-method study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions about PD, particularly, whether their beliefs could change as a result of participating in PD workshops. Data were gathered through a survey with 86 teachers and a follow-up interview with 22 teachers from 16 different schools. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that there was a positive change in the teachers' beliefs after they took part in PD workshops. The findings from this study indicated that successful PD that brought about changes in teachers' beliefs should start from teachers, acknowledge their educational needs and the teaching context in which PD was conducted, and within an understanding of the socio-cultural context.

Within the context of ELT in Colombia, Sierra Piedrahita (2018) argued that professional learning communities (PLCs) were not very popular even though this form of PD could enhance teacher practice and support them in order to fulfil the requirements from the government and society. Thus, through interviews, classroom observations,

recorded meetings, teachers' planning units, and pedagogical materials, Sierra Piedrahita's project explored how an English teacher changed her teaching practice with the support of a facilitator in a teacher learning community. The findings showed that there were changes in two aspects of the teacher practice including new patterns of teaching behaviour and methodology. The facilitator played a vital role in supporting teachers during their continuous learning process. In addition, a PD programme that only provided teachers with subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge was not sufficient and did not lead to similar outcomes of changed teacher practice compared with a programme that supported teachers in their actual classrooms. Therefore, the data from this study indicated that facilitators should support teachers throughout their learning process in order to organise lesson plans, model classes, observe their classes, and offer them essential feedback. This study signals useful insights for my research regarding the benefits of PLCs that can help improve teaching practice and promote collaborative activities among EFL lecturers in the context of higher education in Vietnam.

In addition to the quantitative and mixed-method studies presented above, Joshi et al. (2018) employed a qualitative research design to explore Nepalese teachers' perceived benefits of PD. A total of 45 high school EFL teachers took part in this study. The findings reported that teachers had positive experiences of different PD strategies, and their experiences were affected by their pre-service teacher training. In addition, EFL teachers benefited from self-directed (own teaching experience and self-monitoring), profession related (workshops, seminars, and conferences), and peer-supported (learning from colleagues) PD strategies. Joshi et al. also identified several limitations of this study including being unable to examine Nepalese teachers' PD needs, existing discrepancies between the delivery of PD programmes and their application by teachers in the classroom. Ultimately, the findings from this study revealed that instead of following PD models from developed countries, a locally suitable and result-oriented model of PD should be designed in order to implement future PD programmes for Nepalese EFL teachers. This study provides helpful insights for my research when proposing an integrated framework of effective PD for Vietnamese EFL lecturers.

Overall, the findings from these studies highlight some significant enablers of PD for teachers (e.g., teachers' higher achievements, a positive change in teachers' beliefs after engaging in PD activities, and enhancement on student outcomes). However, this

line of research reveals that few empirical studies have been conducted focusing on the positive factors influencing EFL lecturers' PD at tertiary education level. My study stands alone in terms of its concentration on tertiary EFL lecturers' perceptions in order to examine and understand how the contextual factors affect their PD experiences within the Vietnamese education context.

2.4.1.2. Negative influences on teachers' PD

Attention is now turned to seven empirical studies in relation to EFL teachers' perceptions of the negative factors hindering their PD. Two quantitative research projects were found in the Turkish educational context. One study explored the PD barriers from teachers' perspectives (Çelik et al., 2013) while the other focused on directors and vice-directors' perceived challenges of PD (Yılmaz, 2016). The first of these, Çelik et al.'s project employed a cross-sectional survey in order to explore the attitudes of 42 EFL teachers towards PD. The results showed that although the participants viewed PD as highly important for their profession, the existing PD opportunities were not appropriate to their teaching practice and did not have a significant influence on their teaching. The participants also reported that excessive workload was considered as one of the prominent negative aspect affecting their professional growth. Çelik et al. stated that within the context of higher education, both compulsory and voluntary PD programmes for teachers should be improved in order to increase the quality of ELT.

In the same context, Yılmaz (2016) used an open-ended questionnaire to explore directors and vice-directors' perspectives of teacher PD in schools of foreign languages. The results revealed that administrators highly valued PD opportunities as important for teachers' professional growth, and most of the schools had in-service training programmes for their staff. Nevertheless, due to heavy workload, most of the school administrators did not have sufficient time to take part in many PD activities. Instead, they only updated their knowledge on new trends and laws in language policies through annual meetings or discussion groups. The implications from Yılmaz's research are useful when considering the perspectives of the PD planners and academic managers in my study.

Besides the above-mentioned quantitative studies, three qualitative research concerning barriers of teachers' PD were undertaken by Hartono (2016), Saberi and Amiri (2016), and Rajab and Silman (2017). Saberi and Amiri's project interviewed nine

Iranian EFL faculty members in order to explore the main challenges that they faced in participating in PD. Through the findings, some factors that demotivated teachers' engagement in PD were uncovered such as management issues (e.g., unfamiliarity with technology, high costs, and ineffective administrative policies) and pedagogical concerns (e.g., ambiguous nature of PD, context-bound quality of PD, the conflict between the collaborative essence of PD and teachers' individualistic preferences, and a lack of cooperation and collegiality). Because these inhibiting factors affected the implementation of PD, the researchers recommended that some policies should be modified and adapted to make them more appropriate to the current context of Iranian education. These findings signal useful areas for exploration in my research, particularly, lecturers' awareness of the key barriers influencing their PD experiences.

A contemporaneous project, Hartono's (2016) findings found that although Indonesian EFL tertiary teachers viewed PD as highly important in their career, there were several difficulties related to their PD engagement such as a lack of institutional and financial support, absence of PD programmes, heavy teaching loads, and a lack of information regarding PD opportunities. In addition, some participants described challenges in balancing their individual and professional life. The findings also revealed that the participants' institutions did not highly value the importance of PD, so these institutions did not offer PD initiatives to strengthen their teachers' performance. Hartono recommended that universities should be responsible for teachers' PD and play a role in sustaining and enhancing teachers' quality by creating favourable conditions for teachers to be involved in either individual-based or institutional-based PD opportunities.

In Iraq, Rajab and Silman's (2017) research included a total of 40 instructors, heads of departments, assistant heads of departments, and coordinators from nine public universities. The findings showed that because of the financial crisis in Iraq since 2013, PD opportunities such as attending international conferences, participating in seminars and workshops, or visiting foreign countries for academic purposes were still limited in public universities. Teachers felt demotivated and unwilling to engage in PD activities due to a lack of sustained duration. Rajab and Silman suggested that PD should be carried out as a long-term process which starts with beginning teachers and ends when teachers retire from their career; and that more collaborative work should be undertaken among the teaching staff in order to assist their professional growth from the first days of their career. Although Vietnam has completely different economic, political, cultural, and

social systems from Iraq, the findings from Rajab and Silman's study raise several issues related to both teachers and administrators' perspectives of PD that pertain to the Vietnamese education context.

Alongside the empirical quantitative and qualitative research reported above, two mixed-method studies were located in Thai tertiary education contexts (Meng & Tajaroensuk, 2013; Phothongsunan, 2018). Meng and Tajaroensuk's project used a questionnaire and semi-structured group interviews to explore the problems that tertiary EFL teachers faced in their in-service PD. In total, there were 55 participants who responded to the questionnaire and 12 participants who took part in interviews. The findings revealed that the limitations of programmes (e.g., short-term and focusing too much on the theories of TEFL), the discontinuity of programmes, and the inappropriateness of programmes were identified as three common problems that EFL teachers met in their in-service PD. It was evident that collegial collaboration should be enhanced in teachers' in-service or on-the-job PD. Meng and Tajaroensuk suggested that further studies should be carried out to find suitable approaches to solve these problems. In the same context, Phothongsunan's study also collected data through a questionnaire and interviews with 30 Thai teachers. As shown in the findings, although the participants were quite satisfied with the PD opportunities provided by their institutions, due to workload and internal institutional policies, they felt demotivated to take part in PD activities. Phothongsunan also found that because tertiary EFL teachers mostly depended on the university for their career development, universities should have strategic plans regarding specific PD programmes or financial support in order to assist teachers in their professional growth. In general, even though these two studies were conducted within the Thai higher education context, they provide my study with useful implications regarding the impact of contextual factors on Vietnamese EFL lecturers' PD experiences at tertiary level.

Across the seven above-mentioned studies, there are similarities in terms of the research questions and focus as the researchers were mostly interested in teachers' perceptions of the negative factors affecting their PD. The findings from these studies highlight several typical barriers, namely, heavy workloads, inappropriateness of PD programmes, a lack of collegial and managerial support, a lack of institutional and financial support, and time constraints. Thus, these empirical evidences help identify

barriers that may also influence the Vietnamese EFL lecturers' experiences of PD in my study.

2.4.2. Vietnamese context

Within the Vietnamese context, empirical research in relation to contextual factors influencing teachers' PD is very limited. Le and Nguyen (2012) employed an ecological framework in their study which examined influences at the intrapersonal, interpersonal/cultural, institutional, and physical environment levels in order to find out what kinds of informal learning activities EFL teachers took part in and how the school context affected their engagement. The findings showed that teacher learning activities in the workplace were very limited and influenced by the school context at various levels. The researcher suggested that research regarding workplace learning or community practice should be used as sources of new initiatives for the enhancement of teachers' PD within a school.

In another qualitative study exploring Vietnamese lecturers' experiences of PD, Phuong and McLean (2016) found that lecturers' PD could be enhanced or hindered by both de-motivators and motivators. De-motivators included insufficient compensation and conservative administrative practices while motivators consisted of intrinsic factors (e.g., love for teaching and self-image) and extrinsic factors (e.g., acknowledgment from leaders and students). The findings also showed that the main de-motivators identified in this study were related to institutional structures whereas the motivators are connected with intellectual and personal characteristics.

In brief, the findings from all above-mentioned studies have emphasized the importance of the contextual impact on teachers' professional growth and are likely to feature in the contextual factors influencing tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences in my study. However, because scholars and researchers may approach teachers' PD from different viewpoints, the factors that affect its effectiveness are diverse across different contexts. As stated by Koffeman and Snoek (2019), "The concept of context means different things in different settings" (p. 457). Therefore, my study will carefully examine how the contextual factors influence the specific circumstances of lecturers' PD in Vietnamese higher education, particularly, in the field of ELT so that suitable strategies

might be identified and recommended to meet both the needs and the wants of the participants in the interests of professional engagement. The following section addresses the two theoretical frameworks adopted for this study.

2.5. Theoretical frameworks underpinning this study

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined a theoretical framework as “the ways that a researcher integrates and situates the formal theories that contextualise and guide a study” (p. 86). These authors explained that in qualitative research, theoretical frameworks play an important part in influencing and structuring research throughout an entire study, positioning a study within pre-existing literature, and conceptualising different aspects and perspectives of a topic to contribute to a study’s depth and complexity. My research is grounded in two theoretical perspectives: Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory and Knowles’ (1980) andragogy theory. The following sections briefly review key ideas and concepts related to these theories.

2.5.1. Ecological systems theory: Bronfenbrenner (1979)

The first theoretical framework guiding this study is the ecological systems model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Although Bronfenbrenner’s theory initially focuses on child development, it also provides insights into adult learning. This model (see Figure 2.1) emphasizes the ways in which contexts can affect individuals and vice versa. As identified by Bronfenbrenner, the ecology of human development:

Involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being, and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner proposed different versions of ecological systems model with his earlier version (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) presented as a nested model in which “the environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). This early model is not without criticism. For example, Neal and Neal (2013) criticised that “conceptualizing ecological systems as nested obscures the relationships between them” (p. 723), so they proposed framing

ecological contexts as networked, where each context is built on the social relationships surrounding a central individual, and where contexts at different levels combine with one another in an overlapping but non-nested way. However, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original model, in which different levels of ecological contexts are framed as nested, fits well with my research purposes. Because Vietnam is a socialist republic with a one-party system led by the Communist party (Bui, 2016), the educational system is centralised and hierarchically organised. Bronfenbrenner's nested model is more suitable as a theoretical framework for understanding how these social-political features influence and impact on the participants in my study. I employ this model to analyse Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD and how different contextual factors interact with each other in relation to lecturers' PD.

Figure 2.1

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model (Neal & Neal, 2013, p. 725)

At the lowest level, a *microsystem* focuses on “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). For lecturers in higher education, the microsystem consists of their university, colleagues,

department, students, and families. A *mesosystem* involves the interrelations between microsystems or connections between contexts. Therefore, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. In the setting of higher education, the mesosystem includes, for example, the relationship between lecturers' workplaces and their families or the interaction between their teaching and students. An *exosystem* refers to "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Pesce (2015) points out that the exosystem could include the institutional policies of the university such as tenure and promotion procedures, the academic calendar, insurance, and benefits. A *macrosystem* refers to "the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). In the context of higher education, the macrosystem includes societal and cultural expectations, norms, values and economic, political, and educational structures and principles.

In support of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, Christensen (2016) commented that the ecological systems theory is considered:

to be beneficial in providing an insight into all the factors that play a role in the growth and development of individuals. It also shows how all the factors are related to each other and impact on the development cycle. (p. 24)

Several studies have employed Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model to investigate teachers' PD in a range of contexts. In South Korea, Hwang (2014) implemented a mixed-method study to explore the influence of ecological contexts on teacher educators' needs and concerns for PD. To collect qualitative data, the researcher interviewed 21 teacher educators using semi-structured interviews. Based on the qualitative research findings, a questionnaire was designed and delivered to 823 teacher educators through an online survey. The findings showed that teacher educators' concerns in terms of PD were closely related to implementing more research because it was considered the main activity for their PD. In addition, global influences such as increased academic communication and emphasis on English as a second language learning were some of the most significant factors that had great impact on teacher educators' PD. Finally, it was found that teacher educators needed more opportunities for communicating with their international academic colleagues for the purpose of active scholarship.

In the United States, Pesce (2015) explored faculties' perceptions and attitudes towards PD for teaching in order to increase participation rates. Data were gathered through a survey and interviews with full-time faculties (n =432) at two research-intensive universities. The findings were grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model in order to develop a full picture of faculty members' ecologies at their universities. It was notable that faculties perceived teaching was not valued highly by their organisations. Due to time constraints, faculties tended to prioritise research over teaching. Furthermore, the findings presented issues related to work-life balance, lack of preparation for teaching at graduate school level, preferred topics and formats for programmes, messages received from the administration, and the desire to collaborate with other faculties. Some recommendations for programme facilitators, administrations, and future research were also drawn out through this study.

In China, Yue et al. (2016) carried out a mixed-method study to examine the contextual factors that impacted teachers' PD in military medical universities. First, 19 experts from China's Third Military Medical University were interviewed to explore factors that influenced teachers' PD. After that, these factors were used to design a questionnaire. The quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire survey of 371 teachers from three military universities. Following Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, this research proposed an ecosystem of teachers' PD composed of four layers within a Chinese context (see Figure 2.2). The results revealed that teaching experience, having a shared vision, policy and material security, professional competence, and psychological motivation largely influenced teachers' PD in military medical universities. These are also contextual factors that support effective PD and which are related to the four layers of Bronfenbrenner's model. Yue et al. also confirmed that teachers' PD goals could only be achieved through comprehensive consideration, coordinated arrangement, and content improvement of these five factors.

In general, the findings of these illustrative studies have revealed that contextual factors have great impact on lecturers' PD. As argued by Christensen (2010), "Bronfenbrenner's model makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the individual's role and behaviour in relation to the context surrounding them on different levels" (p. 123). Therefore, grounding my research in ecological systems theory allows for the examination of the impact of different contextual factors on Vietnamese EFL lecturers' PD experiences. In addition, since ecological systems play a prominent role in

the process of lecturers' professional growth, through exploring the contextual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences, my study could propose a workable framework for lecturers' PD in the context of tertiary education in Vietnam.

Figure 2.2

The ecosystem of teacher PD (Yue et al., 2016, p. 69)

2.5.2. Andragogy: Knowles (1980)

Andragogy, an adult learning theory developed by Knowles (1980), is the second theoretical framework underpinning this research. Andragogy is delineated by Knowles (1970) as “the art and science of helping adults learn” as compared to pedagogy, “the art and science of teaching children” (p. 43). According to Knowles (1984), adults have greater self-direction and deeper level of experience than children when performing a task or solving a problem. As highlighted by Merriam and Bierema (2014), andragogy is useful to “professionalize” (p. 46) the area of adult education by establishing knowledge of learning that is unique to adult learners. The authors summarised andragogy as follows:

Andragogy as promoted by Knowles is considered the first systematic formulation laying out the differences between children and adult learners. Andragogy contributed to the development of the field of adult education at a time when adult educators were struggling to establish their own identity separate from childhood education. (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 46)

In the beginning, Knowles (1980) presented four core assumptions of andragogy. However, over the years, he refined his ideas and expanded the four initial assumptions to six assumptions of andragogy that provide the foundation for planning adult learning experiences:

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it;
2. The self-concept of adults is heavily dependent upon a move toward self-direction;
3. Prior experiences of the learner provide a rich resource for learning;
4. Adults typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with a life situation or perform a task;
5. Adults' orientation to learning is life-centred, and they see education as a process of developing increased competency levels to achieve their full potential;
6. The motivation for adult learners is internal rather than external. (Holton et al., 2001, p. 120)

In a pedagogical model, the teacher is responsible for determining, organising, delivering, and evaluating the content. On the other hand, in an andragogical model, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator. This means the facilitator sets a climate for learning that physically and psychologically respects adult learners and involves the learners in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of their own learning (Knowles, 1984). Despite the fact that andragogy is often criticized due to its focus only on the individual, it is a transactional model of adult learning that is proposed to transcend specific applications and situations (Holton et al., 2001; Knowles, 1984).

In defence of the andragogical theory, Knowles et al. (1998) proposed the *Andragogy in practice* model (see Figure 2.3) which is depicted as an enhanced conceptual framework to apply andragogy more systematically across multiple domains of adult learning practice. There are three dimensions of the andragogy in practice model including (1) goals and purposes for learning, (2) individual and situational differences, and (3) andragogy: core adult learning principles.

Figure 2.3

Andragogy in practice model (Knowles et al., 1998, p. 149)

This approach conceptually combines the additional learning influences with the core adult learning principles. The three rings of the model interact and provide a three-dimensional process for understanding adult learning situations. The result is a model that recognizes the lack of homogeneity among learners and learning situations, and illustrates that the learning transaction is a multifaceted activity. Holton et al. (2001) argued that

this approach is entirely consistent with most of the professional development literature in adult education that in some manner incorporates contextual analysis as one step in developing programmes.

Over the years, many researchers and scholars have applied the principles of andragogy in the field of education. In particular, Lawler and King (2000) stated that employing the lens of adult education could be helpful in addressing academic staff development issues and concerns. Drawing from theory, practice, and research into adult learning, these authors proposed a four-stage model including preplanning, planning, delivery, and follow-up with an aim of framing and directing faculty development in higher education from an adult learning perspective. In each stage, specific questions and tasks were raised, and the criteria of respect, collaboration, experience, action, and participation were also integrated. This model provides PD planners and academic managers with an organised and strategic framework to plan and deliver faculty development initiatives.

In America, Zepeda et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative case study to explore on-going principal PD practices in four school systems of Georgia. There was a total of 20 interview participants consisting of superintendent, assistant or deputy superintendent, director of human resources, and principals. The findings presented nine key practices for effective PD for principals, including (1) connecting PD to career development, (2) individualizing PD, (3) engaging multiple sources of PD, (4) adapting, not adopting, externally provided PD, (5) aligning and focusing PD, (6) ensuring on-going scheduled PD, (7) encouraging mentoring relations, (8) providing data-informed and job-embedded PD, and (9) strategic planning of principal PD. It was found that these practices reflected certain characteristics of adult learning such as being problem centred, relevancy oriented, and goal oriented, but they were infrequently self-directed. By applying adult learning theory, the findings from this study provide implications for policy, practice, and future research in relation to PD.

In China, Wang and Storey (2015) undertook a quantitative research project to investigate the extent to which the Western theory of andragogy as an alternative teaching methodology was being practised in teaching EFL. In this research, respondents were 148 EFL teachers who taught in the schools of English studies at the eight Chinese universities of foreign languages. The researchers explained that “andragogy is characterised by

student-centred learning because adult learners are believed to be self-directed. Because these adult learners are self-directed, teachers have to assume the role of being learning facilitators” (p. 299). The findings showed that Chinese teachers of English applied andragogy in their teaching such as personalising instruction, evaluating student needs, and building a positive learning climate. Nevertheless, these teachers put more focus on a teacher-centred methodology than the student-centred one and considered themselves as knowledge providers rather than resource people.

In South Korea, Lee (2016) applied andragogy theory to explore EFL educators’ perceptions of their PD needs and the effectiveness of their PD opportunities in Christian universities. The survey questionnaire was delivered to 520 full-time EFL teachers in 31 Christian universities and 11 Bible colleges. Through the results, the researcher raised several practical suggestions such as developing and providing teachers with a variety of PD programme content and schedules, and implementing instructional methods based on the needs of particular groups of EFL teachers; following learner-centred and active-learning instructional methods in PD programmes; providing PD programmes that are relevant to practical issues, and improving the quality of the programmes; and decreasing teachers’ workload and enhancing institutional support to promote the EFL teachers’ PD. Lee argued that these results could be used to organise future PD initiatives that could meet the higher needs of EFL teachers.

Overall, these illustrative studies have signified that the core principles of andragogy could be applied to investigate and understand teachers’ PD in different educational settings. For instance, through the studies of Wang and Storey (2015) and Lee (2016), it was found that andragogy could be employed in the Chinese and South Korean educational contexts which were greatly affected by Confucianism. As stated by Merriam and Bierema (2014), because of its validity in identifying adult learner characteristics, andragogy is well received by educators and trainers of adults in all forms of instructional settings. In addition, Díaz-Maggioli (2003) suggested “in order for PD to be successful, it must be in line with research on teachers’ career development and patterns of adult learning” (p. 3). Similarly, Kessels (2015) also argued that the main emphasis of PD is to help adults learn and develop, create supportive conditions for learning and development in a work environment as well as their individual lives.

Although many studies have revealed that the effectiveness of PD within the field of adult education could be improved dramatically through applying principles of andragogy, there have been few studies using these principles to investigate EFL lecturers' PD experiences in Vietnam. My study conceptualises PD initiatives as adult education and EFL lecturers as adult learners who are autonomous, able to identify their needs for PD, self-directed, self-motivated, self-oriented, and have accumulated different kinds of individual and professional experiences. Thus, by drawing on andragogy theory, my study may contribute to understandings of EFL lecturers' PD experiences within a Vietnamese university setting. My research, grounded in andragogy theory, may also result in an in-depth understanding of the ways to design effective PD activities for EFL lecturers.

In summary, Kessels (2015) stated that "in most countries the concept [of andragogy] is closely related to adult learning and the academic support for PD in the domain of adult education and lifelong learning" (p. 5). As a result, combining ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) with andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980) conforms well to my research purposes in order to examine the lived PD experiences of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers. These two theoretical frameworks are complementary because the ecological systems theory serves to capture the contextual factors that impact lecturers' experiences of PD while the andragogy theory helps explain the individual lecturers' motivation for their engagement in PD activities.

2.6. Research gaps and questions

Despite the fact that PD is regarded as an important activity under the educational reforms setting in Vietnam, there is a substantial gap in understanding how it currently functions and could potentially function within a tertiary education system. In order to reach that understanding, I have chosen to capture the lived experiences of EFL lecturers and academic managers in one large university through undertaking research based on a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology has not been a common approach to explore PD, and my study aims to apply this approach in order to gain deeper insights into the PD experiences of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers. Grounded in the integration of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and andragogy theory (Knowles,

1980), an in-depth investigation of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD, particularly, the influence of contextual factors on their PD experiences, would help policymakers, PD planners, and academic managers to understand how to best meet lecturers' needs for PD. Based on the findings, my study is intended to propose an integrated framework of effective PD, drawing on the contextual influences identified from the PD experiences of EFL lecturers. The ultimate aim is to contribute to the building of quality of ELT in Vietnam. To achieve these aims, the following central research question and two sub-research questions were developed:

How do EFL lecturers in one Vietnamese university reflect on their PD experiences?

1. What lived experiences of PD do lecturers report?
2. How do individual lecturers perceive that contextual factors impact their PD experiences?

2.7. Summary

Overall, this chapter has examined existing scholarly work concerning theoretical and empirical studies relevant to the foci of my research. Discussion of theoretical approaches to teachers' PD experiences and contextual influences on teachers' PD established the conceptual frameworks underpinning my research. The review of empirical literature reveals that little research has been undertaken focusing on, first, the PD experiences of tertiary lecturers in the field of ELT, and second, the influence of the contextual factors on lecturers' PD experiences. Thus, my research proposes to address the gaps not previously concentrated on in research in the field of teachers' PD and ELT. The following chapter presents the research methodology utilised in this study.

3.1. Introduction

To explore and understand the meaning of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD, phenomenology was selected as the research methodology for the present study. This chapter begins by introducing qualitative research, phenomenology, and transcendental phenomenology. In the following sections, the research setting, participant selection, the researcher role, data collection, and data analysis are explained. The issues related to strategies for validating findings are also discussed. Finally, a description of ethical considerations is provided.

3.2. Qualitative research

“Qualitative research is a powerful research approach with the potential to achieve even more than it has to date” (Newby, 2014, p. 132). This kind of research focuses on understanding a social setting or activity as perceived from the perspective of the research participants. Since the aim of this research was to discover how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers experienced PD, a qualitative study within the interpretative paradigm was the most appropriate design. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), there are four key interpretive paradigms which structure qualitative research including postpositivism, social constructivism or interpretivism, critical theory, and pragmatism (p. 42). In particular, Grbich (2013) explained that in constructivism or interpretivism:

The research focus is on exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments have impacted on constructed understanding. (p. 7)

Because the emphasis of my study was on the lived PD experiences of tertiary EFL lecturers and the influence of contextual factors on their PD experiences, instead of exploring ideas and concepts about how the world really is, I used a qualitative approach involved with how people experience the world. As a result, this research approach sits within the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm. The qualitative approach also fits well

with the use of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) to investigate EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD.

More particularly, qualitative research is usually employed when little is known about a topic or phenomenon and when the researcher wants to discover or learn more about it. Therefore, it is popularly used to understand people's experiences and to express their perspectives. Ravitch and Carl (2016) clearly explained as follows:

Within qualitative research, people's experiences and perspectives are deeply embedded in the contexts that shape their lives, and how people experience aspects of their lives and the world is subjective and can change over time. Qualitative researchers are precisely interested in people's subjective interpretations of their experiences, events, and other inquiry domains. (p. 9)

Creswell and Poth (2018) introduced nine characteristics of qualitative research. The first characteristic is natural setting. This means that data are collected in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Second, data in a qualitative study are gathered by the researcher themselves instead of using or relying on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. Third, qualitative researchers usually collect data from diverse sources such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than relying on a single data source. Fourth, data in qualitative inquiry are analysed inductively and deductively. Fifth, participants' meanings are mainly focused on instead of researchers' or writers' meanings. Therefore, a theme developed in the findings should report multiple perspectives of the respondents. Context-dependent is considered as the sixth characteristic of qualitative study. It means that the research is implemented within the context or setting of participants or sites so that the researcher can understand contextual features and their influence on participants' experiences. The seventh feature is the emergent design of qualitative research, which means this design can be changed during the research process. Reflexivity is the eighth characteristic. In qualitative research, the inquirers "position themselves" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44) through describing their background (e.g., work experiences, cultural experiences, and history) in an introduction, or in other places in a study. Finally, holistic account is the ninth characteristic of a qualitative study because the inquirer aims to build a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This consists of reporting different

viewpoints, determining the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. In short, a qualitative design is the most relevant to my research because I can apply these characteristics in order to uncover the Vietnamese EFL lecturers' experiences of PD and the contextual influences on their PD experiences.

3.3. Phenomenology

Cypress (2018) advised that to achieve the goals and objectives of a qualitative research project, one important concern in planning this kind of inquiry is that the researcher should decide on the methods beforehand, instead of developing and adjusting these during the process. In this study, a phenomenological research methodology was chosen to explore and understand in depth the phenomenon of tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences.

As highlighted by Adams and van Manen (2008), phenomenological inquiries have become captivating as “they offer an alternative to managerial, instrumental, and technological ways of understanding knowledge, and they lead to more ethically and experientially sensitive epistemologies and ontologies of practice” (p. 617). Additionally, phenomenology is an approach that seeks to understand the hidden meanings and the nature of an experience together with how participants make sense of these (Grbich, 2013). Similarly, Creswell (2013) argued that phenomenological research delineates the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

Wilson (2015) pointed out four advantages of phenomenology including (1) understanding, (2) uncovering, (3) explication, and (4) empowerment. Understanding means that phenomenology unfolds the deeper human aspects of a phenomenon, seeks to explore what the actual experience is, what it means to individuals, and what the personal implications are. Therefore, the phenomenological approach can have the ability to understand lived experience in a way that other approaches may not. Uncovering is viewed as the second benefit because when implementing a phenomenological approach, the researchers should examine phenomena that may be covered up by their personal and theoretical assumptions. As a result, it is necessary for the researchers to clear a path to the world of immediate experience through bracketing. In particular, bracketing is defined by Johnson and Christensen (2014) as “suspending [researchers'] preconceptions or

learned feelings about a phenomenon to experience its essence” (p. 445) (see further discussion on the concept of bracketing in Section 3.4 below). Explication is judged as the third advantage for phenomenology as this approach aims to explain experiences that may be ordinary but not well understood. Finally, the fourth benefit, empowerment, means that phenomenology empowers people and fosters understanding of others by allowing the lived experience to be experienced vicariously.

Although there are numerous schools of phenomenology, Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004), Dowling and Cooney (2012), and Grbich (2013) have argued that transcendental (descriptive) phenomenology and hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology are the two main approaches that have been used popularly and intensely among scholars and researchers around the world.

In their article, Wojnar and Swanson (2007, p. 176) clearly identified many differences between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology as shown in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1

Differences between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology

Transcendental/descriptive phenomenology	Hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology
1. The emphasis is on describing universal essences	1. The emphasis is on understanding the phenomena in context
2. Viewing a person as one representative of the world in which he or she lives	2. Viewing a person as a self-interpretive being
3. A belief that the consciousness is what humans share	3. A belief that the contexts of culture, practice, and language are what humans share
4. Self-reflection and conscious “stripping” of previous knowledge help to present an investigator-free description of the phenomenon	4. As prereflexive beings, researchers actively co-create interpretations of phenomenon
5. Adherence to established scientific rigor ensures description of universal essences or eidetic structures	5. One needs to establish contextual criteria for trustworthiness of co-created interpretations
6. Bracketing ensures that interpretation is free of bias	6. Understanding and co-creation by the researcher and the participants are what makes interpretations meaningful

Note. From “Phenomenology: An exploration,” by Wojnar, D. and Swanson, K., 2007, *Journal of*

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Matua and Wal (2015) commented that transcendental phenomenology is used to illuminate poorly understood aspects of experiences while hermeneutic phenomenology is employed to investigate the contextual features of an experience in relation to other influences on people or groups experiencing the phenomenon. Valentine et al. (2018) pointed out that phenomena in transcendental phenomenology are best viewed through the common ways that people describe their experience. In contrast, phenomena in hermeneutic phenomenology are considered as embodied, as well as historically and culturally situated. Thus, a shared or common meaning for the participants is regarded as the basis of transcendental phenomenology. In general, both transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenological approaches have a shared history and focus on lived experience but there are several differences among them such as the research's focus, goal, and outcome.

Although there are some overlaps between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology, overall, transcendental phenomenology was chosen as a better fit for my research, which aims to develop an understanding of the meaning of the tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD. More specifically, I selected transcendental phenomenology as defined by Moustakas (1994) as the appropriate methodology because this approach puts more focus on a description of the experiences of the participants than the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, it is useful for describing the phenomenon of PD grounded in the EFL lecturers' experiences.

3.4. Transcendental phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology aims to acquire and gather data that explicates the essence of human experience. This research approach is usually employed to describe the phenomenon using the participants' experiences, voices, and perceptions. Moustakas (1994) conceptualised transcendental phenomenology as follows:

Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgement, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience. (p. 41)

In support of Moustakas (1994), Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) stated a transcendental approach brings “logical, systematic, and coherent design elements that lead to an essential description of the experience” (p. 19). The authors clarified that transcendental phenomenology enables researchers to develop an objective “essence” (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 32) through accumulating the subjective experiences of several participants. Thus, it is an appropriate approach to use when researchers have identified a phenomenon to investigate and have participants who are willing to describe what they have experienced. Wojnar and Swanson (2007) also confirmed that transcendental phenomenology is both a complicated philosophical tradition and a method of research. It investigates phenomena through direct interaction between the researcher and the objects of study. It requires researchers to set aside their preconceptions through the procedures involved in bracketing.

To deeply understand the phenomenological philosophy, it is necessary to examine some main concepts of transcendental phenomenology such as *lived experience*, *epoché* or *bracketing*, and *co-researchers*.

Lived experience

The purpose of phenomenological research is to explore the lived experience of participants as a phenomenon, so lived experience is an important notion in phenomenology. Adams and van Manen (2008) reported that this term derived from the German *erlebnis* referring to experience as we live through it and recognise it as a specific type of experience. The authors stated that phenomenology explores how the human being experiences the world, thus every lived experience (phenomenon) can become a subject for phenomenological research. van Manen (2017) clearly explicated the term *lived experience* in this way:

It equates with living-through, prereflective, prepredicative, nonreflective, or atheoretical experience while realising that we cannot simply access the living meaning of lived experiences through introspective reflection. As soon as we turn to reflect on an experience that we have in this very moment, we inevitably immediately have stepped away from or out of the living sphere or sensibility of the livedness of lived experience. (p. 812)

In their article, Pelin and Soner (2015) summarized a comparison that was introduced by van Manen (1990) to illustrate the nature of the lived experience in phenomenological research. On the first day of her career, teacher A who has no experience has different teaching experiences from teacher B who has ten years of experience. The junior teacher continually perceives her own experience on the first day of school and feels the glance of the students, but the senior teacher is unconscious of the students' presence during the lecture because she is familiar with lecturing and conducts herself more spontaneously. This comparison presenting differences between two teachers' experiences in the same event demonstrates a lived experience. As a result, the authors suggested that phenomenological research should begin and end with lived experience.

Epoché or bracketing

Epoché is a Greek word meaning to refrain or stay away from judgment. Moustakas (1994) defined *epoché* as “a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (p. 34). The author suggested that the researcher should implement this process at the beginning of the study so that he/she can bracket out his/her views of the phenomenon and focus on those views reported by the participants. The purpose of this step is to remain open to the data collected from the participants.

Connelly (2010) argued that bracketing is one of the distinctions between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenologists do not accept that presuppositions or biases can set aside because they are a part of the person; in transcendental phenomenology, researchers attempt to bracket or put aside these ideas so that they do not influence the study. According to Pelin and Soner (2015), in order to avoid prejudgments, *epoché* requires a new point of view when the researcher deals with the familiar object. This explains the reason why phenomenological studies make no assumptions or hypotheses in comparison to quantitative research.

