

Professional Development of Teacher Educators in Mongolia: Development, Importance, Challenges and Future Directions

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Abstract: This study investigates the professional development (PD) of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educators in Mongolia, exploring its historical evolution, current importance, and existing challenges. Despite the long history of teacher education reforms since the 1921 Revolution, there is a notable lack of direct government policy specifically addressing the professional growth of those who train future teachers. Drawing on Guskey's (2002) Theory of Teacher Change, this research examines the interrelated elements of PD programs, classroom practices, and student learning outcomes.

Applying a qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews with EFL teacher educators, the findings reveal significant barriers to effective professional development. These include heavy workloads and lack of time, insufficient institutional funding, and a deficiency in organizational support. Furthermore, participants identified urgent needs for improving research skills, academic writing, and pedagogical knowledge to meet global standards. The study concludes that for Mongolia's teacher education to progress, authorities must establish a dedicated policy framework that provides systematic support and professional learning opportunities specifically tailored for teacher educators.

Keywords: *Teacher Educators, Professional Development, Mongolia, EFL, Theory of Teacher Change, Educational Policy.*

I. Introduction

Human resource development is the cornerstone of a nation's progress. As Oyundari (2015) notes, the quality of higher education and the proficiency of future professionals depend directly on the capacity of academic staff. Consequently, the professional development (PD) of teacher educators—those who prepare the next generation of teachers—is paramount.

The history of Mongolian education underwent a radical shift following the 1921 People's Revolution. Influenced by the Soviet model, the nation faced an urgent need to combat widespread illiteracy, as only 3% of the population was literate at the time (Urgamal, 2021). This demand laid the foundation for formal teacher education and subsequent PD policies. While numerous documents have since been implemented to improve teaching standards, teacher educators have often remained in the shadows of these reforms.

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Despite the global recognition that "no education system can exceed the quality of its teachers," teacher educators in Mongolia are frequently under-studied and under-supported. Current policies primarily focus on primary and secondary school teachers, leaving a significant gap in the systematic development of those working in higher education. Research indicates that while international initiatives like the "Master Teacher" program (1995) and various "Child-Centered" approaches have been introduced, they often fail to address the specific research and pedagogical needs of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher educators.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the professional development needs and challenges of EFL teacher educators in Mongolia. Using Guskey's (2002) Theory of Teacher Change as a framework, the paper analyzes how structured PD can lead to improved classroom practices and, ultimately, better student outcomes.

II. Teacher education in Mongolia: Development and importance

Teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions about their professional development and its impact strongly influence on teaching and learning. There is a phrase in Mongolia "Unqualified physician kills people right away, but unqualified teacher kills people throughout the life". Providing opportunities for teachers to think about their teaching and learning will assist make perceptions more revealed and visible. Furthermore, this process can enhance teachers' and teacher educators' professional development.

Previous researchers have been conducting a great number of works on human resource development in higher education institutions; however, very few of them focused on teacher educators who train future teachers. Oyundari (2015) suggested that teacher educators must be leaders in education and should carry out the standards for other teachers in higher education institutions about teaching, ethics, knowledge, professional development, curriculum development and cooperation. In order to accomplish it, teacher educators must have leading qualities and capacity. There is a need to investigate more about teacher educators' professional development and learning in order to provide support for their further professional development. Thus, in order to improve the quality of education and further the students' achievement, there is need to focus on not only teachers' in-service professional development but also teachers' pre-service education and their pre-service education providers or teacher educators. Conway et al., (2015) defined teacher educators as "...those who are professionally involved and engaged in the initial and on-going education of teachers". According to Lunenberg et al., (2017), teacher educators not only prepare teachers but also conduct research, plan and carry out curriculum etc., which require specific knowledge. Since teacher educators play many roles, they need much more support. As Lunenberg et al., (2017) recommended, teacher educators have needs in conducting research and developing their research competences. Moreover, as the authors (2017) stressed that the forms of professional development programs should fit the teacher educators' personal qualities and fill gaps in their knowledge and experience. We need large scale research on and in teacher education. Murray and Vanassche (2019) defined research on teacher education that research that is done about professional development programs, histories of teacher education field, policies directed to the field and parties who involved in such research and defined in teacher education research as research that is conducted by people who are involved in teacher education. However, Margolin (2011) stated that few empirical studies about teacher educators, their profession and its development while teacher educators are considered the main role player in education quality. The professional development of teachers and human resource in educational settings is considered and discussed in broader way in Mongolia. However, it is not clear whether the professional development of teacher educators has been considered as a separate issue or not so far. However, little studies exist in Mongolia which have focused on teacher educators' professional development whether it is on or in teacher education research. Thus, the issue of the professional development of teacher educators in Mongolia is under-studied and under-supported, hence, needs more attention both from researchers and government authorities. This study aimed to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding about how much and the significant roles teacher educators' professional development programs play in preparation of quality teachers in Mongolia.

