Needs for Primary School Teacher Educators' Continuing Professional Development Responding to Academic Program Quality Assurance

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Abstract

Primary education plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation of a child's academic and personal development, yet less research was conducted for this area, particularly regarding primary teacher training at university level. To fulfill this gap, the current study explored the concerns raised by accreditors regarding the bachelor of education (B.Ed.) program in primary teacher education (PTE) at a university in Vietnam. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through document analysis and structured interviews with five experienced teacher educators. The findings identify key concerns raised by accreditors, including curriculum design, student support, faculty development, and program evaluation. The study further allowed teacher educators to voice their strategies in response to these concerns. The results suggest that effective continuing professional development (CDP) including raising awareness and practices for competency-based education, building structured mentorship with pre-service teachers, and engaging in diverse professional development opportunities. By prioritizing these aspects, teacher educators can better equip themselves to support student learning and address evolving educational challenges, ultimately improving accreditation outcomes and enhancing CPD practices in primary education teacher training programs.

Keywords: *Quality assurance, primary teacher education, accreditors' concerns, teacher educators, continuing professional development*

Introduction

Primary education is fundamental to shaping future generations, equipping young learners with essential knowledge and skills. Ensuring its quality is a global priority, with many countries implementing accreditation and quality assurance (henceforth called QA) frameworks to improve teacher education (Martin & Stella, 2007). In developing contexts, particularly Vietnam, efforts to align teacher education with international standards have led to the establishment of national accreditation systems. These frameworks assess curriculum design, student support, faculty development, and program evaluation. However, institutions continue to face challenges in meeting QA requirements, highlighting the need for stronger continuing professional development (henceforth called CPD) initiatives among teacher educators. Despite its importance, little research has explored how primary school teacher educators engage in CPD to address QA concerns in higher education (Sanayl, 2013). This study examines how they respond to accreditation recommendations and what strategies they adopt to improve program quality. Using a qualitative case study approach, document analysis and structured interviews with experienced teacher educators, the findings and discussion have provided general and context-related insights into educators' needs for training pre-service teachers. As mediators between policy implementation and future primary teachers, teacher educators play a crucial role in sustaining teaching quality. They must adopt a metacognitive approach of anticipating challenges while embracing innovation to refine their teaching practices and support institutional improvement (Patton et al., 2015). Their perspectives are central to ensuring that teacher education programs not only meet accreditation standards but also foster sustainable educational development (McElearney et al., 2019).

Literature Review

Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education

Quality in education is characterized as the extent to which it aligns with its purpose, demonstrates excellence, fosters transformation, and ensures accountability (Schindler et al., 2015). QA in education is defined as "policies and processes directed to ensuring the maintenance and enhancing of quality". More specifically, when quality is perceived as meeting specific standards while achieving institutional objectives,

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QA is described as "policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or program to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular" (Martin & Stella, 2007, p. 34). Cheng (2003) noted down that QA can effectively address internal quality improvements to enhance the effectiveness of education. Moreover, it serves to maintain the alignment of educational services with stakeholders' expectations whereas maintaining public accountability. A critical principle of QA is "being systematic and comprehensive about maximizing the quality of how things are done and the outcomes that result" (Boyle & Bowden, 1997, p. 114). Common devices of deploying QA can comprise of quality audits, assessments, and accreditation processes (Sanayl, 2013).

UNESCO (1998) defined QA in higher education as a multi-dimensional construct which embraces all its functions itself such as teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, stakeholders, facilities, equipment, services to the academic environment. The quality of an educational program is determined by three main elements which are input (e.g., curriculum, resources, facilities, and teaching teacher educator), process (e.g., admission, instruction, assessment, and supporting services), and outcomes (e.g., passing rates, knowledge, competence, and graduates' employability) (Tam, 2001). Higher education QA can be categorized into internal and external types. On the one hand, internal QA involves policies and practices within an institution or program to ensure that objectives are met and standards are maintained. External QA, on the other hand, is utilized to accredit programs through evaluations conducted by independent organizations. According to Komorowska (2017), internal evaluation of teacher education engages various stakeholders such as management, academic teacher educator, students, and evaluation experts.

