Factors influencing the efficacy of teaching-related professional development in Japanese universities: English-language teachers' perspective

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Teaching-related professional development of university English-language teachers in Japan has been investigated in limited capacity both before and after the adoption of the Faculty Development policy. The authors employed the critical realist approach to investigating experiences and attitudes of eight full-time English-language teachers from eight tertiary institutions across Kyushu towards professional development at their universities. Interviews were conducted over a period of several months using a semi-structured protocol derived from a professional development model. The data was analysed using two approaches: template analysis and abductive analysis. The analysis revealed three themes with several sub-themes. The main themes were institutional orientation towards teaching, teacher agency in self-initiated professional development and pedagogical value of institutional professional development. The results are discussed with references to both domestic and international academic literature on relevant topics pertaining to professional development, pedagogy and the overall system within which university professional development is situated.

1. Introduction

For many years, Japanese universities have been in the process of change, struggling to maintain demand among young people for higher education (HE) services in the context of a declining youth population and, simultaneously, intense international competition (Amano & Poole, 2005; Yonezawa, 2020). Several measures have been put in place to increase the competitiveness of the Japanese HE sector, most relevant of which to this paper is the improvement of the quality of educational services provided by universities (Ozeki et al., 2023), formally pursued via the Faculty Development (FD) policy mandated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2008 (MEXT, 2008).

Despite the designation of professional development (PD) as an important contributor to the betterment of Japanese universities, the question of how well the pedagogical development needs of university academic staff in Japan are met remains underexplored, with only two studies addressing this question, albeit indirectly (Bradford et al., 2022; Smith & Kukharuk, 2016). With the goal of exploring the above-mentioned question, this study is driven by the authors' understanding of critical realism (CR) (Bhaskar, 2009), and as such, attempts to highlight what structures and mechanisms influence the efficacy of PD at Japanese universities. With Japanese universities subject to similar

socio-economic forces as many nations (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rear, 2011; Takayama, 2009), the authors believe the findings of this study will be of relevance to both domestic and international audiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key definitions: FD, PD and efficacy

For the sake of clarity, the authors of this paper distinguish between 'PD' and 'FD' in the following manner. The term 'FD' is used in this paper to refer exclusively to the *policy* of mandating that PD activities be conducted in universities. The authors use the term 'PD' broadly to refer to activities used by in-service teachers to improve their professional skills. As such, it also includes all related concepts, theories and models; it is synonymous with continuous professional development. References to the literature will reflect this focus. Since the present study is situated in the university context, the authors also distinguish between teaching-related PD activities and those related to other aspects of academic practice such as research. Whenever the term 'PD' is used, it is with the meaning of teaching-related PD. The third important term in this paper is 'efficacy'. Since the presented study is qualitative, rather than looking at objective measures of efficacy, 'efficacy' is understood here as participants' accounts of successful learning outcomes and of positive reception of that process.

2.2. PD efficacy in Japanese educational setting

Studies describing the types of PD activities instituted at Japanese universities present an overview of what activities are taking place (e.g., Suzuki, 2013). However, in their examination of views of FD organizers regarding future directions of FD in Japan, Ozeki et al. (2023) note that the implementation of university PD remains poorly explored. For that reason, this study was informed by not only the limited literature situated in the university setting but also by the literature in Japanese secondary education with its multi-decadal culture of PD (Suzuki, 2012), which has seemingly resulted in Japanese teachers' acceptance of it as a lifelong pursuit (Matoba & Arani, 2002).

Several themes can be inferred from the existing English-language literature regarding the efficacy of PD in Japanese education. Reflection is often featured as a key factor contributing to PD of teachers in both school (Angeles & Matsuura, 2019; Glasgow & Hale, 2018; Hiratsuka, 2014; Sato, Tsuda, Ellison, et al., 2020; Sato, Tsuda, McKay, et al., 2020; Watanabe, 2016) and university settings (Smith & Kukharuk, 2016). Other studies highlight the role of the mentor in collaborative PD and the importance of self-direction in both collective and individual PD noting that both exert a positive influence on outcomes (Sato, Tsuda, Ellison, et al., 2020; Sato, Tsuda, McKay, et al., 2020). While not explicitly stated in the papers cited above, a careful reader can infer an emerging theme affecting the efficacy of PD activities in Japanese education: the teacher as an agent of their own PD, benefiting from self-directed activities, including reflection.

