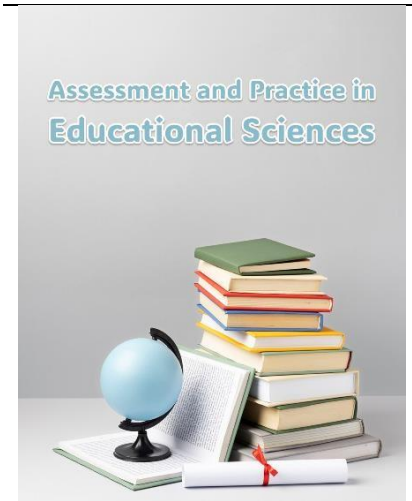

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Exploring the Core Components of Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) in the Iranian Context

ABSTRACT

Collaborative Continuing Professional Development refers to ongoing learning activities. It aimed at enhancing teachers' professional growth through collaboration. This qualitative study explored the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD). It involved semi-structured interviews with 30 teachers (23 university lecturers and 7 institute teachers) to collect in-depth insights into their experiences with CCPD, professional development, and collaboration. To analyze the data, the researchers used thematic analysis and MAXQDA software. The researchers identified seven themes for CCPD: policy and legal framework, active stakeholder participation, needs assessment and localization of content, collaborative learning methods, evaluation and feedback system, motivational and structural support, sustainability and future orientation. Overall, the study emphasized the importance of collaborative practices in continuous professional development for EFL teachers. It highlights that teachers who actively engage in CCPD not only improve their own teaching practices but also contribute to a broader culture of collaboration within their educational institutions. The findings suggest that teacher training programs can incorporate collaborative learning strategies to enhance the effectiveness of professional development.

Keywords: Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD), Qualitative Research, MAXQDA Software, Thematic Analysis.

Introduction

Professional development has become a central pillar in contemporary education systems, particularly in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where rapid pedagogical, technological, and sociocultural changes continuously reshape teaching

practices and expectations. Teachers are no longer perceived merely as transmitters of knowledge but as reflective practitioners, lifelong learners, and active contributors to educational innovation. This shift necessitates sustained engagement in Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which enables teachers to refine their pedagogical competencies, adapt to evolving instructional demands, and enhance student learning outcomes. In this regard, CPD is not a one-time intervention but a continuous, dynamic, and context-sensitive process that supports both individual and institutional growth (1-3).

The growing complexity of educational environments, coupled with globalization and digital transformation, has intensified the need for effective and sustainable professional development models. Traditional top-down training approaches, often characterized by short-term workshops and passive knowledge transmission, have been increasingly criticized for their limited impact on classroom practices and teacher learning. These models frequently fail to address teachers' contextual needs, overlook their experiential knowledge, and lack mechanisms for follow-up and reflection. Consequently, contemporary research has shifted toward more participatory, collaborative, and teacher-centered approaches that emphasize active engagement, contextual relevance, and long-term impact (4-6).

Within this evolving paradigm, Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) has emerged as a promising framework that integrates the principles of collaboration, reflection, and sustained learning. CCPD emphasizes the social nature of learning, positioning teachers as members of professional communities where knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue, shared experiences, and collective inquiry. This approach aligns with social constructivist perspectives, which highlight the importance of interaction, collaboration, and contextualized learning in professional growth. By fostering peer collaboration, mentorship, and community engagement, CCPD enables teachers to move beyond isolated practice and engage in meaningful professional learning experiences (7-9).

A key strength of CCPD lies in its capacity to integrate multiple dimensions of teacher development, including pedagogical knowledge, professional identity, motivation, and reflective practice. Research indicates that teachers who participate in collaborative professional learning communities demonstrate higher levels of instructional innovation, self-efficacy, and professional satisfaction. These communities provide a supportive environment where teachers can share challenges, exchange ideas, and collaboratively develop solutions to classroom problems. Moreover, CCPD facilitates the development of professional identity by enabling teachers to negotiate their roles, beliefs, and practices within a social context (9-11).

Another critical aspect of CCPD is its emphasis on reflective practice and action research as mechanisms for professional growth. Reflective practice encourages teachers to critically examine their instructional strategies, assess student outcomes, and continuously refine their approaches. Action research, on the other hand, empowers teachers to systematically investigate their own classrooms, implement evidence-based interventions, and evaluate their effectiveness. These processes not only enhance teachers' pedagogical skills but also promote a sense of agency and ownership over their professional development (12-14).

In addition to reflection and collaboration, self-directed learning has been identified as a crucial component of effective professional development. Teachers who actively take responsibility for their learning, set professional goals, and engage in continuous self-assessment are more likely to achieve sustained improvement in their practice. Self-directed CPD fosters intrinsic motivation, which has been shown to be a stronger predictor of professional engagement than external incentives. This aligns with self-determination theory, which emphasizes the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivating individuals to pursue meaningful learning experiences (2, 15, 16).