III. Current State of Teacher Education and Development in Mongolia

The period from the 1990s until today is considered as a contemporary period of teacher education and professional development in Mongolia by many researchers in education. In 1990, the Democratic Revolution was held and Mongolia experienced the transition to democratic political system and free market economy. However, until the late 1990s, there was setback in in all sectors and among others education system of Mongolia. Because of insufficient budget, teachers' professional development and teachers' social welfare issues which were fully subsidized by federal government were left behind to some extent and teachers' attrition and shortage in a number of teachers increased. The reputation of teacher's profession fell down. The collapse and drawback in teacher professional development led to insufficient competences such as knowledge, skills (Ichinkhorloo; 2013, Sanjmyatav, 2017), and ethics of educators and it continued up to the early 2000s.

Nowadays, the key university which prepares teachers is the MSUE. This university prepares teachers of all school level in its main and branch schools; School of Teachers, where primary school teachers are educated, and Preschool Education School where kindergarten teachers are prepared. There are other private universities and schools of teachers in provinces of Mongolia as well. Besides this key university, some state universities have also teacher education programs.

From 2000, some substantial measures in teacher education mainly concerned providing teachers with current knowledge and skills, preparing potential and flexible educators, developing teachers' professionalism and solving teachers' social welfare issues. The main impetus for the government emphasis on the teacher education and professional development during that transition period was the result of the research survey conducted among approximately 500 teachers from big cities and provinces.

According to the survey conducted in 1991, five main dilemmas which teachers confronted were the following: the social issue (teachers' salary, teachers' workload, insufficient working condition) left behind, unemployment among teacher-graduates, limited budget for education sector from the government, overmuch pressure from administrators to teachers and inadequate emphasis on teacher professional development.

Recently, the government of Mongolia commenced to pay more attention on teacher education and one of the measures witnessing this is that high school graduates who obtained from 700 to 800 (800 is the highest) scores in general enrollment examination are offered full scholarship if they desire to enroll in the key teacher education university, the MSUE.

In fact, some policy documents such as Teacher Education Policy 2015, National Education Policy 2010-2021, Action Programs of the Government 2016-2020 emphasize that the quality and competencies of teacher educators, university teachers and teachers of all school levels should be upgraded. Analyzing some substantial documents concerning the teacher education, it can be said that there is no direct policy on teacher educators' professional development. Mainly these documents were oriented towards primary and secondary school teacher education and professional development of primary and secondary teachers.

