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Research Article

Unveiling the Interplay of Continuing Professional Development Strategies and Teacher Success in Iran

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Abstract

The global education landscape is witnessing a rise in teacher accountability where educators bear a heightened responsibility for demonstrably achieving student learning outcomes. In response, teachers are engaged in a continuous quest to enhance their pedagogical effectiveness, seeking strategies and methodologies to optimize their classroom practice. The present study investigates the relationship between Continuous Professional Development (CPD) practices and teacher success in the Iranian context. A sample of 364 EFL teachers from junior and senior high schools self-reported on their CPD engagement while 422 of their students provided their perceptions of teacher success. The findings revealed the substantial potential of CPD to elevate teacher success through interconnected processes of knowledge updating, reflective practice, collaborative learning, and refined decision-making skills. Notably, updating knowledge strongly influenced both collaboration and reflection while reflection moderately stimulated collaboration, and collaboration exerted a robust influence on effective decision-making. However, the study unexpectedly uncovered a negative direct association between teacher decision-making and professional success within the specific Iranian context. Additionally, no significant gender-based differences in teacher success were observed. The negative association between teacher decision-making and professional success in the Iranian context warrants further investigation. This suggests that factors specific to the Iranian educational system or cultural context might influence the relationship between these two variables. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing contextually relevant CPD programs.

Keywords: continuous professional development, teacher success, decision-making

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Introduction

Research in pedagogical Practices consistently highlights the vital role teachers play in shaping student learning and outcomes (Derakhshan et al., 2020; van der Heijden et al., 2018; Wang, 2017). A strong link exists between teacher competence and student performance, as evidenced by numerous studies (Coombe, 2014; Vescio et al., 2008). In essence, teacher professional success boils down to their ability to achieve desired learning goals, whether set by themselves or by educational authorities (Wossenie, 2014). In the context of English language instruction, this translates to an EFL teacher's capacity to effectively equip their students with English language knowledge and skills (Pishghadam et al., 2021).

Ensuring both teacher and student success within educational settings hinges on robust professional development initiatives (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Seo, 2013). Burns and Lawrie (2015) underscore the need for continuous professional development. This, coupled with high-quality training programs, keeps teachers up-to-date with the evolving demands of their profession (Evers et al., 2016) and equips them with the necessary skills to deliver impactful instruction, ultimately benefiting both their own growth and the success of their students (Miles et al., 2004). Professional development acts as a lifelong learning journey for EFL teachers, keeping them current with the field and furthering their understanding from initial training to retirement (Helate et al., 2022; Alibakhshi & Dehvari, 2015).

Despite the abundance of research on teacher continuous professional development (CPD), much of it focuses on its diverse forms and its impact on student learning (Avalos, 2011). While studies like Anthony et al. (2007) acknowledge the association between impactful professional development (PD) and improved teacher retention and effectiveness, a critical gap remains in comprehending the specific relationship between teachers' PD engagement and their professional success. Recognizing the rapid evolution and knowledge expansion within education (Duta & Rafaila, 2014), particularly in the influential domain of EFL instruction, the present study acknowledges the necessity for educators to be perpetual learners.

Unraveling the intricate connection between CPD and success in EFL teaching holds significant benefits for diverse stakeholders. Research on CPD-success relationships can inform the development of evidence-based policies that prioritize and support efficacious teacher development programs. This guides policymakers in allocating resources efficiently towards initiatives that demonstrably yield the greatest improvement in educational outcomes. Additionally, research findings can be leveraged to raise awareness about the importance of continuous learning for teachers and foster a culture of professional development within the Iranian education system.

Research examining the specific influence of CPD on the effectiveness of Iranian EFL teachers is limited. Therefore, the primary objective of this study

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was to fill this research gap by empirically evaluating the applicability of the model proposed by Tabatabaee-Yazd et al. (2018). This conceptual framework suggests a positive association between educators' participation in CPD activities and their overall professional success. However, extending beyond mere replication, this study delved into investigating the moderating impact of gender on this relationship. Essentially, the research aimed to ascertain whether the impact of CPD on the success of male and female EFL teachers varied significantly.

The efficacy of educational endeavors is demonstrably contingent upon the success of the instructional personnel within diverse academic environments (Pishghadam et al., 2011). Derakhshan et al. (2020) conceptualizes successful language teachers as individuals possessing a vast repertoire of knowledge, pedagogical principles, and instructional skills. These individuals excel at presenting information in engaging ways, leveraging innovative teaching techniques, and utilizing diverse instructional tools to optimize student learning. Pishghadam et al. (2021) highlight the motivational and inspirational capacities of successful teachers, positing their ability to ignite students' intrinsic desire to attend classes and persist through the challenges of language acquisition. This notion aligns with the broader understanding that learners' success in L2 acquisition is inextricably linked to the pedagogical efficacy of their instructors.

