



Evaluation of the professional development program for english teachers' professional development communities facilitator training course

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the professional development program designed for English teachers as part of the 'English Together' project, with a particular focus on the 'English Teachers Professional Development Communities (PDCs)'. This study, using the Eisner Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model is designed as a case study. The Eisner's Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model offers a qualitative approach to program evaluation, emphasizing expert judgment and interpretive critique, much like the evaluation of art. The model, commonly applied in art and education, involves four interconnected dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematic analysis -to deepen understanding of educational settings and guide educational improvement. The data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis and were analyzed by using the MAXQDA 2022 program. Through a content analysis, 17 themes were identified. As a result, the English Together project is considered well-structured and efficient, despite administrative issues such as the lack of project information, compulsory participant assignments, regional consistency challenges within the Ministry, insufficient financial support for project facilitators, and a lack of ministry-provided incentives or rewards.

Keywords

English together
Program evaluation
Teacher education
Professional development
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Introduction

Organizational changes are crucial to adapt to the evolving world, and education is the key starting point. As society, technology, and individuals change rapidly, education needs to keep pace. Teachers must lead this transformation because they shape the future. Teachers are the bridge between old and new skills in schools, where learning occurs for both students and educators. With technology impacting learning and teaching methods, teachers require updated skills to effectively educate students in today's world. Professional development plays a pivotal role in empowering teachers to lead the necessary transformation in education, enabling them to acquire the updated skills and knowledge required to bridge the gap between traditional and modern educational practices amidst the rapid changes in society, technology, and individual needs. Traditional educational practices are often lecture-

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based and passive, focusing on generic, decontextualized content, while modern practices prioritize active, learner-centered engagement through collaboration, reflection, and real-world application, directly connected to classroom contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Professional development entails endeavors directed at positively altering teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to enhance their teaching practice (OECD, 2014). Professional development is described as a systematic process that involves planned learning opportunities and experiences, aimed at facilitating the professional growth of teachers (Guskey, 2000). According to OECD (2005), professional development activities vary and include facilitating policy reforms, task-focused development, school-based initiatives, and personally selected enrichment. In the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) across OECD countries, teachers participate in various activities such as attending courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, certification programs, school visits, networking, research, and peer observation within schools (OECD, 2014).

Teacher professional development encompasses various terms and practices aimed at continuous improvement in teaching. Continuing professional development emphasizes ongoing growth in expertise and practice. Teacher education focuses on learning experiences that enhance knowledge, skills, and practice. Training targets specific skills, such as teaching a syllabus or writing learning objectives. Mentoring involves guidance from experienced colleagues, while coaching provides structured support for skill development (Morgan & Nail, 2005). Professional learning communities facilitate idea-sharing and mutual support among practitioners (DuFour, 2004). In conjunction with collaborative learning and goal-setting, action research enables educators to engage in systematic, self-directed inquiry, facilitating the examination and enhancement of their teaching practices by addressing specific challenges encountered within their classrooms. Action research involves teachers researching their own practice to address specific issues or problems (Gibbs et al., 2017). Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) emphasize that professional development involves teachers collaborating, setting their own learning goals, and constructing local knowledge. The impact of teachers' professional development on students' learning and academic achievement is supported by research (Basma & Savage, 2023; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Main & Slater, 2022; Morina et al., 2025; Rutten et al., 2024; Segal, 2024). However, it's important to note that teacher development activities vary from country to country. Based on the contextual needs and educational priorities of each region, teacher development programs can take different forms. For example, in Finland, professional development often emphasizes peer collaboration and reflective practices (Sahlberg, 2011), while in the United States, it may focus more on standardized training to align with national educational standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In some countries, such as Japan, teacher development is strongly linked to a culture of continuous improvement and lesson study, where teachers collaboratively analyze and refine their teaching practices through direct observation and feedback from colleagues (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). These variations illustrate how local educational contexts and policies shape the approach to teacher professional development.

Within the scope of in-service professional training in Türkiye, there are both voluntary and compulsory professional development seminars and courses that teachers attend. Among these activities are the compulsory professional development seminars held four times a year-at the beginning and end of each academic year, and since the 2019-2020 academic year, also during the November and April midterm breaks. These activities, referred to as courses or seminars, can be held in person or online through platforms like EBA (Educational Information Network) and OBA (Teacher Information Network), focus on enhancing teaching competencies. Teacher competence, initially focusing on practical skills, has evolved to encompass broader aspects including knowledge, values, and professional identity, with efforts emphasizing informed judgments, behaviors, and exploring cognitive and affective elements (Tran & O'Connor, 2024).

The 'English Together' project is part of the professional development program for English teachers, featuring the 'English Teachers Professional Development Communities (PDCs) Facilitator Training Course.' These communities, although termed professional learning communities (PLCs), are referred to as professional development communities by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. They aim to foster collaboration among educators to improve teaching practices and ultimately enhance student achievement (Harris & Jones, 2010; Mydin et al., 2024). A PLC refers to a group or network of individuals within the field of education who come together with a shared interest in improving schools (DuFour, 2004). This can include various combinations of stakeholders such as grade-level teaching teams, school committees, departments within a high school, entire school districts, state departments of education, national professional organizations, and others. The PLC model emphasizes collaboration, reflection, and ongoing learning among its members to drive positive change and improvement in education (Desimone, 2009). According to DuFour (2004), the widespread use of the term PLC has rendered it so common that there is a danger of it losing its original significance. As a result of this broad usage, the term has become diluted, losing its specificity and potentially causing confusion about its true meaning and purpose. When a term becomes overly ubiquitous, it can lose its effectiveness in conveying a distinct concept or practice. Professional development, as highlighted by Genç (2017), is facilitated through collaborative efforts of teacher teams within PLCs. According to Lomos et al. (2011), researchers have identified five key variables that define a PLC. These include reflective dialogue, which involves teachers engaging in professional discussions; deprivatization of practice, where teachers observe each other's classes to give and receive feedback; collaborative activity, where teachers work together within the PLC; shared goals, referring to agreement on the mission and principles of the PLC or school; and collective focus on student learning, indicating a shared commitment to improving student achievement. In the literature, numerous studies have been conducted on PLCs (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Prenger et al., 2019; Rutten et al., 2024; Tam, 2015; Truong et al., 2025; Yan & Yang, 2019; Yuan et al., 2025). Based on research findings, collaborative efforts among teachers have been shown to improve both student and instructor learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Datnow et al., 2012; Vescio et al., 2008).

In-service training objectives, crucial for evaluation, must be clearly defined, based on identified needs (Aydın, 2014; Clarke, 2001; Hayes, 1995). Evaluating these programs guides future training activities. Program evaluation, according to Demirel (2010), involves assessing effectiveness through data analysis to inform decisions on improvement, continuation, or termination. Yapıcıoğlu et al. (2016) stress its importance for program initiation and sustainability, while Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) highlight its role in shaping policies with meaningful insights. In contrast to traditional views in teacher education, curriculum theorizing starts by recognizing curriculum as a sociocultural creation that shapes environments, making curriculum design, content, and evaluation meaningful (Gershon & Helfenbein, 2023). Evaluation, defined as delineating and obtaining information for decision-making about educational programs, is integral to curriculum development. While various definitions highlight its pervasive nature, emphasizing understanding and worth, they all contribute to informed action and decision-making in education (Kemmis, 1982).

