

Beliefs and Practices: Relationship in Using ICTs for Self-initiated Professional Development

Mitiku G. Tessema

Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ORCID://orcid.org/0000-0003-3144-4416, e-mail: mandella2006@gmail.com

Girma G. Belihu

Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ORCID://orcid.org/0000-0002-2985-8057, e-mail: girmagb@gmail.com

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' beliefs and practices using ICTs for self-initiated professional development (SIPD). The study was carried out in Ethiopia, where teachers are encouraged to engage in self-initiated professional development (SIPD). Similarly, English teachers in Ethiopian higher education institutes are encouraged to engage in self-initiated professional development by assessing and reexamining their teaching beliefs and practices. This can be carried out using information and communication technologies (ICTs). The study participants were EFL teachers from Addis Ababa Science and Technology University. In the study, 35 teachers were selected using total population sampling. Descriptive and correlation methods were employed to analyze the data. Accordingly, although teachers' beliefs were positive, their practice in the use of ICTs for self-initiated professional development was somehow moderate or did not match the level of their beliefs. Therefore, teachers should improve their practice in regard to their strong beliefs about the use of ICTs. All in all, they need to update themselves using the available technologies at their disposal since these technologies provide them with a wide range of ELT's latest developments.

Keywords: beliefs, practice, ICTs, SIPD, EFL teachers.

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Убеждения и практика: взаимосвязь при использовании ИКТ для самостоятельного профессионального развития

Тессема М.Г.

Университет Аддис-Абебы, Аддис-Абеба, Эфиопия

Тессема М.Г., Белиху Г.Г.
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ORCID://orcid.org/0000-0003-3144-4416, e-mail: mandella2006@gmail.com

Белиху Г.Г.

Университет Аддис-Абебы, Аддис-Абеба, Эфиопия
ORCID://orcid.org/0000-0002-2985-8057, e-mail: girmagb@gmail.com

Целью данного исследования было изучение взаимосвязи между убеждениями преподавателей английского языка как иностранного (EFL) и практикой использования ИКТ для самостоятельного профессионального развития (SIPD). Исследование было проведено в Эфиопии, где учителям рекомендуется самостоятельно заниматься профессиональным развитием (SIPD). Аналогичным образом, преподавателям английского языка в высших учебных заведениях Эфиопии рекомендуется самостоятельно заниматься профессиональным развитием путем оценки и пересмотра своих педагогических убеждений и практики. Это может быть осуществлено с использованием информационно-коммуникационных технологий (ИКТ). Участниками исследования были преподаватели EFL из Аддис-Абебского научно-технического университета. В ходе исследования 35 учителей были отобраны с использованием общей выборки населения. Для анализа полученных данных были использованы описательный и корреляционный методы. Соответственно, хотя убеждения учителей были позитивными, их практика использования ИКТ для самостоятельного профессионального развития была в какой-то степени умеренной или не соответствовала уровню их убеждений. Поэтому учителям следует совершенствовать свою практику в соответствии со своими твердыми убеждениями в отношении использования ИКТ. В целом, им необходимо обновляться, используя имеющиеся в их распоряжении технологии, поскольку эти технологии предоставляют им широкий спектр новейших разработок ELT.

Ключевые слова: убеждения, практика, ИКТ, SIPD, преподаватели EFL.

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Introduction

No matter how effective pre-service training is for teachers, it cannot be expected to adequately prepare them for all of the difficulties they will face throughout the course of their employment.

Consequently, it is crucial to pursue ongoing professional growth. [30; 32] argued in favor of this notion by stating that the need for ongoing professional skill and knowledge renewal is simply a response to the fact that not all of the information teachers require is frequently provided at the pre-service level. This professional development need is not only a result of insufficient training. It is also that the knowledge and skills domain of teaching are constantly changing.

The MoE's education policy includes continuous professional development (CPD) as a key component [18]. Teachers at all educational institutions are expected to participate in CPD, [19]. All instructors must actively participate in their learning process, collaborate with their peers, identify their own needs, and participate in a variety of formal and informal activities. This will enhance both their profession and the practice of other colleagues, according to the [20].

