

An Evaluation of Professional Development Perception and Participation among Teachers of Turkish as a Second or Foreign Language*

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Abstract

This study investigated the professional development practices and obstacles that teachers of Turkish as a foreign language perceive as the reasons for preventing their participation in development activities. The study also aimed to find out how a professional development activity prepared in line with the teachers' needs affected their perceptions of professional development. Participants of the study were 160 Turkish as a foreign language teachers. Data were first investigated through a questionnaire. Then, 15 teachers were interviewed in focus groups randomly selected from Turkish teaching centers (TÖMER) in Ankara. After these interviews, a seminar was prepared in line with the professional development needs of the volunteer participants to understand how a professional development activity, prepared according to the needs of the teachers affected their perceptions of professional development activities. The results indicated that teachers have a positive perception of professional development in general. The reasons they perceived as barriers to their participation in these activities were intense pace in their lives, their hectic work schedule and the inefficiency of professional development trainers, while the kinds of activities that they participated in were evaluating their own performance, reading articles, journals and books related to the field, sharing information with colleagues, conducting in-class research and receiving help from colleagues. The research has implications for professional development providers to improve the effectiveness of professional development activities for teachers of teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

Keywords: Professional development perception, professional development participation, professional development obstacles, teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

İkinci/Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Öğretmenlerinin Mesleki Gelişim Algı ve Katılımlarına İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme

Öz

Bu çalışma yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişim uygulamalarını ve gelişim faaliyetlerine katılımlarına neden olarak algıladıkları engelleri araştırmıştır. Çalışma ayrıca öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda hazırlanan mesleki gelişim

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faaliyetlerinin mesleki gelişim algılarını nasıl etkilediğini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Araştırmanın evreni Türkçeyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten 160 öğretmendir. Veriler ilk önce öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim uygulamalarında algıladıkları engelleri, uygulamalarını ve mesleki gelişim tercihlerini belirleyen bir anket aracılığıyla incelenmiştir. Ardından, Ankara'daki Türkçe öğretim merkezlerinden (TÖMER) rastgele seçilen odak gruplarında 15 öğretmen ile görüşülmüştür. Bu görüşmelerden sonra, öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarına göre hazırlanan bir mesleki gelişim faaliyetinin mesleki gelişim faaliyetlerine yönelik algılarını nasıl etkilediğini anlamak için gönüllü katılımcıların mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda bir seminer hazırlanmıştır. Sonuçlar öğretmenlerin genel olarak olumlu bir mesleki gelişim algısına sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu faaliyetlere katılımlarının önündeki engeller olarak algıladıkları sebepler yaşamlarındaki tempo, yoğun çalışma programları ve mesleki gelişim eğitmenlerinin verimsizliğine yoğunlaşırken, katıldıkları etkinlik türleri kendi performanslarını değerlendirmek, makale okumak, dergi okumak ve meslektaşlarla bilgi paylaşımı olarak belirtilmiştir. Araştırma, mesleki gelişim programlarını hazırlayanlara, yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğreten öğretmenler için mesleki gelişim faaliyetlerinin etkinliğini artırması ile ilgili bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mesleki gelişim algısı, mesleki gelişime katılım, mesleki gelişime engeller, Türkçenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimi.

INTRODUCTION

As a profession, teaching is a dynamic and learning-related profession. In the declaration of UNESCO, it is mentioned that an education system is as good as its teachers (2014). For this reason, the fact that a teacher should improve herself/himself at every stage of his/her professional life is the most important factor in improving the quality of education. How to regulate professional development activities is also an important factor in determining the effectiveness on teachers' future applications (Guskey, 2000).