The influence of institutions and institutional culture on the efficacy of PD appears to be another important factor often discussed in the literature dedicated to both school and university settings. Institutional culture and its constraining effects on teachers' professional growth appear twice in the literature in the school setting (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Tanaka & Saito, 2021). Similarly, in a case study conducted at a private Japanese university, Smith and Kukharuk (2016) argue that a clash between individual professional cultures and those of the institution interacted to blunt motivation to reflect and develop. Bradford and Brown (2022), in their investigation of the views of South Korean and Japanese academics towards PD related to English as a medium of instruction (EMI), found that participants were concerned about bureaucratization when questioned on their attitudes to certification of their EMI skills, suggesting ambivalence towards the roles institutions play in PD.

Relevance of PD activities to their participants has been previously mentioned in international literature as an important factor contributing to the efficacy of PD in the school setting (Desimone,

2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Brown and Bradford's (2022) findings - that the need to conduct classes in English engendered positive attitudes toward EMI-related PD - suggest that relevance of PD activities may equally contribute to their efficacy in the Japanese university context. Interestingly, the same theme does not appear in the academic literature on PD in Japanese schools, suggesting it is either a non-issue or of lesser importance to the efficacy of school PD.

Finally, the impact on PD of the availability of time appears as the primary finding in Angeles and Matsuura (2019) in the school setting, with Brown and Bradford (2022) also reporting that time was a major concern among the university teachers they surveyed, inclining them to prefer short, intensive PD interventions over longitudinal ones. While time alone is not a feature of effective PD, research suggests that long-term PD interventions are more effective at promoting professional change (Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001), which may be due simply to participants spending more time on learning new skills. While the busyness of Japanese school teachers (OECD, 2018) can partially be explained by large teacher-to-student ratios in Japan (Hojo, 2021), the reasons for the perceived lack of time among Japanese university educators remain unexplored in the English-language literature.

In summary, while the extant English-language literature on teacher PD in Japan does not explicitly focus on questions of perceived efficacy, teacher agency, relevance of PD to its participants, time constraints and the role of institutional culture can be inferred from relevant studies from the school and university contexts as common themes in relation to the question of PD efficacy in the educational setting.

2.3. Originality of the Study

The literature on teacher PD in the Japanese context, limited though it may be, provides important insights into some of the factors affecting the efficacy of PD at Japanese schools and universities. Despite their collective contribution to the topic, none of the studies mentioned above have looked explicitly at the question of PD efficacy in their respective contexts, instead exploring teachers' experiences with PD via different units of analysis, ranging from specific PD activities to entire PD environments in which those activities take place. With the literature dedicated to university PD being particularly sparse, the factors contributing to (or detracting from) the efficacy of university PD in Japan remain largely unknown. To begin to address the gap in the literature, this study explores university English-language teachers' experiences with PD in Japan, driven by two similar accounts of effective PD (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Steinert et al., 2016) and using an abductive analytical approach to generate themes (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Despite cultural and contextual differences, Japan and its universities operate within an international system of neoliberal capitalism and associated trends influencing higher education (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Takayama, 2009). As such, we believe that, while local circumstances will undoubtedly vary, the findings may resonate with readers' experiences in ways relevant to their contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Ontological and epistemological stance

The aim of this study is to identify the structural mechanisms that influence the efficacy of university PD. The main research question is:

RQ: What factors affect the efficacy of PD as it is experienced by the participants at their institutions?

The primary ontological assumption here is critical realism (CR) (Easton, 2010; Fletcher, 2017; Hoddy, 2019; Maxwell, 2018). CR posits that objective reality exists, and, therefore, attempting to explain causal relationships underpinning the phenomenon under study is a valid research goal.

