

## **AN ANALYSIS OF EFL TEACHERS' FEAR OF FAILURE AS THEIR MOTIVATION FOR PURSUING GRADUATE STUDIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many studies have been conducted to clarify the impact of teachers' motivation for participating in TPD activities; nevertheless, none of them has viewed teachers' fear of failure as their motivation for TPD, especially for pursuing graduate programs in the Vietnamese context. That explains why this current qualitative study with the participation of nine EFL teacher interviewees was administered to fill in the abovementioned gap. Moreover, the study was conducted in a tertiary institution in the Mekong delta of Vietnam. Based on the data analysis, several teachers' fears of failure as their motivation for following graduate programs were detected. Their fears included self-perceived inadequate qualifications in TEFL which resulted in their ineffective teaching performances. Participants were also much concerned about losing a job, failing to have opportunities to further their education and losing momentum for work due to routinized teaching. Mid- age job crisis, negative effects of lacking role models on the growth of children and other younger people, lack of collegial support, and low self-confidence were found to be motivating fears which stimulated participants to make them pursue higher degree programs. The paper ends with discussions of the findings and pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, EFL Teachers' Fear of Failure, EFL Teachers' Motivation, Graduate Programs

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a member of international organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the World Trade Organization (WTO), Vietnam has made remarkable efforts in developing Vietnamese people's English proficiency as the international working language. For instance, the Vietnamese government has implemented the National Foreign Languages Project for about a decade. The project focuses on English teachers' professional development (TPD) activities including improving English language proficiency and ELT pedagogies. Action research has also received sufficient attention from the project.

Another initiative was the reform in general education since 2018, in which English curriculum has been innovated, moving from teaching language knowledge to developing learners' competencies in communicating in the target language. In addition to providing teachers with the TPD, as mentioned earlier, to enhance the quality of English language

teaching and learning in the country, educational leaders have encouraged English school teachers to pursue their graduate studies in teaching EFL as a form of continuing TPD.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate teachers' motivation for participating in TPD activities. Daniels (2017) found that EFL teachers are motivated by the following factors: improving their competence in terms of effective teaching, feelings of autonomy, or by their administrators, TPD providers, or teacher trainers. In the Chinese educational context, Zhang et al. (2021) indicated that several factors at the teacher level affect teachers' motivation for participating in TPD. These factors include teachers' prior learning and teaching experience, self-efficacy, and conceptions of learning. In addition, other factors at the school level consist of work and emotional pressure, colleague support, and institutional support. In the Nigerian context, Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2010) figured out that teachers' motivation for TPD is affected by promotion, salary, retraining, and teacher training activities. These studies accomplished their aims; however, none has specifically analyzed teachers' fear of failure as their motivation for pursuing graduate programs in the Vietnamese context. Eventually, this study aims to fulfill the aforementioned gap. The current action research attempts to investigate EFL teachers' motivations for pursuing a graduate program in a tertiary institution in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The following research question drives the present research: *What motivates EFL teachers to pursue their graduate studies?*

### ***Self-Determination***

Wehmeyer et al. (2009) conceptualized the term "*self-determination*" as one's attitudes and abilities that the person needs to make decisions to enhance the quality of their life. The distinction between controlled motivation and autonomous one is central to self-determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005). While extrinsic motivation is considered as the representative of controlled motivation, intrinsic motivation represents autonomous one. Intrinsic motivation or autonomous motivation occurs when people engage in a particular activity wholly volitionally as they find it interesting, fun, and deservedly partaking (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Dworkin, 1988). On the other hand, controlled motivation, induced as extrinsic motivation, occurs when people are externally affected by a sense of pressure or an obligation for their engagement (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Deci, 1971).

### ***Motivation***

Maehr and Meyer (1997) defined motivation as a theoretical construct that explains the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence, quality of goal-directed behaviors. Additionally, motive is a hypothetical construct that explains why people do a particular action (Brophy, 2004). Motives usually get confused with goals and strategies. Brophy (2004) distinguished three terms of motives, goals, and strategies as that motives are general needs and desires energizing people to initiate purposeful action sequences; nevertheless, Thrash and Elliot (2001) defined goals and related strategies as the direction and quality of action sequences in specific cases.