In many parts of the world, the method usually applied in professional development activities is to participate in independent workshops or presentations in which new knowledge is offered to the participants, but guidance is not provided on its implementation (Guskey, 2000). In this method, teachers are expected to get a new piece of information and apply it in their classrooms. This approach considers the teacher as the person who consumes the information because he/she is asked to apply the information determined by others without being asked whether or not he feels the need to be educated on this particular topic (Borg, 2015). A good continuous professional development process should be related to the needs of both teachers and students, include teachers to the decision-making process and choice of content, support teacher cooperation, and it should be supported by the school management (Borg, 2015).

Turkish as a foreign language teachers graduate from different departments such as Turkish Education, Turkish Language and Literature, Western Languages and Literatures, English / French / German Language Education and Linguistics since the field does not have its own undergraduate program. This leads to different professional development perceptions and practices for teachers teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Therefore, it is necessary to organize professional development activities in line with the needs of teachers working in this area in order to increase participation in such activities.

Over the past decade a large number of master's and doctoral studies have been conducted on professional development needs and practices of foreign language teachers in Turkey (Baykal, 2019; Çınkır, 2017; Karaaslan, 2003; Koçoğlu, 2006; Korkmaz, 2015; Korkmazgil, 2015; Muhammad, 2019; Muyan, 2013; Yağcı, 2014). However, there aren't any studies investigating the professional development perceptions and practices of the teachers in the field of Turkish as a foreign language. Therefore, this study mainly aims to determine the professional development perceptions, practices, and obstacles perceived by teachers of Turkish as a foreign language. The study also aimed to find out how a professional development activity prepared in line with the teachers' needs affect their perceptions of professional development.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Researchers defined professional development in different ways. One of the earliest studies by Joyce et al. (1976) explained professional development as formal and informal provisions for the development of teachers as well as for their development as individuals, educated persons and professionals (p. 6). Gall and Renchler (1985) defined professional development in a more detailed way as an attempt by teachers to acquire new knowledge, attitudes, and skills to develop as more effective professionals as possible (p. 6). Fullan (1995) stated that professional development is the combination of formal and informal

learning, which is monitored and experienced by the teacher in challenging learning environments, under rapid change and complicated conditions (p. 265).

There are different models related to professional development for teachers. Gall and Renchler's deficiency model which sees teachers as "the empty bottle to be filled in" is often criticized by academicians (as cited in Garmston, 1991, p. 64). Professional growth model is often advocated as it considers professional development as requiring a more individual effort that arises from the interests and needs of the teachers and students (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). A group of academics place professional development in the educational change model that reveals change (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006; Warren-Little, 1999). Another group includes professional development in the "problem solving" model, which takes into account the needs of students to be successful (Joyce & Showers, 2002; McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001). Guskey (1994) argued that professional development should not be seen as a one-off event, but as a process and that this process was conscious and it was a systematic effort to create a positive change or development in a teachers's career (p. 63).

Teachers who participate in quality professional development activities have a very important role in developing the learning process. In a study that aims to develop a model, Guskey (2002) suggests that the professional development of teachers is a key element to improve the quality of education by supporting teacher competence. According to many researchers (Guskey, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000), performing systematic professional development activities is one of the most important factors for improving teacher quality and student success.

This review of literature on professional development indicates that professional development has a very important role in the achievement of any educational change. If professional development is relevant to the needs of teachers and students and systematic, only then a real change can take place. Change is inevitable with the idea of constantly developing what constitutes best practice in teaching and learning. It is the most important indicator that a systematic approach to the professional development of teachers is required.

FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are many reasons why each teacher participates in professional development activities. Little (1993) argues that the main motivation for teachers in the pursuit of professional development is related to the "teaching assignments they acquire, the allocation of discretionary time and other work conditions encountered day by day"(p. 147). In addition, participation in compulsory training sessions in order to get a certificate or contractual obligations can also be the reason underlying the participation in professional development activities (Guskey, 2002).

Increasing content knowledge and new pedagogical skills for diversity and technology use require more professional learning for all levels of teachers (Lohman, 2006; Scribner, 1999). Guskey (2002) reported that teachers who participated in intensive professional development programs and experienced a positive change in student achievement went through attitude changes and were much more satisfied with their teaching experience.