QA in teacher education refers to the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning processes to achieve educational objectives for pre-service teachers (Ayeni & Adelabu, 2012). It, subsequently, concentrates on making sure that educational programs are tailored to meet needs of the surrounding community. Besides, it serves to prevent education-related quality issues and provides a comprehensive approach to identifying and addressing pressing problems within the educational system (Jack, 2012). Institutions prioritizing QA are distinguished by their core educational values, including high-quality learners, conducive learning environments, relevant curriculum content, effective teaching and learning processes, and desirable learning outcomes (Eboka & Inomiesa, 2015). In the context of teacher education, the essence of associating QA is to promote educational transformation and improve human productivity, ultimately fostering quality education.

In many countries in the Global South, particularly Vietnam, QA has been established for higher education to align with international trends (Pham, 2014). The critical objectives of such establishment are refining the organizational and managerial systems of higher education and empowering tertiary institutions in training and research, and creating a system to assess and control the quality of higher education and teaching based on a standardized set of criteria. In 2013, the Circular No. 38/2013/TT-BGDDT is approved to regulate the definition, procedures, and cycles for programmatic accreditation. Program accreditation is defined as "an activity to assess and recognize the level that the program achieves against the accreditation standards issued by the MoET" (MoET, 2013, p. 2). There are two types of accreditation standards applied to Vietnamese educational programs, general and specialized standards. Four sets of standards were developed for specific programs, including primary school teacher training (7 standards and 37 criteria), high school teacher training (7 standards and 40 criteria), vocational teacher training (7 standards and 40 criteria), and nursing programs (8 standards and 42 criteria). Similar to institutional accreditation, programs must meet at least 80% of all criteria to receive accreditation (Nguyen, 2018). In late 2016, the Ministry of Education and Training introduced the fifth set of standards for higher education programs, comprising 11 standards and 50 criteria. These standards were adapted from the ASEAN university network - Quality assurance (AUN-QA) standards with minor modifications, approved by the network, and are currently applied across all higher education programs. These specialized standards primarily evaluate program quality in terms of objectives, learning outcomes, organization, management, curriculum, training activities, faculty, support teacher educator, student services, facilities, financial resources, graduate assessment, and career counselling.

Related Studies on QA in Teacher Education

QA and accreditation are believed to be critical to improving educational programs and ensure constructive alignment with national and international standards. In the context of teacher education, there has been growing attention to the effectiveness of QA processes in fostering teachers' continuing professional development, the quality of teaching and learning, and program sustainability.

Numerous international studies have explored the impact of QA and accreditation on higher education. Makhoul (2019) investigated the influence of external accreditation on teaching and learning improvements in Lebanese universities. Findings indicated that whereas accreditation promotes evaluation and improvement, the lack of shared standards among accrediting agencies limits its uniformity. Furthermore, the study emphasized quantifiable measures, such as faculty retention and student attrition, to enhance accreditation processes. Additionally, Lucander and Christersson (2020) introduced a five-phase process for QA of educational programs, tested across multidisciplinary programs. Their findings valued the process's ability to foster quality culture, improve curriculum design, and support both internal and external QA documentation. This process also encouraged active engagement of stakeholders in continuous quality improvement. Gora et al. (2019) examined how QA affects students' competencies and employability in Romanian universities. Implementing structural equation modeling, the research figured out that educational quality and research activities enhanced student competencies and job market readiness. These findings suggested integrating QA into educational and research practices. Lately, Ahmad and Ahmed (2023) focused on the critical role of leadership in implementing QA in universities. Their study identified transformational leadership as crucial for fostering improvements in teaching and research. Furthermore, the compliance-driven leadership merely adhered to external requirements.

In Vietnam, studies on QA have primarily examined its adoption and impact within the higher education system. Pham (2018) emphasized the merits and demerits of institutional accreditation and its potential to enhance prestige and its burdensome and resource-intensive nature. These studies pointed to barriers such as limited autonomy and inadequate reviewer competence. Similarly, Nguyen (2021) explored factors supporting successful implementation of QA in Vietnam. The research identified some factors such as institutional leadership, stakeholder support, and internal QA teams as critical contributors. Nguyen et al. (2023) compared the influence of accreditation policies on public and private universities and revealed significant differences in their advantages and disadvantages. This research, subsequently, recommended incorporating international universities to enhance the competitiveness of accreditation systems. Ta et al. (2023) surveyed Vietnamese students' perceptions of QA, revealing insights into institutional policies. These findings also shed light on the needs for revising internal QA policies to improve teaching-learning experiences. While previous studies have examined the implementation and impact of QA, limited attention has been given to discussion on accreditors' specific concerns about teacher education programs. Moreover, there is a gap in exploring how educators' needs for continuous professional development can address these concerns. This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by focusing on the bachelor of education program in PTE. This research wishes to provide actionable insights to improve accreditation outcomes and foster teachers' continuing professional development at a local context in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam.