Deci and Ryan (2000) stated that students' inherent interest and enjoyment drive their intrinsic motivation. Rather than being affected by external incentives or pressure, intrinsic motivation increases students' desire to play and explore new things to gain satisfaction and joy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Taylor et al. (2014) used a meta-analysis to explain the significant role of intrinsic motivation in school achievement. In the meta-analysis, Taylor et al. (2014) concluded that intrinsic motivation is consistently associated with higher performance. According to Froiland and Worrell (2016), intrinsic motivation predicts students' engagement in ongoing activities and their higher achievement (GPA).

Unlike intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation concerns behaviours done for reasons other than satisfying one's goals or achievements (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Extrinsic motivation drives one's behaviours through externally imposed rewards and punishments. This behalf of motivation is usually considered as controlled or non-autonomous motivation. It means that people will be affected by external factors, such as observable gifts or penalties. However, Ryan and Deci (2020) stated that extrinsic motivation might come from internal rewards of self-esteem for success and by avoidance of negative feelings, such as anxiety, shame, or guilt for failure. Eventually, extrinsic motivation can be autonomously enacted. Whereas intrinsic motivation encourages people to act to find something fun, extrinsic motivation also drives people's actions, even when they are not enjoyable but worthwhile operating it (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

### ***Fear of Failure***

Fear of failure is defined as persistent and irrational anxiety that appears when one fails to meet the standards or their goals (Martin & Marsh, 2003; Elliot & Thrash, 2004; VandenBos, 2007). Several motivational studies on educational change have found that while some people are motivated to achieve their goals, others find it challenging to overcome their fear of failure when the change occurs (McClelland et al., 1953; Birney et al., 1969; Gastorf & Teevan, 1980; Martin & Marsh, 2003; Singh, 2011). Other studies indicated that fear of failure affects one's motivation when they set a particular goal to achieve it (Atkinson, 1957; McGregor & Elliot, 2005; Wright et al., 2009). In the field of TPD, Futernick (2007) affirmed that the teaching profession requires the teachers to unstoppably improve their knowledge and skills to positively impact their students' learning outcomes and the whole society. As a result, fear of failure to meet these expectations leads to teachers' decision-making on participating in TPD activities or leaving this profession (Futernick, 2007).

### ***Professional Development***

The conceptualization of professional development (PD) has been well-explored. Teachers are often viewed as a source for transmitting knowledge to students; therefore, they need to unstoppably broaden their horizons (Aghanimi et al., 2021). Alemu (2013) defined PD as the engagement of individuals in any activity to enhance their competency at the workplace and improve and share a body of knowledge and skills relevant to perform particular duties in their workplace. Schon (1987) suggested that teachers become learners or reflective practitioners in the PD process. Bolam (1993) stated that teachers' PD activities

are aimed to enhance their knowledge and skills. In the same vein, Richards and Farrell (2005) claimed that not only does PD focus on teaching, but it also serves long-term objectives and helps facilitate the development of teachers' awareness of teaching and themselves as a teacher. Day (1999) defined PD as a process in which teachers can work individually or collaboratively to reflect and enhance their performance. In addition, Craft (2002) argued that PD refers to improving teachers' professionals throughout their self-reflection, learning experiences from workshops, seminars, short- or long-term training programs, professional publications, and the like.

### ***Graduate Studies***

Undergraduate programs may provide basic pedagogical knowledge, so teachers need to continue their learning (Viáfara & Largo, 2018). Richards and Farrell (2005) posited that prior learning experience could be productive, but it still has several limits in their educational cycles. Besides, the rapidly changing world has asked them to keep updating and developing their knowledge and skills to cope with unexpected difficulties and meet their students' needs (Viáfara & Largo, 2018). Freeman (2001) asserted that in-service teachers tend to involve teachers' training or development to reach their new goals and achievements in their teaching. Teachers' professional development programs as higher learning courses are one of the options that teachers can choose to improve their professionals.