As to [22], Ethiopia's Higher Diploma Program (HDP) is a significant opportunity for teacher educators and other university instructors. This helps them to strengthen their skills in areas like action research, active learning, reflective teaching, and continuous evaluation. The English Language Improvement Program (ELIP), according to researchers [15; 31], was also introduced to improve all higher education teachers in Ethiopia; however, this program has scarcely been implemented in many of the institutions.

In Ethiopian higher education institutions, English teachers are expected to participate in self-initiated professional development by evaluating and reevaluating their teaching philosophies and methods [19]. They can also benefit from information and communication technologies (ICTs), which let teachers learn at anytime, anywhere. As a result, they can better serve their 21st-century students, [6; 10]. In this study, the use of ICTs in self-initiated professional development is examined in relation to EFL instructors' practices and beliefs.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars such as [33] have argued that professional development is crucial in the twenty-first century because information and communication technologies have an impact on teachers' and students' regular educational activities. There are many advantages and benefits for the countries of the world from the usage of technology in education. For instance, the efficient application of technology in the teaching and learning process has considerably helped industrialized nations. After taking a lesson from the industrialized nations, developing nations like Ethiopia are attempting to incorporate technology into their educational systems [20; 21].

Teachers of English as a foreign language can also take advantage of many chances that advance their careers. For teachers who want to advance their careers, technology has made it possible to have online training and a variety of courses, local, national, and international professional networking, and open resources including books, software, research papers, articles, journals, etc., [11]. As a result, it is up to the English teachers to make the most of these opportunities, [29].

According to [15], there aren't any options for English teachers to have clearly focused professional development in higher education in Ethiopia. As a result, English teachers lack the opportunity necessary to grow professionally and adapt to the changing demands of their students. The traditional

teaching-learning model causes a mismatch between what and how students are currently required to learn and what teachers are doing in the classroom.

Teachers and students in many different countries now have better access to numerous technical tools as compared to they did a few years ago as a result of continual technological progress in our fast-paced environment. Similar to this, today, teachers in Ethiopia's higher education institutions have more opportunities and access than they did in the past to use technological tools including computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and the Internet for teaching learning purposes. The same may be said for the Addis Ababa Science and Technology University's EFL instructors' who are exposed to ICTs in their everyday professional activity.

As far as the researcher reading is concerned, neither higher education teachers generally nor EFL teachers specifically have access to any explicitly designated chances for professional development. The ICTs can help EFL teachers in advancing their careers by assisting themselves, identifying and correcting any professional shortfalls they may have. Therefore, teachers have the opportunity for self-initiated professional development using these technologies. The purpose of this study was to examine EFL instructors' practices and beliefs related to the use of ICTs for self-initiated professional development.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are the following.

1. What beliefs do EFL teachers hold about the use of ICTs in self-initiated professional development?
2. How often do EFL teachers practice ICTs for self-initiated professional development?
3. What is the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use of ICTs in their self-initiated professional development?

Literature Review

Beliefs are considered to be a broad term. It includes attitudes, values, judgments, opinions, ideologies, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, and perspectives, [27].

In an educational context, beliefs are defined as one's convictions, philosophy, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning, Haney et al., 2003, cited in [28]. The concept of teacher beliefs also refers to comprehensive and multiple belief systems. These include knowledge construction, learning, and teaching. They can also contain the examination of these froms of a specific viewpoint, such as pedagogical ideologies, values, and attitudes regarding instructional strategies.

According to [28], teachers' beliefs about learning to teach or professional development are the educational beliefs teachers hold about their profession. Teachers who see teaching as a lifelong process will be more likely to reflect on his or her teaching. Moreover, they experiment with different

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methods of teaching. On the contrary, the teachers who passively see teaching as a required and fixed task will be more likely to stay in a stagnant state of teaching and seek no change in their teaching style.

Teachers' beliefs about themselves are significant factors in predicting their behavior in their classroom teaching or professional development practices. Teachers' beliefs are usually consistent with their professional practice. Sometimes there is an inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and professional practices. To summarize, the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices is an inconclusive issue.

Similarly, the beliefs teachers hold about the utilization of ICTs are expected to determine their usage of these technologies. Teachers who have positive beliefs are likely to use ICTs in their professional development efforts. On the other hand, teachers with negative beliefs about ICTs are unlikely to use them in their daily professional activities. What is more, teachers' beliefs and practices about the use of ICTs may not be consistent. Therefore, studying the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs, and practices in using ICTs for self-initiated professional development is important.

