The Impact of Professional Development on Early Childhood Education Teachers

Shahrean Irani Binti Abdul Rashid[*1], Gurdip Kaur Saminder Singh[2], Ranjit Kaur P. Gernail Singh[3]

[1*,3]Faculty of Education and Humanities, UNITAR International University, Kelana Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, [2]UNITAR University College Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: gurdip.saminder@unitar.my, ranjit.kaur@unitar.my
Corresponding Author Email: shahrean@unitar.my

Abstract
This study explored the impact of professional development on educators in early childhood education. Professional development is essential for successful educational innovations, compelling educators to engage in continuous learning to adapt to system changes. However, challenges arise when the emphasis on participation is exaggerated, as educators may not always perceive it as an opportunity for improvement. This perception stems from standardised programs that fail to address specific needs, reduce their effectiveness in enhancing practices, and employ questionnaires and focus group discussions with seven educators from a private sector preschool. This study, which was qualitative in nature explored three dimensions of professional development among early childhood education teachers which includes impact on teaching practices, perceptions of effective professional development, and challenges related to educators' professional development. Findings from this study highlights the need for tailored professional development programs and adequate support to ensure sustainable improvements in teaching practices, emphasizing the importance of addressing educators' specific needs and providing ongoing support to maximize the benefits of professional development. By focusing on personalized approaches and follow-up mechanisms, educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of professional development initiatives and ultimately improve the quality of early childhood education.
Keywords: Preschool, Educators, Professional Development, Impact

Introduction
Educators' quality is paramount among the factors influencing the performance of preschool programs. The importance of competent early childhood educators who support young children and their families is widely recognized. The most effective educators impart foundational skills in early literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development that are essential for children's success. They also engage in cognitively stimulating and emotionally supportive interactions (Blewitt et al., 2021). How can we ensure that all early childhood

educators possess the requisite knowledge and skills for success? Policymakers are increasingly turning to professional development as a means to adequately prepare educators and enhance their teaching and intervention techniques. Policymakers and program directors have increasingly relied on professional development, which encompasses various strategies aimed at improving the quality of educators' practices to support early educators and subsequently enhance program quality (Eadie et al., 2019). Early educators who engage closely with children on a daily basis are believed to significantly influence program quality (Blewitt et al., 2020). I chose to research how educators perceive the impact of professional development on their teaching practices, as I often question its effects on my own. I have participated in numerous professional development programs as a teacher, typically held on weekends and often during school breaks. Early childhood professionals should possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and practices to provide young children with high-quality developmental and educational experience. The decision to investigate educators' perceptions of how professional development affects their teaching practices arose from the desire to understand the necessity of their participation in numerous professional development programs. The objective of this study is to identify some of the industry's best practices for maximizing the benefits educators derive from their professional development activities.

This research explored the critical relationship between professional development programs and their practical impact on teaching methodologies. By examining educators' perceptions, this study aimed to uncover insights into the effectiveness of these programs and their ability to enhance the knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood professionals. This investigation has potentially revealed valuable information about the alignment between professional development initiatives and educators' real-world needs in the classroom.

In specific this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Based on educators' perspectives, how does professional development impact their teaching practices?
2. What aspects of professional development do educators perceive as important?
3. What difficulties do educators encounter in connection with their professional development?

This study's focus on identifying the best practices for maximising the benefits of professional development activities is particularly significant for early childhood education. By analysing educators' experiences and opinions, this study uncovered strategies to improve the design, implementation, and outcomes of professional development programmes. The findings of this study contribute to more targeted and efficient training opportunities, ultimately benefiting both educators and young children by ensuring high-quality developmental and educational experiences.

Literature Review

Professional development plays a crucial role in enhancing early childhood education teachers' skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting young learners. Research has shown that can significantly improve teachers' instructional practices, classroom management techniques, and their understanding of child development (Kumar, 2023). These improvements translate into more effective teaching strategies, increased student engagement, and improved learning outcomes for young children. Additionally, professional

development opportunities can boost teachers' confidence, job satisfaction, and overall commitment to early childhood education (Purniningtyas et al., 2024). By staying current with the latest research and best practices, teachers are better equipped to address the diverse needs of their students and create inclusive and stimulating learning environments. Ultimately, investing in professional development for early childhood educators is an investment in the future of young children and the quality of the education they receive during their formative years.

