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Beyond the Classroom: Museum-Based Experiential Activities as a Catalyst for Teacher Reflection, Innovation, and Collaboration within a TAG Framework in Vietnam

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Abstract:
Background: *Museum-based experiential learning has long been recognised as an environment that engages learners cognitively, socially, and emotionally in ways that formal classrooms rarely manage. Teacher professional development, by contrast, has remained largely confined to training events, with well-documented limitations in producing any lasting change in what actually happens in classrooms. The overlap between these two areas, namely cultural institutions as places where teachers themselves can learn, has received very little research attention, and none at all in the Vietnamese EFL context. Since no studies have examined museum-based co-learning as a mechanism for teacher professional growth within a structured collaborative framework, we have selected this study to evaluate the effect of a full-day museum visit on the reflective practice, pedagogical innovation, and peer collaboration of in-service English language teachers participating in a Teacher Activity Group (TAG) project in Vietnam.*
Materials and Methods: *In this qualitative case study, two experienced female Vietnamese English teachers from a lower secondary school in Thai Nguyen province took part alongside forty of their students, aged 13 to 14, in a full-day visit to the Museum of Cultures of Vietnam's Ethnic Groups. The visit included three activities: a guided tour of ethnic cultural exhibits conducted in English, a beeswax painting workshop, and an ethnic-themed game facilitated in English. Data were collected from three sources: semi-structured interviews conducted approximately two weeks after the visit, reflective journals completed by both teachers within the first week, and structured observation notes recorded during the excursion across five dimensions of teacher engagement. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach was used to analyse the full dataset inductively.*
Results: *Three themes emerged from the data. Both teachers reported a meaningful shift in their understanding of what it feels like to be a learner, shaped by taking part in the beeswax painting workshop alongside their own students. Real-time reflection was observed during the visit itself, with Teacher B spontaneously reconsidering her instructional approach after watching the museum guide communicate through gestures rather than explanation. Within two weeks of the visit, both teachers had introduced changes to their classroom practice: Teacher A allowed more room for error in speaking tasks, while Teacher B adopted a gesture-first approach to giving instructions. Two concrete collaborative outcomes also emerged without any prompting, a classroom museum corner using photographs from the visit and a shared digital folder for ongoing resource exchange.*
Conclusion: *Museum-based co-learning, when embedded within a structured TAG framework and followed up with deliberate reflection, produced clear shifts in teacher empathy, classroom practice, and peer collaboration among in-service EFL teachers in Vietnam.*
Key Word: *Teacher professional development; museum-based learning; experiential learning; Teacher Activity Group (TAG); Vietnam; EFL; reflective practice; pedagogical innovation; collaborative professional development.*

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I. Introduction

Teacher professional development is one of those topics that generates more policy documents than it does genuine change. This is not a cynical observation; it reflects something documented repeatedly in the research literature. Training events happen, certificates are issued, and classrooms carry on much as before.[1] The gap between what institutions offer teachers in the name of professional learning and what actually shifts their practice has been a source of frustration for researchers and practitioners alike for decades.

Vietnam makes this problem visible in a particular way. English language teachers in secondary schools there navigate daily realities that most professional development frameworks simply ignore: classes of forty-plus students, examination regimes that penalise experimentation, and a professional culture where doing what the ministry prescribes is considerably safer than doing what might actually work better.[2] Against this backdrop, the British Council-funded Teacher Activity Group (TAG) project represents a genuinely different kind of institutional commitment, one that takes teachers seriously as professional agents rather than implementation vehicles.

This paper reports on one episode within that project. Two experienced English teachers from a lower secondary school in Thai Nguyen travelled with forty of their students, aged 13 to 14, to the Museum of Cultures of Vietnam's Ethnic Groups. There, over the course of a day, they participated in three activities: a guided tour of ethnic cultural exhibits conducted in English, a beeswax painting workshop, and an ethnic-themed game facilitated in English. The teachers were not present as supervisors. They were present as learners. They painted. They played. They made mistakes in front of their classes. And then they had two weeks to think about what that meant.

