



## Helping EFL teachers build capacity for effective curriculum implementation: A case study<sup>1</sup>

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

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The study presents the outcomes of capacity-building training that aims to facilitate and enhance Turkish EFL teachers' curriculum fidelity in the state school context and provides in-depth insights into the issue in this context. After the training, all the participants developed positive perceptions about the curriculum. Five participants' stages of concern evolved to concerned about and not resistant to the curriculum. One participant's concerns altered to not resistant but unconcerned, whereas five participants' concerns remained resistant. Only one participant showed ideal development, both in her stages of concern and instructional practices. As well as the insufficiency of curriculum-specific formal training, school-level institutional support, and individual and collective sense-making out of the curriculum were found to lack in the context. Whereas explicit grammar teaching and assessment were revealed to form a comfort zone, teaching and assessing language skills, especially speaking and writing, presented a challenge for the teachers. The ineffectiveness of train-the-trainers, and the need for curriculum maps and mentors were also asserted in the study.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, knowledge and education are seen as the primary drivers of social and economic change (Muhammad, 2020). Education, which is provided through curriculum, aims to enable students to produce intellectual artifacts, innovations, and/or actions by learning better/deeper, thinking critically and creatively, and collaborating. The curricula are shaped/reshaped by the national educational authorities to integrate the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by the century (Alismail & Mcguire, 2015; Gouëdard et al., 2020; Nnabuike et al., 2016).

The implementation of a curriculum as intended by its developers is called curriculum fidelity and is considered to play a critical role in achieving the objectives of an education system. As teachers are the key players in curriculum implementation (Baş & Şentürk, 2019; Bediako, 2019), their implementation fidelity has become a significant issue of research, especially since the 1970s. The studies investigating the impact of implementation on program outcomes have revealed that although the level of implementation affects educational outcomes and contributes to accomplishing the targets and student success (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), teachers' implementation of the school curricula lacked fidelity (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Nawastheen, 2021; Nevenglosky et. al., 2019).

The concept of curriculum fidelity as a research field is relatively new in the Turkish context (Bümen et al., 2014); the issue has been addressed for a variety of subject curricula since the 2000s (Arslan Çelik & Gelmez Burakgazi, 2021; Cetin-Berber & Vásquez-Colina, 2016; Süer & Kinay, 2022). The studies on the English curriculum, which are not many, also show that the EFL teachers cannot implement the curriculum fully and faithfully; there is a gap between the objectives of the curriculum and teachers' implementations of it, which are cited as not having awareness of the curriculum's targeted outcomes, teaching and assessing the structural and linguistic elements of the language as separate topics, and not integrating them into four language skills that mimic the real-life uses of the language (Aksoy, 2020; An, 2020; Arslan Çelik, 2020; Karabacak & Kürüm-Yapıcıoğlu, 2020; Kırkgöz, 2008). The issue was also studied by Öztürk (2020) in an autoethnographic article that revealed the researcher's dilemmas stemming from the lack of alignment between the intended curriculum and teachers' instructional practices in the context.

Implementation fidelity has been addressed in the theoretical framework of change research, and some models and theories have been developed to understand the complex process of change (Olson et al., 2020; Reinholz & Andrews, 2020): the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM, hereafter), and the Theory of Educational Change are among them, which formed the conceptual frameworks of the present case study.

CBAM views curriculum fidelity as a matter of learning for change and having capacity for change and being receptive to change (George et al., 2006; Hall & Hord, 2015). The model asserts that change is a personal process, which can be facilitated through interventions, and it is highly affected by contextual factors. CBAM calls an individual's feelings, reactions, perceptions, and attitudes concerns based on Fuller's studies (1969) and asserts that these concerns follow a developmental path when they are understood and resolved with facilitative interventions. It has three diagnostic tools to predict, evaluate and facilitate the implementation of an innovation: the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ)- survey, Levels of Use (LoU)- interviews, and Innovation Configuration Maps (ICM). CBAM has been used in educational settings for more than 40 years (Olson et al., 2020), and a large literature of CBAM studies that aim at facilitating and enhancing teachers' implementation fidelity exists (Apau, 2021; Haines, 2018; Nawastheen, 2021; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Wang, 2014). In the Turkish context, the studies that utilise CBAM to facilitate teachers' adoption of educational innovations by understanding their concerns have been increasing (Gökçek & Baki, 2013; Kara & Bümen, 2023; Kayaduman & Delialioğlu, 2016; Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019).

Capacity building, one of the seven principles in the Theory of Educational Change (Fullan, 2006): a focus on motivation, learning in context, changing context, a bias for reflective action, tri-level engagement, and persistence and flexibility in staying the course, refers to “the process of assisting an individual or group to gain insights, knowledge, and experiences needed to solve problems and implement change” (UNESCO-IBE, 2013, p. 124). It entails “some kind of external intervention or support with the intention of facilitating or catalyzing change” (Simister & Smith, 2010, p. 4). Teachers’ need for ongoing capacity building and institutional support for curriculum fidelity is underscored, and the lack of formal training on the curriculum is pointed out as one of the factors affecting the implementation fidelity (Gouédard, et al., 2020; Kırkgöz, 2008; Pring, 2015).

