

The tale of two systems: EFL teachers' lived realities in Addis Ababa

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Abstract

Addressing the gap between EFL teachers' actual professional development practices and the governmental documentation system in Addis Ababa's secondary schools, this paper focuses on Global South teacher agency, critiques deficit discourses, and provides a decolonial perspective on teacher professional development. We employed Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology to conduct in-depth interviews (16 individuals), two focus group discussions (8 participants) and hermeneutic analysis of eight official CPD portfolios in four sub-cities. There are five pathways of self-directed professional learning: individual practices; collaborative networks (participation in EELPA association); formal programs (widely denounced as irrelevant); technology-mediated learning; and aspirational visions of bottom-up CPD. Through document analysis, it became evident that the most treasured relational and collaborative practices of teachers are being systematically removed off the record by the CPD portfolios, which concentrate on the forms of performative compliance rather than genuine development. The Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework is our theory of the documentation systems acting out the epistemic violence on teacher-generated knowledge. Policy implications of findings are directly related to policy redesign efforts within Ethiopia ESDP VI (2021-2025).

Keywords professional development practices, EFL teachers, phenomenology, teacher agency, professional associations, CPD documentation

1. Introduction

The professional growth of teachers has received more and more academic interest as the process of teaching becomes more complicated and challenging. The teachers are currently experiencing a need that never before in an era of intense educational change that they need to update and enhance their skills in the form of professional development (Craft, 2000). This is especially urgent in the case of English language teachers, who are exposed to less steadiness and permanence than any other educational field, which is subjected to change too often (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Since English remains the lingua franca of political, cultural and economic interaction, schools and colleges are faced with new demands in adapting to

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curricular changes, new language assessment models and changing student demands.

1.1. Ethiopian Educational Environment

Ethiopia is a special but complicated picture of the English language education. Since Ethiopia is a non-anglophone African country with a diverse and well-developed linguistic background consisting of more than 80 languages, English becomes a decisive language in the education sector since it is used starting with the fifth grade (Heugh, Abebe, & Gellner, 2007; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2009). The education system is very centralized and the federation, curriculum, approval of textbooks, and school management is done at the federal and regional level (Abate, 2018). Ministry of Education is the formulator of national policies and the implementation of these policies is done by the regional education bureaus within their jurisdictions.

Although this centralized structure guarantees a certain degree of uniformity, it has been criticized as a hindrance to teacher autonomy and as being unable to address local contextual needs (Abate, 2018). The patterns of postcolonial imposition of policies of English medium instruction are part of overall trends in linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) in which a language policy sustains power disparities in the world despite having been shown to cause detrimental effects on student learning. As Negash (2006) eloquently states, English is the scourge of English as the medium of instruction in Ethiopia-the foreign policy practiced in Ethiopia that remains despite the adverse effects of its application on educational quality and equity.

In the context of the existing policy is the Education Sector Development Program VI (ESDP VI, 2021-2025) with its focus on the enhancement of teacher quality by providing better CPD and promoting the development of professional learning communities in schools (MoE, 2021). In ESDP VI, there is an explicit suggestion of revitalizing of CPD programs in order to become more responsive to the needs of teachers, and is aware of the value of collaborative effort and learning among peers. The results of this research on self-initiative collaborative work of the teachers and erasure of this work in the official documentation provided systematically address the problems of the implementation of ESDP VI.

It is spelled out in ESDP VI: 80% of teachers will engage in collaborative CPD in schools by 2025 (MoE, 2021). But our results indicate that there is a wide disjunction between this policy goal and classroom practice. Although the policy has an envision that entails a shared, school-based learning, our document analysis indicates that CPD portfolios are personalized, compliance based artifacts that do not reflect collaborative practices. This lack of correlation between policy rhetoric and the reality of implementation is exactly what our Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework tries to explain.

Nevertheless, even after spending a lot of money on the growth of education, there are still issues of quality. Results of the national assessment of 2000, 2004, and 2008 revealed that children in most schools were not mastering the basic skills (Ministry of Education, 2007a). The

absence of qualified teachers is considered to be the main reason for this issue which is mainly due to the insufficiency of continuous professional development (CPD). As Mejena (2003) noted that the Ethiopian English language teachers teach what they know, what they have, what they think, and what they believe. They are not able to provide more than they have and such a professional development that is appropriate and sustainable is something that they are not used to in their profession.

The Ministry of Education has developed a full teacher professional development plan with the focus on upgrading and updating of teachers with the help of pre-service and in-service training (MoE, 2009). CPD takes a wider meaning in the national framework as anything that enhances a teacher better, which means, anything that improves the performance of the teachers by continuously increasing personal growth, capability and professional potential (MoE, 2009). Education and Training Policy is very strict in terms of standards that teachers should take regarding active learning, problem-solving, and student centered teaching techniques. Though these policies were intended, studies have shown that there are still gaps in the implementation with the teachers continuing to use teacher-centred methods and having little access to meaningful professional development (Dasalegn, 2009).

According to the literature regarding teacher professional development, one-shot, externally-defined activities that are planned and implemented without taking into consideration the immediate needs of teachers do not typically have any effect on teacher development and learning (Borg, 2015; Guskey, 2002). On the other hand, high-quality professional development practices are relevant to the needs of teachers and students, include teachers in content and process decision-making, promote collaboration, are supported at the school level, allow teachers to explore and reflect on their practices and beliefs, value experience and knowledge of the teacher (Borg, 2015). The model of teacher change, developed by Guskey (2002) also stresses that the major shift in attitudes and beliefs of teachers happens only when they become equipped with the evidence of the student learning improvement, which implies that the effectiveness of professional development must be evaluated not only by the teacher satisfaction.

Although literature on general professional development is abundant, there is still limited research, which is specific to EFL teacher professional development in the Ethiopian context, specifically in Addis Ababa. The majority of the current research utilizes the quantitative design, which, although useful, is not able to deliver the same insights into the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs held by the participants that qualitative design does (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Moreover, the extant literature is mainly dedicated to the assessment of INSETs programs but does not analyse the actual and lived practices of professional development among teachers. The recent perspectives on CPD imply that teacher development is continuous, lifelong, and, in most cases, self-directed a perspective that requires methodological tools that could be able to elucidate the richness and complexity of teacher experiences.

The paper fills these gaps by using a phenomenological research investigation using the following research question: What are the kinds of

professional development practices that the English language teachers are currently involved in? It also dwells on the professional development practices EFL teachers are involved in presently with references to the lived experience of teachers in the Addis Ababa government secondary schools. Although there was a lot of literature on teacher professional development, few studies have explored interactions between institutional documentation practices and teacher lived professional realities especially in situations of under-resource in the Global South. In this study, the gap is addressed as it explores the ways in which EFL teachers undergo professional development in the structurally constrained systems.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do EFL teachers experience professional development within their institutional contexts?
2. How do documentation systems represent or distort those experiences?
3. What structural factors shape these dynamics?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design: Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The paper uses a Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to research the experiences of English language teachers in relation to their practices in professional development. Phenomenology, which is the purposeful effort to identify and explain the structures and the inner meaning of lived experience (van Manen, 1990), is especially available to find answers to how teachers perceive and practice professional development in their particular locales.