There are several program evaluation models that serve as a basis for program evaluation, and one of them is the Eisner Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model. Program evaluation studies conducted within the country have been based on the Eisner Educational Criticism Model in the literature (Çelik, 2018; Çetin, 2018; Ergin, 2021; Eyiol, 2019; Göçer, 2020; İnce & Yavuz, 2018; Karakuş-Özdemirci et al., 2020; Kumral & Saracaloğlu, 2011; Yazıcı & Taşgın, 2021; Yücesoy-Bakır, 2024). Similarly, studies conducted abroad have also been found (Craig et al., 2022; Edward, 2010; Goss, 2018; Khanipoor et al., 2017; Kime, 2008; Nordin & Wahlström, 2019; Nouri & Farsi, 2018; Service, 2014; Shahidi et al., 2014; Thompson, 2019; Watters et al., 2025). In the literature reviews conducted abroad, it has been observed that Eisner's educational critique model is predominantly utilized in the context of 'Art and Medical Education'. Eisner's Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model suggests program evaluation should be conducted by experts, akin to critiquing art, emphasizing qualitative aspects (Eisner, 1979). Erden (1998) underscores the importance of qualitative data collection post-

implementation. Stakeholders are considered vital sources of expertise. Program evaluation is viewed as an ongoing process integrated into all stages of program development. Eisner's Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model comprises four dimensions: descriptive, interpretation, evaluation, and theme (Eisner, 1979). Although distinct, these dimensions are interconnected. Description visually presents the scene, aiding critical evaluation. Interpretation delves into the meaning behind actions, addressing the 'how' and 'why' (Kumral & Saracaloğlu, 2011). Evaluation assesses educational processes, revealing underlying values. Finally, the thematic dimension identifies and formulates key messages or qualities (Eisner, 2002). In summary, the model involves describing, interpreting, evaluating, and identifying themes to understand and critique educational settings effectively. In his examination of educational criticism, Eisner (1979) questions the possibility of generalizing findings from such studies. While criticism doesn't predict outcomes, Eisner suggests that it can serve as a roadmap for the future by generating forms of anticipation.

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of the 'English Teachers Professional Development Communities (PDCs) Facilitator Training Course' within the 'English Together' project for English teachers. It focuses on evaluating how well the program meets teachers' needs, identifying strengths and weaknesses for improvement. Importantly, it addresses the gap in literature by applying Eisner's Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model to professional development program evaluation, contributing to future initiatives led by the MoNE. Evaluating the professional development program for English teachers within the 'English Together' project is vital for enhancing teaching quality and learning outcomes. Focusing on English teachers acknowledges their unique needs in language instruction. Given the evolving education landscape, continuous improvement of professional development is crucial. Applying Eisner's model fills a gap in literature and offers insights for policymakers and educators to enhance training effectiveness and student education quality. In this context, the following research questions were addressed:

- RQ1: What are the opinions of program stakeholders regarding the PDCs Facilitator Training Course, a professional development program?
- RQ2: What are the experiences of stakeholders regarding the PDCs Facilitator Training Course, a professional development program?
- RQ3: What are the limitations and areas for improvement of the PDCs Facilitator Training Course, a professional development program?

Method

Study design

This study aims to evaluate the professional development program implemented within the 'English Together' project according to Eisner's Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model. The study is designed as a case study in which the professional development program will be examined in-depth according to the stages of the model. Yin (2018) and Stake (1995) find the case study approach suitable and functional for program evaluation. However, Stake provides a clearer perspective and defines the program as a situation with its own limitations, providing flexibility for methodology and research design (Karakuş-Özdemirci & Akar, 2022). In this context, a holistic multiple case design was used to identify the unique structures of the professional development program considered as a case. In this design, facilitator trainers who provided the English Teachers PDCs Facilitator Training Course, facilitator teachers who completed the course, and participant teachers who attended the seminars conducted by these teachers have created multiple cases.

Data sources

The data sources for the research include the Facilitator Training Course for professional development, seminar programs, teachers (facilitators and participants), observed classrooms, and trainers involved in in-service training. A facilitator is an individual who has completed in-service training, such as the 'English Together' project, and is responsible for guiding and supporting professional learning communities (PLCs) within their respective provinces. Facilitators play a crucial role in fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and providing ongoing professional development to their peers, ensuring the effective implementation of the project at the local level. Although the term 'facilitator' is commonly used in the literature in Türkiye, the individuals in question are assigned the role of 'implementer' within the scope of this project; therefore, the term 'implementer' has been preferred instead of 'facilitator' in this study. Also, teachers who attended the seminars are referred to as participants in this context. In-service training trainers were selected as data sources to obtain information about the development and implementation processes of the professional development program. Both interviews and observations data were collected from the primary data source, which is the English teachers who participated in the Facilitator Training Courses and seminars. Participant selection aimed to maximize diversity by considering factors such as the teachers' gender, professional experience, school level, educational background, and whether they were involved in a project. Within the scope of this study, interviews were conducted with facilitators from 15 different provinces and participant teachers from eight different provinces. In addition, the opinions of eight foreign teacher trainers working at the British Council were also obtained via e-mail. In total, qualitative data were collected from 31 participants. The data collection process began with examining the professional development program and developing interview and observation forms based on the obtained data. Interviews lasting 10-15 minutes were conducted with the facilitator and participant teachers, while data were collected via e-mail with the British Council trainers. Classroom observations and facilitator seminars were carried out in Batman and Denizli provinces. In total, 18 observations were conducted: eight seminar observations involving two facilitators from primary and middle schools and four from high schools, each delivering 90-minute sessions; and ten classroom observations of English teachers, including 2 from primary schools, 3 from middle schools, and 5 from high schools, each teaching 40-minute lessons. Observations were conducted in the classrooms after each seminar, and were completed within approximately 8 months according to the seminar schedules.

Data collection tools

Data collection involved interviews, observations, and document analysis, with separate interview forms prepared for each data source: teachers who received trainer training (facilitators), participant teachers, and course trainers. These forms were developed using relevant literature and expert opinions, then revised based on feedback and pilot interviews. The final interview forms contain 12 questions for facilitators, seven for participant teachers, and nine for British Council trainers. Some sample questions are as follows:

- What do you think are the significant features of the PDCs Facilitator Training Course program?
- What contributions do you think the seminars you attended have made to your teaching process?
- What are your thoughts on the content of the PDCs Facilitator Training Course program?
- Did you encounter any difficulties during this process, and if so, can you provide an example?

To obtain data related to the professional development program, two observation forms were prepared. These forms were designed to observe and gather data on the experiences of facilitators who completed the PDCs Facilitator Training Course with trainee teachers and by determining the situations where teachers who received educator training reflected the experiences they gained from the seminars they attended to their own classroom environments. Structured into five sections, these forms focused on warm-up, review, engage and share, reflect and evaluate, and closing of the teaching process. Seminars by facilitator teachers followed a Ministry-provided plan template, with notes taken

accordingly. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the program and its implementation, the content of the in-service training was also analyzed as part of the document analysis. The Professional Development Communities (PDC) program for English teachers is designed to support teachers' professional growth through collaboration and reflective practice. Within a total of 70 hours, the program covers various components, including activities focused on enhancing reflective thinking skills, and improving the teaching of core language skills such as writing, listening, speaking, and reading. It also includes sessions on grammar and vocabulary instruction, as well as effective assessment and evaluation practices. Teachers are introduced to the structure and goals of PDCs and are encouraged to collaborate with peers to share experiences and strategies. Additionally, the program promotes the integration of educational technologies, particularly the use of platforms like EBA for organizing online meetings and sharing materials. Overall, the PDC program combines theoretical and practical elements to help English teachers strengthen their teaching practices and foster a collaborative professional culture.