However, Moustakas (1994) also recognised that the *epoché* process is seldom perfectly achieved. In the same manner, Creswell and Poth (2018) thought that bracketing may be challenging for researchers to carry out, so it is essential that they determine how and in what way their personal understandings will be introduced into the research. The

authors also suggested that researchers can begin their research by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their view before starting with the experiences of the participants.

Co-researchers

As argued by Moustakas (1994), in transcendental phenomenology, the participants are considered as *co-researchers*. The co-researchers' roles are to answer the research questions based on their experiences and narratives. Although the co-researchers do not participate in the study with regards to data collection and analysis, the nature of the phenomena is obtained from their perceptions and experiences. The researchers have an obligation to inform the co-researchers about their roles and to create the textural, structural, and textural-structural descriptions without including the researchers' subjectivity. Therefore, the researchers do not need to provide their own explanation and judgement in analysing data for transcendental phenomenology. In the section on Participant Selection (Section 3.6), I will explain in more detail how the co-researchers for this study were chosen.

To implement a transcendental phenomenological study, Moustakas (1994) suggested the following steps including determining a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from some participants who have experienced the phenomenon. After that, data are analysed by reducing the information to significant statements and merging them into themes. Then a textural description of the experiences (what participants experienced) and a structural description of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context) are developed. Finally, the researcher establishes a synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions to delineate an overall essence of the experience.

The following studies are illustrative examples of transcendental phenomenological research that have been undertaken within higher education contexts. Cordes' (2014) project explored struggling students' experiences and perceptions of developmental math courses. Drawing on Moustakas' (1994) transcendental approach, the researcher interviewed 13 students who did not meet the university's standard of passing a developmental math course. After that, she employed the phenomenological analysis steps proposed by Moustakas to present the findings. The results reported themes of isolation, self-doubt, and negative attitudes towards developmental math, success

clouded by an inability to progress, fixed mindset, experiences with teachers, expected placement, good placement, desire for change, overall positive experience with staff, and change in math confidence.

In Vietnam, Phuong and McLean (2016) carried out a phenomenological study to obtain insights into the experiences of Vietnamese faculties in their faculty development (FD). Nine faculties were invited to take part in interviews as part of this research. Four themes were presented in the findings including faculties' perceptions of their roles, FD activity participation, factors affecting their FD, and FD desires.

In summary, transcendental phenomenology is a relevant methodology for investigating my research questions as the use of this approach will result in rich descriptions of lived PD experiences from tertiary EFL lecturers. The number of studies utilising a phenomenological approach to explore EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD in Vietnamese educational contexts has been very limited (Phuong & McLean, 2016). As a result, my research employing this approach adds a further dimension in building a knowledge base in the field of EFL education.

3.5. Setting

This study was implemented at Star University, a public university administered by the Vietnamese MOET. At the time of this study, Star University had a total number of more than 1,000 full-time lecturers including 1.1% of professors, 12.3% of associate professors, 25.6% of lecturers with a doctoral degree, 59.3% of lecturers with a master's degree, and 1.7% lecturers with a bachelor's degree. The university offered programmes across a wide range of disciplines at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral level (Star University, 2019c). It is a large-sized university within Vietnam and plays a leading role in the social and economic developments of its region.

Of particular relevance to this research, under the Project 2020 initiative, Star University had been assigned by the MOET as one of the six regional foreign language centres responsible for cooperating with their provincial departments of education and training in their region in order to train EFL schoolteachers to upgrade their language proficiency and professional skills (Hashimoto & Nguyen, 2018). As a result, EFL lecturers from this university had delivered diverse courses of PD to EFL school teachers from different provinces in the region.

School A of Star University had been responsible for teaching English language to both majored and non-majored students from different degree levels. At the time of data collection, School A had 58 EFL lecturers and ran three undergraduate programmes (English teacher education, English interpretation and translation, and English language and culture), and one master's programme (Principles and methods in English language education). There had been a total of 1,850 students enrolled in the formal undergraduate programmes, 1,500 students participated in the in-service undergraduate programmes, and 196 students undertook the formal master's programme (School A, 2018).

As part of Project 2020, School A's lecturers had also played the role of teacher educators or master trainers because they had been responsible for training EFL teachers from the wider region. Additionally, School A had implemented many collaborative projects and exchange programmes with many foreign institutions from America, Australia, Belgium, France, Korea, and Thailand in order to enhance the quality of language teaching and learning. In the previous five years, following the requirements from the national education reforms and Project 2020, School A's lecturers had attended many various forms of PD activities organized by the university and some external organisations such as Developing educational professionals in Southeast Asia (DEPISA) and Fulbright (School A, 2018).

Overall, these characteristics and PD activities of the setting made it an appropriate one within which to undertake my research.

3.6. Participant selection

This research recruited participants or co-researchers through purposeful sampling. This means that respondents are selected because of particular features or characteristics that can relate to behaviours, roles, and characteristics (Davies, 2016). Saldaña and Omasta (2018) further explained that participants in qualitative research should be intentionally selected through purposive sampling because they can provide deep understanding of the phenomenon being investigated due to their position, experience, and/or identity markers.

Wilson (2015) advised that participants in a phenomenological study should be fascinated in and committed to investigating their lived experiences. Similarly, Brisola and Cury (2016) commented that in phenomenological research, the participant selection is very important because the participants are few in number (ranging from 10 to 15

participants). The authors also proposed that the participants should have an individual experience of the phenomenon and be enthusiastic about taking part in interviews with the inquirer in a way that allows an encounter between them, not simply a collection of data or exchange of information.

To select the participants for this study, I established four criteria. First of all, the participants must be willing to take part in the research interviews voluntarily. Secondly, the participants should hold at least a bachelor's degree in English language teaching or English language education accredited by the Vietnamese MOET. Thirdly, the participants must be employed as a full-time EFL lecturer at Star University. Finally, the participants should have gained at least three years of teaching experience as a university lecturer. According to Cilesiz (2011), in a phenomenology study, a relatively homogenous group of participants should be chosen to identify and delineate a shared essence of experiences within a particular group.

To find potential participants, I emailed the Dean from School A to ask for his recommendations as well as to gain his permission for EFL lecturers to take part in the study (see Appendix A and B). After receiving suggestions from this academic manager, an information letter (see Appendix C) and consent form (see Appendix D) were emailed to the potential participants so that they could determine if they were willing to participate in the research. A total of 16 participants from a Vietnamese university were selected to participate in this research. There were five males and 11 females.

More specifically, the study recruited 12 EFL lecturers from three departments (Alpha, Beta, and Gamma) within the School A. In addition, four academic managers were invited to take part in the study. The inclusion of the four academic managers was considered important in collecting multiple perspectives on the PD experiences. Together with their management duties, these participating managers were also responsible for teaching different courses of EFL and developing PD programs. There were 10 participants with a master's degree and six participants with a doctoral degree. In order to investigate lecturers' lived experiences of PD at different career stages, I also recruited the participants from three different groups based on their years of teaching experience: four *beginning* lecturers (1-5 years teaching), six *midcareer* lecturers (6-20 years teaching), and six *late-career* lecturers (20+ years teaching).

3.7. The role of the researcher

In this transcendental phenomenological research, I was the primary researcher and the participants were considered as co-researchers. Since the goal of the primary researcher was to make the co-researchers aware of their position and role, before starting this research, I clearly informed the co-researchers about the research objectives and questions so that they could decide whether they were willing to take part in the study.

As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2014), a fundamental aspect of phenomenological research is that the researcher seeks to understand how participants experience a phenomenon from each individual's perspective. Thus, my goal was to penetrate the inner world of each co-researcher to understand his or her viewpoint and experience of PD. Pelin and Soner (2015) also suggested that the researcher should inspire the co-researchers to be open and provide in-depth data about their own experiences. With this in mind, I interviewed the co-researchers about their experiences with an intention to seek answers for the research questions.

Moustakas (1994) recommended that when doing transcendental phenomenological analysis, researchers should bracket their preconceptions of the phenomenon in order to answer the research questions from the viewpoint of the co-researchers. The aim of this process is to remain open to the data collected from the interviewees. In this research, before starting my phenomenological data analysis, I bracketed out my presuppositions through a complete description of my own PD experiences which is presented in the form of a personal biography in Section 3.7.1. Through this step, I could open myself up to new opinions and consciousness.

The focus of this phenomenological research is the EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD, not my interpretation of the experiences. Nevertheless, because I am the human instrument, all writings are affected by my past experiences of PD and personal viewpoints, except for Chapter Six which reports the research findings from interviews by using the participating lecturers' points of view. As the researcher, I can engage with my research topic through my own experiences and the experiences of the participants who have experienced the same phenomenon.

3.7.1. Personal biography

I obtained a bachelor's degree in English Language from a Vietnamese university in 2005, and a master's degree in Information Sciences from an American university in 2008. Five years later, I received another master's degree in Principles and Methods in English Language Education from a Vietnamese university in 2013. Before starting my Ph.D. study in Education at VUW in 2017, I had worked as a full-time lecturer teaching English and Information Sciences in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities in the same university as the research's participants for more than 12 years.

As a university lecturer, I am always aware of the importance of life-long learning in order to improve my professional qualifications, develop my teaching position, and more importantly, meet the ever-changing requirements from the national education reforms and the institution. Luckily, during more than 12 years of my teaching career, I have received many favourable conditions and valuable support to undertake higher education through the Vietnamese government, my university, and some external organisations including the Atlantic Philanthropies of America and VUW, New Zealand.

In the last 12 years, I have also gained numerous opportunities to attend many different kinds of PD activities such as conferences, seminars, workshops, and short and long-term training courses. I also engaged in one project at the national level entitled *Online health information access and use: Intensive national level, health sector capacity development and training programme, Vietnam 2009-2011*. All of these PD activities occurred in different universities throughout Vietnam and in other foreign institutions in America, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, and Thailand.

In addition, since I highly value the effectiveness of self-study, I often learn by myself through educational websites and webinars and read online journal articles via educational databases. For example, in 2012, I had an opportunity to enrol in a ten-week online teacher training course named *English for specific purposes, best practices courses, and materials* sponsored by the United States of America embassy and consulate in Vietnam and run by the University of Oregon. Whenever having free time, I also practise and take IELTS tests in order to improve and update my English language proficiency.

I also cooperated with some senior lecturers in my school to develop textbooks and teaching materials on English for Specific Purposes and Information Sciences. I believe that receiving collegial support and collaborating with other colleagues are very helpful to my career development. Thanks to these activities, I have gained more valuable professional experiences and feedback from other co-workers.

In general, I am particularly satisfied with the PD opportunities delivered by my institution and other external organisations. All PD activities that I have attended since the beginning of my teaching career have provided me with professional knowledge and skills and contributed a great deal to my experiences of PD. I personally think that although the MOET and the university have implemented many PD initiatives in recent years, lecturers themselves should be proactive and acknowledge the importance of PD in their career so that they can propose specific strategic plans for their professional growth.

From my own viewpoint, PD activities not only bring many advantages to individual lecturers such as improving professional qualifications, considerable expertise, and financial gains, but these opportunities also benefit the institution by enhancing its academic prestige as well as its educational qualities and values. However, in the past few years, most PD activities in my institution and my country have followed a top-down approach because they were largely built on the academic managers' point of views rather than responding to lecturers' real needs. I strongly believe that in order to be effective, PD should integrate both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Overall, I highly value self-study, collaboration, and institutional support in my career development. Although influenced by my own experiences of PD, I use this process of bracketing to try and build some distance from my own experiences in order to be more open to the participants' experiences.

3.8. Data collection

Cypress (2018) suggested that in qualitative research the forms of data collection activities should be identified from the beginning. This research employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to qualitative study. Phenomenological interviews (human source instrument) were used to collect data regarding the EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD, and document analysis (non-human source

instrument) was employed to collect complementary background information concerning the contexts within which the participants experienced PD.

3.8.1. Phenomenological interviews

In this study, phenomenological interviews were chosen as the main source of data collection. According to Cypress (2018), phenomenological interviewing is an informal interactive process in order to obtain an individual comprehensive description of a lived experience of a phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it. Vagle (2014) explained that as phenomenological research is not experimental, comparative, or correlational, it is not necessary to ask the same questions in the same ways in all interviews. They can be adapted and changed differently and considered as intriguing opportunities for the researcher to learn about the phenomenon.

Compared to other types of interviews, Moustakas (1990) indicated two specific purposes of phenomenological interviews: (1) exploring and collecting experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon, and (2) developing a conversational relation with interviewees about the meaning of an experience. As suggested by Moustakas (1994), in phenomenological interviews, the participants should be asked two broad and general questions including *What have they experienced in terms of the phenomenon?* and *What situations or contexts have typically influenced their experiences of the phenomenon?* Moustakas explained that, although other open-ended questions may also be used, these two, specifically, focus on collecting data that will ultimately provide an understanding of the common experiences of the participants. In this study, EFL lecturers are individuals with unique PD experiences and educational backgrounds. Therefore, my goal of using phenomenological interviews was to find out as much as I could about the phenomenon from each participant.

Interview questions were developed with the aim of framing the topics related to the research objectives drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory, as well as Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology methodology. More details on how these theories influenced the design of interview questions and data analysis will be elaborated on in Section 3.9.1. The interviews, including 29 open-ended questions, were led by the researcher, who added or excluded questions, depending on how the discussion developed. Each interview lasted

from one hour to one and a half hours. This research included two versions of interview protocols: one for the EFL lecturers (see Appendix E) and the other for the academic managers (see Appendix F). Both versions were divided into two main parts and differed in Part Two.

As advised by Saldaña and Omasta (2018), researchers should start an interview with simpler questions to accustom the participant to the interview and build rapport with the interviewer before going through more complicated and detailed questions. Wilson (2015) also suggested that “Research using phenomenology should start with curiosity about what it is like for a person to have a particular experience. This curiosity will drive the investigation and help the researcher to stay focused” (p. 41).

Part One of the two interview protocols consisted of five items dealing with background information: job position, workplace, educational background, years of work experience, and the English courses that participants usually taught. Part Two of the interview protocol for EFL lecturers included 24 open-ended questions in relation to PD experiences and contextual influences. The aim of this part was to inspire the participants to reflect on the meaning of their PD experiences and encourage them to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the contexts in which it happened. Part Two of the interview protocol for academic managers was made up of 24 open-ended questions aiming to elicit further information on the academic managers’ thoughts of their teaching staff’s experiences of PD as well as contextual influences.

As stated by Atkins and Wallace (2012), doing pilot interviews can be considered as an important developmental experience for the researcher. In the same vein, Creswell (1998) claims that the researcher should engage in a small pilot qualitative project to see whether he or she is at ease with the ambiguity and decision-making processes involved in a study.

Prior to undertaking the interviews with the participants in Vietnam, four pilot interviews were carried out at the School of Education of VUW in February 2018. The interviewees were Ph.D. and master’s students who were EFL lecturers from Vietnam. These pilot interviews provided me with a chance to examine the interview protocol so that suitable adjustments or alternatives were made. In addition, thanks to these pilot interviews, I had opportunities to practise face-to-face interviewing in order to improve my interview skills and identify potential problems.

Following the pilot interviews, data collection was conducted at Star University in Vietnam from April to September 2018. All interviews took place at the participants' office or in a coffee shop in their free time. To avoid misunderstandings, all interviews were carried out in Vietnamese and were audio recorded. During the interviews, I took notes and then transcribed the interview files verbatim. I also read each transcript and asked the participants to review the transcripts after their interview, as a member check, to confirm that they were complete and accurate. I will explain member checking in more detail in Section 3.10 on trustworthiness. After coding, I translated significant statements into English and created main themes. Finally, a translation check was undertaken by another senior English lecturer.

3.8.2. Document analysis

This study used analysis of national and institutional documents in order to better understand the contexts within which my participants experienced PD. Smith and Bowers-Brown (2016) argued that document analysis is the systematic scrutiny of the content of documents to identify patterns of change or development on specific issues.

As emphasized by Merriam (2009), stability is one of the most significant advantages of utilising documentary material. Ravitch and Carl (2016) recommended that it is necessary for a researcher to invest substantial time to identify, gather, arrange, review, and analyse all relevant documents that contextualize and link with the phenomenon under study and the context more broadly because the review and triangulation of these documents in relation to primary empirical data is useful to understanding the context within which the research occurs.

Analysing different kinds of documents could help me uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover information. Consequently, the influence of the contextual factors on lecturers' PD experiences could be analysed specifically. Some public documents at the national level such as Decision No.1400/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the project entitled *Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020* were retrieved online via the website of the Vietnamese government and MOET. Other institutional documents (e.g., the university annual reports, statistics, decisions, and the school reports) easily accessible by staff within the university were collected from the university website and the school administrator at the

research site. Specific detail on the processes used to analyse relevant documents is provided in Section 3.9.2.

3.9. Data analysis

Qualitative research is different from other types of research because there is no separation of data collection and data analysis (Gibbs, 2007). In this study, data collection and analysis were undertaken concurrently.

As explained by Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative data analysis refers to the procedures that investigators use to “make sense of their data” (p. 216). It consists of different structured stages for looking across data sets to determine and formulate analytic themes. Then, these themes are transferred into what are frequently considered as “findings” that help the researcher answer research questions.

However, Finlay (2011) remarked that in phenomenological research, data analysis differs in line with the phenomenological approach employed. It also depends on the type of data collected, the researcher’s own predispositions, and what is required of them by others. van Manen (2017) proposed that “phenomenological inquiry proceeds through an inceptual process of reflective wondering, deep questioning, attentive reminiscing, and sensitively interpreting the primal meanings of human experiences” (p. 819).

3.9.1. Interviews

As stated earlier, this research analysed data collected through the interviews by following the steps in phenomenological data analysis provided by Moustakas (1994). In previous studies, Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004), Cilesiz (2011), Cordes (2014), and Pelin and Soner (2015) agreed that Moustakas’ data analysis approach is systematic, detailed, and rigorous in analysing data about lived experiences.

First, I read and reread the interview transcripts to draw out *significant statements* that gave in-depth information about how the participants experienced the PD phenomenon. Sub-themes emerged from the data such as formal PD, JEPD, student outcomes, managerial and collegial support, occupational prestige, personal responsibility, and time constraints.

Second, I grouped these significant statements into *themes*. These themes supplied the foundation for interpretation. The eight themes were underpinned by the theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Knowles (1980) and addressed the one central research question and two sub-research questions (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Examples of significant statements and themes

Significant statements	Themes
<i>Every academic year, I participate in more than seven workshops and conferences organized by my university. I always partake in workshops or conferences run by other organisations if I have a chance [Bich/Interview02].</i>	Types of PD
<i>I enjoy engaging in PD activities because they have greatly influenced my teaching.... Through PD activities, lecturers can sometimes get together to exchange information and rekindle motivation. This can make their teaching more effective and interesting [Thanh/Interview14].</i>	EFL lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD
<i>I have some colleagues who are very good at doing research. When looking at their accomplishments, I am self-motivated to undertake my own research projects [Hoa/Interview04].</i>	Individual influences

Third, I developed a description of “what” the participants experienced, named a *composite textural description*, by employing these significant statements and themes. Moreover, a description of the context or setting that affected “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon, called a *composite structural description*, was developed in this step.

Finally, based on the composite textural and structural descriptions, I developed the compound description that shows the essence of the phenomenon, named *the textural-structural synthesis*. It concentrates on the common experiences of the participants. Figure 3.1 presents the steps of phenomenological data analysis proposed by Moustakas (1994) and which were followed in this research.

Figure 3.1

Moustakas' (1994) steps of phenomenological data analysis

NVivo 12 was used to code the data by category. I built the sub-categories and categories under the tree nodes. These coding categories assisted me to view, identify, and review the coded data at the nodes. Figure 3.2 shows an example of NVivo coding of interview responses.

Figure 3.2

An example of NVivo coding

Name	Files	References	Created On
2. EFL LECTURERS' EXPERIENCES OF PD		0	25/10/2018 1:57 PM
Frequency of Lecturers' Participation in PD		1	25/10/2018 2:38 PM
1. Frequently		7	25/10/2018 4:11 PM
2. Sometimes		3	25/10/2018 4:11 PM
3. Seldom or Rarely		3	25/10/2018 4:11 PM
4. Never		0	25/10/2018 4:11 PM
Lecturers' Perceived Benefits of PD		0	26/10/2018 7:49 AM
Developing information resources		2	31/10/2018 8:18 AM
Enhancing teaching quality and prestige		11	26/10/2018 1:39 PM
Enlarging professional network		5	26/10/2018 1:42 PM
Getting financial benefits and incentives		3	30/10/2018 9:56 AM
Improving research skills		7	29/10/2018 7:56 AM
Improving students' outcomes		4	29/10/2018 8:15 AM
Increasing self-motivation		5	26/10/2018 1:41 PM
Learning from thesis supervision		2	28/10/2018 1:55 PM
Updating professional knowledge and teaching skills		15	26/10/2018 7:56 AM
Lecturers' Challenges or Constraints related to PD Experiences		1	25/10/2018 2:04 PM
Lecturers' Perceptions of The Importance of PD		1	25/10/2018 2:39 PM
To develop professional knowledge and improve teaching skills		8	26/10/2018 7:32 AM

The findings from the interviews, including presentation of the themes and the composite textural and structural descriptions will be presented in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

3.9.2. Documents

In this study, the content from national and institutional document sources was also used to acquire in-depth background understanding of the influence of contextual factors on EFL lecturers' PD experiences. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) stated that a review of available public and private documents provides descriptions and factual proof related to the context and its culture, and it also discovers environmental factors and issues that may affect participants' perceptions about this context.

Firstly, I read and determined the relevance of each document based on its authority, content, currency, purpose, and target audience. Secondly, I used a modified version of the document summary form (see Appendix G) in order to record each document systematically as suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016). Finally, I examined all the summaries of the documents through these forms and chose the most appropriate and significant information regarding my research topic to present in the findings. Overall, two overarching categories emerged including national professional policies for lecturers and institutional professional policies for lecturers. The findings from document analysis will be presented in greater detail in Chapter Four.

3.10. Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, some validation techniques and procedures that are general to qualitative research and specific to phenomenology are taken into consideration. This section discusses *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* as they are the key aspects recommended by many scholars (e.g., Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

3.10.1. Credibility

Credibility, equivalent to *internal validity* in quantitative research, is concerned with "the audience's belief that the way a researcher conducted the study and the analytic processes and outcomes of the work have generated findings that make sense and persuade readers

that an effective or trustworthy job was done” (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 271). There are several ways to establish credibility such as conducting the initial research design and literature search carefully and thoughtfully; presenting enough information on data analyses to permit the readers to understand how the researcher reached specific categories, themes, or theories; and reviewing the individual transcripts, looking for similarities within and across research participants. In this current research, I employed the technique of member checking by sending the transcripts to the participants after their interview to discover whether the interviewees agreed with how I had transcribed the data and to gain more explanation for some responses. Cilesiz (2009) explained that member checking is very useful in phenomenology because this technique helps to ensure that the participants’ voices, rather the researcher’s perspectives, are represented in the findings. This method allowed me to verify the accuracy of the interviews. According to Creswell (2013), this way is regarded as the most critical method for establishing credibility. Furthermore, as stated by Johnson and Christensen (2014), “triangulation is a validation approach using multiple investigators, methods, data sources and/or theoretical perspectives in the search for convergence of results” (p. 299). Data for this study were gathered through interviews with participants from different job positions including 12 EFL lecturers and four academic managers. In addition, document analysis was also employed. Thus, triangulation helped me investigate and understand various aspects of the participants’ experiences so that the findings could be strengthened, and the research interpretations enriched.

3.10.2. Transferability

Transferability, related to *external validity* or *generalizability*, is “the way in which qualitative studies can be applicable, or transferable, to broader contexts while still maintaining their context-specific richness” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). This means that the audiences of the study can transfer aspects of a study’s design and findings by taking into consideration different contextual factors instead of attempting to replicate the design and findings. In this phenomenological research, a rich, thick account of descriptive data related to the research process and the participants through the textural and structural descriptions as suggested by Moustakas (1994) were provided to allow the audience to determine whether it might be possible for the findings regarding EFL lecturers’ PD experiences to be transferred to other tertiary institutions in similar contexts.

3.10.3. Dependability

Dependability, similar to *reliability* in quantitative studies, means “the stability of findings over time” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). Having peer review in the analysis process, providing a comprehensive description of the research methods, or implementing a step-by-step repeat of the study to see if results might be similar or enhance the original findings are the strategies used to establish dependability suggested by Thomas and Magilvy (2011). In this study, peer review or debriefing was applied to check the research process as this technique is a very important aspect in phenomenology (Cilesiz, 2011). I invited one Vietnamese senior colleague who held a doctoral degree in Education to work as a critical friend (see Appendix H) in order to discuss the research procedures, interpretations, and conclusions from a Vietnamese perspective. Moreover, I frequently discussed the research design, analyses, and results with my supervisors throughout the research process.

3.10.4. Confirmability

Confirmability, similar to *objectivity* in quantitative terms, occurs when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been established (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Korstjens and Moser (2018) explained that “Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but clearly derived from the data” (p. 121). In this study, thematic analysis was employed in order to ensure the confirmability of this research’s findings. In addition, although I used a transcendental phenomenological approach where I was trying to put my experiences and assumptions to one side to let the participants’ experiences be revealed, I drew examples from the data to illustrate the points made within the themes. This use of direct quotes helped confirm that the findings came from the data.

In summary, to enhance the trustworthiness of this research, I used seven different strategies. These included (1) member checking through sending the transcripts to the participants after their interview for clarifications; (2) data triangulation by recruiting both EFL lecturers and academic managers who were at different career stages and had diverse PD experiences to take part in the research interviews; (3) method triangulation by using phenomenological interviews and document analysis to collect data; (4) a rich,

thick description of data by describing not only the PD experiences of EFL lecturers, but the contextual factors influencing their PD experiences as well; (5) peer review by discussing the research procedures, interpretations, and conclusions with a critical friend in order to gain more valuable feedback from a Vietnamese perspective, and regularly discussing the research design, analyses, and results with my supervisors; (6) thematic analysis to establish the consistency of the themes that emerged from the data; and (7) direct quotes to illustrate the points made within the themes.

3.11. Ethical considerations

Atkins and Wallace (2012) pointed out that an ethical approach should pervade every aspect of the research from the initial planning stages, through data collection and analysis to the final reporting. Since this phenomenological research involves human experience, it was important for me to take ethical considerations into account in order to protect and respect the participants. First and foremost, I applied for ethical approval from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (VUWHEC). The research proposal was reviewed and approved by VUWHEC with ethics approval number 25431 (see Appendix I and J) to ensure that all research procedures followed the Human Ethics Guidelines and Policy set by the VUWHEC. These guidelines included informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

More particularly, the first ethical issue in this research was gaining informed consent in order to show respect for individuals' autonomy because they were able to make a more objective personal decision about the implications of participating and also, in some cases, about withdrawing from the research if they came to feel that they no longer wish to participate (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). There was no Ethics Committee requirement from Star University where the data collection was carried out, but this qualitative study had to follow that university's policies for access. Before conducting the study, I emailed the Dean from School A of the research site to gain his permission for EFL lecturers to take part in the study (see Appendix A and B). In addition, I sent each participating EFL lecturer an official invitation letter and consent form on VUW letterhead following the VUWHEC format for information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix C and D). In the information sheet, the participants were informed in detail of the research aims and procedures, the use of audio recording, and their right to withdraw from the research.

Then, I also met the participants in person in order to clearly explain my research goals and inform them about their rights and role when taking part in my study. I also invited them to participate in the member checking process. Furthermore, to ensure the privacy of the research site and participants, their names were kept confidential and pseudonyms were used in interview transcripts, and in reporting of the research in order to protect the university's and lecturers' identities from public disclosure. Data obtained from the participants and feedback from the critical friend were kept securely throughout the research process. Interview transcripts were stored on my computer hard drive and protected by a password. All data including audiotaped data, interview transcripts, and emails from the critical friend will be deleted five years after completion of the doctoral study in accordance with VUWHEC guidelines.

3.12. Summary

This chapter has described the research methodology of the present study. The transcendental phenomenological research approach employed in the development, data collection, and analysis of this study were presented. Then, the setting, as well as the process and criteria for participant selection, was discussed. The role of the researcher and data gathering tools including phenomenological interviews and document analysis were also presented. After that, strategies for analysing data and validating findings were clearly explained. Finally, ethical considerations were addressed to protect the participants' rights and enhance the quality of the research. Chapter Four will describe the data that emerged from the document analysis.

Chapter Four

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Although document analysis is not a typical data collection approach in phenomenological research, it is useful in helping understand the research contexts. In this research, document analysis was used to enable a better understanding of the contexts within which the participating EFL lecturers and academic managers experienced PD. The findings reported in this chapter emerged from an analysis of documents containing information related to the focus of this research.

Documents for analysis in this study include two main types: national and institutional documents. The first type were produced by the Vietnamese government, the MOET, and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). They include circulars, decisions, guidelines, laws, plans, and official dispatches related to national policies on lecturers' qualifications, expertise, and responsibilities; and goals and strategies for lecturers' PD (see Table 4.1). Decisions are a kind of legal document issued by the Vietnamese government or state agencies in order to regulate measures for managing and operating the governmental activities and public administrative system from the national level to the local one. Subjects directly affected by a decision include agencies, organisations, or individuals whose rights, obligations, and responsibilities are impacted by the application of such document after it is promulgated (Vietnam National Assembly, 2015).

Table 4.1

List of national documents

No.	Name of document	Date of issue
1	Circular No.20/2013/TT-BGDĐT on the regulations of professional development for lecturers at tertiary institutions	06/06/2013
2	Circular No.47/2014/TT-BGDĐT on the regulations of the work entitlements for university lecturers	31/12/2014
3	Decision No.1400/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the project entitled "The teaching and learning of foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020" (Project 2020)	30/09/2008
4	Decision No.911/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the project entitled "Training doctoral degrees for lecturers at colleges and universities, period 2010-2020" (Project 911)	17/06/2010

5	Decision No.2080/QĐ-TTg on the adjustments and supplements of the project entitled “Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, period 2017-2025”	22/12/2017
6	Decision No.69/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the project entitled “Enhancing the quality of higher education, period 2019-2025”	15/01/2019
7	Decision No.89/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the project entitled “Enhancing professional competencies for lecturers and academic managers at tertiary institutions in order to meet the needs for fundamental and thorough innovations in education and training, period 2019-2030”	18/01/2019
8	Joint Circular No.36/2014/TTLT-BGDĐT-BNV on the regulations regarding codes and criteria of professional titles for lecturers at public tertiary institutions	28/11/2014
9	Law 08/2012/QH13 on higher education	18/06/2012
10	Law 34/2018/QH14 on the modification and supplementation regarding some articles of higher education law	29/11/2018
11	Official Dispatch No.7274/BGDĐT-GDĐH on guidelines for the implementation of the national foreign language project 2020 at tertiary institutions	31/10/2012
12	Plan No.808/KH-BGDĐT on the implementation of Project 2020 at tertiary institutions, period 2012-2020	16/08/2012

The second type of documents were issued by the research participants’ university and school such as decisions, guidelines, annual statistics, and reports, as well as strategic plans at the institutional level (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

List of institutional documents

No.	Name of document	Date of issue
1	Decision No.939/2017 on the enactment of the internal spending rules within the university	28/03/2017
2	Decision No.355/2019 on the regulations of the organisation and operation of the university	18/02/2019
3	Decision No.223/2020 on the regulations of the work entitlements for lecturers at the university	03/02/2020

4	Guideline No.996/2019 on lecturers' engagement in national and international conferences and workshops with financial support from the university	17/05/2019
5	The school annual report for the 2015-2016 academic year and action plans for the 2016-2017 academic year	19/09/2016
6	The school annual report for the 2016-2017 academic year and action plans for the 2017-2018 academic year	12/09/2017
7	The school annual report for the 2017-2018 academic year and action plans for the 2018-2019 academic year	07/09/2018
8	The university 2018 annual report	18/03/2019

These two types of documents were chosen for analysis because they present the current contexts of tertiary education and policies related to EFL lecturers' PD in Vietnam. These documents assist the researcher to clarify and explain information provided by the interview participants.

4.2. National professional policies for lecturers

Three overarching categories emerged through the review of the national documents. They are (1) requirements on lecturers' qualifications and expertise, (2) expectations of lecturers' responsibilities for PD, and (3) goals and strategies for lecturers' PD.

4.2.1. Requirements on lecturers' qualifications and expertise

According to Law 08/2012/QH13 on Higher Education, Article 54, the standard qualification for lecturers at tertiary institutions should be a master's degree (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012). However, following the amendment of Law 34/2018/QH14 on Higher Education, the Vietnamese National Assembly modified this regulation by stipulating that lecturers teaching a bachelor's programme must have at least a master's degree, and lecturers teaching a master's or doctoral programme must have a doctoral degree. In addition, this document stated that tertiary institutions should prioritise the recruitment of lecturers holding a doctoral degree (Vietnam National Assembly, 2018). These changes indicate the Vietnamese government's higher expectations towards lecturers' professional qualifications and expertise in recent years.

In Joint Circular No.36/2014 named *The regulations on codes and criteria regarding professional titles for lecturers at public tertiary institutions*, the MOET and MOHA clearly identify the criteria for lecturers' professional competencies and expertise as follows:

- Mastering a fundamental knowledge of the subjects that lecturers are assigned to teach and having a general knowledge of the subjects related to lecturers' specialised field;
- Mastering the objectives, plans, content, and curricula of the subjects that lecturers are assigned to teach. Being able to identify the practices and trends of the training and research development in the lecturers' specialised field in the country and around the world;
- Developing textbooks, collecting related reference documents of the department, mainly being responsible for, or taking part in, developing textbooks, guidebooks on assignments, practices, and experiments;
- Having the abilities to undertake research projects and organise research activities for students; applying and deploying the results from scientific and technological projects into education and training, manufacture, and life;
- Having effective teaching methodologies consistent with the content of the subjects; teaching must meet the institutional requirements. (MOET & MOHA, 2014, p. 7, author's translation)

The above criteria show that, as well as holding the professional qualifications outlined in the Law on Higher Education, the MOET and MOHA also require lecturers to be competent in carrying out PD activities such as developing textbooks or undertaking research projects.

4.2.2. Expectations of lecturers' responsibilities for PD

Lecturers' responsibilities for PD are presented in several important national documents including the Law on Higher Education (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012), Joint Circular No.36/2014 (MOET & MOHA, 2014), and the amendment of the Law on Higher

Education (Vietnam National Assembly, 2018). These documents state that, besides their teaching responsibilities, lecturers must regularly take part in PD activities. For example, according to Article 55 of the Law on Higher Education, lecturers must undertake research projects, develop applied science and technology transfer, and ensure the quality of training. This Article also stipulates that lecturers must periodically study and enhance their knowledge levels related to political theory, professional expertise, and teaching methodologies (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012). However, in the amendment of the Law on Higher Education, the government has modified this Article by adding a requirement regarding lecturers' participation in practical activities in order to enhance the qualities of training and scientific research (Vietnam National Assembly, 2018). Additionally, Joint Circular No.36/2014 clearly identifies several other PD responsibilities of lecturers at public tertiary institutions such as supervising students' theses, developing textbooks and teaching materials, undertaking scientific research projects, participating in conferences and workshops, partaking in international collaboration activities, ensuring tertiary education quality, and engaging in continuous learning to develop professional expertise and qualifications (MOET & MOHA, 2014).