In Mongolia, becoming a teacher educator does not require a specific training and induction programs except four-year teacher education programs in university of teacher education. Anyone who graduated from teacher education institution can apply for a job of teacher educator, only they should have background of a former successful teacher if they worked before or should have good grades on their diploma. However, when they start to work as teacher educators some of them tend to have some challenges regarding teaching in higher education, experiences to work with adults, conducting research and etc. In order to tackle problems, teacher educators should be provided with high quality professional development and all teacher educators need to be motivated to become more research active and be able to reinforce their own practice. Yet professional development of tertiary level teachers and teacher educators in Mongolia is left to be solved at university level. Some universities have the teacher

development center and organize different kinds of workshops, seminars and short-time trainings by experienced teachers and foreign visitors. However, as mentioned above, higher education-based teacher educators, university teachers are left behind. Oyundari conducted a mixed methods research on professional development of tertiary level teachers including teacher educators and ways to improve professional development. Oyundari (2015) stated that there is no adequate support from the authorities and suggested that authorities should focus on research skills of university teachers and teacher educators, the system to organize professional development should be more sophisticated, and university teachers and teacher educators must be more motivated for professional development. Key researchers contend that providing opportunities for teacher educators engage as learners to improve their pedagogical and subject knowledge, build and utilize new practice can be beneficial for not only individual teacher's competences and classroom practice, but also for larger educational context.

IV. Professional Development

Professional development and specifically continuing professional development (CPD) has been defined differently by different authors and researchers on the concept. However, we agree with Rose and Reynolds (2005) who recognize that the definition stated by Day's (1999) as being more encompassing of all behaviors which are intended to effect change in the classroom. Rose and Reynolds (2005) quote Day (1999) as defining CPD 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, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives.” (p.219)

Continuing professional development has been identified as one of the main key components of profession including in-service training and upgrading, not only affects the skills and knowledge that teachers bring to the classroom, but it also affects the social status of the profession, the motivation and decision to become a teacher in the first place (African Union, 2016 in Salzano and Oliphant 2017). In addition, Meke (2013) observes that CPD programs brings change in teachers by improving their skills and knowledge, hence improving their effectiveness with students. The changes are mostly reflected in improved learning outcomes of students. In Mongolia recognizing the importance of CPD in improving teacher quality and indeed students' performance, the need for professional development has been emphasized by the Ministry of Education. established a number of structures to facilitate delivery of CPD programs for teachers in the country.

V. The importance of professional development

There may be a number of ways for teacher educators to develop themselves, however, teachers' professional development is the most promising one. As we have noted earlier, different researchers have already suggested variable definitions of PD and discussed the significance of teachers' professional development activities. Guskey (2010) stated that “high quality professional development is a central component in nearly every modern proposal for improving education” (p. 381). While the professional development programs can have different contents and designs, they share the common goal which is to change and improve the professional practices, beliefs, attitudes and understanding of educators. Guskey (2010) further described that “professional development programs are systemic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (p. 381). However, the effectiveness of these programs is crucial; therefore, the teacher professional development programs should have a substantial positive impact on teachers' practices, attitudes and beliefs, and their students' learning achievements. The professional development and trainings should be directed towards achieving certain demands which teachers have and the most important thing is the quality and open access (Ichinkhoroo, 2013). These programs should help teachers to be effectively developed,

changed and improved, and then their students' performance and achievement in the classroom will be improved at the same time. Taking into account all these issues, teacher education and teacher educators' professional development should be discussed. A number of scholars have conducted studies on teacher educators' professional development programs and revealed the reasons why teacher educators should attend such programs.