A plethora of scholars have delved into the intricate tapestry of variables intricately woven with teacher success, shedding light on its multifaceted nature. One thread running prominently through this tapestry is the positive association between teacher creativity and effectiveness as demonstrated by Pishghadam et al. (2012). Within the specific context of EFL instruction, Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010) identified a positive correlation between teachers' critical thinking abilities and their professional success. Malmir (2018) focused on the Iranian EFL context, meticulously examining the predictive power of reflective teaching and self-efficacy in relation to teachers' professional success. Similarly, Pishghadam and Karami (2017) underscored the paramount importance of teachers' credibility and teaching competence in influencing their overall effectiveness. The impact of teacher success extends beyond the individual, even influencing students' motivation and engagement. Pishghadam et al. (2019) argue that a successful, credible, and charismatic teacher positively influences EFL learners' willingness to attend language courses. Finally, Derakhshan et al. (2020) identify professional identity and autonomy as significant predictors of teacher success, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this complex construct.

The landscape of professional development for teachers is rich and varied (Adams, 2014; Alibakhshi & Dehvari**,** 2015). It can take many forms, from school-based training programs to independent learning initiatives, government projects, and even informal conversations with peers (Farrell, 2004; Bennett, 2012). Interestingly, the teacher professionalization movement has challenged traditional models of instructional leadership, where principals held the reins and

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teachers passively followed (Marks & Printy, 2003). Instead, a concept of shared leadership has emerged, emphasizing collaborative partnerships and interactive relationships between principals and teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003). This shift reflects a deeper understanding of professional development as a dynamic, multifaceted process that thrives on both individual initiative and collaborative interaction.

Drawing on Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al.'s (2018) model of professional development, this study focused on four key areas critical for educators' success: updating, reflective, decision-making, and collaborative activities. Teachers must actively update their professional knowledge and skills, critically assess their own teaching practices, and remain flexible in adopting new approaches as the landscape of language teaching evolves (Richards & Farrell, 2005). By reflecting on student learning outcomes and their own teaching methods, teachers identify areas for improvement and discover a wellspring of potential new approaches (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). However, progress is not a solo act. Engaging teachers in broader school decision-making boosts their commitment to professional development and fuels a collective drive for improvement (Xiu et al., 2022). Moving away from the "heroic leader" model, where all responsibility rests on the principal's shoulders, is crucial. Instead, empowering teachers through delegation and collaborative decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and unleashes their potential to contribute to better organizational outcomes (Hulpia et al., 2011). PD thrives within collaborative communities of teachers, rather than through isolated individual efforts (Hadar & Brody, 2010). Working together in their own school settings, teachers can significantly enhance their development through collaboration and collegiality. As Smith and Averis (1998) assert, "collaboration is an essential part of learning" and lies at the core of teacher development (p. 4).

Ravandpour's (2019) study focused on Iranian EFL teachers, exploring the connections between their participation in CPD and their self-efficacy. The research involved 247 teachers from various language institutes across Iran. The findings revealed that all aspects of CPD (collaboration, decision-making, reflection, and updating) positively predicted teacher self-efficacy. Iyunade (2017) studied 500 schools and found that path analysis revealed a significant link between program content focus and active learning strategies with teachers' knowledge and skills. Similarly, a structural equation model study by Tajudin et al. (2017) identified a significant relationship between teachers' standards-based teaching approaches and the connection between CPD and investigative teaching practices. While studies like Iyunade (2017) explored program content and Tajedin et al. (2017) investigated standards-based teaching, a gap remains in understanding how these factors influence EFL teachers specifically within the framework of updating, reflecting, decision-making, and collaborating. The research primarily sought to determine if there is any significant relationship between EFL teachers' continuing professional development and their

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professional success and if the effect of CPD on the success of male and female EFL teachers differed significantly. To this end, this study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' continuing professional development and their professional success?
2. Does EFL teachers' gender moderate the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' continuing professional development and their professional success?

Method

Participants

A total of 364 Iranian EFL teachers from junior and senior high schools participated in this study. The sample comprised 186 males and 178 females, with ages ranging from 21 to 40 years. All participants possessed university degrees, distributed as follows: 165 post-diplomas, 158 bachelor's degrees (B.A.), 23 master's degrees (M.A.), and 18 Ph.D.s. Convenience sampling was employed for participant recruitment. The second group of the participants consisted of 422 students, taught by the aforementioned EFL teachers. The student sample included 226 males and 196 females, with ages ranging from 13 to 18 years. Also, their language proficiency was at elementary to intermediate levels and were taking English courses aligned with secondary and high schools. This study followed BERA's (2011) ethical guidelines; the participants were informed of the research aims and consented to participate. They were informed of the likelihood of publication and were offered anonymity and the opportunity to question, comment on, and withdraw from the research.