The father of phenomenology was Edmund Husserl who concentrated on the study of phenomena as they are manifested in consciousness and suggested that scientists should bracket out the external world and personal prejudice to get in touch with essences (Jones, 1975). Nonetheless, the present study adheres to Martin Heidegger hermeneutic phenomenology that denies the existence of bracketing, since interpretation is central to acknowledgment and that every encounter implies interpretation that is shaped by the background of a person (Heidegger, 1962). The notion of Dasein as Heidegger defines it, as being human or the situated meaning of a human in the world, focuses on the fact that we are all in, amongst, and inseparable with a world being and we make sense of the world out of our being in the world and not in some detached sense (Maggs-Rapport, 2001).

The study follows the Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology because the interest is to unearth and present the perception of EFL teachers on the development of themselves professionally. Such inquiry will require profound questioning to get the nature and meaning of experiences as perceived by participants.

2.2. Researcher Positionality

The researcher in a qualitative research is the instrument (Patton, 2002), with his specific worldviews and belief systems, which affect the research activities and final accounts (Creswell, 2007). In the Heideggerian

hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher participates in the process of interpretation of findings as opposed to being a passive recipient of information (Draucker, 1999). Thus, the readers should be informed about the positionality of the researcher in order to see through the interpretation prism applied to this study.

The investigator has 19 years of experience as a primary, secondary, and tertiary educational teacher, a significant part of which was working as an EFL teacher and teacher-educator in Addis Ababa. This extended relationship with the Ethiopian education system enabled first hand information about the system as well as accessibility and rapport with participants as well as facilitating interpretation of their lived experiences in a subtle way. The researcher as a participant in the professional development field through both frustrations of poorly designed INSET programmes and the opportunities of self-directed learning and collaborative learning informed the questions posed and meaning created through the narratives of the participants.

Nevertheless, such an insider view was also accompanied by rigorous reflexivity during research. The researcher kept a reflexive journal where the assumption, preconceptions, and developing understandings were recorded. Frequent debriefing with the second coder (an ELT Assistant Professor) was used to bring out and check interpretive biases. The researcher bracketed judgments consciously during interviews and adopted an attitude of total curiosity and gave the participants a space to steer the discussion. This was not aimed at removing subjectivity, but doing so in a critical and open manner, which Heidegger would deem impossible.

2.3. Participants and Sampling

Following phenomenological principles emphasizing deep comprehension of common experiences, purposive, criterion-based sampling was employed, focusing on information power and thematic saturation rather than statistical representativeness (Malterud et al., 2016; van Manen, 2014). A core sample of 16 English language teachers was developed, a philosophically and practically appropriate number as phenomenological studies typically use samples of 5-25 to enable deep idiographic analysis while maintaining sufficient variation (Creswell, 2013).

Addis Ababa's eleven administrative sub-cities were stratified, with four selected as primary strata: Yeka and Gulele (densely populated, established urban zones), Arada (historic city core), and Akaki Kality (peripheral, expanding context). From each selected sub-city, two general secondary schools were purposively selected, resulting in eight schools. From each school, two English language teachers were selected using criterion sampling - the primary criterion being active participation in formal or informal CPD activities within the preceding two academic years. Maximum variation was sought regarding gender and teaching experience.

Saturation was prospectively monitored using a protocol of preliminary thematic analysis during data collection. The twelfth interview produced no new codes, and the subsequent four interviews served primarily to confirm, elaborate, and deepen existing themes rather than generate novel categories. Following Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora, (2016) information power

framework, the combination of narrow study aim, dense participant specificity, high-quality dialogue, and strong theoretical support indicated that 16 interviews provided adequate information power.

The final sample comprised 10 male and 6 female teachers with experience ranging from 5 to 34 years (four early-career, six mid-career, six late-career). Seven participants held Master's degrees, while nine held Bachelor's degrees. Participants taught grades 9-12 in government secondary schools across the four selected sub-cities.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Category	Number
Gender	Male	10
	Female	6
Teaching Experience	Early-career (5–10 years)	4
	Mid-career (11–20 years)	6
	Late-career (21–34 years)	6
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	9
	Master's Degree	7

2.4. *Focus Group Discussions*

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted for methodological and contextual triangulation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville 2014). FGD1 comprised four teachers, one from each primary sub-city, selected from the individual interviewee pool to foster interaction revealing shared understandings and divergent perspectives. FGD2 comprised four different teachers exclusively from Addis Ketema sub-city, serving as a supplementary intensive case for analytical triangulation—deliberately excluded from the main interview sample to serve as a pure contrastive case.

2.5. *Document Analysis*

Each of the eight schools which participated in artefactual triangulation had one complete, officially submitted CPD portfolio (Bowen, 2009). These portfolios (annual CPD plans, activity logs and reflective reports at schools) were subjected to the hermeneutic content analysis in order to derive the mentioned objectives and implemented activities and formal outcomes which offer a standalone account of the institutional narratives of teachers lived

experiences and their sense-making within the formal policy-making and planning schemes.

A coding scheme was created by structured discussion in the team to analyze the portfolios. There were four dimensions coded, and these were: (1) teacher voice present (0 = none, 1 = minimal/formulaic, 2 = substantive), (2) challenge articulation (0 = none, 1 = generic, 2 = specific), (3) relational practices recorded (0 = none, 1 = hierarchical only, 2 = collegial), and (4) subject-specificity (0 = generic, 1 = English teaching mentioned, 2 = English teaching central). Exemplars were picked per level of codes.

The inter-coder reliability in document analysis was measured on 25 percent of the portfolios (two documents) by coding them separately and independently by both researchers. Consent was achieved at 92% in all the coding categories with deviations prevailing through discussion. The complete coding rubric along with operational definition and samples is given.

2.6. Data Collection Procedures

The method of data collection was semi-structured face to face interview in both individual interview and focus group interview. One on one interviews gave secure, intimate spaces where personal attitudes and opinions would be shared freely. The focus group interviews brought about collaborative aspects whereby dynamic discussions would be done to expose common themes, experiences, and divergent perspectives. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed word-to-word.

The interview protocol was made on the basis of research questions and available literature on teacher professional development. Questions were used to discuss the current practices of the professional development of teachers, their experience of numerous activities and perceptions of the worth of the different approaches, and their ideal practices of the way they desire professional development to be. The protocol was through expert validation and think-aloud protocol, then implemented. Questions were checked by five experts in the field so that exploration of research areas is full. During the second piloting, the teachers of the government schools were engaged in the think-aloud protocols, when they read one of the questions aloud and gave their understanding of the question, which allowed to make changes and update the interview guide.

2.7. Data Analysis Procedures

Hermeneutic interpretative phenomenological analysis was used and was performed by an interpretive team consisting of two individuals who include the researcher and an ELT expert with a PhD from Dire Dawa University. The involvement of teams brought about profoundness and insights to interpretations. Analysis of the data was a cyclic process; it included reading and re-reading of transcribed texts; identifying main concerns and themes; coding, with the unit of analysis of a sentence, paragraph or a whole text; dialogical coding where conflicts were solved through discussion and debate; forming of themes into categories; formation of superordinate categories; construction of tables of themes with support based on stories. Cohens k was used to determine the inter-coder reliability

based on 20 percent of the randomly chosen data, which were independently coded by both of the researchers. The consensus of $k = .87$ (95% CI, .82-.91), which implies high reliability (Landis & Koch, 1977). When it came to disagreeing, it would be solved by discussing it until a common ground was achieved.

