

## **Situation and Professional Development Needs of Foreign Teachers in Thailand**

สถานการณ์และความต้องการในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพ  
ของอาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศในประเทศไทย

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this research are to 1) investigate the situation of foreign teachers in Thai educational settings; 2) survey their needs for professional development; and 3) propose solutions to overcome the obstacles they faced based on the collected data. The subjects of this study were 13 foreign teachers in a demonstration school in the central region of Thailand. The research tool utilized for the purpose of this study was a semi-structured interview where foreign teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching performance and investigate their needs for professional development. The demographic information, answers from the checklist and the survey were presented in a descriptive analysis. A content analysis was applied to identify and interpret the data gained from the interview, with conclusions drawn from a directed content analysis of the situation and needs of professional development. The findings revealed that their performance in the classroom was effective despite administrative policies of the school, language barriers and the issue of cultural differences posing major challenges to them. The areas that should be included in the professional development program are those that had impacts on their performance in the classroom such as instructional design, classroom management, and contents in the main subject. In order to make the professional development program effective and engaging for the foreign teachers, their opinions should be considered. They should be able to propose the topic or the activities related to their professional development that would correlate to their needs and interests.

**Keywords:** foreign teachers, professional development needs, English language instruction

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## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเรื่องสถานการณ์และความต้องการในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพของอาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศในประเทศไทย มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) สำรวจสถานการณ์ของอาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศในบริบทการศึกษาไทย 2) สำรวจความต้องการในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพ และ 3) เสนอแนวทางรับมือกับปัญหาที่อาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศเผชิญโดยอิงจากข้อมูลที่ได้รับ กลุ่มตัวอย่างคืออาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศ 13 ท่านที่เป็นบุคลากรในโรงเรียนสาธิตแห่งหนึ่งในภาคกลางของประเทศไทย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ข้อมูลพื้นฐานของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง คำตอบจากแบบประเมินการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมเพื่อการพัฒนาวิชาชีพ และแบบสำรวจความต้องการนำเสนอด้วยการวิเคราะห์เชิงพรรณนา ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา หลังจากนั้นจึงสร้างข้อสรุปเกี่ยวกับสถานการณ์ และความต้องการในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพด้วยการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยแสดงว่าอาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศสามารถปฏิบัติหน้าที่ในห้องเรียนได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ แม้จะเผชิญกับปัญหาในด้านนโยบายการบริหารจากโรงเรียน ปัญหาหลักเกิดจากอุปสรรคทางภาษา และความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม อาจารย์ผู้สอนชาวต่างประเทศต้องการพัฒนาวิชาชีพในด้านที่ส่งผลต่อการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ในชั้นเรียน เช่น การออกแบบการสอน การบริหารจัดการชั้นเรียนและเนื้อหาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับรายวิชาที่สอน การเปิดโอกาสให้สามารถแสดงความคิดเห็น นำเสนอหัวข้อหรือกิจกรรมการพัฒนาวิชาชีพที่ตอบสนองความต้องการและความสนใจรายบุคคลส่งผลต่อประสิทธิภาพและการเข้าร่วมการพัฒนาวิชาชีพของอาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศ

**คำสำคัญ:** อาจารย์ชาวต่างประเทศ ความต้องการในการพัฒนาวิชาชีพ การสอนภาษาอังกฤษ

## Introduction

Thailand's Ministry of Education (MOE) has recognized the importance of foreign languages as an important tool for communication, education, and access to the world. English is prescribed as one of several compulsory subjects for students in primary and secondary programs, with teachers positioned as a crucial factor in students' learning. There have been many implementations to highlight the importance of the English language, resultant of its view as the language of development and globalization (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). Among them is the introduction of bilingual education to many schools in Thailand. Since 1999, bilingual education has been implemented as an additional measure for achieving Thailand's lifelong education and development goals of being considered a qualified and competitive human resource (Laksanasut, 2020). The bilingual English education system is classified into the Mini English Program (MEP), in which at least two subjects are taught in English, as well as the English Program (EP) in which at least four subjects use English as the medium of instruction. Bilingual Education programs require foreign teachers to lead teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The qualifications include being a native English speaker, possessing at least a bachelor's degree and completing Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) certification. Alternatively, non-native English speakers have been increasingly recruited by many schools in order to improve the quality of English teaching and learning so as to prepare Thailand to compete in ASEAN and global communities (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2014).