Research has attempted to reveal the factors that may affect the participation of professional development and it has been concluded that there are personal and

environmental reasons affecting participation (Korthagen, 2004; Kwakman, 2003; Schibeci & Hickey, 2004; Scribner, 1999; Wan & Lam, 2010). Scribner (1999) examined personal developmental factors affecting the teacher's professional development process at school and district level. Kwakman (2003) conducted a study on some of the factors affecting the participation of teachers in the continuous professional development activities in the Netherlands. Three factors, namely, personal factors (e.g. professional attitudes, appraisals of feasibility, appraisals of meaningfulness, emotional exhaustion, loss of personal accomplishment), task factors (work pressure, emotional demands, job variety, autonomy, participation), factors related to the working environment (support of the management, colleague support, intentional learning support) affect participation of teachers in continuous professional development activities (Kwakman, 2003, p. 158). As a result, among these three factors, it was found that personal factors seemed to be more meaningful in determining the participation of teachers in continuous professional development activities than the task and working environment factors.

Korthagen (2004) argues that the competences of teachers are determined by their own beliefs. For example, if a teacher believes that it is unnecessary to pay attention to students' emotions, they will probably not develop an empathic understanding. At the following levels, the level of identity they discuss as who they are as teachers. The last level is related to highly personal questions, such as what the teacher wants to do. According to Korthagen (2004), teachers can receive support from this model to supervise reflection processes.

Wan and Lam (2010) tested personal and facilitator/preventive factors such as personal factor, agent, family factor, time factor, the trainer who was responsible for giving professional development and relationships with others. All these studies show that the participation of teachers in professional development activities is influenced by the above-mentioned personal and environmental factors (Schibeci & Hickey, 2004).

As can be seen in the studies mentioned above, perception of teachers about professional development affect their participation in these activities which are crucial to increase quality in language education. Therefore, this research primarily aims to investigate the professional development perceptions, practices, preferences and barriers that teachers of Turkish as a foreign language perceive as the reasons for preventing their participation in development activities. The study also aimed to figure out how a professional development activity prepared in line with the teachers' needs affected their perceptions of professional development. The present research is significant due to the lack of resources related to the professional development perceptions and factors affecting participation in professional development activities of Turkish as a foreign language teachers in Turkey. In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What do Turkish as a foreign language teachers perceive barriers to their participation in professional development activities?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of professional development activities?
 - 2.1. How does attending a professional development activity in line with their needs affect the perceptions of Turkish as a foreign / second language teachers?
3. What are the professional development practices of Turkish as a foreign language teachers?

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a mixed-methods design study in which both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used. Mixed-method design is the process of collecting, analyzing and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand a research problem (Creswell 2012, p. 535) The basic assumption in this method is that quantitative and qualitative methods can be used together to provide a better understanding of the problem of research question than using the two methods separately. The model of the research is the Explanatory sequential design (QUANTITATIVE → qualitative) design. Quantitative data were collected first. Qualitative data were then used to support and expand the quantitative data.

1. Participants

The sample of teachers was identified randomly. 160 teachers of Turkish as a foreign language teaching at universities and institutes various places in Turkey were selected. A total of 93 (%58.1) teachers were females and 67 (%41.9) of teachers were male. The age of participants was within the range from 22 to 50. In terms of experience, the majority of participants had experience of 1-10 years (% 90.6). Regarding the educational background 122 (%76.3) of the participants graduated from Turkish Language and Literature and Turkish Education departments, while 38 (%23.8) of the participants graduated from English/French Language Education, Linguistics and Western Languages and Literatures departments. About the latest educational degree of the participants the majority of the participants had graduate degrees (% 67.6). Most of the participants (% 85.6) teach more than 15 hours. For the interviews 15 participants who accepted to participate in the study were selected.