2.8. Trustworthiness

Credibility was strengthened in accordance with the requirements of Lincoln and Guba (1985) using triangulation (different sources of data), member checks, and peer review. The issue of transferability was handled by thick description of context, participants and methodology. Reliability was maintained by the thorough recording of the research design and data collection procedures and inter-coder reliability. Triangulation, methodological documentation and researcher reflexivity were used to improve confirmability in the process of analysis.

2.9. Ethics

Ethical permission was sought at Addis Ababa University and Addis Ababa City Education Bureau. All respondents were informed, signed consent forms, and assured that there was no harm in being part of the study and the identities would be kept confidential and pseudonyms would be applied all through. All the data were kept in a computer which is password-protected and accessible only to the research team, and all the identifiable information was substituted with pseudonyms (T1-T16 to refer to interviews, FGD1T1-FGD2T4 to refer to focus groups, School 1-8 to refer to documents). The data will be stored within no less than five years after the publications in accordance with university policy after which all documents will be destroyed.

3. Findings

3.1. Overview of Emergent Themes

The analysis of interview data from sixteen EFL teachers reveals five overarching thematic categories representing the essential structures of teachers' lived experiences in professional development practices.

Table 2

Superordinate Themes of Professional Development Practices (N=16)

Theme	Core Description	Frequency (f)
1. Self-Initiated and Collaborative Learning Practices	Self-initiated activities (reading, reflection, media use) plus collaborative engagement (associations, peer observation, departmental work, mentoring, cross-departmental sharing, social gatherings) – often without institutional support	16
2. Formal and	Institutionally organized programs	14

Theme	Core Description	Frequency (f)
Structured Professional Development	(action research, INSET, PGDT, special needs training)	
3. Technology-Mediated Practices	Professional learning leveraging digital platforms (online courses, YouTube, Telegram, forums)	14
4. Aspirational and Visionary Practices	Teachers' articulated desires for ideal CPD (needs identification, practical content, qualified trainers, school-based delivery)	16

3.2. *Theme 1: Self-Initiated and Collaborative Learning Practices*

3.2.1 *Reading and Literature Engagement*

Teachers independently read books and professional literature to stay current and improve knowledge. As one teacher stated, "I read some books when I have a time" (T2), while another reported, "I have also been studying different books" (T9), and a third noted, "I read literature again, follow the audio from internet" (T13). These practices appear driven by personal initiative, as institutional libraries or resources were rarely mentioned. Reading happens in whatever time teachers can carve out, suggesting individual sacrifice for professional growth. The phrase "when I have a time" (T2) poignantly captures how reading is squeezed into personal time, not protected professional time.

3.2.2 *Language Proficiency Practice Through School Activities*

Teachers intentionally transform daily duties into language practice opportunities. One teacher described:

"Most of the time, I practice my English in front of the students. I lead the morning ceremonies, flag ceremonies, something, music, transfer or pass to the students. Just, I do that." (T12)

Another explained:

"I use my classroom to develop my proficiency... I use a lot of English in the classroom because I'm an English teacher. I don't have another field to exercise this English. So my platform, my field is my classroom." (T14)

This finding powerfully demonstrates how the classroom becomes both the site of teaching and personal development, with teachers' isolation from English-speaking environments outside school driving this creative transformation. T14's comment "I don't have another field" highlights the profound constraint teachers face - the classroom is not just where they

work but the primary, and sometimes only, space where they can authentically use and develop their English language skills.

3.2.3 Self-Monitoring and Reflection

Teachers engage in sophisticated introspective practices, as illustrated by one participant:

"Just I try to download different videos and continuously, repeatedly, I watch those videos. Am I teaching in this way? What looks I like, right? Just I am comparing and contrasting with those teachers who are teaching online." (T11)

This practice goes beyond passive viewing - teachers actively compare themselves to models, engaging in critical self-evaluation. The repetition - "continuously, repeatedly" - suggests deep, sustained engagement with the learning process. This reflective practice exemplifies what Schön (1983) termed "reflection-on-action" - the retrospective analysis of practice that enables professionals to surface and critique tacit knowledge.

3.2.4 Watching English Media for Language Development

Teachers consume English-language media for language maintenance and exposure to authentic language use. "I love to watch English movies" (T2) represents both language practice and compensation for limited English-speaking environments outside school. This practice, while seemingly informal, serves as a crucial strategy for maintaining and improving language proficiency in a context where English is not widely spoken outside educational settings.

3.2.5 Professional Association Membership and Participation

A critical finding is teachers' active engagement with the Ethiopian English Language Professionals Association (EELPA) for workshops, conferences, and networking. One teacher reported:

"I attended registered in one professional development in an Ethiopian English language association. So I have got a lot of things from that association. I developed my profession by attending different webinars, conferences..." (T5)

Another participant, serving as an executive committee member, elaborated:

"I am the executive committee member of English language professional association, and I participated in different seminars, in different workshops, in different training sessions and different sessions of English language professional association. It just gives me a lot of insights for how to teach English, how to improve my English language skills. And it gives me a lot of insights than the courses that I have already taken from the universities." (T6)

Teachers consistently report that professional associations provide more valuable development than government INSETs, filling gaps left by inadequate institutional CPD. T6's statement that association participation gives "a lot of insights than the courses that I have already taken from the universities" is particularly striking - it suggests that the collaborative, needs-based, practice-embedded learning offered by the professional association aligns more closely with teachers' lived experience of meaningful development than formal, top-down programs.

3.2.6 Peer Observation and Lesson Study

Contrary to common narratives that collaborative activities are absent, teachers describe rich peer observation practices. One teacher shared:

"We have tried to invite our lessons to the other. Just like to exchange our experiences with my colleagues when they are teaching the lessons. And then I try to observe how they are teaching. And they also observe me by how I am teaching the students. So that is the way that we have observe or communicate our experience." (T4)

Another described a more structured approach:

"We have or we prepare a lesson study. We discuss. We submit some kind of content in how we teach or in what way we have to teach this content in the same way. We share, we discuss." (T11)

A particularly vivid account came from a veteran teacher:

"Even this week, we have passed through in-built supervision myself and my friend, in-built supervision. He comes to my class, checks me, I go to his class, checks him, give him feedback, he gives me feedback, and through this we improve our skill." (T14)

These practices, while often informal and unrecognized as "official" CPD, represent the essence of effective professional learning. The term "in-built supervision" (T14) suggests these practices may be embedded in school culture but not formally labeled as professional development - a phenomenon of significant phenomenological importance.

3.2.7 Departmental Collaboration: Planning, Testing, and Curriculum Work

Teachers regularly collaborate within English departments on core professional tasks. One teacher described:

"When we prepare test... we support each other, one another." (T1)

Another explained:

"When you plan, when you have a test, even when you just explain to each other, even when you have a difficulty in a new textbook, of course they help me." (T2)

A particularly rich description came from a participant:

"We have a meeting or CPD program in English department. So, at that time, we come together and discuss, especially there are the focus areas that we planned to do our own. For instance, how to bring students result, how to teach English, the way of teaching English. We discussed about this... And then, we come back to our class and apply this better ideas that we discussed before." (T10)

This demonstrates that collaborative CPD happens through everyday work - test preparation, lesson planning, curriculum evaluation - activities not labeled "professional development" but functioning as such. T10's description is particularly significant because it reveals a complete learning cycle: collaborative discussion, classroom application, and improved practice.