As stated in Circular No.47/2014 on *The regulations on the work entitlements for university lecturers* issued by the MOET, lecturers at tertiary institutions are required to work 40 hours per week. The number of 1,760 is the total compulsory working hours per year that each lecturer must complete in order to meet the assigned teaching, research, and other PD responsibilities (MOET, 2014b). A significant point of this document is that lecturers' responsibility for research activities is explicitly stated. According to the MOET, lecturers must spend at least one-third of their total working hours per year undertaking research projects. If lecturers cannot complete their research duty, their commendations and compensations at the end of each academic year are affected (MOET, 2014b). However, although the MOET has proposed regulations related to lecturers' responsibilities for research activities through this circular, there is still a lack of description related to lecturers' responsibilities for other PD activities.

Overall, these documents reveal that besides their teaching responsibilities, the Vietnamese government has expected lecturers to regularly take part in other PD opportunities. This signifies that in order to reach the objectives of the national education reforms, the government highly values the importance of lecturers' PD. Furthermore,

these documents inform lecturers of their responsibilities for PD so that they can plan their own PD in order to meet the government's expectations.

4.2.3. Goals and strategies for lecturers' PD

Vietnam has experienced prominent social, economic, political, and educational changes in the last 30 years. As a result of globalisation, the Vietnamese government has implemented many national education reforms in order to seek better integration into an increasingly globalised world (Nguyen & Hall, 2017). In the last 10 years, with an aim to effectively deploy the educational reforms and successfully improve the quality of tertiary education, the Vietnamese government and MOET have put greater focus on lecturers' PD through the implementation of several important projects.

In 2010, the governmental Decision No.911/QĐ-TTg introduced Project 911 entitled *Training doctoral degrees for lecturers at colleges and universities, period 2010-2020*. This project aimed at enhancing both the quality and quantity of lecturers' doctoral education in order to improve professional qualifications as well as teaching, research, and managing lecturers' competencies in tertiary institutions. One of this project's main goals was that at least 20,000 lecturers gain a doctoral degree by 2020 in order to enhance the quality of tertiary education in Vietnam. Through this project, the MOET raised specific action plans and solutions including investing 14,000 billion VND and promoting international collaborations or exchange programmes with prestigious foreign institutions in order to create favourable conditions for lecturers to undertake higher education (Vietnamese Government, 2010).

However, the Minister of Education and Training admitted that after seven years of implementation, Project 911 had not achieved its extremely high and unrealistic goals. For instance, from 2012 to 2016, this project was only able to recruit 3,800 applicants who were lecturers from tertiary institutions throughout Vietnam to undertake doctoral programmes. As a result, in 2017, this project was stopped (Ha, 2017). Nevertheless, Project 911 has provided lecturers with numerous opportunities to undertake doctoral study and raised their awareness of the importance of PD in order to keep up with the national higher education requirements and maintain their own teaching position.

Through Circular No.20/2013 entitled *The regulations on PD for lecturers at tertiary institutions*, the MOET lists four main goals for lecturers' PD as follows:

- To supplement and update new knowledge in specialised fields and training levels in order to meet the needs of each academic year and educational quality improvements;
- To meet the needs for lecturers' professional qualifications and standards;
- To improve the teaching, educating, and research capabilities, and to enhance the organisational and management competencies of tertiary institutions;
- To enhance lecturers' moral qualities, political awareness, and professional conscience. (MOET, 2013, p. 1, author's translation)

To some extent, these goals indicate lecturers' responsibilities for PD. Through this circular, the MOET also explicitly states the main content of PD programmes that lecturers should undertake as follows:

- tertiary education in Vietnam as well as the development trends of tertiary education all over the world and other related fields;
- lecturers' professional expertise, scientific research projects, and teaching methodologies in order to meet the needs for fundamental and thorough innovations of education and training. (MOET, 2013, p. 2, author's translation)

Although specific strategies for the implementation of PD are not clearly stated, this Circular outlines the content, curricula, time, and forms of training programmes and evaluation. As a result, the Circular enables PD planners and academic managers to set clear PD goals for their teaching staff.

In January 2019, through Decision No.69/QĐ-TTg, the Vietnamese government launched the project entitled *Enhancing the quality of higher education, period 2019-2025* as a replacement for Project 911. The general goals of this project are stated as follows:

To create a strong and substantial change in the quality of training, scientific research, and technology transfer of the higher education system to meet the needs for human resources; contribute to improve the quality and labour productivity; promote creative entrepreneurship; and enhance the competitive competency of the nation in the region and the world. (Vietnamese Government, 2019a, p. 2 , author's translation)

Through this project, the Vietnamese government has emphasised the importance of promoting a high-quality teaching staff by investing 12,000 billion VND for lecturers' higher education. Some specific targets have been identified by the government including 100% of lecturers at tertiary institutions achieving a master's degree or equivalent, and at least 35% (9,000) of lecturers gaining a doctoral degree by 2025 (Vietnamese Government, 2019a).

In the same year, another project entitled *Enhancing professional competencies for lecturers and academic managers at tertiary institutions in order to meet the needs for fundamental and thorough innovations in education and training, period 2019-2030* was also launched by the Vietnamese government. Through Decision No.89/QĐ-TTg, the government raises the expectation that by 2030, 10% of lecturers will be trained to doctoral degree level (7% of lecturers to be trained full-time in foreign institutions and 3% of lecturers to be trained by domestic universities or through joint programmes with foreign institutions), and 100% of lecturers and academic managers will be trained in professional competencies in relation to curriculum development, advanced teaching methodologies, scientific research, foreign languages, and information technology. In order to carry out this project, the government has proposed some specific strategies such as organising several training courses regarding foreign languages and necessary skills to support lecturers who have been selected to undertake higher education in foreign countries; increasing funding for doctoral and master's training; and regularly evaluating annual training results in order to learn from mistakes, and make suitable adjustments and rewards (Vietnamese Government, 2019b).

It is too early to evaluate the results of these two projects at the time of this research because they have just been running for a short time. However, it is significant that through these projects, the Vietnamese government has provided lecturers with favourable conditions and opportunities to undertake PD, including gaining higher degrees and taking part in numerous PD activities.

In broad terms, through this analysis of several important national documents, it is evident that in order to enhance the quality of tertiary education, the Vietnamese government has lately put more emphasis on lecturers' higher education. Additionally, it is noticeable that the national requirements and expectations for lecturers' PD have increased significantly since the Law on Higher Education was passed in 2012. The next

section will discuss in greater detail the institutional policies concerning the PD of lecturers in Star University.

4.3. Institutional professional policies for lecturers

This section reports the analysis of the institutional documents with the aim of providing an insight regarding the institutional contexts. Three overarching categories were developed through the review of the institutional documents including (1) requirements on lecturers' professional duties, (2) incentive policies for lecturers' PD, and (3) PD activities of EFL lecturers at the research site.

4.3.1. Requirements on lecturers' professional duties

Influenced by globalisation and the national education reforms, there have been many changes concerning professional policies at Star University. However, because this is a public university administered by the MOET, it must generally follow the professional policies for lecturers imposed by the Vietnamese government and MOET.

Following Decision No.223/2020 on *The regulations of the work entitlements*, Star University has stipulated the specific number of hours regarding teaching, research, and other professional activities for different groups of lecturers based on their pay rates, degrees, and academic ranks. Table 4.3 presents more details.

This table shows that the stipulated teaching hours per year for different groups of lecturers, except for apprentice lecturers, are the same. In contrast, the stipulated hours per year for research and other professional activities are different among the groups in line with lecturers' pay rates, degrees, and academic ranks. In particular, it is clear that lecturers holding higher qualifications are expected to spend more working hours per year on research and other professional activities by Star University.

Table 4.3

Stipulated working hours per year for lecturers

Title, qualification and pay rate	Stipulated hours/year for teaching	Stipulated hours/year for research and other professional activities	Total stipulated working hours/year
High-ranking lecturers, professors ⁴	270	240	510
High-ranking lecturers, associate professors	270	190	460
Senior lecturers with the pay rate higher than 5.76	270	170	440
Senior lecturers with the pay rate from 4.40 to 5.42	270	150	420
Lecturers with the pay rate higher than 4.32, and lecturers with a doctoral degree	270	110	380
Lecturers with the pay rate from 3.33 to 3.99	270	60	330
Lecturers with the pay rate from 2.34 to 3.00	270	10	280
Apprentice lecturers at probationary period	50	10	60

(Star University, 2020, pp. 3-4, author's translation)

In February 2019, through Decision No.355/2019 on *The regulations of the organisation and operation of the university*, Star University presented lecturers' duties and rights as follows:

⁴ According to Joint Circular No.36/2014, professional titles for lecturers at public tertiary institutions in Vietnam are divided into three main groups including High-ranking lecturers (Grade I), Senior lecturers (Grade II), and Lecturers (Grade III) (MOET & MOHA, 2014). These groups of lecturers are assigned different stipulated working hours per year following the national and institutional regulations. In addition, lecturers' pay rate normally starts from the lowest rate of 2.34. After three consecutive years of working, if lecturers can fulfil the teaching and other assigned duties or get a higher education degree following the institutional requirements, their pay rates are annually promoted to a higher level (Star University's Department of Personnel, n.d.).

- Teaching and fulfilling the training tasks based on the university's objectives and curriculum;
- Researching, developing, and transferring applied sciences and technology in order to ensure and enhance the quality of training;
- Ensuring the morality, prestige, and honour of the teaching staff;
- Respecting learners' individual characteristics, treating learners equally, and protecting learners' legitimate rights and benefits;
- Having the right to sign contracts to work as visiting lecturers or researchers with other educational and research institutions following the national laws.

(Star University, 2019a, p. 28, author's translation)

Through this decision, it is noticeable that, along with their teaching duties, Star University also requires lecturers to engage in research activities related to their subject area in order to enhance the quality of their teaching. This requirement at the institutional level conforms to the Law on Higher Education (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012), Circular No.47/2014 (MOET, 2014b), and the amendment of the Law on Higher Education (Vietnam National Assembly, 2018).

Overall, the majority of the professional policies at Star University have strictly followed the national regulations. However, although the university has proposed the number of stipulated teaching and research hours per year for lecturers as indicated in Table 4.3, lecturers have tended to put more focus on extra teaching rather than PD activities. The reason for this is that lecturers get paid additional salary if they teach more classes.

4.3.2. Incentive policies for lecturers' PD

Despite lecturers tending to prioritise additional teaching rather than PD activities, analysis of Decision No.223/2020 on *The regulations of the work entitlements* reveals that lecturers can gain financial benefits if they take part in specific PD activities. For example, if lecturers have a book chapter written in Vietnamese, it is equivalent to 35 teaching hours. When they have a book chapter written in English or French and published with an ISBN, this product is considered equivalent to 60 teaching hours. When

lecturers complete a scientific research project at the institutional, provincial, or national level, Star University counts this activity equivalent to 60, 120, or 200 teaching hours respectively. Furthermore, lecturers nominated by the university to go on an overseas mission, attend PD activities, or undertake higher education also have their regulated working hours reduced (Star University, 2020). It is evident that Star University has created favourable conditions to encourage lecturers to undertake higher education or other PD activities by promulgating regulations that reward lecturers who undertake these activities by reducing the number of regulated working hours for these staff.

Decision No. 939/2017 on *The enactment of the internal spending rules within the university* further demonstrates that Star University has established policies to encourage lecturers' engagement in PD activities. They include reducing the number of stipulated working hours and paying for tuition and travel fees if lecturers undertake higher education in Vietnamese institutions; reimbursing the IELTS registration fee if lecturers achieve a 5.5 band score or above; and providing financial support if lecturers have a paper presentation at a conference or seminar (Star University, 2017). This document makes clear the individual, financial, and professional benefits of lecturers' engagement in PD activities.

Guideline No.996/2019 on *Lecturers' engagement in national and international conferences and workshops with the financial support from the university* reveals that every year, each lecturer can be offered two grants from the institutional budget with a maximum total of 30 million VND if they have papers presented at any national or international conferences or workshops. In particular, this guideline also states that Star University encourages lecturers' engagement in conferences and workshops in order to improve lecturers' professional knowledge and qualifications as well as to enhance the prestige of the university (Star University, 2019b). It can be seen that the university has recently established specific policies regarding financial support to encourage lecturers' engagement in PD activities.

Overall, it is clear that Star University has provided lecturers with different kinds of support to engage in PD opportunities although it has not imposed compulsory policies related to lecturers' PD.

4.3.3. PD activities of EFL lecturers at the research site

Based on analysis of the annual reports for the academic years from 2015 to 2018, this section outlines the significant PD activities of EFL lecturers at the research participants' school in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the research context and to complement the findings from interviews with the participants presented in Chapter Six.

Because Star University is the governing organisation of School A, lecturers' PD activities in this school largely depend on the national and institutional goals. School A has not set up its own policies for lecturers' PD. Instead, it has been only responsible for proposing annual plans related to lecturers' PD and directly reporting to the university through annual reports.

In 2018, School A employed eight (13.8%) EFL lecturers with a doctoral degree, and 50 (86.2%) EFL lecturers with a master's degree. At the time of data collection, seven (12%) EFL lecturers were undertaking doctoral and master's studies in foreign countries. The number of lecturers achieving doctoral degrees is expected to increase steadily in the following years (School A, 2018). To encourage lecturers' engagement in PD, School A has proposed a specific plan for lecturers' higher education in the following four years (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

School A's plan for EFL lecturers' higher education in the period 2019-2022

Academic year	Total number of teaching staff	Degree	
		Master's	Doctoral
2019	60	49	11
2020	62	49	13
2021	63	50	13
2022	64	50	14

(School A, 2018)

Through this plan, it is noticeable that School A aims to gradually increase the number of its EFL lecturers obtaining master's and doctoral degrees. These goals are consistent with the national requirements from Project 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008) and Project 911 (Vietnamese Government, 2010).

However, according to School A's reports for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years, there were some limitations on lecturers' engagement in higher education because of age, family, time, and financial constraints. These problems have brought big challenges for lecturers to gain higher education degrees. Moreover, access to scholarship funds supporting doctoral study from Project 2020 and international organisations (e.g., the Australian and New Zealand governments, and Erasmus Mundus) ended some years ago. This has lessened lecturers' opportunities to undertake higher education (School A, 2017; 2018).

In the school annual report for the 2017-2018 academic year, since the implementation of Project 2020 in 2008, it is noted that all EFL lecturers have been provided with more favourable conditions to voluntarily participate in many different PD opportunities organized by Project 2020 and the university in many institutions throughout Vietnam. As stated in this report, 36 lecturers attended exchange programmes and professional training courses in foreign countries (e.g., America, Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines), and six lecturers completed a training course on pedagogic skills in Vietnam. School A also organized 26 seminars presented by EFL lecturers and six workshops run by foreign scholars, and 19 EFL lecturers presented papers at international conferences. Additionally, there were 19 papers published in international journals and 17 published in national journals. The school lecturers carried out 12 research projects at the institutional level and one research project at the national level. Table 4.5 presents some significant PD activities of the school's lecturers across the years 2015-2018 (School A, 2018).

The table shows that the number of PD activities in this school has significantly increased during the years from 2015 to 2018, primarily because Project 2020 and the institution organised numerous PD opportunities for lecturers. More specifically, in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years, the number of PD activities run by the school and the number of lecturers who took part in these PD activities were significantly higher than those in the 2015-2016 academic year (School A, 2016; 2017; 2018). Furthermore, most lecturers have voluntarily engaged in other PD activities such as professional communities, departmental meetings, informal learning groups, and self-study or self-reflection initiatives. These figures indicate that School A has highly valued the importance of lecturers' PD and its PD activities have closely followed the national and institutional requirements. However, the large number of compulsory teaching hours that

lecturers have had to complete every semester has been a significant barrier inhibiting many lecturers from attending more PD activities (School A, 2018).

Table 4.5

EFL lecturers' key PD activities from the academic year 2015 to 2018

PD activities	Academic year	Academic year	Academic year
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Seminars	8	23	26
Workshops and conferences	3	10	6
Guest speakers' talks	2	9	7
Research projects at the institutional level	4	11	12
Research projects at the national level	1	1	1
Journal articles	14	25	36
Paper presentations at international conferences	23	19	19
Textbook development	4	6	6
Total PD activities undertaken	59	104	113

(School A, 2016; 2017; 2018)

Overall, lecturers in School A have had access to many PD opportunities in the past five years. At the school level, the academic managers have put more focus on lecturers' PD by organising diverse kinds of PD activities and encouraged more lecturers to undertake research projects and higher education.

4.4. Summary

In summary, this chapter has analysed both national and institutional documents with the aim of providing insights into different professional policies related to the contexts of Vietnamese higher education and EFL lecturers' involvement in PD. In order to enhance the quality of education, the Vietnamese government has launched many professional policies to encourage and regulate lecturers' engagement in PD. The review of these

documents has also provided an understanding that professional criteria and responsibilities assigned for lecturers at the national level have significantly influenced the PD plans and regulations for EFL lecturers at the institutional and school level. It is evident that Star University and School A have closely followed the national requirements and have actively supported lecturers' engagement in a range of PD activities. The findings from this document analysis support the triangulation of information collected from the interview participants reported in Chapters Five and Six, Participant Profiles and Findings from Interviews.

Chapter Five

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

5.1. Introduction

The nature of phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences of the participants who share their stories and provide detailed information about the phenomenon under examination. There were a total of 12 EFL lecturers and four academic managers who took part in this study and shared their experiences of PD. Table 5.1 shows the participants' years of teaching experience including three main groups: *Beginning* lecturers (1-5 years teaching), *Midcareer* lecturers (6-20 years teaching), and *Late-career* lecturers (20+ years teaching). The main aim for recruiting the participating lecturers who had diverse years of teaching experience was to investigate their lived experiences of PD at different career stages. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and I have not included their job positions in this table to ensure anonymity.

Table 5.1

Participants' years of teaching experience

No.	Pseudonyms	Years of teaching experience
1	Hanh	1-5
2	Hoa	1-5
3	Lan	1-5
4	Trang	1-5
5	Bich	6-20
6	Cuc	6-20
7	Minh	6-20
8	Ngan	6-20
9	Oanh	6-20
10	Phan	6-20
11	Hung	20+
12	Huong	20+
13	Lam	20+
14	Loc	20+
15	Tin	20+
16	Thanh	20+

5.2. Descriptions of the individual participants' lived PD experiences

The following are brief descriptions of the PD experiences of the individual EFL lecturers and academic managers who took part in this research. The purpose of these descriptions is to provide background for understanding the thematic analysis to be presented in Chapter Six.

Hanh (*beginning*) commented that following the national reform policies, EFL lecturers had been more proactive and put more focus on communicative and task-based language teaching approaches than in the previous years.

Hanh revealed that she had to obtain her master's degree due to her institution's requirement. She felt that the master's programme was not practical, and that it did not bring many benefits to her teaching. Instead, some PD activities that she frequently participated in such as seminars, workshops, and professional meetings were more effective. In the future, she would not follow doctoral study because she had to take care of her family.

From this interviewee's perspective, since PD was very important to EFL lecturers, they had to be proactive in participating in PD activities rather than waiting for their institution to encourage and require them to undertake PD. Hanh felt that lecturers had to be aware of their responsibility for PD in order to promote student outcomes and improve their professional knowledge and skills.

Hanh felt quite satisfied with the institutional support regarding lecturers' PD because the university had covered all tuition fees for her master's study. However, she also revealed that only some of the recent PD activities that she had taken part in were useful, while others were not. As a result, she recommended that PD activities should be based on lecturers' real needs so that the content could be more applicable and effective. In addition, she felt it would be better if the university adjusted the reimbursement procedures. Since the current ones were very complicated, lecturers felt demotivated to register for PD participation.

Hoa (*beginning*) stated that, because of the effect of globalisation, English teaching in Vietnam had changed remarkably. As a result, EFL lecturers had to gain at least a master's degree and constantly update their professional knowledge.

This participant was not completely satisfied with the current support for PD from her school because she had been offered only a few opportunities to attend workshops or conferences. Every academic year, the number of EFL lecturers who was nominated to take part in PD at foreign universities or external organisations was still limited. She indicated some of her challenges regarding participating in PD such as a lack of collegial and managerial support in order to undertake research projects, a lack of teaching experiences, a lack of reference materials in order to prepare the lesson plans, and time constraints. She undertook PD to improve student outcomes, seek higher education opportunities, enhance her prestige, and gain more financial benefits.

She stated that lecturers should set clear objectives for their PD to motivate themselves and that every department should set rules regarding EFL lecturers' PD participation. For example, every academic year, each lecturer should be required to join in some seminars, workshops, observations, professional meetings, and other PD activities. She also proposed that experience-sharing meetings and lecturer's exchange programmes should be regularly implemented at the school level to give lecturers good opportunities to receive feedback and share experiences with their colleagues.

Hoa revealed that it was very challenging for lecturers to gain a scholarship for their doctoral study. Because of that, she felt the university should provide them with more opportunities to attend short training courses or conferences in foreign countries so that they could gain more certificates to upgrade their curriculum vitae (CV). Finally, this participant believed that if the university decreased the number of compulsory teaching hours, EFL lecturers would be able to arrange more time for undertaking research projects and other PD activities.

Lan (*beginning*) remarked that in the previous few years, her university had put more emphasis on improving the quality of English language teaching to meet learners' higher demands. EFL lecturers had more opportunities to attend both formal and informal higher education in foreign countries.

This interviewee stated that academic managers played an important role in directing lecturers' PD. More specifically, two years before, she had not intended to undertake doctoral study, but her head of department established a clear strategic plan for staff PD. Thanks to this plan, she recognised that PD would bring her many benefits, so she gained more motivation to search for a doctoral scholarship.

Lan also said that she usually participated in more than five workshops or conferences every year. At the time of data collection, she was also developing two textbooks on English specifically for the content of her courses. Every semester, she had presented a paper at a school seminar. In addition, she was collaborating with some senior colleagues to conduct two research projects at the institutional level. She explained that she enthusiastically participated in those PD activities to prepare a good CV for her future doctoral study.

This participant believed that if lecturers were not aware of the importance of PD, they would easily fall behind with regard to their professional knowledge and skills. She recommended that English lecturers take an IELTS test every two years to check their language proficiency. Each lecturer should also undertake an action research project every academic year to investigate their teaching problems. The department should organise a professional meeting every month so that lecturers could share teaching portfolios, reference materials, and experiences. In addition, she also proposed that the school should have specific policies for lecturers' PD since she felt the existing ones were not clear and effective enough.

Trang (*beginning*) stated that because English had become more popular worldwide, people had stronger motivation to study that language. Most EFL lecturers at the tertiary level had been well-equipped with professional knowledge and language proficiency. She thought that overcrowded classes, mixed-abilities learners, low motivation, and time constraints were negative influences on lecturers' engagement in PD.

This *beginning* participant explained that some PD activities such as developing textbooks and undertaking research projects required lecturers to invest considerable time while the teaching workload was very high. Therefore, it was very hard for them to concentrate on those activities.

She emphasised that EFL lecturers had to be aware of their own responsibility for PD in order to frequently update their professional knowledge and skills. She revealed that she took part in PD activities in order to promote her prestige and student outcomes rather than to achieve a higher position.

Although her institution had provided EFL lecturers with numerous PD opportunities and financial support, this participant was still unsatisfied with this support.

She recommended that the university organise more short-term training courses and international conferences for the less experienced lecturers in order to help them gain more practical knowledge in teaching and research. In addition, she felt the school should collaborate with foreign universities to organise lecturers' exchange programmes so that they could share teaching experiences and professional knowledge.

Bich (*midcareer*) reported that at the time of data collection, people's needs for studying English were higher, so English teaching should be developing simultaneously in order to keep up with the learners' diverse needs. EFL lecturers were able to get more access to advanced technologies and teaching methodologies as well as more opportunities to study in English-speaking countries. As a result, their expertise had been significantly increased. In addition, she noted that one of the main objectives of English teaching and learning in Vietnam enacted by Project 2020 was aimed at reaching the CEFR, thus lecturers had to change to meet this current objective.

This *midcareer* participant told that her institution had not required PD as a compulsory activity, but EFL lecturers were always encouraged to take part in PD activities. In particular, in the previous two years, there had been numerous PD initiatives implemented by the MOET and the university such as workshops, conferences, exchange programmes, and professional meetings. She had joined in many PD activities including developing textbooks, undertaking research projects, and participating in regional projects as well as attending domestic and international conferences. She indicated some factors affecting her decisions about what PD to undertake including the institutional policies, individual interests, and financial benefits.

Although gaining many benefits from PD such as higher prestige and income, this interviewee also experienced some difficulties hindering her participation in PD activities such as time constraints, heavy workload, and lack of professional knowledge. In her opinion, the school should organise more PD activities regarding specific topics on English applied linguistics or foreign culture instead of teaching methodologies because she was teaching some courses related to English culture and language at the time of data collection. She also suggested that to foster lecturers' PD, it was necessary for them to be self-motivated and have institutional support. Her future needs for PD mainly included undertaking doctoral study and access to more reference sources and professional networks.

Cuc (*midcareer*) suggested that because of the popularity of English as an international language, EFL lecturers now had more career opportunities. Learners not only needed English for academic purposes, but they also studied English for communication and work. Consequently, lecturers had to continuously update their qualifications to meet the learners' needs.

This *midcareer* participant reported that she frequently engaged in many different PD activities such as self-study, self-reflection, experience-sharing, textbook development, research, seminars, and workshops. She reasoned that she had considerable free time to attend PD because she did not have family responsibilities. After attending some PD activities such as international workshops and professional meetings, she found that they had a positive influence on the quality of her teaching and on student outcomes.

In her view, although she had received numerous PD opportunities, good financial and collegial support, the institutional policies were still irrelevant due to a lack of compulsory regulations on lecturers' engagement in PD. She recommended that the school establish some groups for sharing teaching and research experiences at the departmental and school level. The institution should, in Cuc's opinion, collaborate with foreign universities to organise some lecturers' exchange programmes to provide EFL lecturers with more opportunities for studying abroad. In addition, she felt the school should set up yearly goals and objectives so that all lecturers could be aware of the importance of PD. This participant also called for more financial support from the university and MOET to assist lecturers to participate in long-term higher education.

Minh (*midcareer*) confirmed that external factors from the education reform policies and Project 2020 had not influenced her engagement in PD because she was always aware of her responsibility to become a good lecturer. At the time of data collection, her department had been inaugurated for only three years, but the teaching staff had joined in diverse PD activities such as professional meetings, seminars, research projects, and textbook development.

This interviewee recounted that one advantage at her department was the big number of novice lecturers, so those lecturers were highly motivated to participate in PD. On the other hand, a shortage of staff with a doctoral degree was a barrier to her department. Sometimes, she had to call for support from more experienced lecturers from other departments to assist in implementing some PD activities. In addition, due to a lack

of international collaborations, her department could not invite many foreign experts to share teaching experiences at workshops or conferences.

According to this *midcareer* participant, EFL lecturers could gain many benefits from attending PD activities. Consequently, she felt that the university should have suitable policies based on lecturers' needs for PD to promote their participation. She also proposed some initiatives such as encouraging collegial support and collaboration among departments to strengthen PD. In addition, this participant stated that it was the lecturers' responsibility to call for external funding sources regarding grants or scholarships so that they could get more PD opportunities.

Ngan (*midcareer*) stated that with the trend of globalisation, English teaching played an important role in the modern world. EFL lecturers not only focused on teaching language skills but they also embedded political, economic, cultural, and social knowledge in their lessons. In terms of qualifications, this participant commented that more than 80% of the EFL lecturers at her school had gained a master's degree and nearly 20% of them held a doctoral degree.

Every year, she had regularly implemented one research project at the institutional level. She explained that she took part in many PD activities in order to prepare for her doctoral study, achieve a higher position, and keep up with her colleagues. However, she revealed that time and family constraints were her big challenges in pursuing PD.

Ngan also claimed that even though lecturers had to take the main responsibility for their PD, the university should establish some incentive policies such as increasing salaries and giving rewards or gifts to motivate lecturers' participation in PD activities.

This *midcareer* participant felt satisfied with the PD opportunities provided by her institution. In the previous few years, her school had provided lecturers with good PD opportunities such as being involved in many international conferences, workshops, and seminars. In addition, the school invited one Fulbright scholar to train lecturers in a course on action research. This participant realised that after attending this course, lecturers' ability in doing research had been significantly improved, so they were more motivated to undertake their own research projects. The school also organised a course on writing for publication to help lecturers enhance their research writing skills.

She suggested that the school should establish some research groups based on EFL lecturers' interests. Every group should carry out some research projects and sometimes get together to share experiences or report the results. The school should also adjust administrative procedures such as developing a detailed PD events calendar for each academic year and establishing specific guidelines for lecturers' PD in order to create more favourable conditions for their participation in PD.

Oanh (*midcareer*) stated that English teaching had developed remarkably because of the influence of information technology, so lecturers had to change to meet students' higher needs. She recognised that novice lecturers could adapt to current trends of using information technology more rapidly than the senior ones.

From her viewpoint, PD was very important to EFL lecturers because the world always moved forward, and the world of knowledge was continuously updated. If lecturers did not change, they could not bring new knowledge to their students. She thought that what she had known was very limited while what she had not known was enormous. Therefore, she frequently took part in PD activities and learnt from other colleagues.

This *midcareer* participant believed that lecturers had to be proactive and responsible for their own PD. She felt quite happy with the time and financial support given by her institution. She suggested that the university should implement some surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing PD initiatives as well as investigate lecturers' needs for PD. Drawing from the survey results, the academic managers could propose a suitable strategic plan for PD.

As a lecturer, she usually cooperated with novice lecturers to undertake research projects at the institutional level. This helped novice lecturers gain more experience and knowledge in doing research. This participant recommended that her department organise more informal professional meetings so that lecturers could have opportunities to get together to share their experiences of PD.

Phan (*midcareer*) noted that the Vietnamese MOET inaugurated Project 2020 because they recognised the importance of English in a globalised world. To keep up with new trends of globalisation, her university had launched many activities such as enhancing English teaching and learning qualities, opening intensive English courses,

setting up a language-speaking zone, and organising extracurricular activities for students. Thus, EFL lecturers played important roles in implementing those initiatives.

In previous years, the university had provided lecturers with extensive PD opportunities to develop their professional knowledge and enlarge professional networks. She revealed that because the school had put more focus on developing research projects, that PD activity had attracted more lecturers' attention and both the quality and quantity of research had improved greatly. The university had also constructed specific guidelines and offered financial support to motivate lecturers to develop textbooks and teaching materials.

Phan told that she had taken part in many PD activities since she could get many benefits and accomplish her assigned duties. She suggested that lecturers should build their occupational prestige through self-development and self-awareness.

In her view, the university did not force EFL lecturers to participate in PD activities, so they only attended if they recognised that those activities could meet their needs. This was the reason why most lecturers spent more time on teaching rather than PD activities. In addition, due to the heavy workload, lecturers at her department did not have time to get together to share their experiences or collaborate in research projects.

This *midcareer* participant recommended that a workable PD plan should integrate both bottom-up and top-down approaches. PD should follow the professional standards issued by the MOET. In addition, lecturers' needs should be considered thoughtfully in order to establish an effective PD framework.

Hung (*late-career*) remarked that at the time of data collection, people's needs for English were extremely high, so English had become both a real life and classroom language. Because EFL lecturers at his institution had more opportunities to study in English-speaking countries, their language competence and teaching skills had improved significantly. He acknowledged that PD was very important to lecturers. Consequently, they could not stand still instead of following continuous learning until ending their career.

This *late-career* participant revealed that he rarely took part in PD activities because he held a doctoral degree and was going to retire soon. He thought that senior lecturers did not have high demands for PD. Due to a lack of collegial support, the novice

lecturers at his school did not have many opportunities to share experiences with the senior lecturers. Therefore, Hung felt that the school should implement peer coaching or mentoring activities to help the less experienced lecturers.

Hung explained that lecturers had both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to take part in PD activities such as pressure from the institutional policies, individual achievements, and self-respect. However, he commented that the institutional support for PD was not encouraging enough.

In his point of view, academic managers should survey EFL lecturers' needs and provide them with specific organisational plans, constant support, and equal opportunities for PD. In addition, good collegial relationships should be established among the teaching staff to encourage their participation in professional meetings.

Huong (*late-career*) stated that PD was very necessary to lecturers, so she often attended different forms of PD initiatives organised by her institution and external organisations. After participating in workshops and seminars, her expertise was broadened. She felt more confident to provide her students with updated knowledge and skills.

She reflected that although the school always encouraged lecturers to take part in PD activities, most lecturers from her department were seniors with a master's degree. Therefore, those lecturers thought that their professional knowledge was good enough to meet the students' needs. In addition, those lecturers did not have much free time to actively participate in PD. In the previous three years, there had not been any lecturers from her department continuing into doctoral study. Even though undertaking research projects was considered a popular PD activity, only a few lecturers took part in that activity.

This *late-career* participant recommended that to encourage doctoral study, the MOET should decrease lecturers' assigned teaching hours and give more scholarships and financial support. The university should collaborate with foreign universities to send lecturers abroad to undertake higher education. The school should set up incentive policies or organise some teaching contests such as *The best teacher of the year* in order to promote lecturers' motivation to engage in PD.

Lam (*late-career*) commented that, thanks to technological developments and globalisation, lecturers could conveniently access new teaching trends. Most EFL lecturers had employed a communicative approach in their language classrooms.

In terms of professional qualifications, EFL lecturers had to reach the national requirements, approximately C1 level of CEFR or Band 7.0 of IELTS. He explained that both external and internal factors such as lecturers' language competency, teaching methodologies, textbooks, curricula, students' motivation, and financial and family constraints had a strong influence on lecturers' engagement in PD.

In his department, there were no annual plans for PD because organising PD activities mostly depended on the budget allocation from the school and the university. He justified that PD was not compulsory, so lecturers had their own right to decide whether they attended or not. The department was only responsible for encouraging lecturers' participation.

However, Lam emphasised that PD was very beneficial to lecturers to enhance their teaching qualities and promote student outcomes. Thus, he felt that lecturers who worked in an academic environment had to ensure self-development in order to keep up with their colleagues and maintain their jobs.

This *late-career* participant thought that at the time of data collection, the university had provided lecturers with diverse PD opportunities, good incentive policies, and financial support. He suggested that it would be better if the university established compulsory policies to attract more lecturers' attention to PD. Most current PD activities at his institution followed a top-down approach. In his idea, effective PD initiatives should combine both top-down and bottom-up ones.

Loc (*late-career*) reported that English teaching methodologies were more advanced in comparison to those of other majors at his institution since EFL lecturers had more opportunities to access recent developments in teaching methodologies. In addition, upgrading the English teaching curriculum and developing materials were frequent activities in order to meet the learners' needs and improve the teaching qualities.

However, this interviewee stated that the expertise levels among lecturers were not homogeneous. Some lecturers were unaware of the need to engage in PD although

the university and school had provided them with numerous PD opportunities. More than 50% of the lecturers in his school had never attended any PD activities.

This *late-career* participant reported that when planning staff PD strategies, he had experienced many difficulties due to a lack of criteria for the teaching profession enacted by the MOET. He proposed that in order to develop effective PD, the university should establish clear job descriptions when recruiting new lecturers. The MOET should enact criteria for the teaching profession at the tertiary level. Those policies would provide lecturers with more motivation for PD in order to meet the national and institutional requirements.