2. Instruments

2.1. Professional development needs analysis questionnaire: The data were gathered by a questionnaire developed by the researcher to determine the demographic characteristics of Turkish as a foreign language teachers in the research, as well as their professional development needs and perceptions, professional development practices and the reasons preventing them from participating in professional development activities. The measurement tool was prepared by analyzing the surveys used in previous researches related to the professional development (Arıkan, 2002; Ekşi, 2010; Gültekin, 2007; Karaarslan, 2003) and the TALIS (2013) survey prepared by the OECD. The questionnaire was designed as a five-point Likert scale and it consists of five parts. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire used in the study and the question form used in the interviews were verified by the assessment experts before the application. The reliability level of the questionnaires is based on the Cronbach Alpha reliability factor. As a result of the preliminary study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was $r = .94$ which indicated that the scale was reliable to use in the study.

2.2. Focus group interviews: The qualitative part of the study is composed of focus group interviews. While the data collection tool was being developed, the field on teacher professional development was examined and the areas to be investigated in the light of the research questions of the study were determined. Prior to the consultations, expert opinion was sought regarding the reliability, validity and applicability of the interview questions.

2.3. Implementation/Interview with teachers: The second qualitative part of the study is composed of interviews conducted with three volunteer instructors who accepted to participate in the implementation. The interview questions were related to the professional development activity, which was given in line with the teachers' needs as they indicated in the focus group interviews. The audio recordings of these interviews were taken and then the translation and content analysis were conducted.

3. Data Collection Procedures

In the current study data was first collected through aforementioned questionnaire from the teachers working in Turkish teaching centers in different universities and institutes in Turkey. Before its implementation the questionnaire was piloted with 50 teachers and they didn't report any problems in completing it. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the participants in Ankara. For the participants living in other cities a Google online questionnaire form was prepared and sent out to their email addresses. Then, focus groups were formed with the teachers who agreed to participate in the study. In these focus groups, teachers' needs related to their professional development, their practices and the elements they consider to be obstacles to their participation were discussed. Voice recordings were made of these interviews, and then transcription was done and content analyses were conducted.

In the focus group interviews, the theme of "the use of technology" and "drama in language teaching" emerged as common needs for professional development. Then, a seminar was held by a drama-training expert. After this seminar, the volunteers implemented these techniques in their classes and received video recording of their courses. These recordings were evaluated by drama-training experts to get feedback about the drama practices. By considering the feedback of the trainers the teachers implemented the techniques again. Then, interviews were conducted with the volunteer teachers and to find out how the professional development given in line with their needs affect the perceptions of teachers.

4. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire descriptive statistics was used. It was analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program. Teachers' perceptions, practices and the barriers for participating in professional development activities were described as percentage-frequency and cross-tables, and the results were interpreted.

As the qualitative part of the study, focus group interviews and semi-structured interview questions were analyzed by using content analysis. In order to reach the concepts and relations that can explain the data gathered in this context, the codes that have common aspects were found and themes were formed according to the concepts obtained from the data in the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006, p. 40). In order to increase reliability, and to make comparisons between the categories, qualitative data were first read and written, then coded in a general framework, and the frequency calculations of the words were made. Then, the codes that form an interrelated and meaningful whole are combined under themes.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

1. Findings Related to the Factors that Prevent Turkish as a Foreign Language Teachers from Participating in Professional Development Activities

According to the results, the most frequently stated difficulties faced by Turkish as a foreign language teachers in participating professional development activities were the intense pace in their lives, their hectic work schedule and the inefficiency of professional development trainers. As can be seen in Table 1, “the heavy workload in my institution” (60.6%) and “the impossibility of applying the information given in the trainings in the real classroom environment (60%) have emerged as the two most common difficulties. The lack of institutional support (56.9%), not being aware of the trainings (48.8%), lack of motivation (46.3%) and high cost of professional development activities (44.4%) were expressed as other difficulties. The inconvenience of the venue where professional development activity will be conducted (39.4%) was the least mentioned difficulty.