Professional Development for Teachers

Teachers' professional development is an inevitable issue in the teaching-learning process. That is why many educators explain what it is and why it is important for teachers. According to [9] and [32], teachers' professional development is defined as a lifelong process by which teachers learn to update or upgrade their skills and knowledge. This helps them to meet their students' changing needs for knowledge and skills over time. Likewise, [12] defines it as a practice or program that brings significant change to teachers' attitudes, beliefs, instructional practices, and student performance.

For [30], teachers' professional development refers to the overall professional growth of an individual or a teacher. Teachers do not only grow professionally, but they also understand what teaching is and who they are as teachers. Therefore, teachers are expected to grow comprehensively. This can be achieved by engaging themselves in a continuous variety of professional development activities. This helps them to expand their knowledge base, reflect on their practice, adapt or change their practice, or prepare themselves for new responsibilities. This indicated that teachers should adapt new classroom practices in order to improve students' learning outcomes, [8; 32].

Professional Development in ELT Environment

According to [30], the area of language teaching is undergoing significant transformations because the profession adapts to new educational paradigms, and trends. What is more, as institutions face new challenges, as a result of changes in curriculum, national assessments, and student need, professional development in ELT is inevitable. Instructors require regular opportunities to upgrade their professional knowledge and abilities, or professional development opportunities. If teachers are to continue to find language teaching rewarding, they must expand their roles and responsibilities over time, and it is the responsibility of schools and other educational institutions to provide opportunities for teachers to develop longer-term career goals and opportunities over time.

The objective of professional development in the ELT environment is comparable to what the aforementioned scholars have indicated. Continuing professional development (CPD) is a prominent tradition in the English language instruction around the world. It positions instructors as knowledge users, [3]. As he further stated, teachers are introduced to new ideas, information, and practical advice in a short-term training or workshop. After that, teachers are expected to apply what they have learned in their classrooms. The other type of CPD involves extended in-service training courses. These courses require instructors to attend classes, participate in exams, and complete various theoretical and practical assignments to become qualified or certified teachers.

Self- initiated Professional Development

The professional development approach can be top-down, which gives all the responsibilities to the Ministry of Education. In this approach, all the training issues, manuals, and trainers are managed by officials from the institution. On the contrary, the self-initiated professional development approach deals with teachers' initiatives to develop their profession. As [5; 16; 30] stated, in self-initiated professional development, instructors take the initiative and design their programs. They further explained that teachers are generally interested in adding to their professional knowledge, keeping up to date with theory and practice in the field, and improving their teaching skills. Therefore, they feel more confident about what they teach, and they achieve better results with their students.

Definition of Information Communication Technologies

Scholars defined information and communication technologies in relation to the advantages, components, and purposes they hold. Some focus on how information is created, stored, and shared using telecommunications technology, while others define it with information technology tools and services. According to [25], the term "ICT" refers to a form of technology that is used to transmit, store, create, share, or exchange information. This broad definition of ICT comprises technologies such as radio, television, DVD, and telephones (both fixed and mobile). It also comprises satellite systems, computer networks, hardware, software, equipment, and services associated with these technologies. For example, video conferencing and electronic mail are also included in this category, [17].

The document printed by [34, p.3] defines ICTs as "forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share, or exchange information by electronic means. [4] defines ICT as "technologies that provide access to information" through telecommunications. It is similar to

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Psychological-Educational Studies. 2023.
Vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 85–97

information technology (IT), which includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums. This can be a general definition of ICT with a focus on communicational aspects. It is also an integral base for learning and teaching. Generally, ICT can be defined as an emerging communication technology that eases human information exchange with time and place.

Information Communication Technologies for EFL Teachers' Professional Development

The education industry, like any other profession, deals with information exchange. ICT is also extremely useful in enabling knowledge, skill, and pedagogical information for stakeholders. This can be carried out by connecting mobile technologies such as phones, tablets, and laptops to the Internet. Having access to these technological tools can provide many benefits to the English language instructors with sufficient opportunities for professional development, according to [2; 4]. Moreover, both English teachers and students can learn on their own at any time and in any location. ICTs also provide access to a variety of the English language learning lessons, exercises, questions, techniques, and the most recent educational advancements in the target language's culture.