A high demand for foreign teachers in Thailand was expected as the MOE was poised to recruit 10,000 foreigners for the 2020 academic year. There were more than 5,000 schools prepared to welcome foreign teachers who would teach students and assist in developing the skills of local teachers. They were expected to enhance the students' English skills by building confidence and familiarizing them with foreigners. In addition, the local teachers were also expected to learn from their colleagues (MOE, 2020).

Additionally, there have been a number of different measurements imposed in order to develop and improve learning standards and school curricula. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been adopted as a guideline for the instruction of English in Thailand with a focus on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (MOE, 2014). In terms of the administrative policies, the MOE has established facilitating factors for learning management which schools must consider and act upon as follows: administrative policy and structure; staff's professional development; budget and resources; and collaborative administration (MOE, 2009). This means that teachers must be able to apply the established learning standards, competencies, and desired characteristics in their teaching activities in the classroom to achieve the goals as is required in the national curriculum. In order to complete this task, the teachers must possess both knowledge of the subject matters and the theories of language learning and teaching.

In addition to the above guidelines, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), together with Thailand TESOL, Regional English Language Office (RELO) and other such organizations, play a major role in the professional development of teachers. In order to improve the capabilities of teachers, OBEC has provided scholarships for teachers to pursue master's degrees; workshops; knowledge sharing activities as well as online training seminars for both school administrators and teachers. However, the effectiveness of these programs, especially when considering their purpose is to allow for genuine teacher development, remains rather unclear. More important to note is that foreign teachers at schools are also typically excluded from any requirements to attend such programs, often related to an inability to overcome language and cultural differences or even due to differences in management and communication styles as offered by schools. Ultimately this leads to the diminishing prospects of foreign teachers in wanting, or even having the opportunity to, develop professionally.

These obstacles, particularly as they relate to foreign teachers' ability to attend professional development programs, are considered one of the driving factors behind why foreign staff and their levels of qualification sometimes pose a problem, and are scrutinized as such. The challenges that arise from the differences in school management styles, as well as the aforementioned cultural differences, only act as confounding factors that are further contributing to these issues. Noted by Bishop et al. (2016), the factors affecting teaching and performance of foreign teachers include a lack of knowledge, general skill set, and characteristics of professional teachers in Thai culture. Moreover, they do not possess adequate teaching skills or techniques. Foreign teachers cannot design learning activities, create lesson plans, or implement assessments in the classroom appropriately (Pongsuthirak, 2015). In addition, a lack of motivation due to uncertain working status and low salary is also a problem faced by foreign teachers (Chuchuen et al., 2017). Santimit and Maput (2010) observed that

foreign teachers often changed their workplaces. In some cases, foreign teachers would resign without any advanced notice, resulting in inconsistency of teaching and learning in the classroom. A lack of mutual understanding of performance expectations is another obstacle for foreign teachers, as presented by Chitnelawong (2009). Foreign teachers often do not realize that there are many other duties that schools expect them to perform, in addition to teaching, such as being on duty at the school during weekend hours and organizing extra activities which might be after standard office hours, including Saturdays and Sundays. Lastly, Chaiyasaeng and Sudrung (2019) also mentioned adaptation to cultural differences, or lack thereof, as another problem experienced by foreign teachers in Thai schools. Similarly, unfamiliarity with local language and culture was also identified by Chuchuen et al. (2017).