Table 1. Factors That Prevent Participation in Professional Development Activities

	Not important at all		A little important		Not sure		Quite important		Very important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Heavy workload in my institution	10	6.3	12	7.5	41	25.6	40	25.0	57	35.6
2. Lack of motivation	21	13.1	28	17.5	37	23.1	26	16.3	48	30.0
3. Insufficient institutional support	11	6.8	16	10.0	42	26.3	36	22.5	55	34.4
4. Intense pace in my life	8	5.0	17	10.6	36	22.5	41	25.6	58	36.3
5. Ineligibility of work schedule	4	2.5	16	10.0	41	25.6	36	22.5	63	39.4
6. Unfavorability of the venue where the professional development activity will be carried out	23	14.3	26	16.3	48	30.0	16	10.0	47	29.4
7. High cost of professional development activities	22	13.7	23	14.4	44	27.5	30	18.8	41	25.6
8. The inefficiency of professional development trainers	11	6.8	20	12.5	30	18.8	29	18.1	70	43.8
9. The fact that the information given in the trainings cannot be applied in a real class environment	10	6.2	14	8.8	40	25.0	39	24.4	57	35.6
10. I am not aware of the trainings	21	13.0	18	11.3	43	26.9	35	21.9	43	26.9

The teachers' focus group interviews also revealed that the most significant obstacle to participating in professional development was related to hectic work schedule. One of the participants stated that she couldn't participate in professional development activities because of the workload in their institution;

I think that our institution works intensively with its teachers and students, I think there is no time for other things. We are working with YEE (Yunus Emre Institute). We give trainings for new teachers, but nothing is being done for us. Here's the problem. We are very busy with projects about training others, but there is nothing for training their own teachers.

Another reason why a teacher participant could not participate in professional development activities was due to the lack of institutional support:

The reasons that hinder my professional development are certainly not personal. As a person who loves her job very much, the biggest obstacle for me is the bureaucratic ones.

Another participant stated that she doesn't want to participate in professional development activities because the trainers are not well equipped and seminars are inadequate;

The articles we're reading are about things that aren't possible in the classroom. So, they say things that are not possible to implement are good and even mandatory. So, many people are working in this area, but some of them haven't even once been in the class to teach Turkish as a foreign language, this is a problem. In other words, if training is to be provided, it is necessary for those trainers to work, study and apply it in a real classroom environment. Otherwise, I do not attend the seminar given by the person who only has the theoretical knowledge.

2. Findings on Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development Programs

Table 2 indicates that, teachers gave positive responses to all of the sentences related to professional development and had a positive perception towards professional development programs, except the statement "professional development programs are related to my needs" in the last item of the questionnaire. This shows that although participant teachers' perceptions about their professional development programs are positive, they think that the professional development programs they attend so far have not generally addressed their needs.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development Programs

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Completely Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I believe that participating in professional development programs will increase my confidence in classroom teaching activities.	4	2.4	10	6.3	14	8.8	47	29.4	85	53.1
2. I think participating in professional development programs will help me to develop new teaching methods, materials and activities.	5	3.1	5	3.1	27	16.9	44	27.5	79	49.4
3. I think attending professional development programs will help to improve my teaching skills.	2	1.3	5	3.1	20	12.5	57	35.6	76	47.5
4. I think attending professional development programs will enable me to re-evaluate my performance.	1	0.6	8	5.0	22	13.8	46	28.8	83	51.9
5. I think attending professional development programs will provide practical information that I can use within the classroom.	5	3.1	3	1.9	20	12.5	54	33.8	78	48.8

6. Professional development programs are related to my needs.	3	1.9	10	6.3	41	25.6	56	35.0	50	31.3
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At this stage of the study, how attending a professional development activity prepared in line with the needs of teachers will affect their perceptions of professional development activities was investigated. For this purpose, while interviewing the teachers, they were asked if they would like to participate in a professional development activity prepared in line with their needs. Three teachers out of 15 agreed to participate. As a common professional development theme the use of drama and technology in foreign language teaching emerged. In this context, a one-day seminar was given to teachers by a drama instructor to provide teachers with general information about what drama is and how it can be used in a foreign language class. The drama instructor stated at the beginning of the training that teachers should participate in a longer-term training so that they can use drama effectively in their lessons. Afterwards, a focus group interview was conducted with teachers and they were asked whether a professional development activity in line with their needs affects their perceptions of professional development activities.