Epistemologically, critical realists also acknowledge that our understanding of reality is socially constructed and interpretive. Thus, employing qualitative methods to explore the experiences of the participants is a valid approach. The focus of this study is on the participants' experiences, as presented via their narratives, of professional development as teachers, colleagues, and members of faculty as well as on the various structural processes that underpin the implementation of PD at their institutions. The methodology is typical of qualitative studies: semi-structured interviews followed by transcription and iterative, collaborative corpus tagging.

3.2. Interviews

3.2.1. Analytical framework

Boylan et al. (2018) identified several models for PD in academic literature. Of particular interest to this study is the model developed by Desimone and colleagues (Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001), in which they proposed a range of factors found to contribute to its efficacy. For example, in their empirical studies of PD implementations in schools, they found that one-off workshops, lectures and seminars were less effective than collaborative longitudinal programs. The data further suggests that the efficacy of PD improves when holistically integrated with the needs of teachers.

Steinert et al. (2016) compiled a list of factors contributing to PD efficacy in higher education similar to those proposed by Desimone and colleagues. The similarities include ensuring that PD activities are relevant to the participants' practice, address teachers' professional needs, provide experiential learning opportunities, offer space for practice and reflection, promote intentional community building and employ long- rather than short-term, interventions. They recommend that the design of PD activities be grounded in research and for institutions to provide appropriate support.

3.2.2. Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was based on the PD models introduced above (Appendix A). The models operationalize PD as a structure whose different elements can be investigated, evaluated and critiqued, and thus make possible a structured exploration of PD. This was integral to enabling the authors to explore the structural mechanisms underpinning university PD in relation to all important aspects of PD implementations at the participants' institutions within the allotted time. The interview questions were based on the following topics which reflect all the factors mentioned in the above-presented models:

(1) Activity types and duration
(2) Coherence with personal goals
(3) Content coherence and relevance
(4) Collective participation and communication with others
(5) Institutional support, organization and leadership
(6) Coherence with institutional and governmental policies

The interview protocol was piloted with one participant from a different university before deployment.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

3.3.1. Recruitment

Two of the respondents were personal contacts of the first author. The contact information of two other participants was provided to the first author by other contacts, and the rest were recruited via

their work emails, obtained from their institutions' websites. A total of eight participants from eight different universities contributed.

The primary criterion for selection was that the participants had worked for at least one year full-time at their institutions at the time of receiving the invitation. This was done to ensure the respondents have had some experience with PD at their institutions as, in the authors' experience, part-time university instructors are either excluded or not required to participate in institutional PD programs. The respondents came from multiple countries, employed on both tenured and non-tenured contracts, teaching both English majors and non-majors. Their names, introduced later in the paper, are pseudonyms.

3.3.2. Interview Process

The interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2020. Each interview lasted between 50-100 minutes. The in-person interviews were recorded, and online sessions were recorded using Skype's recording function.

The participants reviewed informed consent documentation delivered via email before the interview. They were asked to verbally confirm their understanding and consent on the recording, then sign the form before the interview commenced. They were also asked to complete a profile form, which collected information regarding their employment status, years of employment and the self-estimated time they spend on teaching and research.

3.3.3. Post-Interview Operations

After the interviews, the audio data was securely stored. A copy of the data was sent to the automated transcription service otter.ai, which generated initial transcripts. These were then downloaded by the first author and erased from otter.ai servers. The first author listened to the audio, edited and anonymized the transcripts. They were then shared with the co-authors of the paper via qualitative analysis software – Quirkos – for team coding.

3.4. Analytical procedures

The analysis process consisted of three phases inspired by two different approaches. Template analysis (King, 1998) was used to add systematicity to the process of producing categories and codes. An abductive analysis approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) was employed to ground those codes and categories in the data, drawing them from the respondents' words. The final themes are, therefore, iterated interpretations of the data and do not necessarily reflect the initial categories that informed the interview protocol.

In phase one, the authors read and coded the transcripts individually. The first author took steps not to be influenced by the literature that informed the study; the co-authors' deliberate unfamiliarity with that literature served as a check against the first author's epistemological biases. Rounds of analysis ended in meetings where the research participants shared codes and discussed potential categories. Ten overarching categories emerged from this process.