Museums occupy an interesting theoretical position in the professional development literature, which is to say they are almost entirely absent from it. Hooper-Greenhill's work on museums as sites of meaning-making provides the most developed theoretical account of why cultural institutions produce forms of reflective engagement that formal classrooms rarely manage to generate.[3] Falk and Dierking have accumulated considerable empirical evidence that museum experiences engage learners simultaneously across personal, social, and physical dimensions in ways that classroom instruction, by its nature, cannot replicate.[4] Yet the intersection of museum-based pedagogy and teacher professional development in Vietnamese educational research is, to put it plainly, uncharted territory.[5]

Three questions shaped the inquiry:

1. How can museum-based experiential activities foster teacher professional development?
2. What forms of reflection and pedagogical innovation emerge when teachers participate alongside their students in cultural learning contexts?
3. How does collaboration within a TAG framework support sustained professional growth?

The data drawn on are semi-structured interviews conducted two weeks after the visit, reflective journals completed by both teachers within the first week, and structured observation notes from the excursion itself. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 describes the methodological choices and their reasoning. Section 4 presents the findings. Section 5 draws conclusions

II. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Professional Development: From Transmission to Transformation

If you were to ask most teachers what their professional development looks like, a familiar image emerges: a training day, a guest speaker, a certificate. But how much of what they've learned makes its way into the classroom? It's a question rarely asked, and an answer rarely given. The research literature, by contrast, has been asking it for some time. Short, expert-led, one-off training events do relatively little to alter classroom practice over the long term. What the evidence points toward, with increasing consistency, is something quite different: development that is sustained, that takes teachers' actual practice as its starting point, and that builds in genuine opportunities for collegial inquiry.[6] That is a substantively different proposition from what most institutions actually provide.

Central to this shift is Schon's now-canonical account of professional knowing. His distinction between "reflection-in-action", the largely implicit and continuous process of adjustment that occurs as practitioners go about their work and "reflection-on-action" the more explicit and backward-looking process of examining experience has endured precisely because it describes something important about the development of expertise.[7] This has been borne out by various pieces of empirical research in TESOL and language education more broadly. Indeed, reflective teaching habits have been associated with more adaptive and responsive teaching styles, as well as a more nuanced awareness of one's own working conditions.[8]

In Vietnam, the tension between this evidence base and actual professional development practice is particularly visible. Reflective and collaborative models have been endorsed in policy in principle; in practice,

however, the culture of professional development has favoured content delivery over inquiry, compliance over experimentation.[9] The structural conditions of large classes, heavy administrative demands, and limited peer collaboration time compound the problem considerably.

Professional learning communities, lesson study, and Teacher Activity Groups are each in their own way an attempt to infuse professional learning into the everyday texture of teachers' working lives. What unites them is the recognition that significant change cannot be brought about by a good intervention, however well-designed, without the structural support of a sustained effort and a culture in the organisation in which the teachers work that places professional learning as a priority.[10] A recent scoping review of in-service TESOL professional learning across the decade 2014 to 2024 found that models consistently associated with lasting pedagogical change are those combining sustained engagement, practice orientation, and collaborative structures.[11]

2.2 Experiential Learning Theory and the Teacher as Learner

Dewex was right to contend that only through engaging experiences in real-life situations can education become meaningful and relevant. If learning takes place in a vacuum, disconnected from reality, it only results in rote knowledge and not in transformed practice. Kolb has systematized this concept of learning as a four-stage process of experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and experimentation. In spite of its somewhat mechanical look, it is a true reflection of how adult learning, including that of the teacher, takes place.[12]

The particular implication that matters most for the present study concerns what happens when teachers are positioned as learners rather than experts. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin's argument that professional development must itself model the pedagogical conditions it asks teachers to create for students is, in one sense, straightforward, but it is violated constantly in practice. Loughran's concept of pedagogical empathy is more subtle: the claim that teachers who have genuinely experienced the discomfort of not-knowing are better equipped to scaffold that experience for their students, because they understand it from the inside.[13]

Research across diverse educational settings has found that teachers placed in authentic learner positions, engaging in unfamiliar practical activities alongside their students, report not only new pedagogical strategies but a qualitatively different relational understanding of the learning process itself.[14] Ha, Murray, and Reynolds, in a study directly relevant to the Vietnamese EFL context, found that professional development combining experiential and reflective activities produced measurable changes in both teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, which is precisely the dual shift that the broader literature identifies as the hallmark of effective professional learning.