Technological advancements have further expanded the scope and accessibility of CCPD by enabling online collaboration, virtual communities of practice, and digital learning platforms. These tools provide flexible opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development regardless of geographical constraints. Online CPD initiatives have been particularly valuable

during periods of disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when traditional face-to-face training was not feasible. However, the effectiveness of technology-enhanced CPD depends on the availability of infrastructure, digital literacy, and institutional support (8, 10, 17).

Despite the growing recognition of CCPD as an effective approach to teacher development, several challenges persist in its implementation. One major issue is the lack of alignment between professional development programs and teachers' actual needs. Many CPD initiatives are designed without adequate needs assessment, resulting in content that is irrelevant or impractical for classroom application. This disconnect can lead to low participation rates and limited impact on teaching practices. Additionally, insufficient stakeholder involvement, including limited input from teachers, learners, and administrators, further undermines the effectiveness of CPD programs (11, 18, 19).

Another significant challenge is the lack of systematic evaluation and feedback mechanisms in CPD programs. Effective professional development requires continuous assessment of teachers' progress, as well as constructive feedback that guides improvement. However, many programs rely on superficial evaluation methods, such as attendance certificates or general feedback, which do not provide meaningful insights into teachers' learning outcomes. The absence of follow-up and longitudinal evaluation further limits the sustainability of professional development efforts (3, 6, 20).

Motivational and structural factors also play a critical role in shaping teachers' engagement in CPD. Financial incentives, institutional support, and recognition of professional achievements can significantly influence teachers' willingness to participate in professional development activities. Conversely, lack of support, heavy workloads, and limited resources can act as barriers to engagement. Research has shown that teachers are more likely to participate in CPD when they perceive it as relevant, rewarding, and aligned with their professional goals (1, 21, 22).

Furthermore, the sustainability of CPD programs remains a critical concern. Many initiatives are short-lived and lack long-term planning, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent professional learning experiences. Sustainable CPD requires a strategic approach that integrates ongoing training, continuous evaluation, and adaptation to future educational trends. It also necessitates a supportive policy framework that ensures consistency, accountability, and resource allocation (4, 5, 23).

In the context of EFL education, these challenges are particularly pronounced due to the dynamic nature of language teaching and the diverse needs of learners. Teachers must continuously adapt to changes in language use, technological tools, and pedagogical approaches, making effective professional development essential for maintaining instructional quality. Collaborative approaches, such as CCPD, offer a viable solution by fostering a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and shared responsibility among educators (24-26).

Although a substantial body of research has explored various aspects of CPD and collaborative learning, there remains a notable gap in understanding the comprehensive components of CCPD, particularly in specific educational contexts such as Iran. Existing studies have primarily focused on the effectiveness of individual CPD strategies or the impact of collaboration on teacher performance. However, fewer studies have systematically examined the multidimensional structure of CCPD and its key components from the perspective of practicing teachers. Addressing this gap is crucial for designing contextually relevant and sustainable professional development programs that meet the needs of educators and improve educational outcomes (27, 28).

The present study builds upon this gap by exploring the core components of Collaborative Continuing Professional Development within the Iranian EFL context, drawing on qualitative data from experienced teachers. By identifying the key dimensions of CCPD and examining their interrelationships, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework that can inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective professional development programs. The insights generated

from this research contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher development and offer practical implications for policymakers, educators, and institutions seeking to enhance the quality and sustainability of professional learning.

In line with these considerations, and supported by the empirical and theoretical foundations outlined above as well as the contextual insights derived from prior qualitative work , the present study aims to identify and analyze the core components of Collaborative Continuing Professional Development in the Iranian EFL context.

Methods and Materials

Design of the Study

This study employed a qualitative design. The researchers selected the participants through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases relevant to the research focus. This type of sampling was employed to select teachers who had substantial experience and were well-acquainted with the real challenges in teaching. Collaborative continuing professional development was the main variable of the present study.

Participants

A total of 30 participants, including 23 university lecturers and 7 institute teachers participated in this study. All of them had a minimum of 10 years of experience in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Participant selection and sample size were guided by the principle of data saturation. Interviews were conducted iteratively, and participant recruitment continued until no substantially new themes, categories, or insights emerged from the data. The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows: participants were required to (a) have at least 10 years of EFL teaching experience, (b) be actively engaged in teaching at universities or private language institutes, and (c) have experience with or exposure to collaborative teaching or professional development practices.

Instruments and Materials

In the present study, the researchers used different instruments and materials, including MAXQDA software 24, semi-structured interview, and voice recorder.

MAXQDA Software

MAXQDA is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software. It is useful for textually-based case study research (Mills et al., 2010). In this study, the researchers used MAXQDA 24 to analyze the collected data using thematic analysis.

Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview replicates variation in its use of questions, prompts, and supplementary instruments and resources to attract the participant into the topic under study (Galletta, 2013). This study collected data through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to articulate their experiences, beliefs, and reflections regarding professional development, collaboration with colleagues, and the use of technology in teaching practices. This approach provided rich, detailed insights into teachers' lived experiences and supported a nuanced interpretation of the qualitative findings.

Voice Recorder

In qualitative research, interviewers should not rely on their memory in interviewing. Consequently, using a voice recorder in all structured and semi-structured interviews is necessary (Bernard, 2011). The researchers of the present study used a mobile phone to record the voices of the participants.

Data Collection

The interview questions were designed based on previous research and consultations with field experts to ensure that all relevant aspects of CPD and collaborative teaching were covered. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected teachers. This interview format provided flexibility to explore the participants' experiences while still ensuring that specific topics such as continuous professional development, teacher collaboration, and the role of technology in teaching were addressed. The interviews were conducted either in-person or online to accommodate the teachers' preferences. This approach provided a comfortable environment where the teachers felt free to share their thoughts and insights openly.

Data Analysis

After data collection, thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes and concepts from the qualitative data. This method allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the data by categorizing and interpreting recurring patterns. The steps involved in this analysis were:

1. Initial Coding: The interviews were transcribed and translated. Initial codes were generated from the data, and open coding was used to categorize the information.
2. Identification of Themes and Subthemes: Similar codes were grouped together to form overarching themes and subthemes that encapsulated the main ideas from the data.
3. Use of MAXQDA Software: The researchers used MAXQDA software to facilitate the coding process and data analysis. This software helps the researchers to code the data and explore relationships between different concepts.

The researchers analyzed the interview data by transcribing and coding them using the inductive thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Then, five experts reviewed the analysis to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

To ensure reliability, the researchers used multiple coding and inter-rater reliability techniques. It involved several researchers independently analyzing the data and comparing their findings. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion to ensure a consistent and accurate coding process. To ensure the validity of the qualitative findings, content validity and expert feedback were employed.

Findings and Results

In the current study, the researchers examined the components of Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) in the Iranian context. To this end, the researchers developed several questions based on the related literature. Then, they interviewed 30 EFL teachers using semi-structured interviews. Afterward, they transcribed the interviews, translated them into English, and entered them into the MAXQDA software 24. Using the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researchers identified 24 preliminary themes from the interviews. Finally, the researchers classified these derived sub-themes under seven main components. Figure 4.1 shows the results of this section.

Main Components of CCPD	• Sub-Themes
Policy & Legal Framework	• Lack of Clear Regulations • Lack of Alignment with Higher-level Policies • Centralization • Continuous Changes • Lack of Executive Guarantee.
Active Stakeholder Participation	• Lack of Interaction with Managers • Absence of Learners & Parents • Insufficient Teacher Collaboration • Lack of Professional Network.
Needs Assessment & Localization of Content	• Lack of Interaction With Managers • Absence of Learners and Parents.
Collaborative Learning Methods	• One-Way Sessions • Lack of Group Work • Lack of Practical Experience • Lack of Group Feedback.
Evaluation & Feedback System	• General and Impersonal Feedback • Lack of Follow-Up • Formal Evaluation • Lack of Peer Evaluation
Motivational & Structural Support	• Lack of Financial Incentives
Sustainability & Future Orientation	• Instability of Courses • Lack of Long-Term Planning • Ignoring Future Changes • Lack of Continuous Evaluation • Lack of Financial Incentives.

Figure 1. Components of CCPD

The following section presents the seven components of CCPD and sub-components for each. Moreover, several extracts from the participants' interviews are reported under each. The number of each interviewee is reported in parentheses.

Policy and Legal Framework

The first theme, policy and legal framework, highlighted the challenges teachers face due to unclear or inconsistent regulations. It included five sub-themes: lack of clear regulations, lack of alignment with higher-level policies, centralization,

continuous changes, and lack of executive guarantee. The sub-theme of lack of clear regulations showed that teachers feel insecure and uncertain in their work:

"When regulations are not clear, I don't know exactly what is expected of me (I: 2). "I feel every manager or supervisor has their own interpretation, and this confuses me...Sometimes even the department expert has a different interpretation, and I get stuck between two options (I: 15).

"I have asked many times what the exact regulations are, but no one gave me a clear answer" (I: 8).

"This ambiguity makes me worry that I could be accused of misconduct at any moment" (I: 14).

Another sub-theme, lack of alignment with higher-level policies, demonstrated that teachers saw a gap between macro-level decisions and classroom realities:

"Many times circulars say one thing, but the real need of my class is something else" (I: 4).

"I am forced to do things that are useless for a language class, just because it is written in the macro policy" (I: 19).

"In my real class, many of these policies are impractical" (I: 1)

"What managers want is different from what students need" (I: 16).