VI. Teacher educators' professional development in international settings

Different scholars all over the world have conducted research studies on professional development of teacher educators. For instance, Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) conducted a study on teacher educators' professional development from the view of their role as researchers. Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2014) also examined the relationship between teacher educators' positioning and practices. Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2014) explained that teacher educators need to develop their teaching and research skills. Moreover, Lunenberg et al., (2017) conducted a study on teacher educators' collaborative professional development in Europe and investigated the process how professional development goes through among teacher educators in selected countries. According to the findings of this study, teaching and conducting research can be main pillars to the professional development among these countries (Lunenberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, Carjuzaa (2009) did a study on teacher educators' professional development programs in the United States. According to the findings of this study, teacher educators utilize the skills and knowledge acquired from the professional development in the classroom practice and different types of professional development programs such as workshops, conferences and projects were acted to be a source of teaching materials for teacher educators. In terms of teacher educators' professional development in Asia, different researchers conducted studies. For example, Ping, Schellings, Beijaard and Ye (2020) conducted study on the perceptions of Dutch and Chinese teacher educators on their professional learning. The authors explored how teacher educators perceive the professional development programs in their practice and investigated how different the perceptions of teacher educators are for Dutch and Chinese teacher educators. The findings of the study revealed that professional development is crucial in their teaching practice and research is an important part of teacher educators' professional identity. The idea that professional development can develop and foster teaching is widely accepted (Kennedy, 2016). Borg, Clifford and Htut (2018) noted that teacher educators' professional development programs such as seminars, workshops, conferences, peer coaching and colleagues' discussions should be designed and aimed in a such way that different teaching and learning methods were exposed in front of teacher educators. Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) contended that exposing teacher educators in different teaching and learning approaches professional development programs provide them with opportunities to become more competent and efficient in the classroom practice. Moreover, Ye and Wu (2016) argued that professional development was the key to successful knowledge of teacher educators. As aforementioned, Guskey (2003) claimed that professional development should motivate teacher educators to be able to affect change during classroom practice. Furthermore, Hudson (2013) asserted that ultimate goal of teachers and teacher educators' professional development is to enhance students' learning outcome. As Hudson (2013) stated "professional development must be designed to build teachers' levels of expertise, including their own content knowledge... and knowledge of effective ways to teach".

Moreover, Vanassche et al. (2015) defined teacher educators broadly as those who are professionally involved and engaged in the initial and on-going education of teachers. They also agreed with the fact that the professional education and development of teacher educators is under-supported and under-studied while there is general agreement about the roles and significance, they play in education quality generally. In these studies, the researchers developed the conceptual model that describes the professional development of teacher educators. According to their conceptual framework, the professional development of teacher educators should start from teacher educators' lived practice, the full appreciation of the work teacher educators is doing and of the way they are doing it, their enacted practice. Moreover, As Swennen & Klink (2009) stressed, teacher educators hold much responsibility for the success and quality of teacher education programs, and thus for the quality of teaching. Some other key researchers (Conway et al., 2015; Lunenberg et al., 2014) emphasized that the importance and role of teacher educators are at the heart of educational quality. Liston, Borko, & Whitcomb (2008) cited in Lunenberg

et al., (2014) claimed that "... to a large degree, teacher educators determine the quality of teachers and that these teachers are crucial factor in the quality of primary and secondary education".

VII. Theoretical Framework: Guskey's Model of Teacher Change

Professional development (PD) programs aim to enhance educators' knowledge and skills, yet their ultimate success depends on how effectively these changes are implemented in the classroom. This study adopts Guskey's (2002) Model of Teacher Change to analyze the PD of Mongolian teacher educators.

Unlike traditional models which assume that changes in teacher beliefs lead to changes in practice, Guskey argues that the process is linear and experience-based. According to this model, the change occurs in the following sequence:

1. **Professional Development:** Educators participate in training or workshops.
2. **Change in Classroom Practices:** Educators implement new instructional strategies or tools in their daily teaching.
3. **Change in Student Learning Outcomes:** The new practices lead to observable improvements in student performance or engagement.
4. **Change in Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes:** Only after seeing evidence of improved student outcomes do educators truly shift their professional beliefs and attitudes.

Guskey (2002) emphasizes that PD programs must be "concrete, practical, and specific" to be effective. For Mongolian EFL teacher educators, this means that PD initiatives should not only provide theoretical knowledge but also offer practical tools that lead to visible results in their students' English proficiency. This sequence is crucial for understanding why some PD programs in Mongolia may fail to create lasting change if they do not lead to immediate, practical improvements in the classroom.



Figure 1: A model Showing Interrelated Elements of Teacher Change Model
Source: Guskey (2002)

VIII. Findings and Discussions

The main purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of EFL teacher educators on professional development and main challenges they experience during their day-to-day practices. To achieve its goal, the researcher applied qualitative methods to collect and analyze data in the study. During the data collection and analysis, the study conducted with qualitative- which involved open-ended interview aiming to collect detailed views from participants to explain the initially collected quantitative data.