Data analysis

Before data analysis, the interviews and observations were transcribed into a digital format. The total length of the interview transcriptions was 113 pages, and the observation records amounted to 44 pages in Word documents. During the data analysis process, the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative analysis software was used. The data from various sources were analyzed using content analysis. After transcription, the process of familiarizing with the data was initiated. Initially, one of the researchers read all the data holistically several times, and the data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were coded separately. Themes were developed using the MAXQDA 2022 program. In the second stage, the meanings of the codes and themes obtained from different sources were discussed with another researcher to identify similarities and differences. In the final stage, the codes and themes obtained from the three data sources were merged to create a comprehensive perspective. An example of coding is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding Example

Text	Codes
I believe the most important feature of these communities is that they regularly bring together teachers from the same region and provide an opportunity to discuss their common problems. This is the key feature of these courses. (FT3)	Finding common solutions to problems.
However, during the training, some facilitators did not follow our agreed-upon schedule. They decided to conduct different activities and set the break times differently. (CT7)	Disharmony
I am in favor of diversifying the content of the seminars. (PT7)	Content oriented
When asked about the purpose of the meeting, the group members responded similarly, saying, "We were just told that we would be meeting every month and discussing a different topic each time-that's all I understood." (ONF3)	Lack of understanding of the PDC
It was noteworthy that classroom activities were heavily exam-oriented, and both teachers and students frequently used expressions such as "this might appear on the exam" or "if this happens, remember this" during the lessons. (ONT2)	Focus on the LGS

In Table 1, a coding example for each data source is provided, offering a clear illustration of how the collected data from interviews and observations were analyzed and categorized. Each example demonstrates the process of linking specific data excerpts to relevant codes, ensuring transparency in how the data was handled and interpreted during the analysis phase.

Validity and reliability

The research employed various data collection methods (interviews, observations, document analysis) and diversified data sources (teachers, trainers, course program) to enhance credibility. After data collection and analysis, member checking was conducted to validate the findings. Additionally, expert opinions were sought for the data collection tools. Purposive sampling and detailed descriptions

of participants and the context were provided to ensure transferability. To ensure consistency, variation was introduced by using different data collection methods and sources. Inter-coder agreement was established, and for confirmability, the research purpose, methodology, and findings were presented in detail. Codes such as FT (Facilitator Teacher), CT (Course Trainer), PT (Participant Teacher), ONF (Observer Notes for Facilitator), and ONT (Observer Notes for Teacher) were designated to represent roles, while participants were allocated pseudonyms like FT, CT, PT, etc., following the privacy policy, as indicated in the citation. The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Pamukkale University with the meeting/decision number 17-10 dated 12.10.2022.

Results

Eisner (1998) does not provide a specific formula for the structure of educational criticism and leaves it to the personal preference of the critic. He bases this attitude on his belief that research is dependent on the researcher's personal style and qualities and that the course of the study cannot be predicted with certainty. The findings obtained as a result of the research are presented within the framework of the four dimensions of the Eisner Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism model, collectively across groups, without making distinctions between them.

Descriptive

The explanatory aspect of educational criticism is primarily an attempt to determine, describe, or convey the relevant qualities of the educational experience (Eisner, 1998). In this dimension, themes and codes reached through interviews, observations, and document analysis are attempted to be explained by providing relevant quotations for the reader to visualize. The themes reached for the descriptive dimension are shown in Figure 1.

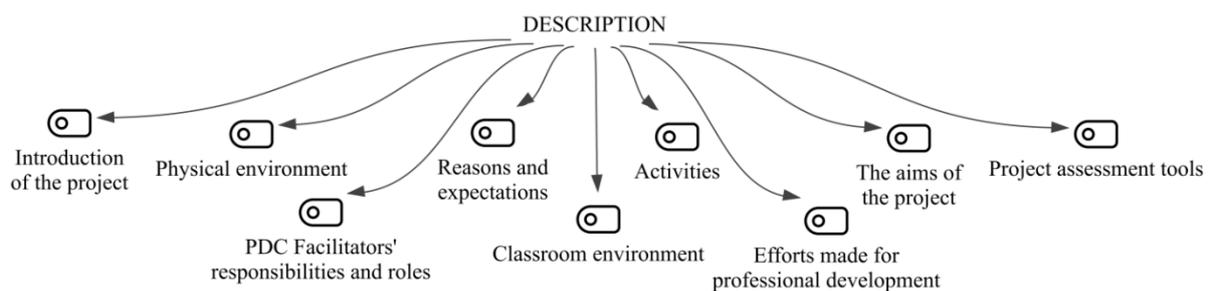


Figure 1. Themes for the descriptive dimension

Introduction of the project

The 'English Together' project, launched in 2020 through collaboration between the Ministry of National Education, the British Council, and the Sabancı Foundation, began with initial contact between the Ministry and the British Council in 2018. The project aims to enhance foreign language teaching and learning through in-service training activities. This includes the 'English Teachers Professional Development Communities (PDCs) Facilitator Training Course' and subsequent seminars. Document analysis identified two sub-themes: 'seminar' and 'course,' under the project's introduction theme. The course aims to enhance the professional development of Ministry-affiliated English teachers by improving their knowledge and skills. As such, it includes all English teachers working in these schools, such as those in vocational schools, Anatolian high schools, lower secondary school and other types of institutions. It covers General Competencies of the Teaching Profession over 70 instructional hours, taught by British Council trainers. Classes are limited to 25 individuals and conducted in a hygienic, socially distanced environment. The content is structured under specific headings and delivered using active learning methods, with assessments including assignments and presentations. Seminars cover similar topics in a four-hour duration, accommodating up to 30 participants and led by facilitators trained in the English Teachers PDCs program. All sessions adhere to hygiene and distance regulations, ensuring optimal learning conditions.

Physical environment

The physical environment, observed during seminars and in classrooms, is crucial for project implementation. Two sub-themes emerged: Seminar Environment and Classroom Environment, highlighting its importance. Participants had mixed opinions on the seminar setup, with PT2 finding it adequate while PT4 suggested a classroom setting would be better. Both seminar rooms and classrooms had smartboards, but cleanliness and temperature varied. Classroom sizes ranged from 12 to 37 students, leading to fluctuations in noise levels.

Efforts made for professional development

Professional development is vital for teachers, enhancing student service, learning outcomes, and professional skills. It also elevates teacher motivation, confidence, classroom experiences, and ultimately improves student education. The codes related to efforts made for professional development are depicted in the Figure 2.

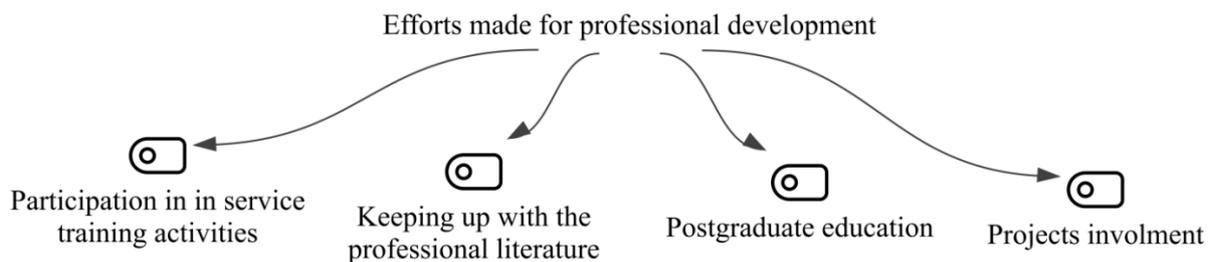


Figure 2. The codes related to efforts made for professional development

Regarding the efforts made for professional development, FT1 participates in in-service training, FT10 follows online publications, and FT3 stands out with postgraduate achievements. Additionally, FT7 was involved in e-Twinning projects. Teachers engage in professional development through training, literature review, MA programs and postgraduate education such as curriculum development and instruction, measurement and evaluation in education, english language teaching etc. and project participation.