"Sometimes I feel the policymaker has never even seen a language class" (I: 10)

Centralization was another concern, where open codes revealed that decisions were imposed top-down without teacher involvement, leading to demotivation:

"All decisions are made at the top, and we teachers are just executors" (I: 7).

"I have never participated in formulating educational policies, even when I had much more experience than the experts" (I: 11).

"In no meeting was my opinion asked, even though I've been teaching for years" (I: 18).

"When we teachers are ignored; policies also fail" (I: 20).

On the other hand, frequent continuous changes in methods frustrated teachers:

"Every year, policies change, and we have to relearn everything from scratch (I: 9).

These continuous changes drain my motivation" (I: 20).

"One year interactive method, the next year translation-based method…This instability is really annoying" (I: 2).

"Once, I finally master one method, I am forced to start over again" (I: 13).

"Sometimes, these changes are more political than educational" (I: 17).

However, the lack of executive guarantee indicates policies often remain on paper without resources or support:

"Many times policies remain only on paper and nothing changes in practice" (I: 6). "I have often seen resolutions announced without any implementation support" (I: 12).

"We don't even have the necessary tools to implement these circulars" (I: 1).

"When there is no support, implementing policies becomes only a slogan...Without financial and logistical support, these policies will never succeed (I: 19).

Active Stakeholder Participation

The second theme, active stakeholder participation, emphasized the absence of collaboration among key actors. It reflected four sub-themes, including lack of interaction with managers, absence of learners and parents, insufficient teacher collaboration, and lack of professional network. Under the sub-theme of lack of interaction with managers, open codes revealed that teachers feel isolated and unheard:

"The manager only wants to receive reports, but I want him to be a companion and colleague" (I: 8).

"When the manager is absent in decision-making, I feel lonely" (I: 17).

"Sometimes managers don't even ask our opinion in educational planning" (I: 2).

"I want the manager to coordinate professional development projects with us, not just ask for reports" (I: 5).

"When the manager is behind the scenes, and we are not informed, decision-making causes confusion" (I: 14).

"Sometimes I feel managers only play a supervisory role and provide no support" (I: 1).

"If there were direct interaction, I could offer more practical suggestions" (I: 12).

"Lack of communication makes me less motivated to attend meetings" (I: 6).

"I want to be present in management meetings too, so that I can raise real classroom problems" (I: 19).

"When the manager is absent from decisions, we teachers also feel our voices are not heard" (I: 4).

"Limited interaction with the manager makes everything implemented in a top-down manner" (I: 20).

The absence of learners and parents showed that stakeholders most affected by educational methods were excluded from decision-making, leading to unrealistic programs:

"Nobody ever asked language learners about their opinion on our teaching methods" (I: 2).

"If parents' voices were heard, I could better understand what matters to kids" (I: 16).

"I really want parents to participate in evaluating workshops" (I: 7).

"Students should give feedback, but we are never given this opportunity" (I: 11).

"Sometimes parents don't even know what methods we are using" (I: 9).

"If learners and parents express their opinions, programs become more realistic" (I: 13).

"Lack of participation makes us only guess what is useful for children" (I: 1).

"If parents' voices are heard, I will be more motivated to innovate in class" (I: 18).

"Talking with students makes real classroom needs more visible" (I: 15).

"Sometimes I feel programs are designed only for managers, not students" (I: 20).

Another sub-theme, insufficient teacher collaboration, highlighted a lack of peer exchange, wasted experiences, and weak professional recognition:

"*We teachers rarely share our experiences" (I: 5).*

"When courses end, our communication ends too" (I: 21).

"Lack of joint meetings causes our experiences to be wasted" (I: 2.)

"I want groups for exchanging experiences between teachers" (I: 10).

"When we don't collaborate with other colleagues, fewer new ideas emerge" (I: 12).

"Sometimes I feel everything is individual and we don't work as a team" (I: 4).

"Access to teachers' professional networks is very limited" (I: 16).

"Experienced colleagues are less recognized, and their experience is not transferred" (I: 6).

"If there were more group meetings, teaching problems would be solved faster" (I: 19).

"After courses, our connection ends, and collaborative learning stops" (I: 7).

Finally, the lack of professional networks further isolated teachers, as they reported having no platforms for national or online exchange of experiences:

"I don't know of any network of teachers for exchanging experiences" (I: 10).

"If there were a place where teachers across Iran could connect, it would be much more useful" (I: 27).

"An online group for sharing resources and experiences would help a lot" (I: 2).

"Lack of a network makes us experience everything again by ourselves" (I: 8).

"If a network existed, classroom problems would be solved faster" (I: 13).

"I would like to connect with colleagues from other cities as well" (I: 15).

"Creating a professional network increases my motivation for further learning" (I: 20).

"With a professional network, successful experiences could be shared faster" (I: 1).