Currently, using information and communication technologies has become the new normal to develop English teachers' language teaching knowledge, skill, and pedagogy, as it is the latest technological innovation in teaching English. These technologies are also being widely used in ELT due to their convenience, omnipresence, effectiveness, and economical advantages. They are also helpful in saving time, energy, and money. As a result, they play an important role in the English language learning and teacher professional development [4]. As a result, EFL teachers can advance their careers without having to wait for institutionally-led professional development events sponsored by the teacher's top management.

Method

A descriptive and correlational research design was employed in this study. A quantitative data collection method was employed to collect the data from the teachers under the study. Based on this method, EFL teachers' beliefs and practices about the use of ICTs in their professional development relationships were described. The researcher also used the correlational method, which involves observing the two variables (beliefs and practices) to establish a statistically corresponding relationship between them. The study was conducted at Addis Ababa Science and Technology University, which was founded as Ethiopian Science and Technology University in 2011.

In this study, 40 respondents were supposed to participate. But only 35 teachers were able to fill out the questionnaire and send it back to the researcher. All of them were EFL teachers from Addis Ababa Science and Technology University. Twelve of them held PhDs, while the remaining 23 held MAs. Their teaching experience ranges from 3–15 years.

All the teachers were included in the study, as they were relatively few in number. This was done based on the recommendation given by [5], who proposed to include the whole population when the

wider population is small. Therefore, total population sampling was used in this study to fill out the questionnaire.

A five-section Likert-type questionnaire was used to gather information from all teachers participating in the study. Thus, based on research questions and a review of related literature, a set of questionnaires was prepared in the English language in relation to the participants' academic status. Many of the questionnaire items were adapted from previous similar studies conducted by [1; 13; 24; 26]. The adapted questionnaire was administered to the English teachers under the study.

The data collected via the questionnaires were entered into SPSS 24, a statistical package program. As for the data analysis of the questionnaire, the mean, standard deviation, and grand mean were used. The data was analyzed using tables and verbal descriptions. Finally, the quantitative data were discussed, and a conclusion was made.

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The analyses of the study were presented in three sections. The first section describes teachers' beliefs about the use of ICTs for SIPD. The second section discusses teachers' practices with ICTs for SIPD. And the third section shows the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practice in ICT usage.

Table1
Teachers' beliefs on the use of ICTs for SIPD

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. It helps me update myself with new knowledge and skills in ELT issues.	4.46	.505
2. It gives me relevant information for my professional development needs.	4.51	.562
3. It enhances my initiatives for self-professional development.	4.26	.611
4. It provides me with wide-ranging self-improvement activities.	4.34	.591
5. It makes me practice professional development activities by myself.	4.40	.604
6. It makes me involved in online professional development programs.	4.11	.832
7. It enables me to share ideas, and experiences with my colleagues.	4.43	.608
8. It helps me access ELT materials anytime, anywhere.	4.17	.857
9. It enables me to make changes over traditional instructional practices.	4.23	.598
Grand mean	4.32	

N=35

According to the data, presented above, the teachers agreed that ICT assisted them in keeping up with new ELT developments. In addition, they believed that it made them practice a wide range of professional development activities independently, without time and location limitations. They also believed that they could participate in online training, which helped them come up with new instructional practices. All in all, the above table indicated that EFL teachers had positive beliefs about the use of ICTs, as all the items' mean score indicated above 4. The grand mean ($M = 4.32$) also indicated that teachers have positive beliefs about the use of ICTs in their professional development activities.

Table2

Teachers' practices of ICTs for SIPD

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I use the Internet or attend online learning or class.	3.26	1.146
2. I read ELT e-books, publications, and articles...	3.57	1.145
3. I participate in professional development webinars.	2.34	1.211
4. I use mobile digital devices like laptops, iPods, tablets, and smartphones.	3.91	1.067
5. I use interactive whiteboards (smart boards).	2.49	1.269
6. I use Web 2.0 applications: blogs, social media, YouTube, etc.	2.26	1.039
Grand mean	2.97	

N=35

Concerning the frequency of ICTs usage for professional development, EFL teachers stated the following. As the mean score showed ($M = 3.91$), many of the teachers often use digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, or iPods for their professional development. Then, as evidenced by the mean score ($M = 3.57$), EFL teachers frequently read ELT e-books, publications, and articles. Teachers also sometimes attend online classes using the Internet. The mean score also showed ($M = 3.26$), which is an evidence for this claim. Teachers rarely use Web 2.0 apps such as blogs, YouTube, and social media. The mean score ($M = 2.26$) attested to this statement. Teachers' participation in webinars for professional development and using whiteboards were also rarely practiced by the teachers. This claim is true as their mean scores indicated ($M = 2.34$ and $M = 2.49$, respectively).