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Continuing professional development (henceforth called CPD) in education can be conceptualized as teachers' continuing personal and professional growth. Saberi and Amiri (2016) noted down that CPD is an ongoing process centered on planned and systematic activities aimed at fostering and enhancing teachers' professional growth. In the context of higher education, professional development (PD) for tertiary lecturers comprises of professional activities which are educationally designed to enhance faculty performance and institutional development (McElearney et al., 2019). Similarly, Ngo et al., (2023) defined CPD-related activities as "a series of complex, planned, and ongoing opportunities undertaken by Vietnamese tertiary EFL lecturers to improve their professional expertise and experiences so that their individual, institutional, and national objectives can be achieved" (p. 17).

CPD has emerged from traditional, formal workshops and conferences, where teachers passively receive information, to job-embedded PD (JEPD), which actively engages teachers in practice-based learning (Cavazos et al., 2018). Despite this evolution, formal CPD remains the dominant model worldwide. Formal CPD is a part of the training model and includes activities such as workshops, conferences, and courses (Joshi et al., 2018). It is characterized by a teacher-centered, one-way approach that focuses on enhancing individual teachers' general knowledge, skills, and teaching methods (Ling & Mackenzie, 2015). However, it is criticized for rarely contributing to alterations in practice and knowledge transfer among teachers. In contrast, JEPD associates with activities related to coaching, mentoring, lesson planning, action research, and sharing best practices (Joshi et al., 2018). Its goal is to improve students' outcomes by addressing classroom challenges and updating teachers' professional practices to align with new teaching methodologies (Zepeda, 2015). JEPD also appreciates collaboration and reflection which facilitate teachers to learn from shared experiences and adapt practices in real-time (Borko et al., 2010). In the Vietnamese higher education context, formal PD remains significant; however, recent efforts have shifted focus toward promoting JEPD (Ngo et al., 2023).

Effective CPD is underpinned by several key characteristics that contribute to teacher growth and improved student outcomes. Firstly, CPD need to prioritize the content aligning with teachers' classroom practices and curriculum. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) described this as focusing on teaching strategies linked with specific curriculum content. Secondly, collaboration is critical since it nurtures teachers to learn from peers, share experiences, and address instructional challenges. Hunzicker (2011) subsequently mentioned the value of collaborative activities such as instructional planning and peer observations. Thirdly, CPD should be a continuous process which extends beyond short-term training. Guskey and Yoon (2009) signified a sustained focus over weeks, months, or even years. Moreover, Zepeda (2015) noted that CPD connects directly to teachers' job contexts, which enables them to reflect on their experiences and adapt practices accordingly. Fourthly, CPD should positively impact student learning. Patton et al. (2015) argued that CPD should be planned with a focus on student outcomes rather than simply introducing new teaching practices. Teacher-driven collaborative learning activities. Besides these characteristics of effective CPD, its additional features may include active learning opportunities, alignment with individual and organizational needs, and long-term engagement.

The conceptualization of CPD is perceived to be critical to the current research. It serves to lay a theoretical foundation for enhancing teaching quality, improving student outcomes, and meeting organizational needs. It characteristics are essential for proposing effective CPD solutions for the bachelor of education in PTE program. The shift from traditional training models to JEPD and the focus on CPD-related activities align with the QA requirements raised by accreditors.

The Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Current Research

In the current research, Ngo et al.'s (2023) integrated framework of effective CPD for tertiary EFL lecturers was adapted as the theoretical framework (see Figure 1). Even though this framework for effective CPD among tertiary EFL lecturers, it is considered suitably adapted and implemented in the current research. In the same context of tertiary education, this framework elaborates on a comprehensive perspective on CPD by combining context, content, and process. These elements are essential for addressing QA concerns in the bachelor of education program in PTE. Subsequently, the framework mentions needs-based relevance aligning with lecturers' career stages and professional requirements. More critically, with its flexibility and practical applicability, the framework supports the designate of effective CPD strategies and contributes to the improvement of PTE quality. To achieve its aims, the current research sought to answer two research questions.