Teachers’ capacity-building needs are defined by UNESCO-IBE as follows: a) understand their changing roles as curriculum changes, b) comprehend curriculum objectives and national curriculum standards, c) master subject matter and pedagogical skills to deliver subject-specific content, d) have a positive attitude to curriculum change and be an agent of change, e) break down isolation and develop team spirit, f) engage in continued professional learning and development (2013, p. 126). OECD also emphasizes that teachers should be equipped with self-reflection and the research tools for action research to develop their capacities for effective curriculum implementation (2012).

Although, in the relevant literature, the Turkish EFL teachers’ implementation fidelity and the factors affecting it were investigated by several studies (Bümen et al., 2014), there is no study addressing the question of how to facilitate and enhance their implementation fidelity. The present study intends to fill in this gap by seeking answers to the questions below:

1. To what extent are the Turkish EFL teachers in the state school context concerned about the current curriculum?
2. After the capacity-building training, will there be a change?
  - a) In the Turkish EFL teachers’ perceptions about the current curriculum,
  - b) to the extent that they are concerned about it,
  - c) in the way they implement it, and
  - d) if there is no change in their implementations, what are the reasons behind it?

## **METHOD**

Implementation fidelity is regarded as a complicated issue (Cheung & Wong, 2012). As case study methodology allows for examining complex, real-life issues and applying theories to practice for creating effective treatments (Cooley et al., 1997; Yin, 2009), a case study approach was adopted.

### **Research design**

A multiple instrumental case study was designed and conducted by utilizing multiple methods in multiple phases over an educational year. In the initial phase, the survey data were collected to understand to what extent the Turkish EFL teachers in the state school context across Turkey were concerned about the current curriculum, if they had any formal training and instructional support regarding it. The findings showed the teachers’ need to build capacity to accept and implement the current curriculum faithfully (see Figure 1).

### **Participants**

In the initial phase, 149 Turkish EFL teachers working at state schools across Turkey and using the current English curriculum were purposively sampled to complete the SoCQ. The teachers’ years of experience ranged from 0-15 (55%) to 16-30 (45%) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Teachers' demographics in phase I (n=149)*

School Types	AHS	PS	SS	RAHS	V&TAHS
	84 (56%)	3 (2%)	19 (13%)	17 (11%)	26 (18%)
Regions	Marmara	Black Sea	Aegean	Mediterranean	
	62 (41%)	11 (7%)	15 (10%)	13 (9%)	
	Central	Eastern	S.E. Anatolia		
	22 (15%)	4 (3%)	22 (16%)		
Gender	Male	Female			
	36 (24%)	113 (76%)			

\*[AHS (Anatolian High School), PS (Primary School G 2-4), RAHS (Religious Anatolian High School), V&TAHS (Vocational&Technical Anatolian High School), SS (Secondary School G 5-8)]

In the second phase, eleven Turkish EFL teachers working at the state schools in a district in Istanbul (Table 2) volunteered to participate in the capacity-building training. The training was organized by the District Directorate of Ministry of National Education (MoNE) upon examining the researcher's qualifications. The five-day theoretical part of the training was conducted at the library of one of the schools in the district. At the end of the theoretical part, the participants were summatively assessed by a multiple-choice test in accordance with the course specification of MoNE and were awarded certificates. None of the participants had a post-graduate degree and had taken any formal training specific to the current curriculum. Only one of them had attended two train-the-trainers concerning the previous curricular revisions.

**Table 2.** *Teachers' demographics in phase II (n=11)*

Teacher	Major (B.A)	Years of Exp.	Teaching Grade
<b>Figen</b>	ELL	21	9, 10, 12
<b>Serap</b>	ELL	21	9, 10, 12
<b>Canan</b>	ELE	22	11, 12
<b>Elif</b>	ELE	10	9, 10
<b>Merve</b>	PHIL in Eng.	20	5-8, 9, 10
<b>Gül</b>	ELL	15	4
<b>Hülya</b>	ELE	8	3
<b>Zehra</b>	ELL	25	2
<b>Işıl</b>	ELE	9	9, 10
<b>Fatma</b>	ELE	8	9, 10
<b>Tülin</b>	ELL	7	9, 10

\* ELL (English Language and Literature), ELE (English Language Education), PHIL (Philosophy)

### Research Instruments and Processes

The SoCQ, questions for reflection, semi-structured interviews, and the participants' exam papers comprised the data collection instruments. After having the legal permissions, in the first phase, the SoCQ data was collected online between June and September 2021. The respondents were informed about their rights in the cover letter of the questionnaire, which was administered in English.

In the second phase, the capacity-building training, devised based on the literature on capacity building discussed above, was administered in the last week of September 2021 by the researcher, who was a PhD candidate and trained as a trainer of the current curriculum. Throughout the thirty-hour theoretical part of the training that lasted for five days, the change in the participants' perceptions about the curriculum, the second question of the study, was qualitatively investigated through their reflective writings.