Tin (*late-career*) emphasised that PD was extremely important to EFL lecturers because of its great effect on teaching. Therefore, whenever he could learn new things from a conference or workshop, he immediately applied them into his classroom. Nevertheless, he sometimes met difficulties in applying new approaches due to overcrowded classes.

This *late-career* participant rarely attended PD activities because they usually occurred at the same time as his classes. He also revealed that in previous years, there had not been many workshops organised by the school that could meet his teaching needs.

Tin explained that to undertake long-term doctoral study, lecturers had to overcome many difficulties such as family and financial constraints. Therefore, he suggested that lecturers who were unable to complete long-term higher education should follow self-study such as reading reference materials or attending short training courses. In addition, the school should reduce the compulsory teaching hours and increase the financial support so that lecturers could participate in PD activities at convenient times.

Thanh (*late-career*) commented that Vietnamese education had witnessed numerous changes in English teaching and learning because of globalisation and the implementation of Project 2020. EFL lecturers had to frequently adopt new teaching methodologies and skills to promote student outcomes.

He noticed that most senior lecturers were not willing to undertake higher education, but the novice ones were more enthusiastic. This participant clarified that some of the reasons he could not follow doctoral study included time constraints, family and financial issues. He also mentioned that since the Vietnamese government's funding for

doctoral scholarships had ended in the previous year, it was more competitive among lecturers to get a scholarship from external organisations or governments.

According to this *late-career* participant, PD activities such as workshops, seminars, and research projects frequently happened at his school. Every month, his department usually organised one informal professional meeting in which lecturers could report teaching difficulties and share research experiences. He recognised that lecturers were motivated to participate in PD because they wanted to gain higher prestige, get students' admiration, and follow the institutional policies.

He stated that one of the strengths of the institutional policies was that the university would cover the registration fee, per diem, and travel expenses if lecturers had a paper presented at a conference or workshop. However, he suggested that the university should simplify the registration and reimbursement procedures for workshops and conferences so that lecturers were more eager to join in those PD activities.

5.3. Summary

This chapter has provided short descriptions on the lived PD experiences of the participating EFL lecturers and academic managers. The purpose of this chapter is to bring their individual stories to light so that some of the variation in experiences and perspectives of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* lecturers can be revealed. Chapter Six will report findings from interviews with the 16 participants presented through a thematic analysis.

Chapter Six

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter delineates the phenomenon of PD through the participating EFL lecturers' and academic managers' views and provides a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences. In general, this phenomenological research aimed to seek answers to one central research question and two sub-research questions informed by the theoretical frameworks provided by Bronfenbrenner (1979), Knowles (1980), and Moustakas (1994). The research questions were:

How do EFL lecturers in one Vietnamese university reflect on their PD experiences?

1. What lived experiences of PD do lecturers report?
2. How do individual lecturers perceive that contextual factors impact their PD experiences?

6.2. Themes

In this chapter, thematic analysis has been employed to present the main findings from 16 phenomenological interviews. Eight major themes developed from the data relating to the research questions:

- Theme 1: Types of PD
- Theme 2: EFL lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD
- Theme 3: EFL lecturers' suggestions for the improvement of the current PD
- Theme 4: EFL lecturers' perceived needs for future PD
- Theme 5: Individual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences
- Theme 6: Institutional influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences
- Theme 7: National influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences
- Theme 8: Global influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences

Following is a presentation of the findings from the interviews with narratives and representative quotations that support and explain each finding. The findings are reported from the highest to the lowest frequency. This means that the most significant aspects of

the findings are presented first, followed by the less significant ones in a descending order. While slightly different questions were asked of the EFL lecturers and the academic managers, I have reported their findings together in order to ensure confidentiality.

RQ1: What lived experiences of PD do EFL lecturers report?

The first sub-research question investigated EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD. Four main themes emerged from the interviews: (1) types of PD, (2) EFL lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD, (3) EFL lecturers' suggestions for the improvement of the current PD, and (4) EFL lecturers' perceived needs for future PD.

6.2.1. Theme 1: Types of PD

Through the interviews, formal PD and job-embedded PD (JEPD) were the two models that the participants had frequently experienced. Table 6.1 summarises the main types of PD activities that EFL lecturers at different career stages engaged in at the time of data collection.

Table 6.1

Participants' PD engagement and career stage

Pseudonyms	Gender	Career stage	Types of PD engaged in					
			Seminars, workshops, and conferences	Guest speakers' talks	Research projects	Textbook development	Professional meetings	Journal article writing
Hanh	F	Beginning	x			x	x	
Hoa	F	Beginning	x			x	x	
Lan	F	Beginning	x		x	x	x	
Trang	F	Beginning	x	x		x	x	
Bich	F	Midcareer	x		x	x	x	x
Cuc	F	Midcareer	x		x		x	
Minh	F	Midcareer	x	x	x		x	
Ngan	F	Midcareer	x		x			x
Oanh	F	Midcareer	x		x	x	x	x
Phan	F	Midcareer	x		x	x		
Hung	M	Late-career	x					
Huong	F	Late-career	x		x	x	x	x
Lam	M	Late-career	x		x	x		x
Loc	M	Late-career	x	x	x			
Tin	M	Late-career	x					
Thanh	M	Late-career	x	x	x			

Note. F: Female; M: Male

6.2.1.1. Formal PD activities

Although the current forms of PD experienced were very diverse, the majority of the interviewees indicated that seminars, workshops, and conferences were formal PD activities that they had experienced in the previous three years. Guest speakers' talks were mentioned by several participants.

Seminars, workshops, and conferences

This category was highly prominent. The overwhelming number of the interviewees (16 of 16) agreed that seminars, workshops, and conferences were the most popular formal PD activities that they had frequently attended.

Trang (*beginning*) stated:

Seminars, workshops, and conferences are considered frequent PD activities that lecturers at my department usually engage in. In particular, each semester, the school regularly organises seminars presented by the teaching staff. The content of those seminars mostly focus on teaching methodologies and research skills. [Trang/Interview03]

When asked about the frequency of her participation in PD, Hanh (*beginning*) said that she often engaged in seminars, workshops, and conferences each academic year. This interviewee recounted her experience: "Last year, I attended three conferences outside the institution and four seminars within the institution. I am always willing to take part in different PD activities" [Hanh/Interview01].

Hoa (*beginning*) reflected that she had more chances to attend seminars, workshops, and conferences organised by her own institution than by other external organisations:

Most seminars, workshops, and conferences run by Project 2020 and the school in my institution are free and call for all EFL lecturers' participation. On the other hand, due to a limitation on the number of participants and the institutional budget, there have been not many lecturers nominated to be involved in PD activities outside the institution. [Hoa/Interview04]

Cuc (*midcareer*) stated: “Every year, I participate in around 10 workshops and conferences organised by my university. I am willing to take part in all formal PD activities organised by my institution” [Cuc/Interview10].

Ngan (*midcareer*) reported her experiences concerning workshops and conferences as follows:

In 2016, I attended seven workshops and conferences. In 2017, I participated in four workshops and conferences. However, in 2018, I did not join in many workshops anymore because I would like to spend more time focusing on my research projects. I realised that the quality of these PD activities was more important than the quantity. [Ngan/Interview13]

This interviewee also noted: “Most lecturers in my department enjoy partaking in international workshops or conferences because they would like to learn from and exchange experiences with foreign lecturers or scholars” [Ngan/Interview13].

Huong (*late-career*) confirmed that seminars were regarded as the most popular PD activity at her school. She thought that this form of PD aimed to enhance lecturers’ research skills as well as teaching methodologies:

Each semester, lecturers can register to present a topic related to their teaching or research problems at a school seminar. This form of PD has attracted many participants in the last few years. Through attending these seminars, lecturers who do not have presentations can also have a good experience learning from other lecturers. [Huong/Interview11]

Lam (*late-career*) said that at the time of data collection, lecturers had received numerous opportunities to participate in workshops and conferences run by Project 2020. This interviewee provided a few examples as follows:

Two years ago, lecturers in my school had a very good opportunity to take part in a workshop run by Project 2020 in collaboration with Queensland University. This Australian university sent some experts to my school to train the teaching staff on new teaching methodologies. Additionally, in the last three years, lecturers have gained many chances to partake in workshops and conferences on testing and assessment or writing

test items organised by Project 2020 in many different universities throughout Vietnam.

[Lam/Interview12]

Guest speakers' talks

Based on the interview results, four of the 16 interviewees revealed that guest speakers' talks were also frequent PD activities that they had experienced in the previous three years.

Ngan (*midcareer*) expressed her enjoyment of presentations by guest speakers from foreign institutions:

I used to participate in a presentation on writing for publication run by an American scholar in my institution. This PD activity was very helpful because it could improve my academic writing skills. As a result, I could make appropriate adjustments in publishing my articles. [Ngan/Interview13]

According to Loc (*late-career*), his school usually invited foreign scholars to present some essential topics such as how to write a doctoral proposal and how to undertake a research project step by step. This participant explained, "The main objectives of those PD activities are to assist junior lecturers who want to undertake higher education and senior lecturers who do not have many chances to develop their profession due to age limit" [Loc/Interview16].

Thanh (*late-career*) showed his experience: "Whenever the school could invite some foreign experts to give presentations, I always enthusiastically attended those talks in order to update professional knowledge and skills" [Thanh/Interview14].

6.2.1.2. Job-embedded PD activities

Affected by the national education reforms and the institutional policies, the greater number of participants said that they had experienced some typical JEPD activities at the time of data collection. These included research projects, textbook and teaching material development, and professional meetings. In addition, journal article writing, students' thesis supervision, and learning and teaching projects were also indicated by a few of the participants.

Research projects

Through the interviews, undertaking research projects was reported by six *midcareer* and five *late-career* participants as the most popular JEPD activity that they had partaken in.

From a *midcareer* lecturer's viewpoint, Phan commented that there had been a big change in lecturers' engagement in undertaking research projects in her school:

Based on the educational reform policies, the number of lecturers undertaking research projects has significantly increased in the last two years. The number of studies carried out by students and supervised by lecturers has also grown in terms of both quantity and quality. [Phan/Interview07]

Similarly, Ngan (*midcareer*) commented that, although in her school there were still some lecturers who had never carried out any research projects, more and more lecturers had gained greater passion for doing research and participated in this form of PD enthusiastically: "Since 2008, I have regularly undertaken one research project at the institutional level each academic year" [Ngan/Interview13].

Lam (*late-career*) discussed his experience related to this form of PD: "Undertaking research projects was very beneficial to enhance the teaching quality and student outcomes, so I frequently do research individually. Sometimes, I also invited several novice lecturers to join in my research projects" [Lam/Interview12].

This interviewee also explained the reason why he usually collaborated with novice colleagues instead of senior ones:

I realise that novice lecturers could take up new ideas more efficiently than the senior ones because the more experienced lecturers seem to be more conservative while the novice ones are more willing to apply new innovations and methodologies into their research. [Lam/Interview12]

Textbook and teaching material development

Of the 16 participants, four *beginning* and five *midcareer* and *late-career* lecturers reported that developing textbooks and teaching materials were JEPD activities that they had participated in at the time of the interview.

Lan (*beginning*) believed that engaging in this kind of PD was very helpful to her career development. She revealed that she had cooperated with more experienced lecturers to develop textbooks in the previous two years:

I have collaborated with one senior lecturer holding a doctoral degree and one novice lecturer holding a master's degree to develop a textbook on English listening and speaking skills and a textbook on English for tourism. We plan to finish these textbooks at the end of this academic year. They can be published at the institutional level.

[Lan/Interview15]

Hanh (*beginning*) remarked:

Half of the teaching materials in my school have used original versions from foreign publishers. However, half of the others have been developed by our school lecturers. I think that through developing teaching materials, lecturers can have more favourable conditions to collaborate with other co-workers and update their professional expertise.

[Hanh/Interview01]

Phan (*midcareer*) commented that developing textbooks was considered a compulsory activity in her institution. As a result, the university specifically allocated annual budget to support this activity. She reported her recent experience related to this activity:

I have collaborated with some colleagues to develop three textbooks on basic English for non-majors. The main objectives of these textbooks are to develop and evaluate non-majors' English language abilities based on the six levels of CEFR. Additionally, I have also partaken in developing some textbooks on English teaching methodologies for training high-school teachers assigned by Project 2020. I think that through developing textbooks, my professional knowledge and skills have been greatly enhanced.

[Phan/Interview07]

Huong (*late-career*) recounted that developing textbooks and teaching materials was an important activity in her department:

Every academic year, my department always registers with the university to develop some textbooks with an aim to upgrade our teaching curriculum. Although this activity has attracted a big number of lecturers' engagement, some new textbooks cannot be published on time due to lecturers' heavy workload. [Huong/Interview11]

Loc (*late-career*) also pointed out that at the time of the interview, the school had put more focus on curriculum and textbook development following the educational reform policies: "Developing textbooks and updating teaching materials are considered regular activities at my school in order to meet learners' needs and improve the teaching quality. I think that lecturers can learn many useful things and skills through these opportunities" [Loc/Interview16].

Professional meetings

This activity was identified by more than half of the interviewees. Particularly, five participants reflected that they regularly took part in formal meetings at the school or departmental level and four participants reported that there were informal meetings that groups of lecturers organised themselves.

Hoa (*beginning*) gave an illustration related to this kind of PD activity:

After finishing higher education or attending workshops in foreign countries, lecturers can share what they have learnt with their colleagues through meetings at the school or departmental level. This is an efficient PD activity which can promote strong collaborations among lecturers. [Hoa/Interview04]

On this point, Hanh (*beginning*) reported that she really enjoyed sharing experiences with other novice colleagues through informal professional meetings:

When having free time, I and some novice lecturers from my department usually get together in a coffee shop to exchange information related to our teaching and research projects. As a novice lecturer, I usually feel more comfortable and confident to discuss professional issues in an informal group meeting. [Hanh/Interview01]

Minh (*midcareer*) recounted her experience: “On the first week of each month, my department regularly organises a professional meeting in which all teaching staff get together to discuss current teaching or research problems. This is a compulsory activity at my department”. She further clarified that through those meetings, lecturers were able to get valuable feedback and advice from their co-workers [Minh/Interview09].

Journal article writing

Because of the institutional policies regarding the stipulated research hours per year for lecturers (see Section 4.3.1), research activities in this institution had developed significantly at the time of data collection. Writing journal articles was regarded as another JEPD activity that could promote lecturers’ expertise. In response to a question about the PD opportunities available to lecturers, five of the 16 participants mentioned that they regularly wrote journal articles. Among these participants, there were three lecturers holding a doctoral degree.

Oanh, a *midcareer* lecturer with a doctoral degree, revealed that after undertaking any research project, she was really interested in writing journal articles. Through the interview, she pointed out specific benefits that she could get from this activity: “I can learn how to organise an article and use grammar correctly from reviewers’ feedback on my articles whenever I have papers submitted to any journals” [Oanh/Interview06].

With reference to this PD activity, Bich (*midcareer*) commented: “I usually write some papers for publication. Last year, I had a paper published in a conference proceedings” [Bich/Interview02].

Lam (*late-career*) also noted that writing journal articles was a helpful way to improve lecturers’ professional expertise because they could learn new knowledge from this kind of activity. As a result, this activity had attracted more attention from lecturers at the time of the interview. However, this interviewee commented, “My school has not proposed any specific policies to encourage more lecturers to write articles for publication” [Lam/Interview12].

Students' thesis supervision

Even though supervising students' theses was not an official PD activity, two of the 16 participants indicated that they had regularly engaged in this kind of activity because they could gain greater professional benefit.

Phan (*midcareer*) identified a positive experience regarding this activity: "When supervising students' theses on a new topic, I had to carefully investigate that topic. As a result, my professional knowledge could be improved significantly" [Phan/Interview07].

Having the same idea as his co-worker, Hung (*late-career*) stated that every semester, the number of bachelor's and master's students in his school carrying out theses and dissertations was very high. He explained in detail:

Although lecturers do not undertake their own research projects, they can learn a lot from supervising students' theses. I believe that it is a good way for lecturers to develop their expertise. Lecturers can also cooperate with their students to publish their research.

[Hung/Interview05]

Learning and teaching projects

Besides JEPD activities such as research projects, textbook and teaching material development, professional meetings, journal article writing, and students' theses supervision, through the interviews, two of the 16 participants stated that they could gain more professional experiences by engaging in learning and teaching projects.

On this point, Bich (*midcareer*) introduced that she had been involved in a project named the Lower Mekong Initiative. This project aimed to create integrated sub-regional collaboration between the United States of America with the five Lower Mekong countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. She commented that "This project has provided me with free access to reference resources and some webinars to help improve my professional knowledge and skills" [Bich/Interview02].

Hung (*late-career*) recounted that at the time of the interview, he was taking part in a project on language development and community change managed by an American professor who had taught many courses on community change:

English lecturers are considered as an important bridge for cultural and educational exchange since they not only teach language but also communication skills. I believe that my engagement in this project is a meaningful activity to develop my expertise.

[Hung/Interview05]

Overall, the participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups indicated that they had experienced a variety of both formal and job-embedded PD activities in the previous three years. Seminars, workshops, and conferences were reported by all participants as the formal PD activities that they regularly engaged in while guest speakers' talks were mentioned by several participants only. In addition, with the exception of seminars, workshops, and conferences, several JEPD activities attracted the greater number of lecturers. In particular, more than half of the participants revealed that they frequently participated in undertaking research projects, developing textbooks and teaching materials, and professional meetings whereas few participants mentioned journal article writing, students' thesis supervision, and learning and teaching projects through their interview responses.

6.2.2. Theme 2: EFL lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD

In the interviews, the participants indicated four main motivators for their engagement in PD activities. These consisted of enhancing professional knowledge and skills, improving student outcomes, gaining financial benefits, and networking.

6.2.2.1. Enhancing professional knowledge and skills

Improvements in professional knowledge and skills were delineated by 12 of the 16 interviewees as the most prominent motivation that PD activities had brought to EFL lecturers.

More specifically, Hoa (*beginning*) expressed her achievement as follows:

My expertise was broadened after attending workshops and seminars. I felt more confident in teaching. I was also able to provide my students with updated knowledge. If

I did not attend any PD activities, my academic life would be boring. I would feel ashamed of myself. [Hoa/Interview04]

Ngan (*midcareer*) reported the benefit she gained through a PD activity:

Two years ago, after attending a short training course on how to undertake an action research project instructed by an American scholar, I could learn more useful knowledge and then introduced several new approaches such as using blended learning or flipped classroom to my students. [Ngan/Interview13]

Oanh (*midcareer*) realised that after she had carried out some research projects, her professional knowledge could be improved significantly. Because teaching and doing research had a close relationship, she could make appropriate adjustments in her lectures. This helped improve her teaching practice. This interviewee provided a specific example:

Based on the results from a research project regarding students' behaviours on using the Internet, I recognised that YouTube was the most familiar website to my students. Thus, I designed some embedded activities related to this website in my lectures so that they could attract more students' attention. [Oanh/Interview06]

Thanh (*late-career*) told that he would like to take part in various PD activities for the following reason:

If lecturers only focus on teaching and do not attend any PD activities for a long time, they easily feel bored with their job. Through PD activities, lecturers can sometimes get together to exchange information and rekindle motivation. Therefore, they can acquire more professional knowledge and skills. [Thanh/Interview14]

Loc (*late-career*) confirmed his belief that when the knowledge level of a lecturer was enhanced, this would certainly lead to a higher quality of teaching:

Despite the important role of modern facilities in the field of English language teaching, lecturers' competence is regarded as the most decisive factor in their achievements. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in PD activities can bring great improvements on lecturers' professional expertise. [Loc/Interview16]

6.2.2.2. Improving student outcomes

In addition to enhancing professional knowledge and skills, nine of the 16 participants acknowledged that improving student outcomes was the main motivator for their PD engagement.

Hanh (*beginning*) stated her reason as follows:

After teaching some courses of basic English, I recognised that most of my students could not fluently communicate in English. As a result, I thought that my teaching methodologies and skills were not effective enough. By attending PD activities, I would like to enhance the teaching quality and improve the students' results.
[Hanh/Interview01]

In the same vein, Trang (*beginning*) believed, “When lecturers can teach more effectively, students can study better, and their learning attitudes can also be strengthened” [Trang/Interview03].

Hoa (*beginning*) told that strengthening student outcomes was her main purpose for participating in PD: “Because lecturers can gain more professional knowledge and experiences through PD activities, those can positively influence students' learning results” [Hoa/Interview04].

Bich (*midcareer*) also explained that students could get more advantages based on lecturers' PD: “As lecturers actively take part in many PD activities, they can build a better classroom environment. In addition, they can be more willing to apply new methods to their classroom” [Bich/Interview02].

6.2.2.3. Gaining financial benefits

Through the interviews, eight of the 16 participants revealed that they could gain financial benefits through their PD involvement. For example, the university paid for tuition fees if lecturers undertook higher education in a domestic institution or counted lecturers' PD activities towards their annual stipulated working hours.

Hanh (*beginning*) reported that she did not initially plan to undertake her master's degree due to family constraints, but the university paid all school fees and allowed her

to be freed up from teaching so that she could completely concentrate on her study. Consequently, she emphasised: “The financial support from the university brought me an encouragement to study my master’s degree” [Hanh/Interview01].

Oanh (*midcareer*) commented that in the previous two years, the university had delivered a better financial policy to support lecturers to engage in PD, so lecturers could gain more benefits when participating in certain activities:

At my institution, if lecturers have a presentation at a school seminar, the university pays for this activity equivalent to 20 teaching hours. To prepare for the seminar, lecturers only need to choose a simple topic related to their practical teaching problems and invest little time, but they can get more financial benefits than other teaching activities. [Oanh/Interview06]

Lam (*late-career*) with a doctoral degree, shared his experience:

The salary of English lecturers is quite low in comparison to that of other jobs. Since gaining a doctoral degree, I have had more chances to be invited as a visiting lecturer by other institutions. Therefore, I could earn more money. [Lam/Interview12]

Similarly, Huong (*late-career*) pointed out that even though lecturers’ participation in PD was not compulsory at her school, lecturers could gain good financial incentives at the end of each academic year if they presented papers at school seminars, undertook research projects, or published journal articles: “The school counts these activities towards the annual stipulated working hours”. In addition, this participant revealed:

Lecturers could receive more chances to be nominated by the head of department to attend PD activities in foreign countries if they enthusiastically and regularly took part in PD. The university was responsible for paying all fees related to those activities. [Huong/Interview11]

6.2.2.4. Networking

In the interviews, three of the 16 participants indicated that they could enlarge their professional networks through engaging in PD activities. However, only *midcareer* lecturers mentioned this advantage.

Cuc (*midcareer*) said:

Even though the topics of some workshops and conferences that I had participated in were not very interesting and irrelevant, I could establish academic networks with experts or lecturers from other institutions thanks to those activities. [Cuc/Interview10]

Bich (*midcareer*) also revealed networking as another advantage of PD opportunities: “By joining in a professional community through Facebook, I could discuss some research ideas and methodologies with professional experts and scholars from all over the world” [Bich/Interview02].

In summary, the majority of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups identified enhancing professional knowledge and skills and improving student outcomes as the most significant motivators for their engagement in PD. Moreover, several lecturers acknowledged gaining financial benefits and networking.

6.2.3. Theme 3: EFL lecturers’ suggestions for the improvement of the current PD

Through the interviews, six prominent aspects for the improvement of the current PD were proposed by the participants: PD should be needs-focused; institutional policies should be strengthened; lecturers’ awareness of the importance of PD should be raised; financial support should be fostered; collegial and management support is needed; and PD should be regular and sustained.

6.2.3.1. Focusing on lecturers’ needs and interests

Fourteen of the 16 participants stated that PD should meet lecturers’ needs and interests. These participants explained that if the university put more focus on their needs for PD, they would be more inspired to take part in those activities.

Hoa (*beginning*) recounted that she used to participate in numerous PD activities, but not all of them were beneficial:

In 2017, I felt very excited when receiving an announcement related to a workshop on testing and assessment organized by Project 2020. I thought the topic of that activity was connected to my current teaching concern. However, after attending this workshop, I was very hopeless because I could not learn any new things. The content was not updated, so it was quite boring. In general, I believe that effective PD should be grounded in lecturers' needs. [Hoa/Interview04]

According to Lan (*beginning*), at the time of data collection, lecturers could easily access many diverse sources of online reference materials. Therefore, if workshops or conferences presented out-of-date or uninteresting topics, those activities would not attract lecturers' interests. This novice lecturer suggested: "PD should be comprehensive, practical, and updated" [Lan/Interview15].

Trang (*beginning*) recommended a solution for enhancing PD through surveying lecturers' opinions:

Before implementing any PD activities, the school should carefully survey lecturers' needs and carry out some pilot activities. Based on the survey results, suitable adjustments should be made so that the upcoming activities could meet participants' demands. [Trang/Interview03]

In the same vein, Oanh (*midcareer*) indicated that when lecturers recognised the usefulness of PD in their career development, they would certainly be willing to participate in those activities. Therefore, she advised: "The school should regularly evaluate lecturers' needs and classify their needs into appropriate groups. After that, PD activities should be implemented based on lecturers' real needs" [Oanh/Interview06].

Ngan (*midcareer*) also commented that PD should satisfy the needs of lecturers:

Successful PD activities should specifically focus on lecturers' expertise to develop their professional knowledge and viewpoint in a positive direction. Consequently, lecturers

could gain high motivation to implement what they had learnt from the previous activities. [Ngan/Interview13]

Bich (*midcareer*) commented: “The school should organize different workshops for different groups of EFL lecturers because the needs for PD of novice lecturers are completely different from those of senior lecturers”. This participant explained that most novice lecturers did not have much experience in teaching and research. As a result, if they attended the same workshops with the more experienced lecturers, it would be very hard for them to keep up with the content [Bich/Interview02].

According to Thanh (*late-career*), instead of only focusing on TESOL, the topics of PD activities should be diverse and related to aspects such as ICT or culture:

In the next two weeks, my school will run a workshop on American culture presented by a Fulbright scholar. I have never visited America in my life, so I feel very excited to attend this workshop. I hope that I can gain more practical knowledge on American culture and society to share with my students. [Thanh/Interview14]

In the same vein, Hung (*late-career*) also raised his need to attend workshops on specific topics such as the advantages and disadvantages of teaching the communicative approach, task-based language learning, and English for global and regional integration. He confirmed: “The interesting topics would attract more lecturers’ attention to PD activities” [Hung/Interview05].

6.2.3.2. Strengthening the institutional policies

Although the university had regulated the number of stipulated teaching and research hours for lecturers each academic year (see Section 4.3.1), the absence of a comprehensive policy to support lecturers’ engagement in PD was regarded as a big barrier to lecturers’ career development. As a result, 12 of the 16 participants suggested that the institutional policies regarding lecturers’ PD should be strengthened.

Lan (*beginning*) discussed that lecturers’ PD would be enhanced if the school established a clearer policy:

At present, lecturers do not have convenient opportunities to raise our ideas regarding the forms and content of PD activities. Almost all PD activities have been assigned by Project 2020 or the university, and then implemented by the school. Therefore, lecturers cannot have proper directions and high inspiration when taking part in those activities as they do not understand the objectives of some PD initiatives. [Lan/Interview15]

This participant continued: “The school has not published any legal or policy framework to prove that when lecturers engage in PD activities enthusiastically, they can receive some rewards or benefits” [Lan/Interview15].

Cuc (*midcareer*) showed her ideas as follows:

The university should establish a twenty-year strategic plan on human resource development proposing specific strategies for PD so that lecturers would have more convenient opportunities to access PD. The school should also prepare for the alternative teaching staff to replace senior lecturers who are going to retire. [Cuc/Interview10]

Huong (*late-career*) also addressed her request for detailed institutional policies related to lecturers’ PD. According to this participant, the school should stipulate the exact number of PD activities that lecturers had to participate in every academic year:

Every lecturer should attend at least three conferences or workshops; have one paper presentation at a school seminar; undertake one research project at the institutional level; collaborate with other colleagues to develop textbooks; and participate in all professional meetings at the departmental level. [Huong/Interview11]

Thanh (*late-career*) reflected that although the university provided some funding for PD, lecturers met difficulties due to the complicated administrative procedures to ask for the institution’s permission or reimbursements. Consequently, he suggested: “The university should simplify the paperwork procedures to create favourable conditions for lecturers’ PD” [Thanh/Interview14].

With respect to this issue, Tin (*late-career*) also suggested that the university should adjust relevant policies so that PD activities became more effective for lecturers:

Lecturers really need some improvements on the quality of PD activities instead of the quantity. In my point of view, the teaching quality and student outcomes are more important than the certificates or degrees that lecturers can get after participating in any PD activities. [Tin/Interview08]

Loc (*late-career*) emphasised that due to a lack of detailed job descriptions when recruiting new teaching staff, lecturers did not recognise the importance of PD. After being recruited to a full-time position, it would be understood by lecturers that they could maintain their job throughout their entire career. Thus, this interviewee thought: “The university should build up clearer criteria for job recruitment to promote the quality of the human resources. This can also raise lecturers’ awareness of their duty to follow continuous professional learning during their profession” [Loc/Interview16].

6.2.3.3. Raising lecturers’ awareness

Nine of the 16 participants stated that in order to encourage lecturers’ engagement in PD, the institution should set up strategies to raise their awareness of the importance of PD across their entire career.

Hoa (*beginning*) recommended: “The school should regularly organise different kinds of PD activities so that lecturers consider their engagement in PD as a habit. This can help enhance lecturers’ awareness of PD” [Hoa/Interview04].

According to Cuc (*midcareer*), at the time of data collection, most EFL lecturers in her department were quite satisfied with their current teaching position because all lecturers held a master’s degree and they thought that their professional qualifications and expertise were sufficiently qualified to meet their institutional and students’ needs. As a result, these lecturers put more focus on teaching rather than investing time for PD activities. She noted:

The academic managers should propose specific directions so that not only lecturers who are keen on PD, but those who are not interested in PD also take part in PD activities enthusiastically and regularly. I believe that it is very important to help all lecturers recognise the importance of their PD engagement. [Cuc/Interview10]

In the same vein, Minh (*midcareer*) explained that lecturers had to continuously update and improve their professional knowledge and skills because PD was an important part in lecturers' career. She suggested: "The institution and school should emphasise the necessity of lecturers' participation in PD so that lecturers are always conscious of this duty" [Minh/Interview09].

Oanh (*midcareer*) stated that in the previous three years, although her institution and school had created numerous PD opportunities for lecturers, it was very challenging to change senior lecturers' beliefs:

It is easier to call for novice lecturers to participate in PD because they are quite active and enthusiastic. In contrast, it can be very difficult to change senior lecturers' thinking if they do not value the importance of their PD engagement. However, if the school forces all lecturers to engage in PD, it can be inefficient. [Oanh/Interview06]

Similarly, Loc (*late-career*) reflected that at the time of this research, the MOET, the university, and the school had offered lecturers favourable conditions and numerous opportunities to participate in PD. Nevertheless, due to lecturers' lack of consciousness of the necessity of PD in their career growth, several lecturers at his school had never attended any PD activities: "Raising lecturers' awareness of the value of PD is one of the most important duties for academic managers in my school because most lecturers do not proactively engage in PD activities" [Loc/Interview16].

6.2.3.4. Providing financial support

Building on the previous section's focus on raising lecturers' awareness, another important aspect for PD improvement identified by eight of the 16 participants was receiving good financial support from their government and university.

As a *beginning* lecturer, Hoa highly acknowledged the importance of achieving a doctoral degree for her career development. Therefore, she conveyed a high expectation for financial support from the Vietnamese government. More specifically, this interviewee recommended: "Because the Project 2020's funding for doctoral study ended last year, the government and MOET should build other new projects as soon as possible to assist lecturers' higher education" [Hoa/Interview04].

Ngan (*midcareer*) clearly indicated the importance of financial assistance as follows:

It is very challenging to win a doctoral scholarship even though I have applied for a scholarship from different external organisations many times. As a result, I always expect that the university could provide the financial support for my doctoral study in a foreign country. [Ngan/Interview13]

Besides calling for financial assistance for formal higher education, five of the interviewees emphasised that more budget should be invested to enhance other PD activities. Cuc (*midcareer*) explained that PD activities usually cost a lot of money, so she suggested: “Every academic year, the school should select some EFL lecturers to take turns for attending several exchange programmes in foreign countries”. This participant thought that, in this way, the university could save money, and all lecturers could be provided with equal opportunities to attend this form of PD [Cuc/Interview10].

Hung (*late-career*) provided an illustrative example related to the financial support of an American university where he earned his doctoral degree five years before:

According to that institution’s regulations, Ph.D. students or lecturers could apply for a conference grant once every year. If they had a paper accepted by a domestic workshop, they were supported with US\$400. If their paper was presented at a workshop abroad, they would be granted US\$900. They could also call for external funding sources. [Hung/Interview05]

This interviewee also commented:

It usually takes a long time for lecturers in my institution to apply for a conference or research grant while the funding is not supportive enough. I propose that the university should increase the financial support to encourage lecturers’ PD. [Hung/Interview05]

6.2.3.5. *Obtaining collegial and managerial support*

As well as calling for more financial support, seven participants mentioned gaining support from colleagues and academic managers as the fifth aspect for PD enhancement.

Phan (*midcareer*) raised her suggestions concerning collegial and managerial support as follows:

Because collaboration is an important aspect in promoting lecturers' professional growth, it is essential for the university, the school, and the department to work together and provide lecturers with on-going support so that they could achieve PD objectives and maintain their job position. [Phan/Interview07]

Cuc (*midcareer*) proposed that the university should cooperate with other universities within the Southeast Asian region or English-speaking countries to organise lecturers' exchange programmes:

EFL lecturers can teach at their own institution in one semester and then transfer to another foreign university next semester. Thanks to this model, the university can gain more financial benefits since it only needs to pay for travelling and living expenditures of one lecturer instead of sending around many students to study abroad at the same time. I strongly believe that this activity can significantly enhance lecturers' PD. Besides, collaborative relationships among universities can be strengthened effectively. [Cuc/Interview10]

Recognising the importance of managerial support for lecturers' PD, Hung (*late-career*) commented that if an organisation wanted to be successful, academic managers should clearly understand the needs for PD of all lecturers to give them sufficient assistance. He recommended: "Academic managers should provide their staff with constant support and set specific institutional objectives so that all lecturers could work in the same direction" [Hung/Interview05].

Lam (*late-career*) voiced a different idea from Hung. He pointed out that because the university had not imposed any mandatory policies on lecturers' PD, it was very hard to require the staff to frequently attend PD activities:

I usually asked my staff to raise their specific needs for PD at monthly departmental meetings, but they seldom gave any suggestions or ideas. As a result, I met many difficulties in setting up an appropriate PD plan for my department. [Lam/Interview12]

Thanh (*late-career*) recommended that the school should strengthen collaborations among departments and lecturers. This participant gave an example:

The English Teaching Methodology Department could assist the English for Non-majors and Specialized English Department by sending more experienced lecturers to evaluate some observation sessions. Thanks to this form of cooperation, lecturers from different departments could build good collegial relationships and exchange their teaching and research experiences effectively. [Thanh/Interview14]

6.2.3.6. PD of sustained duration

Through the interviews, five of the 16 participants expressed their concerns related to the duration of PD. Each of these participants who raised the importance of engaging in sustained PD were *beginning* and *midcareer* lecturers.