Roberts (2016) and Johnstone (2004) agreed that graduate courses are characterized as formal teachers' training on their teaching. Pursuing graduate studies involves learners in partaking in the activities of education, training, research, and professional practices. The objectives of graduate studies are to develop professionals who are productive, responsive to the difficulties of the country, and highly creative. These programs are expected to promote teachers' productivity, pedagogical knowledge, and even research knowledge that helps teachers innovate and update their knowledge base (Yetkiner & Murat, 2016; Viáfara & Largo, 2018).

### ***Graduate Programs in Vietnam***

Kelly (2000) stated that graduate education in Vietnam is only available at some major universities. At first, graduate programs were based on the French education model and followed the Soviet Union pattern. However, with the increased interest in Western economic methods, these programs also became flexible.

The current study mainly focused on exploring EFL teachers' fear of failure as their motivation for pursuing Master of Art (M.A) programs in the Vietnamese context. M.A programs in Vietnam normally last two years. After taking all required courses, candidates write and defend their theses in public. To be recruited into the M.A programs, candidates normally have to pass the entrance exam into these programs, which signifies that candidates should be competitive in terms of their English proficiency and pedagogical knowledge to become potential candidates for the programs. Holding an outstanding achievement degree after graduation may help increase the holders' chances of looking further in doctorate programs and enhancing their credibility.

## METHODS

This study was conducted qualitatively using focus group interviews to collect data to answer the research question. As aforementioned, the researched context was a graduate program at a tertiary institution in the Mekong delta of Vietnam. The program consisted of 60 credits in total. A credit meant fifteen 50-minute theoretical contact hours and forty-five 50-minute practice activities, and 45 self-study hours. Before the program began, an orientation meeting was organized to keep learners informed of the program objectives and learning outcomes. Information about how to be successful in the program was also presented and discussed at the orientation meeting. Upon completion of the program, the learners were expected to increase their pedagogical knowledge, independent learning, competencies in doing action research and attributes of global citizens. The study involved nine participants out of thirty-four graduates of the same cohort of the program. Table 1 displays the backgrounds of the principal participants.

*Table 1. Participants of the study*

Participants	Gender	Age	Teaching experiences	Undergraduate majors	Workplaces
<i>A</i>	Male	26	4	TEFL	Language center
<i>B</i>	Female	30	8	TEFL	High school
<i>C</i>	Female	35	13	English Studies	Language center
<i>D</i>	Female	33	10	TEFL	High school
<i>E</i>	Female	26	3	TEFL	High school
<i>F</i>	Male	42	21	TEFL	High school
<i>G</i>	Male	26	3	TEFL	Language center
<i>H</i>	Female	26	4	TEFL	College
<i>I</i>	Male	34	11	English Studies	High school

The principal question asked in the interview aimed to determine teachers' reasons for pursuing the graduate program. Following-up questions were used to have interviewees clarify or elaborate what they stated so as to help the researchers gain more in-depth understanding of the researched issue.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, three focus group interviews, three participants for each, were conducted on the Zoom platform. Each interview lasted one hour and a half. During the interviews, the participants used Vietnamese to communicate with the interviewers so as to avoid any unnecessary misunderstandings and to facilitate the expression of interviewees' ideas. Under the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded and note-taken. The Vietnamese transcriptions were translated into English by the research team and sent back to the interviewees. The participants were informed to contact the research team via email or direct phone calls if any misunderstanding or mismatched information occurs. Data were analyzed according to themes.

## RESULTS

This current study detected many reasons for EFL teachers participating in the program. First, the interviewees remarked on their fear of shortage of knowledge and

ineffective teaching. Teacher D- a female one with 10 years teaching experience in high schools- said,

“I have taught for more than ten years. Therefore, I started doubting whether my teaching methods are outdated or not. Then, I decided to study higher to develop my teaching performance, approach new teaching methods, and avoid being obsolete.”