Upon completing the theoretical part, the participants were requested to conduct action research; thus, they were guided to become more involved with the learning outcomes, suggested materials (authentic materials such as websites, cartoons), and tasks of the current curriculum (blog or vlog keeping), which they had never experienced before. Five participants from four schools volunteered to conduct action research under the guidance of the researcher: Gül and Hülya wished to integrate authentic BBC cartoons into their classes and examined their effect on their 3rd and 4th graders' listening and speaking

skills. Figen had her students watch TED talk videos and keep a reflective writing blog, while Merve and Işıl asked their students to create a readers' vlog. The participants wrote narrative accounts of their research experiences. As the participants began and finished their action research attempts at different times at their schools, the practical part of the training was completed in twenty weeks. One participant from the fifth school did not wish to carry out any action research. Since CBAM allows the SoCQ to be administered twice a year, all the participants who completed the theoretical part of the training were requested to refill the questionnaire at the end of the educational year. So, the change in their stages of concern after the training, the third question of the study, was examined.

The change in the participants' implementations of the curriculum, the fourth question of the study, was investigated through individual semi-structured interviews and analysis of the samples of exam papers given by the participants over the educational year to assess the student learning. The interviews were conducted by the researcher following the interview protocol. Upon making appointments, the participants were requested to explain the changes they made in their instructional practices to implement the curriculum with fidelity, in the first week of June 2022. If they could not make any changes, they were also invited to elaborate on the reasons for not being able to, which answered the fifth question of the study. The interviews lasted for 20-30 minutes and were recorded with the participants' permission. The samples of exam papers were collected from the participants.

### ***The Stages of Concern Questionnaire***

The SoCQ consists of three parts: the cover letter, the questionnaire itself comprising 35 questions addressing the seven different stages of concern, and the demographic part. It is a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 7. It is widely accepted as the most rigorous technique for measuring concerns with strong reliability estimates (test/retest reliabilities range from .65 to .86) and internal consistency (alpha-coefficients range from .66 to .83). It displays teachers' concerns in a developmental path of seven stages: Unconcerned, concerns about Self (Informational, and Personal), concerns about Task (Management), concerns about Impact (Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing) (Hall & Hord, 2015).

### ***Instructional Design of the Capacity-Building Training***

The training was drawn from the literature on capacity building for educational change and shaped around the questions for reflection. It was intended to raise the participating teachers' awareness and knowledge of the current curriculum to assist them in its acceptance and implementation with fidelity. It also aimed at equipping the participants with teacher reflective practice and inquiry skills. For this purpose, questions for reflection were devised based on the concepts of teacher reflective practice: reflective self, reflective practitioner, and practical action (Pultrak, 2010), reflection on action (Schön, 1983), and reflection for action (Olteanu, 2017).

On day one, after a brief introduction, the participants were requested to give written answers to the questions about their reflective selves. Thus, the participants' perceptions about the current curriculum as well as their values about effective instruction in a foreign language were inquired about. After that, the relevant research article was read and discussed by the participants as a group. On the same day, a PowerPoint presentation providing knowledge about teacher reflective practice and research was delivered by the researcher.

On day two, the questions for reflection, drawing on the concept of reflective practitioners, inquired into the participants' knowledge about and experience with teacher reflective practice and inquiry. After their reflective writings were collected, the teachers were requested to read the relevant action research articles chosen by the researcher and share their reactions to them.

On day three, the questions for reflection drawing on the concept of practical action examined whether the participants' beliefs and instructional practices match or conflict with the current curriculum's philosophy and objectives. The major philosophy and general objectives pages of the English Curriculum

for Grades 2–8 and 9–12 were read. The participants had the opportunity to discuss the way they had been implementing the curriculum. Besides, the participants' attention was drawn to the learning outcomes specified in the four language skills and the suggested materials and tasks in the 3rd and 4th grade syllabuses. The researcher conducted a micro-teaching on the theme 7 "Food and Festivals" in the 10th grade syllabus to demonstrate the emphasis the current notional-functional, skills-based curriculum puts on the four language skills and its difference from explicit grammar instruction.

On day four, some excerpts exemplifying teacher narrative inquiry were read. The participants were requested to think about the problems they faced in the classroom during the implementation and what type of research they could conduct to deal with the problems. The learning outcomes and the suggested materials and tasks in the syllabus were reviewed again. The researcher made some suggestions regarding the action research the participants could conduct.

On day five, the participants reflected on the training and the instructional practices they planned to alter by writing their reflections on the relevant questions. They were also encouraged to plan the action research they would conduct.

The research articles, which the participants were requested to read throughout the training, were intended to develop the participants' research skills by learning about research conducted by teachers. The sample research articles were chosen based on the criteria that they were teacher-authored, conducted by practicing teachers in their classrooms, published in journals or books, and effectively exemplified the stages of teacher reflective practice and a variety of research types, including teacher narrative inquiry (Johnson, 2009) and qualitative and quantitative research studies (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017).