The Challenges Faced by EFL Teacher Educators Regarding Professional Development

The study further wanted to find out the challenges EFL teacher educators face regarding professional development. All the participants were asked to identify the barriers that obstruct their professional development and they concluded that they faced some challenges and difficulties regarding professional development. Not surprisingly, lack of time and heavy work load, limited budget on professional development, and organizational support was mentioned by all participants.

Time and workload

Results indicate that all the participants agreed with the fact that EFL teacher educators' professional development has positive impact on their teaching practice. Some participants highlighted that school-based professional development is preferred as they provided them with opportunities to collaboratively work with colleagues in their work site. Nevertheless, participants complained that they have difficulties related to time to be engaged in professional development. They emphasized that the timetable of professional development activities is not flexible and does not match with teacher educators' own schedule. As one of the participants noted;

The next big difficulty is time for the training. We were not allowed to leave during the work hours and sometimes we had class at the same time of the trainings. In this case, we had to handle these problems ourselves. We asked our colleagues to teach instead of me and ask permission from the training manager for leave (TE-8)

One of the participants emphasized that language teachers and teacher educators usually have much work pressure.

For us language teachers, we have heavy workload as English language is quite popular. The professional development programs are not planned very often (TE-2)

Thus, there is need for professional development programs to be organized during the time EFL teacher educators have free time to attend the trainings.

Limited budget by Institutions on Professional Development Programs

Results of the interviews indicate that most institutions do not have enough funds to support professional development programs of their staff. It, therefore, becomes difficult for EFL teacher educators to participate in professional development activities, especially when it requires participation fees to be paid. As one member lamented:

...and also, some other professional development programs are not free of charge, so there are money issues also, professional development programs which are free of charge are usually short-time and ineffective. Some trainings with fees are high cost (TE-1)

Thus, unless the teacher educators are given financial support regarding professional development, it will be hard for them to attend most professional development programs most of which require members to pay participation fees.

Lack of Organizational Support towards Professional Development Programs

Results of the interviews with EFL teacher educators have shown that there seem to be less support from the organization/institutions towards professional development activities. Participants observed that most institutions do not have a deliberate policy on professional development, which may make them accountable in case they fail to support the teacher educators. For instance, one of the participants mentioned that organization should have regulation regarding the balance of workload and time for professional development of teacher educators.

One of the participants who has working experience to be a secondary school teacher highlighted that there is less focus from the organization for higher education-based teacher educators than for teachers who work in secondary schools. She narrated as follows:

When I worked as a secondary school teacher, many professional development opportunities were open and the activities organized by the national institution for teachers' professional development mostly were directed for middle school teachers. From this, it can be said that university teachers and teacher educators are not adequately focused by not only organization but also policy-makers (TE-7)

Furthermore, one of the participants also emphasized the problem related to the number of seats in professional development. According to her, limited numbers of participants for professional development programs organized by external providers such as embassies of native-speaking countries, international educational organizations or higher-ranked foreign language training centers are given and teacher educators have to compete for two or three seats.

Yes, there are some challenges related to limited numbers of participants and frequency of professional development programs. For example, the numbers of university EFL teachers are extensive. There are not enough seats in the trainings and we have to compete with each other or to wait for my turn to take part in such high-quality professional development programs. That's why it usually turned to develop myself personally at certain time (TE-7)

Professional Development Needs

The last research question of the study wanted to find out the professional development needs of EFL teacher learners. As such, a deliberate question was asked during the interviews requiring the teacher educators to state the most urgent professional learning needs for their professional development.