2.3 Museums as Sites of Professional Learning

Hooper-Greenhill's account of museums as sites of meaning-making foregrounds the sensory, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of engagement with material culture, dimensions that are rarely activated simultaneously in formal classroom settings. Falk and Dierking's contextual model adds a further dimension: what visitors bring as individuals, their motivations, prior knowledge, and emotional states, interacts with the social conditions of the visit and with the physical environment itself. Each shapes, and is shaped by, the others. This outcome represents a form of learning that is not easily standardized because the circumstances cannot be reproduced with exactitude. Such resistance is not a negative trait; it is what makes the encounter at the museum truly unique from the standard lesson.[15]

What is perhaps less well-documented is the specific potential of museums as sites of professional learning for teachers. The evidence base is, on the whole, encouraging. Tran and King found that museum participation tends to renew professional enthusiasm and broaden curricular perspective. More recent work by Porter and colleagues has demonstrated that museums can function as boundary spaces, places where teachers encounter both external expertise and peer collaboration simultaneously, outside the hierarchical structures of the school, in conditions that appear genuinely conducive to professional inquiry.[16]

Anderson and Kisiel have noted that when teachers participate in museum activities alongside their own students, something structurally significant shifts: The traditional asymmetries of the classroom are temporarily set aside, and teachers and students are free to be actual co-explorers. The research question underlying this study is whether this suspension has any enduring professional consequences.[17]

2.4 The TAG Framework and Collaborative Professional Development

The British Council's Teacher Activity Group model is grounded in broadly sociocultural theoretical commitments. Drawing on Vygotsky's account of learning as mediated through social interaction, and on the extensive literature on professional learning communities, the TAG model positions teachers as agents of their own development working within locally-anchored peer structures. The sustained collegial exchange that is central to the model is not incidental: it is the mechanism through which individually-experienced insights can be collectively examined, refined, and applied.[18] The empirical analysis of teacher communities of practice by Eshchar-Netz and Vedder-Weiss provides evidence of the existence of this mechanism, as collaborative planning generates conditions favourable to reflective inquiry that may be impeded by hierarchical professional relations.

2.5 Research Gaps

While the evidence collected is reasonably persuasive as a whole, some areas still lack sufficient attention. Specifically, in research on teacher professional development in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, insufficient attention has been given to cultural institutions as sites for teacher development.[19] The role of teachers as co-participants in the experience of the student has been too little explored in settings in which teacher authority norms are strong. In addition, the issue of how such models as TAGs can translate individual experiential events into ongoing professional development has not been well explored. This study can be offered as a small contribution to all three of these areas.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative case study. The decision follows directly from the nature of the research questions, which are concerned with understanding the processes through which two specific teachers responded to a specific professional learning experience, not with measuring outcomes across a population. Yin describes a case study as an appropriate method for studying a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. Merriam and Tisdell emphasize the method's commitment to producing rich descriptions.[20] Statistical generalisation is not the aim; analytical transferability to comparable contexts is.

3.2 Participants and Setting

The sample included in the study consisted of two female Vietnamese English teachers from a lower secondary school in Thai Nguyen province. Teachers A and B agreed to be participants of the research. In terms of professional experience, teacher A had nine years of experience, mostly teaching seventh and eighth grades. Meanwhile, teacher B had eight years of experience, mostly teaching seventh to ninth grades. Both teachers worked with classes of approximately 40 to 45 students. Students were aged between 13 and 14. Most importantly, neither teacher had any experience of museum-based teaching and learning or of TAG format professional development. This supports the logical assumption that the professional changes observed in the teachers could be at least partly explained by the experience of the museum.