### **Data Analysis**

The SoC data were analyzed by SPSS 11.0, and descriptive statistics were computed. The item raw score means for each scale were converted into the percentile scores. Based on these percentile scores, the respondents' SoCQ profiles were constructed and displayed by a line graph. The valleys on the line graph showed the low stages of concern while the peaks meant the high stages of concern.

The participants' reflective writings and the transcripts of semi-structured interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis that followed the six-step approach of Braun and Clarke (2006). The researchers familiarized themselves with the data by reading and rereading them over. Thus, the initial codes were generated. While the themes were named, a deductive approach was adopted (Bingham, 2023) and the themes that already exist in the theoretical frameworks of the study, such as not having awareness of reflective practice, the lack of institutional support, and the lack of individual and collective sense-making out of the curriculum, were utilized. The deductive approach to coding enabled a complete intercoder agreement. The samples of exam papers were analysed by skills, parts, and grades to examine if the participants' assessments focused on the targeted learning outcomes of the current curriculum. As well as the utilization of theory, method, and data triangulation strategies (Yin, 2017), the data were validated through member-checking to ensure the validity of the study

### **Ethic**

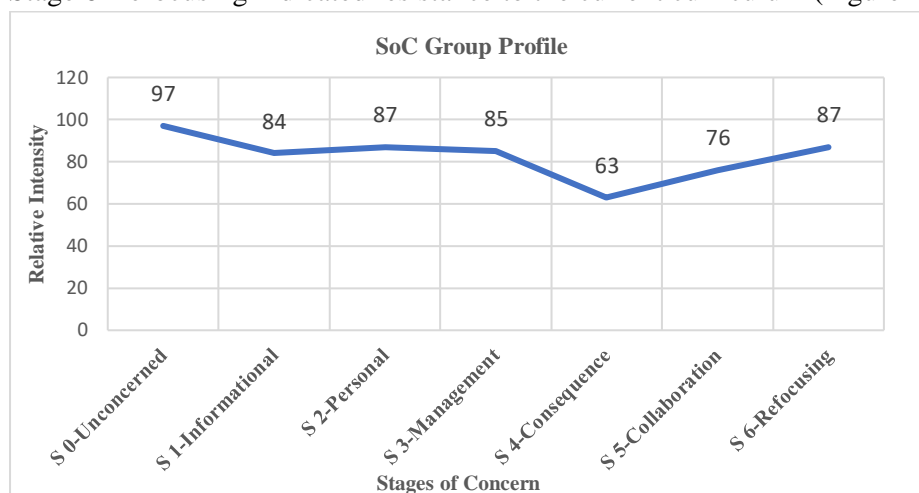
In conducting the study, which the present research article reports, the utmost importance was given to academic rules and ethical conduct

### **FINDINGS**

#### ***Finding 1. Teachers' Need for Capacity Building***

The analysis of the SoC data collected from 149 Turkish EFL teachers working at state schools across Turkey showed that they were unconcerned about the current English curriculum with the highest percentile score 97 at Stage 0-Unconcerned, which was also 10 points higher than the nearest score. The second highest score 87 at Stage 2-Personal Concerns meant that the teachers were uncertain about the

demands of the curriculum, their adequacy to meet those demands, and how it might affect their instructional practices. Besides, the lowest score 63 at Stage 4-Consequence meant that the teachers' implementations did not focus on the current curriculum's impact on student learning. The tailing up with the score 87 at Stage 6-Refocusing indicated resistance to the current curriculum (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Line graph of the participants' pre-study SoC group profile (n=149)

The demographics part of the SoCQ showed that 84 % (n=125) of the respondents did not take any formal training on the current curriculum, while 16 % (n=24) of them had taken it. 72 % (n=108) of the respondents perceived that they were not instructionally supported to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

### ***Finding II. Change in the Participants' Perceptions about the Curriculum***

Throughout the theoretical part of the training, the participants were asked to conduct reflective practice. Their reflective writings allowed the researcher to understand how the participants' perceptions about the current curriculum altered. The stage reflective self guided the participants to reveal their beliefs and values about effective instruction of a foreign language and perceptions about the curriculum. The themes of negative attitudes towards the curriculum, lack of values, lack of motivation, and lack of competence came out of the analysis of their writings:

*"It is too difficult to implement the current curriculum." (Elif)*

*"It is difficult to do listening and speaking activities in the classroom." (Tülin)*

*"I do not think that the current curriculum can be effectively implemented." (Gül)*

*"Even though I am a teacher who sometimes negatively criticizes the current curriculum, making its implementation possible actually depends on our agency. I realize the effects of the methods on the student that need to be applied, but somehow, which we are never able to apply." (Hülya)*

The stage reflective practitioner probed into the participants' awareness of and experience with reflective practice and inquiry to solve the implementational problems. Analysis of their writings revealed the theme of not having awareness of reflective practice and research:

*"I do not think that I have sufficient knowledge about teacher reflective practice and action research." (Hülya)*