1. Regarding accreditors' concerns, which CPD-related issues do primary school teacher educators need to address?

2. What are primary school teacher educators' strategies to engage in the CPD activities in response to the concerns?
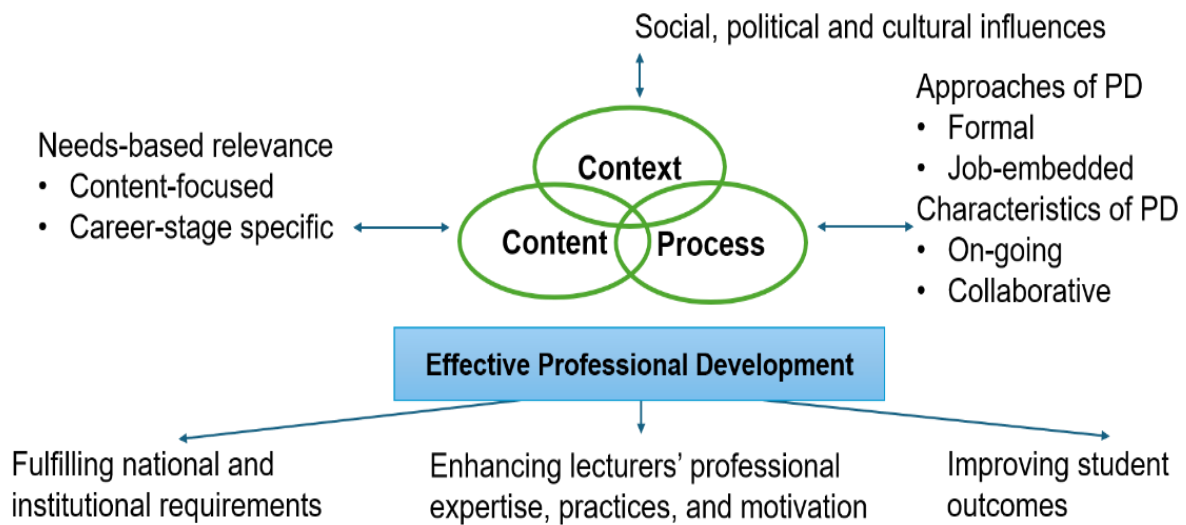
Figure 1. Integrated framework of effective PD for tertiary lecturers (adapted from Ngo et al., 2023)

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore accreditors' concerns and educators' needs for CPD in response to QA accreditors' concerns about the bachelor of education (B.Ed) program in PTE. As Yin (2003, p. 13) conceptualized, a case study approach is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". According to Park (2024), this approach facilitates an in-depth investigation into participants' experiences, perspectives, and recommendations within a specific institutional context. Implementing a case study as the research design for this study is perceived to be appropriate as it serves to shed light on CPD activities which primary school teacher educators need to address and their strategies to engage in these activities in response to accreditors' concerns.

The study takes place in the Department of PTE within the School of Teacher Education at a university, called Rose University for pseudonym, in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The participants consist of five experienced teacher educators, called TE1, TE2, TE3, TE4, and TE5, who have been training pre-service teachers for primary education for more than 10 years (see Table 1). These educators were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they possess relevant criteria to the case study (Rai & Thapa, 2015), including expertise and firsthand knowledge of the program's strengths, challenges, and potential areas for improvement.

Table 1. Summary of interview participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Subject-focus
TE1	Female	Vietnamese, Civic Education
TE2	Female	Vietnamese
TE3	Male	Arts, Technology
TE4	Female	Natural Science
TE5	Male	Mathematics

Research Instruments and Data Collection

This study employs document analysis and structured interviews as primary research instruments to explore educators' needs for CPD in response to QA concerns about the B.Ed program in PTE. The key document

analyzed in this study is the 84/NQ_HĐKĐCLGD on August 5th, 2024, issued by the Accreditation Council for Education QA (see Table 2). This resolution presents the official evaluation of the B.Ed. program in PTE at Rose University, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. A particular focus is placed on Appendix II (pp. 3-5), which outlines the concerns raised by accreditors and their recommendations for enhancing program quality. The document serves as a foundational reference in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009), often used for understanding the gaps in professional development and curriculum implementation that need to be addressed.