Hoa (*beginning*) revealed that one-shot seminars and workshops were not effective:

It was very helpful to me when being involved in some workshops related to new teaching methodologies or skills. However, after attending those activities, I did not have convenient opportunities to immediately apply new knowledge acquired from these activities to my classrooms, so I have easily forgotten them only a short time later. [Hoa/Interview04]

This interviewee believed that PD should be implemented on an on-going basis to help lecturers transfer knowledge into practice. Therefore, she recommended the school should run periodic rather than one-shot PD activities:

When lecturers have many chances to get together, they can re-evaluate what they have gained from the previous workshops or seminars. They can also discuss some advantages and disadvantages regarding updated teaching methodologies or skills and decide whether they can apply to their real teaching contexts. [Hoa/Interview04]

In the same vein, Trang (*beginning*) stated:

Although I used to be involved in many one-shot activities, they were not very effective.

I think PD activities could be short-term or long-term based on lecturers' real needs, but they should provide lecturers with sufficient follow-up and support during the implementation stages in the classrooms. [Trang/Interview03]

Bich (*midcareer*) suggested: "To be effective, PD should be regularly maintained to allow lecturers to participate in continuous learning". This participant explained that after attending some PD activities, lecturers always needed time to apply new knowledge from PD activities to their teaching and evaluate the outcomes [Bich/Interview02].

Minh (*midcareer*) reported that her department often organized a professional meeting every month: "Regular PD activities could bring lecturers good habits and self-awareness" [Minh/Interview09].

Overall, through the interviews, the participants raised many useful suggestions for PD improvement. Particularly, the greater number of the participants suggested that PD planners and academic managers should put more focus on lecturers' needs for and interests in PD, strengthen the institutional policies regarding lecturers' PD, and raise lecturers' awareness of the value of PD. Moreover, nearly half of the participants stated the necessity of providing financial support and obtaining collegial and managerial support while there were some participants who recommended that PD should be of sustained duration.

6.2.4. Theme 4: EFL lecturers' perceived needs for future PD

In the interviews, the participants conveyed their diverse needs for further PD. They identified a range of activities that they felt would meet their future PD needs including seminars, workshops, and conferences, research projects, higher education, exchange programmes or short training courses in foreign countries, professional meetings, peer coaching or mentoring, research groups, and advanced academic writing courses.

6.2.4.1. Seminars, workshops, and conferences

More than three-quarters of the participants indicated that they wanted to attend seminars, workshops, and conferences in the following three years. Hanh (*beginning*) shared an

experience related to her previous master's study in order to illustrate her needs for future formal PD opportunities:

My master's study has not brought many advantages to my current teaching, so I am not interested in continuing doctoral study anymore. Nevertheless, I realise that it is essential for me to attend more workshops and conferences to update my expertise. Particularly, I wish to be involved in some workshops and conferences focusing on testing and assessment because evaluation approaches to assess student outcomes at my school are not effective enough. [Hanh/Interview01]

This participant also claimed: "I do not have much time to undertake my own research projects, but I can enthusiastically take part in seminars presented by my colleagues every month" [Hanh/Interview01].

As *beginning* lecturers, Hoa and Lan also stated that they would be willing to participate in seminars, workshops, and conferences if those activities were scheduled at times appropriate to their teaching hours. More specifically, Hoa explained: "The objectives of my participation in those forms of PD are to gain more professional knowledge and update a good CV for higher education" [Hoa/Interview04].

Cuc (*midcareer*) showed a strong desire for joining in international workshops and conferences because she believed that these opportunities could provide EFL lecturers with more advantages:

Some seminars, workshops, and conferences organised by my school were not interesting enough to attract lecturers' interest. Consequently, in the future, the university should connect with other universities from developed countries to run some international PD activities with updated topics. [Cuc/Interview10]

Similarly, Phan (*midcareer*) wanted to be able to attend workshops and conferences that were held at the university but that were of a quality equivalent to an international conference, rather than actually go to international workshops and conferences:

Due to the family constraints, I cannot undertake long-term higher education in a foreign country. Consequently, I wish the school can run more conferences and workshops

following international standards so that I can conveniently attend these activities within the institution to advance my expertise. [Phan/Interview07]

Tin (*late-career*) also noted that it was very hard for him to apply for a doctoral scholarship because he was more than 45 years old at the time of this interview. Therefore, he had another suggestion for his PD:

I frequently participate in seminars, workshops, and conferences both within and outside the institution to update my teaching qualifications. I thought that instead of calling for doctoral study, our institution and school should find alternative solutions to support senior lecturers who cannot continue higher education. For instance, the school should frequently launch more conferences, workshops, and other PD initiatives within the institution. Thanks to these activities, many senior lecturers can gain more favourable conditions and higher inspiration for PD. [Tin/Interview08]

Although the majority of the interviewees mentioned their need to participate in seminars, workshops, and conferences, Loc (*late-career*) emphasised that the number of lecturers in his school participating in these activities was still very limited. He indicated his requirement for lecturers' participation in those activities as follows:

About 50% of lecturers do not regularly and voluntarily attend seminars and workshops. Therefore, when composing a next-year plan for PD, I will propose 100% of lecturers in my school should participate in at least one workshop or seminar every semester. [Loc/Interview16]

6.2.4.2. Research projects

In the interviews, the participants reported that their government and institution had launched some encouraging financial policies in order to enhance lecturers' participation in research activities. Consequently, 10 of the 16 participants hoped to undertake more research projects in the following three years.

Ngan (*midcareer*) desired to carry out one action research project each academic year to develop a good CV for her doctoral study. Additionally, she revealed: "I am

interested in supervising students' theses with more diverse topic areas so that my professional knowledge and research skills can be enhanced" [Ngan/Interview13].

Minh (*midcareer*) intended to launch a movement on action research projects in her department with the aim of raising lecturers' awareness of the importance of research activities in English learning and teaching:

Every semester, lecturers can choose a relevant topic related to their practical teaching problems and carry out an action research on this topic. At the end of the semester, the department can organise a *Writing Week* in which lecturers get together to write their research proposals. If they get stuck, they can immediately discuss and ask for support from other colleagues. [Minh/Interview09]

This participant also clarified that at the end of the semester, lecturers had usually finished all their teaching and grading tasks, so it was an ideal period for them to escape from their daily duties and to concentrate on their research projects.

Huong (*late-career*) analysed the necessity of undertaking research projects at the institutional level. From her viewpoint, promoting research activities would not only bring advantages to lecturers but also provide the school with higher prestige in terms of publications: "If lecturers have more research papers published every year, the university can achieve a higher ranking in the academic world" [Huong/Interview11].

In the same vein, Loc (*late-career*) revealed:

Carrying out research projects is considered one of the most important PD activities to promote lecturers' professional knowledge and skills. Therefore, every academic year, my school plans to require 40% of the lecturers participating in the research activities. I have also proposed many incentive policies in order to encourage more lecturers' involvement in this sort of PD. [Loc/Interview16]

6.2.4.3. Higher education

In recent years, as a result of the national education reforms and some national projects (e.g., Project 2020 and Project 911), continuing higher education has been considered one of the most necessary activities to improve lecturers' qualifications at tertiary institutions

in Vietnam. Through their responses, more than half of the interviewees raised an urgent demand for doctoral study to meet the national and institutional requirements.

Hoa (*beginning*) revealed:

I am writing a research proposal and searching for a doctoral scholarship from external organisations. In the next two years, if I cannot win a scholarship to study at an English-speaking country, I plan to study my doctoral degree in a Vietnamese university. I worry that I cannot follow doctoral study when I get older. [Hoa/Interview04]

Bich (*midcareer*) also confirmed that continuous professional learning was very important to lecturers to keep up with the ever-changing world of knowledge. She expressed her big concern for doctoral study in this way:

According to a new proposed legislation by the Vietnamese government, it is compulsory for all university lecturers to hold a doctoral degree by 2025. If lecturers cannot meet this requirement, they can be fired or changed to another job position instead of teaching. Influenced by this policy, undertaking doctoral study is a big pressure to retain my position of a university lecturer. [Bich/Interview02]

Lam (*late-career*) emphasised that developing a high-quality human resource with more lecturers achieving a doctoral degree was one of the strategic plans at his department:

Every academic year, my department often nominates some lecturers to apply for a doctoral scholarship. However, it was very challenging to carry out this plan because most of the teaching staff had family with young children. Therefore, they could not leave their family for doctoral study in a long period of time. [Lam/Interview12]

Loc (*late-career*) also mentioned the importance of promoting lecturers' higher qualifications:

Although the university has not imposed any mandatory regulations on lecturers' doctoral study yet, my school always encourages all lecturers under 45 years old to undertake doctoral study in order to meet the national education reform policies. [Loc/Interview16]

In her opinion, Huong (*late-career*) stated that in the era of globalisation and market economy, promoting lecturers' PD was an urgent need at any educational institutions:

All lecturers at my department have gained a master's degree, but I think that to promote their professional career, some novice lecturers with high English proficiency should continue doctoral study in a foreign country. After finishing their study, those novice lecturers can play important roles in improving future research activities at our institution.

[Huong/Interview11]

6.2.4.4. Exchange programmes or short training courses in foreign countries

Through the interviews, seven participants raised their need to engage in exchange programmes or short training courses in foreign countries since they believed that their professional knowledge and language competence could progress more quickly if they studied in an international environment.

Hanh (*beginning*) sought opportunities for engaging in exchange programmes with other foreign institutions. Nevertheless, she revealed her problem as follows:

I have never had any opportunities to be involved in an exchange programme in a foreign institution. However, I realise that some lecturers have received more opportunities to participate in that kind of PD than others. Therefore, I suggest that the school should provide all lecturers with equal opportunities to attend exchange programmes.

[Hanh/Interview01]

Along the same lines, Cuc (*midcareer*) wished to engage in a short-term training course in an English-speaking country such as Australia or Singapore as she believed: "This form of PD can help improve my professional knowledge and language competence and enlarge professional networks" [Cuc/Interview10].

Minh (*midcareer*) also recognised some benefits of being involved in exchange programmes:

My school managing board had run several exchange programmes with universities from the Southeast Asian region so that lecturers could share specialised knowledge and

experiences with foreign colleagues. After attending these activities, lecturers could apply what they had learnt to their teaching and research. I thought that these good opportunities had brought lecturers higher motivation for professional learning. [Minh/Interview09]

Loc (*late-career*) told how, in the previous few years, the school had established good collaborations with some universities in English-speaking countries with an aim to create more favourable conditions for lecturers' PD:

The school are going to send 15 senior lecturers to attend a three-month training course in foreign universities. These senior lecturers are nominated because of the age limit. They are more than 45 years old, so they cannot have many opportunities to continue doctoral education. However, those lecturers need to improve their language proficiency and teaching skills in order to sustain in their profession. [Loc/Interview16]

6.2.4.5. Professional meetings

One-third of the participants wished their school and department would organise frequent professional meetings to encourage stronger collaborations among the teaching staff. Hoa (*beginning*) reflected that this form of PD did not exist at her department at the time of the interview. Thus, she hoped the department could run monthly informal meetings:

Through informal meetings, lecturers can have opportunities to share their teaching and research experiences. They can also get valuable feedback and suggestions from other co-workers. Additionally, the collegial relationship among the teaching staff can be enhanced. [Hoa/Interview04]

Lan (*beginning*) also commented:

Attending professional meetings can bring lecturers many advantages. Therefore, I think that my department should usually organise this kind of PD so that I can present my teaching difficulties and find out suitable solutions based on my colleagues' suggestions. [Lan/Interview15]

Similarly, Hanh (*beginning*) discussed that it was essential for lecturers to attend informal professional meetings at the school or departmental level. She recommended a specific activity:

Novice lecturers can form a “small reading group” including five or six members. The group should get together twice a month so that every member can share what he or she have learnt from readings with other members. I believe that this activity is beneficial for sharing professional experiences among novice lecturers. [Hanh/Interview01]

Phan (*midcareer*) suggested another idea regarding her need for professional meetings:

After completing teaching any English courses, lecturers need to take part in an informal professional meeting in which they can discuss some of their strengths and weaknesses on teaching these courses with other co-workers. As a result, their colleagues can provide essential feedback to help them overcome some deficiencies and improve the teaching outcomes. [Phan/Interview07]

6.2.4.6. Peer coaching or mentoring

Peer coaching or mentoring was not a prominent PD activity in this institution in comparison to other activities such as workshops, conferences, or research projects at the research participants’ institution. Therefore, only four participants mentioned their need for this type of PD through the interviews.

Recognising some benefits of the peer coaching activity, Lan (*beginning*) clearly identified her need for this activity as follows:

I am a new lecturer with few experiences in teaching. So, I really need to collaborate with more experienced lecturers so that they could give me practical advice and feedback regarding my teaching content as well as methodologies. I also need support from two academic managers or senior lecturers who can write reference letters for my doctoral application. [Lan/Interview15]

Hoa (*beginning*) stated that after reading several articles on peer coaching or mentoring, she realised that this form of PD was very useful, but unfamiliar to lecturers in her school. Therefore, she raised an idea regarding her request for mentoring: “From my own experience, novice lecturers usually hesitate to ask for help from senior lecturers, so the school should assign one senior lecturer to work as a supervisor in order to provide appropriate directions for one novice lecturer” [Hoa/Interview04].

Similarly, Trang (*beginning*) explained that because she was a lecturer with only six-years’ experience, she would like to work with other senior lecturers to gain more valuable experiences:

My school used to organise many workshops on how to write a research proposal, so I and other novice lecturers felt overwhelmed with these workshops’ topics. Now I am only interested in hands-on activities that can direct novice lecturers how to undertake research projects step by step. As a result, I have a strong desire for collaborating with more experienced lecturers. [Trang/Interview03]

Hung (*late-career*) stated: “Novice lecturers could get many benefits through peer coaching or mentoring although this form of PD activity is not very popular in the Vietnamese educational context”. As a result, he suggested, “The school should organise some peer coaching or mentoring programmes to help promote novice lecturers’ professional expertise” [Hung/Interview05].

6.2.4.7. Research groups

Although research groups as a form of PD have existed for many years in developed countries, this PD activity is not well-recognised in the Vietnamese education context. As a result, only two *midcareer* lecturers raised in their interviews a need to participate in research groups.

Oanh (*midcareer*) clarified the necessity for establishing some research groups at her school:

After completing my doctoral study, I wanted to expand research activities among the teaching staff at my school. Thus, I implemented some studies at the institutional level and called for collaborations from some novice colleagues. Thanks to their participation

in my research projects, these novice lecturers had gained essential experience and significant progress. After that, I encouraged them to undertake their own research projects under my supervision. I considered these activities as an oil spill to attract more lecturers' voluntary involvement in research projects. [Oanh/Interview06]

In the same vein, Ngan (*midcareer*) expressed her strong desire for participating in a research group:

Every department should establish some research groups based on significant research areas so that lecturers can work together to undertake research projects or exchange ideas with other co-workers when supervising students' theses. [Ngan/Interview13]

This interviewee also suggested: "This kind of PD should be regularly organized because collaborating with others may bring lecturers more motivation and inspiration" [Ngan/Interview13].

6.2.4.8. Advanced academic writing courses

Even though research activities had become more and more popular at this institution in recent years, only one *midcareer* and one *late-career* lecturers declared that they needed to develop advanced academic writing skills.

Oanh (*midcareer*), with a doctoral degree, showed her desire to attend some courses on advanced academic writing skills:

I do not want to engage in many PD activities anymore because my professional knowledge is good enough. Instead, I hope to participate in some short-term training courses on writing for publication so that I can submit my papers for academic journals with higher reputations. [Oanh/Interview06]

Tin (*late-career*) also raised his requirement for improving his academic writing skills, but his purpose was completely different from that of Oanh. He explained that because teaching the writing skills was quite complicated and required much time be invested, EFL lecturers who were responsible for teaching the writing skills had to continuously update their professional expertise:

I am responsible for teaching many English writing courses for students at different levels. However, due to my heavy workload, it is not easy for me to attend further education to improve my academic writing skills. Therefore, I hope that the school can have some short-term training courses on advanced academic writing skills.

[Tin/Interview12]

Collectively, with regards to lecturers' perceived needs for future PD, the majority of participants hoped to be involved in more seminars, workshops, and conferences because these activities were identified as the most popular type of PD in their institution. It is also notable that in line with the influence of globalisation and the national education reform policies, more than half of participants showed their future expectations for undertaking research projects and higher education. In addition, through the interviews, several participants expressed their perceived needs for engaging in other PD activities including exchange programmes or short training courses in foreign countries, professional meetings, peer coaching or mentoring, research groups, and advanced academic writing courses.

In summary, the first sub-research question examined EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD. There were four key themes developed through data analysis including types of PD, lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD, lecturers' suggestions for PD improvement, and lecturers' perceived needs for future PD. The findings revealed that participants from the *beginning* career stage through to *late-career* stage had experienced many formal and job-embedded PD activities at the time of this research. It is also evident that these participants generally appreciated the value of their PD opportunities. However, there were significant differences regarding the PD experiences among the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups of the participants.

RQ2: How do individual EFL lecturers perceive that contextual factors impact their PD experiences?

The second sub-research question examined the participants' perceptions of the contextual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences. Four key themes emerged from the interview data consisting of (1) individual influences, (2) institutional influences, (3)

national influences, and (4) global influences. Some of these factors were barriers and some of these were enablers affecting lecturers' PD experiences.

6.2.5. Theme 5: Individual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences

Through the interviews, occupational prestige, personal responsibility, and time were revealed by the majority of participants as the three main individual factors impacting their PD experiences.

6.2.5.1. Occupational prestige

According to Ch'ing-Jiang (1994), the occupational prestige of teachers is conceptualised as follows:

The prestige ranking of teachers' work by different members of society engaged in different occupations. Prestige ranking may not represent teachers' actual social status, but is nevertheless a good indicator of it. The ranking of teachers' prestige by different members of society reflects society's general concept of the value of teachers' work. (p. 77)

This category was significant regarding the high number of participants (14 of 16) who reported that occupational prestige had greatly influenced their engagement in PD. When EFL lecturers engaged in many PD activities, they could update their professional knowledge and skills in order to meet the national and institutional requirements. As a result, they could ensure their occupational prestige.

Lan (*beginning*) stated that she did not want to receive negative comments and feedback from other colleagues and students:

I partake in many PD initiatives so that I can become more confident when discussing any teaching problems with my colleagues or students. I hope that my professional knowledge and language competence are highly evaluated by other co-workers and students. [Lan/Interview15]

Trang (*beginning*) reflected that her professional expertise and qualifications were not good enough to meet both the national and institutional requirements: "I regularly

take part in many different forms of PD in order to improve my occupational prestige” [Trang/Interview03].

Ngan (*midcareer*) commented that the school had not imposed any compulsory policies regarding lecturers’ PD yet, so she had to establish her own plan for PD in order to maintain her prestige:

I have some colleagues who are very good at doing research. Therefore, I have collaborated with them to undertake some research projects. I believe that my occupational prestige can be enhanced through the accomplishments of these projects.
[Ngan/Interview13]

In the same vein, Hung (*late-career*) also revealed that self-esteem was the main reason for his engagement in PD activities:

I gained my doctoral degree six years ago and am going to retire in the next few years. However, I regularly undertake continuous professional learning in order to maintain my occupational prestige. I always want my students to be proud of my achievements.
[Hung/Interview05]

6.2.5.2. *Personal responsibility*

In the interviews, personal responsibility was mentioned by 12 of the 16 participants as the second individual factor influencing their PD experiences.

Hanh (*beginning*) confirmed that PD was very necessary to EFL lecturers. As a result of globalisation, lecturers had to continuously update their expertise to meet the ever-changing learners’ needs: “In order to develop their career, lecturers had to actively participate in PD activities instead of waiting for the university to impose compulsory requirements” [Hanh/Interview01].

Phan (*midcareer*) stated that PD opportunities helped update her professional knowledge and skills, so she had to be responsible for undertaking on-going PD activities:

I partake in PD activities to fulfil my responsibility as a university lecturer. If I always stay at the same level of knowledge and experience, it can be hard for me to keep up with social and educational developments in the next 10 years. [Phan/Interview07]

In order to emphasise lecturers' responsibility for PD, Minh (*midcareer*) shared a story told by her teacher at her master's class in an Australian university: "When starting his job, a lumberjack could cut down many trees and earned much money from selling those trees. However, for a period after that, he could not cut down as many trees as he had before". The teacher asked Minh and her classmates if they knew the reason why. All students predicted that because the forest was out of the trees. On the contrary, the teacher explained, "There were still many trees in the forests. Due to intense concentration on cutting trees and obtaining money, the lumberjack forgot to sharpen his axe". At this point, the teacher was indicating that the lumberjack's job of sharpening his axe was a simile for lecturers' engagement in PD [Minh/Interview09]. Through this story, Minh confirmed that lecturers had to be responsible for identifying their individual needs and finding PD opportunities to design and resource their own PD across different stages of their career.

Cuc (*midcareer*) commented that lecturers' PD potentially influenced many generations of students:

My department is responsible for training prospective English teachers from different provinces in the Mekong delta region. After graduating, our students can become EFL teachers at elementary, secondary, or high school level. As a result, if the teaching staff do not acquire enough professional knowledge and skills, we cannot train well-qualified students. [Cuc/Interview10]

In the same vein, Bich (*midcareer*) explained that each teaching career stage was completely different from others, so lecturers should not stay at the same level as their

beginning career stage. Thus, lecturers should be aware of their own responsibility for PD during their entire profession.

Lecturers should not think that the only aim of PD is to enhance the university's prestige.

On the other hand, lecturers should continuously develop their qualifications to keep up with the education reform policies. There is a famous saying "Study, study more, and study forever". [Bich/Interview02]

Tin (*late-career*) advised: "Lecturers should be responsible for their PD engagement. For instance, they should frequently read books or articles concerning their teaching courses or engage in other PD activities such as workshops and seminars to develop their career". This participant continued:

I regularly take part in PD activities even though not all of these activities are effective and beneficial to me. As an English lecturer, I must be responsible for discovering what is happening in the field of English language teaching. [Tin/Interview08]

According to Hung (*late-career*), in the following years, English lecturers would have to continuously update their professional knowledge because the amount of knowledge would be bigger and bigger, and the requirements of students would be higher and higher:

English is popularly used as a language of instruction in schools, so the needs for studying English for basic communication are higher. Thus, lecturers cannot stand still, instead they must be responsible for continuous learning until the end of their teaching career. [Hung/Interview05]

Huong (*late-career*) discussed that lecturers should improve their professional knowledge through workshops, professional meetings, or students' theses supervision: "Because the responsibility of a university lecturer is completely different from that of a secondary or high school teacher, lecturers must be self-conscious of the importance of PD" [Huong/Interview11].

Similarly, Lam (*late-career*) emphasised:

Unlike at the secondary or high school environment, the head of department at the university does not frequently supervise and check whether lecturers have completed their duties or not. Therefore, lecturers must be responsible for their own work rather than report to the head at the end of every week as high school teachers often do. [Lam/Interview12]

6.2.5.3. Time

Time was identified as the third individual influencing factor that 12 of the 16 interviewees had experienced.

Hoa (*beginning*) interpreted that female lecturers experienced more pressure in undertaking PD activities than their male co-workers because they had to spend time on both work and family duties: “If female lecturers do not have good time management skills, they can get stressed easily. I am lucky because my husband works in the same field of education. So, he can sympathise with my busy teaching schedule” [Hoa/Interview04].

Oanh (*midcareer*) expressed her interest in undertaking research projects. Nevertheless, it was very hard for her to balance time for teaching and doing research:

In recent years, I have put more focus on undertaking some research projects, so I have not spent much time on teaching. When judging emulation at the end of the last academic year, some colleagues commented that I did not fulfil my teaching responsibility. [Oanh/Interview06]

Huong (*late-career*) indicated that there were many workshops and seminars often occurring at the same time as her classes: “It was very difficult for me to attend these activities because I could not negotiate suitable schedules with my students to organise compensating classes” [Huong/Interview11].

Of interest, three of the 16 participants reported that they had time constraints due to overcrowded classes, rather than insufficient time within a lecturer’s workload or broader life. For instance, Ngan (*midcareer*) expressed her dissatisfaction with this problem: “Because of the big number of students in my classes, I had to spend much time

on marking and giving feedback on their assignments. Therefore, I did not have much time to invest in PD activities” [Ngan/Interview13].

In the same vein, Tin (*late-career*) told that after learning new teaching approaches or skills from several workshops or colleagues, he recognised that the new knowledge was very interesting and useful. However, he did not have enough time to apply them in his real teaching contexts:

There were often more than 50 students in my Listening and Speaking classes. Therefore, it was very hard for me to apply a new teaching approach such as task-based language learning. Due to time limitation, all students could not take turns to practise the speaking skill in class. I thought that this problem has greatly influenced lecturers’ PD.
[Tin/Interview08]

Overall, in terms of the individual influences, the majority of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups indicated that occupational prestige and personal responsibility were key motivators for lecturers’ PD engagement. In addition, in comparison to the male interviewees, there were more female participants expressing that they could not have many favourable conditions to participate in PD activities due to time constraints.

6.2.6. Theme 6: Institutional influences on EFL lecturers’ PD experiences

As well as the individual influences, five fundamental factors from the institutional contexts that affected participants’ PD experiences emerged from the data. These were finance, management policies and procedures, collegial and managerial support, content of PD activities, and reference materials.

6.2.6.1. Finance

Finance was the first striking institutional factor identified by 10 of the 16 participants through the interviews. There were variable experiences of the provision of funding. For instance, Lan (*beginning*) reported that although she had worked in this institution for several years, she recognised that the university and the school had made many efforts to

encourage lecturers' engagement in PD: "Last year, I had a conference presentation in Thailand and the university paid for the return air ticket, registration fee, and per diem. This really made me feel motivated to take part in more PD opportunities" [Lan/Interview15].

According to Oanh (*midcareer*), the university had offered lecturers good financial support to engage in PD: "In the last five years, I have put more focus on undertaking research projects, developing teaching materials, and supervising students' theses because I could gain higher income through these activities" [Oanh/Interview06].

In contrast, Hanh (*beginning*) reflected that sometimes lecturers had to self-fund some of their PD activities:

There are several free PD activities, but others are not. Therefore, lecturers have to pay for themselves when they would like to take part in their favourite activities. If lecturers receive more financial support from the university, they can be more motivated to engage in PD opportunities. [Hanh/Interview01]

Cuc (*midcareer*) indicated a challenge regarding the financial limitation: "Because the Vietnamese government's scholarship programme funding for doctoral study ended last year, it is more competitive for lecturers to apply for a scholarship from external organizations or governments" [Cuc/Interview10].

In Tin's (*late-career*) viewpoint, at the time of this research, most lecturers did not participate in PD activities enthusiastically due to the limited financial support from the university. He hoped: "In the near future, when the MOET empowers the institution to manage its own finance, lecturers can be provided with more financial incentives to take part in PD activities" [Tin/Interview08].

6.2.6.2. Management policies and procedures

Besides the financial factor, more than half of the participants indicated that their PD engagement was hindered due to inadequate management policies and procedures. Bich (*midcareer*) explained: "Until now, the university only encourages instead of forcing lecturers' involvement in popular PD activities such as seminars, workshops, research projects, and journal article writing". This participant believed: "If the MOET and the

university can establish specific criteria in relation to lecturers' PD, their engagement can be more effective and efficient" [Bich/Interview02].

Phan (*midcareer*) also reflected that at the time of data collection, her school had not set up an annual PD plan and most PD opportunities for lecturers depended on the managers' decisions:

When the academic managers know some interesting PD activities, they will nominate lecturers to take part. Because lecturers do not have the right to choose PD activities that they are interested in, they usually do not feel satisfied with these PD opportunities. [Phan/Interview07]

In contrast, Loc (*late-career*) revealed:

Due to a lack of obligatory policies from the university, some lecturers are not aware of their own responsibility for PD. Therefore, these lecturers have only focused on teaching as many classes as possible to gain higher income. They rarely take part in PD activities organised by the university or school. For instance, when looking at their CVs, I realised that some lecturers have never carried out any research projects or attended any workshops and seminars since 2010. [Loc/Interview16]

Huong (*late-career*) explained the reason why the university should consolidate its regulations regarding lecturers' PD:

Since 2015, my university has issued the stipulated teaching and research hours per year for lecturers. However, although many lecturers did not participate in any PD activities (e.g., workshops, seminars, or research projects), the university has not imposed any fines or restrictions. [Huong/Interview11]

Similarly, Hung (*late-career*) also agreed that irrelevant policies were big barriers that demotivated lecturers' engagement in PD. He commented: "Only lecturers with high patience are willing to take part in PD activities due to the complicated reimbursement procedures" [Hung/Interview05].

6.2.6.3. Collegial and managerial support

Through the interviews, a lack of collegial and managerial support was identified by eight of the 16 participants as the third institutional factor impacting their PD participation. Hoa (*beginning*) revealed that she could not get enthusiastic support from other senior colleagues: “Sometimes, I have to collaborate with lecturers from other departments to undertake research projects because a few senior lecturers in my department are not willing to share their experiences with me” [Hoa/Interview04].

In the same vein, Ngan (*midcareer*) indicated another disadvantage: “Two years ago, the school managing board used to establish several research groups based on lecturers’ interests. However, until now, those groups have not undertaken any studies owing to a shortage of lecturers’ involvement and collaboration” [Ngan/Interview13].

Although highly valuing the importance of staff collaboration to develop their careers, Bich (*midcareer*) experienced some difficulties regarding how collaboration occurred:

When working individually, I could not relevantly determine relevant research topics and procedures due to my lack of research experience. Thus, my papers were usually rejected when submitting to journals since they could not meet publishing criteria. However, when working in groups, some lecturers disagreed with others’ ideas and argued a lot. This made me feel demotivated. [Bich/Interview02]

In his view, Hung (*late-career*) remarked:

Since most lecturers and academic managers in my department are very busy with their heavy workload, they do not have much time to frequently attend professional meetings and build good collegial and managerial cooperation. Therefore, novice lecturers do not have many favourable conditions to share their experiences with senior lecturers. I think that the school should organise peer support programmes to assist less experienced lecturers. [Hung/Interview05]

6.2.6.4. Content of PD activities

As well as the lack of collegial and managerial support, four of the 16 participants stated that inappropriate content of PD activities was a factor at the institutional level that influenced lecturers' PD engagement. Cuc (*midcareer*) commented as follows:

The content of the current PD activities is mostly based on decisions from Project 2020 and the school managing board. As a result, these activities could not meet lecturers' requirements. Consequently, every academic year, the school should survey lecturers' needs in order to decide suitable topics for PD activities. [Cuc/Interview10]

Tin (*late-career*) revealed that some PD opportunities could not meet his teaching needs:

Since 2002, most workshops and conferences run by Project 2020 and my institution have put more focus on English language teaching methodologies and skills. However, I only need to improve my expertise regarding English applied linguistics (e.g., phonology, semantics, and discourse analysis) because I am responsible for teaching these courses. [Tin/Interview08]

Huong (*late-career*) also expressed her dissatisfaction with what she perceived were the irrelevant content of some PD activities:

Sometimes, lecturers in my department got bored with a few workshops and seminars because their content was repetitive and inappropriate to our teaching demands. I thought that some workshops were not very useful, so I occasionally felt regret after spending time on these activities. [Huong/Interview11]

6.2.6.5. Reference materials

Although reference materials can play an important role in promoting lecturers' PD, not many participants reported that a lack of reference materials was an influencing factor. Only one *beginning* and one *late-career* lecturers identified this factor as a barrier standing in the way of their career development. The other 14 participants did not mention this issue in their interviews.

Hoa (*beginning*) revealed a problem regarding the lack of online reference materials in her institution: “I could not get full access to many online databases through the learning resource centre’s website, so sometimes I had to pay much money to download articles necessary for my research” [Hoa/Interview04].

In the same vein, Tin (*late-career*) remarked that his self-study was strongly affected by a lack of reference materials:

The university learning resource centre (library) has not provided lecturers with sufficient reference materials on the field of English language teaching. Moreover, most materials currently available at the centre are out of date. Therefore, I have not got enough reference materials to prepare for my lesson plans and undertake my on-going learning. [Tin/Interview08]

Overall, it is clear that the institutional factors had a greater negative impact on EFL lecturers’ PD experiences than a positive one. Specifically, the findings show that a greater number of participants identified finance and management policies as hindering factors for their PD engagement. Moreover, half of participants considered inadequate collegial and managerial support as an influencing factor whereas the issues regarding the content of PD activities and reference materials were raised by only a few of the participants.

6.2.7. Theme 7: National influences on EFL lecturers’ PD experiences

Through the interviews, nine of the 16 participants reflected that the national education reform policies and some significant projects such as Project 2020 and 911 had affected their PD experiences. Although these national plans had provided EFL lecturers with more PD opportunities such as attending workshops and conferences, and undertaking research projects and higher education, they had also put more pressure on lecturers’ engagement in PD. Lan (*beginning*) commented:

According to the Project 2020’s requirement, all university lecturers had to undertake doctoral study in the next five years. If lecturers do not gain a doctoral degree, they can be fired by the university. Therefore, I must undertake my doctoral study as soon as possible. [Lan/Interview15]

Bich (*midcareer*) reported that in previous years, following the education reform policies, lecturers' professional qualifications had been significantly improved:

It is compulsory for all university lecturers to gain at least a master's degree. At present, 100% of EFL lecturers in my school have gained a master's degree. Especially, in my department, almost 80% of lecturers have received good opportunities to undertake higher education in English-speaking countries, so these lecturers have more practical experiences and knowledge in terms of culture and language than those who have studied in Vietnamese institutions. [Bich/Interview02]

Lam (*late-career*) shared his experience:

In 2012, after taking an English proficiency test required by Project 2020, 100% of EFL lecturers in my school reached the national education requirements, approximately C1 level of CEFR or Band 7.0 of IELTS. However, influenced by the national education reform policies, lecturers have had to continue higher education in order to gain advanced qualifications. [Lam/Interview12]

Thanh (*late-career*) revealed that since Project 2020 was launched in 2008, lecturers had received more opportunities to take part in different kinds of PD such as short-term training courses, workshops, and conferences:

Even though Project 2020 has experienced some limitations such as being unable to recruit the sufficient number of lecturers with qualified English language proficiency to undertake higher education in foreign countries and lacking periodic evaluation, to a certain extent, it has provided lecturers with more inspiration to develop their professional skills and language proficiency. [Thanh/Interview14]

Loc (*late-career*) raised his idea as follows:

Although the Vietnamese government and MOET have invested much money in lecturers' PD initiatives through Project 2020, the results of these activities are ineffective enough to fulfil the Project's objectives due to its lack of compulsory policies on lecturers' participation in PD.

This interviewee continued:

I think that lecturers can be more motivated to engage in different kinds of PD activities if the MOET imposes specific criteria for the teaching profession at the tertiary level.

This can also raise lecturers' awareness of the importance of PD in their career growth.