One of the participants explained his interest in this field has made a positive contribution to his perception of the professional development activity:

I think that drama education is very useful especially in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. I even talked a lot about this with our director to get an education. I get a lot of help from my own drama teacher friends about what I can do about it, in terms of how I can perform it in class. So it was really interesting for me to be educated on this subject. It was a step for me to determine what steps I should take to prepare my lessons.

Another participant explained the benefits of participating in a professional development activity related to her needs as a positive contribution to her perception of the professional development activity:

When we used the drama technique, language learning became more fun. The biggest benefit for me was to teach the Turkish language as a foreign language and to provide the students with the chance to learn the rules of the language in a real environment rather than learning the mechanics of the grammatical rules.

After evaluating the answers given in the questionnaires, it was found out that teachers' perceptions about professional development were positive but they were not designed according to their needs. In the interviews conducted after this practice, it was seen that the training of teachers in an area that they felt the need for development made the positive perceptions of professional development even more positive. In addition, teachers stated that participating in a training program prepared in line with their needs helped them to get rid of the classical teaching methods and create a more student-centered, communication-oriented and creative environment.

3. Findings Related to Professional Development Activities Teachers Participate in

According to these findings, professional development activities in which Turkish language teachers' participate can be listed as evaluating their own performance (80.6%), reading articles, journals and books related to the field (80.1%), sharing information with colleagues (80%), conducting in-class research (73.1%), receiving help from colleagues (65.1%), following special groups (60.7%), and exchanging ideas over the internet (56.9%).

The least preferred professional development activities were participation in a field-related organization (39.4%), participation in workshops, seminars and courses (35.6%), and observing their colleagues (33.2%).

Table 3. Professional Development Activities Teachers Participate in

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Completely Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Reading articles, magazines and books related to the field	0	0.0	5	3.0	27	16.9	78	48.8	50	31.3
2. Participating in workshops, seminars and courses in the field	7	4.4	33	20.6	63	39.4	41	25.6	16	10.0
3. Conducting in-class research (action research)	2	1.2	6	3.8	35	21.9	53	33.1	64	40.0
4. Getting help from colleagues	3	1.8	17	10.6	36	22.5	54	33.8	50	31.3
5. Sharing information with colleagues	2	1.2	8	5.0	22	13.8	56	35.0	72	45.0
6. Observing colleagues while teaching	35	21.7	34	21.3	38	23.8	27	16.9	26	16.3
7. Assessing their own performance (reflection)	1	0.6	3	1.9	27	16.9	60	37.5	69	43.1
8. Joining an organization related to the field	35	21.8	26	16.3	36	22.5	34	21.3	29	18.1
9. Follow specific groups related to the field	16	10.0	19	11.8	28	17.5	51	31.9	46	28.8
10. Exchanging ideas related to the field on the internet	9	5.6	23	14.4	37	23.1	31	19.4	60	37.5

DISCUSSION

Although professional development is considered as a vital component of effective teaching, research shows that there are many challenges related to the effective implementation of professional development. Some of the obstacles to the fulfillment of these are time, accessibility, staff motivation and financial issues (Geldenhuis & Oosthuizen, 2015). Age, personnel shortage, non-supportive managers, staff attitude, unavailability of appropriate programs, work pressure, family related situations are defined as other obstacles to participation in professional development activities (Fernandez-Manzanal et al., 2015).