Table 2. Summary of QA document

Section	Main content	Number of pages
Resolution	Overview of the accreditation process and reference to relevant regulations.	2
Decision	Official decision recognizing the accreditation results	1
Appendix I	Detailed breakdown of accreditation results, including evaluation scores for various standards.	3
Appendix II	Acknowledgement of strengths	3
	Concerns and recommendations	2

Following the document analysis, structured interviews were conducted with five experienced lecturers, each having over ten years of experience in training pre-service primary teachers. The interviews took place at their workplace, providing a comfortable and familiar environment for discussion. Before interviews, the participants have read the accreditation resolution to review, allowing them to reflect on the concerns and recommendations presented. During the interviews, they were asked about their perceptions of the evaluation and their insights into effective CPD strategies. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, recorded with consent, later transcribed and kept for confirmability.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used thematic analysis for both the document and interview data. The document analysis involved coding the accreditation resolution into key themes related to the evaluation and recommendations. For the interview data, open coding was applied to identify recurring ideas, which were then grouped into broader themes. To enhance the validity of the analysis, peer debriefing and member checking were employed, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data and accurately reflected participants' perspectives (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). The final analysis was cross-referenced with existing research to provide additional context and ensure the robustness of the findings (Penders, 2018). To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, member checking was employed, wherein participants were provided with their transcripts for review and clarification. Additionally, informed consent was obtained before data collection, ensuring that ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process.

Results

CPD-related issues that primary school teacher educators need to address

The analysis confirms that the undergraduate Primary Education program at Rose University meets the quality standards outlined in Article 23 of Circular No. 38/2013/TT-BGDĐT. The council unanimously approved its accreditation and recommended the issuance of a quality certification. The program has met 49 out of 50 criteria, achieving a compliance rate of 98%. Additionally, each standard has at least 50% of its criteria marked as "meeting the requirements". However, despite this high level of compliance, areas and suggestions for improvements were mentioned.

- Clearly define entrepreneurship and creativity factors in the program objectives based on the school's mission. Enhance the use of feedback from stakeholders to improve the program objectives.

Communicate the meaning and content of the output standards clearly to stakeholders, helping new students differentiate between output standards and graduation requirements.

- The student handbook should integrate a summary of the training program to facilitate student learning. Survey stakeholders' opinions about the format, content, and methods of disseminating the program description to improve it. Add corresponding rubrics for each course in the course syllabus.

- Review and select appropriate teaching methods and assessment techniques that align with the output standards regarding autonomy and responsibility; specify teaching methods according to the outcome standards for each lesson in the course syllabus. Strengthen comparisons with equivalent programs abroad to make improvements.

- Communicate and guide the integration of educational philosophy into teaching and learning activities; assess the effectiveness of applying information technology in online teaching. Encourage students to enhance their foreign language skills, utilize English-language materials, and participate in more research activities to develop self-learning abilities. Consider increasing observation, internship, and practical time for students.

- Periodically review and evaluate the validity and reliability of assessment methods and criteria for each course; provide clearer guidance on the types and methods of assessment that align with the output standards for soft skills, responsibility, and thinking. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of using rubrics according to the specific characteristics of each course and output standards. Promote the use of plagiarism detection software for thesis projects and apply information technology to ensure the reliability of assessment content. Periodically gather feedback from students on academic regulations and feedback mechanisms to improve them.

- Analyze risk factors affecting faculty planning in pedagogy fields and solutions during the implementation of the overall development plan of the university. Study and establish regulations on community service with appropriate criteria and conversion standards for faculty planning. Set specific targets for the ratio of faculty members trained and specialized according to different types, assess the effectiveness of the plan to improve professional development activities. Increase interdisciplinary research projects relevant to primary education.

- Develop a teacher educator development plan to align with the university's overall plan up to 2022, with a vision for 2030. Consider the specific competence requirements for each position when developing recruitment criteria for teacher educator. Build quantitative criteria to track, monitor, and evaluate teacher educator based on job competencies. Implement systematic assessments of training impact and improve teacher educator quality. Periodically survey teacher educator satisfaction with work management to improve it.

- Periodically assess the correlation between academic outcomes and admission criteria to ensure students with appropriate abilities and career orientations for their field of study. Evaluate the effectiveness of extracurricular activities and the number of students participating in soft skills and entrepreneurship training courses to encourage student participation in activities related to the field. Increase extracurricular activities that encourage the development of foreign language skills and provide opportunities for students to access modern education models in schools with international elements.

- Invest in improving and upgrading some office spaces to enhance the quality of the working, learning, and research environment. Consider equipping teaching practice rooms that can implement teaching and learning activities according to the standards of schools with international elements.