[Loc/Interview16]

Overall, a high number of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups reported that EFL lecturers' PD experiences were both positively and negatively influenced by the national education reform policies and the national projects. It is notable that the Vietnamese government had put more emphasis on lecturers' PD through implementing several important national plans at the time of this research.

6.2.8. Theme 8: Global influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences

Because of globalisation, the need for studying English for academic, vocational, and communicative purposes has grown remarkably. This has led to the development of ELT in Vietnam. Through the interviews, globalisation was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees as a prominent factor impacting their professional expertise and career opportunities.

6.2.8.1. Professional expertise

Thirteen of the 16 participants reported the influence of globalisation on their professional expertise. Hoa (*beginning*) revealed that her school had required lecturers to adjust their teaching materials and methodologies in order to catch up with the new trends of globalisation:

In recent years, lecturers have used more English textbooks and teaching materials imported from developed countries. Additionally, they have put more focus on teaching four integrated skills of English at the same time rather than each one separately. I believe that these activities have greatly affected lecturers' PD. [Hoa/Interview04]

Lan (*beginning*) said that lecturers must undertake life-long learning during their entire career so that they can keep pace with new professional knowledge and skills:

“Because globalisation has influenced English language teaching and learning, lecturers are always considered as the learners” [Lan/Interview15].

Bich (*midcareer*) thought: “As a result of globalisation, EFL lecturers have received more opportunities to access new teaching methodologies and modern facilities. In addition, they have gained more diverse environments to practise English. Thus, their professional expertise has been developed faster” [Bich/Interview02].

Minh (*midcareer*) expressed that in previous years, people mainly studied English in order to communicate with native English speakers such as Americans, Australians, British, and Canadians. However, because of globalisation, English had become an international language at the time of data collection:

More and more people have studied English as a second or foreign language. English language learning and teaching have become more important and experienced many prominent changes. Consequently, English lecturers must participate in PD constantly so that they can catch up with the modern trends of English language teaching and learning. [Minh/Interview09]

On this point, Phan (*midcareer*) reported that at the time of the interview, globalisation had significantly influenced English teaching at her institution:

The school has implemented several incentive policies with an aim to enhance the qualities of English teaching such as funding more lecturers to attend international workshops and conferences or undertake doctoral study in foreign countries. Consequently, lecturers’ PD has been considered an important factor to promote the English teaching quality of the university. [Phan/Interview07]

Hung (*late-career*) commented:

With the trend of globalisation, the Internet or telecommunications have provided people with more opportunities to approach English. Therefore, the number of English learners has significantly increased. I think that this number can be higher in the next 10 or 15 years. Since the learners’ needs for English have changed quickly, it is very essential for

English lecturers to regularly update their professional knowledge and skills in order to meet these needs. [Hung/Interview05]

Tin (*late-career*) confirmed that lecturers had to constantly update their professional knowledge to meet the higher needs of students in a globalised world. In particular, lecturers had to adapt the teaching content in order to attract students' interests. He gave a specific example: "Nowadays, yoga is considered a very popular spiritual and physical exercise, so I have embedded a few readings and discussions related to this type of exercise in my recent lecture on Health" [Tin/Interview08].

In his view, Lam (*late-career*) explained that lecturers could get more access to modern teaching methodologies as a consequence of globalisation:

Through the Internet or some webinars, lecturers can upgrade their professional knowledge and exchange information with foreign scholars and experts. At the moment, most English lecturers in my school have applied the communicative or task-based language teaching approach instead of grammar translation method in their classrooms. [Lam/Interview12]

In the same vein, Huong (*late-career*) stated that globalisation had brought more favourable conditions for lecturers to communicate in English: "Lecturers can receive more authentic inputs, so their language competency can be greatly improved" [Huong/Interview11].

6.2.8.2. Career opportunities

Besides professional expertise, three participants stated that globalisation had created better career opportunities for EFL lecturers because of people's diverse demands for English. Cuc (*midcareer*) explained:

At present, learners not only learn English for academic purposes, but they also learn English to be able to communicate, read, and write effectively. Therefore, lecturers can gain more career opportunities. However, they must recognise that the learners' needs for English are very diverse in order to make suitable adjustments in their teaching. [Cuc/Interview10]

Oanh (*midcareer*) also identified a positive effect on lecturers' PD as a result of globalisation:

EFL lecturers have gained more opportunities to attend exchange programmes with foreign institutions. Every academic year, lecturers in my department often have some field trips to Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand through lecturers' exchange programmes. These activities are very beneficial in order to develop their career. [Oanh/Interview06]

In terms of the global influences, it is evident that EFL lecturers had to update their PD in order to keep up with the new trends of the globalised world. As a result, there were many participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups commenting that globalisation had positive effects on lecturers' professional expertise and career opportunities.

Overall, the second sub-research question has explored the influence of the contextual factors on EFL lecturers' PD experiences. Four main themes generated from the interview data were individual influences, institutional influences, national influences, and global influences. In particular, the majority of participants indicated that the three individual factors of occupational prestige, personal responsibility, and time had the greatest impact on their PD experiences. In addition, many participants identified institutional factors including finance, management policies and procedures, and collegial and managerial support as both negative and positive impacts while topics of PD activities and reference materials were mentioned by a small number of participants. Moreover, more than half of the interviewees reported the national education reform policies and some important projects as influencing factors. Finally, the majority of participants reflected that globalisation also affected their PD engagement. All these findings signify that the four contextual factors had both negative and positive impacts on the PD experiences of EFL lecturers across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups.

6.3. Composite textural and structural descriptions of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD

This section provides a summary of the findings through composite textural and structural descriptions. As explained by Moustakas (1994), the aim of this process is “to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (p. 99).

6.3.1. Composite textural description of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD

Following the thematic analysis presenting the lived PD experiences of the individual participants, the composite textural description focuses on describing “what” the EFL participating lecturers as a group had experienced with regard to the phenomenon of PD.

Types of PD

With regard to types of PD, the majority of participants reported that they had experienced both formal and job-embedded PD activities. More specifically, the findings indicate that seminars, workshops, and conferences both within and outside the institution were the most typical formal PD opportunities that many participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups had attended in the previous three years. However, some participants showed a greater interest in attending international than locally organised workshops and conferences.

Several participants also identified seminars as a kind of periodic activity regularly run by their institution at the time of this research, so they had more opportunities to join in this form of PD than workshops and conferences. Nevertheless, because lecturers' participation in seminars was encouraged, rather than required, by the university, the number of lecturers who took part in this type of activity was still very limited.

Furthermore, a few *midcareer* and *late-career* participants mentioned guest speakers' talks as formal PD activities that they regularly took part in. These participants explained that since the university had put more focus on enhancing international collaborations with a number of external institutions and organisations, they could gain

more opportunities to participate in these activities. However, some participants reflected that EFL lecturers in their school were not provided with equal opportunities to participate in these PD activities in foreign countries because their participation was often selected and assigned by the academic managers without the selection criteria being made explicit.

It is significant that the Vietnamese government and the research participants' institution had issued more policies to encourage and support lecturers' engagement in PD through several important documents such as the regulations of PD for lecturers at tertiary institutions (MOET, 2013), the regulations of the work entitlements for university lecturers (MOET, 2014b), and the enactment of the internal spending rules within the university (Star University, 2017). As a result, due to the influence of these important policies, a high number of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* participants reported their regular engagement in a range of JEPD activities including research projects and textbook and teaching material development. These findings provide the evidence that the national context has greatly influenced EFL lecturers' involvement in PD.

In addition, many participants also stated that they frequently attended professional meetings in order to develop their career. Several *beginning* and *midcareer* participants highly valued staff collaboration in order to help improve the quality of their teaching. Some *beginning* participants believed that if they were enthusiastically assisted by their senior colleagues through mentoring or peer coaching, they could make quick progress in their profession. Therefore, these participants showed their proactive attitudes to participate in these activities.

There were more *midcareer* and *late-career* participants taking part in writing journal articles for publication than *beginning* academics. It could be seen that because the senior lecturers had achieved deeper levels of teaching and research experiences, it was easier for them to write papers for publication. The responses of these participants indicate that writing papers for publication should be encouraged in this institution because this activity could enhance both the prestige of the university and the individual lecturers.

Through the interviews, some *midcareer* and *late-career* participants also mentioned their regular engagement in students' thesis supervision as a useful PD opportunity. These participants explained that supervising their students' projects provided them with good opportunities to update their professional knowledge. This

finding highlights that at the institutional level, the school and the departments could encourage more undergraduate and master's students to undertake a graduate thesis and call for more lecturers to supervise their students' theses.

Overall, it is notable that, influenced by the national education reforms and some important projects, EFL lecturers had been offered a variety of opportunities to experience diverse types of PD and most of them recognised the importance of their participation in PD. It was also reported that EFL lecturers at different career stages engaged in different forms of PD. Nevertheless, the findings highlight that the distribution of lecturers' engagement in PD activities was uneven among the teaching staff. Due to the lack of a compulsory policy at the institutional level, some lecturers chose not to take part in PD while others participated in many activities.

Motivation for engaging in PD

In terms of motivation for engaging in PD, the majority of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups claimed that enhancing professional knowledge and skills was an important motivator. For example, some participants indicated that they could make suitable adjustments in their lesson plans based on the results of their action research. Moreover, several participants reported that after participating in workshops or seminars, they could learn more professional knowledge, and this certainly led to higher quality in their teaching. These findings suggest that lecturers' professional expertise could be significantly enhanced through their participation in different PD activities.

As well as enhancing professional knowledge and skills, most interviewees across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups stated that lecturers' PD could also help improve their student outcomes. These participants explained that lecturers' professional qualifications and expertise had a strong impact on their student achievement. As a result, the participants felt it was necessary for lecturers to regularly participate in both short-term and long-term PD activities in order to meet the ever-changing needs of the students. Of interest, there were more *beginning* lecturers focusing on student outcomes than the *midcareer* and *late-career* lecturers.

Half of the participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups identified gaining financial benefits as another motivator for their engagement in

PD. Some of them reflected that their teaching salaries was quite low at the time of this study. Therefore, if lecturers developed their professional qualifications and expertise, they could gain more opportunities to earn money. For instance, some lecturers with a doctoral degree could earn extra income easily because they were usually invited to work as a visiting lecturer by other external institutions. Furthermore, the university had established several good financial incentives to support lecturers' engagement in some PD activities. Therefore, when participating in writing journal articles, developing textbooks, supervising students' theses, or undertaking research projects, lecturers could gain greater financial benefits.

Finally, networking was perceived by several *midcareer* participants as another motivator for participating in PD. By being involved in PD activities, lecturers could enlarge their academic relationships with scholars and experts all over the world. Therefore, they could gain more opportunities to exchange new teaching methodologies or professional skills with other colleagues. This finding indicates that EFL lecturers highly acknowledged the value of collaborative PD activities such as lecturers' exchange programs with foreign institutions and professional learning communities.

Overall, the data from this study show that the EFL lecturers' individual motivation plays an important part in their career development. Of interest, enhancing professional knowledge and skills and improving student outcomes were identified as the two most significant motivators by the majority of participants.

Suggestions for the improvement of the current PD

In terms of lecturers' suggestions for the improvement of the current PD, six main aspects were uncovered through the interviews: (1) PD should be needs-focused, (2) institutional policies should be strengthened, (3) lecturers' awareness of the importance of PD should be raised, (4) financial support should be fostered, (5) collegial and management support is needed, and (6) PD should be regular and sustained.

The greater number of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* participants proposed that PD should focus on lecturers' needs and interests. These participants explained that most lecturers were very busy with many individual and professional duties, so they were only interested in PD activities that were practical and relevant to their real teaching and research needs. Moreover, a few participants indicated that they

had experienced several boring and inappropriate PD opportunities because lecturers' needs were not evaluated before implementing these activities. It is notable that not all participants felt satisfied with the PD opportunities provided by the Vietnamese government and their institution at the time of data collection.

Another prominent finding was that many participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups recommended that the institutional policies in relation to lecturers' PD be strengthened. For instance, several interviewees thought that the university should regulate the specific type and number of PD activities that lecturers had to engage in every academic year so that all lecturers could understand and fulfil their responsibility for PD. Moreover, some participants would like the university to simplify the paperwork procedures in order to offer lecturers more favourable conditions when applying for the institutional grants regarding their research projects or conference presentations. These findings indicate that the institutional policies have created a barrier in relation to lecturers' engagement in PD.

In addition to focusing on lecturers' PD needs and strengthening the institutional policies, the majority of *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* participants also recommended the institution raise lecturers' awareness of the importance of their PD engagement. For instance, several participants confirmed that while all EFL lecturers in their school held at least a master's degree, thus meeting the national requirements, some of them did not recognise the value of PD in their career growth. As a result, they did not regularly participate in PD activities. A few interviewees also suggested that the institution should create more favourable conditions to support lecturers' PD so that they could consider their engagement in PD as an integral part of their work. It is evident that raising lecturers' awareness of the importance of PD is one of the key factors affecting the successful implementation of PD initiatives at the institutional level.

Furthermore, half of the participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups suggested that the Vietnamese government and their university should foster financial support for lecturers' PD. More specifically, several participants proposed the government should offer more scholarship opportunities for doctoral study in foreign countries. Some participants also recommended more financial investment in other PD activities such as exchange programmes in foreign countries or workshops and

conferences. These findings highlight that the provision of more financial support is one of the main issues in order to encourage lecturers' involvement in PD activities.

It was found that nearly half of the participants identified obtaining collegial and managerial support as an important aspect for PD improvement. For instance, a few participants stated that academic managers should clearly identify and understand lecturers' needs for PD so that they could draw out relevant strategic plans in order to support their staff development. Several interviewees also suggested more collaboration among the teaching staff and departments within their school so that lecturers could have opportunities to exchange teaching and research experiences with their colleagues. In addition, some interviewees proposed that the university should enhance its international relations with foreign universities in order to help lecturers exchange professional information with outside experts. These findings show that collegial and managerial support plays a vital role in lecturers' engagement in PD.

Finally, the participants made suggestions regarding the timing of PD. According to some participants, PD activities should be carried out regularly to support lecturers' continuous learning. These participants stated that one-shot workshops or PD opportunities could not provide lecturers with great progress and motivation because after participating in these activities, lecturers could not immediately transfer the new knowledge into their practice. This finding indicates that PD activities of sustained duration may help lecturers acquire new knowledge easily.

Perceptions of the future PD needs

Through the interviews, the participants' perceived needs for future PD opportunities were also explored. In particular, a greater number of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups reported their needs for seminars, workshops, and conferences. However, many *beginning* and *midcareer* lecturers would like to be involved in many seminars, workshops, and conferences within and outside the institution. Some *late-career* lecturers explained that because of their age and their responsibilities for family and professional duties, it would be better for them to only attend some short-term workshops and conferences instead of undertaking long-term PD activities. These findings demonstrate the varied needs for specific PD types of EFL lecturers across different career stages.

Due to the requirements from several national initiatives such as Project 2020 and Project 911, more than half of the interviewees expressed their future expectations for undertaking research projects and higher education. In particular, many participants from the *midcareer* and *late-career* groups indicated their intention to carry out action research in related to their teaching problems. These lecturers believed that through undertaking action research projects, they could re-evaluate their current teaching practice and strengthen their professional expertise. These findings show that the national policies have influenced EFL lecturers' needs for particular types of PD activities.

With regard to undertaking higher education, many interviewees raised their urgent need for doctoral study in order to meet the national requirement and maintain their job position as a university lecturer. Several *beginning* and *midcareer* interviewees worried that if they did not upgrade their professional qualifications, they could be fired by their institution in the following five years. However, some *late-career* lecturers explained that they could not undertake long-term doctoral study due to time and family constraints and age limits. As stated in the interviews, most of the scholarship programmes only recruited applicants aged under 45 years old. Consequently, in comparison to their senior colleagues, more *beginning* and *midcareer* lecturers expressed a greater expectation for undertaking their doctoral study in a foreign country.

Compared to seminars, workshops, conferences, research projects, and higher education, fewer participants expressed a need for other PD activities. However, several participants would like to take part in future exchange programmes or short training courses in foreign countries in order to develop their English language proficiency, professional expertise, and exchange information with foreign colleagues. Some lecturers commented that they were not offered equal opportunities across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups to participate in these PD activities. It could be understood that the institutional policies were not sufficiently clear to make lecturers feel motivated to engage in these activities.

A few participants also called for more professional meetings in the future. These participants believed that through school or departmental meetings, they could learn and develop their professional knowledge and skills effectively from their colleagues' feedback and suggestions. More *beginning* lecturers showed a greater need for this type of PD in compared to the *midcareer* and *late-career* lecturers.

Although peer coaching or mentoring was not a popular activity in this institution at the time of this research, some *beginning* lecturers revealed that they would like to participate in this type of PD. It could be seen that these participants highly valued support from their academic managers and co-workers, so they thought this type of PD was essential to develop their future career. The findings regarding professional meetings and peer coaching or mentoring signify that collaborative PD activities are important for lecturers' career development.

Several interviewees also showed their interests in attending future research groups and advanced academic writing courses because these activities were not only useful to the career growth of individual lecturers, but they also helped enhance the scientific research movement in their institution. However, it is notable that the university did not put much emphasis on these types of PD at the time of this research.

Overall, the data from this study reveal that lecturers' perceived needs for future PD opportunities varied across their different career stages. As some *beginning* and *midcareer* lecturers would like to upgrade their CV in order to undertake higher education and develop their future career, they were very clear in articulating their need for particular types of PD. On the other hand, several *late-career* lecturers believed that their professional knowledge and skills were good enough to complete their assigned teaching responsibilities, so their PD needs were not high. These findings demonstrate that EFL lecturers' needs for PD have been strongly affected by their contextual factors.

6.3.2. Composite structural description of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD

The composite structural description is a way of exploring "how" the participants as a group experienced the impact of contextual factors on their PD engagement. The aim of this process is "to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words the 'how' that speaks to conditions that illuminate the 'what' of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99).

Individual influences

Regarding individual influences, the participants identified three significant factors affecting their PD experiences including (1) occupational prestige, (2) personal

responsibility, and (3) time. Occupational prestige was stated by almost all participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups as the first prominent aspect. It was found that one of the main purposes for lecturers' involvement in PD was to update their expertise and qualifications in order to enhance their professional prestige. For example, some participants revealed that they did not want to receive negative feedback and comments from their colleagues or students, so they had to take part in PD activities regularly. They were especially aware that, in the following few years, when the university became financially autonomous, there could be higher competition among universities and the teaching staff. As a result, it was essential for EFL lecturers to be aware of the importance of PD so that they could develop their individual plans for continuous professional learning.

Personal responsibility was reported by the majority of participants as the second individual factor impacting their PD experiences. In order to fulfil the national and institutional requirements, lecturers could not stay at the same level of knowledge and experience during their entire career. Instead, the participants recognised they had to continuously update their professional expertise so that they could keep up with new developments in education and meet the ever-changing requirements from the national education reform policies as well as their institution. These two findings regarding lecturers' occupational prestige and personal responsibility have been greatly affected by the Vietnamese culture indicating that lecturers are always put in a high position in society with respect to other people. As a result, lecturers took part in PD initiatives in order to maintain their prestige and fulfil their professional duties.

Time was stated as the third individual factor. Many interviewees explained that they could not participate in different kinds of PD activities due to time constraints. More specifically, heavy workload hindered lecturers' engagement in some activities such as self-study, professional meetings, workshops, conferences, and research projects. Female participants had experienced more difficulties in investing time for PD opportunities in comparison to their male colleagues because they had to spend much time fulfilling their family duties.

Institutional influences

In terms of institutional factors, the participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups identified five prominent influencing aspects. These included (1)

finance, (2) management policies and procedures, (3) collegial and managerial support, (4) content of PD activities, and (5) reference materials.

Finance was indicated as the first significant factor by many participants. Although the university had increased its financial investment in lecturers' PD at the time of data collection, several participants reflected that they were not provided with financial support for all necessary activities. As a consequence, sometimes lecturers had to self-fund their preferred PD activities. Some *beginning* and *midcareer* participants reported experiencing financial difficulties in undertaking higher education because the Vietnamese government's funding for doctoral study had ended in the previous year. Therefore, the university could not afford to support lecturers' long-term higher education in foreign countries. At the school level, the academic managers could not regularly run PD initiatives for the teaching staff because the annual funds for PD relied mainly on the institutional expense policies. These findings indicate that financial investment plays a crucial part in encouraging lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD activities.

The second institutional aspect impacting EFL lecturers' PD engagement was the management policies and procedures. The majority of *midcareer* and *late-career* participants disagreed with the existing institutional policies. For instance, some participants revealed that they felt demotivated to participate in PD activities because of the complex procedures to get reimbursements from the institution. In addition, although the university issued the stipulated working hours per year for lecturers, without compulsory policies regarding lecturers' engagement in PD, some lecturers rarely took part in PD activities. Several interviewees also reflected that their university and school did not propose a specific annual plan for lecturers' PD and most activities largely depended on the academic managers' decisions. As a result, these activities did not always attract lecturers' interest.

Collegial and managerial support was indicated by half of the participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups as the third institutional factor. Some lecturers explained that it was necessary to build good relationships among the teaching staff because peer support played an important role in their career development. However, although the school had formed several research groups relevant to lecturers' expertise and interests in the previous two years, many lecturers could not engage in research projects due to their teaching workloads and family constraints. Several

beginning lecturers also reflected that they did not have many opportunities to exchange teaching and research experiences with more experienced lecturers due to a lack of collegial collaboration. These findings emphasise the importance of collegial and managerial support in facilitating lecturers' PD.

In addition, the data from this study show that the content of PD activities influenced lecturers' PD participation. Some *midcareer* and *late-career* participants commented that most PD activities within their institution followed a top-down approach, with the content of these activities assigned by Project 2020 or the school's managing board rather than coming from lecturers' real needs. For example, several lecturers stated that there were many workshops focusing on teaching methodologies while they would like to attend more workshops on English applied linguistics such as phonology, semantics, or pragmatics. Therefore, these PD initiatives did not attract lecturers' participation due to repetitive or irrelevant content. This finding reveals that several PD activities that lecturers engaged in were not actually based on their felt needs.

Finally, some participants reported a lack of reference materials as the fifth aspect hindering EFL lecturers' engagement in PD. In order to develop self-study or life-long learning, lecturers needed access to diverse sources of reference materials. However, several participants said that most reference materials available at their institution were out of date, so they could not keep up with the new trends and developments in the field of ELT. Besides, lecturers could not get full access to many online databases relevant to their research areas due to the limited number of databases provided by the university's learning resource centre. The finding shows that several essential conditions to support lecturers' PD needed to be improved in this institution, such as acquiring more reference materials and online databases appropriate to lecturers' PD needs.

National influences

As well as the individual and institutional influences, more than half of participants across each of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups indicated that national factors also greatly affected their PD experiences. In particular, at the time of data collection, the Vietnamese government had put more attention on and invested more money into lecturers' PD, so the participants revealed that they had been offered more favourable opportunities to develop their professional qualifications. On the other hand, a few participants reported that following the requirement from Project 2020, in 2012, EFL

lecturers had to take a language test in order to check whether their English proficiency could reach C1 level of CEFR or Band 7.0 of IELTS or not. Lecturers who could not achieve these standards were required to participate in an English training course delivered by the Vietnamese MOET and retook the test until they passed. A few lecturers stated that they felt stressed due to this compulsory policy from the national level.

In addition, under the national education reform policies, most EFL lecturers had been put under more pressure to undertake doctoral education. This could explain why the participants felt the need for undertaking further study during their entire career so that they could fulfil the ever-changing national demands.

Global influences

Together with the individual, institutional, and national influences, global factors were reported by the majority of the interviewees as the fourth aspect impacting lecturers' professional expertise and career opportunities. More specifically, since the learners' needs for English were very diverse at the time of this research, EFL lecturers continuously updated their professional knowledge and skills in order to meet their learners' needs and keep up with new and modern teaching trends in developed countries.

Many participants across all of the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups stated that English as a global language offered EFL lecturers numerous opportunities to undertake higher education and exchange programmes in foreign countries as well as enlarge international collaborations. As a consequence, their professional expertise had greatly progressed.

In summary, the findings of this study demonstrate that EFL lecturers' PD experiences were both negatively and positively affected by the individual, institutional, national, and global factors. More details concerning these contextual influences will be discussed in the Section 7.2.2.

6.4. Summary

This chapter has employed thematic analysis to report the main findings from the 16 phenomenological interviews. There were eight emergent themes including four textural ones (types of PD, motivation for engaging in PD, suggestions for the improvement of the current PD, and perceived needs for future PD), and four structural ones (individual

influences, institutional influences, national influences, and global influences on lecturers' PD experiences). Based on these themes, the composite textural and structural descriptions of "what" and "how" the participants as a group experienced PD were developed. It is clear that there were prominent differences regarding the PD experiences among the *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* groups of participants. In addition, the individual, institutional, national, and global factors showed both negative and positive effects on EFL lecturers' PD experiences. In the next chapter, a detailed discussion of the findings presented here and drawing on the literature on PD, as well as the theoretical frameworks by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Knowles (1980), will be provided through a phenomenological textural-structural synthesis (Moustakas, 1994) of the EFL lecturers' PD experiences and contextual influences on their PD experiences.

7.1. Introduction

Influenced by globalisation, improving English language teaching and learning has been considered one of the key emphases of the national education reforms in Vietnam, and teachers' PD plays a vital part in the effort to promote the quality of ELT. Although extensive international literature has emphasised the importance of teachers' PD, little attention has been paid to how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers experience PD opportunities under the setting of the educational changes. This study has attempted to enhance the limited empirical literature located within the Vietnamese context by investigating the lived PD experiences of tertiary EFL lecturers and the interaction between different contextual factors that influence their PD experiences. These main aspects are important to scrutinise when planning, organising, and delivering effective PD programmes for EFL lecturers in higher education in Vietnam.

This research employed a phenomenological approach to collect qualitative data through phenomenological interviews supported by document analysis in order to answer the central research question and two sub-research questions:

How do EFL lecturers in one Vietnamese university reflect on their PD experiences?

- What lived experiences of PD do lecturers report?
- How do individual lecturers perceive that contextual factors impact their PD experiences?

This chapter analyses, interprets, and synthesizes the findings regarding EFL lecturers' PD experiences and the contextual influences on their PD experiences through a phenomenological textual-structural synthesis as proposed by Moustakas (1994). The aim of this chapter is to provide interpretive insights into the findings from the 16 phenomenological interviews with the participants and the document analysis. The discussion draws upon the literature on PD together with ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) as theoretical framings for my analysis and interpretation.

7.2. Textural-structural synthesis of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD

As explained by Moustakas (1994), the final process of phenomenological data analysis involves integrating the composite textural and structural descriptions in order to create a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience. This first part of the chapter is organised into three main sections which collectively present the synthesis as well as my reflection throughout the research study, leading to the essence of PD experiences of tertiary EFL lecturers:

- EFL lecturers' experiences of PD
- The contextual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences
- The essence of EFL lecturers' PD experiences

7.2.1. EFL lecturers' experiences of PD

Through the theory of andragogy, Knowles (1980) introduced six key principles of adult learning including (1) learner's need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) prior experience of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learn, and (6) motivation to learn. In support of Knowles' theory, Holton et al. (2001) argued that "The key principles of adult learning are believed to enable those designing and conducting adult learning to design more effective learning processes for adults" (p. 119). These important principles provide my study with a solid foundation for explaining the PD experiences of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers who are adult learners. This section starts with a comprehensive discussion on how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers had experienced their engagement in PD opportunities before moving to focus on their perceived needs for future PD in ELT settings.

7.2.1.1. Lecturers' previous and current engagement in PD

According to Craft (2000), the approaches and activities of PD that teachers participate in have changed remarkably over time in relation to organisation and methods. Joshi et al. (2018) distinguished two main approaches including formal PD (e.g., workshops, conferences, meetings, and courses) and JEPD (e.g., observing demonstration lessons, coaching or mentoring, study groups, reflecting on specific classroom practices, action

research, planning lessons, and sharing of best practices). The findings of this study show that EFL lecturers across the three groups of *beginning*, *midcareer*, and *late-career* had experienced numerous formal and job-embedded PD activities in the previous three years.

Formal PD

Regarding their engagement in formal PD, most EFL lecturers and academic managers reported that they had engaged in seminars, workshops, and conferences. This finding is aligned with Nana's (2017) research indicating that seminars, workshops, and trainings have offered teachers opportunities to keep informed about the latest issues of English teaching and to share experiences with other colleagues. Teachers acknowledge these activities can help improve their teaching quality. However, this finding is not supported by some scholars (e.g., Borko et al., 2010; Ling & Mackenzie, 2015) who have argued that even though formal PD can help promote teachers' professional knowledge, this approach may not result in remarkable changes in teaching practice. My study demonstrates that, within the context of Vietnamese higher education, formal PD activities still play a valued role in lecturers' professional growth.

Job-embedded PD

As well as formal PD, the data from my study indicate that there has been an increasing trend regarding lecturers' involvement in JEPD. The greater number of participants reported that they had experienced JEPD activities (e.g., research projects, textbook and teaching material development, and writing papers for publication). The findings from my analysis of national and institutional documents show that, besides their teaching duties, lecturers were encouraged to engage in key JEPD initiatives such as textbook or teaching material development and scientific research projects (e.g., MOET & MOHA, 2014; Star University, 2019a; Vietnam National Assembly, 2018; Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012). The school statistics also indicate that the number of EFL lecturers participating in JEPD activities had increased considerably in previous years. Both the number of lecturers who had undertaken research projects and textbook development and the number of research works published had increased enormously. (School A, 2016; 2017; 2018). The evidence from my study has confirmed the perceived value of engaging in JEPD opportunities in order to develop EFL lecturers' career.

My study corroborates one of the findings from Nguyen's (2012) research revealing that teachers experienced significant development through participating in JEPD, particularly, curriculum development. Similarly, Phuong and McLean (2016) found that Vietnamese lecturers acknowledged research-related activities as a fundamental part of their PD experience. The findings from my study also support international literature. For example, Joshi et al. (2018) clarified that JEPD can promote teaching practices, students' learning, and teachers' development. Mohan et al. (2017) argued that formal PD is considered as teacher-centred and ineffective while JEPD is grounded in teachers' day-to-day teaching practice with the aim of improving student outcomes. In the same vein, Cavazos et al. (2018) confirmed that the JEPD is an approach that accommodates teachers' diverse levels of knowledge and experience in order to fulfil the diverse needs of their students.

It is evident that after the initiation of several important national projects such as Project 2020 and Project 911, EFL lecturers had been offered many opportunities to experience a wide variety of formal and JEPD activities. However, my findings also reveal that lecturers reported few experiences related to collaborative PD activities. The participants expressed their need for more collaborative PD experiences which will be discussed in greater detail in Section 7.2.2.2 below.

PD at different career stages

This study has identified that although EFL lecturers and academic managers indicated their positive experiences of both formal and job-embedded PD, they engaged in different approaches to PD at different stages of their career. In particular, the *beginning* EFL lecturers reported being highly enthusiastic about taking part in all types of PD opportunities available to them as they thought that most PD activities they had been involved in were essential to develop their career. On the other hand, the *midcareer* and *late-career* lecturers tended to take part in more JEPD activities. Drawing on the third and sixth principles of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980), this suggests that EFL lecturers, as adult learners, have internal rather than external motivation for their involvement in PD, and their perceptions of the value of different forms of PD are influenced by their level of experience. Since the *midcareer* and *late-career* EFL lecturers had achieved more advanced levels of professional knowledge and skills compared to the *beginning* ones, they only chose to take part in PD opportunities that they felt were

important and applicable to enhance their expertise. This helps explain why more *midcareer* and *late-career* EFL lecturers than *beginning* ones reported that they had experienced JEPD activities such as writing papers for publication, undertaking action research projects, and supervising students' theses as PD.

The data from my study have provided further support for previous literature. Particularly, Topkaya and Yelik (2016) explained that "teaching is a developmental process and within this process there are identifiable growth patterns having unique characteristics which are called career stages" (p. 6). Rodríguez and McKay (2010) argued that senior teachers differed from novice teachers because they only took part in PD opportunities that affirmed the knowledge, experience, and intuitive judgment they had accumulated during their teaching careers. Similarly, Mahmoudi and Özkan (2015) found that both novice and experienced teachers gained benefits from PD activities, but they experienced different types of PD. My study contributes a clearer understanding of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' engagement in PD activities at different stages of their career.

In summary, the findings of this study highlight that the participants highly acknowledged the value of formal and JEPD activities in EFL lecturers' professional growth. Lecturers' choice of PD opportunities was, however, affected by the stage of their career. The evidence from this study suggests the need to take into account individual differences in meeting lecturers' PD needs, an issue that will be discussed in Chapter Eight. The next section discusses lecturers' perceived needs for future PD opportunities.

7.2.1.2. Lecturers' perceived needs for further PD

As understanding teachers' needs is an important aspect of facilitating the planning and implementing of effective PD, numerous studies have investigated the PD needs of teachers (e.g., Khandehroo et al., 2011; Koç et al., 2015; Park, 2013; Spencer et al., 2018). The data from my study show that EFL lecturers and academic managers expressed a strong need for content-focused, on-going, collaborative, and career-stage specific PD activities in the future.

Content-focused PD

In terms of PD content, the participants reflected that in the previous three years, EFL lecturers had been involved in many workshops and short-term training courses focusing on teaching methodologies, classroom management, and research skills. Instead, lecturers expressed a wish to engage in more PD opportunities that could address specific needs they had in the classroom such as areas of English applied linguistics (e.g., phonology, phonetics, semantics, or pragmatics) and foreign cultures (e.g., American or British culture). The second principle of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980) suggests that EFL lecturers, as adult learners, are self-directed and autonomous, so they understand their own specific needs for topics of PD activities.

Within the Vietnamese ELT context, PD content has been delineated as “theory-based, formal, and irrelevant to teachers’ needs” (Nguyen et al., 2020, p. 82). Because content knowledge helps teachers make informed pedagogic decisions, instead of exploring current pedagogical practices, they are more interested in acquiring content-related knowledge and knowledge that they could instantly apply within their classroom contexts (Nguyen, 2012). This finding reinforces points argued by other international scholars (e.g., Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2011; Labone & Long, 2016) that PD should be content relevant and concentrate on specific differences in teachers’ needs. The data from my study reveal that EFL lecturers have their own preferred topics of PD. In other words, they are active not passive participants, and meeting their expectations will influence their motivation.

On-going PD

Another important finding from this study has highlighted that the participants identified that they would like future PD activities to be of sustained duration because most of the existing PD opportunities were short-term workshops or training courses which usually took place over one or two days. For example, some EFL lecturers claimed that one-shot PD activities were not very effective, so they called for more PD activities that were periodically organised, based on lecturers’ real needs and included follow-up activities. This finding lends weight to the arguments made by Dayoub and Bashiruddin (2012) and (Hunzicker, 2011) that teachers need multiple opportunities to interact with information and ideas on a long term continuing process that is carefully planned. Within the ELT

setting in Vietnam, Truong (2017) proposed that “There should be a combination of different formats of input delivery, employing various tools for effective professional development, and organizing time on an on-going basis” (p. 163). My study highlights the fact that EFL lecturers highly value on-going PD activities in order to help them transfer knowledge into practice and improve their teaching practices.