The aims of the project

The project aims to enhance English teaching in Türkiye by introducing new practices, employing communicative language teaching, and fostering teacher collaboration and experience sharing for greater effectiveness. The codes obtained from the data are presented in the Figure 3.

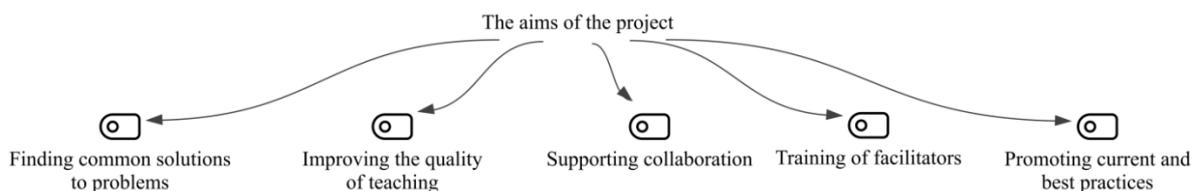


Figure 3. The codes related to the aims of the project

Participants highlighted the project's aim of finding common solutions to problems in English teaching. FT10 emphasized this goal, stating it's about generating common solutions to professional problems. FT8 expressed the intention to change teaching methods to make students more active and central, aiming to improve teaching quality. CT7 highlighted the project's focus on providing trainers with effective teaching methods to promote best practices.

Project assessment tools

Assessment tools serve crucial roles: monitoring progress, evaluating teaching effectiveness, offering feedback, guiding teaching, and ensuring accountability. The codes obtained based on the data from the participants regarding the theme of project assessment tools are presented in the Figure 4.

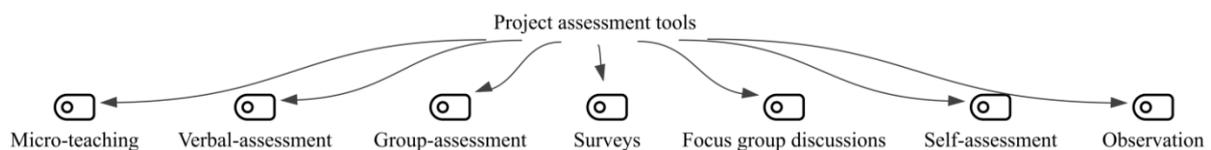


Figure 4. The codes related to the project assessment tools

In terms of project evaluation techniques and tools, they include microteaching, verbal assessment, group assessment, surveys, focus group discussions, self-assessment, and observation. FT10 mentioned that verbal assessment was conducted with the following sentences: ‘They took notes about us. They provided feedback. Later, they decided if we were qualified to be facilitators’. The responsibilities of the facilitators include managing Professional Learning Communities (PDC), designing educational materials, integrating technology, and supporting professional development. For example, managing PDC meetings and creating educational content to support teachers' professional development are specified in the course program. Additionally, designing activities for students, digitalizing activities using educational technologies, and designing content related to the four language skills, vocabulary, and grammar instruction are also among the facilitators' responsibilities. CT1 stated, ‘British Council trainers communicate their feedback to the Ministry through a focus group...’ indicating that a focus group discussion was conducted for the project.

Reasons and expectations

Expectations and reasons drive motivation, shape perspective, foster collaboration, aid in evaluating success, and support personal development and learning. The codes formed under the theme of reasons and expectations are illustrated in the Figure 5.



Figure 5. The codes related to reasons and expectations

Participants joined the project for various reasons, with professional development being the most common motivation. FT9 and CT5 sought opportunities for professional growth, while PT8 attended involuntarily. FT12 was attracted by the involvement of stakeholders, and CT4 saw it as a chance to expand their professional network. Overall, reasons for participation included professional development, excitement about the project, knowledge refreshment, collaboration, and network expansion, although some attendees mentioned compulsory attendance.

Classroom environment

The classroom environment is crucial for the success of the study, with codes highlighting its importance in achieving desired project outcomes, are shown in the Figure 6.

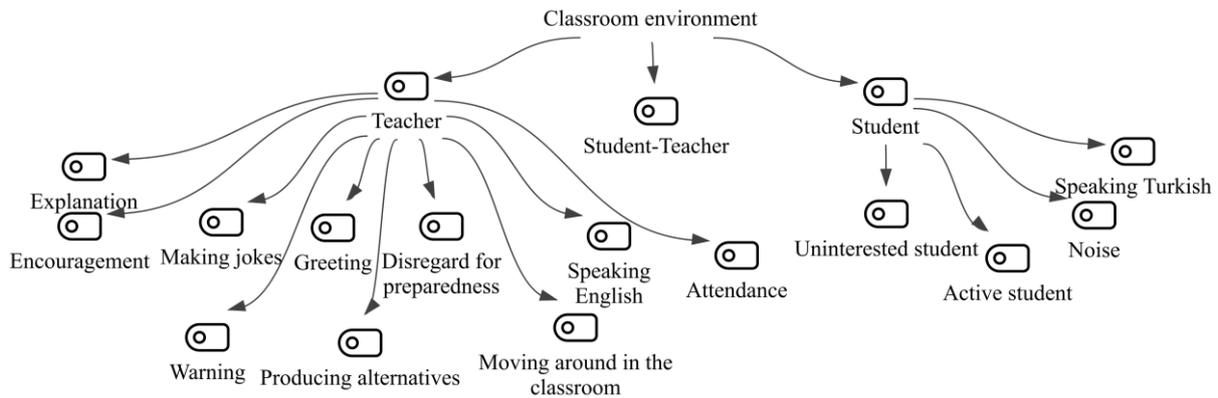


Figure 6. The codes related to classroom environment

Observations in classrooms revealed teachers providing explanations, encouraging student participation, and showcasing creativity by producing alternatives. Some students showed disinterest, while others actively participated. Noise and Turkish language use were observed. Student-teacher interaction involved question-and-answer dynamics, with teachers engaging students in activities.

Activities

Observation notes on facilitators' activities in seminars and participants' activities in their English classes are presented under the activities theme, encompassing warm-up activities, engage and share activities, reflect and evaluate activities, review activities, and in-class implemented activities. Facilitators in seminars followed the lesson plan template provided, conducting various activities such as two truths and a lie, snowball, my personal star for warm-ups. Engage and share involved jigsaw reading, gallery walk etc. Review sessions used a parasite game, while reflection and evaluation utilized an onion ring and gallery walk. Among participants, using books was a common classroom activity. Some applied seminar-learned activities like the parasite game, while others adapted these methods, such as ball throwing, to suit their classrooms.

PDC facilitators' responsibilities and roles

Trained PDC Facilitators conduct seminars nationally in their institutions or districts following Ministry-provided topics and schedules, assuming specific responsibilities. The codes related to this theme, obtained from seminar observations, are presented in Figure 7.

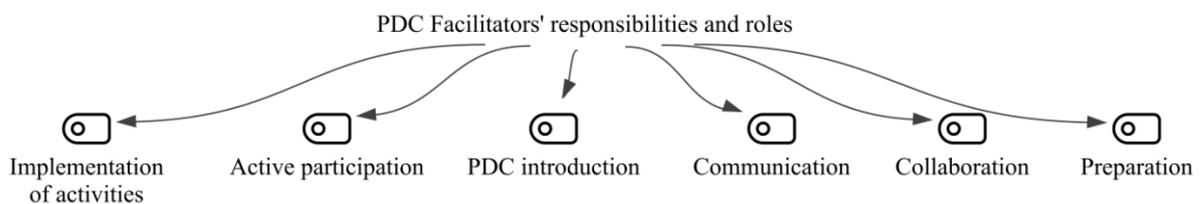


Figure 7. The codes related to PDC facilitators' responsibilities and roles

During observed seminars, facilitators implemented activities demonstrated during training or presented during the seminar. For example, one activity involved participants writing sentences or words about themselves on paper and trying to find the owner when the music stopped. Active participation was evident, with participants reflecting on questions and continuing activities accordingly. The introduction of the PDC was evident during initial seminars, with facilitators actively engaging with groups and demonstrating preparedness by following lesson plan templates.

Interpretation

Eisner (1998) emphasized that in the interpretive dimension of educational criticism, behaviors, activities, and meanings are revealed, drawing parallels with Geertz's (1973) concept of 'thick description' in anthropology. Themes based on participants' interpretations within this framework are presented in Figure 8.

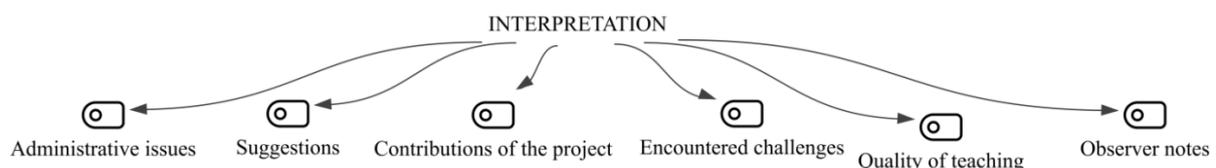


Figure 8. The themes for the interpretation dimension

Administrative issues

Administrative issues can hinder project success, necessitating early identification, effective communication, planning, monitoring, skill development, and risk mitigation. Interview-derived codes related to this theme are presented in Figure 9.

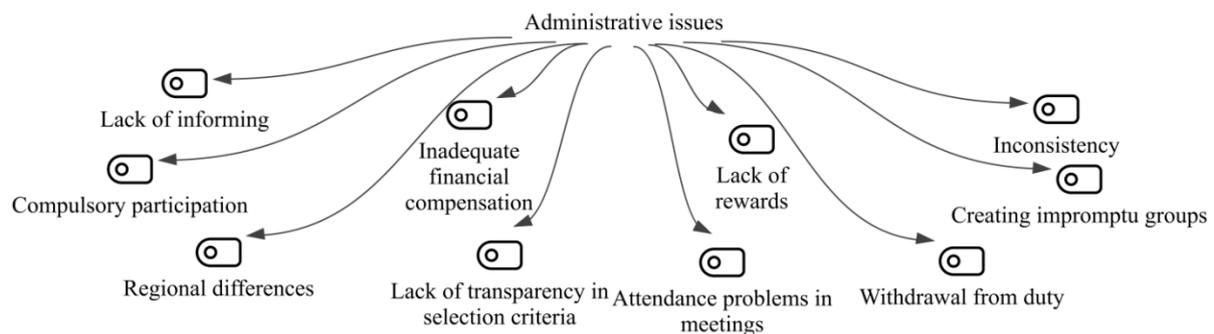


Figure 9. The codes related to administrative issues

Participants highlighted various issues, notably the lack of information, as FT8 emphasized: 'If there had been such a thing at the beginning, I wouldn't have participated as a facilitator...'. FT5 pointed out inadequate financial compensation, stating: 'We currently receive payment for four hours for a PDC. We all know it's a very modest and symbolic amount...'. Additionally, FT11 highlighted regional disparities, noting inconsistency among provinces: 'MoNE should not allow each provincial administration to act arbitrarily in this regard...'. FT7 expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of recognition: 'No one appreciated me or thanked me. I'm not receiving anything'. Moreover, compulsory participation was evident in observation notes.

Suggestions

Interview-derived codes, fostering an open environment for improvement ideas, are outlined in Figure 10 under the theme of suggestions, vital for bolstering project sustainability and success.

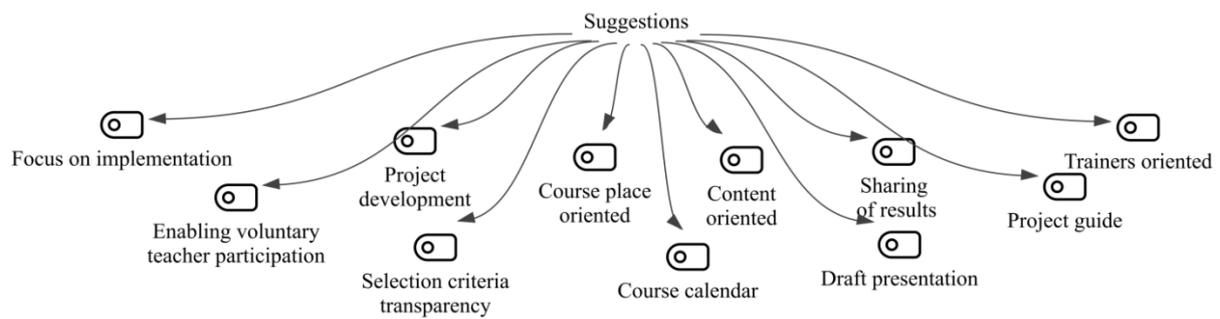


Figure 10. The codes related to suggestions

Practical suggestions emerged from the interviews, with participants recommending improvements to the seminar structure and content. CT5 suggested allocating a full day for grammar and vocabulary sessions to allow for more in-depth learning. PT5 expressed a desire for longer, more frequent seminars with interactive assignments. FT8 emphasized the importance of voluntary participation, advocating for seminars with volunteer teachers. FT7 proposed a follow-up to the project, suggesting its expansion into something more extensive. Other recommendations included diversifying seminar content, providing draft presentations for facilitators, creating a project promotion guide, reporting outcomes, and appointing expert trainers in various fields.

Contributions of the project

The codes related to the theme of a project's contributions, affecting participants, stakeholders, and society positively, were gathered from interviews and observations, as detailed in Figure 11.

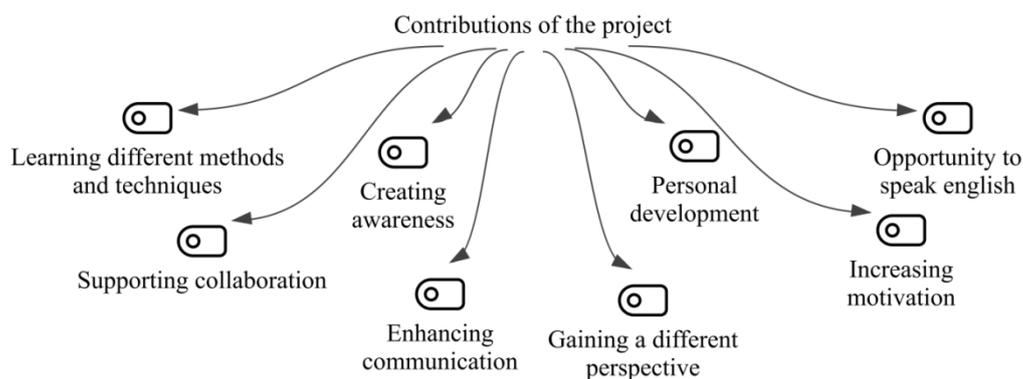


Figure 11. The codes related to contributions of the project

Regarding learning different methods and techniques, FT7 stated, 'As a teacher, it helped us learn different activities, approaches, and methods.' FT12, in explaining the project's name 'English Together,' emphasized the role of collaboration, saying, 'We were together, we did everything together. Its guiding qualities were very good.' FT15 expressed that the project created awareness, saying, 'It helped us change our style a bit. It raised awareness. I found it very beneficial as it raised awareness for both students and teachers.' FT7 expressed, 'It helped me expand my network. For example, whether they were in middle school or roommates, they were high-quality people. We still keep in touch with friends we received training with. We share our monthly updates, what each of us is doing in the group. My network has improved significantly, thanks to this project. Some friends are doing different things through this network.' They also noted that it contributed to enhancing communication. The contributions reflected on by teachers include personal development, gaining a different perspective, motivation due to the involvement of various stakeholders in the project, and the opportunity to speak English.

Encountered challenges

The codes related to managing project challenges for sustainability, goal attainment, and reducing negative impacts are listed in Figure 12.

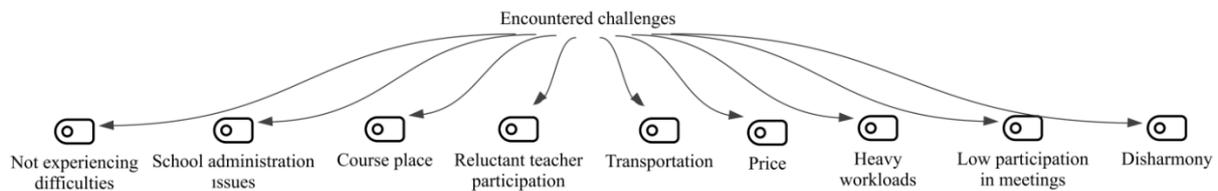


Figure 12. The codes related to encountered challenges

Based on the interviews FT12 reported no challenges before or during training, while FT15 faced obstacles with school administrators, leading to some teachers being unable to attend. FT7 noted, 'The only drawback was that the city was very cold; another city could have been chosen.' expressing concerns about the training location. Challenges related to internet access, meal quality, and institute administration were also mentioned. British Council trainers faced heavy workloads, low participation in meetings, and disharmony among trainers, with CT7 stating, 'Some trainers didn't use our common schedule...' indicating that there was a disharmony.

Quality of teaching

Post-project observations focused on teachers applying learned techniques in classrooms, revealing the teaching quality theme, with associated codes listed in Figure 13.

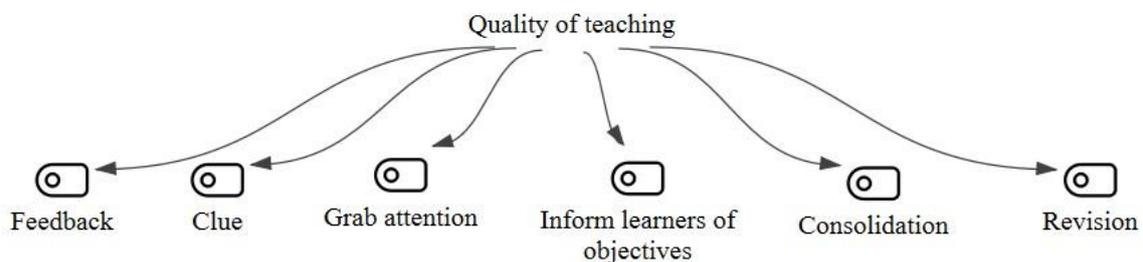


Figure 13. The codes related to the quality of teaching

Observations of trainee teachers' English lessons identified factors contributing to classroom teaching quality. Feedback provision was noted, as students were corrected and explanations were given when needed. However, instances lacking feedback were also observed, where clues were provided instead. Efforts to engage students, such as asking about the lesson topic, were noted as well. Overall, factors such as clear lesson objectives, consolidation, and review were found to enhance teaching quality.

Observer notes

The observer noted observations from both seminars and participant teachers' classrooms post-seminars, adding personal comments. Analyzing these notes revealed the observer notes theme, with corresponding codes in Figure 14.

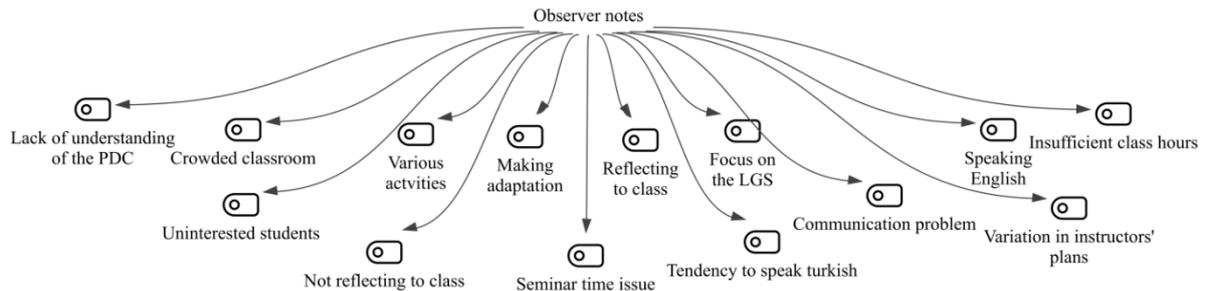


Figure 14. The codes related to observer notes

Observation notes highlight various challenges and adaptations in the context of teacher training. Issues such as lack of understanding of the PDC, crowded classrooms hindering student participation, and student disinterest were observed. Facilitators incorporated course content into seminars, leading to adaptation of activities by teachers in their classrooms. Trainee teachers focused on preparing students for the High School Transition Exam (LGS) and faced communication challenges, particularly with immigrant students present. Despite efforts to use English in the classroom, there was a tendency to revert to Turkish. Timing issues with seminars held after school hours were noted, as well as variations in activities and distractions when seminars were conducted simultaneously. This led to participant teachers selecting seminar classes based on the facilitator.

Evaluation

Eisner's approach emphasizes evaluation as integral, demanding expertise in assessing educational events. He contends that differing critic perspectives on educational events aren't a drawback but a potential strength (Eisner, 1998). Interviews yielded two themes within the Evaluation dimension: Positive and Negative aspects of the Project.

Positive aspects of the project

Positive aspects are crucial for gauging participant satisfaction and project success. The codes related to this theme are shown in Figure 15.

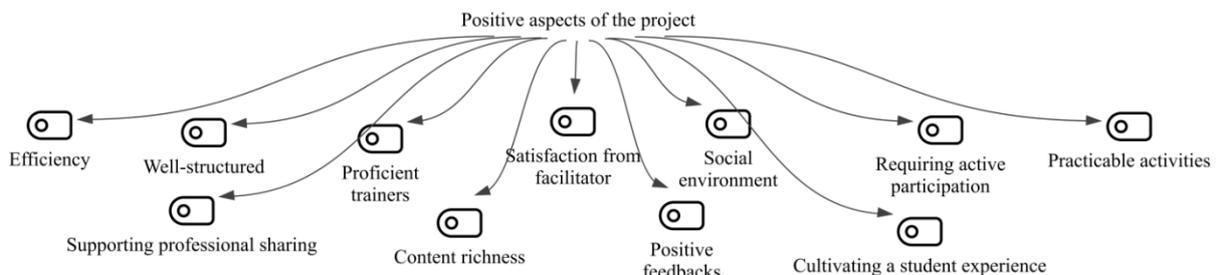


Figure 15. The codes related to the positive aspects of the project

The project is frequently mentioned as an efficient one by the participants, facilitators, and trainers. FT15 emphasized its effectiveness stating, 'I've been a teacher for 12 years, and this was the most fantastic professional development I've ever seen...'. The presence of knowledge sharing in the project highlights its support for professional sharing. It indicates that the project is well thought out, well-planned, and well-structured. FT3 stated, 'Because it is possible for every teacher to apply the knowledge or methods they have learned in their classrooms,' indicating the inclusion of practicable activities. Other positive features include the requirement for active participation during activities and cultivating a student experience.

Negative aspects of the project

Assessing the project's drawbacks is crucial for gauging its effectiveness and success, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The codes related to this theme are presented in the Figure 16.

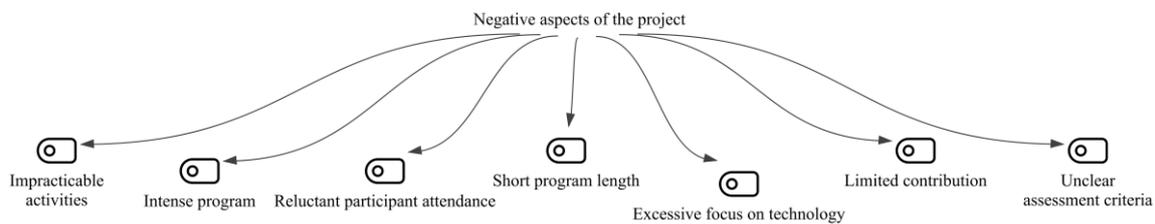


Figure 16. The codes related to the negative aspects of the project

Regarding the inclusion of impracticable activities, FT13 stated, 'There were also pieces of information that were far from being applicable, which everyone couldn't apply in their schools. In today's conditions, there were activities that couldn't be implemented in any type of school, especially in big cities like Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, or in western or rural schools.' FT11 described the program's intensity. FT13, in contrast, mentioned that the short program length could have been a bit longer. Educators also expressed negative views on the allocation of the entire afternoon to technology, highlighting an excessive focus on technology. Reluctant participation due to participants being assigned involuntarily, limited contribution, and unclear assessment criteria are also among the negative aspects.

Themes

As described by Eisner (1979), themes 'provide a summary of essential characteristics' (p. 104). Themes are general ideas or conclusions drawn from the observed situations, summarizing the significant features or characteristics of that situation, and they represent an effort to identify common and significant connections among observed processes (Eisner, 1979). The themes reached through the analysis summarize the significant features and processes of the project. Themes highlight various common points, contributing to the identification of the main focus of the critique. In this study, analysis of documents, interviews, and observations identified 17 themes. These themes include introduction of the project, aims of the project, efforts made for professional development, reasons and expectations, physical environment, activities, project assessment tools, PDC Facilitators' Responsibilities and Roles, classroom environment, observer notes, quality of teaching, contributions of the project, administrative issues, positive aspects of the project, negative aspects of the project, encountered challenges, and suggestions.

Based on the data obtained from the participants and observations in the study, the theme with the most codes is Positive Aspects of the Project (138). A project with positive aspects enhances success, increases impact, motivates participants, boosts its reputation, and serves as an exemplary model. These aspects enhance the project's societal impact, improve the participants' experiences, and provide learning for future projects. The theme 'Introduction of the project' (129) ranks second in frequency after document analysis. Administrative Issues (128) is among the themes with the most codes, indicating challenges or issues arising in the project's management process. The theme 'Suggestions' (99) also has a high frequency, derived from discussions with participants. Recommendations are critical for the success and impact of the project. They improve project performance, offer creative solutions, drive progress, increase stakeholder engagement, mitigate risks, and better tailor the project to the target audience. The theme 'PDC Facilitators' Responsibilities and Roles' (80) clarifies the roles of facilitators, including implementing activities, providing explanations, and collaborating. Physical Environment (79) and Classroom Environment (78) are derived from observations. Negative aspects of the Project (63) are characteristics that limit the project's impact, hinder its progress, and affect its success. The theme Project Assessment Tools (31) had the fewest codes, and these tools provide insights into how the project is evaluated.

Discussion

In this study, the evaluation of the professional development program implemented within the scope of the 'English Together Project' was conducted according to the Eisner Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism Model. A successful teaching process can be analyzed from two perspectives: the aspect of educational planning systems and the aspect of the learning environment (Eisner, 2002). These two perspectives help to provide a more comprehensive analysis by evaluating different aspects of the teaching process. The analysis indicates that the results are consistent across all groups.

Studies confirm that schools functioning as PLCs can be compared globally and locally, but various contextual factors like culture, education, regulations, and regional differences must be recognized (Lomos, 2017). Based on the findings obtained in the descriptive dimension, it was concluded that the purpose of the professional development program is to support professional development. The fact that teachers participated in this project to support their professional development aligns with the program's purpose, as indicated by their reasons for participation. This result is consistent with prior research (Desimone et al., 2002; Kalinowski et al., 2019; Liu & Phelps, 2019; Yurkofsky et al., 2019). In contrast, Başkan (2001) found that, according to participating teachers, some programs fell short of their ideal objectives. The beginning stages of teacher training seem to be essential for the cultivation of pedagogical skills (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). These results underscore the importance of professional development programs in motivating teachers to continuously improve and their role in enhancing the quality of education. According to Theresa (2021), a collective vision positively impacted the work of members and led to sustainable enhancement of the overall organization.

In the descriptive aspect, it's clear that teachers are actively engaged in professional development, with a strong focus on in-service activities and postgraduate education. The accessibility of postgraduate education, especially through distance learning, and the benefits it offers, such as exemptions from exams, have fueled this interest. According to Niemi (2015), ongoing professional development through in-service training is an effective way for teachers to refresh and improve their skills in the field. It allows teachers to continually update their knowledge and teaching practices to better serve their students. On the other hand, a productive PLC effectively encourages its members to take ownership of their colleagues' professional development (Grossman et al., 2001).

One of the results obtained in the interpretive dimension is that the English Together Project is described as a well-structured and efficient project. According to the findings, the reasons underlying the efficiency of the project include sustainability and the involvement of various stakeholders that support collaboration. Starting as a course and continuing with seminars, the support process has persisted. Effective professional development should also include peer coaching and other follow-up methods (Bull & Buechler, 1996). Quality professional development involves three key elements: content knowledge, effective learning opportunities, and alignment with other activities (Hirsch, 2001). In contrast, Büyükcın (2008) concluded in his study that teachers experienced difficulties due to poorly structured seminar programs. Güngör (2023) reached the opposite conclusion, stating that coaching programs were not very effective. Similarly, there are studies in the literature where teachers have negative opinions about professional development activities (Çiftçi, 2008; David & Bwisa, 2013; Güngör, 2023; Woods et al., 2007). Oturak-Eyecisoy (2014) stated in her study that social studies teachers were uncertain about the adequacy of in-service programs and were indecisive. O'Donahue (2012), Hong (2012), Martinsone and Damberga (2017), Pozo-Rico et al. (2020) have similarly found that in-service training programs were effective, and teachers applied them in their classrooms. Arranging in-service training programs for teachers is identified as a crucial requirement (Sakkoulis et al., 2018). These activities offer vital chances for teacher development, improving pedagogical skills and embracing modern educational approaches. Tailored in-service training programs effectively enhance teacher performance, highlighting the need for educational institutions to strategically plan and implement quality training. Tam (2015) discovered that teaching underwent changes across five dimensions, encompassing curriculum, teaching methods, learning approaches, roles of teachers, and the process of

learning to teach after PLC. Within these areas, three patterns of change emerged: modifications solely in practice without concurrent shifts in beliefs, alterations in beliefs without corresponding changes in practice, and changes occurring in both practice and belief concurrently.

The fact that the project supports professional sharing is indicated by its positive aspects, such as having competent trainers, rich content, containing practical activities, and requiring active participation. This result was revealed in the evaluation dimension. The characteristics of the project, such as the participants being unfamiliar with the professional development community model or the project being supported by different stakeholders, and the use of English during the courses and seminars, may have contributed to this result. Studies like Kalogiannakis (2010), Omar (2014), Huhtala and Vesalainen (2017), Pieters and Kapenda (2017), and Kalkan (2019) stress tailoring content to participants' needs. Öztürk and Öztürk (2019) highlight the lack of qualified trainers as a major training issue. Eisner (1979) underscores the necessity of specialized knowledge for educational critique and research to comprehend and enhance classroom practices. This perspective emphasizes not just understanding but also critically evaluating and improving classroom experiences, emphasizing expertise's role in effective criticism and research in education.

In the evaluative dimension, alongside positive aspects, negative aspects were identified, including impractical activities, an intensive course program, and unwilling participants, all impacting the project's effectiveness. Reasons for non-implementation of activities may include overcrowded classrooms, lack of internet access, and insufficient tools and equipment. The intensity of the course program may stem from the project's expansion across Türkiye, requiring consecutive training sessions. Unwilling participants pose a significant obstacle to achieving project goals. Effective learning occurs when participation is voluntary, aligning with Arslan's (2015) findings on compulsory seminar attendance. Martinez (2016) and Zieher et al. (2021) also highlight challenges in achieving desired outcomes in professional development programs, emphasizing the need for continuous support. Meesuk et al. (2021) found similar results to this research, highlighting that despite challenges stemming from procurement regulations leading to irrelevant processes, the professional development funded by a government organization in Thailand underscores the importance of policy coherence and stakeholder acceptance. Nevertheless, the process remains beneficial, particularly in supporting teacher learning, with identifiable steps for improvement.

One of the findings in the descriptive dimension is that microteaching was used as an assessment tool in the course component of the project, and e-certificates were provided in the seminar component. Microteaching can contribute to teachers' more effective, secure, and student-centered teaching. Kalkan (2019) and Karasolak et al. (2013) advocate for practical exams in training programs. Gathering participant feedback and evaluating programs are crucial to enhancing future training quality. Jung (2001), Kim et al. (2008), and Du-Plessis and Webb (2012) stress the significance of incorporating participant opinions for evaluating and improving these programs.

In the interpretative dimension, administrative issues were identified, including lack of project information, compulsory participant assignments, regional coherence challenges, insufficient financial support for coordinators, and absence of ministry rewards. These issues may stem from evolving project structure and communication gaps, impacting project management. Lack of communication, unclear goals, and resource management issues contribute to these challenges. Maya and Taştekin (2018) found various methods used to encourage participation in professional development activities, emphasizing the positive impact of incentives like rewards and financial support, as highlighted by Berry and Eckert (2012). Huijboom et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of tailored support and facilitation to foster the growth of within-school PLCs. Their study highlights the diverse developmental pathways these PLCs traverse across two academic years and underscores the ongoing exploration of factors influencing PLC development within the school context. Truong et al. (2025) found that building effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) requires active involvement from key stakeholders-principals, academic leaders, teachers, and policymakers-who should collaborate to provide leadership, support, professional development, and necessary resources.

In the interpretative dimension, the project's contributions include providing teachers with opportunities to learn diverse methods and techniques, collaborate, raise awareness, and improve communication with colleagues. As proposed by Richards and Farrell (2012), effective professional development addresses both institutional and individual goals. The project's focus on fostering professional development communities aligns with this idea, emphasizing collaboration, student learning enhancement, and specific goal achievements. Collaborative opportunities, emphasized by Joyce and Showers (1983), encourage relationships, shared experiences, and informal discussions on common issues. Within a collaborative environment, interactions facilitate joint planning and idea exchange, valuing each teacher's role in the school community (Bull & Buechler, 1996). Meesuk et al. (2021) found that in Thailand, the Professional Learning Community (PLC) program has been implemented for over four years to promote sustainable professional development among in-service teachers. This sustainable development initiative has been widely adopted nationwide through the Thai Teacher Council network. Research findings indicate that the project is crucial for both teachers and educational staff, leading to transformative shifts in teaching and learning methodologies, as well as fostering positive thinking skills. Additionally, it contributes to enhanced academic achievements among students.

In the interpretative dimension, teachers reflected on facilitators' seminar expectations but struggled to translate these into classroom practice, noted through observations. Reluctance to attend seminars might contribute, alongside the emphasis on entrance exams for 8th and 12th graders, potentially prompting exam-focused teaching. Observations in May, when attendance wasn't mandatory for 12th graders, might have limited classroom activities due to smaller or crowded classes. These trends could reflect a teacher-centered or textbook-focused teaching approach. Vescio et al. (2008) highlighted that professional learning communities fostered student-centered teaching, while Carpenter (2012) observed positive practice changes via collaboration. These communities should enhance pedagogical skills, share best practices, and encourage collaboration for improved student learning. Eisner (1979) underscores that effective educational criticism enhances student achievement and better the education system.

In the interpretive findings, stakeholders suggest improvements for the project, including voluntary seminar participation, transparent selection criteria, schedule and location adjustments, promoting more sharing, offering draft presentations, providing project guidance, diversifying expertise among instructors, and generating outcome reports. These recommendations address project weaknesses, enhance effectiveness, and foster a participant-centered approach, aligning with Boydak-Özan and Dikici's (2001) emphasis on recommendations' role in training improvement.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the study indicate several key findings regarding the evaluation of the professional development program implemented within the 'English Together Project'. Firstly, the program effectively supports teachers' professional development, aligning with their motivations for participation and emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement in pedagogical skills. However, challenges such as impractical activities, intensive course programs, and reluctant participants hinder the project's effectiveness, necessitating improvements in program design and implementation. Despite these challenges, the project demonstrates structured efficiency, sustained by collaboration and stakeholder involvement, underscoring the significance of peer coaching and ongoing support mechanisms in professional development initiatives. The project's contributions include providing diverse learning opportunities, fostering collaboration, and enhancing communication among teachers, aligning with effective professional development principles. However, observations reveal a gap between seminar expectations and classroom practice, suggesting the need for more tailored and practical training approaches. Recommendations for improvement focus on enhancing

participant engagement, transparency, and program alignment with teacher needs, emphasizing the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation in professional development initiatives. Overall, the study underscores the value of targeted, collaborative, and participant-centered professional development programs in enhancing teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

Suggestions

To successfully ensure the sustainability of PLCs through in-service education programs and to adequately support participants' needs, it is recommended to customize the content of the training, establish an effective feedback mechanism, provide sustainable support, create a well-planned program specifying its goals, duration, and participants, secure sufficient resources, supplement it with educational materials, facilitate information sharing through the use of effective communication channels, and expand it to various disciplines.

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