Vietnamese EFL teachers need to have M.A degrees in TEFL to meet the professional requirements of colleges or universities. In other words, they have a fear of a lack of certified qualifications. Teacher H- a female with four years teaching at a college- stated,

“I am teaching in a college, and it requires me to have an M.A degree to remain in the post of a lecturer. Therefore, I have to follow this program.”

Finding a job in Vietnam is quite tough. As a result, teachers want to further their education to secure their jobs as competition for teaching job is getting sharper. To put it simply, they got the fear of job loss. Teacher B- a female high school teacher with eight years teaching experience- shared,

“My family and relatives have advised me to attend master's programs for a long time. They said that my bachelor degree is insufficient to help me survive in this profession, and I need to have higher degrees like master or even doctorate degrees.”

Besides the abovementioned reasons, positive feedback from former students of the program also affected the interviewees' decisions about enrolling in the graduate program of a specific institution. In other words, the teachers were afraid of losing chances to be educated in an excellent academic environment. Teacher A, a male one with four years teaching English at a language center- remarked,

“My friends, who graduated from the program, gave uncountable positive feedbacks on the quality of this program. Therefore, with my curiosity about the program and its quality, I decided to sign up for it.”

Interestingly, the experienced interviewees shared that they want to refresh and have more motivation for teaching after a long time working in this profession. Said differently, the teachers experienced the fear of losing motivation for working. Teacher I- a male one with twelve years teaching at a high school- asserted,

“After teaching for more than ten years, I feel like I do not have any motivation for teaching. So, I want to try new things like studying this graduate program to refresh myself and inspire my schooling.”

Some interviewees were aware of the age-related effects on their learning. To maximize learning, the teachers wanted to study the program when they were young. They gained the fear of age-related negative impacts. Teacher G-one of the youngest ones who is teaching English at a language center- shared,

“Now, I'm still young, so I think I have got many advantages. For example, I guess I can catch up with technological development better than those who are. Besides, I am afraid that age-related factors will affect my learning quality. So, it is better to study as soon as possible.”

In another perspective, the decisions were affected by family and relatives. Specifically, Teacher F, who wants to be a role model for his child to follow, stated,

“I realized that my child is not studying well, and he wants to play video games. Therefore, I want to change his mind and set him as a role model to follow.”

That is to say that the fear of the uncertain future of the young generation due to the adverse effects of video games or the like affected the teachers’ motivation for TPD.

The interviewees were well-aware of global development, and as a result, they wanted to learn higher to catch up with the development of the world. It also means that the teachers got the fear of being left behind. Teacher E- a female one with three years teaching in a high school- admitted,

“The world is changing rapidly; if you stayed still, it meant you are left behind. Of course, I do not want to be in that situation.”

The interviewees were affected by their friends or colleagues who had registered to study higher education. In other quarters, the teachers might fear dealing with difficulties alone or without collegial support during the learning process. Teacher F who has twenty-one years of teaching in a high school said,

“My friends had applied for the program, so they asked me to study with them. And yeah, I think it is a good idea because we can help each other get over difficulties or share ideas about the lessons.”

Another reason was that the interviewees used to study undergraduate programs of the educational institution, and then, they strongly believed in the teaching quality of the academic staff. As a result, they chose the program to study the graduate program. Teacher G who has three years teaching at a language center claimed,

“I used to be a university student in this institution. Therefore, I understand that the teaching quality here is so good and effective. It is difficult to find a reason why I should select to study higher in another place.”

Put the matter another way, the teachers might fear experiencing changes as new teaching methods in other educational institutions.