*"I am not knowledgeable about it because we have never done it." (Elif)*

The stage of practical action guided the participants to reflect on if their values and personal theories about foreign language instruction match or conflict with the current curriculum's philosophy and objectives. Analysis of their writings revealed the themes of lack of individual and collective sense-making out of the curriculum in the context as suggested by the following quotes:

*"In our context, I had not seen that curriculum was read." (Merve)*

*"I was thinking of reading the curriculum; I hadn't read it before the training. Neither had I seen anyone else reading it." (Tülin)*

The stage reflection on and for action guided the participants to reflect on the training and for the instructional practices they planned to alter after the training. The following themes came out of the analysis of their writings:

The participants developed positive attitudes toward the current curriculum as indicated by the quote below:

*"With the training, I realized that I was prejudiced against the current curriculum and coursebook. I was transmitting too much grammatical knowledge. Now, I think that by finding ways to get the students to do the activities in the coursebook, I can help them learn English by using it for performing some functions." (Işıl)*

The training increased the participants' motivation as indicated by the following quotes:

*"The training helped me to revive my identity as a teacher who questions, does research and open to innovations, which I had shelved for a while. I realized that I could increase both my own and students' motivation by changing my teaching approach based on the curriculum's recommendations." (Gül)*

*"Now, I believe that the activities of four language skills can be done in the classroom despite all the negative factors. I will try." (Elif)*

The participants had an opportunity to make sense of the curriculum as indicated by the following quotes:

*"I understood that the curriculum asks me to develop the student's listening and speaking skills in the grades 2-4." (Gül)*

*"I intend to give more weight to the activities of four language skills instead of explicit grammar teaching." (Canan)*

The participants' awareness of reflective practice and inquiry was raised thanks to the training as indicated by the quote below:

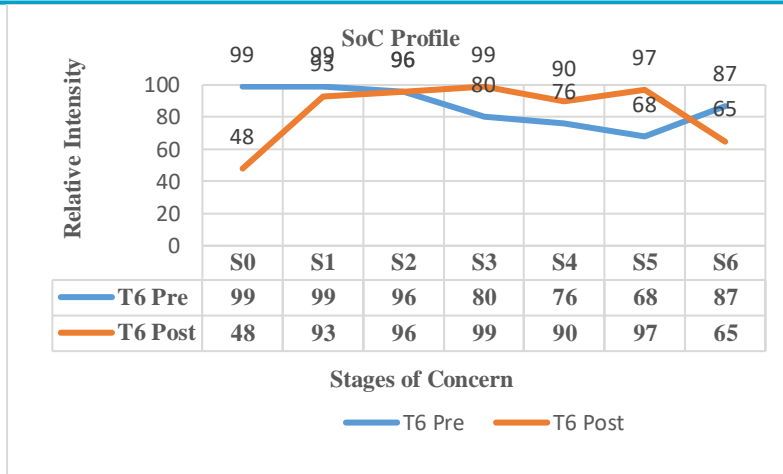
*"The training enabled me to be empowered with the theoretical concepts of reflective self and practitioner. In addition, we learned about research. We analyzed the curriculum. I realized the importance given to the four language skills in the curriculum. I intend to integrate technology into my instructional practice to increase my students' exposure to English." (Tülin)*

### ***Finding III. Change in the Participants' Stages of Concern after the Training***

The change in the participants' stages of concern was examined by readministering the SoCQ at the end of the study. Before the training, the participants were found unconcerned about and resistant to the curriculum as a group (Figure 1). This group profile did not change after the training. Thus, the change was individually examined by drawing each participant's pre- and post-study SoC profiles. The teachers Hülya, Merve, Canan, Serap, and Gül (Figure 2) were found concerned about and not resistant to the curriculum, whereas Işıl, Fatma, Tülin, Elif, and Figen (Figure 3) remained unconcerned about and resistant to it. Zehra was found unconcerned about, but not resistant to the curriculum (Figure 4).

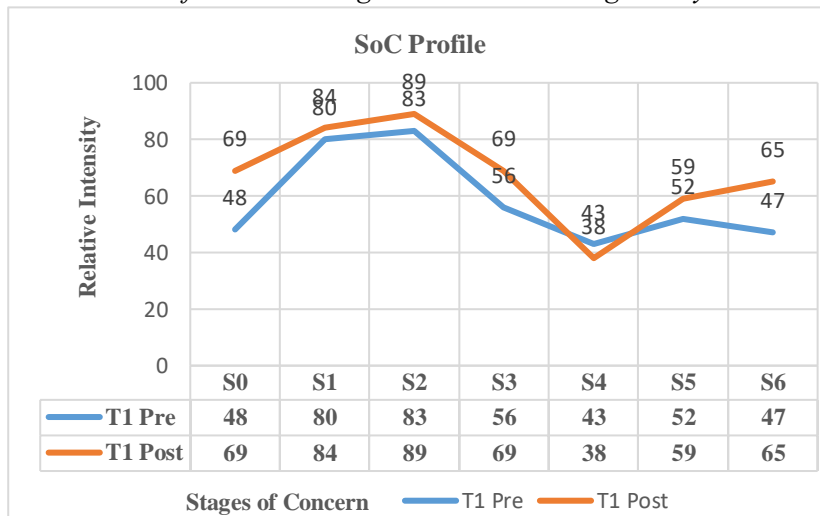
Gül (T6) became concerned about and not resistant to the curriculum. Her S 2-Personal concerns remained high after the study; yet, her task (S 3), and impact concerns (S 4 and S 5) considerably increased, which is the expected ideal development. After the training, she also stated: *"The training had been a quite different, special experience for us. We questioned our instructional practices, and we were changed."*