To confirm the validity of the codes and categories, the analysts distanced themselves from the data by pausing the analysis for one month. The second phase involved rereading the data, checking the previously created codes, and creating new ones. In addition to coding the data, the analysts arranged the codes on Quirkos' code canvas to visually represent how they felt the codes formed categories. To confirm these observations, they analysed the most prominent codes for overlaps using the Overlap feature of the software and a shared notebook in OneNote to store snapshots of them for easier visualization. Nine distinct categories emerged from this process (Appendix B). First descriptions of the categories and their interrelationships were organized into narratives within the same shared OneNote. This process revealed four overarching themes.

After tentatively identifying the four themes, the authors began composing the narratives. This constituted the final refinement of the themes. As the iterative process continued, the authors read additional literature and created and edited themes as new insights emerged. The findings and interpretations presented below are largely the result of this final activity. Due to space limitations, only three of them are presented in the analysis section.

4. Analysis

In this section, the following themes and sub-themes will be discussed:

- Institutional orientation towards teaching as a catalyst for PD
- Teacher agency: Efficacy of self-initiated PD
    - Time constraints
- Pedagogical value of institutional PD
    - Institutional PD as reaction
    - Top-down decision-making culture

4.1. Institutional Orientation Towards Teaching as a Catalyst for PD

The data highlighted a tension between two professional identities: researcher and teacher. The relationship between the development practices of individual participants and the institutional attentiveness to such practices was prominent. For instance, Jack noted that he had been given no guidance on how – or indeed any indication that he was *expected* – to deliver high-quality language courses:

> I've been given no guidance and no requirement that I should actually be good at language teaching. […] it's been quite a turnaround in my professional life, to go from being almost a full-time language teacher to being a language researcher – more interested in getting funding and bringing in prestige for the university, doing, you know, research presentations, writing papers, going overseas, you know, enriching the name of the university – than actually improving the work that I do in class.

Jack observed that his institution did not seem to consider language teaching qualifications to be important, noting, 'If I'm qualified in any area, it is in language teaching. And [...] I'm the only person in this department who has a professional qualification in [it]'. Jack almost immediately contrasted this with a research orientation among his colleagues, saying '[…] their background is they're fantastic language researchers, […] but in terms of what it means to actually work a course [...], I'm not that confident that they know that.'

The same phenomenon was reported by Michael, who observed that, in his context there was 'a lot more pressure in terms of publishing and getting science grants.' Jack shared his analysis of the situation, saying that the teaching of English, mandated by MEXT, may not be seen by his colleagues as a productive way to spend their time.

In contrast, Rachel noted that at her department, there was a focus on FD as PD. However, she also observed that this was not institutional but departmental, having been initiated by members of the team and their supervisor. Boris remarked on the strong institutional influence, noting that his institution was 'supportive' of their teachers going to conferences 'to watch presentations and try to become a better teacher' and spoke at length of the various ways PD was encouraged and instantiated within his department.

Overall, it appears that the respondents were aware of the institutional orientation towards PD, and where the institution did not emphasize its importance, the teachers were left to choose whether to pursue PD or not. In contrast, where the institution – or the local department – encouraged and created an environment conducive to PD, the respondents not only engaged in PD but reported that

it was common practice among their colleagues as well. This finding suggests that the institutional, departmental or faculty cultures exert a significant influence on the amount of time the teachers engage in PD. In other words, if PD is not part of the discourse, it may detract from both the frequency of PD and its potential duration, rendering even individual attempts at it less effective than they otherwise could have been due to less time being dedicated to it.

4.2. Teacher Agency: Efficacy of Self-Initiated PD

When prompted to relate their PD experiences, all respondents talked about self-initiated change. Many stories followed a similar pattern of noticing an issue, finding ways to address it, making a change, then reevaluating their teaching practices. For instance, Jack stated:

> I will identify an area that requires improvement. For example, the grading of speaking, I didn't think it was given in guidance, so I created my own rubric for doing that and then reflexively changed the activities that I did in my classes.

Other than resolving specific pedagogical problems, the respondents' PD was motivated by both their desire to better assist their students – most prevalent in Shinji's narratives – and by personal beliefs regarding the importance of development. While the importance of agency in one's own development is not surprising considering the literature, it is important to note here that the reports of self-initiated PD consistently co-occurred with the stories of teachers successfully improving their practice or their students' learning experiences. It appears that agency is not only a strong motivator for PD but also an important contributor to its efficacy.