Definition of Professional Development
Teachers' professional development refers to the continuous process of enhancing educators' knowledge, skills, and practices to improve their effectiveness in the classroom and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes. It encompasses a wide range of activities and experiences designed to promote professional growth including workshops, seminars, mentoring programs, peer observations, collaborative learning communities, and self-directed learning opportunities. Effective professional development is characterised by its ongoing nature, content-focused approach, active learning methodologies, collaborative engagement, and job-embedded practices. It also incorporates data-driven decision-making, sustained implementation, alignment with educational standards, integration of technology, and differentiated strategies to meet educators' diverse needs. The ultimate goal of teachers' professional development is to equip educators with the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary to adapt to evolving educational landscapes, implement evidence-based instructional practices, and positively impact student achievement. By engaging in continuous professional growth, teachers can remain current with educational research, refine their pedagogical approaches, and contribute to the overall improvement of educational quality within their schools and communities.

Theory of Professional Development
The theory of professional development in education encompasses several key components that contribute to its effectiveness and impact on teaching practices and students' outcomes. Professional development is viewed as a continuous learning process, recognising that educators must adapt throughout their careers (Czerniawski, 2022). Effective programs focus on subject-specific content and pedagogical knowledge, helping teachers to address student misconceptions and scaffold learning more effectively (Sonmark et al., 2017). Active learning methodologies, such as role-playing and analysing student work, are emphasised to meaningfully engage teachers and facilitate changes in teaching practices (Macedo et al., 2018). Job-embedded practices ensure that learning is directly applicable to classroom contexts, whereas professional learning communities foster ongoing collaboration and a culture of continuous improvement (Park, 2022). Data-driven decision making informs both the content and evaluation of training initiatives, and programs are aligned with educational standards and school goals to ensure relevance (Simboteanu, 2021). The integration of technology differentiated strategies, and sustained implementation over time are crucial for creating lasting changes in teaching practices (Razali et al., 2022). Reflective practice, mentoring, and coaching components provide individualised support and encourage critical analysis of teaching methods (Quayson, 2022). Ultimately, the success of professional development is measured by its impact on student learning outcomes, and a systemic approach involving all levels of the educational system ensures comprehensive support for these efforts (Dewi et al., 2024) . By incorporating these elements, the theory of professional

development provides a framework for creating effective and impactful learning experiences for educators, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement of teaching practices and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Importance of Professional Development for Teachers' Development
Professional development plays a crucial role in teachers' growth and effectiveness, ultimately benefiting students' learning outcomes (Dewi et al., 2024). It provides educators with opportunities to enhance their subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and classroom management techniques (Rajalakshmi, 2022). Through ongoing professional development, teachers can stay updated with the latest educational research, instructional strategies, and technological advancements, enabling them to adapt their teaching methods to meet diverse student needs (Wilson & Thorpe, 2021).

Effective professional development programs foster collaboration among educators, allowing them to share best practices, reflect on their teaching, and engage in peer learning (Bücking et al., 2023). This collaborative approach not only improves individual teaching practices but also contributes to a positive school culture focused on continuous improvement (Anderson et al., 2021). By participating in workshops, seminars, and professional learning communities, teachers can develop a support network that extends beyond their immediate school environment, creating opportunities for the cross-pollination of ideas and innovative approaches to education (Keijzer et al., 2020).

Additionally, professional development helps teachers address the specific challenges they face in the classroom, such as differentiation for diverse learners or implementing new curriculum standards (Ndlovu, 2020). These targeted learning experiences enable educators to develop strategies to support students with special needs, English language learners, and gifted students, ensuring that all learners receive appropriate instruction and support (Campbell, 2021). Furthermore, professional development can equip teachers with the skills necessary to integrate technology effectively into their teaching practices, prepare students for the digital age, and enhance engagement in the classroom (Cohen & Mcintyre, 2024).