The studies mentioned reveal many challenges faced by foreign teachers in Thailand. Nevertheless, the researchers only discussed the circumstances that foreign teachers find themselves in at schools without further providing actual solutions or guidelines for addressing the issues raised, which shall be the focus of the current study. Hence this research aims to investigate the general circumstances and professional development needs of foreign teachers in order to propose recommendations for potential professional development programs to address foreign teachers' needs.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Situation of Foreign Teachers in Thailand**

With the rise of bilingual programs and an increase in the overall necessity of language education streams to improve English language proficiency of Thai students, the demand for English-speaking foreigners to teach in Thailand has increased (Ulla, 2019). Nevertheless, it should be noted that English language education in Thailand has been influenced by Anglo-centric models and the perception of "English as the language of development and globalization" Consequently, English has been considered an important tool for communication, thus granted "foreign" but of high status in Thailand (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017).

At the same time; however, to avoid conflict with the hegemony of the Thai language's official status within language policy, English and other languages have been considered as the language of the "other" or "outsider" in Thailand (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). In response to this concept, foreign teachers are referred to as English-speaking foreigners regardless of their nationalities.

When recruiting a foreign teacher, the requirements need to be clearly stated in order to meet the demands of the school. Each school determines its own requirements based on the position that needs to be filled. For example, the schools administered by OBEC in Bangkok, have to meet a minimum set of standards defined by OBEC. These minimum requirements of foreign teachers are built on in 4 areas including curriculum, teaching, measurement and assessment, and extracurricular activities (Chaiyasaeng & Sudrung, 2019). Similarly, the scope of responsibilities of the demonstration school under this study encompasses 4 areas of duty: 1) curriculum, including analyzing the curriculum to the design of learning activities and materials; 2) instruction, involving creating lesson plans and delivering the lessons; 3) evaluation of the instruction and assessment of the students' performance; and 4) performing

other duties as assigned such as gate duty, homeroom teacher responsibilities, parent meetings, and attendance and participation in sports days and other such school activities.

All foreign teachers are required to perform the same duties at the school. Nevertheless, each foreign teacher has a different cultural background and teaching practice. To understand and adapt to these differences is particularly important to work effectively in an environment of cultural differences. That is to say that for foreign teachers from different countries to work with Thai teachers in a Thai school, there are many issues they have to confront, specifically cultural differences (Jongjit, 2018).

## **2. Intercultural Competence in Professional Contexts**

Intercultural competence is defined by Spitzberg and Chagnon (2011) as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent cognitive, affective and behavioral orientations to the world” (p.7). Deardorff (2006) proposes that “intercultural competence” involves three elements including one’s intercultural knowledge, skills to interpret, relate, discover and/or interact with others, and attitudes such as valuing others. To learn about and explore cultural similarities and differences, intercultural competencies need to be at the forefront of those who wish to develop, encompassing the ideas of mutual respect, curiosity, self-awareness and that of others, reflection, sharing and listening for understanding (Deardorff, 2020). In general, intercultural competence is the combination of personal abilities such as flexibility, empathy, open-mindedness, self-awareness, adaptability, language skills and cultural knowledge as well as relevant contextual variables including shared goals, incentives, perceptions of equality and perceptions of agency (Arasaratnam, 2016).

In schools where there are teachers from different countries working together, there is a need to understand the differences each culture possesses, as people are reflective of their own cultural identity. A more comfortable workplace might result from greater awareness of other cultures (Jongjit, 2018).

## **3. Professional Development for Language Teachers**

Teacher development serves as a long-term goal and intends to support professional growth and understanding of teaching for teachers, unlike teacher training which focuses on a teacher’s immediate responsibilities and short-term goals (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Teacher development is a bottom-up approach in the sense that it involves the teacher’s reflection on their teaching practices, beliefs, values, and principles.