Instrument

CPD Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed as a 40-item instrument with two key data sections: background information and professional development. Its foundation lay in the questionnaire established by Tabatabai-Yazdi et al. (2018), which originally measured factual and attitudinal aspects of four core professional development constructs: Updating, Reflecting, Collaborating, and Decision Making. To enhance the instrument's relevance to peer observation's impact on reflection, six additional items (24, 26, 29, 34, and 38) were incorporated. This modification was informed by Fatemipour's (2009) research, which found that peer observation partnerships significantly fostered individual teachers' reflection and analysis of their teaching practices. Further adjustments were made to enhance the measurement of reflection and collaboration, drawing from Ramani's (1987) work highlighting the value of micro-teaching sessions for promoting teachers' theoretical evaluation and holistic reflection on their teaching. Consequently, eleven additional items (21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36, 37, and 39) were added to the constructs of Reflecting and Collaborating. These modifications aimed to strengthen the

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questionnaire's sensitivity to the specific influence of peer observation on teachers' professional development, particularly in the areas of reflection and collaboration. By aligning the instrument with established research and tailoring it to the study's focus, the authors aimed to gather reliable and valid data on the impact of peer observation on participants' professional development practices. Finally, three additional items specifically focusing on technology friendliness (items 32, 33, 40) were incorporated into the decision-making and collaboration constructs. This expansion aligned with Ghavifekr and Rosdy's (2015) emphasis on fostering communication and interaction between administrators and teachers, and facilitating the utilization of instructional materials within schools. In total, the questionnaire was augmented by 20 additional items, bringing its final size to 40.

The CPD questionnaire was developed and validated with the support of ELT experts. To ensure reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated, yielding a score of 0.77, exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.75 for research instruments. Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measure used to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a test or scale. It quantifies how closely the items within a test are related to each other, essentially measuring the same construct. An alpha value of 0.75 is generally considered acceptable for research instruments. However, higher values are desirable (Bland & Altman, 1997). Additionally, the internal consistency of subcomponents ranged from 0.71 to 0.80, demonstrating strong individual item reliability. To ensure validity, a three-pronged approach was employed: a) Face Validity: The questionnaire was assessed against item writing principles, including clarity, conciseness, natural language, and avoidance of ambiguity and bias. Additionally, visual elements like font choices, margin adjustments, and sequencing were optimized for clarity and ease of response, drawing upon Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2010) recommendations. The final questionnaire was aesthetically pleasing and could be completed within 30 minutes. b) Content Validity: Three external experts and three academic colleagues evaluated the questionnaire's language, content, and relevance to the research objectives, ensuring appropriate coverage of the constructs of interest. c) Construct Validity: Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the structural validity of the questionnaire and confirm the hypothesized relationships between items and underlying constructs. This analysis confirmed the congruence of questionnaire components with the intended constructs. This questionnaire obtained a reliability score of 0.77 through Cronbach's α analysis, and a total acceptable value of .75 was shown in the experimental stage of the study.

Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Success Questionnaire:

To assess students' perspectives on teacher effectiveness, the present study employed Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al.'s (2018) Teachers' Success Questionnaire (TSQ). This 40-item survey utilizes a multidimensional framework to evaluate

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instructors' performance across a broad spectrum of criteria. Seven key constructs are encompassed by the TSQ: 1. ELT Competencies (6 items): This factor measures teachers' proficiency in delivering clear and engaging language instruction, managing pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition, and fostering critical thinking skills among students. 2. Pedagogical Objectives and Teacher Accountability (11 items): This construct assesses alignment between instructional activities and learning goals, effective lesson planning, and utilization of appropriate materials and resources. 3. Interpersonal Interactions (3 items): This factor emphasizes teachers' ability to create a positive classroom environment, cultivate rapport with students, and promote effective communication and collaboration. 4. Examination/Evaluation (5 items): This construct focuses on teachers' assessment practices, including designing valid and reliable tests, providing constructive feedback, and utilizing scores to inform instruction. 5. Class Attendance, Management, and Commitment (5 items): This factor evaluates teachers' punctuality, organization, classroom discipline, and dedication to their professional responsibilities. 6. Attitude, Motivation, and Confidence (5 items): This construct assesses teachers' positive attitude towards teaching, enthusiasm for engaging students, and ability to demonstrate self-assurance and control in the classroom. 7. Teacher's Self-Awareness (5 items): This factor emphasizes teachers' ability to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, reflect on their teaching practices, and adapt their methods to accommodate individual student needs. Items within each construct were categorized using factor analysis, ensuring coherence and interpretability of the measured dimensions. The questionnaire is on a 5-point Likert-type responses (ranging from "Always" to "Never").

The questionnaire was designed in Persian to enhance accessibility and maximize response rates, and completion time typically averages 10 minutes. Cronbach's alpha analysis yielded an overall score of 0.83, exceeding the standard threshold for research instruments, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Subcomponent alpha values ranged from 0.78 to 0.91, further supporting the questionnaire's reliability.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, both the CPD questionnaire and Teachers' Success Questionnaire (TSQ) questionnaire underwent modifications and validation procedures. This ensured the instruments' suitability for the specific study context and target population. The study was conducted in several schools within West Azarbaijan, Iran. Careful consideration was given to both credibility and feasibility in selecting these schools. The chosen schools were recognized for their high standing within the region, and given the researchers' existing or past relationships with some of these schools, they benefited from the willingness and cooperation of teachers. Prior to administering the questionnaire, clear and concise information about the study's purpose, and

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procedures were provided to the participants. In addition, the students were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and confidential, so they were given freedom to participate in and withdraw from the study at any stage of the research, and were assured that their responses would be used solely for the research purposes. Finally, to protect the privacy of the participants, they were guaranteed that their identity and individual responses would stay confidential. Towards the end of the academic term, the participating teachers were given the CPD questionnaire to complete at home. The students of the participating teachers were also invited to complete the "Characteristics of successful EFL teachers" questionnaire. Similar to the teachers, they completed the questionnaires at home and returned them to the researchers during their next session. For each teacher, the mean average of their students' responses for each statement on the "Characteristics of successful EFL teachers" questionnaire was subsequently provided.