4.2.1. Time Constraints

One of the most common codes ascribed to the data was 'self-initiated', indicating that, at least among the participants in this project, motivation for professional development was largely intrinsic. Nevertheless, most participants also noted that time constrained their engagement in PD. Rachel spoke of the impacts of her teaching commitments on her work/life balance, observing that she did a great deal of work outside her contracted hours, especially during the semester. She noted that the combined load of teaching, research and PD was overwhelming and explained that she had to limit her engagement with PD and teaching:

> I didn't have any teaching-related projects, because again, it goes back to this idea of time management. […] if you want to get a new job, […] you need to have a research track when you apply for the next job. So, at my current job, I'm focusing on my research because before my contract ends in a few years, I want to have several publications […].

Those with tenure faced similar constraints. Jack noted that during his master's degree he was enjoined to spend as much time on planning as teaching, if not more. Later, he remarked that when he gained tenure, this had significantly reduced the hours available for preparation. Similarly, Mary remarked that time was 'the elephant in the room' in discussions about collaboration and teacher learning. Jack suggested that if an academic is focused on research over instruction, then it becomes easy to view an English lesson as 'ninety minutes of your life that you aren't going to get back.' Michael also mentioned the trade-offs between teaching, research and PD, observing that development activities were lowest in his list of priorities. The profiles of the participants revealed that only two teachers had fewer than 10 contact hours per week, with the rest teaching between 12-17 hours. Naturally, the teachers teaching more classes spent more time preparing for them, which ranged between 5-6 hours (three respondents) and 10-20 hours (five respondents).

To summarize, due to their workload, participants often chose to either restrict the amount of time they engaged in PD, regardless of their motivation, or to engage in PD at a cost to their personal

well-being. This finding highlights another mechanism negatively impacting the efficacy of PD – pressure on workers to achieve excellence in an ever-increasing number of professional skills.

4.3. Pedagogical Value of Institutional PD

There appeared to be a strong sense of PD as something that was required by MEXT's FD policy (MEXT, 2008) and that it was seen as a bureaucratic imposition rather than an opportunity for effective learning. As Boris remarked, 'I'm guessing almost everybody in the room is doing it because they have to…' with Brian explaining that in his department '[…] it kind of had the feeling as a filler of like, 'we've got to have this meeting, we've got to check that box.'' Further exploration of the data revealed that compulsory institutional PD possessed two distinct characteristics that led to the decrease of cognitive engagement with it on the part of the people it supposedly served, rendering it less effective.

4.3.1. Institutional PD as Reaction

The very requirement to conduct PD as a formal activity seems to affect the quality of the content of those PD activities, leading to the perception of it as less relevant. Brian remarks, '[…] we don't have a lot to discuss. So why don't we do that?' before describing the kind of PD he was offered as something that was neither carefully considered nor developed. Mary provided further examples of what compulsory institutional PD activities may amount to, noting, 'It could be, you know, problems with a certain student […] or they need to set some or change something that's been done in the past or, you know, things like [that],' implying that at least in some instances the focus of PD may even be driven by non-pedagogical issues only distantly related to the participants' teaching competence. Another common tactic to fulfil the obligation of formally engaging in PD appeared to be to resort to discussions of topics popular in the broader teaching community at that moment, such as active learning, use of technology in the classroom or conducting assessments. However, these, too, seem to have failed to provide the necessary depth and novelty for the participants to benefit from them. Brian succinctly summarizes the sentiment shared by four other participants saying, '[…]to me, it's like [I] was at this stage of teaching career when you've been at it for 10 years already, like it was pretty kind of obvious.'

In summary, it seems the reactive nature of compulsory institutional PD at Japanese universities affects its quality, which, as a result, creates a situation where teachers find little pedagogical value in the PD activities they are required to participate in, reducing the overall efficacy of institutional PD.