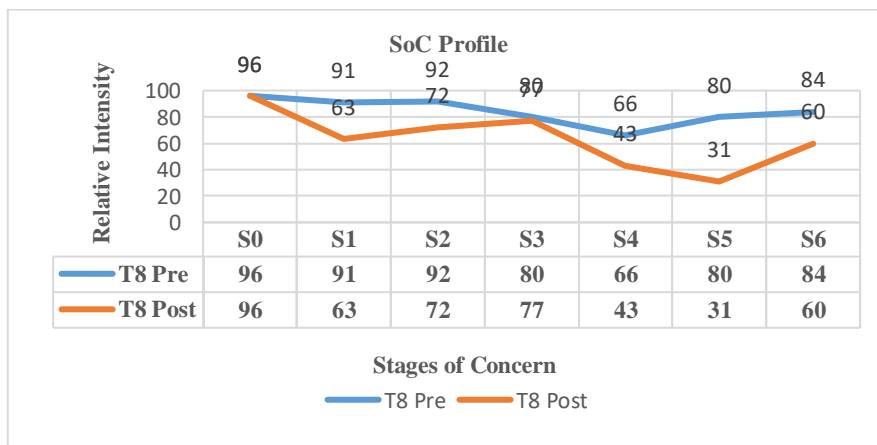


**Figure 2.** Gül's (T6) pre- and post-study SoC profile

Figen's (T1) remained unconcerned and resistant to the curriculum with high S 2-Personal Concerns with percentile score 89 after the training. It was interpreted that Figen was still concerned about the demands of the curriculum, and her adequacy to meet those demands. In her interview, she also stated: "I need more formal training on the curriculum given by academicians."



**Figure 3.** Figen's (T1) pre- and post-study SoC profile



**Figure 4.** Zehra's (T8) pre- and post-study SoC profile

#### **Finding IV. Change in the Participants' Implementations of the Curriculum**

Analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews and samples of the exam papers revealed that the positive change in the participants' perceptions of the curriculum did not suffice to alter their implementations in accordance with the curriculum, except for the teachers Gül and Hülya:

Gül changed her practices in compliance with the English Curriculum for Grades 2-8. Authentic short videos, and technology integrated listening and speaking activities became an indispensable part of her classes. She also began to have her students video-record their speeches. Before the training, she had been giving the instructions in Turkish so that her students would understand the task better. After the training, English became the tool of instruction and interaction in the classroom for Gül; she decided to use body language and realia when the students did not understand the instruction in English. The high scores at Stage 3-Management and Stage 4-Consequence in Gül's post-study SoC profile provided converging evidence that her concerns about the current curriculum progressed to the impact level.

The analysis of Gül's exam papers revealed the misalignment between the English Curriculum for Grades 2-4 and the Regulation on Pre-school and Primary Education Institutions of MoNE (2014). The article 20(3) of the Regulation required only written exams for the assessment of the student learning; it did not take into consideration the targeted outcomes of the curriculum, which are the development of listening and speaking skills in the grades 2-4.

Thanks to the positive results of the action research Hülya conducted on her 3rd graders, the listening and speaking activities became Hülya's routine classroom activities. She also decided to assess her students' listening and speaking skills formatively by understanding the emphasis the current English Curriculum for Grades 2-4 puts on these skills. However, her SoC profile did not provide converging evidence that her concerns reached the impact level. Zehra did not make any changes in her practices, although the training helped her feel supported and motivated as indicated by the following quote:

*"The training process and staying in contact with the other participants emotionally supported and motivated me. I did not change any of my classroom practices after the training. Yet, I believe the effectiveness of short authentic videos that are specific to the learning outcomes. I want to use them in my classes if they could be provided by MoNE in the resource pack." (Zehra)*

Figen did not change anything in her instructional practices, nor did Serap, Canan, Elif, Merve, Işıl, Fatma, and Tülin, despite the positive attitudes they developed towards the curriculum as indicated by the following quotes:

*"I had been feeling resentful towards the curriculum. The training broke it and motivated me. Teachers always complain. Yes, we talked about the problems too, but for the first time, thanks to this training, we came across the perception that we, as teachers, can overcome these problems." (Canan)*