Colbert et al. (2008) also proposes that when teachers are empowered to create their own professional development plan, their passion for teaching increases and their students’ learning improves. Therefore, authentic professional development activities can develop both teachers and student learning.

Professional development can be self-reflective, dialogues with colleagues and collaborative projects with other teachers. Nevertheless, there are many skills and a vast array of knowledge that cannot be learned from critical reflection such as subject-matter knowledge, understanding of the curriculum and teaching pedagogies. Therefore, professional development should engage the teachers to explore new trends and approaches in language teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

#### **4. Factors Affecting Foreign Teachers' Performance at Schools**

In Thailand, the teachers were aware of the needs to continue professional development, as well as the availability of professional development programs. The teachers showed high interest and considered their development as substantially valuable in contributing to their success in the profession, especially development related to English proficiency, the use of pedagogical strategies for teaching as well as assessing productive skills (Noom-ura, 2013). As a consideration, schools should allow and encourage English language teachers to attend professional conferences or workshops once a semester, while government organizations should provide staff development meetings and workshops in order to make recommendations for instructional materials and training opportunities for teachers. In addition, the teachers should accumulate instructional materials and take advantages of online resources (Dhanasobhon, 2007). Ulla and Winitkun (2018) conducted a study and identified primary teachers' beliefs, needs and challenges faced in the teacher training program in Thailand with the implication that educational organizations and the Ministry of Education itself should highlight the importance of professional development as a significant contributor towards the success of students. The findings suggested that previous training experiences had impacts on their beliefs. The training programs must be engaging, simple and provide relevant teaching strategies to the teachers. Lack of teaching resources, problems regarding implementation of the new teaching strategies and large class sizes were some of the obstacles experienced by teachers. In addition, Klinkerd (2015) investigated the professional development needs of primary school English teachers and found that a focus on developing English listening and speaking skills was necessary for most teachers. In addition, teachers tended to opt for professional development courses that primarily allowed for self-study through the use of information technology or the internet as a main resource. It was also voiced that a majority of the training programs lacked ongoing feedback or follow-up actions, and that overall workloads were a major constraint impeding professional development.

The previous studies demonstrated that English teachers required professional development that addressed their needs with respect to their pedagogical approaches (Noom-ura, 2013; Ulla & Winitkun, 2018), English proficiency (Klinkerd, 2015) and ICT (Dhanasobhon, 2007; Klinkerd, 2015). However, the results of these studies were only reflective of Thai teaching staff and their English teaching methods, not that of foreign staff. This suggests that a knowledge gap exists within academic circles regarding the professional development of foreign teachers teaching in Thai schools, as up until this point the research has focused on native Thai teachers only. Moving forward, research that incorporates foreign teachers, who are considered an important factor in successful English language instruction in Thailand, is necessary to bridge this gap.

## **Objectives**

The research aims to investigate the scenario of foreign teachers in a Thai educational context with the following objectives:

1. To investigate the situation of foreign teachers in a Thai educational setting
2. To survey the needs for professional development of foreign teachers
3. To map out the possible solutions to overcome teaching challenges the foreign teachers are facing based on the collected data

## **Research Methodology**

### **1. Research Procedures**

The study can be divided into three stages as follows:

1.1 The preparation stage aims to analyze, design and develop the research tool. The regulations concerning teaching professions set by the Ministry of Education were studied in order to clarify the requirements of the teaching profession. Interviews with three trainers and facilitators who have experience in providing professional development training to foreign teachers were conducted. Their insight, comments and recommendations were used to design and develop the semi-structured interview for the foreign teachers with an integration of the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2018), which is an international survey for teachers and principals to provide information about professional development, teaching beliefs and practices.

1.2 The implementation stage is when the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the foreign teachers. The data from the interviews were analyzed in the pursuit of meeting the objectives of the research.

1.3 The final stage presented the conclusion from the collected data. The discussion and suggestions for future research were put forth.