4.3.2. Top-Down Decision-Making Culture

The stories of institutional PD overlapped with descriptions of top-down decision-making cultures. Many expressed doubts that their opinions had any bearing on the decisions made regarding PD. Brian remarked:

> Anything we would raise in the meeting would be okayed to discuss certainly, but in terms of, you know, 'Hey, the university should do this and this…' Then, you know, I can't imagine that the voices of, you know, foreign teachers in that department down there are gonna matter a great deal to the real powers in the University.

Similarly, Mary attributed the inefficacy of institutional PD to the very idea of it being imposed on her without consultation on her interests and needs, saying, 'Perhaps it's because, you know, it's been pushed down from the outside. Whereas it's... if somehow it could be more personalized and developed from the inside, then it might be more helpful.'

When asked whether externally initiated PD activities had ever been informed by his ideas, Michael simply answered, 'It's not how it works'. Similarly, Shinji noted, 'I don't have control. They decide the date and the topic.' Harry suggested '[t]hey should survey […] and ask what people would

like to have development for, so that even if it is a top-down decision, but something that people will find interesting'.

In Rachel's case, this situation prompted pushback from the teachers, leading to them enjoying more input into the organization of a formal PD program. They were able to create their own PD workshops aimed at the needs of the teachers in her department:

> I think this colleague and some other colleagues started to kind of voice their opinion that this is not the best way to spend one's time when it comes to Faculty Development. So then, there have been some initiatives to kind of start to have faculty development, but only for the program.

Tellingly, all respondents noted that they would have preferred to have more input into the contents of the PD programs they were required to participate in. Concurring with teachers' positive reports of self-initiated PD, this suggests that teachers find more value in PD they have influence over than that unilaterally imposed on them by their institutions.

5. Discussion

It is noteworthy that PD faces serious challenges in the Japanese university context. While research suggests relevance is critical to the efficacy of PD (Desimone, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001), effective PD in Japanese universities seems to be undermined by the very system in which it occurs. Although all institutions instantiated FD, the participants did not speak positively of it. They questioned its relevance, explaining that, on the one hand, it had little connection to their careers, in which their future employability depends on their research output, and, on the other, it provided little value in terms of novelty and depth to be beneficial. In pedagogical terms, one could say the participants might feel a lack of psychological meaningfulness: there is little return on investment from PD in the form of physical, cognitive or emotional energy (Chikoko et al., 2014; Kahn, 1990).

Other than seeing teaching-related PD as less important to their future, the participants also described institutional PD as reactive and seemed to perceive institutional PD either as a box-checking exercise or motivated by external stakeholders with little insight into front-line experience at the institutions. In other words, institutional PD seems to serve to alienate teachers from PD as a product of their labour, rather than encourage a sense of ownership over it.

Participants also highlighted time constraints as influencing their engagement with PD, despite their intrinsic motivation. It appears that PD is often of low priority, which may be the result of PD being added to, rather than replacing, other duties. The push by MEXT towards learner-oriented education (Ozeki et al., 2023) influenced by both international trends towards knowledge economies (Olssen & Peters, 2005) and the local challenge of decreasing youth population (Amano & Poole, 2005; Yonezawa, 2020), coupled with the fact that research output remains more strongly correlated with employment prospects than teaching skills (Mason et al., 2023), has seemingly had unintended consequences: It has arguably contributed to a time-pressured work environment that is, in some instances at least, inimical to teaching-related professional growth.

Another important finding is the preponderance of autonomous, self-initiated PD in the form of problem solving. This description of self-initiated PD as meaningful and relevant coincided with scepticism regarding the power of the participants to inform the what-and-how of institutional PD, echoing the broader theme of the marginalization of the roles of international faculty, especially of non-Asian backgrounds, in the academic mainstream in Japan (Brotherhood et al., 2020). This preference for control over one's own learning, however, is in line with the work of Power and Goodnough (2019) who found a PD program designed in accordance with the principles of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) to be highly effective.