Needs Assessment and Localization of Content

The third theme, derived from the interviews with the participants, was needs assessment and localization of content. It consisted of two sub-themes: the lack of interaction with managers and absence of learners and parents. It overlapped with participation but focused on adapting educational content to real classroom needs. Again, lack of interaction with managers surfaced as a major open code, with teachers reporting top-down decisions and lack of coordination in professional development:

"The manager only wants to receive reports, but I want him to be a companion and colleague" (I: 8).

"When the manager is absent in decision-making, I feel lonely" (I: 17).

"Sometimes managers don't even ask our opinion in educational planning" (I: 2).

"I want the manager to coordinate professional development projects with us, not just ask for reports" (I: 5).

"When the manager is behind the scenes, and we are not informed, decision-making causes confusion" (I: 14).

"Sometimes I feel managers only play a supervisory role and provide no support" (I: 1).

"If there were direct interaction, I could offer more practical suggestions" (I: 12).

"Lack of communication makes me less motivated to attend meetings" (I: 6).

"I want to be present in management meetings too, so that I can raise real classroom problems" (I: 19).

"When the manager is absent from decisions, we teachers also feel our voices are not heard" (I: 4).

"Limited interaction with the manager makes everything implemented in a top-down manner" (I: 20).

Similarly, the absence of learners and parents in needs assessment made the content disconnected from the actual expectations of students and families:

Nobody ever asked language learners about their opinion on our teaching methods (I: 2).

If parents' voices were heard, I could better understand what matters to kids (I: 16).

I really want parents to participate in evaluating workshops (I: 7).

Students should be given the opportunity to give feedback, but we are never given this opportunity (I: 11).

Sometimes parents don't even know what methods we are using (I: 9).

If learners and parents express their opinions, programs become more realistic (I: 13).

Lack of participation makes us only guess what is useful for children (I: 1).

If parents' voices are heard, I will be more motivated to innovate in class (I: 18).

Talking with students makes real classroom needs more visible (I: 15).

Sometimes programs are designed only for managers, not students (I: 20).

Teachers also described insufficient collaboration among themselves, leading to repeated trial-and-error rather than shared growth. Lastly, lack of professional networks prevents innovation and localized problem-solving, showing how structural isolation limited content adaptation.

Collaborative Learning Methods

The fourth theme, collaborative learning methods, reflected dissatisfaction with the learning methods. It consisted of four sub-themes, including one-way sessions, lack of group work, lack of practical experience, and lack of group feedback. Open codes under one-way sessions revealed that the sessions lacked interactivity:

"In most courses we are only listeners and have no chance to participate" (I: 12).

"I want to share my opinion, but the space is not interactive" (I: 19).

"Sometimes I feel I only receive information and cannot share my personal experience" (I: 2).

"I would like to present my ideas in sessions, not just listen" (I: 6).

"This one-way style prevents deep learning" (I: 10).

"The lack of interactive space reduces my motivation to attend" (I: 1).

"Sometimes I need to ask questions to understand, but no opportunity is given" (I: 17).

Lack of group work was another sub-theme, with teachers noting that learning remained theoretical without team-based activities:

"We have very few group exercises, and everything is theoretical" (I: 10).

"If we had more team opportunities, my learning would increase" (I: 26).

"Group work allows our ideas to support each other" (I: 2).

"Sometimes individual work is very hard, and teamwork is easier" (I: 8).

"Group exercises lead to practical learning" (I: 14).

"I would like to participate in real team projects" (I: 18).

"The lack of group work makes learning only theoretical" (I: 7).

Teachers also stressed the lack of practical experience, pointing out that workshops focused too much on theory rather than hands-on practice, which diminished retention and confidence:

"I can only use something in class if I try it myself" (I: 8).

"Workshops mostly explain instead of giving practice opportunities" (I: 29).

"Practical experience increases my self-confidence" (I: 4).

"I would like to practice methods in workshops before entering real classes" (I: 13).

"Without practice, new concepts are quickly forgotten" (I: 20).

"Sometimes I am forced to test methods after class on my own, which is time-consuming" (I: 16).

Finally, the absence of group feedback prevented reflective learning, as participants did not receive constructive peer input to improve their methods:

"I would like to hear colleagues' opinions about my performance after group work "(I: 18).

"Group feedback helps me see my strengths and weaknesses better" (I: 5).

"Sometimes colleagues' feedback is more useful than formal evaluation" (I: 11).

"I would like to receive colleagues' feedback throughout the course, not just at the end" (I: 15).

4.5 Evaluation and Feedback System

The fifth theme, the evaluation and feedback system, focused on how evaluation was perceived as ineffective. It included four sub-themes of general and impersonal feedback, lack of follow-up, formal evaluation, and lack of peer evaluation. Teachers described general and impersonal feedback, receiving only certificates without personalized comments:

"After the workshop, I only get a certificate; no one tells me where I was strong or weak" (I: 6).

"Feedback is usually too general and useless for me" (I: 9).