By investing in teachers' professional growth, schools and educational systems can enhance the quality of instruction, increase teachers' job satisfaction and retention, and ultimately improve student achievement (Tsai & Antoniou, 2021). Research has shown that teachers who regularly participate in high-quality professional development are more likely to implement evidence-based practices in their classrooms, leading to improved student outcomes across various subject areas (Purniningtyas et al., 2024) Moreover, professional development can help address teacher burnout and attrition by providing educators with the tools and support they need to navigate the challenges of their professions (Tyagi & Misra, 2021).

Regular participation in professional development activities also demonstrates teachers' commitment to lifelong learning, setting a positive example for their students and reinforcing the importance of education beyond the classroom (Musa et al., 2024). This model of continuous learning can inspire students to develop a growth mindset and embrace challenges as opportunities for personal and academic growth (Cole, 2024). Additionally, teachers who engage in ongoing professional development are better equipped to prepare

students for the rapidly changing demands of the 21st-century workforce, as they stay informed about emerging trends and skills required for future success (Dibenedetto, 2024)

Professional development also plays a crucial role in promoting equity and inclusion in education. By providing teachers with training on culturally responsive teaching practices, implicit bias awareness, and strategies for creating inclusive learning environments, schools can work towards closing achievement gaps and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education (Sharma et al., 2023). This focus on equity through professional development can lead to more inclusive curricula, improved school climates, and better outcomes for historically marginalised student populations (Willis & Schram, 2022).

Furthermore, professional development can extend beyond subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical skills to encompass areas such as social-emotional learning, mental health awareness, and trauma-informed teaching practices (Shalev & Gidalevich, 2024). By equipping teachers with a holistic understanding of student development and well-being, professional development programs can contribute to creating safer and more supportive learning environments that address the diverse needs of students beyond academic achievement (S & G, 2023).

In conclusion, professional development is a cornerstone of an effective education system, providing teachers with the knowledge, skills, and support necessary to excel in their roles and positively impact student learning. By prioritising ongoing professional growth, schools and educational institutions can foster a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and excellence that benefits educators, students, and society as a whole.

Previous Studies on Professional Development in Early Childhood Education
Professional development plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of early childhood education. Previous studies have highlighted their significance in improving teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices, ultimately benefiting young learners. (Alzahrani & Nor, 2022) demonstrated that ongoing professional development opportunities for early childhood educators lead to improved classroom interactions and more effective instructional strategies. Similarly, (Pölzl-Stefanec, 2021) found that teachers who participated in targeted professional development programs showed increased confidence in implementing developmentally appropriate practices and in managing diverse learning needs.

The impact of professional development extends beyond individual teacher improvement and influences the overall quality of early childhood education programs. For instance, (Özgenel et al., 2024) observed that centres with robust professional development initiatives consistently achieved higher ratings in quality assessment measures. Their longitudinal study revealed a positive correlation between the frequency of professional development activities and improvements in the program structure, curriculum implementation, and child outcomes.

(Kariuki et al., 2020) emphasized the importance of collaborative professional development approaches in early childhood settings. Their study revealed that peer learning and mentoring programs foster a supportive environment for educators to share their experiences and refine their teaching methods. Wilson (2017) further highlighted the positive impact of professional

learning communities on early childhood educators' ability to adapt to changing curriculum standards and to integrate new technologies into their classrooms.

The format and delivery of professional development also plays a crucial role in its effectiveness. (Windon et al., 2021) compared various professional development models and found that blended approaches combining in-person workshops with online learning modules yielded the most significant improvements in teacher practice. They noted that this format allowed for immediate application of new skills and ongoing reflection and refinement.