When taken together, our findings suggest that institutionally initiated PD may be more effective if teachers are given opportunities to design and implement their own programs, with organizers providing facilitation and feedback rather than determining activities. Such a change might also help

with increasing the psychological meaningfulness of PD perceived by its participants, at least in part alleviating the challenges presented at the start of this discussion. Addressing the issue of career relevance should be prioritized by both policy makers and institutions by, for example, making one's record of PD achievements an equally important factor during consideration for employment alongside with one's research and teaching track. Finally, the benefits of PD should be carefully weighed against the potential negative effects it may have on teachers' personal well-being or on their ability to effectively carry out other duties, namely, those of teaching and research. All these factors are likely to require a significant rethinking of the structures underpinning the modern university system, both in terms of labour practices and in terms of how learning is afforded to PD participants.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

The main implication of this study for policy makers and PD organizers is that PD must meet the needs of the staff it aims to develop by acknowledging the agency of the participants in the process and by providing the necessary environment in terms of time and incentives for engagement. Both will require resources and, importantly, commitment from stakeholders.

The major shortcoming of this study is the inability of the authors, due to limited time, resources and the difficulty of accessing potential candidates, to confirm whether the data saturation point was achieved with eight respondents. While the data showed numerous similarities across cases, highlighted in this report, the smaller codes and categories omitted as less important by the authors may prove to be noteworthy in a larger sample. A larger scale study would help increase the transferability of the findings to other similar contexts. A future mixed-methods project using the preliminary results of this research to develop questions more amenable to quantitative methods, combined with a more detailed exploration of the (re)emergent themes in qualitative interviews with a larger number of participants would be a welcome addition to the literature, as would papers investigating more narrowly the individual phenomena identified in this article.

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Conflict of interest

All authors have approved the final article and have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Appendix A. Interview protocol.

Exploratory/Starting questions
1. I am in interested in your current teaching context. Can you describe it? (who/what/where)
2. I want to know how PD is done at your place. Can you describe your experiences with PD so far?
3. What significant/recent experiences with TRPD can you remember? (**positive/negative**)
4. Can you recount to me an experience with TRPD you remember best? (who/what/how/how long/where)
5. Can you recount any other experiences from this or previous year?

Checklist and probes
1. *Activity type (reform/transform) and Duration (span/duration)*
What kind of TRPD activities were you involved in in the past year or two?
Could you circle the TRPD activities you have participated in personally or know about?
How busy did [TRPD] keep you every teaching week? How about non-teaching weeks?
> *[span]* How often (a week/month/year) do you have [TRPD] activities?
> *[duration]* How long do they last at a time?
2. *Coherence with personal goals*
How does *[TRPD]* help you become the kind of teacher you want to become?
> *[clarification]* What kind of teacher do you want to be?
> *[specific]* What part of that image have the TRPD activities been helping you with?
How relevant is TRPD to your future?
3. *Content Coherence and Focus on Content*
What kind of things have you learned from *[TRPD]*?
> *[connection]* Can you recall a topic/activity that started one week and continued onto the next week?
How has *[TRPD]* affected your teaching practice?
> *[connection to subject]* How close is *[TRPD]* to the content or the subject you teach?
> *[example]* Can you give me an example of what you teach and how it was influenced by something you learned about teaching it?
How does your teaching affect/inform what you do in *[TRPD]*?
> *[active participation]* Have you ever used your own lesson or something from your lesson for TRPD?
4. *Collective participation and Communication with others*
How often did you help other teachers with their TRPD?
How often did other teachers help you with that?
> What exactly did you do together? / What was your role in that collaboration?
> What kind of things did you talk about?
> Was the collaboration a help or a burden to you?
5. *Organization and Leadership*
How did you learn about [*this or that opportunity for TRDP*] at your place?
> Who organized them?
> Who led them?
> Did you have any control over the organizational aspects of TRPD?
6. *Coherence with institutional and governmental policies*
How is TRPD related to your contractual obligations?
> *[assessment]* How does it help you meet the teaching quality requirements at your institution?
> *[assessment2]* How does PD help you meet the requirements set by the MEXT?
> *[elaboration]* Can you give an example of such requirements?

Exploratory/Finishing questions

1. What does being a university English teacher mean to you?
2. What does TRPD mean to you in that context?
3. What could make TRPD a better experience for you?

Do you have any comments or thoughts about what we discussed to add to our conversation?

Appendix B. Template analysis: Final template