### **2. Subjects of the Study**

The population of this study includes the foreign teachers at a demonstration school in the central region of Thailand that has been providing a bilingual education program for 10 years. All foreign teachers are directly recruited by the school to allow for performance appraisal. There were 18 foreign teachers during the 2020-2022 academic year. The subjects of this study were 13 foreign teachers due to their consent according to the guidelines and requirements of the research ethics. Despite the limited number of foreign teachers, the subjects of the study were representative of a vast number of different cultural backgrounds, teaching many different subjects and having diverse teaching experiences in Thailand.

### **3. Research Instrument**

A semi-structured interview form was applied as the main instrument to collect data for later analysis. There were three parts of the questions prepared for the interview as follows:

Part 1 requested personal information about the teacher, the teacher's qualifications, teaching experience and workload.

Part 2 concerned teacher's reflection on teaching approaches, materials, learning environment, assessment, workload, stress, coping strategies, curriculum, ethics and professionalism, problems faced in the classroom, school and as a teacher, as well as solutions to the problems based on the teacher's perception.

Part 3 investigated teachers' needs for professional development and their general attitude towards it. A checklist served as a guideline of the areas available for professional development of which the foreign teachers were able to choose from. In addition, the teachers were asked to provide any suggestions or comments regarding English instruction and professional development.

After constructing the semi-structured interview form, three reviewers were invited to check face validity (Lyman, 1963) of the questions. This process aimed to ensure its accuracy, appropriateness, and quality of the interview and to make sure that the questions covered all issues and information essential for the analysis. The questions in the semi-structured interview were revised according to the comments and feedback before resending it to the reviewers for final approval.

#### **4. Data Collection**

The following procedures were implemented. First, the researcher contacted the participants via e-mail requesting them to sit for an interview. The objectives of the interview and the research were provided. The participants could choose whether to have face-to-face or online interviews based on their preference and convenience. Before the interview, the researcher informed each participant of the objectives, confidentiality, anonymity, protection of data and the right to withdraw from the interview. The participant was then asked to sign the consent form. Finally, the researcher conducted the interview with individual participants.

#### **5. Data Analysis**

The demographic information, answers from the checklist and the questionnaire were presented in a descriptive analysis to present and summarize data in a clear manner, reflected as a percentage. Content analysis was applied to identify and interpret data gained from the interview to gain understanding of the situation and the needs of professional development among the foreign teachers in Thailand. The responses from the interviews were combined before identifying patterns or themes into categories through a directed approach. Conclusions were drawn from induction analysis of the situation, attitudes and needs of professional development in pursuit of meeting the research objectives.

#### **Findings and Discussion**

This study investigates the circumstances and professional development needs of foreign teachers within Thai schools. The results can be presented in three parts as follows: 1. information about the participants; 2. situation of foreign teachers in a Thai educational setting; 3. needs for professional development of foreign teachers.

## **1. Information About the Participants**

The demographic information revealed that most of the foreign teachers were native English speakers (76.92%). Only three of them (23.08%) were non-native English speakers. The majority of the foreign teachers at school were middle-aged, between 30-39 years old (61.54%). The more senior group comprised 4 teachers: two of whom were between the 40-49 age bracket (15.38%) and another two of whom were beyond 60 years old (15.38%). There was only one teacher who was new to the teaching profession, falling within the 25-29 age bracket (7.70%).

With respect to qualifications, teachers held a bachelor's degree (76.92%), master's degree (15.38%) and doctoral degree (7.70%). Their majors ranged from business administration, English language, anthropology, general science, broadcast media production, third world development, a dual degree program in medical science and international studies and information science. Lastly, their teaching experiences in Thailand ranged from 1 year to more than 20 years.

## **2. Situation of Foreign Teachers in Thai Educational Settings**

### ***2.1 Teaching Practices***

According to the data from the interviews, the foreign teachers reflected on their teaching practices as effective.

