

## Professional Development Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers in Türkiye\*

Article Type	Received Date	Accepted Date
Research	19.03.2025	29.05.2025

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### Abstract

Professional development efforts have become one of the key factors in the success of many countries. Effective professional development practices that include the core features defined in the literature are critical for improving the quality of early learning. This phenomenological study explores views and experiences of early childhood teachers on professional development. The participants in the study were ten early childhood teachers. The data of the study were obtained through semi-structured interviews and professional development experience forms. The data were analyzed through the core features of effective professional development under the themes of active learning, content focus, collective participation, coherence, and duration. The study indicates that practices which promote active participation and respond to teachers' specific professional needs foster ongoing professional learning and support the implementation of new instructional strategies in the classroom. The findings suggest that early childhood teachers' professional development can be enhanced through collaborative, needs-based, and reflective methods. The study's findings are believed to provide valuable insights for the development of professional development processes and for researchers in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** professional development, early childhood education, early childhood teacher, professional learning, teacher education

\* This article is produced from the first author's master thesis under the supervision of the second author.

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## Türkiye’de Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Mesleki Gelişim Deneyimleri\*

Makale Türü	Başvuru Tarihi	Kabul Tarihi
Araştırma	19.03.2025	29.05.2025

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### Öz

Mesleki gelişim çalışmaları birçok ülkenin başarıya ulaşmasındaki önemli unsurlardan biri olarak nitelendirilmektedir. Alan yazınında tanımlanan birtakım temel özellikleri içeren etkili mesleki gelişim uygulamaları erken çocukluk eğitiminin kalitesini artırmak için kritik öneme sahiptir. Bu fenomenolojik çalışma okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişim deneyimlerini ve görüşlerini araştırmaktadır. Çalışmaya on okul öncesi öğretmeni katılmıştır. Çalışmanın verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve mesleki gelişim deneyim formları aracılığıyla elde edilmiştir. Veriler etkili mesleki gelişimin temel özellikleri aracılığıyla aktif öğrenme, içerik odaklılık, kolektif katılım, tutarlılık ve süre temaları altında analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, aktif katılımı teşvik eden ve öğretmenlerin spesifik mesleki ihtiyaçlarına yanıt veren uygulamaların, öğretmenlerin sürekli mesleki öğrenmeye katılımlarını artırdığını ve sınıflarında yeni öğretim stratejilerini uygulamalarını desteklediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişiminin iş birlikçi, ihtiyaç temelli ve yansıtıcı yöntemlerle artırılabilceğini göstermektedir. Çalışmanın bulgularının mesleki gelişim süreçlerinin geliştirilmesi ve erken çocukluk eğitimi araştırmacıları için değerli öngörüler sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Mesleki gelişim, erken çocukluk eğitimi, okul öncesi öğretmeni, mesleki öğrenme, öğretmen eğitimi.

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## Introduction

Professional development is conceptualized as a learning process that is planned, purposeful, aligned with content, and aimed at improving teacher practice. Effectively designed professional development practices can transform teachers' ways of thinking, classroom decisions, and pedagogical practices (Desimone, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The organization of these practices, the importance of which is advocated worldwide, based on various professional development components increases the efficiency of the practices (Clarke et al., 2021). Many traditional professional development models include processes that render teachers' passive participants (Margolis, 2023), that are far from the school context (Borko et al., 2010), do not provide opportunities for collaboration, fail to meet the ever-evolving professional needs of teachers (Little, 2006), and contradict the principles of adult learning (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Thus, these top-down approach methods have several notable consequences including lack of engagement, limited long-term effect, and limited collaboration (Margolis, 2023; Murphy & Calway, 2010). Desimone (2009; 2011) provides a framework for effective professional development programs that include the core features of content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. He argues that a professional development program with these components can lead to significant improvements in teaching practices. Effective professional development programs should have a meaningful and practical structure that occurs at regular intervals, incorporating training, practice, and feedback. They should address the needs and aspirations of teachers as learners, consider the interests and needs of students, focus on enhancing student learning, provide teacher-centered and professionally integrated learning experiences, and promote active and collaborative learning (Desimone, 2011).

Quality professional development practices have also become the focal point of early childhood education reforms worldwide and stand out as a critical element that directly affects the quality of early childhood education. (Olsson et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024). Early childhood teachers' professional development experiences are not limited to the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also have the potential to transform their child-centered pedagogical approaches (Machado & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2024). In particular, the content, duration and practical applicability of the professional development programs that teachers participate in are of great importance for adopting contemporary teaching approaches such as play-based learning (Lee et al., 2024). All these findings reveal the need for more in-depth, context-sensitive, and experience-driven research on the professional development processes of early childhood teachers. Questions such as how teachers construct meaning in these processes, the challenges they face, and how they experience their development can provide important insights into improving the quality of early childhood education. Current literature reveals a gap in understanding how professional development experiences translate into daily classroom practices (Gardner-Neblett et al., 2021).

Studies suggest that professional development initiatives should consider teachers as active agents in their learning and be adapted to their unique early childhood environments (eg. Şahin et al., 2024; Egert et al., 2020). This highlights a gap in the inclusion of teacher perspectives and contextual factors in research (Baker, 2018). Thus, exploring the professional development experiences of early childhood teachers is crucial for enhancing educational practices and addressing the unique challenges faced by this group. Professional development serves as a vital tool for equipping teachers with the skills necessary to implement developmentally appropriate practices and manage classroom dynamics effectively (Hooper et al., 2023). Recognizing the influence of such practices on the quality of early childhood education, many countries around the world have emphasized the importance of professional development practices in early childhood. However, these opportunities have differed widely in terms of accessibility and content (OECD, 2012). Research often overlooks teachers' voices and the specific contexts in which they work.

As in many countries around the world, in Türkiye, the importance of professional development for early childhood educators has been increasingly recognized, aligning with global trends in educational reforms. Over the past two decades, significant steps have been taken to enhance teacher professional development through various reform initiatives, although challenges persist in ensuring these opportunities meet the diverse needs of educators in different contexts (OECD, 2023). In Türkiye, in-service teacher professional development is coordinated by the Directorate General for Teacher Training and Development under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The

Directorate offers workshops, seminars, and other activities—often held two weeks before or after the school year—in collaboration with universities, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Most training is delivered face-to-face or via distance learning. Teachers can also apply for programs aligned with their individual needs and interests. Despite increased funding and activity variety, the effectiveness of professional development programs in Türkiye has been questioned by teachers and researchers (Gokmenoglu et al., 2016). The exploration of early childhood teachers' experiences can reveal insights into context-specific programs that address the unique challenges and knowledge gaps of early childhood educators. Investigating such issues appears to be crucial for understanding how professional development programs can affect the practices of early childhood teachers, what might be done to support their professional growth and development as teachers of young children, and what gaps/omissions remain in the literature. Although many studies (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Desimone, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Patton et al., 2015; Schachter et al., 2019) have been carried out on the implementation and evaluation of professional development programs worldwide, the limited number of studies conducted in Türkiye draws attention (Can, 2019; Eroğlu & Özbek, 2018; Yüner, 2022). Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the views and experiences of early childhood teachers on professional development practices. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) What are the experiences of early childhood teachers on professional development practices?
- 2) What are the views of early childhood teachers on professional development practices?

### **Method**

#### **Research Design and Sample**

In this research, the phenomenological method was used to have in-depth information and interpret the experiences (Creswell, 2013). The experiences and views of ten early childhood teachers working in the central city of Türkiye were analyzed in depth based on Desimone's (2009) professional development components. The study group consisted of three teachers working in independent kindergartens and seven teachers working in preschools affiliated with primary education. The years of teaching experience of the participants ranged from five to eighteen years.

#### **Research Instruments and Procedures**

The main data collection tools of this research were semi-structured interviews and the Professional Development Experience Form. The first part of the interview questions included demographic information about the participants, the second part included questions to obtain their experiences on professional development practices, and the last part included questions to understand their experiences and views on professional development components. The Professional Development Experience Form, developed by the researchers based on Desimone's (2009) five core components of effective professional development, included items designed to capture teachers' experiences. The form consisted of a total of 14 items about the experiences of teachers regarding their professional development.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the interviews were first transcribed by listening to the audio recordings and participants' statements were presented verbatim. Once the transcriptions were completed, the data obtained were categorized into themes according to Desimone's (2009, 2011) five basic components of effective professional development: active learning, content-focused, coherence, collective participation, and duration. In this study, the data obtained from the semi-structured interview questions were analyzed using a deductive analysis approach and then, the inductive analysis method was used (Gibson & Brown, 2009). With the deductive analysis approach, professional development components were used as five themes by Desimone (2009). These themes were referenced, and the data were read many times, thoroughly examined, and organized accordingly. Subsequently, various codes were generated and the data regarding the pre-determined themes were grouped into clusters. The data were read many times and analyzed thoroughly, and inductive analysis was used to make sense of the data (Bingham, 2023). In this process, the explanations of the codes were re-examined and developed, and the ideas obtained from the data were determined. Then, the interpretation phase of the data was completed by identifying the categories aligned with the

developed themes, and by analyzing the research findings through the codes and categories generated using both deductive and inductive analysis methods.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, data triangulation, peer review, expert consultation, and a pilot study were employed (Creswell, 2013). The interview questions and the Turkish version of the Professional Development Experience Form were first submitted to three early childhood researchers for their evaluation. Then, a pilot study was conducted with three early childhood teachers from the target group to identify potential issues and make necessary revisions before the main data collection phase (Creswell, 2013).

**Ethical Procedures**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant university on September 27, 2022.

**Results**

**Active Learning**

The professional development experience form findings for the active learning theme are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Professional development experience form findings for the active learning component

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
The professional development programs include active learning environment.		T2, T3, T4, T5, T8,	T1	T9	T7, T10
I participate in professional development programs.		T2,	T1,	T3, T4, T6, T8, T9	T5, T7, T10
Teachers' professional needs are considered before designing professional development programs.	T5	T3, T4, T6, T8, T9, T10	T1, T2	T7	

According to the findings, almost all the teachers had professional development experiences that involved direct instruction through presentation. While describing their experiences in terms of active learning, the participants noted that many professional development practices lacked interactive processes. Some excerpts from teacher statements reflecting these experiences are provided below:

*T2: I think it's a problem when a trainer simply presents slides during a workshop... For example, they introduce themselves and immediately open their slides.*

*T3: In some activities, they cannot involve us in the process, they just tell us and move on, and we cannot learn much this way.*

Considering active learning, the participants reported that professional development practices oriented toward active learning were the ones they could remember more easily. As evident from the findings, combining theoretical knowledge with practical application was considered particularly effective for teachers. Furthermore, they reported the importance of using various and concrete materials, related to the subject matter, on enhancing their learning and increasing their motivation. Below is an excerpt reflecting these experiences:

*T5: The processes in which we are always active and fully practice-orientated are wonderful. It is great when something is taught beforehand, and then we get to apply it afterward.*

The findings revealed that receiving feedback during professional development practices was essential for their engagement. Teachers reported a strong desire to have their voices heard, particularly in settings where they could address uncertainties arising from their experiences and discuss aspects they believed needed improvement. They emphasized the importance of engaging in professional development activities alongside experts in their field to facilitate this process. The role of receiving feedback throughout the process was defined as a tool that encouraged more active participation in the process and made it easier to follow up. A participant's statement regarding this is presented below:

*T7: ... Let's be included in the process a little. Let's write a plan—design an activity or create a pool for that activity. We can send it there; they can read it and evaluate it. There should be spaces where we can actually create and produce something. That would be active learning.*

### Content Focus

The professional development experience form findings for the content focus theme are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Findings from the professional development experience form for the content focus component

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
What I have experienced in the professional development programs contributes to my practices.			T3, T4, T6,	T1, T2, T5, T8	T7, T9, T10
My school provides me with professional development opportunities in addition to the professional development programs offered by the municipality.	T1	T3, T4, T5, T8, T9, T10	T6, T2	T7	
The professional development programs offer different contents.		T1, T2, T7		T3, T4, T5, T6, T8, T9, T10	

The findings revealed that teachers found professional development practices focusing on specific content related to early childhood education more effective. Professional development activities were found beneficial when they focus on subject matter content, the implementation in classroom and how young children learn that content. Teachers emphasized that professional development activities should contribute to children's learning and be tailored to their needs. However, most professional development practices were reported as not aligned with these needs and were instead compulsory, which reduced both motivation and effectiveness. In addition to these, all teachers highlighted the importance of incorporating current updates into professional development practices to adapt to the changing profiles of children each year. The following quote corroborates this finding:

*T2: Over the years, both children change, we ourselves change, and technology advances. Any kind of development inevitably affects us. The dynamics are constantly changing. We need to keep up with the changes, because our audience, I mean, we are affected first-hand because we are preschoolers. Naturally, the education we received and current education, or even this year's education processes, must be different.*

Almost all participants agreed that effective professional development practices could be transferred to the learning environment as long as they contributed to their own professional growth and were part of a mutually beneficial cycle. The participants reported that when professional development enhanced their own learning, they could more effectively and positively transfer their knowledge to the classroom. It was found that professional development practices were more effective when they contributed to teachers' understanding of child development and its practical implementation. An excerpt regarding this finding is given below:

*T3: The ones that I find effective, as far as I see on children, motivate them and involve them better in the education and training process. It also motivates me. This is because I feel professionally satisfied when I can make progress in children. If I cannot make any progress, I'm not professionally satisfied with the education I receive from those programs.*

### Collective Participation

The findings of the experience form are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Findings of the professional development experience form for the collective participation component

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Only early childhood teachers participate in the professional development programs.		T3, T6, T8	T1, T4, T7	T5, T2, T9, T10	
The professional development programs include sharing ideas among colleagues.		T10	T2, T8	T1, T3, T5, T9	T4, T6, T7
After the professional development programs, I share my professional learning with people who did not attend it (such as colleagues and administrators).			T10, T8	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5	T6, T7, T9
After the practices, my school provides a suitable environment for the exchange of information and ideas about the practices.	T1	T4, T5, T9, T10	T3, T2	T7, T8	T6

The findings revealed that some professional development practices were offered to all teachers from their schools. Teachers found it beneficial to share ideas and engage in brainstorming sessions with their colleagues after these activities in their school environment. Early childhood teachers who shared similar experiences gained new perspectives on current situations, which in return positively influenced the classroom environment. Teachers who were fed from different perspectives benefited from a more diverse learning environment. In addition, it was also among the statements that teachers transferred the things they learned from practices to their colleagues who had not participated. One of the statements of the participants regarding these experiences is given below:

*T3: Definitely, it should be because you are discussing, maybe something that I would not think of in that environment comes to the mind of a friend in that group. ...We positively influence each other.*

Furthermore, they emphasized that the professional development activities should be in a structure that allows for collaborative sharing, not only afterwards. Considering the experiences of the participants, it was found that the exchange of ideas and brainstorming about the practices among colleagues, which were carried out during the professional development practices contributed to their professional development. Teachers stated that hearing the classroom examples of others and sharing their practices with their colleagues were important for their professional development. Some examples of these experiences are presented below:

*T4: It should be collaborative. The teacher should contribute to the process.*

*T7: Firstly, knowledge increases as we share it. ... My learning is also permanent. The more I explain, the more I tell the theories, the more I give examples of applications, the easier it is for me to assimilate...Then we exchange ideas about what we can do more. As long as there is interaction, there is development.*

Participants believed that incorporating their professional experiences in professional development practices positively impacted the process. They expressed that sharing similar experiences with colleagues increased their focus and interest in the process. They also stated that taking examples from participants could enable them to be involved in the subject. A few examples of these views are given below:

*T6: Maybe a friend applies a method I once used with a child—but in a different way—and gets a result. That could be an example for me.*

Overall, it was found that the participants described collaborative experiences as effective professional development practices. There were opinions that the practices in which the participants were stakeholders increased the motivation of the participants and facilitated the integration of the subjects discussed.

## Coherence

The professional development experience form findings for the coherence theme are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Findings from the professional development experience form for the coherence component

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
The professional development programs are effective for teachers.		T1, T2, T8, T10	T3, T7	T9, T5	T4, T6
The professional development programs have coherency.		T3, T5	T8, T1, T2	T4, T6, T7, T9, T10	

It was found that the coherence between the school conditions and the content of the professional development activity was an important element for teachers. Teachers preferred practices that aligned with their current working conditions, which could negatively affect their application of learning. Teachers learn in professional development activities that are consistent with the national program and socio-economic background of the environment. The consistency of subjects, practices, and samples with common classroom situations increased the sense of belonging for professional development among teachers. It was seen from the data that professional development practices that teachers are required to attend were not sufficient for them to improve themselves and resulted in low satisfaction in terms of meeting the requirements of the current program and children's profiles in schools; therefore, they participated in private professional development practices. Among the statements are that paid practices are effective practices in terms of organization and meeting the needs of teachers. An excerpt is given below:

*T3: ...unfortunately, many professional development activities do not motivate us and that is why I receive training privately.*

It is noteworthy that the professional development practices were not consistent with the facilities of the schools where the participants are working. Most professional development practices were implemented throughout the country. Teachers reported that they found it more effective if they were part of training oriented towards the conditions and needs of their current schools:

*T8: It should be suitable for the conditions of the place where I work. It should be applicable, it should not be left up in the air, in other words, if I cannot come and apply something they explain in my classroom, it will not be of any use. It will not be of any use to the child either. Conditions should not be considered as if everywhere were like Ankara.*

When the views of early childhood teachers on the coherence component were examined, a striking consensus emerged regarding the necessity of conducting a needs analysis. The participants emphasized that professional development practices that take into account their professional needs contributed more to their development and that the conditions of the school they worked at played an important role in shaping and diversifying these needs. Some of the participant views on this are presented below:

*T5: I think that needs assessment should be conducted beforehand for the teachers.*

*T7: I think that even a small survey to teachers, in other words, getting their valuable opinions, is the first thing to do.*

## Duration

The professional development experience form findings for the duration theme are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Findings of the professional development experience form for the duration component

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I find the duration of the professional development programs sufficient.		T3, T5	T1, T2, T4, T6, T9, T10	T7	T8
The duration of the professional development programs should be increased.	T7	T1, T2, T4, T5, T8, T9, T10		T3	T6

The findings indicated that the duration of the professional development practices teachers attended was not fixed and could vary from one and a half hours to five days. It was observed that this variation in duration depended on the subjects related to subject and the locations where the practices were conducted. It was reported as a part of their experience that the municipality could frequently provide distance education and teachers could also participate in residential professional development practices outside the city, lasting three to five days.

*T9: We attend seminars at the beginning of the year, during mid-term breaks, and at the end of the year. There are also additional trainings. Some are 18 hours long, while others vary depending on whether it's a 1-hour training. The 18-hour ones are usually compressed into two days.*

The findings also revealed that the professional development practices were mostly carried out outside the classroom hours. It is noteworthy that requiring teachers to dedicate additional time beyond school hours and making this compulsory for the teachers decreased both their motivation and the effectiveness of the process. Two of the statements of the participants are presented below:

*T2: The trainings are usually held after school, and the time is not appropriate.*

*T5: Timing really matters. The teacher will both come to school and attend the seminar after leaving there.*

In addition, there were one-off and short-term professional development practices among the experiences of the participants. It is important to mention that the fast-paced structure and brief duration of these activities were perceived to negatively affect both the overall effectiveness of the training. The statements of the participants regarding this are presented below:

*T9: For example, most things were rushed, and went too quickly, there was no need for that much.*

*T10: Some seminars only last one hour.*

It is striking that teachers perceive the continuous integration of professional development practices throughout the academic year as beneficial for their learning and implementation. They advocate for these practices to be distributed across the academic year, rather than being concentrated in high-intensity, compressed sessions during specific seminar periods. This approach, they argue, would enhance the teaching and internalization of the provided content, as opposed to being confined to singular events. Some examples of these views are presented below:

*T5: I think these seminars could be continued at certain intervals.*

*T7: ... If these were spread out over the course of the program... Maybe if we spread the timings of professional development activities over the term a little bit, this could be more manageable.*

Overall, teachers emphasized that it would be more effective if the duration of the professional development activity was aligned with the subject and the way it was applied.

### **Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

In this study, the views and experiences of early childhood teachers regarding professional development were examined through the lens of Desimone's (2009; 2011) five key components: active learning, collective participation, duration, content focus, and coherence. The findings indicated that professional development activities were predominantly conducted through direct explanations via presentations, lacking interactive processes. In active learning environments, the objective is to engage actively in the practices they are acquiring, with applications that incorporate interactive activities to facilitate comprehensive learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It was found that teachers were not sufficiently engaged in active learning processes during their professional development experiences. Hooper and his colleagues (2023) noted that teachers are frequently positioned as passive participants, resulting in superficial experiences. It is well-known that considering active learning features in the planning and implementation of these processes enhances the effectiveness of professional development (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001). Practices such as seminars, one-time workshops, and similar sessions have often been criticized for their minimal contribution to teacher development and their failure to provide an active learning environment (Hooper et al., 2023). It is seen that professional development programs in Türkiye are mostly carried out in the form of courses and seminars (Atal & Sancar, 2021). In these programs, teachers frequently remained passive listeners for extended periods, becoming reliant on the presenter, which diminished their potential and discouraged them from taking responsibility for their professional growth (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). A notable aspect of the participants' experiences was their assertion that

incorporating practices that facilitated engagement enhanced the programs' effectiveness. The literature reveals that teachers regard opportunities for practical work in professional development programs as highly valuable (Garet et al., 2001; Machado & Oliveira-Formosinho 2024). Furthermore, the OECD (2005) review highlights that effective programs provide teachers with specific content applicable in the classroom, offer feedback, and maintain participant engagement throughout the process. This examination of teachers' views and experiences revealed that programs incorporating feedback and active learning components effectively addressed teacher needs.