3.2.8 Informal Mentoring and Learning from Experienced Colleagues

Teachers seek out and learn from more experienced colleagues informally. One teacher noted:

"I got some experience from my colleagues in English department teachers. For instance, how to prepare lesson plan... in addition to my experience, I got another experience from my colleagues, especially who serve more than me." (T10)

Another expressed desire:

"I would like to communicate with experienced person. I wanna to develop my skills." (T8)

A teacher described a valuable resource:

"I do have the well-experienced instructor in our departments, well-matured person, the one who taught about more than 35 years also. Then from them, if I got about some professional training experience, the way how to develop our professionals..." (T16)

This highlights an untapped resource - experienced teachers serving as informal mentors. The description of a colleague "who taught about more than 35 years" represents a wealth of practical knowledge that remains largely unrecognized by formal professional development systems.

3.2.9 Cross-Departmental Experience Sharing

Teachers report learning from colleagues in other subject areas, recognizing that pedagogical skills transfer across disciplines. One teacher explained:

"Colleagues from other subjects, we feed one another, I can say. We feed one another. Because one teacher or one subject teacher or subject department cannot stand by itself being isolated... We share experience from biology from physics from mathematics." (T14)

Another described learning from a physics teacher:

"He was an experienced teacher. He is a physics teacher. By the way, regarding CPD, just he share us a lot of experience, especially how to plan. Starting from the planning, selecting the needs... and also, regarding the reflection after the reflection, he share us his experience." (T11)

This reveals that pedagogical skills are transferable across subjects, and teachers recognize and value this cross-disciplinary learning. The phrase "we feed one another" (T14) beautifully captures the reciprocal, mutually beneficial nature of these professional relationships.

3.2.10 Informal Social Gatherings with Professional Discussion

A unique finding reveals teachers using social occasions for professional dialogue. One teacher described:

"We do have... a program like we meet together, we have lunch once maybe in a month. In that program we share experiences, alright? We share experiences. We have a chat. When we chat we don't talk something unimportant things. We talk about our profession. How do you teach? What problems did you face? How are your students with you? How do you treat them? How do you manage your class? Were there any problems? Please share us. We do this." (T14)

This finding has profound phenomenological significance - professional development permeates teachers' social lives because professional identity is deeply integrated into their sense of self. Teachers choose to discuss teaching in personal time not because required but because professional being is inseparable from who they are. The explicit statement that "we don't talk something unimportant things" underscores the intentionality and seriousness of these professional conversations.

3.3. Theme 2: Formal and Structured Professional Development

3.3.1 Action Research

Some teachers engage in systematic inquiry into their practice. One participant reported:

"I do action research. Action research based on reading skills. Based on reading skills I do also, I want to do based on reading skills, action research on grade nine students. How we they can develop their reading skills." (T3)

Action research represents formal, systematic CPD directly addressing classroom realities. T3's focus on reading skills with his own students demonstrates how formal inquiry can be deeply practice-embedded.

3.3.2 In-Service Training (INSET) and PGDT

Teachers attend government-organized training programs but consistently critique them. One teacher described PGDT participation:

"I have taken PGDT... For three consecutive summers. Yes, yes." (T9)

However, another expressed strong dissatisfaction:

"To tell you frankly, I didn't get anything from that in-service program because the program itself was not attractive. So I didn't get anything to apply in my class." (T5)

A participant elaborated:

"But the in-service training that is given by the government, honestly speaking, that is not something which is related to my work... There is nothing that I have to apply to in my classroom." (T6)

The consistent critique of INSETs as "theoretical" and "not attractive" reveals a profound disconnect between system offerings and teachers' lived needs. T6's critique is particularly sharp - the training is "not something which is related to my work" - suggesting a fundamental misalignment between what the system provides and what teachers actually need.

3.3.3 Special Needs/Inclusive Education Training

In contrast, special needs training (SOS) is genuinely valued. One teacher shared:

"I use, there was what? One student who is eye impaired, so I try to participate her very well. So the training, what? Helps me." (T1)

Another described profound impact:

"It helps a lot, especially with special needs students... After training, I can just identify my student. Even I have found one student... So after training, it helps me a lot. Even to screen my babies, right? I'm very hyper, my second child is very hyper. So, even it helps me personally." (T2)

When CPD meets genuine needs, teachers not only appreciate it but integrate it deeply into personal and professional lives. T2's account of applying training to understand her own child reveals how meaningful professional development transcends the classroom, becoming personally transformative.

3.4. *Theme 3: Technology-Mediated Practices*

3.4.1 *Structured Online Courses*

Teachers enroll in formal online courses offered by international organizations. One teacher reported:

"I have got opportunity to get online courses with American Embassy and British Embassy. So these kinds of programs have helped me to develop my profession." (T5)

Another described:

"The British Council, the American Embassy, help us a lot of or give us a lot of opportunity for us to to develop our professions like MOOC courses, the global courses, online courses." (T6)

International providers fill gaps left by local institutions, with teachers actively seeking these opportunities. The phrase "examined from USA" (T9) suggests these courses have certification value that local programs may lack.

3.4.2 *YouTube for Professional Learning*

Teachers use YouTube to watch teaching demonstrations and learn from other educators. One participant described sophisticated engagement:

"I use social media, especially YouTubes. Just I try to download different videos and continuously, repeatedly, I watch those videos. Am I teaching in this way? What looks I like, right? Just I am comparing and contrasting with those teachers who are teaching online." (T11)

This represents sophisticated professional learning - not passive viewing but active, reflective engagement and critical self-evaluation. The teacher holds his own practice up against models, engages in critical questioning, and seeks improvement.

3.4.3 Online Forums, Telegram Channels, and Social Media Groups

Teachers participate in online communities for ongoing professional dialogue. One teacher explained:

"Most of the time we use online forums or groups to develop our... professions. We don't have a team or a group. Then we communicate by telegrams or online forums to communicate with them daily." (T8)

Telegram emerges as a significant platform for professional networking, with teachers constructing their own digital professional communities. T8's description - "We don't have a team or a group" - suggests that these digital spaces substitute for the face-to-face professional communities that the system has failed to create.

3.5. Theme 4: Aspirational and Visionary Practices

3.5.1 Teacher Involvement in Needs Identification

Teachers envision CPD starting with their identified needs, not top-down mandates. One teacher described his dream training:

"First, I will discuss with the teachers and then I will let them... to identify what the professional development training... then I will do that. Not I will, what, enforce the teachers to do this, this, this, yes? Rather, I will let them to improve, to to identify their gaps and then I will support..." (T1)

Teachers consistently emphasize bottom-up needs assessment, feeling current CPD ignores their input. The word "enforce" (T1) is telling - current PD is experienced as coercion, not support.