My new approach of starting (the lesson in an) easy (way to understand) has proven to be much more effective as I can build upon the foundations I've laid, and teacher instructions being understood often follow the same pattern of application.

(Teacher H, personal communication, April 25, 2022)

The foreign teachers knew how to select and adapt their teaching approaches to address the students' abilities. One of the teachers commented:

The reason for this is in activity-based classes, having students move away from a 'listen, learn, copy' approach tends to strengthen their vocabulary & grammar retention beyond a classroom environment.

(Teacher B, personal communication, April 30, 2022)

The research findings revealed that the area in which foreign teachers reflected upon as being already effective was their teaching approach. They applied a variety of teaching practices and used those they deemed most appropriate for their students. This finding is in contrast with the previous study by Bishop et al. (2016) who identified a lack of knowledge, skills and techniques among foreign teaching staff, with a lack of the aforementioned seen as having a negative impact on the teaching profession.

## ***2.2 Problems Faced by the Foreign Teachers***

There were a number of issues that foreign teachers deemed problematic with respect to the school's administrative policies, communication style and cultural differences.

### ***2.2.1 Challenges of the School's Administrative Policies***

First, the issues related to the administrative policies included scheduling, lack of communication channels and sharing information, as well as overall workload.

The challenges I've faced in class can be looked at a number of ways. One such way, administration decisions in regard to scheduling issues. Certain school activities will conflict with class-time which have caused classes to fall behind and if I stick to the original syllabus, not complete the set work.

(Teacher H, personal communication, April 25, 2022)

The foreign teacher's comment suggested the school's administration as one of the factors affecting their performance. The administration's decisions forced the teacher to steer away from what had been planned. This is reflective of Chitnelawong's (2009) study that identified a lack of mutual understanding of performance expectations as a challenge faced by foreign teachers.

Our workload includes so many different classes to prepare, and this is a significant challenge of mine. Workloads also change regularly and during my 6 years at the school I have had to teach nearly 50 different classes.

(Teacher D, personal communication, April 25, 2022)

The statements revealed constant changes to the subjects that the foreign teacher was assigned to teach. Teaching requires preparation and a workload featuring many different subjects demands extra efforts for planning the lessons, teaching, marking assignments, and evaluating the students' performance.

### ***2.2.2 Language Barriers***

Communication problems as they relate to difficulties in language comprehension and general understanding are a common theme represented throughout previous research on this topic (Chaiyasaeng & Sudrung, 2019; Chuchuen et al., 2017), with the current situation also reflective of this notion.

Challenges I have faced in school include communication difficulties with my co-teacher regarding the curriculum.

(Teacher F, personal communication, May 12, 2022)

Working together might be challenging due to communication issues caused by language barriers between foreign and Thai teachers.

### *2.2.3 Cultural Differences*

Moreover, cultural differences have the potential to negatively affect the foreign teachers' performance. This could be caused by different perceptions of matters in everyday life such as timeliness.

In my opinion, the problems faced in the job stem from people not adapting to the cultural differences associated with time, working hours and punctuality. If you accept these differences, then the only downside is listening to people complain.

(Teacher G, personal communication, June 10, 2022)

Different cultures have differing concepts of time and work ethic. Without respect, curiosity, awareness of self and that of others, reflection, sharing and listening for understanding (Deardorff, 2020), the collaboration of foreign and Thai teachers can be challenging. Interestingly, these findings correspond with those found by Chaiyasaeng and Sudrung (2019) and Bishop et al. (2016).

Being a foreigner in Thailand has its own difficulties: Language barriers, culture differences, the distance and cost to return home (especially in times of emergency). Balancing home and work life is something that I have always struggled with.

(Teacher F, personal communication, May 12, 2022)

People are representative of their own cultural identity. When there are teachers from different cultures working closely together, there is a need to develop intercultural competencies which encompasses a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively and appropriately interact or behave towards others (Arasaratnam, 2016; Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2011).