Forty lower secondary students accompanied their teachers, providing the authentic co-learning context on which the study's design depended. The Museum of Cultures of Vietnam's Ethnic Groups houses artefacts, clothing, tools, and artistic works drawn from the country's diverse ethnic communities, a cultural environment sharply different from the text-centred secondary school classroom in which both teachers ordinarily worked.

3.3 Data Collection

Three data sources have been employed. Methodological triangulation is an explicit objective. Each data source is designed to access a distinct dimension of the temporal and epistemic nature of the teachers' professional response to the museum experience.

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted approximately two weeks following the excursion. The timing is significant. It allows the teachers time to return to the classrooms and attempt to apply the lessons of the excursion, or not, as they may have chosen. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The topics explored included initial impressions of the excursion, the experience of co-learning with the students, reflective processes

triggered by the excursion, changes made or planned for the classrooms, and suggestions for future improvements. Kvale and Brinkmann's account of the semi-structured interview as a method balancing thematic consistency with openness to unanticipated responses is pertinent here.[21]

Throughout the week after their visit, both teachers wrote reflective journals. The journals were provided to the teachers without any pre-determined prompts in order to avoid producing teacher responses that merely conformed to the interests of the researcher rather than reflecting actual teacher reflection.

Observational notes completed during the excursion measured teacher engagement on five dimensions: participation in activities, quality and frequency of student interaction, use of English, evidence of teacher reflection-in-action, and spontaneous collaboration among the participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke.[22] Thematic analysis used inductive analysis where themes were not decided beforehand and instead were present in multiple close readings of the complete data set. From this process, three main themes emerged: teachers as learners; changes in pedagogical practices; and collaboration and reflection as professional growth. Theoretical literature was brought into the discussion with the themes when writing rather than before doing so.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Quality was assessed using Lincoln and Guba's framework of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.[23] Credibility rests primarily on triangulation across three distinct data sources. Transferability is addressed through the thick contextual description provided throughout. Dependability is supported by transparent documentation of methodological decisions at each stage. Confirmability was attended to through reflexive journaling in which the researcher noted and examined assumptions and positional biases as they arose.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research was designed so it met the BERA ethical principles when designing research in education.[24] Both teachers participated voluntarily and provided written informed consent. Students were told that the visit was a learning activity and that no student data would be reported. Pseudonyms are used throughout; the school's name is not disclosed; all data were stored on encrypted, password-protected files.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The results contained in this section were all based on data from all three data sets. Data from the three data sets were organised around the three themes that emerged from data analysis. Excerpts from the interviews and the reflective journals are presented in italics and verbatim. The observation data was paraphrased unless otherwise indicated.

4.1 Teachers as Learners: Role Reversal and Empathy

The most consistently reported professional insight from the museum visit was, on the surface, simple: both teachers discovered what it actually feels like to be a learner again. This is not as trivial as it sounds. There is a meaningful experiential difference between knowing abstractly that one's students find language learning difficult and having a visceral, embodied sense of what that difficulty is like from the inside. The beeswax painting workshop created precisely the latter kind of experience.

Teacher A described the experience in her reflective journal, written three days after the visit:

"Today I still think about the museum experience. It was quite different from my usual teaching. I felt like a learner again when I tried beeswax painting. Honestly, I was not very good, and my students laughed when I made mistakes. But strangely, I enjoyed it. I could feel what it is like to be in their shoes -- sometimes confused, sometimes nervous, sometimes proud when finishing something."

The emotional register here is worth noting. This is not the language of professional analysis; it is the language of felt experience. The confusion, the nervousness, and the unexpected pride are affective states that Teacher A

reports not merely observing in her students but temporarily sharing. Teacher B offered a closely parallel account in her interview:

"It changed the atmosphere. Normally in class, I am the authority, the one who explains. But at the museum, I was sitting next to my students, trying to paint, making mistakes. They laughed at me a bit, and I laughed too. It helped me understand how they feel when they struggle with English."