"I need specific and practical feedback" (I: 2).

"Personalized feedback improves my performance" (I: 14).

"Sometimes feedback is too general and does not advance my learning" (I: 1).

"I would like to know exactly what I should improve" (I: 17).

Another sub-theme, lack of follow-up, showed that after training ended, there was no monitoring of how methods were applied in classrooms:

"After the course, no one asks me if I actually used the methods in class" (I: 15).

"I feel everything only matters until the end of the course" (I: 23).

"If there were follow-up, I would try harder to apply techniques" (I: 2).

"Without follow-up, learning quickly fades" (I: 7).

"Follow-up makes me feel more responsible" (I: 12).

"I would like someone to check the results of my methods" (I: 19).

Moreover, formal evaluation was criticized as a bureaucratic exercise that decreases motivation:

"Sometimes evaluations are just to fill out forms, not for learning" (I: 4).

"My answers are not even read, they just tick that I attended" (I: 20).

"I want a real evaluation of my performance" (I: 1).

"Formal evaluation decreases my motivation" (I: 10).

"Sometimes I feel this is only done on paper" (I: 16).

If evaluation were real, I could better address my weaknesses (I: 6).

Additionally, the lack of peer evaluation deprived teachers of feedback grounded in classroom realities, as many felt that colleague evaluations were more valuable than distant experts' assessments:

"If my colleagues evaluate me, it is much more useful than by an unknown expert" (I: 7).

"Colleague feedback is closer to the reality of the class" (I: 13).

"I would like colleagues who worked with me to share their views" (I: 18).

"Peer evaluation highlights my real skills" (I: 20).

4.6 Motivational and Structural Support

The sixth theme, motivational and structural support, revealed how the lack of incentives undermined participation. Teachers emphasized the lack of financial incentives, noting that workshops bring no tangible rewards:

"With such a low salary, I have little motivation to attend courses" (I: 1 &11).

"When participation has no financial impact, I get discouraged" (I: 24).

Furthermore, insufficient managerial support appeared in open codes about managers not granting leave or treating workshops as symbolic:

"My manager doesn't even give me leave to attend workshops. / Sometimes I feel managers only want our symbolic presence" (I: 5 & 22).

However, the lack of technological facilities further discouraged engagement, especially in online courses:

"In online courses, weak internet prevents me from learning" (I: 16).

"When class equipment is incomplete, I lose motivation to use new methods" (I: 28).

Finally, teachers mentioned a lack of non-financial incentives, such as recognition or appreciation, which could increase motivation even in the absence of financial rewards:

"Even a simple certificate of appreciation would make me feel valued" (I: 20).

Sustainability and Future Orientation

The final theme, sustainability and future orientation, highlighted structural weaknesses in long-term planning. It included five sub-themes: instability of courses, lack of long-term planning, failure to account for future changes, lack of continuous evaluation, and lack of financial incentives. Teachers expressed frustration with the instability of courses that disappeared after one or two sessions, making sustained learning impossible:

"Many courses are held once or twice and then disappear" (I: 13).

"This inconsistency prevents me from long-term planning" (I: 21).

Under the sub-theme of lack of long-term planning, open codes revealed teachers' desire for clear roadmaps for their professional growth:

"There is no roadmap for my professional growth in the future" (I: 2).

"I would like to know what educational path is designed for me in five years" (I: 26).

Similarly, ignoring future changes demonstrated how current courses failed to prepare teachers for evolving technologies and future job requirements:

"*Courses do not prepare us for new technologies" (I: 9).*

"I think we should receive training useful for the future job market" (I: 27).

The absence of continuous evaluation indicated that progress was not tracked over time:

"There is no system to assess my progress over the years" (I: 14).

Finally, the repeated lack of financial incentives resurfaced, reinforcing the point that without structural and financial investment, sustainability in teacher development was unrealistic:

"With such a low salary, I have little motivation to attend courses (I: 1).

"When participation has no financial impact, I get discouraged (I: 24).

"Sometimes I think when there is no financial investment, spending time is useless" (I: 2).

"I would like to receive at least financial rewards or credits for professional promotion" (I: 5).

"The lack of financial motivation makes some colleagues avoid courses entirely" (I: 8).

"With financial motivation, my participation in workshops would be much more active" (I: 12).

"Sometimes I feel our efforts are not recognized, leaving no motivation to continue" (I: 15).

"If structural and financial support existed, programs would be more realistic and effective" (I: 18).