3.5.2 Practical, Classroom-Focused Content

Teachers envision CPD directly applicable to daily teaching realities. One teacher stated:

"I like more practical thing than theory. So I make everything in practical." (T5)

Another expressed:

"my dream in service training is a training which is directly related to the English teaching practice." (T6)

The repeated emphasis on "practical" and "directly related" reveals deep dissatisfaction with theory-heavy current offerings. This is not a rejection of theory but a demand for theory that illuminates and improves practice.

3.5.3 Qualified and Effective Trainers

Teachers envision CPD delivered by skilled, knowledgeable professionals. One veteran teacher critiqued:

"I would like to make trainers, trainers themselves, to be powerful, skilled, right? Skilled, knowledgeable, right? Effective and efficient. This is one thing that I'm going to do. I don't like any person any person who is not trained simply with the power of related maybe to the officials... So I will try to improve these problems." (T14)

Another suggested:

"The training or the research must be delivered by the skilled persons... the linguist, okay, why not we invite the instructors from Addis Ababa University." (T15)

T14's critique of trainers who have "power of related maybe to the officials" suggests a perception that trainer selection is sometimes based on connections rather than expertise - a serious systemic concern.

3.5.4 School-Based and Continuous Delivery

Teachers envision CPD situated in their schools and delivered continuously. One teacher expressed:

"The place I want, especially for this, the governmental school teachers need more attention and it should be given. It can be in the school or it can be in the universities." (T6)

Another added:

"In the school campus, maybe by effective and efficient maybe professionals, such as maybe lecturers from university, instructors, even experienced, highly experienced teachers." (T14)

Teachers want CPD integrated into their work life, not requiring travel or disrupting their lives. The emphasis on school-based delivery reflects a desire for job-embedded learning that addresses daily challenges.

3.6. Findings from Focus Group Discussions

The FGDs powerfully confirmed the centrality of professional association membership. One participant stated:

"Even though we didn't have such kind of trainings workshop in our school, but I have already attended as a group in Ethiopian English professionals associations, different workshops, annual conferences, bi-monthly sessions. I have participated as a group there." (FGD1_T1)

Another emphasized:

"In my school as well, there isn't such professional practices. Usually, there are promises. Promises are there, but these promises are not put into words. So individually, I attended different workshops in Ethiopian English Language Professional Development Association. And they gave us different workshops, trainings, and also there are webinars. That's only the only source we have." (FGD1_T3)

The repeated phrase "only source we have" is striking. When schools fail to provide CPD, teachers turn to professional associations - EELPA is not enrichment but a lifeline.

The FGDs revealed a stark resource-based dichotomy. In high-resource contexts, teachers described abundance:

"The environment is very conducive to teach English language because everything is available in our school. For example, we can just have an internet access, a computer, a printer, whatever we want." (FGD1_T1)

In low-resource contexts, teachers described scarcity:

"According to in School 3, run secondary schools, the need is not enough as much we concern, especially the textbook is not related or much with the number of the students. There is a lot of shortage for the textbook. So if there is no enough material, how you can conduct or how you can deliver your lesson, it's really difficult." (FGD1_T4)

This bifurcation is critical - teachers' practices are shaped by material conditions, not differences in motivation or commitment. The question "if there is no enough material, how you can deliver your lesson?" (FGD1_T4) powerfully captures how resource scarcity fundamentally constrains practice.

3.7. Findings from Document Analysis

The hermeneutic analysis of CPD portfolios reveals a fundamental bifurcation of experience: there is the documented practice required by the system - generic, top-down, bureaucratically performative - and the lived practice enacted by teachers - self-directed, collaborative, relationally embedded.

Table 3
Document Analysis Summary Across Eight Schools

School	Document Type	Practice Documentation Quality	Key Findings
School 1	CPD		Collaborative practices listed

School	Document Type	Practice Documentation Quality	Key Findings
	Portfolio	Limited (2)	but bureaucratically flattened
School 2	CPD Portfolio	Present/Articulated (3)	Structured, relational, multi-dimensional practices
School 3	Supervision Checklist	Poor/Performative (1)	Surveillance tool, blank, no teacher voice
School 4	CPD Portfolio	Substantially Reflective (4)	Structured, collaborative, technology-integrated practices documented
School 5	CPD Portfolio	Poor/Performative (1)	Administrative routines, no connection to English teaching
School 6	CPD Portfolio	Adequate/Descriptive (3)	Some collaborative practices documented but superficially
School 7	Supervision Checklist	Poor/Performative (1)	Generic, rushed, blanks; no teacher voice
School 8	CPD Plan	Poor/Performative (1)	Rushed, template-driven, copied evidence

The School 8 portfolio provides particularly rich evidence of planned practices:

- "Identifying students with behavioral problems" (3 hrs)
- "Identifying absentees and remaining students" (3 hrs)
- "Discussing with students" (3 hrs)
- "Discussing with parents" (4 hrs)
- "Working with psychologist" (4 hrs)
- "Evaluating pre- and post-intervention work" (2 hrs)
- "Organizing portfolio" (1 hr)
- "Improving computer skills" (3 hrs)
- "Experience sharing" (3 hrs)
- "Preparing and teaching with short training videos and notes" (8 hrs)
- "Collaborative planning with colleagues, classroom observation and feedback" (5 hrs)
- "Compiling portfolio" (1 hr)

This document powerfully reveals "lived relation" across multiple dimensions - with students, parents, specialist colleagues, and teaching peers. The teacher does not exist in isolation but is embedded in a web of professional relationships.

However, the most valued practices from interviews - professional association participation, structured online courses, YouTube learning, peer observation, informal mentoring, social gatherings, action research, cross-departmental learning, Telegram forums - are completely invisible in official documentation. As one coder noted, "The most valued practices - the ones teachers themselves identify as most beneficial - are completely invisible in official documentation. The system cannot see what teachers actually do."

3.8. *Triangulated Synthesis: The Phenomenological Essence*

The synthesis of results indicates that there is a significant truth: teachers are energetically resourceful actors who create their own professional learning curves through the use of a wide variety of practices, both personal and collaborative, formal and informal, local and global, but they do so at a highly inequitable price: the official system is meant to sustain them but instead compels them to be performatively compliant and unequally blind to their own genuine development.

Teacher practices interact at many levels: reading, language practice in school activities, peer reflection, participation in a professional association, peer observation, collaboration in a department, mentoring, cross-departmental sharing, socializing, action research, online courses, learning on YouTube, and networking on the internet. This plurality shows that teachers are active not passive agents.

The phenomenological analysis demonstrates that the majority of worthy professional learning takes place in relationships. Teachers are learners with students, fellow teachers, their mentors, and communities of professionals as well as international teachers. This relationality, the existential immediacy of being-with (Mitsein) is the existential foundation of their professional development, but it is especially this dimension of relationality that cannot be captured in official documentation.

The analysis of the documents shows a bifurcation of fundamentality, the teachers operate in two systems at the same time: the lived practice system (self-directed, collaborative, relational, subject-specific, technology-mediated, responsive to immediate needs, invisible to official records, etc.) and the documented compliance system (mandated, top-down, generic, bureaucratic, performative, technology-absent, assessment-focused, visible in official records, etc.).

4. Discussion

4.1. *Individual Self-Directed Practices: Agency Amidst Constraint*

The recommendation that all the sixteen teachers are practicing individually in self-directed ways shows that teachers are not passive consumers in the externally developed programs. This seems to coincide with the definition of language teacher development as a bottom-up process by Mann (2005) as an appreciation of insider perspectives and independent of any organization. T14's statement, "I use my classroom to develop my proficiency... I don't have another field to exercise this English," poignantly captures both constraint (no English-speaking environment outside school) and agency (transforming the classroom into a development site).