Unlike Teacher G, some teachers after completing their undergraduate programs were not satisfied with the quality those programs offered to them, which resulted in their lack of self-confidence in their pedagogical knowledge and skills. It could be interpreted that those teachers might lack self-confidence in their teaching competencies. As a consequence, they decided to further their study to fill in their perceived knowledge gaps. For instance, Teacher C, a female one, even after thirteen years teaching at a language center, said,

“Although I have studied for more than ten years, much of the knowledge I gained from the university was not valuable enough for my teaching. I do not want to blame the quality of the undergraduate program I ever took, but I need more than that.”

In a nutshell, several teachers’ fears of failure as their motivation for following graduate programs were detected. Their fears included self-perceived inadequate qualifications in

TEFL, which resulted in their ineffective teaching performances. Participants were also concerned about losing job, failing to have opportunities to further their education, and losing momentum for work due to routinized teaching. Mid-age job crisis, lack of role models of learning for children and younger people, falling behind feelings, lack of collegial support, and low self-confidence were motivating fears that stimulated participants to make their studies a big success.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the findings of the current study with previous studies. These discussions mainly focus on the Vietnamese context.

### ***Ineffectiveness of Teaching Knowledge and Skills***

Backtracking to the literature related to the conceptualization of effective teaching, a set of knowledge and skills teachers should be equipped with includes methods to classify individual students' vigour and flaws, the consciousness of instructional strategies for diverse learners as well as evaluate students' knowledge accurately (Choy et al., 2013). According to Centra and Potter (1980), teaching skills such as clarity of expression, variability of questioning, or criticism significantly impact students' academic performance. In another study, Ehindero and Ajibade (2000) stated teachers' lack of teaching knowledge and skills causes students' poor learning outcomes. Based on those previous studies, teaching knowledge and skills obviously and directly affect students' learning outcomes. Moreover, Shulman (1987) asserted that teachers' knowledge and skills are the foundations of new reforms. Eventually, Vietnamese teachers have undoubtedly been required to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills to meet the expectations of educational reforms. Due to these requirements, teachers need to ameliorate their effectiveness in terms of teaching knowledge and skills. It means that the fear of failure to meet the criteria transpired and encouraged the teachers to continue their learning for a higher degree.

### ***Self-Perceived Inadequate Qualifications in TEFL***

In considerable efforts to assist teachers in finding overseas jobs, Crangle (2007) remarked on some pitfalls that teachers need to eschew: the absence of adequate TEFL certifications. The hypothesis that high English competencies and strong pedagogical knowledge enable teachers to work ubiquitously where they find fit has been disclaimed because lacking proper TEFL qualifications limits the opportunities to become a potential candidate for the employee recruitments (Crangle, 2007). On the other hand, TEFL certification helps teachers guarantee and intensify their professional status as a teacher (Phytanza & Burhaein, 2020). According to Decision No.1400/QĐ-TTg (2008), signed by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Vietnamese EFL teachers must have spectacular TEFL degrees and English proficiency certificates to continue their teaching. As a result, higher learning and fear of inadequate TEFL certificates and degrees motivated the teachers to learn graduate education.

### ***Losing Job***



Related to the fear of insufficient TEFL qualifications presented above, it might lead to another anxiety: fear of job loss. Instead of encapsulating this finding in the field of education, job loss should be discussed widely and deeply about subsistence standards and the economic aspects of Vietnamese teachers. According to Hai et al. (2020), thanks to the adoption of renovation policy, the economy of Vietnam has turned from a low-to a middle-income country. Nevertheless, most Vietnamese teachers experience a struggle over living conditions. Budget wages are prominently observed; thus, they have to take a part-time job as tutoring to bolster their income to accommodate their family and themselves (Nguyen, 2017). As a result, losing a job means losing their chances to take care of themselves and their beloved ones. For the reason as mentioned earlier, the fear of job loss observed in this current study is avoidable to Vietnamese teachers.