Professional development practices should prioritize and foster collective participation and interaction. The exchange of ideas among colleagues within these practices offers diverse perspectives and enhances learning by providing varied approaches (Desimone, 2011). Such practices promote a collaborative environment where strong professional relationships are established and information exchange is encouraged (Methlagl, 2022). Similarly, opportunities for collaboration should be structurally supported, impeding sustainable collaborative learning processes (Liu et al., 2024). Supporting that research, teachers' views indicated that professional development experiences offering collaborative learning opportunities contributed more significantly to their classroom practices. Moreover, teachers emphasized that when the knowledge and experiences gained are not transferable to their daily classroom practices, they may struggle to maintain focus and motivation. Differentiated practices tailored to each school's specific needs are critical for the effectiveness of professional development. In order to maximize the impact of professional development, it is important to take into account the professional needs of teachers in the planning process (Yüner, 2022). Therefore, ensuring the usability and practicality of professional development programs is essential. Teachers may be adversely affected by generic content, limited applicability, or mandatory participation in ineffective programs. Machado and Oliveira-Formosinho (2024) discovered that many programs are not adequately connected to teachers' daily classroom practice. Lastly, inconsistency between practice and policy is another factor limiting the effectiveness of professional development. Olsson, Almqvist, and Kultti (2025) reported that the failure to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice negatively impacts teachers' development. In this context, the findings of this study indicate that for professional development processes to be effective, it is crucial not only to consider the content presented but also how this content is delivered and integrated with the teacher's experience.

Teachers typically engage in one-time or short-term training, but ongoing professional development practices and sustained participation support continuous learning and improvement (Desimone, 2011). Regarding duration, Lee et al. also (2024) highlighted that many professional development programs consist of short-term activities with limited impact, which adversely affects the retention of learning. Participant teachers attend training sessions ranging from one to eighteen hours and typically participate in eight or nine sessions in an academic year. Teachers highlighted the importance of adjusting training durations according to the content and teachers' professional needs. Extensive and in-depth training programs tend to be more effective when they are long-term. A noteworthy finding of the study is that although teachers perceived the duration of the programs as insufficient, they did not express a desire for these durations to be extended. While this may initially appear contradictory, the findings suggest that this hesitation stems from participants' negative perceptions of the training programs they had previously experienced, as well as the lack of implementation of other essential components recognized to enhance program effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this regard, the desire to extend the duration only when the professional development program is effective and includes active learning, feedback, brainstorming, collaboration, and varied instructional methods distributed over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 1994) aligns with expectations in the literature. The length of these activities is considered crucial for two main reasons. Firstly, extended sessions are more likely to facilitate thorough discussions on content and teaching methods. Secondly, activities that span a longer period are more likely to enable teachers to experiment with new techniques in the classroom and receive feedback on their instructional methods (Garet et al., 2001; Lindvall et al., 2022).

This study highlights the need for professional development practices in which early childhood teachers actively participate, receive feedback, and engage with content that aligns with the specific needs of their classrooms. When teachers feel their voices are unheard and their context-specific needs are overlooked, the impact of such initiatives diminishes. Therefore, professional development

programs should be designed to foster collaboration, active participation, and reflective practice. Incorporating these elements can not only enhance teacher engagement but also support the sustained implementation of new strategies in the classroom. To be effective, professional development should be aligned with the actual needs of teachers, offer content that is directly applicable to early childhood classroom settings, and ultimately contribute to both teacher learning and student outcomes. A strong emphasis on content is essential for influencing instructional quality and classroom climate. Moreover, programs should be sustained over time to allow for in-depth exploration of pedagogical concepts, integration of feedback, peer learning, and opportunities for reflection on classroom practice. Designing professional development in this way can promote meaningful professional growth among early childhood educators in Türkiye.

While this study reveals the experiences of early childhood teachers regarding professional development, the data is limited to interviews and experience forms. The findings indicate that the effects of different professional development models on teachers' professional development processes should be investigated in more depth. In addition, it is also recommended to conduct research with observation-based data in professional development activities. In this context, the need for longitudinal studies that support teacher learning, including various approaches and models, is clearly evident.

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