The significance of both accounts lies not in the experience of difficulty itself but in what that difficulty generated: empathic understanding of the learner's position. This shift corresponds structurally to the first and second stages of Kolb's cycle, with the concrete experience of struggling with the painting feeding directly into reflective observation about the learning process.[25]

The observation data provide corroborating evidence at the behavioural level. During the beeswax workshop, Teacher A was observed deliberately allowing a student to correct her technique rather than asserting her own authority, a behaviour strikingly atypical of her normal classroom conduct. Teacher B's response to the ethnic games was perhaps more revealing still: she was recorded saying aloud, apparently to herself, *"Maybe in class, I do not give them enough freedom. Here, they were more confident when I did not explain too much."* This constitutes what Schon identifies as reflection-in-action: a real-time adjustment of understanding in direct response to present experience.[26]

According to Loughran, when teachers engage as learners (alongside their students) in authentic ways, they are able to develop pedagogical empathy in ways that cannot be replicated through second-hand descriptions of authentic experiences; even those written by well-intentioned actors. The research conducted by King also appears to validate these findings; King's research indicates that teachers involved in community learning projects with students also develop significantly new methods of instruction and greater relational connections with their students.[27] In the present context, the museum environment appears to have amplified these effects by adding a cultural dimension: both teachers encountered ethnic craft traditions and indigenous games to which their students had no greater prior claim than they did. The levelling was genuine, and it was visible to all parties.

4.2 Shifting Pedagogical Practices: From Control to Facilitation

A second theme concerned a visible shift in both teachers' understanding of what effective pedagogical action might look like in practice. This was perhaps most concisely expressed in Teacher B's account of watching the museum guide during the tour:

"The guide talked quite fast. I caught myself thinking: if my Grade 7s were here, half would switch off after two minutes. But then I watched how the guide used gestures, pointed, told little stories. That helped comprehension without translation. I realised I need to chunk instructions. Show, then say."

What is notable here is how the insight arrived: not through instruction about teaching, but through direct observation of a practitioner solving a communication problem under real conditions, followed by the teacher's own inference. The concision of "Show, then say" suggests genuine conceptual crystallisation, not merely a vague resolve to change something.

Teacher A's trajectory followed a somewhat different path. Her initial reflection on the day of the visit was tentative: *"I usually correct every mistake in speaking tasks. After today, I think I should let students talk more, even if it is imperfect."* Two weeks later, by the time of the interview, this had moved from intention to practice: *"In my speaking class, I allowed students to make mistakes and encouraged them to use body language. Before, I corrected too much. Now I see learning can be more flexible."* This transition from the idea of a change to actually making a change is often deemed by researchers studying professional development as the most challenging progression, as well as the most critical progression, in terms of when it does occur.

Observation data from the ethnic games phase reinforced this picture: rather than relying on verbal correction as was typical of their classroom practice, both teachers turned instead to supportive gestures, smiling, and encouraging words as their primary tools for assisting students. In general, the results of this study are consistent with Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin's assertion that teacher development should develop teachers in the same types of learning environments it expects them to develop for their students.[28] It is important to acknowledge the structural constraints that both teachers identified as limiting the full enactment of a facilitative approach: large

classes, exam pressure, parental expectations prioritising demonstrable accuracy. The museum visit appeared to provide a clearer experiential reference point for navigating those constraints, not a solution to them.

4.3 Collaboration and Reflection as Seeds of Professional Growth

The third theme concerns the collaborative and reflective dynamics that emerged between the two teachers during the visit and in the weeks that followed. The observation notes record several instances of spontaneous, unsolicited peer dialogue during the excursion: Teacher B asking during the guided tour *"Do you think we can try this in speaking club?"*; both teachers discussing how the craft element might be simplified for younger students; a brief exchange after the ethnic games in which Teacher A noted that physical activity seemed to reduce student anxiety about speaking English.