*"In the training, we learned about what the curriculum expects us to do and the types of assessment the curriculum enables us to utilize (blog, vlog, and e-portfolio). I also realized that these technology-integrated assessment methods get away from the old methods. When I examined the book, I found its method very rational too. I thought that this method of teaching and learning would appeal to the students. However, as we, as a department, give more weight to teaching grammar, and our class sizes are large, we could not implement the curriculum effectively, but we attempted to." (Tülin)*

The analysis of their exam papers also showed that their instructional practices were still focused on teaching and assessing the structural and linguistic elements of English explicitly, not on the functions that can be performed using these elements in four language skills, which is the objective of a skills-based, notional-functional syllabus (MoNE, 2018) (see Table 3). The lack of uniformity and alignment in assessment are also asserted by the study. The weight given to the grading of the skills showed variance among the schools, and the assessment was not aligned with the learning outcomes of the current curriculum.

**Table 3.** Analysis of the participants' exam papers by skills/parts and grades

Schools	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Grammar	Vocabulary
S1 (V&TAHS)	15	15	10	10	30	20
S2 (V&TAHS)	X	20	X	X	80	X
S3 (RAHS)	25	15	15	X	35	10
S4 (AHS)	10	10	10	10	50	10

X= No assessment of the skill

### Finding V. Reasons for Not Changing the Implementation

The inquiry into the reason why the participants, except for Gül and Hülya, could not alter their instructional practices in compliance with the targeted outcomes of the curriculum after the training revealed that the issue was complex, multifaced and inextricably linked to the “tri-level of engagement” (Fullan, 2006, p.11). The following themes came out of the analysis of their responses: teachers' need for curriculum maps and mentors, the ineffectiveness of train-the-trainers, lack of school-level institutional support, lack of shared sense making out of the curriculum, comfort zone, and challenge zone.

Teachers' need for curriculum maps was indicated by the following quotes:

*“Nobody knows anything about the curriculum. Teachers ask each other on social platforms. The one-day seminar in which the curriculum was introduced was insufficient, and not delivered well either. Why don't they tell us that you have to implement the curriculum like that? Why don't academicians give us training on how to implement the curriculum?” (Figen)*

*“They just informed us of the curriculum at the beginning through a meeting. But it wasn't very detailed; I think we need ideas about how to implement it instead of just introducing it.” (Serap)*

The following quotes indicated teachers' need for curriculum mentors:

*“We need guidance and reinforcement on how we are doing.” (Serap)*

*“I asked our principal for help to clarify some points regarding the assessment. He told me to ask another teacher.” (Figen)*

The ineffectiveness of train-the-trainers was indicated by the following quote:

*“I attended two programs of train-the-trainers given by MoNE, one was in Kızılcahamam, and the other was in Antalya, I do not remember the exact dates now. You take the training, and come back to school, and naturally you want to share what you have learned with your colleagues in the department, but no one cares about what you have learned, and you cannot change anything.” (Serap)*

The following quotes indicated that school-level institutional support lacked in the context:

*“School principals are not stakeholders in curriculum implementation. They are neutral.” (Elif)*

*“E.g. I had a disagreement about how to assess the language skills and grade them in the department. I asked the principal to clarify the issue. I said that the curriculum says so, but the principal told me that you, as the teachers in the department, had to reach an agreement.” (Serap)*

*“At times of conflict, the principals generally tell us to reach an agreement by majority vote.” (Işıl)*

The lack of shared sensemaking out of the curriculum in the context was indicated by the following quote:

*“After the training, we, the three teachers, developed positive attitudes towards the coursebook and wanted to follow its method by getting away from the Grammar Translation Method we had seen in our previous departments. We wanted to teach and assess the grammatical structures in the text. However, the teachers who did not take the training and were more experienced than us did not agree with us; they wanted to teach and assess grammatical structures explicitly. That is why we had a little conflict.” (Fatma)*

*“The three teachers from my school wanted to attend the training; yet the school administration allowed only me to attend since there were no substitute teachers for our classes. If we, as the three teachers, had been allowed to attend, we could have motivated each other and convinced the others in our department in order to do the skill-based activities in the book.” (Elif)*

Explicit grammar instruction formed a comfort zone to the teachers in the context as indicated by the quotes below:

*“Before this training, I would do the grammatical structures of the unit first and then have the students do some activities from the coursebook. My English teachers used to teach in this way too.” (Merve)*

*“We see the learning outcomes in the syllabus, but we neglect them. It can be considered not getting out of the comfort zone. Teaching and assessing grammar is easy. Teaching skills is difficult, and students are unmotivated.” (Elif)*

*“Teaching grammar is easier; when you teach grammar, the students take notes. Teaching skills is difficult.” (Işıl)*

Teaching and assessing skills, especially speaking and writing, comprised a challenge zone for the teachers in the context as indicated by the following quotes:

*“I do not expect my students to speak; I expect them to comprehend what they read in English. That is sufficient for me. We, as the department do not assess the students’ speaking skills; last year, we did not assess their listening either. If I suggested assessing speaking at the department, my colleagues would find it troublesome.” (Merve)*

*“I did all the reading and listening activities in the book, but quite a number of the writings could not be done. I did not understand the importance of the learning outcomes in the syllabus, are there any teachers in the district who have understood them?” (Figen)*

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS**

The multiple instrumental case study that aims at facilitating and enhancing Turkish EFL teachers’ implementation fidelity provides in-depth insights into the issue in the Turkish state school EFL context. The findings of the study assert the critical role capacity building plays in raising teachers’ awareness and acceptance of the proposed changes in a curriculum initiative (OECD, 2012).