- Ensure a systematic approach in gathering information about workforce needs to design the curriculum. Survey stakeholders to update the process of developing and issuing the curriculum. Implement effective

solutions to increase the response rate from stakeholders regarding feedback activities to help improve the quality of the training program.

- Implement a comprehensive evaluation of the solutions to help students shorten the average time to graduation, share successful practices for replication in other fields. Expand benchmarking efforts, research areas/fields for comparison, and benchmark with universities of similar status and academic programs.

11 concerns listed in Appendix II were inductively derived into four key themes, addressing critical issues of curriculum development, student support, faculty and teacher educator, and program evaluation for institution development.

Justification of curriculum and syllabus design

The first concern emphasizes the importance of integrating entrepreneurship and creativity into the program objectives and outcome standards, with a specific focus on utilizing stakeholder feedback to refine the curriculum. This concern highlights the need for clarity in communicating outcome standards to all stakeholders, guaranteeing students can distinguish between these standards and graduation requirements. Following this, the third and fifth concern point to the necessity of aligning teaching methods and assessment techniques with the expected output standards, with periodic reviews to keep track of their validity and reliability.

Further effort for supporting learners and learning environment

The second concern focuses on improving student support by integrating a summary of the training program into the student handbook, with an emphasis on gathering feedback from stakeholders to refine program descriptions and rubrics. In the fourth concern, there is a call to encourage extracurricular activities that support language skills, technological skills, research participation, and hands-on experience, such as internships and practical training. The ninth concern addresses the need to enhance the physical learning environment by investing in office spaces and upgrading teaching practice rooms to meet international standards.

Clarification of the approaches for teacher educator development

The sixth concern raises the importance of analyzing risks impacting faculty planning, particularly in the pedagogy field, and developing strategies to mitigate these risks during the faculty development process. The seventh and eighth concern discusses the recruitment and competence of teacher educator, stressing the need for clear recruitment criteria based on competencies and establishing systems for monitoring and distributing staff roles. These concerns emphasize evaluating the effectiveness of teacher educator training programs and gathering feedback on teacher educator satisfaction to improve overall teacher educator performance.

Reflectiveness and forethought in program evaluation

The first concern emphasizes the need for continuous program improvement by regularly assessing program components, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and collecting workforce data to ensure the curriculum aligns with industry standards and meets current industry demands. Moreover, the first concern advocates for expanding benchmarking activities, comparing the program with similar institutions, and sharing best practices to elevate academic quality. Finally, the seventh concern stresses the significance of long-term strategic planning for faculty and teacher educator development, ensuring that these plans are aligned with the university's overall growth objectives for 2022 to 2030.

Primary school teacher educators' strategies to engage in the CPD activities

In response to the concerns raised by QA accreditors, interview data from five primary school teacher educators (TE1 to TE5) revealed emerging insights into their intentional and foreseeing strategies for engaging in CPD activities. These strategies were aligned with four main areas of concern: curriculum design, student support, teacher educator training, and program evaluation.

Curriculum design: "A more manageable and gradual syllabus"

Teacher educators emphasized the importance of adapting and localizing competency-based education (CBE) to enhance curriculum delivery. TE1 explained that the curriculum needed to be redefined to ensure clearer, more manageable learning sessions. "We must avoid overwhelming students with too much content at once and instead build the curriculum step by step, reinforcing key concepts before moving on to more advanced material..." TE1 noted.

TE2 highlighted the need to integrate job orientation and career consultation more flexibly into the training of pre-service primary teachers. "Many students enter the program with limited understanding of the professional expectations and realities of teaching..." TE2 explained. By embedding career-focused discussions and exposure to real classroom environments throughout the training process, educators can help students align their skills with future workplace demands. TE4 added that structured guidance on professional pathways, including mentorship from experienced teachers and engagement with school administrators, would enhance students' preparedness and confidence before entering the workforce.

TE5 emphasized the necessity of articulating learning outcomes more clearly to align with CBE and job market expectations. "Students should not only understand what they are learning but also how each competency connects to their future roles as primary teachers..." TE5 noted. Establishing well-defined, outcome-based frameworks would ensure that graduates possess the necessary pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and classroom management strategies required in real teaching contexts.