### ***Failing to Have Opportunities to Further Their Education***

According to Adams (1993), many educators have defined the term “high-quality educational programs” as those which offer superiority approved by their reputation, recourses and inputs, teaching and learning process, content, outputs and outcomes, and the “added values.” Most universities in Vietnam were low-ranked or even not placed in the international university ranking according to the Quacquarelli Symonds of the UK in 2018 (Hanh et al., 2019). Even worse than that, in the researched context, located in the Southwestern as one of Vietnam's most challenging socio-economic regions (Hanh et al., 2019), the EFL teachers might find it quite hard to approach a high-quality educational environment. Therefore, positive feedback on the quality of the researched program from its former students might significantly affect the EFL teachers' willingness to study and their fear of wasting chances to experience a program of high quality.

### ***Losing Momentum for Work due to Routinized Teaching***

Backtracking to the literature, Ryan and Deci (2020) asserted that whereas intrinsic motivation encourages people to act to find something fun, extrinsic motivation also drives people's actions, even when they are not fun but worthwhile to operate. Eventually, losing the reason for working means that the teachers might decline to continue their profession; said differently, they would leave the job before retirement. This fear might be more associated with experienced teachers rather than novice ones. According to Burhaein (2017), too long job tenure without promotion or variations in work may lower teachers' enthusiasm in teaching. Remaining in the job too long without many challenges may cause teachers' loss of energy and effort to continue their teaching. As a result, many Vietnamese EFL teachers would like to enrol in a higher degree program to refresh their knowledge and inspire their teaching endeavours.

### ***Mid-Age Job Crisis***

The negative impacts of age-related factors on one's memory may be commonly observable (Nilson, 2003; Park et al., 2002; Salthouse, 2009). Moreover, there is an existence of maturational constraints in language acquisition (Long, 1990). Precisely, at a certain

maturational point, L2 learners may be no longer capable of reaching a native-like level of competencies (Long, 1990; Scovel, 2000). The negative impacts of age-related factors on EFL teaching have been discussed in previous studies, particularly the use of ICT in the classrooms (Yaghi, 2001; Teo, 2008). Eventually, the older the teachers become, the more they feel anxious with their learning and TPD, especially those required them of ICT skills.

### ***Negative Effects of Lacking Role Models on the Growth of Children and Younger People***

Bandura (1977) affirmed that most human behaviours are learned through modelling observations. Thus, people learn from their role models in learning environments (Gaberson & Oermann, 2010). A positive role model is approachable, calm and in control, high-standardized, up-to-date, well-motivated, trustworthy, adaptable, friendly, knowledgeable, well-communicated, skilful, professional, inspirable, and worth-following (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000). Having a role model helps one overcome challenges, obtain new skills, and better their knowledge base (Filstad, 2004), and vice versa. Moreover, the concept of role models affects students' socialization process, such as behavioural/ professional perspectives (Vinales, 2015). Hence, the teachers in the current study were invigorated to become good models for the younger people who are strongly affected by the circumstances of technological development, such as loss of privacy, lessening ability to multitask, causing health-related issues, and changing social norms (Hatch, 2011). As assumed, children without a role model who unstoppably enhances knowledge may decrease their willingness to gain higher academic achievements.

Moreover, some teachers are parents, so the desire to become role models for their children significantly magnified their enthusiasm for signing up for graduate programs. Wiese and Freund (2011) stated that parental behaviours affect their children's plans for work engrossment. Furthermore, they play as role models for their kids, but the parents are also their children's heroes (Anderson & Cavallaro, 2002). In the Vietnamese context, parents are expected to play an indispensable role in their children's education (Iacopini & Hayden, 2017). In other words, the awareness of their roles in the growth of their children encouraged the teachers in this current study to partake in TPD and graduate programs in particular.

### ***"Falling Behind" Feel***

Fear of being left behind has not been equivalently well-explored. Nevertheless, according to Deppish (2021), there is a particular conglomerate of emotions representing the conceptualization of the "being left behind", including unconscious, concerned, anxious, unsafe, threatened, disadvantaged, foreign, alienated, deceived, disappointed, envious, dissatisfied, frustrated, unpromising, hopeless, uncared, neglected, let down, forgotten, abandoned, unnoticed, not taken seriously, unrecognized, powerless, and lamentable. The fear of falling behind has pushed people's zeal to change (Krejsler, 2018). Additionally, the term "falling behind" may be a feel to Vietnamese people when they compare their education to that of other countries (Walldorf, 2019). Pursuing a higher degree program might potentially help avoid this type of negative feeling.