(Schachter et al., 2019) explored the long-term effects of sustained professional development on early childhood education quality. The findings indicate that teachers who engaged in regular professional development activities over an extended period showed significant improvements in their ability to create stimulating learning environments and promote children's social-emotional development. Garcia and Martinez (2022) corroborated these results, demonstrating that ongoing professional development was associated with higher levels of child engagement and improved school readiness outcomes.

The content of professional development programmes is equally important (Mohd Tahir et al., 2021) conducted a comprehensive review of professional development curricula and identified the key areas that consistently led to improved teaching practices. These include child development theory, effective communication strategies, play-based learning approaches, and strategies for creating inclusive environments. The study emphasised the importance of aligning professional development content with current research and best practices in early childhood education.

(Ifedi & Ogbeche, 2024) investigated the role of professional development in addressing specific challenges faced by early childhood educators, such as supporting children with special needs and promoting language development in multilingual settings. Their research underscored the importance of tailored professional development programs that address the unique contexts and needs of early childhood education settings. (Gunn et al., 2020) further emphasized the need for professional development initiatives that focus on culturally responsive teaching practices to support diverse learner populations in early childhood classrooms.

The integration of technology into early childhood education has also become a focal point for professional development. (Xu & Jack, 2022) examined the impact of technology-focused professional development on early childhood educators' digital literacy skills and their ability to integrate technology effectively into early learning experiences. Their findings suggest that such targeted professional development could enhance teachers' confidence in using digital tools to support young children's learning and development. (Mark P Oriel, 2022) highlighted a positive correlation between teachers' participation in high-quality professional development and improved job satisfaction and retention rates in early childhood education settings.

Professional development also plays a crucial role in supporting educators' mental health and wellbeing. (Muzyka, 2022) found that professional development programs that incorporated stress management techniques and self-care strategies led to reduced burnout rates among

early childhood educators. This, in turn, positively impacts the quality of teacher-child interactions and the overall classroom climate.

(Kalicki & Koenig, 2021) conducted a meta-analysis of professional development studies in early childhood education, revealing that effective programs shared common characteristics such as sustained duration, active learning components, and alignment with teachers' specific needs and contexts. (Mui Pei Ern, 2022) explored the role of professional development in mitigating burnout among early childhood educators, emphasising the importance of programs that address both pedagogical skills and emotional well-being.

The impact of professional development extends beyond individual classrooms to influence policies and practices at a broader level. (Keung et al., 2021) examined how professional development initiatives contributed to the implementation of new early learning standards across multiple states. Their findings highlight the critical role of targeted professional development in ensuring the consistent and effective adoption of educational policies.

Furthermore, professional development has been shown to enhance collaboration between early childhood educators and their families. (Caspe & Hernandez, 2023) demonstrated that educators who participated in family engagement-focused professional development were better equipped to build strong partnerships with parents and caregivers, leading to improved communication and more cohesive support for children's learning and development.

Methodology
Research Design
Focus groups was specifically utilised in this research methodology's qualitative approach to gather data on the impact of professional development on early childhood education educators. Research instruments, including semi-structured questionnaires for interviews, were also presented. A summary of the methodologies employed, data processing procedures, and reliability and validity of the acquired data is provided. The participants' cumulative professional growth experiences significantly influenced the data collected from them, which provided a rationale for pursuing this investigation within an interpretative paradigm. A focus group comprising seven participants was organised using an interview guide developed specifically for this study. This approach was adopted because this study aimed to elucidate educators' perceptions of the research issue. Consequently, the participants' professional development experiences substantially influenced the data collected from them, which provided an interpretive perspective for conducting this research study. To emphasise the "thoughts and feelings of participants in the growth of the social world", this research study employs a subjective approach (Liu, 2021).

The focus group interview utilising a qualitative approach was selected because of its capacity for in-depth examination of educators' perceptions regarding the impact of professional development programs on their practice. In instances where the boundaries between the phenomena and contexts are not clearly defined, a case study approach is employed to investigate the phenomenon in question. This methodology facilitates a comprehensive analysis and description of a specific instance, topic, or workgroup (Bakar & Connaughton, 2009). A literature review indicated that a focus group methodology enables detailed analysis and examination of an activity or occurrence in situ by utilising multiple methods and data

sources (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020). For the purposes of this study, the parameters were established by limiting the enquiry to a group of preschool educators with the objective of gathering rich data within the constraints of the available timeframe.