Collaborative PD

This study has revealed the participants’ desire to have access to more collaborative PD opportunities. As reflected by EFL lecturers and academic managers, there had been a shortage of collaborative activities at the time of this study. More specifically, the participants emphasized their preference for collaborating with other colleagues through PD activities such as action research projects, peer coaching or mentoring, professional meetings, and PLCs. My study identifies a noteworthy finding consistent with other international research findings that have emphasised the necessity of teachers’ collaboration in their career development (e.g., Avalos-Bevan & Bascopé, 2017; Bates & Morgan, 2018; Svendsen, 2016). In particular, McElearney et al. (2019) stated that PD that involves collaboration could positively affect “teacher knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, classroom practice, whole school and student achievement” (p. 437).

In the context of Vietnamese education, other scholars (e.g., T. M. H. Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2020; Phan, 2017) have suggested that in order to enhance teachers’ PD quality and student outcomes, collaborative PD activities (e.g., peer observation, mentoring, peer coaching, critical friends group, instructional rounds, and action research) should be implemented. Knowles’ (1980) andragogy theory helps to explain that because EFL lecturers, as adult learners, have different psychological and sociocultural attributes as well as learning experiences and needs, they consider collaboration as an important aspect in promoting their career growth. The data from my study show that there is a readiness or a desire to collaborate among EFL lecturers in their professional learning.

Career-stage specific PD

One of the most important findings from this study is that at different career stages, the participants expressed different PD needs and thus different PD approaches were seen to be of more value. For example, compared to the *late-career* group, more *beginning* and

midcareer EFL lecturers reported that if they could not hold a doctoral degree by 2025 in response to a new requirement by the Vietnamese MOET, they would be fired or changed to another job position. Therefore, they had to undertake doctoral study as soon as possible. The findings from the document analysis conducted in this research reinforce the participants' opinions that, with the aim of improving the quality of the national education system, the Vietnamese government had invested more in lecturers' PD and had increased the demand on lecturers' professional qualifications. However, the government had only provided funding for lecturers under 45 years old to undertake doctoral study (Vietnamese Government, 2010, 2019b). This policy helps explain why more *beginning* and *midcareer* lecturers emphasised their need for undertaking higher education so that they could gain advanced qualifications in order to ensure their position as a university lecturer. However, this kind of need was not as evident among *late-career* lecturers due to age and family constraints.

The data collected from my study about lecturers' different needs for PD at different stages of their career are quite consistent with the findings from international literature. In particular, Mak (2010) found that experienced, well-qualified teachers perceived the needs for PD from a broader perspective than their less qualified, less experienced colleagues. Eros (2011) also discovered that when teachers passed through different cycles over the course of their careers, their particular needs for PD could change. Therefore, he emphasized the necessity of analysing each teacher's specific PD needs. In the same vein, Richter et al. (2011) stated that teachers tended to choose activities that reflected the needs or professional goals of the career stage they were in. Nana (2017) also argued:

There is no recipe for professional development that works for everyone. Frequently teachers find to be an effective tool for them may not offer similar results for other teachers. Techniques that teachers believe useful and meaningful today may not meet teachers' needs a year from now. (p. 44)

The voices expressed by the participants in this study are supported by the fourth and fifth principles of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980), which propose that as people mature, their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their social roles and they consider education as a process of developing increased competency levels to achieve their full potential. Because EFL lecturers, as adult learners,

were practical and focused on what was relevant to their current needs, they were normally more willing to learn when they experienced a need to perform a task or to deal with an assigned duty from the government or the university. This helps explain why the participants emphasised their need for PD activities that were applicable and appropriate to their teaching or other duties as being of value to their career.

Overall, the findings from this study of the Vietnamese higher education context are usefully seen through the lens of Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory. It is evident that EFL lecturers, as adult learners, are autonomous, self-motivated, self-oriented, and have accumulated different kinds of individual and professional experiences. They called for more future PD activities that are content-focused, on-going, collaborative, and career-stage specific; each of which are important characteristics of effective PD programmes. The next section discusses how different contextual factors affected EFL lecturers' engagement in PD opportunities.

7.2.2. The contextual influences on EFL lecturers' PD experiences

The data from my study have revealed that PD of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers is a multidimensional and dynamic process that plays an important part in promoting the quality of English language education in the context of the national education reforms. Especially, lecturers' experiences of PD have been greatly influenced by the simultaneous confluence of global, national, institutional, and individual factors. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, it can be interpreted that every individual EFL lecturer interacts with other individuals, both within their own institutional context and with other individuals or institutions. In addition, the institution is built on individual lecturers, and lecturers attempt to fulfil their national and institutional requirements by delivering different kinds of teaching and engaging in other assigned professional duties. Thus, in order to understand the complexity of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' PD, it is not enough only to describe it in the context of their own institution, but also essential to take into consideration how the different contexts interact with the individual lecturers and with each other. This section discusses how the contextual factors at the four levels of macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem affected tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences in order to gain insights into the current nature of the on-going PD phenomenon of EFL lecturers in Vietnam. More

specifically, the key enablers and barriers influencing EFL lecturers' engagement in PD opportunities are discussed.

7.2.2.1. Enablers of lecturers' engagement in PD

Many researchers have addressed how contextual factors contribute to enhance teachers' PD from a variety of standpoints (e.g., Bayar, 2013; Muhammad & Ali, 2016; Yue et al., 2016; Zein, 2015). The findings of this study have demonstrated that (1) English as a global language, (2) national policies and projects, (3) student outcomes, (4) occupational prestige, and (5) personal responsibility were the five prominent motivators influencing Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' engagement in PD activities.

English as a global language

According to Altan (2017), globalisation has “the power of creating a world without boundaries where people communicate, share, and do business with the help of information, communication and transportation technologies. And the medium of all these activities is English language” (p. 764). In response to the trend of globalisation, the Vietnamese government has taken many initiatives such as launching *Đổi mới* (Renovation) economic reforms since 1986; taking part in the ASEAN since 1997 and the WTO since 2007; and inaugurating Project 2020 in 2008 (Le, 2020). As a consequence of these important policies, English has become the most dominant foreign language and plays a vital part in the social, political, economic, and cultural development in Vietnam. Nguyen et al. (2018) stated that globalisation and the expansion of English language usage have led to English being “a valuable resource for national development and regional integration” (p. 214).

This study has found that the majority of participants reported globalisation as a motivating factor affecting EFL lecturers' professional expertise and career opportunities. More specifically, the participants identified the personal benefits that lecturers could gain from globalisation. They had been able to access more favourable conditions to improve their English language proficiency and competency through direct communications with English speakers or via the Internet and telecommunications. Globalisation had also provided lecturers with numerous opportunities to undertake higher education and exchange programmes in English-speaking countries as well as enlarge international collaborations. Furthermore, as English had become a global

language, lecturers were able to gain better career opportunities due to a significant growing number of the English learners. These findings concur with that of Le and Chen (2018) stating that “Vietnamese students and teachers now have more opportunities to interact with global educational policy and discourses. In turn, these global educational flows have placed pressures on the national education system to improve students’ and teachers’ English proficiency” (p. 17). The data from my study are also supported by Hwang’s (2014) project examining how ecological contexts influenced teacher educators’ PD in South Korea, which found that the global context impacts on concrete policies at the national and institutional levels. My study contributes to the evidence in the literature confirming that globalisation has great impact on ELT and EFL lecturers’ professional growth in the context of Vietnamese tertiary education.

Overall, at the macrosystem level, globalisation has been considered one of the most prominent driving forces leading to great changes in English language education policies and lecturers’ PD in Vietnam. This study highlights the perceived importance of on-going PD for Vietnamese EFL lecturers throughout their teaching career in order that they are able to stay up to date with trends in EFL teaching in a globalised world.

National policies and projects

Since the changing world of teaching requires significant educational change and reform, the national education system in Vietnam has also been contingent on massive reform efforts over the last decades. Nguyen and Hall (2017) stated that the Vietnamese government has recognised reform of the education system as “a matter of urgent national importance” (p. 244). In this study, nine participants reported that the educational reform policies and national projects (e.g., Project 2020 and Project 911) had had positive effects on lecturers’ PD experiences. Particularly, PD opportunities offered by the national projects had enabled lecturers to gain advanced qualifications and perform effectively in their teaching practice.

The findings from the document analysis undertaken in this study support the participants’ views that, in the previous years, the Vietnamese government had put more emphasis on enhancing lecturers’ PD through the implementation of the national plans such as Project 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008), Project 911 (Vietnamese Government, 2010), or the new project adjusting and supplementing Project 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2017). Consequently, lecturers could access many

opportunities to undertake their PD in order to upgrade their professional expertise. As indicated in the school annual report, at the time of this study, more than 98% of EFL lecturers had gained a master's degree, and 100% of EFL lecturers had reached the national language proficiency level - approximately C1 level of VSTEP or Band 7.0 of IELTS (School A, 2018). The findings of this study are aligned with T. M. H. Nguyen, Phan, and Le's (2020) work, which confirmed that Project 2020 had created a positive influence on teachers' motivation to promote their professional learning:

The impact of new reforms has triggered the teachers' motivation to learn to enhance their teaching practice in order to keep up with the changes and to enhance the quality of learning for their students... The new requirements, as well as the new curriculum, have created learning opportunities for teachers. (p. 92)

It is evident that, affected by the national education reform policies and prominent projects, EFL lecturers' professional qualifications and expertise had been greatly advanced. Almost all EFL lecturers in this university had achieved a master's degree and others were studying doctoral degrees at the time of this research. They had been also provided with more opportunities to undertake diverse types of PD activities and higher education in English-speaking countries, that enabled EFL lecturers to enhance their careers.

In summary, drawing on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980), it can be argued that at the macrosystem level, the national education reform policies have influenced the institutional policies, and these policies have, in turn, affected individual lecturers' motivation for engaging in PD. This study demonstrates the importance of contextualising the national policies specifically relevant to the institutional and individual contexts so that these policies may reach the national reform targets and encourage EFL lecturers' individual motivation.

Student outcomes

In this study, more than half of the participants indicated that improving student outcomes was an important factor influencing EFL lecturers' engagement in PD. This finding reveals that EFL lecturers believed they could gain professional advantages through PD activities and in turn, they helped improve their student outcomes. This finding is

consistent with international literature on the interrelation between teachers' PD and student outcomes (e.g., Akiba & Liang, 2016; Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Krille, 2020; Opfer & Pedder, 2010; Rajab & Silman, 2017). These authors agree that teachers' engagement in PD activities has a positive influence on their student achievement.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, it can be understood that between the microsystem and mesosystem levels, the most direct interconnection occur between lecturers and students. As proposed by Project 2020, one of the main roles of Vietnamese EFL teachers in undertaking the national language reforms is to enhance students' learning (Vietnamese Government, 2008). The data from my study indicate that lecturers consider their continuing development to be a decisive factor in student achievement, which becomes a strong motivation in their engagement in PD activities.

Occupational prestige

Within Asian contexts influenced by Confucianism, occupational prestige is always considered one of the significant factors affecting teachers' career development in general. In this study, fourteen participants indicated that occupational prestige connected to Vietnamese cultural values was a key impact that enhanced EFL lecturers' motivation to engage in PD activities. Since lecturers deeply acknowledged the value of the admiration and respect that they could be held in by other people in their society, they felt they had to develop their professional expertise and practice in order to maintain their occupational prestige. This finding reveals the influence of Term 69 of the Vietnamese Education Law, which stipulates that teachers have a duty to maintain their attributes, prestige, and honour (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2019). Because the main target of education in Vietnam is to train people to become good citizens in relation to both knowledge and morality, the Vietnamese government always expects teachers, including EFL lecturers to maintain their occupational prestige and continually develop themselves professionally and ethically. The evidence from this study indicates that lecturers play the role of both knowledge transmitters and moral guiders. As noted by Phan (2008), "Morality plays a significant and indispensable role in all processes of teacher identity formation and the teaching profession in Vietnam" (p. 5). Thus, lecturers are not only

considered mere transmitters of existing knowledge, but they are also disseminators of cultural and moral values.

In addition, Vietnam has experienced a long history of cultural change affected by four key external influences including Chinese Confucianism, French colonialism, the Soviet Union model, and the West (Nguyen, 2014). However, teachers, as knowledge conveyors, always receive high respect from other people as illustrated through these Vietnamese famous folksongs: “*Không thầy, đồ mày làm nên*” (Without teachers, one cannot do anything); “*Muốn sang thì bắc cầu kiều. Muốn con hay chữ phải yêu kính thầy*” (If one wants to come to the other shore, he must build a bridge across the river. If one wants his children to be educated, he must first respect the teacher); “*Dạy học là nghề cao quý nhất trong những nghề cao quý*” (Teaching is the most noble profession among other noble professions); and “*Tôn sư, trọng đạo*” (Respect teachers, respect morality). Since 1958, the 20th of December of every year has been decided by the Vietnamese government as the Teachers’ Day when all types of schools and academic institutions in Vietnam celebrate numerous activities to express honour and respect to teachers (Nguyen & Hall, 2017). These practices indicate that lecturers are always held in high status in Vietnamese society, so they always pay great attention to enhancing their occupational prestige. Because teaching is considered as a greatly honoured and respected career in Vietnamese society, in order to deserve social respect, teachers are required to be role models with regard to knowledge, morality and performance (Phan & Locke, 2016). Therefore, this study identifies the importance of maintaining occupational prestige in the lecturers’ minds as part of the Vietnamese tradition: “*Mỗi thầy, cô giáo là tấm gương cho học sinh noi theo*” (Every teacher should be a model for the students to imitate).

Furthermore, “*Thể diện*” (the concept of face) in the Vietnamese culture, which is made up of “social roles and role-driven characteristics, positive qualities, and achievements” (Pham, 2014, p. 225), helps explain why EFL lecturers in this study revealed that they did not want to receive negative comments and feedback from their managers, colleagues, or students. As clarified by Phan and Locke (2016), “Vietnamese are likely to display good qualities and conceal anything which might potentially harm their dignity and attract social criticism” (p. 111). This finding reinforces Dimmock and Walker’s (2005) argument that in China, also a similar Confucian context, “teachers are generally reluctant to admit to their own weaknesses, or problems, typically responding in ways suggesting that they do not have any problems” (p. 154). It can be argued that,

because of the concern for face loss and public image, by updating their professional knowledge and pedagogical skills regularly, EFL lecturers are better able to maintain their occupational prestige. Nguyen (2015) also explained that “Face as a feature of the Vietnamese culture rooted in traditional Confucian values could be a channel to understand the impact of traditional values on Vietnamese teachers’ views in their profession (p. 206). As a consequence, it is important for PD planners and academic managers to acknowledge the concept of face as a significant cultural effect on lecturers’ professional growth and pay careful attention to EFL lecturers’ concern for face loss and public image when planning and implementing some evaluation activities in PD. For instance, after a classroom observation session, feedback and criticism concerning lecturer’s teaching performance and professional expertise may be given confidentially.

Overall, the findings of this study on occupational prestige as part of the Vietnamese culture have furnished further evidence of the impact of the important social status of teachers in Asian societies influenced by Confucianism. Tran (2016) argued that “Cultural values attached to the teaching profession and the teacher educators’ professional roles shaped their sense of professional identity and affected the quality of their PLD experience” (p. 210). Based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory, Neal and Neal (2013) justified that, at the lowest level of microsystem, the individual plays a direct role, has direct experiences, and has direct social interactions with others. Consequently, the Vietnamese EFL lecturers’ work not only affects their educational achievements but it also influences their social values and development. As stated in the second principle of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980), the self-concept of adult learners depends on a move toward self-direction. It can be argued that occupational prestige could be identified as an important driver in enhancing EFL lecturers’ professional growth. This study foregrounds the strong attachment between occupational prestige and lecturers’ engagement in PD activities.

Personal responsibility

Together with English as a global language, national policies and projects, student outcomes, and occupational prestige, three-quarters of the participants in this study identified personal responsibility, which is closely linked to the occupational prestige, as another positive factor influencing EFL lecturers’ PD experiences. The data from my study indicate that lecturers always considered PD as one of the most important duties in

their profession. Therefore, lecturers would like to play a proactive role in identifying their individual needs and finding PD opportunities to design and resource their own PD across different stages of their career.

As stipulated in governmental documents such as the Law on Higher Education (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012), the Joint Circular No.36/2014 (MOET & MOHA, 2014), and the amendment of the Law on Higher Education (Vietnam National Assembly, 2018), alongside their personal responsibility for PD, lecturers must undertake PD activities regularly in order to fulfil the professional demands from their government. This study suggests that although the MOET and the university play a main role in creating PD opportunities and promoting the quality of PD, it is essential for EFL lecturers to be responsible for developing their own career and supporting the university to achieve the objectives of the national language reforms as noted by Nguyen et al. (2020):

Language teachers play a fundamental role in implementing the changes in language learning and language policy. Many scholars have portrayed teachers' crucial role in educational change. Priority should be placed on providing quality teacher education and professional development programs to help teachers to implement reforms. (p. 94)

The evidence from this study related to Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' taking personal responsibility for PD reflects the international literature that indicates that teachers should be the first decision-makers in their PD (e.g., McMillan et al., 2016; Potolea & Toma, 2015). More than two decades ago, Day (1999) called for teachers to be centrally involved in their PD and on-going learning: "Teachers cannot be developed (passively). They develop (actively). It is vital, therefore, that they are centrally involved in decisions concerning the direction and processes of their own learning" (p. 2). Alfaki (2014) argued that the role teachers have is complementary to that of the government. Both teachers themselves and the government have reciprocal parts to be undertaken in teachers' PD. Similarly, Labone and Long (2016) noted that "The teacher has responsibility not just for their own growth, but for that of their school and system" (p. 56).

In summary, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the individual always develops within a context. As a result, the willingness of EFL lecturers in this study to play a proactive part in accomplishing their individual and professional

goals, together with fulfilling other external duties regulated by the Vietnamese government and the university, is likely to contribute to the effectiveness of PD. The first and sixth principles of andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980) suggest that EFL lecturers, as adults learners, have personal responsibility for their own PD, so they need to know why they need to learn something before learning it and their motivation for engaging in PD activities is internal rather than external. The data from this study emphasises the importance of lecturers' personal responsibility in order to develop their career.

7.2.2.2. Barriers to lecturers' engagement in PD

As well as the positive influences, several contextual factors also showed significant negative effects on Vietnamese EFL lecturers' experiences of PD. This section discusses (1) top-down national requirements, (2) inappropriate institutional policies, (3) insufficient collegial and managerial support, and (4) time constraints as the four main demotivating factors as perceived by lecturers for their engagement in PD opportunities.

Top-down national requirements

Extensive international research has noted the impact of educational reforms on teachers' work and their professional growth (e.g., Ganim, 2016; Jiang, 2017; Lingam et al., 2017; Little, 1993; Starkey et al., 2009). As highlighted through Section 7.3.2.1, even though the national education reforms, including some significant projects, had provided Vietnamese EFL lecturers with many favourable conditions and opportunities for their career enhancement, one-third of the participants reported that these national policies generally followed a top-down approach and placed more pressure on EFL lecturers' motivation for PD. This finding indicates that "overambitious and unrealistic goals" (Le, 2020, p. 7) regarding lecturers' doctoral education and English proficiency established by the Vietnamese government had been considered big challenges for EFL lecturers to achieve because these top-down policies were not built on lecturers' actual needs. The evidence from this study supports Nguyen and Mai's (2015) project, which found that the Vietnamese MOET did not seek teachers' opinions before designing PD initiatives, so these programmes could not fulfil all of the needs of teachers. As defined by Anderson (2018), the top-down approach refers to an organisation, institution or school identifying the PD needs and then providing training programmes to fulfil those needs without consulting individual teachers on their actual needs. Wyatt and Ončevska Ager (2017)

expressed the view that “excessive top-down CPD can be demotivating, even in a context where some teachers may conceptualize CPD as essentially a top-down process” (p. 171). In his study, Pesce (2015) revealed that faculty members do not want to feel pressured into going to PD. Similarly, Hildebrandt and Eom (2011) explained that enforced participation is not an effective way to promote individual teachers’ motivation and often led to counter-productive results. Professional growth happens when teachers could determine their own professional goals and connect or collaborate with others.

It is evident that because Vietnam has a highly centralised education system (T. M. H. Nguyen, 2017), most of the educational reform policies have followed a top-down approach. However, the findings of my study show a widespread perception that the top-down approach needs to be integrated with the bottom-up approach when establishing the national and institutional policies concerning lecturers’ PD. This view is supported by other international scholars. As argued by Agbayahoun (2016) and Wyatt and Ončevska Ager (2017), both top-down and bottom-up approaches should be combined in order to enhance the effectiveness of teachers’ PD. This argument is reaffirmed through Anderson’s (2018) model of an interactive PD approach, which integrates both input from institutional needs analyses and from individuals who have defined their PD needs. Anderson stated that when PD opportunities are directed towards the institutional and individual goals, they could bring more positive change. As recommended by Nguyen (2018), a more holistic approach with better collaboration among different stakeholders at different levels should be employed in the Vietnamese education context:

In order to achieve educational reform and to improve the standard of ELT in Vietnam, dialogues need to be established between policymakers, educational researchers, educational authorities and teachers. It is particularly important for PD initiatives to incorporate more informed decisions by the teachers who participate in PD programs. (p. 104)

Overall, it can be seen through Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory that at the macrosystem level, the national reform policies have a dynamic interaction with the institutional policies and individual lecturers. This is illustrated by the fact that EFL lecturers in this study called for the integration of the top-down and bottom-up approaches in planning and implementing PD activities.

Inappropriate institutional policies

As the participants' university was directly administered by the MOET, the institutional policies related to EFL lecturers' PD mainly followed the directions imposed by the Vietnamese government. At the time of this study, although there had been many positive changes in professional policies for Vietnamese tertiary lecturers, as already presented through the findings from document analysis in Chapter Four, eleven participants reported that some institutional policies (e.g., gaps in current policy requirements, the lack of financial support, and complicated administrative procedures) were demotivators of lecturers' engagement in PD. This finding corresponds with Phuong and McLean's (2016) research which found that Vietnamese lecturers were unsatisfied with some institutional policies such as inflexible administration and ineffective human resource management. These factors were viewed as key and direct inhibitors affecting lecturers' professional advancement.

The data from my study are also congruent with international literature. For instance, Ali (2018), Hwang (2014), and Rajab and Silman (2017) stated that irrelevant institutional policies (e.g., low salary and insufficient financial support) have been regarded as an inhibiting factor for teachers' on-going PD. As claimed by Phothongsunan (2018), "Teachers and their universities are to be mutually dependent and complementary if teachers need to further develop and universities need quality teachers" (p. 291). My study indicates that the institutional policies have an important impact on EFL lecturers' motivation to participate in PD activities. Moreover, in recent years, the financial autonomy of the university has led to higher competitiveness among lecturers. Thus, EFL lecturers are more highly motivated to partake in PD in order to upgrade their professional expertise.

As argued by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the individual is at the centre of an ecological system and affected by surrounding contextual factors. Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory also suggests that lecturers' motivation to attend PD would be a main factor influencing their professional growth. However, due to the lack of comprehensive PD policies at the institutional level, EFL lecturers felt demotivated to take part in PD activities. It is possible that lecturers did not understand the clear directions and objectives of PD policies set by the Vietnamese government and their organisation. This study

highlights the significant influence of the institutional policies on lecturers' career development in the Vietnamese education context.

Insufficient collegial and managerial support

In this study, more than half of the participants identified the lack of collegial and managerial support as another negative factor influencing EFL lecturers' engagement in PD. This finding is consistent with that from V.C. Le and Nguyen's (2012) research, conducted within the context of Vietnamese education, which revealed that uncooperative colleagues greatly discouraged teachers from contributing to the process of collective professional learning and looking for help from within their community. In the same vein, T. M. H. Nguyen (2017) argued that "If teachers brought a more reflective and collegial set of components to their EFL teaching, their practice would improve markedly" (p. 19). The evidence from this study is also in agreement with earlier works from international literature which have focused on the importance of collegial support in teachers' PD (e.g., Avalos-Bevan & Bascopé, 2017; Krajnc & Zuljan, 2014; Shagrir, 2017; Svendsen, 2016). Zepeda (2015) claimed that:

Although adults can learn "on their own", learning in the company of others is a major component of professional development that supports adults. Learning on your own could potentially be a lonely journey, but it does not have to be. Learning is a proactive, collaborative, and reflective process. The journey continues and widens. (p. 19)

As stated by Postholm (2018), collaboration between teachers leads to a wide range of benefits with prominent impacts on their professional lives and plays an important part in teachers' PD strategy. More specifically, de Vries et al. (2013) identified several benefits of teachers' collaboration such as reducing stress and enhancing confidence, providing feedback, new ideas, and challenges, creating greater enthusiasm for collaborative working and greater commitment to changing practice, and influencing student outcomes. Forte and Flores' (2014) project examining teachers' experiences of collaboration and PD in the workplace signified that teachers acknowledged the importance of interpersonal relationships at school and formal meetings (e.g., department meetings, and projects driven by central government or school administration initiatives) when they had opportunities to work collaboratively in the workplace. In addition, teachers recognised the advantages of collaborative activities for themselves as teachers,

for students, for the school and for the community. Shah (2012) argued that “Schools that do not support collegiality among their staff and allow their teachers to work alone in their classrooms waste human resources and contribute to disenchantment with teaching as a career” (p. 1244).

As well as the collegial support, some participants stressed the value of managerial support in their career development because academic managers provided on-going leadership to support lecturers’ change and played a prominent part in the planning and implementation of PD initiatives. This finding is in agreement with that of Tran et al. (2020) confirming that the school principals in Vietnam played an important role in implementing and supporting their teachers’ PD, and that the principals had created four workplace conditions to promote teachers’ PD including (1) collaboration, (2) teacher empowerment, (3) supervision and evaluation, and (4) teachers’ motivational strategies. Tran et al.’s (2020) research was conducted in a schooling context and my study extends this finding to lecturers’ PD, in foregrounding the role of leadership in promoting EFL lecturers’ professional growth within the higher education context in Vietnam.

The data from this study also support the international literature which has emphasised the influence of managerial support on teacher learning. In particular, Clement and Vandenberghe (2001) noted that, in the Belgium education context, academic leaders play a vital part in teachers’ PD because they are not only in charge of task-oriented and administrative leadership, but also instructional and educational leadership. Academic leaders also take the responsibility for creating a working context that motivated teachers to look over and reflect on their own teaching behaviour. Similarly, through an empirical study conducted in China and Thailand, Hallinger et al. (2019) pointed out the role of leadership in creating conditions that motivate, engage, and sustain the on-going learning of teachers. The data from my study offers insight into the important effects of ensuring sufficient support from academic managers on Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers’ involvement in PD.

In summary, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory demonstrates the dynamics of the contextual systems and the role of the individual lecturers and collaboration within those systems. As EFL lecturers felt that collaborative PD activities were more effective than individual PD ones in enhancing their teaching quality and student achievement, they placed a great deal of emphasis on the needs for collegial and

managerial support. The data from this study confirms current understandings of the vital role that collegiality plays in the professional growth of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers in that it was considered desirable yet was a lacking element by many of the participants.

Time constraints

Alongside the top-down national requirements, inadequate institutional policies, and insufficient collegial support, twelve participants identified time constraints due to heavy workloads and gender roles as another significant factor hindering EFL lecturers' engagement in PD. It is evident that due to their heavy workloads and multiple personal and professional responsibilities, EFL lecturers faced many challenges when undertaking PD opportunities. This finding is supported by my findings from the document analysis indicating that the large number of compulsory teaching hours that EFL lecturers had to complete every academic year appeared to be a barrier that would prevent many lecturers from attending PD activities (School A, 2018). Within the context of Vietnamese education, Le (2020) also confirmed that EFL teachers suffered from heavy teaching schedules and did not have favourable conditions to engage in on-going learning during their career.

The data from my study are similar to those from the international research. For instance, Gemeda et al. (2014) revealed that teachers' heavy workload hampered the accomplishment of Ethiopian teachers' PD because teachers were overwhelmed with many tasks that negatively influenced what and how they taught, and on their student outcomes. In the same vein, Badri et al. (2016) found that the most significant barrier faced by Abu Dhabi teachers in order to take part in PD was conflict related to their work schedules. Similarly, in a report named *Teacher workload and professional development in England's secondary schools: Insights from TALIS*, Sellen (2016) indicated that 60% of teachers in England considered their workload due to long working hours as a prominent barrier to their access to PD. My study identifies a similar issue of time constraints caused by heavy workload as a prominent factor hindering Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' engagement in PD.

Of interest, more female participants than male ones said that they did not have enough time to engage in PD activities. While all the female participants noted that their family responsibilities impacted their ability to participate in PD activities, none of the male participants identified this as an issue. According to Phan and Locke (2016),

influenced by Confucianism which conceptualises that women perform very different social roles compared to men, Vietnamese women are expected to possess the four feminine virtues: “*Công, dung, ngôn, hạnh*” (Performing family duties, having good appearance, having proper speech, and displaying proper behaviour) (pp. 111-112). As the government has promoted gender equity in Vietnamese society, the number of women joining the workplace has increased rapidly. In a developing country such as Vietnam, women have to find employment in order to support the financial demands of their families. Thus, it can be argued that as well as their professional responsibilities, EFL lecturers, especially female lecturers had to deal with other barriers regarding their individual and family responsibilities which led to time constraints for their participation in PD opportunities.

The evidence from this study reinforces similar concerns from several Asian countries. In Pakistan, Ali (2014) reflected that female teachers had a shortage of PD opportunities due to family obligations and other constraints. In Iran, Jazi et al. (2015) also examined the PD obstacles that EFL teachers faced in their PD involvement, and found that gender roles as a demotivating factor considerably affected teachers’ professional growth. On the other hand, in America, Pesce’s (2015) project indicated that female faculty members were more likely to have attended PD in the past and more likely to say they would attend in future. The data from my study suggest that, in an Asian country as Vietnam, female EFL lecturers have major roles related to motherhood and managing a household together with their professional duty, so they face more challenges related to time constraints for their engagement in PD activities compared to male lecturers. The impact of gender roles at a particular point in lecturers’ career development emerges as a significant issue in this context.

Overall, it is evident that Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers have been required to undertake educational changes (e.g., developing professional expertise and improving the quality of ELT) that have demanding requirements. Therefore, lecturers inevitably face different challenges including time constraints due to heavy workloads and gender roles that inhibit their engagement in PD opportunities.

7.2.2.3. The integrated nature of enablers and barriers of lecturers’ PD

In general, the findings of this study have identified that although EFL lecturers’ engagement in PD activities was significantly affected by the enablers (e.g., English as a

global language, national policies and projects, student outcomes, occupational prestige, and personal responsibility), there were also the barriers inhibiting lecturers' professional growth (e.g., top-down national requirements, inappropriate institutional policies, insufficient collegial and managerial support, and time constraints). These enablers and barriers can be considered as key contextual factors across the four levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory influencing lecturers' involvement in PD and are presented in Figure 7.1. I chose Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model as a nested one because it puts more focus on the context than the role a person plays in their own development. Although not all influencing factors have been presented in the figure, it gives an overview of the types of contextual factors EFL lecturers experience that impact their career development. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Section 8.2.1.

Figure 7.1

The ecological systems of EFL lecturer PD

7.2.3. The essence of EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD

The above sections (7.2.1 and 7.2.2) have discussed the main findings emerging from the two sub-research questions. The integration of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and andragogy theory (Knowles, 1980) has provided useful theoretical frameworks in order to examine the lived PD experiences of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers along with the contextual factors that influenced their PD experiences. It is clear that EFL lecturers' experiences of PD are prominently influenced by the contextual factors at different levels of ecological systems. Therefore, the enablers and barriers facing lecturers' engagement in PD originate from different complicated situations. Even though the global, national, institutional, and individual contexts present both positive and negative impacts on lecturers' PD experiences, the institutional factors (e.g., managerial or collegial support, financial incentives, and institutional policies) show the strongest influence among the contextual factors.

The evidence from this study has signified that the essence of Vietnamese EFL lecturers' experiences of PD is driven by imposed policies in response to the national education reforms and are mainly top-down, but the actual engagement is grounded in lecturers' individual motivation and responsibility. Especially, the Vietnamese cultural values such as "*Tôn sư, trọng đạo*" (Respect teachers, respect morality), "*Thể diện*" (the face), "*Công, dung, ngôn, hạnh*" (Performing family duties, having good appearance, having proper speech, and displaying proper behaviour), and "*Kính trên, nhường dưới*" (Yield to those below, respect those above) are a significant influence on lecturers' motivation and inspiration for their involvement in PD opportunities. This study offers insights into EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD and the contextual influences under the setting of higher education reforms in Vietnam.

7.3. Summary

This chapter has discussed the main findings of the study through a textural-structural synthesis of EFL lecturers' experiences of PD and the contextual influences. The discussion concerning the essence of the EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD has also been presented. The next chapter will introduce an integrated framework of effective PD for tertiary EFL lecturers, key implications arising from this study, and a summary of the contributions of this study.

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, implications from this study are identified for PD planners, academic managers, and EFL lecturers and for further research with the aim of supporting the design of future PD programmes and the growth of the EFL teaching profession within the Vietnamese higher education context. This chapter also points out several limitations of this research before concluding with a summary of its contributions.

8.2. Implications of this study

This section introduces an integrated framework to demonstrate the dynamic interplay of factors that influence the quality of lecturers' PD under the tertiary education setting in Vietnam. This framework also serves to identify the implications for EFL lecturers, PD planners, and academic managers and for further research.

8.2.1. Integrated framework of effective PD for EFL lecturers

Earlier discussion in Chapter Seven has revealed that, within the context of Vietnamese higher education reforms, PD, as a multidimensional activity, plays an important role in EFL lecturers' professional growth. In order to illustrate the complexity of lecturers' PD, an integrated framework of effective PD for EFL lecturers is presented for discussion (see Figure 8.1). This framework is grounded in the assumption that the quality of lecturers' PD is affected by many different factors. These influencing factors are divided into three main categories comprising (1) content, (2) context, and (3) process related factors (Almuhammadi, 2017; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Murray, 2014). The arrows represent the direction of these influences.

Content

Content refers to the “what” of PD. It includes the new knowledge, skills, and understandings that teachers need to be successful in their career development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Murray, 2014). The findings of this study have found that the participants were not particularly satisfied with the content of available PD activities. Because most of the PD activities that EFL lecturers had participated in mainly focused on enhancing

their teaching methodologies and language proficiency, some lecturers suggested that the content of future PD activities should be more problem-focused and relevant to their course content such as English applied linguistics or foreign cultures. The fourth and the fifth principles of Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory concerning adults' readiness and orientation to learn demonstrate that since EFL lecturers, as adult learners, recognise their own orientation to on-going learning, they are primarily willing to participate in PD opportunities that are applicable and relevant to their teaching practices. The data from this study suggest that lecturers need to have a say in what content of PD is relevant to them.