### ***Lack of Collegial Support***

Collegiality is often used interchangeably with “collaboration” which is defined as the cooperative relationships among co-workers (Shah, 2012). The absence of collegial supports creates a cell that prevents teachers from their learning, growth, and development (Zepeda, 2020). Several studies have explored the possibility of teachers’ collegiality, including enhancing teaching and instructional practices and promoting educational innovation (Brownell et al., 2006; Zhao et al., 2002), increasing teachers’ attitudes towards education (Brownell et al., 1997), heightening job satisfaction (Woods & Weasmer, 2002), diminishing stress and burnout (Numeroff, 2005), advancing teachers’ self-efficacy (Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997), building high morale working environment (Nias, 1999), lessening staff turnover (Jarzabkowski, 2003), supporting novice teachers (Wang et al., 2008), promoting trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) as well as TPD (Knapp, 2003). In the Vietnamese context, professional support for teachers helps them develop their pedagogical knowledge and self-confidence (Huan, 2013). The teachers in this current study were well aware of the merits and demerits of the collegial support; therefore, the fear of lacking this type of support during the learning process might affect their decision-making in terms of time and place for their post-graduate learning.

### ***Low Self-Confidence***

Pintrich and McKeachie (2000) defined self-confidence as a reflection of ones’ perceptions of their abilities to achieve a spectacular objective in a specific situation. Tunçel (2015) indicated the critical role of self-confidence as a mechanism for fulfilling basic human requirements, such as satisfaction and accomplishment. In education, there is a confined correlation between teachers’ self-confidence and their performance and their students’ learning outcomes (Enochs & Riggs, 1990). In the current study, the teachers’ fear of unproductive teaching might cause that inadequate self-confidence. According to Weinstein (1990), the confidence level may shrink upon the practical constraints.

Consequently, the teachers’ fear of inadequate self-confidence befalling after graduating from universities might be noticed within their struggles during their teaching. Vietnamese teachers’ self-efficacy sometimes relies on efficacy-building information from other people rather than their self-assessment (Phan & Locke, 2016). To bypass the fear of inadequate self-confidence, the teachers’ willingness and motivation to study in graduate programs for TPD increased.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current study has contributed to understanding fears as EFL teachers’ motivation for TPD, especially in the Vietnamese context. As a result, Vietnamese policy-makers and institutional administrators may be the first group of beneficiaries. Based on the findings of this current study, they can plan other TPD activities to meet teachers’ needs and calm “teachers’ fears” down. Furthermore, they can offer sufficient support for EFL teachers to help increase teachers’ motivation to participate in TPD.

Second, EFL teachers can reflect on the role of their fears in their motivation for further study in graduate programs as a form of TPD. Moreover, the awareness of their role in English teaching towards future generations and their country may help increase their responsibility for TPD.

Third, graduate program coordinators might gain a better understanding of teachers' needs and demands. Eventually, they can adjust the programs' curriculum to strengthen their constructive alignment and ensure quality assurance.

Last but not least, the researchers who are especially interested in the field of motivational strategies are given a reliable framework, significant findings, and a new perspective on what factors affecting teachers' motivation for further development in Vietnam. Eventually, they can discuss these findings with other educational contexts with different or similar backgrounds to help increase the understanding of this field.

Despite making considerable efforts to investigate EFL teachers' fears as motivation for TPD, the current study collected data using focus group interviews. Therefore, further research should combine document analysis, surveys, and ethnography to make the findings more significant. Moreover, this study was a case study with a small sampling; thus, generalizing its results could be limited. That is why further research should recruit a more significant number of participants and diverse backgrounds, such as teaching areas, teaching levels, and academic qualifications.

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