Although there have been systemic failures, such as the lack of institutional support, ineffective INSET programs, and the absence of resources, teachers still strive to get their own professional development at their own initiative, which does not support any narrative that places teachers at the center of the problem. According to Borg (2015), an excellent professional development as he says must appreciate the experience and knowledge that teachers hold; self-directed practices show that teachers already have this potential and use it. The system has a task that is not to provide motivation but to identify and nurture it.

The phenomenological meaning comes out with the description of classroom as a platform in T14. Classroom is not just a workplace but a place of home where the professional identity is realized and formed. In cases where external development opportunities are not made available in the system, the teachers do not stop developing, instead, they resort to inhabited spaces in order to make them growth centers.

4.2. Collaborative and Social Learning: The Primacy of Relationality

others. Relationships specified - with colleagues in departmental planning, with mentors of 35 years, with colleagues in observation and feedback, with colleagues in the same associations workshops, with friends at lunch - are not a means to an end, but are instead The large scale collaborative practices show that the main organizing principle in the professional growth of teachers is relationality. This sounds so well with the idea of Heidegger of *Mitsein* (being-with)-human existence is essentially relational. Teachers are not built in vacuums but amongst others and through constitutive of professional being.

Particular attention should be paid to the finding that the participation in a professional association (EELPA) is of paramount importance. EELPA is constantly reported to give more useful development than government INSETs. T6's statement that association participation gives "a lot of insights than the courses that I have already taken from the universities" is striking - collaborative, needs-based, practice-embedded learning offered by professional associations aligns more closely with teachers' lived experience of meaningful development than formal, top-down programs.

This supports and builds up research on language teacher associations (Salama & Kuchah, 2018). EELPA represents the good examples of the features of the teacher association defined in the literature: creating opportunities of ongoing professional growth, helping teachers improve their pedagogical skills, organizing arenas of best practices exchange (Elsheikh, Coombe, & Effiong, 2018). These associations also play a pivotal role in keeping teachers informed of the latest proceedings in a globalizing world in which English is the lingua franca (Lakew & Getachew, 2020).

Peer observation and lesson study (T4, T11, T14) dispute the common accounts that schools in Ethiopia do not have such forms of collaboration. Phenomenological meaning is in the manner the teachers explain these practices not as prescribed activities but rather as mutually feeding and trust-based relationships. T4's description of inviting colleagues to observe and be observed, T11's mention of "lesson study," and T14's account of "in-built supervision" with reciprocal feedback reveal professional relationship

quality that official documentation cannot capture -horizontal, collegial encounters characterized by mutual vulnerability and shared commitment to growth.

This is in accordance with the literature of effective professional development. According to Guskey (1999), both models of observation and assessment provide positive advantages to the observer and the observed in the form of discussion and feedback and benefit the isolating side of teaching as well as encourages collaboration among teaching peers. These conditions have been imposed on teachers even when there is no systemic support.

Departmental collaboration Widespread in lesson planning, test preparation, curriculum evaluation, is a way of teachers building professional learning communities on top of the existing school structures. T10's description is particularly rich: "We have a meeting or CPD program in English department... we come together and discuss... And then, we come back to our class and apply this better ideas that we discussed before." This is what practice-based, collaborative, reflective professional learning literature refers to as the most effective ones (Borg, 2015; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

The cross-departmental learning and informal mentoring can expose how resourceful teachers can be in their use of learning opportunities. The experience described by T16 about learning by a colleague with over 35 years of experience and T14 about cross-departmental sharing (we feed one another) proves that teachers understand and apply the expertise in their communities, which is in line with the craft or mentoring model by Crandall (1993).

The most impressive is that T14 describes informal social meetings during which professional discussion is held the monthly lunch meetings during which teachers discuss their profession. The implications of this observation on the level of phenomenology are immense - professional identity is not an act that is adopted at work but is a substantial part of the self. Teachers will opt to use personal time to talk about teaching not because they are supposed to but because professional being cannot be separated to who they are. According to Mann (2005), the development of language teachers is broader than professional development, and it also incorporates the personal, moral and value aspects.

4.3. Formal and Structured Development: The Experience of Irrelevance

Teachers engage in formal structured development - action research, INSET, PGDT, special needs training - but consistently critique government INSETs as theoretical, irrelevant, and unattractive, revealing profound disconnect between system offerings and teachers' lived needs. This aligns with extensive literature critiquing traditional, top-down professional development approaches. As Borg (2015) argues, externally-driven practices often result in "teacher as consumer modes of teacher learning," where teachers become dependent on others for professional development rather than learning to take charge. Teachers experience this consumer mode acutely - "given" training they did not request, addressing topics they did not identify, failing to connect to classroom realities.

The critique that INSETs are "theoretical" and "not attractive" (T5, T6) resonates with literature emphasizing practical, job-embedded professional development. As Hawley and Valli (1999) argue, high-quality practices are "school-based emphasizing job-embedded learning" and "driven by attention to goals and student performance." Teachers' critique is not merely dissatisfaction but fundamental misalignment between training content and lived classroom realities.

Special needs training (SOS) being valued while other INSETs are criticized is instructive. Teachers value this training because it addresses real classroom challenges - supporting students with visual impairments, ADHD, autism. T2's account of applying training to understand and support students, and even understand her own child, reveals that when CPD meets genuine needs, teachers not only appreciate it but integrate it deeply into personal and professional lives. This supports Guskey's (2002) argument that professional development has greatest impact when immediate needs of teachers in particular instructional contexts are considered in design, implementation, and evaluation.

4.4. Technology-Mediated Practices: The Global Classroom

Teachers engaging extensively in technology-mediated practices - structured online courses from international providers, YouTube for professional learning, online forums and Telegram channels - reveals teachers constructing global professional learning networks, filling gaps left by local institutions. This finding is particularly significant in Ethiopian context where internet access is limited and expensive. That teachers nevertheless pursue online learning demonstrates strength of motivation and perceived value of these resources.

The phenomenological significance of YouTube learning, as described by T11, is particularly rich: "Just I try to download different videos and continuously, repeatedly, I watch those videos. Am I teaching in this way? What looks I like, right? Just I am comparing and contrasting with those teachers who are teaching online." This is not passive consumption but active, reflective engagement - holding own practice up against models, engaging in critical self-evaluation, seeking improvement. The repetition - "continuously, repeatedly" - suggests deep, sustained engagement.

This aligns with literature's emphasis on self-directed, reflective practice (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Teachers already utilize technology affordances for professional learning without institutional support. As Borg (2015) notes, high-quality professional development should include "exploration and reflection with attention to both practices and beliefs."

Teachers using Telegram channels and online forums for professional dialogue reveals creation of informal, accessible professional communities. T8's description - "We don't have a team or a group. Then we communicate by telegrams or online forums to communicate with them daily" - suggests digital spaces substitute for face-to-face professional communities the system has failed to create. Teachers construct their own *Mitsein* (being-with) in digital spaces when physical spaces of professional community are absent.