This study was conducted at Klang Valley preschool. All seven school educators participated in the survey. The seven educators who responded to the survey served as the basis for data collection. The sample comprised an experienced teacher, junior teacher, and teacher who served as the principal of the school. Focus groups were conducted in English, and there were no barriers to participation as the selected educators were able to converse fluently in English. All female participants were aged between 25 and 45 years. The types of data to be gathered for this study were selected with continual reference to the research questions. This approach effectively mitigates the risk of becoming overwhelmed by the volume of information gathered throughout the process. The researcher's epistemology, which influenced this aspect of the research design, informed the selection of the data pertinent to this investigation. Designing and developing an effective questionnaire is challenging, particularly for novice researchers (Taherdoost, 2022). A significant amount of time is required during the preparation and planning phases. The questionnaire for this research study was designed and subsequently utilised to supplement the data gathered from the interview sessions. Questionnaires were employed as the research instrument to gather preliminary data on educators' overall perceptions of the impact of professional development on educators' practices, followed by interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Qualitative Focus Group Questions served as the primary sources of data. A combination of closed- and open-ended questions was used in the semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The respondents were required to respond to questions in the first segment that elicited information about their background, including age and duration of their teaching experience. The second half of the questionnaire in Part 2 included questions regarding professional development data in sections A, B, and C. The interview focused on the respondents' perspectives on their involvement with the professional development programs that they had participated in and their assessments of how their teaching practice had improved. The utilisation of these questionnaires facilitated the formulation of concepts regarding educators' general perceptions of the relationship between their professional development and teaching practices.

Research Instrumentation and Sampling
Focus group sessions were selected as research tools because of their capacity to gather in-depth information. The sessions were conducted online via Zoom and lasted approximately 60 min. To ensure convenience and accuracy, the focus group meetings were audio-recorded, and notes were manually documented. Participants provided consent prior to the commencement of the sessions, with access to consent forms provided via telephone. To gain familiarity with the interview content, a manual transcription of each session was undertaken. Subsequently, transcripts were numbered for ease of reference. Relevant participants were then provided with transcripts via email for review purposes. Participants were informed that if no response was received within two weeks, it would be assumed that they were satisfied with the transcript content, and the research would proceed to the next phase. The data analysis was then summarised and interpreted. A constant comparison method was

employed in this study. Data interpretation necessitated reflection on the actions and words of the respondents in the research, as well as abstracting their perspectives to comprehend the research.

Descriptions of the questionnaire were incorporated into the group interviews, along with information regarding the analysis of data from each method. The validity and reliability of the information obtained from this investigation were also discussed. Maintaining veracity in reporting research findings is essential in qualitative research. According to (Tusting, 2022), enhanced validity for interviews can be achieved by minimising bias to the greatest extent possible. The decision was made to employ research tools including questionnaires, group interviews, and document analysis. The participants in this study were presented with identical questions; however, the data sources were triangulated in addition to methodological triangulation due to their diverse perspectives on the issues posed. The validity and reliability of this study's findings were examined. To enhance research integrity in the study's design and analysis, these methodologies utilise a qualitative approach that facilitates the adoption of rich, in-depth, and multiple outcomes.