Design of the study

The main purpose of this study was to examine teachers' opinions on the extent to which professional development contributed to their own success and positively affected their classroom practices. Additionally, the study aimed to offer a model of CPD based on EFL high school teachers' perspectives to address CPD in the EFL context. To place the puzzle pieces of four constructs of CPD and their connection with how students evaluate their teachers' success, this study analyzed the quantitative data from two questionnaire: Teachers' CPD Questionnaire and the Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Successful Classroom Practices Questionnaire. The research undertaking in this study was done with a focus on the quantitative data. In case of teachers, purposeful sampling was used, that is, just EFL high school teachers were selected. Also, student participants who filled out the "Teachers' Successful Classroom Practices" questionnaire were selected randomly from among each teacher's class. Data from the two questionnaires were meant to support the study's data, to pursue in-depth information around a topic.

Results

Prior to assessing the structural measurement model, the measurement model underwent a thorough evaluation. Hair et al. (2019) stipulate that all research indicators should be treated as reflective. Following this guidance, several key aspects were examined: outer loadings, individual item reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The respective findings of these investigations are presented in Tables 1, 2, and Figure 1, providing a comprehensive overview of the measurement model's psychometric properties.

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Table 1
The Results of Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings Minimum-maximum	CR	AVE
Updating	1-2-3-5-9-18-19-33-40	.84-.92	.87	.81
Reflecting	8-10-11-21-22-23-24-26-27-29-30-31-34- 35- 36- 38- 39	.79-.92	.87	.77
Collaborating	4-6-7-14-15-17-20-25-32-37	.87-.94	.86	.81
Decision making	12-13-16-28	.87-.90	.85	.79
Teachers' success	1 to 40	.52-.89	.89	.69

Note. Loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 are acceptable; <0.7 is high. Composite reliability (CR) should be 0.7 or higher. The average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be 0.5 or higher.

Composite Reliability (CR) was employed to assess the reliability of each construct. As shown in Table 1, all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.8 for CR, demonstrating strong internal consistency (Gefen et al., 2000). This suggests that the items within each construct effectively measure the intended latent variable. Convergent validity was evaluated through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to ensure the indicators belonged to a single underlying variable. Hair et al. (2019) recommend that each construct should explain at least 50% of the variance in its assigned indicators (AVE ≥ 0.50). As presented in Table 1, all constructs met this criterion, implying that the indicators reliably capture the corresponding latent factors. By achieving both acceptable CR and AVE values, the measurement model demonstrates strong evidence of reliable and valid measurements for each construct.

Table 2
The Results of Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	Collaborating	Decision Making	Reflecting	Teachers' Success
Collaborating				
Decision Making	.19			
Reflecting	.56	.58		
Teachers' Success	.29	.37	.34	
Updating	.42	.63	.62	.42

Finally, discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that each construct remained distinct from the others. This is crucial for establishing confidence in

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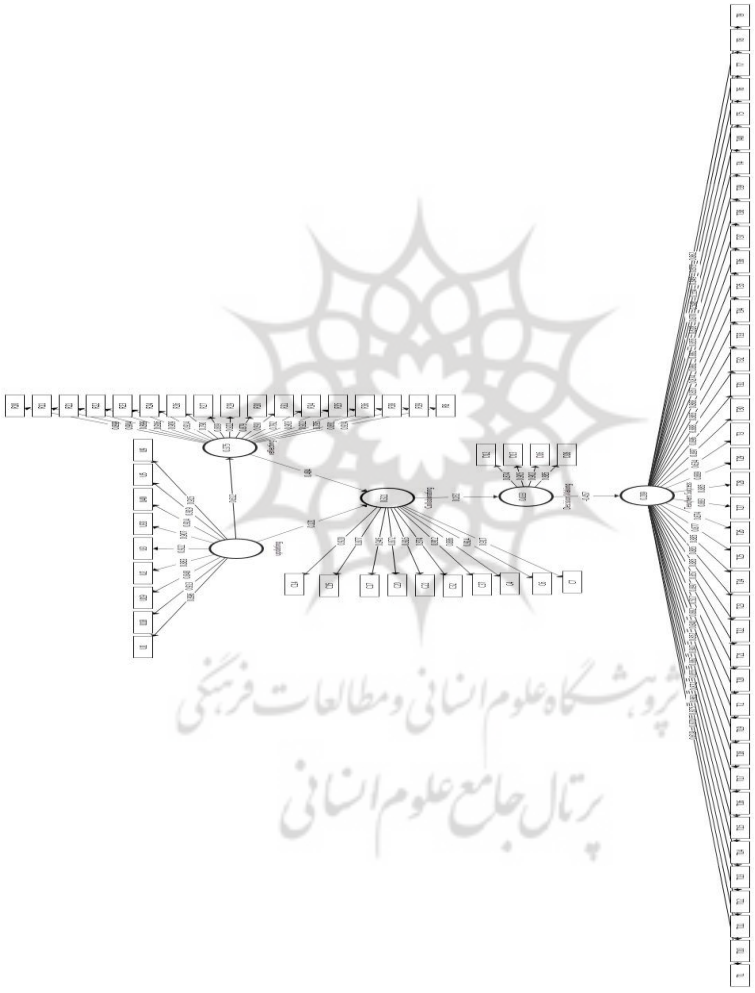
the unique meanings and contributions of each latent variable within the model. As depicted in Table 2, all ratio relationships between constructs fell below the recommended threshold of 0.85, supporting the discriminant validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). This finding suggests that the constructs are sufficiently distinct and do not overlap to a concerning degree, allowing for meaningful interpretation of their individual and combined effects.