In the first phase of the study, the results of the SoCQ showed that the Turkish EFL teachers were unconcerned about and resistant to the current curriculum. Their personal concerns outweighed their concerns about the impact of the curriculum on student learning. Besides, 84% of the respondents did not take any formal training concerning the current curriculum, and 72% of them perceived that they were not supported in its implementation. This finding accounts for the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum, as shown by the curriculum fidelity studies conducted in the context (Aksoy 2020; An, 2020; Arslan Çelik, 2020). As stressed by Hall and Hord (2015), “if there is limited training and support for the change, it is likely that it will not be fully or faithfully implemented” (p. 59). The insufficiency of formal training regarding the curriculum and the teachers’ increasing need for it (Kara & Bümen, 2023; Kırkgöz, 2008) were shown by the present study, although an abundance of in-service training programs seems to exist in the context (Altun, 2011; Güngör, 2017; Önalın & Gürsoy, 2020; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). The findings of the present study also support the assertion that the content of an in-service training program needs to be explicitly linked to the school curriculum and classroom lessons to enhance its effectiveness (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

In the second phase, the eleven participants’ reflective writings throughout the theoretical part of the training suggested a positive change in their perceptions of the current curriculum by revealing the themes of positive attitudes towards the curriculum, increased motivation, raised awareness of teacher reflective

practice and inquiry, and sense-making out of the curriculum both individually and collectively, which was found to be lacking and seemed not to have been encouraged in the context (Arslan Çelik, 2020; Karsantık, 2021). As stated by Land et al. (2015), without effective reading of curriculum materials, it is unlikely that teachers will implement the curriculum with fidelity. The findings asserted the indispensable role of teacher reflective practice in building capacity for effective curriculum implementation (Carless, 1998; Fullan, 2007).

Concerning the change in the teachers' stages of concern, while all the participants were found unconcerned about and resistant to the curriculum before the training, five of them developed to be concerned about and not resistant to it. Whereas one participant progressed to not being resistant to but unconcerned about the curriculum, one participant remained resistant after the training. The findings revealed the participants' varying responses to the training (Desimone & Garet, 2015) and matched the CBAM's assertion that "change is a highly personal experience" (Hord et al., 2014, p. 6).

The positive change in the eleven participants' perceptions about the curriculum did not suffice to help them change their instructional practices accordingly; except for the two of them, as cited in the literature, teachers may not be able to alter their implementations even though they may seem to understand the requirements of changes (Ayas et al., 2007; Msamba et al., 2023; Johns & Tanner, 2002). The finding pointed out that teachers need many opportunities for formal training on the curriculum to enhance their implementation fidelity (Carless, 1998; Kırkgöz, 2008; Yenipalabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016).

The inquiry into the participants' reasons for not being able to alter their instructional practices in accordance with the curriculum after the training revealed the teachers' need for curriculum configuration maps. The teachers' high Stage 2 personal concerns pointed out that they were still uncertain about what differentiated the current curriculum from the previous one. What instructional practices align with the objectives of the curriculum and which ones are drastic mutations and do not serve its targeted outcomes need to be explicitly demonstrated by the curriculum developer, MoNE, through curriculum configuration maps (Hall & Hord, 2015).

The inquiry also asserted that the context lacks school-level institutional support, as indicated by the perception that school principals are not stakeholders in the implementation. A limited number of teachers who take formal training through train-the-trainers cannot find any school-level institutional support and serve as change agents, and even they face the risk of isolation in their departments (UNESCO-IBE, 2013). This finding contradicts the premise of "tri-level engagement," considered essential for enhancing implementation fidelity; as stated by Fullan (2006), the national, district, and school levels should mutually interact during the implementation. Moreover, train-the-trainers, which is mainly used to introduce the curricular revisions to the teachers, was shown not to be effective in catalyzing the change for effective curriculum implementation (Çimer et al., 2010; Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). Therefore, a well-tailored system of curriculum mentoring can provide the institutional support teachers need by ensuring interaction between the national, district, and school levels and providing ongoing capacity building (Güngör, 2017; Ndagi et al., 2023).

The assertion of the study that teaching and assessing grammar create a comfort zone, while teaching and assessing language skills—especially speaking and writing—present a challenge for the teachers is consistent with the research findings in the literature (Morgan & Xu, 2011; TEPAV, 2014). A well-tailored system of curriculum mentoring can assist the teachers in mastering these challenges through workshops that are continuous, school-based, and explicitly connected to the curriculum.

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