Demographic Data
Table 1
Teachers General Information

Teacher	Gender	Age	Qualification	Teaching Experience
1	Female	40-45	Master in Early Childhood	20 years
2	Female	40-45	Degree in Early Childhood	16 years
3	Female	30-36	Degree in Early Childhood	12 years
4	Female	30-36	Degree in Early Childhood	10 years
5	Female	25-28	Degree in Early Childhood	5 years
6	Female	25-28	Diploma in Early Childhood	4 years
7	Female	25-28	Diploma in Early Childhood	3 years

Qualitative Data Analysis
This table presents the educators' demographic information and professional backgrounds for a group of seven teachers. All the teachers in this sample were female, ranging in age from 25 to 45 years. Their qualifications varied, with one teacher holding a master's degree in early childhood, four possessing a bachelor's degree, and two having a diploma. The teaching experience of these educators' spans from 3 to 20 years, indicating a mix of novice and veteran teachers in the group

The data revealed some interesting patterns. The two most experienced teachers, with 20 and 16 years of experience, respectively, were also the oldest in the group, falling in the 40-45 age range. This finding suggests a correlation between age and teaching experience. Additionally, the three youngest teachers, aged 25-28, have the least teaching experience (3-5 years) and hold either a degree or diploma in Early Childhood. This information provides insights into the composition of teaching staff, highlighting a diverse range of experience levels and qualifications within the early childhood education setting.

Findings
The findings presented in this section are presented based on themes and sub-theme. Three major themes were developed based on the research questions of this study.

Figure 1 illustrated a brief introduction to the themes developed through the data analysis.

Research Question 1
Based on educators' perspectives, how does professional development impact their teaching practices?

Theme 1
Impact of Professional Development

Positive feedback			
Codes	**Teachers' satements**	**Total responses**	**Percentage (%)**
PDP	"The professional development programmes I attended were very meaningful to me." "I feel motivated to apply the new skills and knowledge I learned in my daily practice." "After the courses, I was eager to improve how I work with children." "Professional development is really important for my growth as an educator." "The training helped me keep up with the evolving needs of the children. "Professional development isn't just helpful — it's essential for my teaching." "Continuous learning through professional development is necessary for me to adapt to new challenges.	7	100%
Learning To Use A New Or Alternative Teaching Strategy	"For me it was a learning and educational experiences" "I enjoyed the lesson and the content."	3	40%
Becoming A More Thoughtful Practitioner	"I'll give that a shot. Can that possibly be used with my class? "You can see how well that tactic worked. They're better at reading now	4	60%

Being Capable Of Improving Subject Knowledge	" I'm able to control my classroom better" "I wish I had known that information when I was rearing my own kids."	2	20%
Observing The External Influences That Led To Changes In Educating And Staying Ahead Of Them	"I firmly believe that we must remain engaged in what is occurring, and in order to do so, you must constantly learning." "I have attended first aid training. I feel it had help me in handling the children in an accident situation better" "I have went for Phonics workshop, and it had help me with teaching the children to read faster" " Yes I agree, for me as well"	7	100%
Becoming More Certain When They Teach	"I attended a workshop on play-base curriculum and it help me in designing appropriate lesson"	4	60%

Research Question 2
What aspects of professional development do educators perceive as important?

Theme 2
Aspects of Effective Professional Development

Positive feedback			
Codes	**Teachers' satements**	**Total responses**	**Percentage (%)**
Teachers needs	"Professional development programmes must be tailored to teachers' specific needs to be truly effective." "Customised training has a greater impact on improving our teaching practices." "One-size-fits-all professional development doesn't meet the real challenges we face in the classroom." "Effective professional development listens to and addresses what teachers actually need." "Personalised professional development is essential for meaningful growth and better outcomes for children."	7	100%
Professional Development Methods	"I believe that when we had a significant amount of outside PD, it decreased people's power." "If it is co-taught or modelled and followed by a discussion, I believe I will learn more." "We were involved in different school-based professional development activities like mentoring, coaching, and professional learning communities."	7	100%

Codes	Teachers' satements	Total responses	Percentage (%)
	"Besides attending programmes by outside providers, we gained a lot from in-school initiatives." "We learnt the most through modelling and coaching compared to attending external workshops or training."		
Negative feedback			
Codes	Teachers' satements	Total responses	Percentage (%)
Individually tailored	"Despite the fact that every one of us has a distinct learning style and that the teachers have varying levels of experience, the professional development we received was always conducted at the same level and at the same pace for everyone." "I believe it would be better if it was more individually tailored." "Some unsuccessful professional development opportunities in the past that weren't catered to their specific requirements."	4	60%
Reasonable timeframe	"I occasionally feel as though I don't have enough time to properly consolidate my information or new learning." "It can be disappointing that I don't have time to put that into practise." "Time, in my opinion, is a key factor in successful professional development. I want to implement it but I don't have enough time to integrate it into my routine." "Having enough time to apply new knowledge in our teaching made a big difference in how successful professional development was." "When we were given time to practise and integrate new ideas, professional learning felt more effective and meaningful."	5	70%