Table 3

Correlations between ICTs use beliefs and practices

		ICTs use beliefs	ICTs practice(usage)
ICTs use beliefs	Pearson Correlation	1	.390*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	35	35
ICTs practice (usage)	Pearson Correlation	.390*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	N	35	35

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The above table presents the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient. Concerning the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use of ICTs in self-initiated professional development, the results are ($r(35)$ is equal to .390, and the P value is equal to 0.021. It is less than the correlation significant value of 0.05; see the table). This indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use of ICTs for professional development. In other words, teachers' beliefs about the use of ICTs were explained in their practice or use of ICTs for professional development. Although the relationship was not strong, it was statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices about the use of ICTs in self-initiated professional development. So, to identify what relationship exists between their beliefs and practices, a questionnaire was employed. In addition, each variable was described and two variables were checked for their relationship using Pearson correlation coefficients.

According to the data, the majority of the EFL teachers' beliefs were positive about the use of ICTs in self-initiated professional development. They stated that ICTs provide them with a variety of self-improvement ELT activities for their professional development. The Pearson correlation indicated $r(35) = .390$, and P value 0.021, 0.05. (See table). In addition, they believed that ICTs helped them practice self-initiated professional development anywhere and at any time. These beliefs about ICT use were similar to the findings of [14; 26]. Generally, teachers believed that ICTs have a great role in EFL teachers' self-initiated professional development.

Moreover, as stated in the data analysis, many EFL teachers use ICTs such as the Internet, smartphones, laptops, tablets, and desktops too frequently, but a few teachers use them rarely.

Interactive whiteboards, webinars for professional development, and Web 2.0 applications seemed not to be used by many EFL teachers. In general, some teachers use ICTs most of the time while others don't, [14; 17]. All in all, many EFL teachers, according to the data, use ICTs for their professional development.

Concerning the relationships between EFL teachers' beliefs and practice in the use of ICTs for SIPD, the correlation analysis indicated the following. Teachers' beliefs and practices were moderately correlated. This relationship is witnessed by [28]. Teachers' beliefs and practices can have relationships, but the strength of the relationship is varied. In this study, the relationship was statistically significant, but it was not as strong as it should have been in spite of the increasing importance of ICTs in professional development because these technologies were believed to provide teachers with a variety of opportunities to improve their profession without time and place restrictions [14].

All in all, teachers in general and EFL teachers in particular need to update themselves using the available technologies. These technologies are important in providing them with a wide range of ELT's latest developments. Moreover, 21st-century students' needs are changing, and they prefer to learn using ICTs rather than the "talk and chalk" approach. Therefore, EFL teachers need to use technology for their professional development, as they believe ICTs are useful. This helps them meet their students' changing needs. What is more, the university should provide the EFL teachers with short-term training on how to effectively use the available ICT facilities. This can enhance teachers' use of ICTs. As this study deals only with Addis Ababa Science and Technology University EFL teachers, further investigation is recommended to involve other local university EFL teachers. This helps to provide a general picture of the situation of ICTs' use for professional development in Ethiopian higher institutions.

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Тессема М.Г., Белиху Г.Г.
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Information about the authors

Mitiku G. Tessema, PhD, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa Ethiopia, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3144-4416>, e-mail: mandella2006@gmail.com

Girma G. Belihu, Associate Professor of ELT, Certified Professional Teacher Educator, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa Ethiopia, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2985-8057>, e-mail: girmagb@gmail.com

Информация об авторах

Тессема М.Г., PhD, Аддис-Абебский университет, Аддис-Абеба, Эфиопия, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3144-4416>, e-mail: mandella2006@gmail.com

Белиху Г.Г., Адъюнкт-профессор ELT, сертифицированный профессиональный преподаватель-воспитатель, Аддис-Абебский университет, Аддис-Абеба, Эфиопия, ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2985-8057>, e-mail: girmagb@gmail.com

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