4.5. *The Tale of Two Systems: Document Analysis and Systemic Alienation*

The document analysis reveals a fundamental bifurcation in teachers' experience of professional development. Teachers do not experience a single, coherent professional development system but rather a dual existence. On one hand, they inhabit a lived practice system - the rich, collaborative, self-directed world of actual professional learning. On the other hand, they must navigate a documented compliance system - the bureaucratic world of CPD portfolios, supervision checklists, and mandated trainings demanding performative compliance while remaining blind to authentic growth.

This dual existence is experienced as alienation. The system's official artifacts - rushed, incomplete, generic portfolios - materially embody this alienation. They are physical evidence of a relationship gone wrong, of a system demanding documentation of development while remaining structurally incapable of recognizing what development actually is.

The finding that most portfolios are performative artifacts - rushed, incomplete, template-driven - rather than authentic records of professional growth confirms what teachers reported in interviews: CPD is experienced as a bureaucratic requirement, not a meaningful development process. T11's explanation is crucial:

"We are working CPD? For the sake of efficiency. In the semester, there is efficiency. It takes around 10 points. Not to lose that 10 points, both the teachers are working for that matter."

The document analysis provides material evidence of this experience - the physical characteristics of the documents themselves (rushed execution, blanks left unfilled, copied elements) serve as phenomenological evidence of disengagement.

The finding that teacher voice is systematically excluded from official documentation aligns with literature's critique of top-down professional development models. As Johnson (2006) argues, "top-down professional development models... have begun to give way to alternative professional development structures that allow for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning." The documents in this study, however, reflect persistence of top-down, compliance-oriented approaches.

The inequitable distribution of support revealed by contrast between Schools 1 and 8 portfolios and other six schools is a tragic dimension of this alienation. Some teachers experience alignment between lived and documented practice - authentic professional growth recognized, supported, recorded. These teachers experience validation and affirmation. Others experience authentic practices as invisible, professional identities erased, agency reduced to compliance. The system that should support all teachers instead reproduces and amplifies existing inequities.

4.6. *The Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework*

The integration of interview, FGD, and document analysis reveals a fundamental duality that existing professional development models fail to

capture. We propose the Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework to theorize this phenomenon.

Existing models conceptualize professional development as a unified system. Guskey's (2002) five-level model, for instance, assumes that evaluation at one level (participants' reactions) connects coherently to subsequent levels (learning, organizational support, application, student outcomes). Villegas-Reimers (2003) categorizes models by scale and partnership type but assumes the documented practice corresponds to lived practice.

Our findings challenge this assumption. Teachers simultaneously inhabit two parallel systems:



Figure 1 The Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework

This figure shows the Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework in the form of a two-column diagram. In the left column, which is titled Lived Practice System (What Teachers Do), there are seven characteristics: self-initiated and agentic practices, reading, collaboration, and online learning are on the list; EELPA membership and peer observation are on the list; focus on four skills and communicative competence are on the list; use of YouTube, Telegram, and MOOCs are on the list; continuous, lifelong learning is on the list; invisibility to official records is on the list. The right column, titled Documented Compliance System (What Systems Require), contains seven conflicting features, which include mandated, top-down strategies; generic training and assessment activities; supervision checklists; generic goals; technology-absent; and episodic, compliance-cyclical actions and visibility in portfolios. There is a core box beneath the two columns with the title of Teacher Experience implying the dual consciousness in which the teachers have to work with both systems but genuine development is happening in the lived system which is not visible on official records.

This dichotomy is far-reaching. First, it unveils that the official documentation systems selectively destroy the most useful learning practices of teachers as a type of epistemic violence turning unseen the activities in which teachers develop. Second, it describes alienation of teachers: they are forced to do compliance in a system which does not notice them, whereas genuine development takes place elsewhere which is not supported and recognized.

The framework applies the critical policy research about audit culture (Ball, 2003; Shore & Wright, 2015) to the professional development of teachers. The analysis of the changing of performativity regimes and its impact on professional practice by Ball (2003) most clearly proceeds to lay light on the Ethiopian case: the ontological insecurity of teachers undergoing the struggle of matching the authentic values of professionalism to the metrics imposed by the external authorities makes them ontologically insecure. The CPD portfolios serve as the so-called governing by numbers, where documentation is more of a technology of control than a strategy of development (Shore & Wright, 2015).

This meaning can be seen further in a theoretical perspective. Similarly to how healthcare workers have to balance patient care and performance indicators, teachers have to balance between true professional development and bureaucracy. But in Ethiopian EFL, as with healthcare, both systems at least recognize the same patients, in the context of the documented system, the system is structurally blind of the lived system, i.e. there is no record of the practices that teachers hold most dear in their portfolios.

This framework helps to comprehend professional development in Global South situations where postcolonial education policies tend to drive in use of standardized, externally-generated CPD frameworks that do not capture local conditions and realities, resources, and teacher-created practices.

4.7. Decolonization of EFL Teacher Development

The systematic destruction of lived practices of teachers as recorded in this paper is to be interpreted as being in the context of other colonial pasts that have influenced Ethiopian education. English language teaching as Phillipson (1992) posits serves as a source of linguistic imperialism in preserving power inequalities in the world by imposing language policy. This criticism can be seen in the description of English as the curse of English as a medium of instruction in Ethiopia by Negash (2006) a policy that has been introduced externally persists despite being proven to have a detrimental effect on student learning.

This colonial heritage is embodied in the CPD portfolios that were examined in this work. Their template-driven generic format, which can be applied to any subject teacher, systematically obliterates the knowledge base of English language teaching. This is what Santos (2014) calls the epistemicide the destruction of native knowledge systems and the application of Western epistemological systems. The collaborative practices of Ethiopian teachers described as the lunch meetings, informal mentoring and the discussions in departments are locally-produced professional

knowledge that cannot be acknowledged by the official system since it has nothing to classify it.

This observation is consistent with the decolonial proposals towards TESOL suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2012), who views the local knowledge and teacher agency as crucial elements. The educators in this research are already practicing this sort of strategy - they have developed their own professional learning communities using EELPA, Telegram and peer collaboration specifically because the formal system is not accommodating them. The policy task is not to make better top-down programs but to see, resource, and learn on the basis of these already existing teacher practices.

This phenomenon is also shed more light by Kumaravadivelu (2012) with his concept of the postmethod pedagogy. The context-sensitive pedagogical knowledge that teachers form is cumulative by learning through reflecting and peer sharing of experience- knowledge that cannot be summarized in standardized CPD templates. The teachers in this research are not awaiting outwardly-developed systems; they are creating their own through natural interaction with their peers, learners and professional networks.

The recent decolonial TESOL scholarship sheds more light on this dynamic. Motha (2023) states that the Southern educations of epistemology should be central to the language teacher education, which questions the hegemonic status of Western theories that do not adequately explain the local realities. Likewise, as Phan (2022) shows, postcolonial situations demand teacher identity frameworks that acknowledge negotiations that teachers undertake to reconcile between global discourses and local practices.