Consequently, the foreign teachers perceived that they were treated as an outsider even though they desired to be part of the school community, where they had the potential to develop and grow as a teacher.

...I want to be treated more like an asset to develop in the school. The school's attitude of 'we will just find another teacher' is very dangerous to the reputation and standards of the school. Recruitment is not as easy as the school believes, therefore much more should be done to develop and keep teachers currently doing well at the school.

(Teacher C, personal communication, May 5, 2022)

In conclusion, the above self-reflections revealed that the foreign teachers had extensive knowledge of teaching approaches. Nevertheless, policies of the school, as well as communication and cultural differences posed major challenges to them.

### 3. Needs for Professional Development of Foreign Teachers

**Table 1**

*Areas of Professional Development Needs*

Professional development areas	Strongly in need	In need	Moderately in need	Low level of need	Not need at all
1. Content in main subject	5 (38.46%)	8 (61.54%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
2. Curriculum, learning standards, indicators	6 (46.15%)	5 (38.46%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
3. Student assessment	5 (38.46%)	5 (38.46%)	3 (23.08%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
4. Classroom management	8 (61.54%)	3 (23.08%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
5. Instructional design	9 (69.23%)	4 (30.77%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
6. ICT skills for teaching	4 (30.77%)	5 (38.46%)	1 (7.69%)	2 (15.38%)	1 (7.69%)
7. Teaching students with special learning needs	4 (30.77%)	5 (38.46%)	4 (30.77%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
8. Teacher's ethics and professionalism	6 (46.16%)	5 (38.46%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
9. Handling with student discipline and behavior problems	5 (38.46%)	6 (46.16%)	2 (15.38%)	0 (00.00%)	0 (0.00%)
10. Action research	0 (00.00%)	2 (15.38%)	3 (23.08%)	5 (38.46%)	3 (23.08%)

The areas of professional development that the foreign teachers had the strongest need to attend were those related to instructional design including teaching materials, worksheets, handouts, lesson plans and learning activities ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $S.D. = 0.48$ ) classroom management ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $S.D. = 0.7$ ), and content in the main subject ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $S.D. = 0.51$ ) respectively. The teachers expressed that instructional design was an important area for professional development because it provided the teacher with tools to design appropriate materials that were applicable to the classroom practice as revealed in the interview excerpt below:

I can create materials, but when implanted in class I find them to need improvement perhaps that is normal for the first use, or too difficult for the students.

(Teacher F, personal communication, May 12, 2022)

Curriculum, learning standards, indicators ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $S.D. = 0.75$ ) and teacher's ethics and professionalism ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $S.D. = 0.75$ ) were found to be in a high level of need, followed by handling with student discipline and behavior problems ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $S.D. = 0.63$ ) and student assessment practices ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $S.D. = 0.80$ ). The foreign teachers commented that knowledge of the curriculum, learning standards and indicators was important because teachers needed to keep up to date with current standards and practices. This is in alignment with the proposal by Richards and Farrell (2005) that professional development should provide the teachers the opportunity to explore new trends and approaches in language teaching. In addition, knowledge of teacher's ethics and professionalism was indispensable as reflected from the comment below.

As a foreigner living in amongst a foreign culture to my own. I think there will always be a need for learning opportunities to understand culturally-appropriate expectations of professionalism, but not necessarily specifically as a professional development need.

(Teacher B, personal communication, April 30, 2022)

The topics that the foreign teachers perceived as low in need were teaching students with special learning needs ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $S.D. = 0.82$ ) and ICE skills for teaching ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $S.D. = 1.31$ ). The area that was the least in need by the foreign teachers was action research ( $M = 2.31$ ,  $S.D. = 1.03$ ). The teachers commented that this was not an area of their interest.

Research is something that is complicated. If the school requires me to do it, I'll do it. If not, it the area not much of interest.