Another key finding from this study also reveals that, at different stages of their career, lecturers had different needs for PD. For instance, more *midcareer* and *late-career* lecturers showed their perceived need for more future PD activities such as action research projects and textbook development while more *beginning* lecturers called for more future collaborative activities such as peer coaching or mentoring, professional meetings, and professional communities. As explained by de Vries et al. (2013), in each stage of their career cycle "teachers vary in their concerns and commitment, including their professional development behaviour and needs" (pp. 80-81). Therefore, understanding these stages and lecturers' changing needs can help improve the quality of PD. Lowe (2015) also stated that understanding the needs of teachers who are adult learners leads to "greater work autonomy, opportunities to build and reinforce self-efficacy, a sense of control, and a sense of empowerment" (p. 103). Thus, Lowe recommended that teachers should be considered as partners in their on-going learning, instead of recipients because this could help them feel being involved in the process as valued professionals. It can be argued that, if EFL lecturers are able to be involved in decision-making process at the institutional level and raise their voices concerning their PD needs, they can play a better role in improving the quality of their professional growth.

As a consequence of the fact that needs are variable and personal, the question of who decides the PD content is another factor affecting the quality of lecturers' PD. As reflected by the participating EFL lecturers, at the time of this research, the content of the available PD activities was mostly decided by the managing board of the national projects, PD planners, and academic managers. Lecturers did not have the right to raise their voices about their own perceived needs for PD content. This helps explain why lecturers indicated that many PD activities that they had attended could not meet their

needs. As a result, it is important for PD planners and academic managers to consider lecturers' views regarding their needs for PD before designing and organising any PD activities so that lecturers can choose practical and appropriate PD content.

Figure 8.1

Integrated framework of effective PD for tertiary EFL lecturers

Context

Context refers to the “who”, “when”, “where”, and “why” of PD. It concerns the organisation, system, and culture in which PD occurs and where the new understandings will be undertaken (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). Sandholtz and Ringstaff (2016) explained that context is an important mediating influence on the extent to which PD leads to changes in teachers' instructional practices and those practices persist over time. The data from my study have highlighted that EFL lecturers' PD was significantly influenced by the contextual factors at the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem

levels, drawing on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980).

At the macrosystem level, this study has demonstrated that the impact of English as a global language has stimulated Vietnam, like other Asian countries, to launch national English education reforms in order to enhance the quality of ELT. Consequently, it is essential for EFL lecturers to undertake on-going learning in order to keep up with the new trends of a globalised world.

At the exosystem level, the institutional policies are regarded as a key factor influencing lecturers' PD because these policies may motivate or hinder lecturers' engagement in PD activities. As the university could not cover fees for all PD activities of EFL lecturers, self-funding is quite challenging for lecturers if they would like to take part in their preferred PD activities. Therefore, the Vietnamese government and the university could consider providing lecturers with more relevant funds for essential PD activities in order to attract their enthusiastic participation in PD. In addition, the data from this study demonstrate that some management policies and procedures regarding lecturers' PD at the institutional level still needed to be improved in order to encourage lecturers' engagement in PD. These findings are supported by other scholars (e.g., Ali, 2018; Demir & Qureshi, 2019; Pesce, 2015; Simon & Pleschová, 2013) who have stated that institutional policies can help incentivize teachers to participate in PD. The evidence from this study has emphasised the need for establishing relevant institutional policies in order to offer EFL lecturers more favourable conditions for their engagement in PD activities (e.g., delivering more financial incentives and rewards, reducing the stipulated teaching hours, allocating suitable time for lecturers' engagement in PD, or promulgating appropriate administrative procedures regarding lecturers' PD). It is important to note that PD activities need to be institutionalized and obligatory for all EFL lecturers. More specifically, every lecturer may take part in PD activities every semester or academic year. At the institutional level, PD planners and academic managers need to be responsible for investigating the advantages and disadvantages concerning lecturers' PD and informing lecturers of the national and institutional policies. It is also necessary for the university to inaugurate an evaluation policy to assess lecturers' engagement in PD activities after each semester or academic year. If there are still lecturers who do not attend any PD activities, the academic managers can be responsible for reminding and encouraging them. This way may help raise lecturers' awareness of the importance of PD

in their entire career and lead to the improvements of the teaching quality and student outcomes.

Furthermore, because managerial and collegial support plays an indispensable role in facilitating lecturers' professional growth, it is possible that PD planners need to organise and implement more collaborative PD activities (e.g., peer coaching, mentoring, monthly professional meetings, and PLCs) so that EFL lecturers can gain support from their colleagues and academic managers. However, Truong et al. (2017) stated that since social relations in Vietnam are implicitly arranged conforming to age, seniority, and rank, people must recognise who is above them and who is below in the family or social order as these two Vietnamese proverbs highlight: "*Kính trên, nhường dưới*" (You must yield to those below and respect those above), and "*Trên phải ra trên, dưới phải ra dưới*" (Above has to be above, and below has to be below) (p. 81). Tran et al. (2018) also explained that age, status, experience, and even gender could easily lead to an "invisible distance" (p. 94) between teachers and their managers, and also among teachers. Their arguments may help demonstrate how social values and cultural norms shape, promote, and hinder Vietnamese lecturers' collaboration in PD activities. Because collaboration is built on social hierarchy, it is important to create favourable conditions for EFL lecturers to take part in collaborative activities and encourage their agency by involving lecturers in making decisions concerning their PD needs and budget allocation.

At the mesosystem level, the evidence from this study has demonstrated that student outcomes, occupational prestige, personal responsibility, and time were the four prominent factors affecting EFL lecturers' individual motivation to take part in PD activities. These motivators are all linked to each other. In particular, because PD activities help enhance lecturers' professional expertise and this leads to student achievement, improving student outcomes can be considered one of the most crucial factors encouraging lecturers' engagement in PD activities. In addition, occupational prestige is a significant motivator connected to student outcomes. It can be argued that as lecturers did not want to receive negative feedback and comments from their colleagues, academic managers, or students, they had to undertake on-going learning during their entire career in order to maintain their occupational prestige. Personal responsibility is also an important motivator in developing lecturers' career. This helps to explain why EFL lecturers would like to be the first decision-makers in their PD activities by identifying their own needs and finding relevant PD opportunities to take part in.

Furthermore, time is a prominent factor influencing lecturers' engagement in PD. Lecturers, particularly, female lecturers, cannot avoid facing different challenges including time constraints due to heavy workloads and gender roles that inhibit their engagement in PD opportunities. In general, the data from this study highlight the importance of individual motivation in EFL lecturers' career development. This argument is supported by Ovesni et al. (2019) who argued that individual motivation of teachers for PD is considered "a key to the quality development of teaching, which can make a decisive contribution to the maintaining and developing their professional skills" (p. 164). The sixth principle of Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory concerning adults' motivation to learn suggests that because EFL lecturers have individual motivation for their career growth, they need to play a proactive role in their on-going learning as well as complying with the national and institutional requirements.

At the microsystem level, this study demonstrates that EFL lecturers are key players in implementing macro policy decisions in practice. Although the top-down national reform policies had provided EFL lecturers with favourable conditions to be involved in a wide range of PD opportunities, the Vietnamese government's high requirements concerning lecturers' further education and professional expertise had also placed more pressure on lecturers' career growth. Therefore, PD activities could be more effective if both elements of the top-down and bottom-up approaches are integrated. Shepherd and McEntee-Atalianis (2020) claimed that, within the Vietnamese education context, "an inextricable link therefore between macro-, meso- and micro-levels of LPP [Language Policy and Planning] and the need for each level to understand the aims, goals and needs of the other in order to successfully achieve policy change" (p. 17). It is important to note that in order to plan and implement high-quality PD activities, regular conversations need to be established between policymakers, PD planners, and academic managers with EFL lecturers. This study suggests that the Vietnamese government should consider establishing and integrating both top-down and bottom-up national policies. It is essential for PD planners and academic managers to pay attention to EFL lecturers' voices when developing and implementing high-stake policies so that lecturers could be provided with appropriate and timely support. As a result, lecturers could overcome their challenges in order to fulfil the government's expectations. Without consulting lecturers' opinions on their real needs for PD, the MOET cannot understand lecturers' needs in order to deliver relevant PD activities. If lecturers can be involved in the decision-making

process, they can contribute more to improving their professional growth as well as the quality of ELT.

Process

Process refers to the “how” of PD. It consists of the approaches of PD activities, and the ways for planning, organising, implementing, and evaluating those PD activities (Murray, 2014). In this study, the participants acknowledged the value of their engagement in both formal and job-embedded PD approaches (e.g., workshops, conferences, textbook and teaching material development, and action research projects). Therefore, it is essential for PD planners and academic managers to plan the delivery of both formal and job-embedded PD activities in order to support lecturers’ career growth. In addition, the participants revealed their needs for PD activities that are on-going and collaborative. Lecturers were interested in PD activities implemented on an on-going basis with appropriate follow-up and support. As argued by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), “Effective PD provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practise, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice” (p. vi). Based on the findings from my study, it is therefore important to note that EFL lecturers should undertake on-going PD activities with sufficient follow-up and support so that they could have opportunities to transfer new knowledge into practice and improve their teaching practices.

Moreover, EFL lecturers emphasised the importance of collaboration in their career development as they explained that PD activities could offer them useful opportunities to collaborate, reflect, and develop their teaching practices through the support of their colleagues and academic managers. This important collaboration characteristic of effective PD needs to be taken into account by PD planners and academic managers. In addition, the question of who decides the process of PD activities should be considered when designing and planning future PD initiatives. It is necessary to seek opinions from different stakeholders (e.g., EFL lecturers, PD planners, and academic managers) before making any decisions concerning the process of PD activities.

Combining the content, context, and process, effective PD is presented as the core component in this framework. It is expected that high-quality PD for tertiary EFL lecturers should achieve three main targets: (1) fulfilling national and institutional requirements, (2) enhancing lecturers’ professional expertise, practices, and motivation,

and (3) improving student outcomes. The three targets are all important and connected to each other. It is clear that together with meeting the national and institutional requirements, effective PD needs to promote lecturers' pedagogical skills, add new knowledge, and develop language proficiency which in turn, help improve student outcomes. This suggests why lecturers' PD is regarded as a key mechanism for improving classroom practices and student achievement.

Overall, the integrated framework of effective PD for EFL lecturers captures the role that the content, context, and process play in determining the quality of lecturers' PD (Almuhammadi, 2017) and indicates that these factors can promote or inhibit lecturers' engagement in PD activities. In order to implement effective PD activities, it is important to call for reciprocal collaboration and support from different stakeholders at the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem levels and ensure that the key characteristics of content, context, and process are carefully considered. This framework provides both practical implications for PD planners, academic managers, and EFL lecturers and theoretical implications for further research on PD. Details concerning these implications are presented in the next section.

8.2.2. Implications for PD planners and academic managers

Although EFL lecturers take the main responsibility for their on-going learning, PD planners and academic managers may act as “motivators, space creators or participants for and in the learning process” (Heystek & Terhoven, 2014, p. 629). The findings of this study have provided PD planners and academic managers who plan, organise, and implement PD initiatives for EFL lecturers with practical implications.

First, this study has revealed that PD, as a complex and multidimensional process, is affected by the simultaneous interaction of different contextual factors (e.g., English as a global language, national language reform policies, institutional incentives and rewards, managerial and collegial support, and individual motivation). It is therefore important for PD planners and academic managers to contextualise PD policies particularly appropriate to the institutional and individual contexts so that these policies can achieve the national reform objectives and at the same time meet the needs of individual EFL lecturers.

Second, this study has reinforced that PD should be considered a long-term process instead of separated opportunities. It can be recommended that PD planners and academic

managers plan and stipulate the number and types of PD activities that every lecturer needs to engage in every academic year to make sure that all lecturers take part in PD activities on a regular basis.

Third, the participating EFL lecturers reflected that they were not offered equal opportunities to be involved in different types of PD activities. As a result, PD planners and academic managers may collaborate with EFL lecturers to propose specific PD plans for each individual in order to recognise personal, career-sensitive goals, and their relationship with institutional and national goals.

Fourth, the data from this study have indicated that although the participating EFL lecturers could gain professional benefits through PD opportunities, they still viewed PD as an individual focus rather than the phenomenon of the concurrent interaction between the individual, institutional, and national goals. It can be suggested that PD planners and academic managers should develop a well-defined comprehensive policy framework of PD which integrates both top-down and bottom-up approaches. In particular, PD planners and academic managers may work together with EFL lecturers to fully understand the crucial contribution of PD to both their individual career advancement as well as institutional and national success.

Fifth, the findings of this study have confirmed that lecturers' needs for PD were varied at different stages of their career. Thus, it is important for PD planners and academic managers to clearly identify and understand EFL lecturers' needs for PD at different career stages so that they can build on this knowledge in order to design stage-appropriate PD. In addition, PD planners and academic managers may organise and implement various types of PD initiatives for different groups of EFL lecturers in order to fulfil lecturers' diverse needs. As mentioned by Gameda et al. (2014), "When teachers' needs are met they will be motivated to be effective in their performance, thereby achieving the organizational goal" (p. 79). In addition, PD planners and academic managers need to survey lecturers' preferences for PD regularly so that activities that respond to the needs of lecturers can be organised in order to develop the quality of their career development.

Sixth, as presented through the findings, lecturers emphasised the important role of financial support in facilitating their career development. Thus, PD planners and academic managers may allocate more budget from the Vietnamese government and the

university or outsource the funding from external organisations in order to create favourable conditions for EFL lecturers' engagement in further PD activities (e.g., international conferences, exchange programmes, and higher education courses in foreign countries).

Seventh, this study has found that Vietnamese EFL lecturers, particularly, female lecturers, identified time constraints due to heavy workloads and gender roles as a significant barrier inhibiting their engagement in PD activities. As a consequence, PD planners and academic managers could propose the reduction in the stipulated teaching hours for EFL lecturers so that they can spend more time on developing their career. The provision of PD activities with appropriate paid-time for lecturers to take part in needs to be taken into account. For example, PD activities need to occur at times outside the lecturers' teaching schedule but not on weekends.

Finally, the evidence from this study has demonstrated the prominent influence of collegial and managerial support on lecturers' PD. Thus, PD planners and academic managers may organise and implement more collaborative activities such as peer coaching or mentoring, monthly professional meetings at the school or departmental level, and experience sharing sessions among EFL lecturers. These PD activities can facilitate lecturers to learn from each other more effectively in order to promote the quality of their professional growth.

8.2.3. Implications for EFL lecturers

In this section, implications for EFL lecturers are identified. The implications drawn here are not going to happen simply by preaching to lecturers but also require changes in the national and institutional policies.

First, the study has highlighted that in response to globalisation and the national education reforms, the MOET and the university have increased the requirements concerning lecturers' professional qualifications and expertise. Thus, in order to maintain their job, it is essential for tertiary EFL lecturers to be aware of the importance of on-going learning during their teaching career from start to finish (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Lecturers need to be proactive in upgrading their professional knowledge and skills in order to meet the increasing global, national, and institutional demands. It can be argued that, at the individual level, lecturers need to be independent learners taking responsibility

for their own on-going learning. At the institutional level, because collegiality plays an important part in lecturers' professional growth, lecturers need to be able to collaborate with other colleagues in order to develop their career as suggested by Nguyen et al. (2020): "considering others as a learning resource or working cooperatively with others for shared learning" (p. 93).

Second, together with language competency and teaching methodologies, it is important for EFL lecturers to take opportunities to improve other areas of their knowledge (e.g., applied linguistics, foreign cultures, research skills, and the use of modern technology in the classroom). As reflected by Le (2020), most of the available PD activities for Vietnamese EFL lecturers have focused on two main purposes: enhancing lecturers' English proficiency to the mandated level and updating their pedagogical practices with new teaching methodologies. In order to more fully develop their professional expertise, classroom practices, and thus potentially improve student outcomes, lecturers should be involved in PD activities with a broader content focus.

Third, if EFL lecturers fully understand their specific needs for PD, it is essential for them to carefully consider engaging in kinds of PD that are appropriate to their individual conditions and situation. As explained by Alibakhshi and Dehvari (2015), PD is context dependent, and lecturers from different career stages and institutions may have different views of PD. Therefore, lecturers need to be self-aware and critical when selecting relevant PD activities to engage in.

8.2.4. Implications for further research

This study has strived to address a gap in the literature, particularly, to understand Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD. The findings of this study have highlighted some potential areas for further research.

First, even though this study has presented a comprehensive description of the phenomenon of tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences under the context of Vietnamese higher education, the findings may not be generalizable to similar contexts. Because the PD experiences of tertiary lecturers from other universities or from other disciplines may be different, the study calls for more studies in other contexts.

Second, the data from this study have demonstrated the importance of understanding lecturers' needs in planning and implementing effective PD. However, due

to a lack of empirical studies concerning tertiary EFL lecturers' needs for PD, particularly, those needs at their different career stages, more research needs to be implemented in this area within the context of Vietnamese education.

Third, this study has indicated that as a result of the national language reforms, EFL lecturers have been exposed to numerous formal and job-embedded PD activities. In order to enhance the quality of lecturers' PD, further studies are needed to unravel aspects of the impact of informal and collaborative PD activities on Vietnamese EFL lecturers' PD experiences.

Finally, the evidence from this study has revealed that the contextual factors had significant effects on Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' PD experiences. Nevertheless, as there has been a shortage of empirical studies investigating the influence of the contextual factors (e.g., English as a global language, national policies and projects, occupational prestige, and personal responsibility) on lecturers' PD under the setting of education reforms in Vietnam, more research will in fact be necessary to refine and further elaborate the new findings of my study.

8.3. Limitations of this study

Attention is now turned to a discussion of the limitations of this study, including the research design and methodological aspects that affected data collection and analysis.

First, due to the limitation of time and cost, my study only recruited 12 EFL lecturers and four academic managers at a university as the participants. While this approach provided depth of understanding in this context, the findings cannot be generalised to other groups of teachers (e.g., elementary, secondary, or high school teachers) and higher education lecturers who are not represented in the sample. The findings of this study concerning lecturers' experiences of PD could be confirmed by a larger sample size. For instance, by involving more EFL lecturers and academic managers in reflecting on their PD experiences at the institutional level, different perspectives may shed light on how the national reform policies have affected the institutional policies, and how these policies have, in turn, influenced individual lecturers' career development.

Second, while my connection with the research setting, EFL lecturers, and academic managers created favourable conditions to recruit the participants and encouraged enthusiastic collaboration that contributes to the data validity, my role as an

insider may have affected the process of data collection and interpretation. In order to lessen this limitation, I bracketed out my presuppositions by describing my own PD experiences through a personal biography as presented in Section 3.7.1) before starting with the experiences of the participants.

Finally, this study only employed qualitative data sources including phenomenological interviews supported by document analysis to examine how EFL lecturers experienced PD and the contextual factors that affected their PD experiences. In order to gain more in-depth knowledge on lecturers' PD experiences and the complexity of the influencing factors, other empirical studies using different research designs could involve the collection of quantitative data (e.g., the number of PD sessions that EFL lecturers participate in, the frequency of their engagement in PD activities, or the prioritised value they place on the various activities). This addition may have provided deeper understanding of the EFL lecturers' perceptions towards their lived experiences of PD.

8.4. Contributions of this study

This research makes contributions to our understanding of lecturers' lived experiences of PD.

First, drawing on Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory, my study has revealed that tertiary EFL lecturers, as adult learners, had their own orientation and motivation for PD. The study provides empirical evidence of the value of Knowles' theory for understanding how individual motivation affected lecturers' professional growth.

Second, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the findings regarding the contextual factors, as a nested system, influencing lecturers' engagement in PD activities have enabled a fuller explanation of Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD from a new, more systemic, perspective. My study has addressed a gap in this area in the field of ELT in Vietnam.

Third, my study has found that at different stages of their career, tertiary EFL lecturers tended to engage in different types of PD activities. These findings contribute to the currently limited empirical literature on lecturers' involvement in PD at different career stages within the context of higher education reforms in Vietnam.

Fourth, even though the international literature agrees that individual factors significantly influence teachers' professional growth (e.g., Alfaki, 2014; Appova & Arbaugh, 2018; Hartono, 2016; Rajab & Silman, 2017), until now, the cultural aspects related to occupational prestige and personal responsibility as the enablers of lecturers' engagement in PD have not been extensively explored. Consequently, this study contributes to current literature on lecturers' PD by specifically demonstrating the impact of occupational prestige and personal responsibility on Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' motivation in PD activities (Knowles, 1980).

Fifth, the integrated framework of effective PD for EFL lecturers proposed in this study makes a contribution to the literature on lecturers' PD with an in-depth explanation of the key influencing factors of *content*, *context*, and *process* to consider when designing and implementing future PD programmes.

Finally, this study has made a methodological contribution. As phenomenology is involved in "uncovering and describing the essence of human experiences" (Cilesiz, 2011, p. 506), the study contributes to a growing body of empirical literature indicating the value of phenomenological research approach in investigating tertiary EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD. Sharing the findings of the present study with EFL lecturers, PD planners, and academic managers will provide them with opportunities to reflect on lecturers' lived PD experiences in order to enhance the quality of PD and ELT in Vietnam.

8.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, Knowles' (1980) andragogy theory, and Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology as theoretical and methodological frameworks, this study has examined how Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers experienced PD and the contextual factors that influenced their PD experiences. The findings have emphasised the critical role that PD plays in lecturers' professional growth and the success of the national education reforms. It is important for EFL lecturers to undertake on-going learning throughout their career in order to ensure that they have sufficient professional knowledge and pedagogical skills to fulfil the national and institutional requirements together with meeting the students' needs. In addition, my study has drawn the attention of PD planners and academic managers to the fact that EFL lecturers cannot perform as expected unless their needs and voices are

included in the process of planning and implementing PD activities. Although there are on-going changes happening in the area of lecturers' PD in Vietnam, there is still place for further change and enhancement. The evidence from my study suggests that PD initiatives for Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers need to be reformed. At the national level, it is important for the Vietnamese government and MOET to understand lecturers' real needs for PD when implementing any PD activities. At the institutional level, a comprehensive framework with specific requirements and guidelines regarding lecturers' engagement in PD activities would bring greater coherence and consistency. At the individual level, a proactive role by EFL lecturers would further foster their professional growth along with fulfilling the national and institutional requirements. All three levels need to work together. It is expected that my study will provide PD planners and academic managers with an in-depth understanding of tertiary EFL lecturers' experiences of PD and the dynamic interaction of factors impacting lecturers' on-going learning in order to strengthen the sector under the context of Vietnamese higher education reforms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Information letter to the Dean

INFORMATION LETTER TO THE DEAN

Subject: Asking for permission to approach lecturers and do interviews

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether allow your staff to take part. If you decide your staff may participate, thank you. If you decide that you do not wish your staff to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Ngo Huynh Hong Nga and I am a lecturer in a Vietnamese university. I am currently a Ph.D. student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of this research is to undertake an in-depth investigation of how EFL lecturers experience professional development (PD) using a qualitative research design. More specifically, the research will focus on issues related to EFL lecturers' PD experiences as well as the influence of ecological contexts on their PD experiences. This study is expected to contribute to the research field by providing in-depth insights into Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' perceptions of their PD experiences. The findings are also intended

to enable the researcher to propose a workable framework to support planning, organising, and delivering effective PD programmes in the context of educational reforms in Vietnam.

How can you help?

I am seeking your permission to conduct research within your school. If you give consent for this research to be undertaken, I will invite you and three heads of department and 12 EFL lecturers within your school to be involved in my research. Every participant will be invited to take part in one interview. You and your staff will be asked about issues related to professional development. The interview will take approximately 1 hour to 1^{1/2} hours. All interviews will be audio-recorded. You can withdraw consent for your school to participate by contacting me at any point before 1st April 2018. Throughout the project all attempts will be made to minimize any disruption to the teaching activities of your staff.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. This means that my supervisors and I will be aware of your school identity, but the research data will be aggregated, and your identity will not be disclosed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. Your school will not be identified in any work generated from this study. Pseudonyms will be used for the school and all participants. The interview transcripts, summaries, and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed five years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation, articles, and conference presentations.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to permit me to conduct research within your school, you have the right to withdraw your permission before 1st April 2018 and ask any questions about the study at any time.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher	Primary supervisor	Secondary supervisor
Name: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga University email address: nhhnga@ctu.edu.vn	Name: AProf. Sue Cherrington Role: Doctoral supervisor School: Education Phone: +64-4-4639552 Email: sue.cherrington@vuw.ac.nz	Name: AProf. David Crabbe Role: Doctoral supervisor School: Education Phone: +64-4-4635603 Email: david.crabbe@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone: +64-4-463 5480.

Appendix B. The Dean's consent form

THE DEAN'S CONSENT FORM

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Please read the following statements and circle if you agree

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I permit the researcher to conduct her study with staff at my school.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw permission for this study to take place at my school at any point before 1st April 2018, without giving any reason.
- Any information participants provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, her supervisors, the transcriber, and the translator. I understand that the results will be used for a PhD thesis and may be reported in academic reports and presented at conferences.
- My school name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify my school.
- All participating staff will not be identified; pseudonyms will be used for the school and all participants.

I would like to receive a full copy of the thesis and have added my email address below.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Signature _____

Name _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix C. Information letter to the interview participants

INFORMATION LETTER TO THE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Subject: Asking for acceptance to do interviews

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Ngo Huynh Hong Nga and I am a lecturer in a Vietnamese university. I am currently a Ph.D. student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of this research is to undertake an in-depth investigation of how EFL lecturers experience professional development (PD) using a qualitative research design. More specifically, the research will focus on issues related to EFL lecturers' PD experiences as well as the influence of ecological contexts on their PD experiences. This study is expected to contribute to the research field by providing in-depth insights into Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' perceptions of their PD experiences. The findings are also intended to enable the researcher to propose a workable framework to support planning, organising, and delivering effective PD programmes in the context of educational reforms in Vietnam.

How can you help?

I am seeking your participation in my research. If you agree to take part in, you will be invited to participate in one interview. I will ask you about issues related to professional development. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour to 1^{1/2} hours. All interviews will be audio-recorded. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before 1st May 2018. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. This means that my supervisors and I will be aware of your identity, but the research data will be aggregated, and your identity will not be disclosed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. You will not be identified in any work generated from this study. Pseudonyms will be used for your university and all participants. Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcript of the pilot interview. The interview transcripts, summaries, and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed five years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation, articles, and conference presentations.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during the pilot interview;
- withdraw from the study before 1st May 2018;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview recording;
- read over and comment on a written transcript of your interview;

- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

You will be given a consent form to complete at the start of the interview.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Researcher	Primary supervisor	Secondary supervisor
Name: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga University email address nhhnga@ctu.edu.vn	Name: AProf. Sue Cherrington Role: Doctoral supervisor School: Education Phone: +64-4-4639552 Email: sue.cherrington@vuw.ac.nz	Name: AProf. David Crabbe Role: Doctoral supervisor School: Education Phone: +64-4-4635603 Email: david.crabbe@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett.

Email: susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone: +64-4-463 5480

Appendix D. Participant's consent form for interview

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Please read the following statements and circle if you agree.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in one audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 1st May 2018 and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed five years after the research is finished.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, her supervisors, the transcriber and the translator.
- I understand that the results will be used for a Ph.D. thesis and may be reported in academic reports and presented at conferences.
- All participating staff will not be identified; pseudonyms will be used for the university and all participants.

- My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me.

I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview: Yes No

I would like to receive a copy of the final thesis and have added my email address below.

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Role of participant: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix E. Interview protocol for EFL lecturers

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR EFL LECTURERS

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Part 1. Demographic and background information

1. What is your department?
2. What are the main responsibilities in your job?
3. What is your educational background?
4. How many years have you been working as an EFL lecturer?
5. What courses of EFL have you ever taught?

Part 2. PD experiences of EFL lecturers and contextual influences

1. What do you think about the current trend of globalisation? What effect is it having on EFL teaching in Vietnam?
2. What are the current features of EFL teaching in Vietnam?
3. What are the current features of EFL teaching at your school?
4. What factors influence your teaching performances? Do these factors have a negative or positive influence on your PD experiences and needs?
5. Can you tell me about the PD activities that are available for EFL lecturers?
6. How often have you engaged in PD activities?
7. What PD activities have you engaged in during the last three years?
8. What factors have motivated you to participate in PD?

9. Are any PD activities ever required by the university/school/department administration?
10. What challenges or constraints have you experienced in relation to your PD?
11. To what extent do you feel you are responsible for your PD?
12. How important do you perceive PD is for EFL lecturers?
13. How have PD experiences helped achieve your personal and professional goals?
14. If you have not taken part in any PD activities, could you briefly explain the reasons why?
15. Who sets the content or focus of PD activities for PD in your university/department?
16. How do they link to the government or education reform policies?
17. Do you feel that your university/department provides you with sufficient PD opportunities?
18. How do you think PD for EFL lecturers at your university/department may be enhanced?
19. What PD activities would you like to attend over the next three years?
20. Why do you want to engage in those PD activities?
21. What factors influence your future PD needs?
22. What characteristics of PD programmes help make them effective for you?
23. What kind of support do you need for your future PD? How does your university/department support your participation in PD? What could your department do to meet your needs for PD? What could your university administration do?
24. Do you have any other thoughts on this subject? Do you have any other suggestions for PD of EFL lecturers?

Appendix F. Interview protocol for academic managers

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ACADEMIC MANAGERS

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Part 1. Demographic and background information

1. What is your department?
2. What are the main responsibilities in your job?
3. What is your educational background?
4. How many years have you worked as an EFL lecturer and academic manager?
5. What courses of EFL have you ever taught?

Part 2. Issues related to planning PD for EFL lecturers

1. What do you think about the current trend of globalisation? What effects is it having on EFL teaching in Vietnam?
2. What are the current features of EFL teaching in Vietnam?
3. What are the current features of EFL teaching at your school?
4. What external factors (institutional, national, or global) influence lecturers' teaching performance?
5. How long have you been involved in planning PD for staff?
6. Can you tell me about the PD activities that are available for EFL lecturers?
7. What PD activities have you and your staff engaged in during the last three years?
8. How often have you engaged in PD activities?
9. Are there any PD activities ever required by the school/department administration?

10. What factors have motivated EFL lecturers to participate in PD?
11. How important do you see PD is for EFL lecturers?
12. How have PD experiences influenced lecturers' professional practice?
13. How do you decide what PD activities to plan for EFL lecturers at your department? What framework have you used in planning PD at your school/department?
14. To what extent do you feel that there are challenges or constraints around planning for your staff PD programme?
15. Who sets the content or focus of PD activities in your school/department?
16. How do they link to the government or education reform policies?
17. How does your school/department support lecturers' participation in PD?
18. What incentives have you provided for your staff to participate in PD?
19. What responsibilities do you have for supporting staff to engage in PD?
20. Do you feel that your school/department provides lecturers with sufficient PD opportunities?
21. How do you think PD for EFL lecturers at your school/department could be enhanced?
22. What PD activities would you like your staff to attend over the next three years? Why?
23. What characteristics of PD programmes help make them effective for your staff?
24. Do you have any other suggestions for PD of EFL lecturers?

Appendix G. A sample of document summary form

DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe (2016)

Name or Type of document: Decision on the approval of the project entitled *Training doctoral degrees for lecturers at colleges and universities, period 2010-2020*

Document No.: 911/QĐ-TTg

Date of Document: 17th June 2010

Event or Contact with which Document Is Associated: Decision on the approval of the project entitled *The teaching and learning of foreign languages in the national education system, period 2008-2020* issued by the Vietnamese government on 30th September 2008

☒ **Descriptive**

☐ **Evaluative**

☐ **Other** _____

Brief Summary of Contents:

This decision was issued by the Vietnamese government to announce the approval of Project 911 with the aim of training doctoral degrees for lecturers at colleges and universities in Vietnam. Through this decision, several issues regarding the project's general and main objectives, forms, budget sources, solutions, and procedures were clearly indicated so that they could be appropriately undertaken by other stakeholders and related parties.

Significance purpose of Document

This decision aimed to inform the implementation of Project 911 in order to:

- Enhance lecturers' doctoral education both qualitatively and quantitatively in order to improve professional qualifications as well as teaching, research, and management competencies of lecturers at universities and colleges.

- Increase the proportion of lecturers who hold a doctoral degree at universities and colleges throughout the country; strive to have at least 20,000 lecturers with a doctoral degree in 2020 in order to enhance the quality of tertiary education in Vietnam.
- Increase the competency and quality of doctoral training programmes in the country; make use of and enhance international collaborations in education and training, especially in doctoral education.
- Build a firm foundation to fundamentally and thoroughly innovate Vietnamese education; help Vietnamese education integrate with other advanced tertiary education in the region and the world.

Is there Anything Contradictory About Document?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Appendix H. Critical friend research agreement

CRITICAL FRIEND RESEARCH AGREEMENT

Project title: The influence of ecological contexts on EFL lecturers' professional development (PD) experiences in a Vietnamese university

Researcher: Ngo Huynh Hong Nga, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

Dear _____,

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Ngo Huynh Hong Nga and I am a lecturer in a Vietnamese university. I am currently a Ph.D. student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of this research is to undertake an in-depth investigation of how EFL lecturers experience professional development (PD) using a qualitative research design. More specifically, the research will focus on issues related to EFL lecturers' PD experiences as well as the influence of ecological contexts on their PD experiences. This study is expected to contribute to the research field by providing in-depth insights into Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers' perceptions of their PD experiences. The findings are also intended to enable the researcher to propose a workable framework to support planning, organising, and delivering effective PD programmes in the context of educational reforms in Vietnam.

How can you help?

I am seeking your participation in my research. If you agree to take part in, you have been invited to play a role as a critical friend in my research. By partaking in this way, you will not only help me gain deeper insights on EFL lecturers' lived experiences of PD but also assist me address any bias that may be present.

Your role is participating in discussions and reflections with me. No more once a month during the research period (July 2019 - July 2020), I will talk to you through Skype or email to discuss the research procedures that have occurred and ask for your feedback from a Vietnamese lecturer's perspective. By challenging my viewpoint and pointing out some strengths and weaknesses related to my research, you will assist me to enhance validity or trustworthiness of this qualitative research. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before 1st August 2019. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed.

Participant agreement

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to participate as a critical friend in this research.
- I, _____, agree to ensure that all information related to the research will remain confidential to the researcher, Ngo Huynh Hong Nga and myself.
- I agree to take the following precautions:
 1. I will ensure that no person, other than me, access or know the information related to the research.
 2. I will ensure that no other person has access to my computer.
 3. I will delete the files from my computer once the research has been completed.
 4. I will not discuss any aspect of the research with anyone except the researcher, Ngo Huynh Hong Nga.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I. Ethics approval

Phone 04-463 5480
Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Nga Ngo
COPY TO	Dr Sue Cherrington
FROM	AProf Susan Corbett, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	5 December 2017
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval: 25431 THE INFLUENCE OF THE ECOLOGICAL CONTEXTS ON EFL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD) EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS IN A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 5 December 2020. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Susan Corbett'.

Susan Corbett
Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee

Appendix J. Ethics amendment

Phone 0-4-463 6028
Email judith.loveridge@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Nga Ngo
FROM	Dr Judith Loveridge, Convenor, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	11 June 2019
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	Ethics Approval Number: 0000025431 Title: The influence of the ecological contexts on EFL teachers' professional development (PD) experiences and needs in a Vietnamese university

Thank you for your request to amend your ethics approval. This has now been considered and the request granted.

Your application has approval until 5 December 2020. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'J. A. Loveridge'.

Judith Loveridge

Convenor, Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee