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Reflections of Turkish Instructors on a Six-Week Online Professional Development Course in the Work-From-Home Era

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Abstract: With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the urge it created at schools across the world, seismic changes in education have not only resulted in a sudden transition in the way of instruction but the way of teachers' personal growth. Hence, this qualitative case design aims to examine the experiences of Turkish EFL instructors affiliated with foreign language units in higher education context partaking in a six-week professional development course based on asynchronous distance learning. To that end, their posts on the platform, reader discussions, and assignments uploaded onto the system besides individual semi-structured interviews were exploited as data gathering tools. The results speak to the positive impression of online course takers in terms of establishing interpersonal synergy, achieving personal growth, and promoting their content knowledge. Moreover, their post-training perspectives disclosed the support they sensed the need for professional and institutional issues. Though instructors detected some problems to be addressed in the course, their criticism functioned as suggestions to best shape similar further practices in addition to reforming the current training. Finally, some recommendations have been provided for scholars concentrating on studying within this field to create their future directions.

Keywords: CPD, Distance Education, Teacher Development, Teacher Learning, Professional Learning

Highlights

What is already known about this topic:

- When enhanced with academic research or based on teamwork, in-service training has proven to be highly effective.
- An insufficient number of case studies were reported on online CPD training among teachers as well as academics.

What this paper contributes:

- Positive attitudes about online PD courses in terms of fostering collaboration, and support for pedagogical and practical knowledge were revealed.
- Some institutional and professional factors that need improvement were pointed out.

Implications for theory, practice and/or policy:

- The research will stimulate schools of foreign languages to take the correct path to TD.
- This study will contribute to ELT and future CPD research by considering EFL instructors' perspectives and approaches toward training the trainers.

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Introduction

Higher education (HE) is a far-reaching field considering the quality of the degree program, qualification of the teaching staff, well-being of academics and learners within well-resourced institutions, and the expectations and requirements of the council. Pre-service teaching has been provided by universities, while in-service training is arranged by the Ministry of Education (MoE), institutions themselves, teacher associations, publishing houses or some high-quality courses. These Professional Development (PD) programs have generally been noted to promote the instructional skills of teachers (Borko, 2004), turning theory into practice in a particular community of practitioners (Schaler & Fusco, 2003) besides stimulating collegiality (Ayar, 2019), and online learning (Baran & Correia, 2014; Gregory & Salmon, 2013). Despite their prominence and direct support of language education, the inadequacy of some of this training has been explored among teachers from primary and secondary education (Baran & Cagıltay, 2006) and instructors at universities (Ayar, 2019). Besides, the teaching staff has been reported to experience some drastic problems with PD and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) practices due to their unwillingness, the irrelevancy of the realities in language education in schools to teacher education, and practices lack a theoretical base on English Language Teaching (ELT). Finally, Gabriel (2004) has stressed their technocratic nature in that those programs represent the standardized applications of classroom practices disregarding the characteristic features of the target audience.

Considering these foregoing drawbacks and failures they have caused in the education system, Moore et al. (2016) have drawn attention to virtual conferences, webinars, and other online communities to reveal potential teacher satisfaction and evaluate the training in terms of the contributions to Teacher Development (TD). Yet, Borg (2015) unveils that research displaying the positive contributions of these digital practices for teachers has been scant in the field. Accordingly, the impetus behind the operationalization of this study would be addressing this void and aiming to enrich the literature by revealing the experiences of English instructors within an online PD course. The theoretical background of this research is based upon Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model which has mostly grown from Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist learning theory in that it has a huge part to play in the change of experiences and learning within and from online education (see Richmond & Cummings, 2005).

Literature

As a unique process, PD strives to offer in-service teachers new resources, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will help them put the theories into practice. Essentially, the quality of PD necessitates experiences that have been decisively planned, placed in various contexts centred upon classroom instructions, and well-combined with learning tools for education. Thus, this demands a coordinator or facilitator paving the way for progressive education in a safe environment where teachers would act as co-learners and professionals. Research on face-to-face PD has revealed that in-service training has been quite powerful when enriched with academic studies, or based on collaboration, maintained for a length of time, and addressed instructions and contents in an in-person learning context (Higginbotham, 2019). Moreover, when standards have been compatible with such kinds of initiatives, these practices can also offer trainees some opportunities, such as in-class discussions, or reflections (Eliason & Holmes, 2010; Guskey, 2003; Pate & Thompson, 2003).

The principles of PD, in fact, go beyond face-to-face education with thriving prominence to the quality of the program, which brings about the enhancement of standards. That being the case, online PD initiatives have quickly emerged as a favoured model for attendees and providers, and the majority of PD models have been customized to match the unique needs of the participants and program goals in virtual settings (Lockee, 2020; Nami, 2022). Similarly, Van et al. (2022) have covered online CPD or PD programs in their research designs to reflect their benefits through the eyes of the teachers. Some scholars have also narrowed down the scope of this online support and clarified best practices to navigate the improvement and delivery of successful asynchronous instruction (e.g., Holzer, 2004; Yoon, 2020). In that vein, Moore (2005) has championed studies on asynchronous learning networks in

the HE context assuming that faculty or departments, the efficacy of online learning, learner satisfaction, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness operate as the pillars and quality principles. In turn, these online PD practices will enable robust interactions between learners and instructors with abundant materials and prolific debates in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). By the same token, Baran and Cagıltay (2006) have regarded such kinds of online PD support as catalysts to increase self-government in e-learning with their time-place independent nature. Correspondingly, the study by Marei et al. (2021) has resulted in the profit of following an online, asynchronous teacher PD course while designing feedback systems with a promising future to augment contributions to teacher learning.

Recently, some studies have been carried out to determine whether and in what ways online PD courses strengthen TD or become effective by concentrating on several factors, such as the senses, needs, or perceptions of the teachers in virtual education platforms. To exemplify, Moore et al. (2016) indicate that online TD activities can present beneficial and substantial opportunities to teachers in the general sense. Touching upon this subject at length, some other studies have also explored that interaction in digital settings has influenced the quality of PD courses directly (e.g., Anderson, 2003). Likewise, Chitanana (2023) has discovered their efficacy in regard to providing "...learning environments conducive to the development of professional skills among educators" (p.1). In addition, a number of researchers have identified critical thinking (e.g., Al-Naabi, 2023; Garrison, 2006), teacher presence (e.g., Holmes et al., 2010) and self-regulated learning (e.g., Avidov-Ungar et al., 2023) as the benefits of online courses after the analyses of inquiries of in-service teachers. In parallel, Nazari and Xodabande (2022) have declared that teachers increasingly changed their associated views and became more aware of the potential educational exploitation of mobile learning through these online courses. Furthermore, Kanowski (2004) has considered self-reflection as a fundamental opportunity of web-based courses for teachers by peer and self-analysis of their experience. In a like manner with Crebbin (1997), Nazari and De Costa (2022) underline online PD has been arranged to be inextricably intertwined with the identity of the teachers to an extent that the new normal and the changes it has brought along with will reflect on the change in their beliefs and practices. They have also described in their further analysis that online courses gave the teachers a chance to strengthen their professional connections and involvement with their peers. Hence, these events did have a tremendous impact on and influence agency and emotions, two important parts of identity. Similarly, the impact of this training has been also observed in their positive self-perception reports, overall satisfaction with the implementations, reflections on pedagogical approaches, and classroom practices (Fernandes et al., 2023). However, underestimating these attempts and putting the so-called futile efforts down to the current climate of change particularly due to Covid-19, some researchers seem to be convinced by the view that satisfactory progress in TD could only be achieved through face-to-face education (see Gregory & Salmon, 2013). To illustrate, Brandt (2006) has disclosed participants in such kinds of intensive courses do not have adequate chance either to conduct implementations or commit errors without the interruptions of the facilitators or their criticisms. Additionally, they have not been noted to avail course takers of reflective practices. Further evidence suggests those PD activities have been on the decline owing to losing their effectiveness, and physical distance from partners besides the lack of a concrete working environment (Oddone et al., 2019). Wynants and Dennis (2018) also provide further details regarding the lack of social interaction in these online practices. By the same token, PD practices' priority has been reported to dwindle as teachers struggle to fulfil their role in the new status quo (Acuyo, 2021). As for the issue of delivery of the course content and consistency in the designs, it has been announced to be problematic by Leary et al. (2020). Poole et al. (2020) have described the lack of flexibility in timing and the additional workload the online training brings together as other challenges. Last but not least, Ferguson and Donno (2003) also detail the potential obsoleteness of these courses due to attaching particular importance to practical techniques at the expense of theoretical underpinnings of ELT as well as drawing little attention to language awareness. Taken together, with regard to the foregoing inconclusive findings, to develop a more nuanced understanding of whether online PD courses have been sensed to be fruitful through the lens of the teachers, and how best practices can be shaped, the study seems to be worth being conducted among instructors of EFL at the tertiary level.

Main Focus of the Study

The emergence of Covid-19 as a global pandemic has caused educators to confront the problem of the adaptation of their learning to online settings in addition to the abrupt transition of their face-to-face materials, plans, or methods to online teaching. This crisis has also altered some stereotypes in the education system. As a result, current learning models, PD activities, CPD practices, and all other academic development interventions have to be reformed via social networking systems, and computer-mediated communication in the face of the new normal. However, as Moore et al. (2016) emphasize, little research has been done thus far to delve into this issue through the lens of the teachers in the HE context despite its growing reputation as an ideal model for TD opportunities. Above all, the training of the trainers is a very specific course context dissimilar to all other training or organizations. Research regarding the courses developed for the Certificate in Teaching English to Adults Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) or Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA) (Higginbotham, 2019), general PD activities (Eliason & Holmes, 2010; Holmes et al., 2010; Moore et al., 2016; Oddone et al., 2019; Van et al., 2022; Yoon, 2020, to name a few), or education on other traditional subjects, such as the integration of technology into language classes (Ates-Ozdemir & Dikilitaş, 2016; Baran & Cagıltay, 2006; Marei et al., 2021, among others) subsists in the field. However, any studies directly investigating the experiences of EFL instructors taking the course of training the trainers in asynchronous, online distance education format have not been administered yet, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. To fill this chasm in the literature and give a clear portrait of the significance of this point, the researcher has addressed these questions:

1. What were the EFL instructors' experiences in an online PD course?
    1.a. What support did the course takers receive throughout the training?
    1.b. What support did the course takers feel they needed at the end of the training?
2. How can this PD course best be shaped according to the instructors?

Methodology

The qualitative case study design presented in this study was applied to scrutinize the experiences of a group of English instructors partaking six-week digital PD course. The researcher also respected Stake's (1995) perspective while developing and implementing the study in that "A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning" (p.237). Moreover, as Yin (2009) states, this research approach should be adopted to describe, explain or explore phenomena, circumstances, documents or events in the real, ordinary contexts in which they appear. As the five basic and crucial stages of the case studies must be considered before undertaking the research activity (Crowe et al., 2011), the definition and selection of the case were first conducted after revising the existing literature and clarifying the nature and the scope of the study. In what follows, in light of the painstakingly formulated research questions, collection and analysis of the data, their coherent interpretations, and reports of the results were all presented, respectively.

Data Collecting Tools

The dataset for this study consisted of interviews with ten open-ended questions in the semi-structured format in addition to text chats, reader discussions, and uploaded assignments on the system. As the collected data were on a broad basis, it would also be worth representing the contents of the posts, listing the expectations from the participants, and giving a brief overview of weekly learning, systematically. The syllabus of that six-week course can be illustrated as follows:
Week 1: Conducting a PD program needs analysis (or an initial training need analysis).
Week 2: Gathering data, evaluating resources, planning, and evaluating plan.
Week 3: Designing initial training or PD modules.
Week 4: Focusing on program and considering methods of program delivery.
Week 5: Developing dynamic Professional Learning (PL) initiatives.

Week 6: Building community.

Correspondingly, while posting to the discussion board, participants were required to respond to the given prompt(s), answer at least one of the classmates' postings for each question, and read, reflect on and respond to as many postings as possible to facilitate their learning. Furthermore, in line with these weeks, attendees were expected to read a good number of selected resources compulsorily, and carry out some tasks through which they would be assessed accordingly, as follows:

Table 1. Course grading

With a minimum of 80% overall, participants will receive a certificate for the course.	
Q&A Discussion Board	6 X 6.5%
SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis	4.5%
Word cloud-based plan analysis	1.5%
CPD Training Plan	20%
Group Task: Success Stories	10%
Training Module	25%
	100%

As for back to the questions in the interview, they intended to disclose their thoughts about this training considering its contributions to their academic career. In addition, the researcher addressed the number of (online) CPD activities they took part in as of yet, other digital courses, and their strengths and weaknesses. They were, finally, asked about whether to recommend the course to colleagues and their overall suggestions for best practices. The data was gathered at the peak outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2021; hence the interviews were conducted either through phone calls or meetings on Zoom by asking for an appointment according to the schedules of each course graduate. The interviews were conducted in the mother tongue, Turkish, not to block their thoughts. They initially shared basic demographic features (i.e., age, educational background, and teaching experience apart from the institution), and then questioning began.

Study Group

23 EFL instructors affiliated with Turkish universities were awarded to take a course organized by the international association of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and funded by the U.S. Department of State. The inclusion criteria for the study group were that they were non-native speakers of English, and they were working as full-time instructors in foreign language units of universities. Considering that two participants were lecturers in the faculty of education, six instructors dropped out of the course, one did not answer the call for the invitation to this research, another one was the coordinator of English education programs, and finally, the others (N=4) were foreign teachers, 9 instructors partook in this qualitative research design, in total. All these trainees also volunteered to participate in the course without third-party coercion.

Although the course was on the training of the trainers, the participants were entitled "attendees" or "trainees" rather than "trainers" in the study, assuming that these instructors considered the training as an investment for the future since only three of them received trainer certificates beforehand. Additionally, each instructor was assigned a numerical number with the prefix “I” symbolizing the word *I*nstructor instead of fake nicknames. The brief demographic information of these attendees has been presented in the table below.

Table 2. Demographics of participants

Instructors	**Age**	**Years of teaching experience**	**Educational Background**	**Type of the institution**
I1	38	16	PhD candidate	State university
I2	45	21	Bachelor’s Degree	Foundation university

I3	40	17	Master's Degree	Foundation university
I4	38	16	Master's Degree	State university
I5	32	11	PhD candidate	Foundation university
I6	46	20	Master's Degree	State university
I7	31	10	Master's Degree	State university
I8	47	23	Bachelor's Degree	Foundation university
I9	49	28	Master's Degree	State university

According to Table 2, the attendees had minimum ten-year seniority in the teaching profession and most held a Master's Degree in education. In addition, though their ages ranged from 31 to 49, instructors aged 40 or more outnumbered the others in their thirties. Finally, five EFL instructors from the state university context partook in the study, whereas the number was four for the foundation universities.

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2009) model of qualitative analysis was utilized to analyse the data and validate the accuracy of the information (see Figure 1). Initially, the whole posts of each trainee and all of their weekly assignments with the exclusion of success stories that were only accessible to group members (see Table 1) were copied from the system one by one and pasted onto the Word to create tangible documents while holding a meticulous and systematic examination. Then, dossiers were formed on behalf of each attendee for the first round of data analysis. Despite the differences in numerical amounts of words per dossier (i.e., I1= 12.795, I2=9.451, I3=10.942, I4=12.704, I5=9.674, I6=9.864, I7=13.425, I8=4.456, and I9=9.961), 93.272 words were counted to conduct the analysis, in total. However, some of the tasks submitted through Microsoft's PowerPoint and Excel programs were not included in these numbers due to being in the protected view and hence not displaying the word count. As for the interviews, the same process was followed after transcribing audio recordings, which took a total of 97 minutes and 55 seconds, and translating them into the English language.

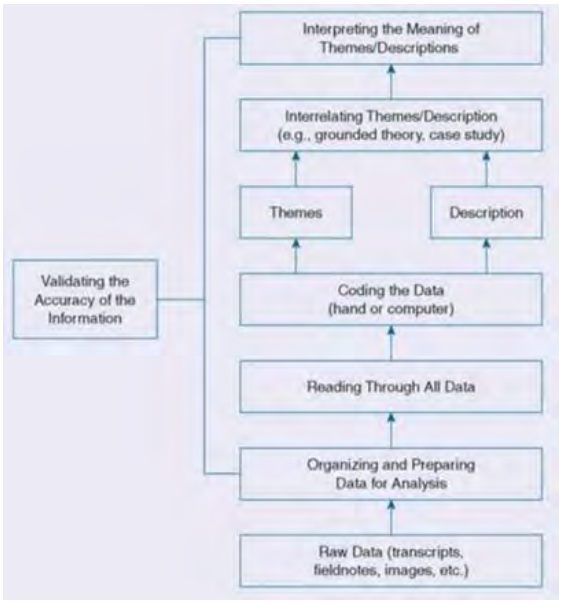

Figure 1. Model of data analysis by Creswell (2019, p.172).

Having collated the responses of each participant according to the questions in the order in light of content analysis (Elo et al., 2014; Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 1980), and read the dataset quite a lot of times, manual coding of those large volumes of data started. The researcher coded them into manageable groups, then generated categories to further summarize the data, and finally created

theme(s). Processes, from the very beginning, took nearly eight weeks for the researcher to complete the first half of the analysis. This long procedure also resulted from the researcher's forgetfulness in taking the interview record of one participant and having to make a new appointment yet again, which extended the data analysis continuum for another week. Afterwards, a colleague of the researcher holding a Ph.D. in ELT was involved in the study as the second coder. Having concluded the analysis of two types of data individually in six weeks, this rater and the researcher exchanged the identified codes and categories. After melting data in the same pot in two rounds of discussions, they finally ironed the results out. In what follows, they interrelated the themes and interpreted their meanings to get the validation accuracy of the data in view of Creswell's (2019) model. In addition, the researcher examined the dataset once again to provide examples regarding each in order to enrich the text. Taken together, data analysis of the current study took approximately 15 weeks starting from scratch.

The first theme was created concerning how the course takers were supported during the training as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3. Strengths of the course for the participants

Theme	Category	Code
Effectiveness of the CPD course	Interpersonal synergy	Online Sense of Community (SoC)
		Constructive peer feedback
		Online PL network
	Personal gain	Great awareness of the need for change
		Bonds between practice and beliefs
		Growth mind-set
	Content support	Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)
		Impact on student learning

The following theme emerged with regard to supports instructors felt they were in need after completing their digital courses as follows:

Table 4. Further post-training perspectives of participants

Theme	Category	Code
The support instructors sensed they needed	Professional	Ownership of career path
		Self-reflection
	Institutional	Organization of CPD events
		Standards for CPD programs
		Collegial support
		Networked culture

Finally, the themes were reported as comments in Table 5 to reveal how this course can be best designed considering the reflections of course graduates.

Table 5. Participant responses to suggestions for enhancement

Comments	Participants								
	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9
More interaction online	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Clearer course requirements		✓			✓		✓	✓	
More facilitator feedback		✓					✓		✓
An extended period	✓		✓	✓		✓			

Fewer assignments	✓			✓						
Access to the facilitator instantly			✓	✓						
Synchronous support to the course				✓	✓			✓		✓
Practicality					✓	✓	✓		✓	
Assessment of the course outcomes					✓		✓			

Findings and Discussions

Online PD course experiences of the participants and the ways to best shape the course from their perspectives were explored in light of the research questions, respectively. First of all, all of the instructors in the study made similar points about the power of the course in improving dialogic communication among the participants and making them feel like members of the same community thanks to cooperative bonds (Anderson, 2003; Crebbin, 1997; Schaler & Fusco, 2003). As a case in point, I5 reported that the course was structured in a way that allows room for participants to present their relevant opinions, comment on each other's perspectives, and engage in relevant discussions. I6 added that this structure not only provided the course with an interactive and dynamic form but also guided them on how to fulfil their overall needs. I7 also referred to the same issue by stressing the activity s/he enjoyed the most as collating success stories and their analysis with group members which required community support at the highest level. Similarly, I9 confessed to having learned the value of the cooperation of the stakeholders in the education system, the collaboration of subject teachers, and creating an online SoC via this training. I5 also underlined its weight while discussing the values teacher educators should master given collectivism and peer collaboration hold a more critical role than the other standards (e.g., program development, vision, the teacher education profession, and public advocacy). Finally, I8 uttered the efficacy of the course emphasizing the gravity of online SoC:

It has contributed much to me, and I can briefly say that it served as a guideway for my professional development and understanding of the vital significance of partnership and an SoC within an online network.

In revealing the strong ties and parallelism among the codes in Table 3, I1 furthered that as well as fostering the sense of belonging to a local, online community, constructive feedback from colleagues must be regarded as evenly crucial (Ayar, 2019; Chitanana, 2023; Marei et al., 2021; Nazari & De Costa, 2022). Likewise, I3, I4, I6, and I8 highlighted to what extent feedback exerted an effect on successfully maintaining CPD activities (see Dille & Røkenes, 2021). Despite not being possible for all their work, they declared to receive feedback from the other attendees in general. In other words, they reported having the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues in the field aside from receiving their valuable comments. By the same token, I5 shared a post on the web platform adumbrating the prominence of feedback in CPD programs:

I contend that if teachers' involvement and performance within CPD circles have to be evaluated, it should bear a constructive nature and follow a developmental agenda with a focus on creating feedback for the stakeholders so that they can take the required actions.

I5 also drew attention to online PLC specifying that collaborative professionalism was one of the essential characteristics of effective teachers. In this way, the course offered various opportunities through which participants could improve their professional knowledge and skills while enjoying a

refreshed enthusiasm toward the profession. In the same vein, I1 put the effectiveness of the training down to the fact that the course formed an online PLC which paved the way for each participant to interact and learn with the help of colleagues. Only then were course takers encouraged to provide constructive feedback to one another and engage in reflective dialogues, which illustrates that this finding sharply contrasts with the conclusions of Brandt (2006) and Oddone et al. (2019). Regarding this issue, I6 detailed the gravity of this network through value cycles by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020):

Our PL in this community is a joint activity where we share our experience or expertise and focus on solving problems. We get value from just participating in the course; this is what the scholars call "immediate value". This course has given us confidence, new insights, good ideas, new perspectives, unexpected solutions, new contact, and more. These represent "potential value". So, it's up to us to create "applied value" and "realized value". It does not matter if we succeed or fail because its value lies in its potential to lead us to further learning.

I4 had a similar perspective:

I know I have a long way to be a successful trainer, but I think I got enough fuel to start the journey and find my co-learners who will accompany me during this process in this PLC where we will share values and transform them into learning.

Finally, I3 stressed the importance of creating online PLCs where social e-learning would take place (see Baran & Correia, 2014; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022) since the world was changing and the way teacher learning would change, accordingly. As Al-Naabi (2023) had similarly revealed in his research design, this critical determination would lead us to the personal gains of the attendees since they were mostly detected to disclose their gaining awareness of the need for change after this course. Thus, this judgment will be at odds with Ferguson and Donno (2003) in that they dwelled on the so-called adverse impact of online PD course and their concern about providing limited opportunities for language awareness. Concerning this, I3 made an overall remark:

Like many other fields, the field of education and teaching is changing rapidly. If we are to survive in this ever-changing field, we have to adapt ourselves and teach following the recent demands and conditions. In this sense, the course reminded me of the significance of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) with various online applications, tools, and similar latest components of effective teaching.

Similarly, I7 touched upon this issue while discussing out-dated needs analyses, and the huge role CPD plays herein. I7 alluded to the fact that teachers need to equip themselves with new methods, materials, and skills to address learners whose needs, expectations, profiles, and skills changed, which would hence require CPD support. While interpreting the success of own research, I5 featured that the collective mind-set of the teachers completely changed (Fernandes et al., 2023; Holzer, 2004; Yoon, 2020). Accordingly, change was reflected to be an inevitable component of TD given the concept of learning was mainly described as a permanent change in behaviour caused by experience or practice. Moreover, I1, I3, and I9 mentioned six abilities of future, ELT, professionals by Liu (2003) as one of the assigned readings of the fourth week of the course to approach the subject of change. They mostly centred upon *teaching less to maximize learning*, *familiarizing oneself with new learning and the teaching models*, and *ensuring learning outside the classroom*. They epitomized that as the needs of students and institutions always change and transform depending on the context, this would force education practitioners to be flexible and ready to adapt to new situations. At that point, I2, I3, I4, I7, I8, and I9 also referred to the problem of some instructors' resistance to change refusing to partake in any CPD events. Considering the importance of keeping up with the rapid changes in education, I9, as the coordinator of the Professional Development Unit (PDU), proposed a CPD plan based on a sustainable eclectic model, with a combination of top-down and bottom-up models, which aims to invite these

resistant practitioners to activities. By the same token, I6 developed a training module adapting a more bottom-up approach and included opportunities where instructors can learn by actively participating in the CPD activities and become change agents themselves for the improvement of the school's preparatory program. Thus, as reported in the interview, I6 also came to realize that adopting an especially more bottom-up approach for CPD would be crucial for a change to take place. Finally, this instructor noted after their own institution hosted the first international ELT conference, they initiated the Meeting of Change Agents (MOCA) by holding a one-day event every year to offer a platform where both learners and teachers can develop mutual trust and a better understanding of each other and collaborate.

While contextualizing the topic of change, I3 pointed out the interrelation between practice and beliefs considering that their repercussions would be evident in teacher training activities (see Crebbin, 1997; Nazari & De Costa, 2022). I3 also added that the behaviour of teachers cannot be changed without a change in their ideas, beliefs, and preferences. I1 addressed the issue in a like manner and reminded that development can only be possible when teachers attempt to change. This participant also clarified the reason why many educational reforms encountered failures as these reforms focused on teachers' behaviour rather than their beliefs. In doing so, I1 underlined teachers' cognition in light of Borg's (2012) study. Reportedly, as teachers' beliefs were intangible, their effects on behaviours, peripheral beliefs, and core beliefs, as well as the difference between contextualized and abstract concepts would be intricate. Moreover, I4 reflected a similar attitude concerning practice and beliefs depending on personal experiences. As I4 had to have a year of In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) in the first year of teaching, this was the first-time s/he realized how difficult it was to have such a tension between beliefs and practices. After attending this course as well, I4 seemed to believe that there should be a change in teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices to be able to adapt to students' needs. In parallel, according to attainments from the course, I5 commented that cognition entails crucial considerations on mental constructs, such as how teachers shape their opinions, how they learn, what they know, and what their beliefs are. In turn, awareness of these issues would contribute greatly to facilitators in guiding teachers during their PD endeavours. Having pointed out the critical nature of teacher cognition in CPD, I5 finally noted that practitioners should avoid making strong generalizations about the tandem work of practice and beliefs, and cognition itself.

I6 associated the foregoing codes of personal gain with another identified item in reference to Padwad and Dixit's study (2008) focusing on the influence of PLC on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards widely accepted problems in the field. This is because these scholars contended PLCs would potentially push teachers to change either in attitudinal ways or in their consequent engagement with learning. I6 interpreted their results based on individual field-based experience, as well, and affirmed that PLC members would regard problems as a part of the profession, they would feel responsible for both the challenges and potential solutions and behave accordingly by respecting the requirements of change. Yet, I6 emphasized that it would be unrealistic to expect to see a change in teachers' practices in the short-term impact of the CPD. Different from the others, another instructor concentrated on the clash between beliefs and practices in initial teacher education and the chasm between education for potential and current teachers. As working closely with newly qualified teachers at the same university context, s/he confidently argued that many novice teachers were baffled by what they experienced after starting to teach in their own classroom, which was mostly due to the lack of cooperation between pre-service teacher education programs and institutions where many teachers start teaching. Similarly, the gap between the two contexts was also addressed by I1, I3, and I9 by accentuating the need for boosting the number of trainings during the interviews. I6 finally strengthened that stance by preparing a success story through an action research session on in-service teachers and working on a pre-service teacher while addressing PL initiatives as the requirement of the course.

As for the last item of the second code, as in the interview, I7 detailed in the posts that thanks to the contributions of this course (e.g. discussions they had with other participants, reading their posts, and working as a team), s/he gained different perspectives in understanding and interpreting the needs of

the other instructors in the school and in organizing activities following these needs. Likewise, identifying *mindfulness exercises*, *displaying a growth mind-set* as one of the key principles in the sample CPD model, and regarding mind-set as the critical, key word in the word-cloud exercise revealing the focus of CPD plans, I9 seemed to attach importance to this subject throughout the training. In addition, this participant stated in the interview that CPD must take people out of their own circles (Kanowski, 2004). Similarly, I6 revealed:

This six-week-long professional development course enabled me to "remain vitalized" and grow through "contemplation and retreat", as Regan (2012) puts it. The opportunity to share and interact with valuable teacher educators in these hard times and their support gave me strength and helped me grow personally and professionally.

Likewise, I4 stated to have had a deeper insight, especially into how to design a training module, what fosters teacher learning, why it was vital to focus on students' learning and how teachers can tailor their teaching to students' needs, and what educators can do to make it possible as trainers. I4 continued that before the course, s/he had many ideas in mind without knowing how to shape them and what to do concerning these thoughts. Nevertheless, I4 then had a clearer image of the way to plan, implement and evaluate and reported feeling more courageous and confident to put the training plan into action and start the CPD in the school. Dissimilar to all these expressions, I5 considered the course as an opportunity for trainers to broaden their horizons and see the big picture by breaking down the school-based context view and disregarding institutional boundaries:

I took part in this course hoping that I would have the opportunity to think, discuss, and work with people who share a similar enthusiasm for teaching and TD. Looking back at the six weeks we had in the course, I had invaluable opportunities to see how others approach issues that interest me and have a clearer idea of how certain practices are implemented in other institutions.

With regard to the last code, firstly, the course graduates seemed to deem its direct impact on their PCK as was highly emphasized by Fernandes et al. (2023) given its positive reflections on pedagogical knowledge and implementations. Concentrating on the dataset, and compiling and curating resources for CPD modules, the researcher deconstructed that the participants appeared to understand better the importance of offering effective development programs. Furthermore, they can choose convenient instructional strategies inserted in a specific structure to deliver the content strongly (Borko, 2004). For instance, I1 reported:

An effective CPD needs to have the principles of being sustained, impactful, needs-based, in-practice, evaluated, peer-collaborative, and reflective to bring effective changes in teaching. Besides, it is essential to lead the teachers to try out new practices and see the effects on their students and reflect critically and systematically on their practice and improve it.

Apart from the core principles of CPD, some educational myths in ELT constituted one of the hotly debated topics in light of PCK. I3 came against a longstanding idea and labelled learning styles as a specific myth despite being once a supporter of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. This was on the ground that learning was a result of the same neurological process for everyone. I5 also furthered:

There are several myths I have learned to negatively influence many practitioners, such as the "critical" role of homework and its role in improving academic gains, the notion that learning can be measured, that there are universally successful learning/teaching frameworks, we can transfer design elements from countries/schools with a proven record of achievement, and so on. That said, I have seen that the focus on motivation as a critical construct in language learning was the myth with the biggest impact in the field.

I6 surmised that for the instructors to experience I.N.S.P.I.R.E. (see Richardson & Díaz-Maggioli, 2018), they need to actively partake in designing the PD activities. This is because only when instructors were involved in shaping the PD program, would they take the responsibility for professional practices and teacher learning. Moreover, I6 mentioned some colleagues' misbelief about the use of technology-based productivity tools (e. g., translators, and electronic dictionaries) in that they would hinder student learning. S/he strongly declared the ways teachers can provide students with the knowledge of how to make the best use of those tools as aids in comprehension thanks to this training. Unlike the above-mentioned examples, I7 alluded to a personal experience to remind one of the attendees of the correct integration of materials, effective training, and purposeful use of the lesson plan. Accordingly, there would be no need for the products of technology to teach and learn English:

In a particular ELT teacher training activity, there was an imaginary situation where participant teachers were supposed to assume that they had to teach in a remote part of the world with no electricity and telecommunication facilities, and they were asked to choose three among the ten types of objects and lesson materials. In many cases, I witnessed with amazement that teachers tended to choose a guitar, a Shakespeare anthology, and some newspapers/magazines, and they were perfectly content with teaching English with the help of these objects. It was just surprising to see this reverse acceptance of the idea that we do not need technology at all!

As per the last item to be analysed in Table 3, I1 accounted that the course helped participants accomplish fruitful results not only on their own professional and personal improvement but on learners' enthusiasm and success, which can be regarded as the most important motivation of the teachers. I2 concurred that the course enabled them to see better that the effectiveness of training depends on its impact on students. As such, for the following training or workshops, I2 would regard students' outcomes as the key point so as to assess the effectiveness of the events. However, I5 dissented with I2 in that the extent to which students improve their outcomes cannot be used as a direct or only way of evaluating the role CPD plays in teachers' development or the efficacy of the program as it would go well beyond the borders of academic performance even though s/he underlined the significance of students and their learning within CPD. Furthermore, I4 stressed the malpractice of placing teachers in the centre of the proposed training plan, since as Hirsch et al. (2019) stated, the point in attempts to encourage teachers' participation in CPD was to increase student learning. In the same vein, I7 and I8 reported that all the trouble they took over during CPD practices was for learners and enhancing their gains, which they portrayed in the success story and training module, respectively.

Having reviewed the profits of this CPD course on the participant instructors, the supports they sensed to need worth investigating to reveal their in-depth reflections (see Table 4). To begin with, I2 reflected that the resources of the week gave them food for deeper thought about PD requiring teachers to take ownership of their learning as an on-going responsibility (Avidov-Ungar et al., 2023). Similarly, I3 declared to be of one mind with I1 and I2:

I strongly agree with your idea that taking the responsibility for our own professional development is the most triggering element going towards being a teacher educator. As you have mentioned because once you take that responsibility, all the other elements or practices follow. Besides, being eager to learn all the time -being an advocate of lifelong learning- is certainly a significant characteristic for a teacher educator.

I4 also declared what attracted attention was the superiority of PL over PD justified in the overview of the course resources by suggesting that teachers take an active role in their own continuous development, which would emphasize their learning. I5 also reported to be in the same line with these instructors and added by reproaching the institution a bit, as follows:

Demonstrating the impact of PL has never been more critical. We are at a juncture in our schools where educators are implementing rigorous content standards and assessments and experiencing new

evaluation systems, even as they navigate a sea of other challenges and even as resources for PL are on the chopping block.

I6 also revealed that this course served as a means to encourage teachers to apply strategies for their own PL. As it was crucial to becoming autonomous and independent learners, especially in an era where educators can access a vast amount of information, I6 sensed to need for digging more into the ownership of PL and tried to implement related strategies (Baran & Cagıltay, 2006; Crebbin, 1997; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022). Thus, this finding discords with Acuyo (2021) who reported that as teachers struggled to fulfil their new responsibilities and own learning, the priority of PD practices would decrease in the end.

As was hotly discussed and stressed by Chitanana (2023), and Nazari and De Costa (2022) in the arena of teacher development, I1 better understood the critical role of self-reflection and sensed the need for enhancing it by giving reference to Regan (2012) while defining steps to become reflective practitioners both in the interview and in the posts. Likewise, I9 adumbrated the urgent need for self-reflection for education practitioners after attending the course and gaining awareness of its crucial role in TD. Emphasizing the requirement of more self-reflection, I3 also self-reflected several applicable ideas depending on the personal gaining through the course as needs analysis, collaboration, cooperation, and evaluation of the training systematically. I4 came to the forefront by stressing the gravity of self-reflection at most and feeling its pressing need after the analyses of the reading materials. I4 added two more stages to the training plan regarding digital observation as "critical self-reflection" and "showcase of learning". After the debriefing session of the observations, teachers were supposed to write or record a self-reflection on the lesson. And as the last stage in the plan, they were encouraged to share some of their reflections and learning with the whole group. I4 explained the aim herein to be disseminating the learning outcomes of the observation process so that a larger group can utilize one single action. I4 finally added to referring more to own new or revised learning through self-reflection. I5 also supported this notion by indicating its importance in the action plan. As a PDU member, this instructor would instigate teachers to perform self-reflection the whole year by setting professional targets at the beginning of the term and considering the feedback they received from students and colleagues (see Kanowski, 2004). I5 reported seeing the need for self-reflection more clearly, as follows:

Teachers should be the ones to analyse students' performance data and combine the results with their self-reflection to identify how they can better help their students with their learning and what they need to do to grow as a teacher.

As Table 4 reads, CPD events were still regarded to be one of the requirements for schools of foreign languages. However, aside from the deficient number of CPD organizations in state universities as disclosed by I1, I4, I7, and I9 (see Ayar, 2019), the hosts creating these events escalated the debate among the participants. Initially, I5 noted that many CPD opportunities presented to language teachers free-of-charge came from international publishing houses, and they should be approached with caution as such opportunities always bear the risk of teachers' perspectives being limited by those of such private enterprises. The instructor stated to believe that institutions should look into establishing in-house TD programs that followed a needs-based agenda, focused on peer collaboration, and were continuously evaluated and updated towards developmental purposes. Similarly, I4 affirmed publishing houses were for-profit institutions and that there would also be an agenda that they had to follow. Naturally, this would influence the decision-making mechanism behind their PD offerings to a large extent. Therefore, I4 had a critical stance towards PD from for-profit institutions, including publishing houses. That being the case, through the lens of I4, CPD must emerge within the community that would receive it, though some of the instructors benefited from the training offered by the publisher. I7 championed these claims by revolving the success story around the large-scale in-house conference that was organised in the school by the initiatives of his/her own as one of the trainers in the PDU. On the other hand, I6 and I9 detected after their research that more than half of the instructors in the institution preferred in-service training programs conducted by an external teacher trainer to the ones

followed by the PDU. They described the potential source of this case as the dearth of real professionals and teacher trainers in PDU including themselves. This investigation, finally, revealed that aside from these two participants, I1, I3, I4, and I8 also confessed not considering themselves as teacher trainer despite being PDU members or coordinators.

Another key issue detected after the examination of the dataset was the lack of standards for CPD activities in the institutions where the participant instructors were affiliated. I1 informed that their institution, which has neither clear, tangible aims for PD, nor a well-designed program shaped around long-term plans, lacks standards for CPD. Similarly, I4 announced the weaknesses in school resulted from the missing standards and principles of CPD. Reportedly, due to their deficiency; they could not have an "active PDU" as already affirmed by Eliason and Holmes (2010), Guskey (2003), and Pate and Thompson (2003). Furthermore, by narrowing down to the subject of standards, I6 referred to the lack of lesson planning in the school since it relies mainly on the course books, they teach despite having a curriculum development unit. Likewise, I7 notified it would be improbable to claim that the objectives of the program constitute standards that can contribute to the CPD culture in the institution in the long run. This is because they were not designed as a result of thorough needs analysis with comprehensive data from the teachers but with the lack of standards in terms of competencies. Through the lens of I7, the institution did not benefit from any of the standards to design the CPD activities since they were not localized, and certain items may not have any correspondence in teaching and training contexts. When it was dug into more depth, I9 also regarded it as one of the things they lacked in school and believed some kind of appraisal to be necessary to keep the quality standards and even for the distribution of duties. The lack of an appraisal system in CPD practices was also dealt with by I2 and I3 who presented that this item was the most neglected one in their institutions. Distinct all from the prior notes, I5 accounted that the standards were so manipulated that they were used to govern every single process within education. As such, they not only defined what should be done at a minimum level but also dictated what needs to be done at every level. This use of standards would not respect human creativity, the capacity to diversify approaches and perspectives, and the ability to alter practices based on the needs of the learners. To make matters worse, over-reliance on standards and working at institutions that approach the standards in this manner would be likely to deteriorate the capacities and abilities, in turn. The instructor also added:

I have always positioned myself against the neoliberal discourse of education. Thus, I strongly believe that the primary reason why we should evaluate our PD programs should be to have more effective programs for our teachers with content and methods of delivery that better address their self-discovered needs rather than to respond to the falsely grounded demands for accountability and standards.

As per the following item, initially, both the participants from foundation universities and state universities mostly revealed the negative attitude of the teachers about being supervised or observed. The former context seemed to attempt to encourage teachers a lot to alter their manners by offering distinct types of collegial support, such as team teaching, peer observation, video coaching, study groups, action research, mentoring, article club and peer coaching as a routine and obligatory process in the institutions. As a case in point, I3 replied to one of the suggestions of I1 from a state university as follows:

Regarding the teacher trainer observations and the peer coaching, this has been a longstanding custom in our institution, so the instructors do not usually resist them……. The observed teacher's selection of a focus for the observation is really a good idea. However, this application is followed in our peer coaching studies (open classrooms). Therefore, we prefer a wider framework in teacher trainer observations to make it different from peer observations.

Contrary to the explication above, I4 noted a comment within a state university context:

We did not have any observations within mentoring programs. There was resistance towards observation, and it was not welcomed. There should be also observation and feedback sessions in the program particularly for the newly recruited to remediate the mentoring system.

I1 and I4 did stress their wish for teachers to be able to choose their own peers to observe as an ideal way of peer observation which would be the ultimate goal in the long term. However, considering the situation in school, I4 offered to start with the trainers, who would also be the partners of some other instructors teaching the same classes, for a better and safer entourage in light of the suggestion by Guskey & Yoon (2009) in terms of beginning with carefully controlled or small-scale studies. I9 addressed the same issue focusing on the resistance to peer observation in the institution and expressed some concerns about collegiality in their context. I6 and I9 highlighted that some instructors avoided being observed by their peers for fear of being judged; accordingly, they prefer observations conducted by external observers or experts rather than colleagues at school. I9 reported that instructors sometimes asked what they were supposed to do with the information given by their peers. This is because they required more practical ideas which they can directly use in their classrooms with students than facing criticism, and most importantly they wanted to be heard. The comment by I5 well-explained the potential motive behind their attitude in different words:

Mcleod (2011) warns us against our "ego" because it is one of the biggest reasons that hinder us from modelling and acting as co-learners, which made me realize one reason why I could not take any action in our CPD unit until now.

I6 and I9 additionally mentioned the adverse effect of some instructors on the program as they had to have grammar lessons on account of such kinds of believers, although they seemed to follow a skill-based syllabus. That being the case without giving enough time for learners to internalize the language, the instructors at this school would just explain the form and move on by filling in the blanks exercise but not any real production. By the same token, what 19 discovered after delivering a survey asking to find out which method teachers felt comfortable with, peer observation appeared to be the least favoured among others. As another trainer in a state university, I7 added that the situation in the institution was mostly the mainstream PD activities, such as workshops, observations, and appraisals which were done for the sake of doing, and the content of these activities was decided by the overall needs of the majority.

Finally, all of the participants without exception remarked on both the deficiency and the need for networked school-wide ethos (culture). I7 implied what they lack, as in the SWOT analysis, was an online culture of CPD shared by all the teachers in the institution. Considering this failure, I7 reported planning a tailor-made organisation with other trainers for a one-day, fully online event designed according to the needs of the school instructors and delivered by its own people by enriching its sharing and caring culture. Correspondingly, I3 focused on networked institutional culture:

The idea of connecting positively to the whole-school culture is an often-neglected issue in the institution. However, I strongly agree that commitment to the institution you work for, and collaboration supported by positive connections are vital components of success in any workplace.

Though the course was regarded to be successful in general in terms of the afore-mentioned aspects (see Table 3 and 4), referring to the suggestions of the course graduates for the support to further CPD practices according to the weaknesses of this training would be essential. As Table 5 displays, congruent with Wynants and Dennis (2018), some participants felt that additional support was required for real-time chats or online interaction over the six weeks. For instance, I7 declared that there was no interaction other than reader discussions and success stories. The unclear presentation of the course requirements was also addressed as another deficit part of the course, likewise Leary et al. (2020). I8 explicitly highlighted the lack of guidance and assessment criteria owing to his/her one week later partaking in the course. Likewise, I2 complained about the lack of both subject and layout and design of the outline besides not being offered good content and the non-uniform syllabus. I5 also added that

the course did not have a clear focus. Even though they attended this course because it was PDU-oriented, the course designers did not clarify whether it was for beginners, mid-levels, or full-fledged trainers. I7 also mentioned the lack of smooth transition between the contents and course requirements by week. By giving support to the inferences of Dille & Røkenes (2021), the same course graduate also criticized the insufficiency of facilitator feedback exemplifying that s/he was not convinced about the subject of standardization via discussion posts on account of not being reinforced enough by the trainer. I9 corroborated I7 and noted that the feedback provided by the trainer was not meticulous or detailed enough. As similarly recorded by Poole et al. (2020), huge assignments given in six-week time were also in the firing line. I4 remarked:

The biggest criticism was the time constraint. In other words, this comprehensive program could have been planned for a longer period. We had a heavy workload during the course, but the time allotted was very little. In addition, we are all working people, and apart from working life, I also have graduate courses. I had very limited time to study for the training.

I4 took the criticism further, stating that s/he had problems with immediate accessibility to the course trainer potentially due to the time difference between the USA and Turkey, and regarded it as one of the disadvantages of distance or online education. Moreover, being alike minded with I4, I7, and I9, I5 expressed:

Its biggest shortcoming was the absence of synchronous support. Maybe getting together for an hour and putting the discussions in all correspondence into words would keep the subjects more alive.

I5, I6, I7, and I9 also thought the course deprived of implementations and practicality in terms of making teachers gain trainer skills. As for the last item in Table 5, being one of the commenters, I7 stated:

It was assumed that we have completed the course achievements. It is unfeasible to make a self-assessment since we do not know what we have completed and to what extent. By far the worst, a specific rubric was not adopted within the course frame different from the previous courses I deem quite successful.

Taken together, considering the identified suggestions of the course graduates about the improvement of this course and support TD, the course designers also need to take into account seemingly insignificant details. To set an example, though the designers must have regarded reader discussions, teamwork, and success stories as sufficient to promote interaction among the participants, they were widely criticized for this practice and even attendees referred to the need for synchronous support to the course. Accordingly, offering these practices as suggestions to the course takers and increasing the opportunities for them seems to be better than if they were not available in the course program.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Similar to Moore et al. (2016), the findings revealed instructors' positive attitudes and thoughts about boosting interpersonal synergy, personal gains, and support of the PD course to pedagogical and field-based knowledge. They also reported detecting some professional and institutional factors to be improved at the end of the course. Furthermore, though the majority of the participants shared positive views on the course, they dwelled on some problems, such as its deficiency in practicality, intermittent transitions between the modules as well as the lack of synchronous lessons or meetings. That being the case, these comments functioned as suggestions to best shape such kinds of future PD and CPD practices and to reform the current training, accordingly.

As for the implications of the study, as there are some PDU units affiliated with schools of foreign language that narrow their initiatives or do not attempt to extend collaborative bonds or establish

partnerships with other institutions, this study will stimulate these schools to take the correct path to TD. Furthermore, as it aimed at fulfilling a gap in the literature by focusing on asynchronous CPD practices of active in-service teachers in HE in the Turkish EFL context and concerning their perspectives and general approach toward training the trainers, the research also contributed to the ELT arena. Finally, it would be listed as one of the studies that subverted the widely-held belief in the education paradigm that online PD, CPD, and training initiatives were implemented due to the lack of any other robust alternatives in the face of the pandemic, even though they were not efficient, indeed.

Despite reaching a good amount of data, there seems to be a lot that remains hidden from the researcher. As the first suggestion for further studies, the demographic data of the participants can be increased and included in the study as new variables, and their interrelationships can also be examined. Alternatively, teacher engagement or teacher presence can also be embedded in the study as a variable and its relationship with the participants' perceptions about the efficiency of the course can be examined. Moreover, evaluation can be made with pre and post-tests, or the study can be triangulated by collecting quantitative data. By the same token, when the course has been conducted periodically (e.g., 2-3 times a year), all trainees can be invited to the study to raise the number of participants. In this way, since faculty members and instructors as their co-workers would also take part in the study, both their competencies and knowledge of digital instruction and the comparisons of their attainments from the course will add a different dimension to the study by extending its scope and thus enrich the studies in the field.

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