Learner support: "Strengthening systems to assist students' overall development"

In terms of student support, TE2 and TE4 both highlighted the importance of creating well-established systems to guide students throughout their learning journey. TE2 discussed the need to establish mentorship programs and peer-support networks, which could help students navigate both academic challenges and personal difficulties that affect their studies. "By fostering a sense of community and support, students are more likely to stay motivated and succeed…" TE2 stated. TE4 added that providing additional learning resources, such as online materials and interactive sessions, was essential in supporting diverse learning styles and boosting student engagement.

TE5 highlighted the crucial role of teacher educators as active supervisors in the observation and practicum process. Rather than taking a passive role, TE5 emphasized the need for structured guidance, including pre-practicum briefings, regular check-ins, and post-lesson reflections. "As supervisors, we should provide continuous and personalized feedback, not just evaluate performance but also offer psychological support. Do not gatekeep like these experiences are too easy or too hard. Just provide enough to help them independently build confidence and resilience in their teaching practice…" TE5 explained.

TE1 emphasized the importance of teacher educators being open-minded and approachable to learners, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. "When we create a space where students feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their difficulties, we can better understand their needs and provide more effective guidance..." TE1 stated. TE4 added, "Students often hesitate to seek help because they fear judgment. If we, as educators, show them that we are willing to listen and support them, they will be more engaged and confident in their learning." TE3 further highlighted that being approachable also meant acknowledging students' diverse backgrounds and learning needs. "We must be flexible in our teaching approaches and adapt based on student feedback. Professional development is not just about acquiring new knowledge but also about refining our interactions with learners" TE3 explained.

Teacher educator training: "When educators are good, learners will follow suit"

On teacher educator training, TE5 outlined strategies to foster ongoing professional development for educators. "It's essential that we keep updating our teaching methods and staying current with the latest educational technologies..." TE5 explained. Regular workshops and collaborative learning sessions were identified as key methods for ensuring that teachers continuously improve their pedagogical skills. TE3 also pointed out the importance of peer feedback in teacher educator development, where educators would regularly share insights, review each other's lessons, and identify areas for improvement. These CPD strategies would enable educators to refine their teaching practices and deliver high-quality instruction.

TE1 emphasized the importance of teacher educators engaging in research and involving students in collaborative research writing as part of their professional development. "Conducting research helps us stay updated with new educational trends, but more importantly, it allows us to bridge theory and practice in meaningful ways..." TE1 stated. TE4 added, "When we mentor students in research projects, we are not just guiding them academically but also fostering critical thinking and inquiry-based learning." TE3 further highlighted that research collaboration between educators and students could enhance both teaching quality and student engagement. "By co-authoring research papers or guiding students through small-scale studies, we create an academic culture where learning goes beyond the classroom..." TE3 explained.

Program evaluation: "It's a cycle of plan, do, check, then plan and do again"

Regarding program evaluation, TE1 and TE5 emphasized the significance of incorporating feedback from the immediate environment, particularly students and peers, to improve the curriculum and teaching methods. TE1 noted, "It's important to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum regularly, ensuring that it stays aligned with current educational standards and meets the evolving needs of our students…" TE5 added that peer observations and collaborative discussions among educators played a crucial role in refining teaching strategies and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

In addition to feedback from students and peers, TE5 highlighted the importance of evaluation input from higher institutional levels, such as academic leaders and external reviewers. "A structured review process led by faculty leaders and accreditation bodies ensures that our program remains competitive and meets national and institutional benchmarks…" TE5 explained. Feedback from these higher-level sources provided a broader perspective on program quality, allowing necessary adjustments to be made to align with long-term strategic goals and policy changes.

Discussion

All concerns deduced from the QA documents were found to be highly relatable and were recognized by the experienced teacher educators in primary education. The findings corroborated existing research, particularly Pham (2018), which emphasized the merits and demerits of institutional accreditation. Similarly, Nguyen (2021) explored the factors that support the successful implementation of QA in Vietnam. Participants in the study expressed agreement with the concerns raised in the QA documents, with many commenting, "We totally agree with the concerns, and we do recognize these shortcomings, but we need more time and support to ease logistical challenges." This reflects the reality that while the concerns are recognized, the process of addressing them is gradual and requires additional institutional backing. This aligns with Nguyen et al. (2023), who compared the influence of accreditation policies on public and private universities in Vietnam. Their research revealed noticeable differences in the advantages and disadvantages faced by these institutions, suggesting that different operations of universities undertake divergent approaches from accreditation with both challenges and benefits. Therefore, the study subsequently recommended incorporating international universities into the accreditation process to enhance advantageous competitiveness within the globalization era.