Research Question 3
What difficulties do educators encounter in connection with their professional development?
Theme 3
The Difficulties or Challenges

Codes	Teachers' satements	Total responses	Percentage (%)
Overwhelmed With Professional Development Initiatives	"Before I had a chance to truly sink my "teeth" into one, I was already carrying another." "The PD facilitators frequently believe that the focus area is the only thing we teach, but in reality, we must be generalists." "There are occasionally less new seminars available the longer we've been doing this, in my experience."	3	40%
Increasing the Availability Of Possibilities	"Things were packed at schools, but when we had it, it was incredibly helpful." "Sometimes during school hours. Unless you can find someone to watch over your class to do that, you still must be present in your own classroom. So, that's extremely challenging."	2	20%
The Price	"Because of how delicate our financial situation is, I'm always aware of it. I haven't taken many courses recently as a result of the cost." "I struggle to balance work and studies"	2	20%

Discussion
The data collected from the interviews indicated that overall, early childhood educators perceived professional development programs as having some impact on their teaching methodologies. This study explored participants' perceptions of their professional growth and how they believe it has influe The data collected from the interviews indicated that overall, early childhood educators perceived professional development programs as having some impact on their teaching methodologies. This study explored participants' perceptions of their professional growth and how they believe it has influenced their instructional practices(Blewitt et al., 2020) . The data analysis also identified four significant issues: feeling overwhelmed by professional development initiatives, the need to increase the availability of opportunities, and the cost associated with professional development training.

This study primarily aimed to examine the effects of professional development on educators in early childhood education. This study acknowledges its limitations and offers recommendations to enhance educators' opportunities for professional advancement(Khasawneh et al., 2023) . The results pertaining to the original research objectives are presented in detail in the subsequent section.

This study demonstrated that professional development for educators positively influences their teaching methodologies (Murray et al., 2021). According to (Kabilan, 2019), most

teachers expressed satisfaction with their professional development experience. This finding indicates that, to maintain high teaching standards, professional development for educators is essential. Such a development is generally perceived as a means of enhancing knowledge within the field. Educators who engage in professional development programs not only deepen their content understanding, but also gain confidence in their practice (Holland et al., 2021). The research further revealed that exchanging ideas with colleagues and receiving constructive feedback from peers enhanced students' comprehension of subject matter. Educators were able to address these challenges as they acquired a profound understanding of the subject. This progression is likely to lead to increased student engagement with specific topics being taught. As educators cultivate greater awareness and insight into their teaching practices, professional development helps them become reflective practitioners. Importantly, professional development experiences also enable educators to remain abreast of changes within the educational system, ensuring that their teaching practices remain aligned with the evolving needs of their students.

Educators assert that professional development is deemed successful when the following conditions are met: teachers' needs, reasonable timeframe, and effective professional development methods. This study underscores the importance of considering teachers' existing knowledge and skills to tailor professional development to their specific needs. A strong emphasis on student learning has been identified as a critical factor that influences the effectiveness of professional development for educators (Audisio et al., 2024). This finding highlights the necessity for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development, enabling swift application of newly acquired knowledge in the classroom. According to(Dahal, 2023), teachers perceive professional development as having the most direct impact on their ability to critically evaluate their practice.