Teacher A reflected on this in the interview: *"We talked a little about using the painting activity in English lessons. It made me realise that sharing ideas can be very motivating."* Teacher B was more specific about what structural conditions would be needed to sustain that motivation: *"I would like a follow-up meeting or online group where we can share how we applied ideas in our classes. Otherwise, the inspiration may fade."*

This concern has been backed by extensive literature regarding professional development. Avalos argues that just because an event is considered to be an important professional experience, it most likely will not result in an enduring change in what happens in the classroom or school unless there is ongoing institutional support or scaffolding to support that change. Stoll et al. have shown through myriad studies that for true professional collaboration to occur there must be a systematic approach instead of relying on individual dedication.[29] The evidence from the two weeks following the visit suggests that some transfer did occur. Teacher B piloted a "Mini-Museum Corner" in her classroom, using photographs from the visit alongside sentence frames for descriptive language tasks. Teacher A introduced a gesture-first instruction routine modelled on the museum guide's technique. Both represent the kind of creative transfer from experiential learning to classroom practice that Moreno-Lopez and colleagues have characterised as a hallmark of effective experiential professional development.[30]

Both teachers also agreed to bring student work samples to a planned debrief session and to maintain a shared digital resource folder. These are lightweight structures, but purposeful ones: they prefigure, in modest form, exactly the kind of ongoing collegial exchange that the TAG framework is designed to institutionalise.

4.4 Cross-Cutting Observations

In reflecting on the museum environment itself, it is possible to see how it played a significant role in creating an experience for visitors. The Museum of Cultures of Vietnam's Ethnic Groups was much more than a location to visit, it was part of the experience. The use of hands-on craft activities, culturally specific artifacts, and a physical separation from the classroom combined to form an environment in which participants were able to suspend the normal hierarchies of classroom interaction for a period of time. Hooper-Greenhill's description of museums as "sites of meaning-making" can therefore be understood in a much broader context., they allow for types of interactions that would be structurally discouraged in formal educational settings.[31]

The teachers were not simply removed from school and placed in a stimulating setting. They were placed there alongside their own students, in a situation where they held no special authority and where their performance was visible to the people they normally taught. It was that combination of cultural novelty meeting social exposure, that appears to have generated the empathic understanding described so candidly in the journals. Remove the students, and the professional experience would likely have been enjoyable but far less generative.

Perhaps the most practically significant observation about this visit is that its professional impact was largely dependent on how it was followed up. If structured follow-through isn't provided, including time set aside for collegial sharing and institutional recognition of the changes that teachers have made, then there is a risk that the impact will remain local and for a short term. This should not be taken as an argument against this type of experience, however, but rather as an argument for viewing them as beginning something rather than being all that it will be.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Answering the Research Questions

Research Question 1: How can museum-based experiential activities foster teacher professional development?

There is substantial evidence to suggest that museums generate a series of intertwined outcomes that are challenging to distinguish. Museums set up the circumstances for real role reversals by providing an authentic, social-based learning environment for teachers to act as active participants rather than directors of learning. In so doing the teacher experiences the kind of empathic understanding that would otherwise be difficult to achieve through some form of workshop-based model. The museum also serves as a source of both observational-type access to pedagogical practices that are sources of non-commanding behaviour that serve the school-aged population (by example) (i.e., movement-based language to show teachers how to chunk instructions in a way that allows them to sit in a state of confusion), and allows for confusion to exist without having to resolve it too rapidly. Whether these observations become classroom practice will depend on how teachers interpret them, but they will be available to them.

Another important observation to note with respect to how the above outcomes are generated is the distance that is created by experiencing a 'school'-like environment in a different context than outside of the 'school time' and the implication associated with who knows what in the establishment of this contract creates an opportunity for professional behaviour to be viewed and questioned in a different context than school. Finally, whether or not this distance is a dimension of museums, and/or whether or not other (non-museum) out-of-school learning environments would provide a similar 'professional distance' for teachers is a research topic that needs to be examined.

Research Question 2: What forms of reflection and pedagogical innovation emerge when teachers participate alongside students?

There were two different types of reflection happening at the same time, one way was through reflection-in-action while the teachers were visiting the museum by Teacher B having an impulse to reframe her teaching style that day as a result of the experience and Teacher A deciding to allow students to correct themselves. The other type was reflection-on-action between both teachers over the next two weeks as they made connections from specific parts of the museum experience to specific issues in their classrooms and developed innovative yet reasonably simple solutions to these problems. These innovations were relatively small in scale but demonstrated a real change in how both teachers viewed their roles, from one of correction/control to facilitator/learner agency.