According to the results of this study, the most frequently stated difficulties faced by Turkish as a foreign language teachers in participating professional development activities were the intense pace in their lives, their hectic work schedule and the inefficiency of professional development trainers. "The heavy workload in the institution they work in" and the fact that "the information given in the training cannot be applied in a real class environment" has emerged as the two most common difficulties. In the literature, time and workload are seen as related factors that prevent participation in continuing professional development activities (Day et al., 2007). The lack of institutional support, not being aware of the trainings, lack of motivation and the high cost of professional development activities are mentioned as other difficulties. In order to overcome financial problems and increase motivation of the teachers to participate in professional development activities, there are suggestions such as giving economic support to increase participation in professional

development activities, which can provide the necessary motivation for teachers. In addition, teachers can participate in these activities more if the participation in professional development activities increases their salaries (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). The inconvenience of the place where professional development activity will be held is the least mentioned difficulty.

Professional development preferences of Turkish as a foreign language teachers participating in the study were as follows: programs should be optional, format of the programs should be more like seminars and workshops which include exchanging ideas about not only theoretical information but more about practical applications for the classrooms. They also stated that these activities should be at their workplace, during the work hours when there is no class. They should be carried out once a month or once in a semester and shouldn't be more than 45 minutes. Last but not least, the professional development programs should be prepared and presented by people who are experts in this field. Sauer (2011), in her doctoral dissertation, investigated what models teachers preferred for professional development and whether these models influenced teachers' classroom behaviors. Teachers participating in her study expressed that they preferred the practical presentation models. When teachers were an active part of learning, they reported that they felt that learning was more meaningful (Sauer, 2011, p. 102). In the study conducted by Duman (2016), participant teachers stated that they preferred professional development activities in the form of workshops in which they are involved in the process. In Karagül and Karaba's (2014) research, the importance of the continuity of the in-service training programs was emphasized. In the study conducted by Bayrakçı (2009), it was proposed to organize systematic in-service training programs for teachers.

Another result of the study is that teachers' perceptions about professional development are generally positive. However, the teachers stated that participation in professional development programs increased their self-confidence in classroom teaching activities, and their teaching skills, and that they gained practical knowledge through these studies, in the other parts of questionnaire about the professional development programs they stated that "the professional development programs should not be compulsory and the ones that they have participated so far have not been very effective on their teaching" and "they were partly related to their needs". Akçay (2012) also found similar results in his study and stated that teachers generally have a positive attitude towards professional development. Although teachers indicated that professional development studies help them to improve their teaching practices and develop new teaching materials, and that professional development studies are activities worth spending time on and definitely have an impact on their teaching, they stated that they were "not sure" in questionnaire statements such as "I would not participate if I was not obliged to participate in the in-service activities" and "professional development studies did not have much effect on my teaching". The participant teachers also stated that attending a training program in line with their needs increased their self-confidence and helped them to create a more student-centered, communication-oriented and creative environment within the classroom. This supports the view that a professional development activity in which the teachers take part in the preparation process can increase the effectiveness of the process by making them at the appropriate time and giving priority to their needs.

Finally, most of the teachers participating in the research indicated that they participated in professional development activities such as “evaluating their own performance”, “sharing knowledge with other colleagues”, “reading articles and magazines about the field”, “conducting in-class research” and “getting help from other colleagues”. Apart from these activities, teachers also participated in the activities such as “exchanging ideas about the field over the internet”, “joining an institution related to the field”, “following special groups related to the field”. It was found that their participation rate in activities such as “observing colleagues while teaching” and “participating in workshops, seminars and courses in the field” were very low. In the TALIS (2013) report, “attending conferences and seminars” was listed in the first place among the activities of the teachers. This activity was followed by “study groups for professional development” “making individual or joint work in professional subjects” “guiding, monitoring and training colleagues”, “study tours to other schools”, “diploma or certificate programs”. In this sense, it is observed that Turkish as a foreign language teachers preferred sharing practices and opinions with their colleagues in terms of professional development. The reason for this may be the recent development in this area and the fact that seminars and conferences, which respond to the needs and expectations of the teachers of this field, have recently been initiated.

CONCLUSION

In today's world it is evident that there is an increasing need and interest in learning foreign languages. Therefore, many studies were conducted about the professional development needs and practices of language teachers to increase the quality of instruction in language classrooms. However, existing studies about professional development for foreign language learning mainly depend on English as a foreign or second language teachers (Baykal, 2019; Çınkır, 2017; Karaaslan, 2003; Koçoğlu, 2006; Korkmaz, 2015; Korkmazgil, 2015; Muhammad, 2019; Muyan, 2013; Yağcı, 2014). There is only a small number of research about other languages such as German, French and Turkish as a second or foreign language. This is why researchers should make more inquiries about professional development needs, practices and factors affecting participation of teachers of languages other than English.

With the purpose of revealing what are the Turkish as foreign language (TTFL) teachers' professional development practices, preferences and obstacles that they perceive as the reasons for preventing their participation in development activities, a mixed method research was conducted. According to the results, TTFL teachers' perception of professional development is generally positive. Several studies conducted with English instructors also yielded similar results (Arıkan, 2002; Baykal, 2019; Karaaslan, 2003; Muyan, 2013). However, the participation rate in professional development activities is lower than it is expected due to the teachers' hectic work schedule, bureaucratic reasons and their perceptions of the previous ineffective seminars they attended. Likewise, in a study conducted with English instructors, participants also indicated “lack of time” and “the content of the seminars” as the major hindrances for participating in professional development programs (Muhammad, 2019).

Another finding in the study highlights an important issue in teacher development regarding native versus non-native teachers. As the participants in this study were native speakers of Turkish who mostly graduated from Turkish Language and Literature

Department, they didn't mention participating in activities for developing their linguistic skills. They mostly emphasized the need to learn how to teach Turkish to foreigners. However, in Muhammad's (2019) study non-native English instructors indicated that they participate in professional development programs to improve their language proficiency in English. This is also similar to the studies conducted with non-native French and German instructors (Batdı, 2016; Bayliss & Vignola, 2007; Day & Shapson, 1996; Kırmızı, 2009; Richards et al., 2013). The participants stated, "language should be viewed in the same light as keeping up any other teachable subject" (Bayliss & Vignola, 2007, p. 384)

According to the results of this study, although teachers have a positive perception of professional development, they do not think that activities such as courses, workshops and seminars they participate in are very effective on their teaching and professional development. This is due to the fact that the organizers and trainers in these professional development activities are not experts in the field, the activities are prepared without considering the actual needs of the teachers and only theoretical knowledge is used in the activities and the teachers are left alone how to use this theoretical knowledge in the classroom. This reduces the participation of teachers in conferences and seminars and leads them to prefer peer/collegial solidarity as a professional development activity. Similarly, the same situation can also be observed in the research conducted with English instructors (Korkmazgil, 2015; Sauer, 2011). Therefore, the professional development activities to be prepared for teachers in the future can be arranged in line with the opinions taken from them, and instead of the traditional activities where the speakers come out and give theoretical information, they should provide innovative, practical information which can be used in the classroom.

It is obvious that participation in trainings are both facilitated and prevented by some personal and environmental factors such as family, time, trainers who deliver professional development and institutional aspects. Therefore, in order to increase the participation of teachers in professional development activities, it is necessary to control the above-mentioned personal and environmental factors.

One final suggestion that can be made regarding the results of the study is that the main reason why professional development activities done so far have not fully met the expectations of the teachers working in this area seems to be due to their different educational backgrounds. Opening the department of "Teaching Turkish as a foreign language" department at universities will enable teachers who want to work in this area to feel more competent by receiving a training that is more comprehensive and meeting their needs and expectations and then participating in professional development activities in accordance with their needs.

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