Time Management skills

Result of the study indicate that mostly, time management is highlighted as one of the most important professional learning needs of EFL teacher educators. The participants noted that though they may have more time, they need time management skills in order to be engaged in different academic and scholarly activities such as conducting research, publishing and writing academic writing, critical thinking and reading in addition to their everyday teaching activities. As one of the participants asserted:

I need more time to spend for writing and publishing articles in scholarly journals. We are required to publish at least 2 articles depending on our work position in the school per an academic year. In order to improve my researcher's role as a teacher educator, I need more time. The school should support us with time management issues (TE-8)

It was noted during the interviews by another EFL teacher educator, who spoke in support of the above-mentioned views and proposed that EFL teacher educators expect managers of the organization to support them by time allocating some time which will allow teacher educators to focus not only teaching but also researching how to teach well. They noted that this would also allow the EFL teacher educators to participate fully in professional development activities. Thus, the respondent was worried that when they go for further studies, they may lose their jobs, so they proposed about the sabbatical or academic leave to study in postgraduate or other long-term professional development abroad for them to be safe about their job. One respondent explained that:

I want to feel safe about my working place when I go abroad for my PhD degree. If I get chance for scholarship, I am thinking of going however, I need to be sure for my workplace to be kept for me (TE-4)

Furthermore, one of the respondents suggested that time management is necessary for effective use of time on other professional activities such as meetings, discussions with other colleagues on teaching practices, reading across disciplines and other teaching practice related activities.

Another suggestion related to time which the teacher educators complained about, and called for enhanced time management skills is about their workload. As one of the respondents claimed:

In almost all universities, foreign language teachers have heavy workload, I want to free up some time for doing research, write research article or prepare for international conferences (TE-1)

When EFL teacher educators asked about their suggestions to address this professional learning need, typically the answer was need for time management skills and reduced workload, exemplified by one EFL teacher educator request, 'I need to focus on my teaching and professional development at the same time, and for this I need more time and less workload'. Two EFL teacher educators also emphasized that they need academic leave for long-term courses such as PhD or master courses.

I want to apply for scholarship to upgrade my academic degree abroad; however, the school said that they were not planning to keep my workplace. I need my school's support (TE-5)

Research skills

All EFL teacher educators who participated in the study emphasized that their need is to improve their research skills in the areas of writing and publishing scholarly papers and research methodology and methods. In addition, the participants commented on their need to develop their teacher educator-researcher role, how to be ethical researcher and how to analyze data.

For example, two EFL teacher educators who got their Master degree in Australia highlighted that the research skills that they acquired in Australia should be strengthened while all participants agreed with the fact that doing research was one of the best ways to improve their teaching practice. The following is the example:

I obtained my master degree in Monash University in Australia studying there for two years. There I had opportunity to write minor thesis. I learned the fundamental knowledge regarding research and academic writing. Furthermore, I would like to continuously develop these skills through professional development (TE-1)

Results indicate that EFL teacher educators have a lot of practical experience as a university teacher. They have full teaching schedules and lack much experience in doing research. The quotation that follows by one of the participants clearly describes it:

I think EFL teacher educators who work in higher education have enough knowledge regarding content of the subjects they are teaching and teaching skills, however; they need to improve their scientific or research knowledge and capacity to be improved (TE-8)

For the questions how best to address the professional development need of improving research skills, mostly, EFL teacher educators' responses were that they need to do courses, trainings, seminars and conferences on research processes and they emphasized that in-house courses would be best tailored to their needs. In this vein, one EFL teacher educator argued that each university had 'the professors' team' and this team should focus on developing teacher educators' research skills by assisting them in conducting research. Furthermore, she claimed that she needed in their realistic assistance.

Skills in publishing or writing academic paper

During the interviews, some teacher educators revealed that they lack experiences to write high-quality research articles and others said that they have some level of writing experience alluding to the need develop the skills. However, the majority of teacher educator expressed their request to be mentored by experienced colleagues following the instruction in research background or working on papers collaboratively. As one participant asserted:

We are required to publish three research papers in one academic year, but I find it difficult to conduct research and data analysis as I am not confident with the quality of my paper. I would like to work with and learn from someone who is much more experienced than me. I am thinking of working together and publishing high quality papers would give me not only capacity but also inspiration (TE-8)

As EFL teacher educators who participated in the interview suggested, the best ways to address the professional learning need of publishing and writing academic papers were coaching and mentoring. EFL teacher educators need realistic assistance from other colleagues who have much experience in this field.