Research Question 3: How does collaboration within a TAG framework support sustained professional growth?

The museum visit generated spontaneous and valued collegial exchange. Whether that exchange will produce sustained professional growth depends less on the teachers' motivation, which was evident throughout, than on whether institutional conditions exist to support ongoing collaboration. The TAG framework is precisely designed to address this gap. The teachers' own initiatives, including the planned debrief and shared digital folder, represent the kind of nascent collaborative infrastructure that, if recognised and supported institutionally, could develop considerably.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Significance

The study's contribution to the literature is modest in scope but specific in character. It adds a Southeast Asian empirical voice to a field that has remained overwhelmingly Western in its research base, a skew that matters when the findings of that literature are used to design professional development in places like Vietnam. More pointedly, it provides grounded evidence for something the literature has endorsed theoretically but rarely examined in practice: the professional value of positioning teachers as learners alongside their own students, in a setting where shared cultural material removes the usual asymmetries of classroom authority.

The study highlights the importance of intentionality in developing and implementing museum visits that promote professional learning at minimal additional cost. Examples of such activities are using gesture-based models, using artefacts as speaking prompts, and not correcting errors during the initial interaction. This type of activity

is not new; these examples come from two teachers who were able to make these types of observations because they were provided with the opportunity to observe and reflect on their practice. Therefore, it is important to create regular opportunities for teachers to be able to observe and reflect on their practice through museum visits. In Viet Nam, it is necessary to have a kind of professional development framework with opportunities available beyond just the training day and certificate.

5.3 Recommendations

Teachers should develop a reflective practice through journaling, peer conversations, and being mindful of their own lived experience of learning, not just as something they do once in a while, but as part of their normal course of business. Teachers should seek opportunities to learn alongside students in community settings.

For school leaders: create protected time for reflection and peer exchange following experiential professional development. Treat informal pedagogical innovation as worthy of institutional recognition and dissemination.

For TAG designers: build explicit follow-up structures into experiential initiatives from the outset. Visiting a museum without any way to continue talking about it is not going to have much impact even if the visit was designed well.

For policymakers: Review what you are currently doing with professional development and see how much you will be able to add to the amount of reflective/collaborative/experiential content that you can provide. Explore potential for creating formal partnerships between schools/cultural institutions with designated funding.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

The limits of this study are worth stating plainly. A sample of two teachers precludes generalisation, and two weeks is insufficient to assess the durability of professional change. The researcher's presence during the visit may have influenced the teachers' behaviour and subsequent reflections. Future work would benefit considerably from longitudinal designs tracking classroom practice over six to twelve months, from samples large enough to permit comparative analysis, and from studies that examine student language outcomes alongside teacher development within the same project. There is also scope for research specifically designed to examine how TAG structures can sustain the professional gains generated by single experiential events, a question the present study raises but cannot fully answer.

5.5 Closing Reflection

This study began with an observation that is simple on the surface but less so in its implications: two experienced teachers, placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment alongside their own students, came away thinking differently about their professional practice. The more interesting question is why. Why does this particular configuration of conditions appear to generate the kind of professional reflection that workshop attendance typically does not?

The answer, if the data are to be believed, lies less in the museum as such and more in the combination of conditions it created. The cultural material was unfamiliar to everyone present. The activities demanded physical engagement that language instruction rarely calls for. Genuine uncertainty was in the room, and the sustained presence of students who normally look to these teachers for certainty made that uncertainty professionally meaningful rather than merely uncomfortable. The Museum of Cultures of Vietnam's Ethnic Groups did not deliver professional development. It created a situation in which professional development could happen naturally, through the encounter of curious teachers with a world that neither they nor their students had ready-made authority to interpret. In that shared uncertainty, something educationally real took place.

The evidence gathered here points, cautiously but with some conviction, toward the possibility that such conditions can be created deliberately and at scale, in museums, in cultural institutions, in community settings wherever schools are willing to look beyond their own walls. Whether that potential is realised depends, as it usually does, not on the quality of the individual experience but on the institutional will to support what comes after it.

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