Internationally, the multi-layered concerns for program quality presented in documents, which involve various divisions of labors, also echoed and expanded upon the studies of Tam (2001), who explored the internal evaluation of teacher education programs. Tam's research highlighted the importance of involving a diverse group of stakeholders, including management, academic teacher educator, students, and evaluation experts, in the evaluation process. Furthermore, the internal and external aspects of the concerns align with

the work of Komorowska (2017) and Ayeni & Adelabu (2012), who both discussed the significance of incorporating both internal and external evaluations in higher education. These studies emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to QA that takes into account the perspectives of all involved parties, a view strongly supported by the findings of this study. In addition to acknowledging the diverse concerns raised by QA documents, it is recommended that teacher educators adopt a flexible and eclectic approach when categorizing or classifying QA concerns. By doing so, educators can more clearly identify and address specific areas that need improvement, as well as better align their strategies with the evolving needs of their students and the institution. Implementing such an approach would help educators tailor their responses to address the dynamic challenges faced by their respective programs, thus ensuring a more efficient and effective implementation of QA measures.

The strategies employed by primary school teacher educators in response to the concerns can be effectively analyzed through the Ngo et al.'s (2023) CPD framework for tertiary lecturers, which combines context, content, and process. As the study takes place in a collectivist society with a high power-distance culture, where collaboration and hierarchy shape educational practices. In this context, teacher educators emphasize the need for curriculum adaptation and job-orientation integration, aligning the training of pre-service primary teachers with local societal norms. Adapting CBE to local needs, along with focusing on gradual curriculum delivery, reflects the educators' awareness of the impact that contextual factors (students' prior knowledge and cultural backgrounds) have on their learning. By integrating CBE into their teaching practices, these educators ensure that future primary school teachers are better equipped to apply similar approaches in their own classrooms. This continuity of CBE in teacher education not only addresses the immediate needs of pre-service teachers but also contributes to shaping the educational practices of future generations, ensuring that CBE principles are passed on to younger learners and continuously evolve within the educational system. Furthermore, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where teacher educators are approachable and receptive to students' needs, is seen as key to maintaining a positive educational atmosphere in line with the collectivist culture.

The content of CPD strategies is aligned with the needs of both educators and students, emphasizing the importance of making professional development relevant to specific teaching stages and career needs. For educators, continuous updates in teaching methods, staying informed on educational technologies, and incorporating peer feedback are seen as crucial for enhancing pedagogical skills. For pre-service teachers, incorporating job orientation, career consultations, and mentorship into the curriculum helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience. Additionally, clear articulation of learning outcomes ensures that pre-service teachers understand how their learning connects with real-world expectations and job market demands. Regarding the process, CPD is characterized by both formal and informal, ongoing, and collaborative approaches. Teacher educators advocate for regular workshops, collaborative learning sessions, and peer feedback to foster professional growth. These strategies provide opportunities for educators to continuously refine their teaching practices and enhance their engagement with students. With a welcoming perspective, involving students in research projects and collaborative writing encourages an inquiry-based approach to learning. This collaborative process not only benefits teacher educators but also empowers students, encouraging them to take an active role in their own learning and development.

Conclusion

This study strengthens the importance of CPD in addressing QA challenges within PTE programs. With sharing from primary school teacher educators, emerging actionable strategies were revealed and contextualized to improve curriculum alignment, bolster student support systems, enhance teacher educator quality, and refine program evaluation processes. Additionally, the discussion with international and Vietnamese studies highlighted the role of CPD in promoting a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability among educators, which is crucial for maintaining high teaching standards and responding to evolving educational needs. These insights contribute to the ongoing discourse on accreditation and CPD in higher education, reinforcing the necessity for institutions to provide structured, reflective, and contextually relevant professional development opportunities. The implications of the study advocate for a holistic

approach to teacher education, where CPD is integrated into sustainable development through collaboration among educators, administrators, and policy-makers.

Despite achieving the aims by answering the research questions with qualitative sources, this study is limited by its self-reported data and cross-sectional design. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as participants might overstate or understate their engagement with CPD activities. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study means it captures a snapshot of practices and perceptions at a single point in time, without accounting for potential changes over time or the long-term impact of CPD initiatives. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to explore the long-term effects of CPD on primary teacher development and program quality. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple PTE institutions and regions would help validate and refine CPD models, providing a more comprehensive understanding of effective practices in preparing primary educators.

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