This view of decolonization is also supported by Sah and Fang (2024), who state that the policies of teaching and learning English in the Global South should be analyzed in a rather critical way through the prism of the decolonization approach that would recognize the colonality of such educational system. They argue that the necessity in decolonizing pedagogy by means of translanguaging has also enabled different stakeholders to reevaluate the role of English and their other linguistic and cultural capital as well as multimodal resources to both learn and communicate (Sah and Fang, 2024). Our results build upon this argument by showing that even CPD documentation systems themselves operate as venues of colonality that wipe out local-produced knowledge of professional practice by subjecting Ethiopian classrooms to the linguistic and pedagogical facts of standardized formats and templates that do not serve the Ethiopian linguistic and pedagogical realities.

The CPD portfolios used in the present research are an illustration of Motha (2023) concept of the so-called epistemological imposition the need to require the teacher to describe his/her growth in terms of templates and categories that were developed in the Western setting, disregarding the particular challenges and resources of the Ethiopian classrooms. As a portfolio template prompts to talk about professional growth and offers no opportunity to describe the obstacles such as the lack of English-speaking outside the school, 35 students in a classroom, and 15 textbooks, it creates

what Santos (2014) terms as epistemicide, a systematic murder of the knowledge generated in a place.

This result is in line with the concepts of translingual, where Kumaravadivelu (2012) urges TESOL teachers to be seen as knowledge producers and not as knowledge consumers. In this study, the teachers are already practicing translingual professionalism—they are already code-switching between Amharic and English, they are serving more than one linguistic community, and they are developing context-sensitive pedagogies that cannot be acknowledged within the official system as it has no category to be named.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

The Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework proposed in this research describes the way in which teachers are simultaneously in two conceptualizations of a system of performative documentation as dictated by institutional accountability requirements, and a system of relational practice as dictated by lived pedagogical realities. In contrast to current models of professional development that consider documentation as being neutral, this model shows that documentation is a source of the construction of professional identity and agency— an important difference to appreciating why reform models fail so frequently despite the commitment of teachers.

This phenomenological study demonstrates that EFL teachers in high schools of Addis Ababa do not receive passively; but they are robust resourceful agents who create a variety of learning opportunities by reading, language practice, reflection, participation in professional associations, peer observation, departmental interaction, mentoring, cross-departmental sharing, social gathering, action research, online courses, YouTube learning, and online network. These are practices that are essentially relational. Teachers are also learned by and with students, colleagues, mentors and professional community. This relationality is not really just instrumental but forms professional being itself.

But this alive ecosystem of lived practice is in a state of war with a bureaucratic system of documentation that insists on performative compliance and is structurally deaf to the genuine learning of teachers. This blindness is represented materially in official CPD portfolios, which systematically eliminates the practices which teachers most appreciate and the relations by which they learn. What comes out is a two-stage existence whereby on the one side, teachers are engaging in compliance to a system which does not identify them and on the other, genuine growth is taking place elsewhere and not supported or recognized.

The tragedy that is unveiled is that teachers have themselves, by themselves, in spite of systemic failure, provided themselves with all the conditions of effective professional development that the literature describes. Finally, structural change and not technical adjustment is necessary in bringing about meaningful reform. Professional development will not be transformative, but will continue to be performative until institutional systems start to acknowledge and integrate the lived realities of teachers.

5.2. Implications for Policy

There are five policy implications of this study. The policymakers should first identify and invest in professional association such as EELPA which are already involved in effective development based on needs by way of formal association. Second, CPD documentation systems need to be redesigned to require narrative, reflective documentation, which reflects teacher voice, collaborative practices, and subject-area specificity, instead of performative artifacts. Third, there is a need to have contextual inequities that require differing support mechanisms based on the fact that some policies may not work in radically different resource foundation. Fourth, the access and integration of technology should be facilitated by enhancing the internet access, availing devices and formulating guidelines on how best to utilize technology in professional learning. Fifth, informal mentoring/ cross departmental learning is an unexploited potential that needs to be formalized such that the experienced teachers who mentor others are identified, encouraged, and compensated.

5.3. Implications for Practice

The schools need to establish time and space to collaborate together by guarding the time to hold departmental meetings, peer observation and other cross departmental sharing and provide the physical space upon which sharing will occur. The teacher agency needs to be supported by engaging in needs identification, program design, and evaluation of the professional development. Technology should be used by identifying YouTube, Telegram, and online courses as valid professional development practices, offering instructions on how it can be used, and allowing teachers to share learning. To bridge formal and informal learning, the participation of association in the CPD portfolios must be identified, and the opportunities provided to share the learning in online courses. Effective models, like the use of SOS special needs training and efficient models of school-based CPD, have to be identified, modified, and then scaled.

5.3.1 Implications on Teacher Educators

There are five practical implications that teacher educators may make. One, informal learning practices need to be modeled and justified by basing them on self-directed activities of teachers, instead of regarding formal CPD as the only valid learning form. Second, implement the Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework to make teachers learn how to see the systemic processes, and how to approach tasks of compliance strategically and invest in the process of real development. Third, connect teachers to professional associations at the beginning of their career through active promotion, attending conferences and course work. Fourth, impart strategic documentation skills which allow one to operate with some efficiency in compliance and convert bureaucratic requirements into valuable professional reflections. Fifth, promote systemic change by research, consultation and professional service.

5.4. *Implications for Research*

Time-lapsed studies would be able to monitor the development of practices over a period of time. The comparative study would be an opportunity to study the influence of school-level variables on professional development experience systematically. Exceptional cases might be reported in intervention research and scalable methods might be developed. The study of technology and professional growth would involve research about the choice of online resources, its assessment, and learning by teachers. The research of professional associations might look at how they are organized, how effective they are, what the problems are and what the possibilities of partnership with formal systems are.

5.5. *Dynamic Coefficients and Cragina Conditions*

There are a number of limitations that should be mentioned. Contextual specificity implies that the results of the study in the case of Addis Ababa government secondary schools may not conclude in the case of rural areas, small-scale schools, lower learning education, or countries with other colonial experiences. The linguistic environment of Ethiopia is also unique: 80+ languages where English is the medium of instruction since the fifth grade, which poses certain limits, is not universal. Limitations of our sampling are that we sampled four out of eleven of the sub-cities and we therefore may have omitted differences in the peripheral areas having a different resource profile. The analysis of documents was based on voluntarily submitted portfolios of eight of 500+ secondary schools in Addis Ababa; although inter-coder reliability was 92, hermeneutic interpretation is subjective per se. Self-reported information will be subject to memory constraint or social desirability but triangulation and regular criticism of government schemes by the teacher indicate truthfulness. Being a cross-sectional study, we do not trace the development of practice throughout time.

Researcher positionality-19 years as an Ethiopian EFL teacher gave access as an insider but biased analysis priorities, which was balanced by practices of reflexivity and independent coding. The Performative-Relational Bifurcation Framework developed in the context of resource-constrained and centralized situations; its applicability in better-resourced systems with distributed leadership needs testing. Regardless of these limitations, methodological rigor, triangulation, thick description, inter-coder reliability, and reflexivity enhance trustworthiness and find beneficial pathways in conducting future research.

Author contribution statement:

Yoseph Feleke – Conceptualisation, research design, data collection, data transcription and coding, data analysis and interpretation, manuscript writing, revision, and final approval.

Dr. Abebe Gebretsadik – Supervision and advisory support

The usage of GenAI: Only Figure 1 was created using ChatGPT. All other aspects of the research and manuscript are entirely the work of the authors.

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