The prioritization of key components in Continuous Collaborative Professional Development for teachers can provide valuable insights into areas that require the most attention. Based on the frequency of open codes derived from teacher interviews, the main themes have been ranked according to their significance in shaping effective professional development programs. The prioritization is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Prioritization of Main Components in CCPD Based on Open Code Frequency

Main Theme	Total No. of Open Codes
Active Stakeholder Participation	37
Needs Assessment and Localization of Content	37
Collaborative Learning Methods	21
Policy and Legal Framework	19
Evaluation and Feedback System (Extended)	18
Sustainability and Future Orientation	15
Motivational and Structural Support	8

As illustrated in Table 1, active stakeholder participation and needs assessment and content localization emerge as the most critical components, each with 37 open codes. It indicates that teachers highly value interaction with managers, involvement of learners and parents, collaboration among peers, and contextualized content that meets actual classroom needs.

Following these, collaborative learning methods (21 codes) and policy and legal framework (19 codes) are also significant, highlighting the importance of interactive sessions, practical experience, and clear, well-aligned regulations. the evaluation and feedback system (18 codes) underscores the need for personalized and follow-up feedback mechanisms. In contrast, sustainability and future orientation (15 codes) reflects concerns about long-term planning, course stability, and preparation for future challenges. Finally, motivational and structural support (8 codes) appears less frequently but remains important, emphasizing financial incentives, managerial backing, and adequate technological and non-financial support for effective participation in CCPD.

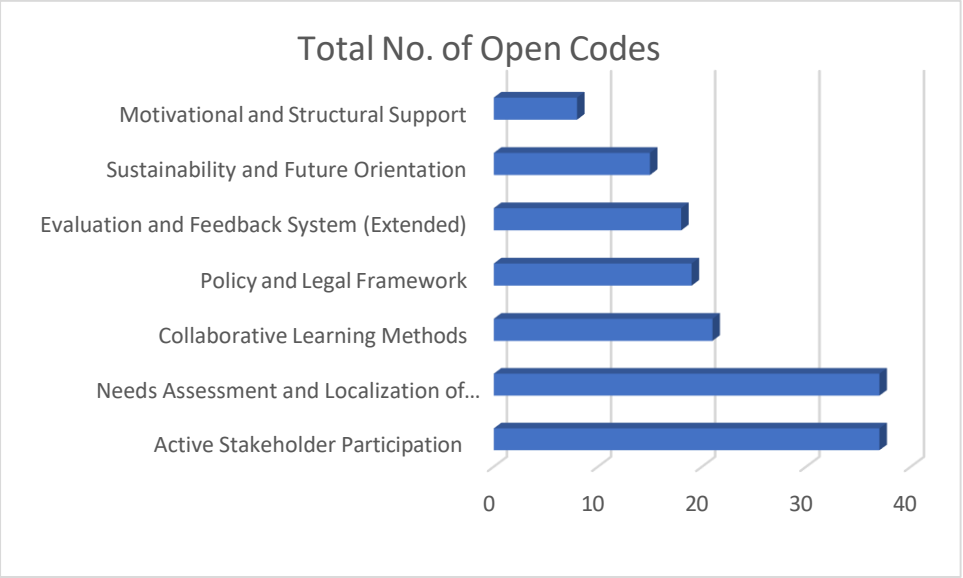

Figure 2 Total Number of Open Codes

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the core components of Collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) in the Iranian EFL context through qualitative inquiry. The findings revealed that CCPD is a multidimensional construct comprising seven interrelated components: policy and legal framework, active stakeholder participation, needs assessment and localization of content, collaborative learning methods, evaluation and feedback system, motivational and structural support, and sustainability and future orientation. Among these, active stakeholder participation and needs assessment emerged as the most dominant components, followed by collaborative learning methods and policy-related factors. These results indicate that

effective professional development is not merely dependent on content delivery but is deeply embedded in participatory structures, contextual relevance, and sustained systemic support.

The prominence of active stakeholder participation highlights the centrality of interaction among teachers, managers, learners, and parents in shaping meaningful professional development experiences. Participants emphasized the lack of communication with managers, limited collaboration among teachers, and the absence of learner and parent voices in decision-making processes. This finding aligns with previous studies that underscore the importance of collaborative environments and professional learning communities in enhancing teacher development. For instance, research has demonstrated that communities of practice facilitate knowledge sharing, collective problem-solving, and professional identity formation among teachers (7, 29). Similarly, mentorship and peer collaboration have been identified as key drivers of professional growth and instructional improvement (24, 25). However, the present study extends this perspective by emphasizing the inclusion of broader stakeholders, particularly learners and parents, as integral contributors to professional development. This broader conceptualization suggests that CCPD should be viewed as an ecosystem rather than a teacher-centered activity, thereby expanding the scope of collaboration beyond traditional boundaries.

The second dominant component, needs assessment and localization of content, further reinforces the importance of contextual relevance in professional development. Teachers reported that many CPD programs were designed without adequate consideration of their actual classroom needs, leading to a mismatch between training content and practical application. This finding is consistent with earlier research indicating that CPD initiatives often fail when they are not aligned with teachers' contextual realities and professional challenges (11, 18). Moreover, studies have shown that localized and needs-based training enhances teacher engagement, motivation, and instructional effectiveness (2, 19). The current findings suggest that incorporating systematic needs assessment mechanisms and involving teachers in content design can significantly improve the relevance and impact of CCPD programs.