Time was identified as a critical factor in the successful implementation of educators' professional development experiences. Educators must allocate sufficient time to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their practice to ensure that the intended modifications to teaching practices are effectively realised. This study acknowledges its limitations and offers recommendations to enhance educators' opportunities for professional advancement(Perifanou et al., 2022) . They perceived that engaging in one professional development activity at a time, followed by adequate time to practice and integrate it into their teaching practice, would enable them to assimilate new information and consolidate it effectively. Furthermore, it is asserted that their ability to sustain improvements in practice is impeded by a lack of consistency and follow-up, which is attributed to inadequate planning. nced their instructional practices. The data analysis also identified four significant issues: feeling overwhelmed by professional development initiatives, the need to increase the availability of opportunities, and the cost associated with professional development training. This study primarily aimed to examine the effects of professional development on educators in early childhood education. This study acknowledges its limitations and offers recommendations to enhance educators' opportunities for professional advancement. The results pertaining to the original research objectives are presented in detail in the subsequent section.

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Time was identified as a critical factor in the successful implementation of educators' professional development experiences. Educators must allocate sufficient time to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their practice to ensure that the intended modifications to teaching practices are effectively realised. A significant challenge faced by educators concerning their professional development is external professional development overload. They perceived that engaging in one professional development activity at a time, followed by adequate time to practice and integrate it into their teaching practice, would enable them to assimilate new information and consolidate it effectively. Furthermore, it is asserted that their ability to sustain improvements in practice is impeded by a lack of consistency and follow-up, which is attributed to inadequate planning.

Research Limitation and Recommendations
The scope of this study is confined to a focus group discussion with educators from a private preschool in Klang Valley, which constitutes one of its limitations. Consequently, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to a broader population because of the restricted sample size. To ensure the accuracy of the data collected and the validity of the research conclusions, meticulous attention and precautions were taken. This included the use of diverse methodological and data sources during the data collection process. The study also examined educators' general professional experiences, which may vary based on individual experiences. Educators' perspectives on the influence of professional development on their teaching practices are discussed based on their personal experiences. It would be advantageous if the

study focused on analysing educators' perspectives on the impact of a specific professional development program.

As previously indicated, participants concurred that effective professional development for educators must be tailored to meet individual needs. Recognising its significance, educational institutions must urgently leverage the extensive expertise of their faculty and establish collaboration between internal and external specialists. Professional teacher development programs must be meticulously and systematically designed. To ensure alignment with prior professional development experiences, it is essential to integrate new insights with existing knowledge while preserving the modifications made to pedagogical approaches. Schools should focus on enhancing their professional learning communities to provide educators with a platform for continuous learning opportunities, thus enabling them to benefit from each other's experiences. Professional development must address educators' concerns regarding students' academic performance. Educators are more motivated to engage in professional development if they believe that it will assist them in addressing challenges related to their students' educational outcomes. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, this study should be replicated with the involvement of several educators' focus groups. It is recommended that this research be conducted with a cohort of educators who share similar experiences to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive the impact of professional development on their teaching practices.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact of professional development on early childhood education teachers, revealing that educators recognize the continuous need to enhance their pedagogical methods to better support learning outcomes. The findings indicate that while professional development programs contribute positively to teaching methodologies, educators often find themselves constrained by the frequent scheduling of these initiatives. This overlap can hinder their ability to effectively implement and integrate new knowledge into their classroom practices.

To address these challenges, it is essential to allow educators adequate time to assimilate and apply what they have learned. Establishing professional learning communities can facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge, further reinforcing the adoption of new practices. The study underscores the importance of tailoring professional development programs to meet the specific needs of educators, ensuring that these experiences are both meaningful and manageable.

Moreover, educators reported feeling overwhelmed by the multitude of professional development opportunities available, often leading to a sense of burnout. This research emphasizes the necessity for targeted professional development initiatives that not only address individual challenges but also provide ongoing support and follow-up to sustain improvements in teaching practices.

In summary, a strategic approach to professional development, one that is customized, paced appropriately, and supported by a collaborative framework can significantly enhance the effectiveness of these programs. By focusing on individualized needs and fostering a culture

of continuous improvement, educational institutions can empower educators to thrive and, in turn, improve the quality of early childhood education for young learners.

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