(Teacher J, personal communication, May 18, 2022)

While the regulations by the Teachers Council of Thailand required the teachers to have knowledge of educational research, the teacher's comment implied that research was an additional task for foreign teachers. The research must be conducted to meet the school requirement only.

The foreign teachers are well aware of the importance of professional development and look to this positively for their teaching as one teacher commented:

Professional development in any field is essential – change is consistent feature of all fields and the teaching profession is no different. The only way to understand these changes is through continued development. I can see a direct impact of professional development on my own teaching as it has allowed me to take a step back, think through the key components of what it is a need to understand, and then apply that knowledge to the lessons I create.

(Teacher B, personal communication, April 30, 2022)

In addition, the professional development program must address the needs of the teacher so that the knowledge and the skills required can be applied in their teaching. This is congruent with the proposal set forth by Richards and Farrell (2005) in which professional development should apply a bottom-up approach in which the foreign teachers can voice their needs for professional development.

I generally choose a workshop based on areas that I feel need improving or areas that I enjoy and want to know more. I am always looking for new activities and new ways to engage students in a communicative classroom and therefore seminars about this usually take my interest. In the last year seminars about improving online engagement have been of interest due to the current situation with COVID-19.

(Teacher A, personal communication, April 21, 2022)

In conclusion, the areas that should be included in the professional development program as needed by the foreign teachers are those that had impacts on their performance in the classroom, particularly classroom management and instructional design. These two areas would equip them with tools to manage their class and provide effective learning experiences appropriate to the students.

#### **4. Proposed Solutions to the Situation of Foreign Teachers**

Based on the analysis of the situation of foreign teachers in Thai schools and their needs for professional development, the following solutions are proposed.

Firstly, to address the administrative issues, the school should establish clear guidelines on the scope and responsibility of the foreign teachers. For example, the maximum range of the subjects that they are required to teach in a term must be determined.

Secondly, a general lack of communication and cultural issues pose a great challenge to foreign teachers in Thai schools. Frequently, they do not know the information regarding school activities, announcements, and changes to the timetable. One cause of this can be attributed to language barriers. Without effective communication, the foreign teachers are treated as outsiders in school. Thai teachers do not learn and adapt to Western cultures and vice versa. Most of the time, the foreign teachers are not invited to join the monthly meeting. All of the activities, including the

routine activities at schools, are organized with the use of the Thai language as the medium of communication, such as the case for Teachers' Day, Sports day, and etc.

To handle the communication issues, the school should implement a bilingual policy in which all announcements are to be communicated in both Thai and English. For immediate action, coordinators with a proficiency level in both Thai and English should be assigned to help in communicating with the foreign teachers for all information and announcements from the school. At the same time, intercultural communication competence should be promoted. There should be an activity that provides an opportunity for teachers from different backgrounds to share, learn and explore cultural similarities and differences based on the principles of intercultural competencies including respect, curiosity, self-awareness, and that of others (Deardorff, 2006).

In terms of the professional development program, foreign teachers' opinions should be considered in order to ensure it is reflective of their needs. By this, the school can ask the foreign teachers to develop their individual development plans by determining their strengths and areas for improvement. The self-reflected response will be beneficial for the school to organize an effective professional development program.

### **Conclusion**

This research provides information about the situation and the needs of professional development of foreign teachers in Thai schools. The results of this study suggest the importance of possessing intercultural competence for appropriate application in contexts where interactions between people of different cultural backgrounds are involved.

Professional development is crucial for foreign teachers. It is an ongoing process that ideally should be integrated into routine tasks including critical self-reflection on teaching practices, classroom observations and classroom action research. Moreover, training seminars or other such activities aimed at short-term and immediate goals of the teachers should be blended with these tasks to provide a structured process of professional development.

In order to make the professional development program effective and engaging for foreign teachers, their opinions should be considered. They should be able to propose the topic or the activities proposed for professional development schemes that would correspond with their needs and overall interests.

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