Figure 1
Items Loading, Path Coefficient and R^2



The factor loadings of the items within the latent variables, presented in Figure 1, ranged from 0.79 to 0.94. This indicates strong associations between the observed indicators and their underlying constructs. However, five teacher success indicators (T1, T2, T4, T5, and T6) fell below the recommended

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minimum loading of 0.70. Although these items may not be ideal measures of their respective constructs, their removal was deemed unnecessary as they did not significantly impact the overall model reliability. Furthermore, one indicator (T40) exhibited a particularly low loading of 0.39, suggesting it was a poor measure of the intended construct. Therefore, it was excluded from the analysis to ensure model parsimony and enhance the interpretability of the results. These findings underscore the importance of item-level analysis in structural equation modeling. Evaluating the psychometric properties of individual indicators ensures that only reliable and valid measurements contribute to the analysis, ultimately leading to a more robust and trustworthy outcome.

Analysis of the Structural Model

Having confirmed the measurement model's validity and reliability, the next steps addressed potential multicollinearity and assessed the overall model fit before proceeding to the structural model analysis. As recommended by Hair et al. (2017), multicollinearity concerns were mitigated due to all variance inflation factor (VIF) values remaining below 3.5 (Table 3). This absence of multicollinearity ensures independent influences of the constructs within the model. Moving to the model fit indices, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.06 presented in Table 6 aligns with established criteria for a good model fit (Henseler et al., 2014). Similarly, the normed fit index (NFI) of 0.95 further confirms an acceptable model fit based on its proximity to the desired value of 1 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Finally, the RMS theta value of 0.121, displayed in Table 6, indicates a good model fit based on its closeness to zero, suggesting minimal discrepancies between the observed and model-implied covariances (Lohmoller, 1989). These positive fit indices collectively provide assurance in the model's ability to adequately represent the research relationships.

Table 3

Bootstrapping Results

	Std Beta (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Error	t	p	R2	R2 Adjusted	f2	Q2
Collaborating Decision Making→	.18	.18	.03	4.94	.00	.033	.032	.03	.02
Decision Making Teachers' Success→	-.45	.45	.01	39.64	.00	.209	.208	.26	.07
Reflecting Collaborating→	.48	.48	.05	8.91	.00	.321	.319	.21	.24
Updating Collaborating→	.12	.12	.05	2.30	.02	.321	.319	.01	.24
Updating Reflecting→	.61	.61	.02	22.14	.00	.375	.374	.60	.27

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As presented in Table 3, bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 subsamples revealed statistically significant relationships for all paths within the structural model. This was supported by t-statistics exceeding 1.96 for each path (two-tailed t-test, α= 0.05). *Updating* on *Reflecting*: Updating was found to have a direct and positive influence on reflecting (β= .61, t= 22.14, p< .05), explaining 37% of the variance in reflecting. *Updating* on *Collaborating*: Updating also demonstrated a direct and positive influence on collaborating (β= .12, t= 2.30, p< .02), explaining 32% of the variance in collaborating. Reflecting on Collaborating: Reflecting exerted a direct and positive influence on collaborating (β= .48, t= 8.91, p< .05), explaining 32% of the variance in collaborating. *Collaborating* on *Decision Making*: Collaborating was directly and positively associated with decision-making (β= .18, t= 4.94, p< .05), explaining 3% of the variance in decision-making. *Decision Making* on *Teacher Success*: Interestingly, a direct and negative association emerged between decision-making and teacher success (β= -.45, t = 39.64, p< .05), with decision-making explaining 20% of the variance in teacher success. This implies that as decision-making increases, teacher success decreases, and vice versa. Considering Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the R^2 values of 0.37, 0.32, and 0.03 for reflecting, collaborating, and decision-making, respectively, can be interpreted as follows: *Reflecting*: Updating contributes substantially to explaining individual reflecting behavior (R2= 0.37). *Collaborating*: Both updating and reflecting have moderate predictive power for collaborating behavior (R^2= 0.32). *Decision Making*: Collaborating provides weak predictive power for decision-making behavior (R2= 0.03).