Needs concerning pedagogical skills

The results indicate that the EFL teacher educators clearly noted their most important needs are to be kept well-informed with new pedagogies such as: upgrading teaching and learning strategies, working with diverse students etc.

The following quotation suggested that developing the capacity regarding pedagogy is needs for experienced EFL teacher educators as well.

For me, I have been working as a teacher educator for 12 years, but I still need to be excelled in teaching EFL. I am teaching future teachers; thus I need to be the best (TE-9)

To the question about how to address these professional learning needs, the participants responded that through attending or being engaged in trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences would be efficient for acquiring teaching and learning skills. Additionally, formal and informal in-school courses would be best tailored to their needs as it allows them to exchange acquired knowledge with each other immediately. For example, one teacher educator said that:

The round table meeting which was organized in the department was beneficial with some reasons, the environment was comfortable and gave us chance to be confident in our site of work, and the participants were our colleagues who know each other well. During that discussion, I could get much knowledge in short time in warm and familiar atmosphere (TE-9)

Knowledge of current policies in teacher education

Finally, EFL teacher educators illustrated, the most important professional learning need is to be knowledgeable of current policies in teacher education and implementation of the policies in their practice. One of the respondents clearly illustrated this kind of professional learning need:

The relationship between policy makers and the teacher educators (as the implementers of the policy) should be clear, teachers' awareness of policies, official documents related to teacher education and requirements in them should be clear and informed officially not only for teacher educators but also student teachers (TE-8)

Moreover, another EFL teacher educator highlighted that policies and documents related to teacher education were supposed to be known by those who were supposed to implement them. Thus, the significance of being aware of policy issues was excessive. The responses to the question, how best to address the professional learning need of awareness of current policies in teacher education, was the constant in school-based meetings and discussions.

IX. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the professional development (PD) landscape for EFL teacher educators in Mongolia, highlighting a significant disconnect between historical educational progress and current policy support. While Mongolia has a century-long tradition of prioritizing teacher quality, teacher educators—the primary architects of future teaching standards—remain a marginalized group in terms of systematic professional growth and dedicated policy frameworks.

The findings demonstrate that EFL teacher educators face a complex interplay of institutional and personal barriers. Heavy workloads, financial constraints, and a lack of organizational incentives such as sabbatical leave

create an environment where professional learning is often ad-hoc rather than systematic. Furthermore, the transition toward research-oriented higher education has created an urgent demand for competencies in research methodology, academic writing, and advanced pedagogical supervision, for which many educators feel underprepared.

By applying Guskey's (2002) Theory of Teacher Change, this research confirms that meaningful change in the Mongolian education system cannot occur without addressing the needs of those who train the teachers. If teacher educators are not provided with concrete, practical, and supported PD opportunities, the cycle of improvement in classroom practices and student outcomes will remain stagnant.

Recommendations:

1. **Policy Formulation:** The Ministry of Education should develop a dedicated policy framework specifically for the continuous professional development of teacher educators in higher education, distinct from primary and secondary school teacher policies.
2. **Institutional Support:** Universities should implement "Academic Sabbaticals" and dedicated PD funds to alleviate the financial and time-related burdens on staff.
3. **Targeted Training:** Professional development programs should shift focus toward research skills, academic writing in English, and modern thesis supervision techniques to meet the evolving demands of the sector.
4. **Strengthening Communication:** There is a need for formal mechanisms to ensure that teacher educators are not only aware of current educational policies but are also involved in the feedback loop of policy implementation.

In conclusion, investing in the professional growth of teacher educators is not merely an institutional duty but a national necessity. To ensure the quality of the next generation of Mongolian professionals, the "teachers of teachers" must be given the resources, time, and recognition they require to excel.

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