Collaborative learning methods also emerged as a critical component, with participants expressing dissatisfaction with one-way, lecture-based training sessions. Teachers emphasized the need for interactive, practice-oriented, and group-based learning experiences that allow for active participation and knowledge exchange. This aligns with constructivist approaches to professional development, which advocate for experiential learning, reflection, and collaboration as essential elements of effective teacher learning (4, 8). Furthermore, action research and reflective practice have been widely recognized as powerful tools for fostering continuous professional growth and improving instructional practices (12, 13). The findings of this study corroborate these perspectives by highlighting the importance of integrating hands-on activities, peer feedback, and collaborative inquiry into CCPD programs.

The policy and legal framework component revealed significant structural challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CCPD. Participants reported issues such as unclear regulations, lack of alignment with higher-level policies, centralization of decision-making, and absence of implementation support. These findings resonate with existing literature that emphasizes the role of institutional and policy support in ensuring the success and sustainability of professional development initiatives (3, 5). Without clear guidelines, consistent policies, and adequate resources, even well-designed CPD programs may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. The current study highlights the need for a coherent policy framework that supports decentralized decision-making, encourages teacher participation, and provides the necessary infrastructure for implementation.

The evaluation and feedback system was another area of concern identified in the findings. Teachers reported that evaluation processes were often superficial, lacking personalization, follow-up, and practical relevance. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that effective professional development requires continuous assessment and meaningful feedback to guide teacher improvement (6, 20). The absence of peer evaluation was particularly notable, as participants expressed a

preference for feedback from colleagues who are familiar with classroom realities. This aligns with studies highlighting the value of peer observation and collaborative reflection in enhancing teaching practices and professional learning (14, 30). The results suggest that integrating formative evaluation methods, peer feedback, and longitudinal monitoring can significantly enhance the effectiveness of CCPD programs.

Motivational and structural support, although less frequently mentioned, remains a crucial factor influencing teacher engagement in professional development. Participants identified lack of financial incentives, insufficient managerial support, and limited technological resources as major barriers to participation. These findings are supported by previous studies demonstrating that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors play a significant role in motivating teachers to engage in CPD activities (16, 21). While intrinsic motivation, such as a desire for self-improvement, is important, external support mechanisms, including financial rewards, recognition, and institutional backing, are equally essential for sustaining participation. The study underscores the need for a balanced approach that addresses both motivational and structural dimensions of CCPD.

Finally, sustainability and future orientation emerged as a critical yet underdeveloped component of CCPD. Teachers expressed concerns about the instability of programs, lack of long-term planning, and inadequate preparation for future educational challenges. These findings highlight a gap in the strategic design of CPD initiatives, which often focus on short-term outcomes rather than long-term professional growth. Existing literature emphasizes the importance of sustainable professional development models that incorporate continuous learning, adaptability, and future readiness (10, 17). The current study reinforces this perspective by demonstrating that sustainability requires not only consistent program delivery but also alignment with emerging trends, technological advancements, and evolving educational needs.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive and context-specific model of CCPD. While previous research has explored individual aspects of professional development, the present study integrates multiple dimensions into a unified framework, highlighting their interdependence and collective impact on teacher development. The results confirm that effective CCPD is characterized by collaboration, contextualization, reflection, and systemic support, thereby offering valuable insights for designing and implementing more effective professional development programs in EFL contexts.

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to EFL teachers within a specific national context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Additionally, the study relied primarily on self-reported data collected through interviews, which may be subject to bias, including social desirability and selective recall. The qualitative design, while providing rich and in-depth insights, does not allow for statistical generalization or causal inference. Furthermore, the study did not include perspectives from other stakeholders such as policymakers, students, or administrators, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of CCPD.

Future research should address these limitations by employing mixed-methods designs that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more robust analysis of CCPD. Expanding the sample to include teachers from different regions, educational levels, and cultural contexts would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine the long-term impact of CCPD on teaching practices and student outcomes. Additionally, future research could explore the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and digital learning platforms, in shaping the future of professional development. Investigating the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including policymakers and learners, would further enrich the understanding of CCPD and its implementation.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest several implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and teacher educators. It is essential to design CPD programs that are participatory, needs-based, and contextually

relevant, ensuring that teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes. Establishing professional learning communities and fostering collaboration among teachers can enhance knowledge sharing and innovation. Moreover, implementing effective evaluation systems with continuous feedback and follow-up mechanisms can improve the quality and impact of professional development. Providing adequate financial, technological, and institutional support is also critical for motivating teachers and sustaining their engagement. Finally, adopting a long-term strategic approach that emphasizes sustainability and future readiness can ensure that CCPD programs remain effective and responsive to the evolving demands of education.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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