Cohen's (1988) guidelines were used to gauge the effect sizes of the estimated paths in the structural model. Table 3 reveals that reflecting exerts a close-to-medium effect on collaborating (f^2= 0.21), suggesting that it explains a substantial portion of the variance in collaborating behavior. Interestingly, decision-making shows a close-to-medium effect on teacher success (f^2= 0.26), implying that it plays a significant role in influencing overall teacher success. In contrast, collaborating demonstrates a small effect on decision-making (f2= 0.03), indicating its limited predictive power regarding decision-making processes.

The model's predictive relevance was assessed using the blindfolding procedure. According to Hair et al. (2014), a Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates satisfactory predictive relevance for a specific endogenous construct. The model demonstrably predicts reflecting (Q^2= 0.27) and collaborating (Q2= 0.24) with sufficient accuracy. However, the Q^2 values for decision-making (0.02) and teacher success (0.07) fall below the acceptable threshold, suggesting limited predictive power for these constructs. Table 4 presents the indirect effects.

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Table 4
Indirect Effects

	Std Beta (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Error	*t*	*p*
Updating -> Reflecting -> Collaborating	.29	.29	.03	8.43	.000
Reflecting -> Collaborating -> Decision Making	.08	.08	.02	3.63	.000
Updating -> Reflecting -> Collaborating -> Decision Making	.05	.05	.01	3.57	.000
Updating -> Collaborating -> Decision Making	.02	.02	.00	2.35	.019
Reflecting -> Collaborating -> Decision Making -> Teachers' Success	-.04	-.04	.01	3.46	.001
Updating -> Reflecting -> Collaborating -> Decision Making -> Teachers' Success	-.02	-.02	.00	3.40	.001
Collaborating -> Decision Making -> Teachers' Success	-.08	-.08	.01	4.66	.000
Updating -> Collaborating -> Decision Making -> Teachers' Success	-.01	-.01	.00	2.38	.017

Table 4 reveals significant and positive indirect relationships for all paths involving CPD strategies. This indicates that engaging in these strategies indirectly and positively influences the target constructs, even though the direct effects in some cases may be negative. The t-statistics exceeding 1.96 further confirm the statistical significance of these indirect relationships.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Success Components

Teachers' success components	M	SD
Teachers' delivery of instruction/goal	4.32	.04
Class attendance, management and commitment	4.03	.04
Interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues	3.92	.04
ELT competencies	3.87	.04
Attitude, motivation, and confidence	3.85	.04
Teacher's self-awareness	3.81	.04
Examination/ evaluation	3.23	.03

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The significant variation in Iranian EFL teachers' ratings of different teacher success components was corroborated by the one-way repeated measures ANOVA analysis. Wilks' Lambda (.71), $F(7, 320) = 43.66$, $p < .000$, indicated a highly significant difference, further emphasized by a very strong partial eta squared effect size of .94, exceeding Cohen's (1988) thresholds for large effects. Post-hoc Bonferroni comparisons revealed that *Teachers' Delivery of Instruction/Goals* received the highest average rating ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .05$), highlighting its perceived crucial role in teacher success. Contrarily, the *Examination/Evaluation* construct received the lowest score ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .03$), suggesting relative less importance placed on this aspect.

Finally, we investigated the potential moderator effect of gender on the relationships within the CPD program constructs. This required ensuring measurement invariance (MI) across gender groups, a prerequisite for robust multi-group analysis (Hair et al., 2014). This was achieved using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA) with progressively stringent levels of invariance to confirm that the underlying measurement models held true for both male and female teachers.

Table 6

Compositional Invariance Assessment and Full Measurement Model Invariance Assessment Results of MICOM for Invariance Measurement Testing Using Permutation

				Compositional Invariance assessment		Full measurement model invariance assessment					
Construct	Configured Invariance	Original correlation	5.00 %	Partial measurement invariance	Mean Original difference	Confidence interval	Equality of means	Variance original difference	Confidence interval	Equality of variances	Full measurement invariance
Updating	Not Established	.899	.973	Not Established	.228	(-0.192/0.207)	Not Equal	.412	(-0.316/0.271)	Not Equal	Not Established
Reflecting	Not Established	.987	.988	Not Established	.256	(-0.202/0.200)	Not Equal	.268	(-0.246/0.234)	Not Equal	Not Established
Collaborating	Not Established	.985	.987	Not Established	.201	(-0.196/0.188)	Not Equal	.454	(-0.344/0.332)	Not Equal	Not Established
Decision making	Not Established	.988	.989	Not Established	.237	(-0.206/0.210)	Not Equal	.343	(-0.288/0.258)	Not Equal	Not Established

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Discussion

The results of this study revealed a direct positive influence of *Updating* on both *Reflection* and *Collaboration*. This suggests that as teachers acquire new knowledge, they become inclined to critically examine their own teaching practices since new knowledge or perspectives offer different lenses through which to analyze their classroom experiences. Furthermore, this new knowledge prompts thoughtful discussions and collaboration among teachers. New ideas and resources gained through updating can be jointly explored and implemented in classrooms. Research by Vygotsky (1978) underscores the significance of social interaction and collaborative learning in educational settings. According to his sociocultural theory, learning is a social process that occurs through interactions with others, leading to the co-construction of knowledge. Moreover, contemporary studies by Hattie (2009) emphasize the importance of reflective practices in teaching. Hattie's meta-analysis highlights that teachers who engage in reflective practices are more likely to improve their instructional strategies and enhance student learning outcomes. This underscores the value of continuous updating and critical examination of teaching practices in fostering professional growth. Moreover, Coombe (2020) emphasized the importance of current professional knowledge as a crucial requirement for highly effective English language teachers. Additionally, research by Fullan (2016) emphasizes the role of collective efficacy in driving school improvement. When teachers collaborate and share new knowledge, they contribute to a collective sense of efficacy, which positively impacts student achievement. This highlights the importance of collaborative exploration and implementation of new ideas and resources gained through updating. By integrating insights from these theoretical perspectives and empirical studies, it becomes evident that updating not only enhances individual reflection but also fosters collaboration among teachers, leading to improved instructional practices and ultimately benefiting student learning.

The study further revealed a direct positive influence of reflective practice on collaboration, aligning with the observations of Sharifi and Abdolmanafi Rokni (2014) who suggest that reflective teaching acts as a catalyst for collaborative endeavors. In line with this, Cajkler et al. (2015) found that CPD courses often inspire teachers to form teams, share knowledge and experiences, and engage in cooperative tasks. This fosters mutual support for teaching and learning practices, ultimately contributing to greater overall success. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a direct positive influence of collaboration on decision-making**.** Collaboration exposes teachers to diverse viewpoints, which can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of a situation and more well-rounded decisions. When teachers work together, they can share their own experiences and insights, as well as learn from the perspectives of others. When teachers work together, they can pool their knowledge and resources to come up with creative solutions to problems. This can lead to more innovative and effective decisions than any one teacher could make on their own. Drawing from current theoretical and empirical knowledge, research by Johnson and Johnson (2019) on cooperative learning underscores the benefits of collaboration in educational settings. According to their findings, collaborative learning environments promote higher levels of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and overall academic achievement among students.

The study unexpectedly revealed a negative direct association between teacher decision-making and professional success in the Iranian context. The results of this study differ from those of Derakhshan et al (2020), who discovered that teachers' attitudes towards research and their perceived needs for continuous professional development were significant predictors of high perceptions of professional success among Iranian teachers. Additionally, Crandall and

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Finn Miller (2014) contended that activities such as exchanging ideas, receiving administrative support, dedicating time to improving skills and sub-skills, and engaging in continuous professional development can all contribute to enhancing teachers' instructional effectiveness. This seemingly paradoxical finding calls for further research to elucidate the specific mediating factors underlying this complex relationship. While Farrell (2008) and Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) underscore the critical role of flexible decision-making in teacher effectiveness, Safari and Rashidi (2015) highlight the unique characteristics of the Iranian English language learning environment, shaped by its distinct ethnic, social, and political landscape. This context is further defined by the Ministry of Education's centralized control, as evidenced by the pre-determined syllabi and resources provided, significantly limiting teacher autonomy over curriculum and materials (Safari & Rashidi, 2015). Consequently, Ahmady et al. (2009) argue that these standardized curricula can have detrimental effects on both teachers and students, potentially stifling teachers' engagement in active empirical learning practices such as reflection, debate, practical evaluation, and action research.

Several potential explanations for this counterintuitive finding can be drawn from specific aspects of the Iranian context. The highly centralized education system, with decision-making authority concentrated at national and regional levels, can restrict teachers' autonomy over curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. This may lead to frustration and disengagement among teachers who feel their agency is constrained, ultimately impacting their performance and overall success. Additionally, cultural values in Iran may emphasize obedience and respect for authority, potentially creating an environment where teachers are less likely to challenge decisions made by superiors. This could reduce opportunities for collaborative decision-making and constructive feedback, both crucial for professional growth and success. Furthermore, teachers may prioritize adhering to prescribed guidelines and regulations over implementing innovative or independent approaches, primarily to avoid potential repercussions from authorities. This seemingly counterintuitive finding calls for further investigation to identify the specific mediating factors driving this unexpected association**.**

The results also revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the success of male and female teachers. This finding diverges from the previous studies, such as Moses et al. (2016), which identified gender-related disparities in teacher efficacy**.** Challenging the often-prevalent stereotypes about inherent teaching abilities across genders can foster fairer perceptions and encourage more diverse representation in education. If this finding holds across various subjects, it could suggest that effectiveness stems from factors beyond gender, like teaching methods, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills. Additionally**, s**ocietal shifts towards gender equality in professional settings may contribute to the diminishing disparity in teacher effectiveness.

The study reinforces the critical role of well-designed CPD programs in enhancing teacher success across genders. Schools and CPD programs should actively encourage collaborative learning environments where teachers can share expertise, best practices, and support each other in their professional development. The positive influence of *updating* on both *reflection* and *collaboration* suggests that staying current with educational research and practices can enhance teachers' ability to engage in reflective practices and collaborate effectively with their peers. The positive influence of reflective practice on collaboration underscores the importance of self-assessment and critical reflection in fostering collaborative learning environments among teachers. Engaging in reflective practices can deepen teachers' understanding of their practices and contribute to more meaningful collaborations with colleagues. The positive influence of *collaboration* on *decision-making* emphasizes the value of teamwork and shared

expertise in making informed and effective decisions in educational settings. Collaborative decision-making processes can lead to innovative solutions and better outcomes for students and teachers alike. The negative association between teacher decision-making and professional success suggests that ineffective or isolated decision-making practices may hinder teachers' overall success and professional development. Encouraging collaborative decision-making processes can mitigate this negative impact and promote collective growth and success. The finding of no significant difference between the success of male and female teachers indicates that gender does not play a significant role in determining teacher success. This highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the diverse contributions of all teachers, irrespective of gender, in fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment. By considering these findings, schools and CPD programs can design more comprehensive and effective professional development initiatives that prioritize updating, reflection, collaboration, and inclusive decision-making processes to support the success and professional growth of all teachers.

Before suggesting avenues for further research, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations or weaknesses identified in the current study. One potential limitation could be related to the specific context in which the study was conducted along with the sample size limiting the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, potential confounding variables and alternative explanations may have been overlooked for the outcomes, which could limit the scope and depth of the conclusions.

Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the nuances of this complex issue. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of teacher effectiveness across diverse contexts and demographics could provide valuable insights. Qualitative inquiries exploring the lived experiences and teaching philosophies of educators could also shed light on any potential gender-based differences in pedagogical approaches and their impact on student outcomes. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher success, regardless of gender, is crucial for informing equitable educational practices and optimizing learning environments for all students.

Declaration of Interest: none

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Biodata

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رونمایی از تعامل راهبردهای توسعه حرفه ای مستمر و موفقیت معلمان در زمینه زبان انگلیسی زبان ایران

چشم انداز آموزش جهانی شاهد افزایش مسئولیت پذیری معلمان است، جایی که مربیان مسئولیت بیشتری برای دستیابی به نتایج یادگیری دانش آموزان بر عهده دارند. در پاسخ، معلمان درگیر تلاشی مستمر برای افزایش اثربخشی آموزشی خود هستند و به دنبال استراتژی‌ها و روش‌هایی برای بهینه‌سازی عملکرد کلاس خود هستند. پژوهش حاضر به بررسی رابطه بین شیوه‌های توسعه حرفه‌ای مستمر (CPD) و موفقیت معلمان در بافت ایرانی می‌پردازد. نمونه ای متشکل از ۳۶۴ معلم زبان انگلیسی از دبیرستان های دوره اول (هفتم، هشتم، و نهم) و دوره دوم (دهم، یازدهم، و دوازدهم)، در مورد مشارکت CPD خود گزارش دادند، در حالی که ۴۲۲ نفر از دانش آموزان آنها برداشت خود را از موفقیت معلم ارائه کردند. یافته‌ها پتانسیل قابل‌توجهی CPD را برای ارتقای موفقیت معلم از طریق فرآیندهای به‌هم‌پیوسته به‌روزرسانی دانش، تمرین بازتابی، یادگیری مشارکتی و مهارت‌های تصمیم‌گیری اصلاح‌شده نشان داد. به طور قابل توجهی، به‌روزرسانی دانش به شدت بر همکاری و تأمل تأثیر گذاشت، در حالی که تأمل به طور متوسط همکاری را تحریک کرد، و همکاری تأثیر قوی بر تصمیم‌گیری مؤثر داشت. با این حال، این مطالعه به طور غیرمنتظره ای ارتباط مستقیم منفی بین تصمیم گیری معلم و موفقیت حرفه ای در بافت خاص ایران را آشکار کرد. علاوه بر این، هیچ تفاوت معناداری مبتنی بر جنسیت در موفقیت معلم مشاهده نشد. ارتباط منفی بین تصمیم گیری معلمان و موفقیت حرفه ای در زمینه ایران مستلزم بررسی بیشتر است. این امر نشان می‌دهد که عوامل خاص نظام آموزشی یا بافت فرهنگی ایران ممکن است بر رابطه بین این دو متغیر تأثیر بگذارد. درک این عوامل برای توسعه برنامه های CPD مرتبط با زمینه بسیار مهم است.

کلمات کلیدی: توسعه مستمر حرفه ای، موفقیت معلم، تصمیم گیری