

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Taking the lid off in-service teacher education in Turkey: Voices from stakeholders

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## Ethical Statement

Consent forms were gathered from the participants.

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating in-service teacher education in Turkey by comparing the Ministry of National Education's regulations on in-service education to the perspectives of multiple stakeholders: teachers, school managers, and a local in-service education director. This goal was achieved by delving into regulations on in-service education of teachers in Turkey, checking whether the regulations were put into practice and what the stakeholders' views were about the current practices. The results revealed that the regulations reflected an ideal in-service education for teachers; however, the satisfaction level of the stakeholders decreased as we moved from the local director to the teachers. The overall findings imply that in order to realize the regulations' goals, teachers' needs should be identified first, practices should be organized for each branch separately, the seminars should be planned for small groups and different school levels, and the evaluation processes should certainly be implemented after the in-service practices.

**Keywords:** In-service teacher education, in-service teachers, English language teachers.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Clearly, meeting the expectation that all students will learn to exacting standards will require a transformation in the ways in which our education system attracts, prepares, supports, and develops expert teachers... An aspect of this transformation is developing means to evaluate and recognize teacher effectiveness throughout the career, for the purposes of licensing, hiring, and granting tenure; for providing needed professional development ...” (Darling-Hammond and Prince 2007, 3)

As the quote highlights, the effectiveness of education is strongly bound to the staff’s professionalism and expertise. However, it does not require solely the “training” of teachers; but also systematically regulated professional development practices guided by the educational policies of the country considering the needs of the teachers. As one of the core elements of effective education outcomes, professional development includes a career-long process and related policies planned to provide educators with opportunities to improve their knowledge, skill, and commitment to be able to perform their duties more effectively (Schwille & Dembélé 2007). In line with this, in-service teacher education (INSET), a component of professional development, is defined as education and training practices in which teachers and directors engage pursuing their previous knowledge and aiming at developing their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they can teach more effectively (Bolam, 1986). Considering Bolam’s definition with a focus on the previous knowledge and the need for improvement, Roberts (1998) argued that in-service teacher education training emerges from the gap between teachers’ current level of knowledge or skill and the required level by their role in the system.

Accordingly, INSET has some principles to outline effective teacher education practices and one of the most significant key concepts in teacher education is needs analysis. Roth (1996) stated that needs analysis should be carried out collaboratively by all the stakeholders of the system, not only identifying the needs but also making training plans, creating activities, implementing them, and evaluating the outcomes. If all the stakeholders involved in this system participate in the process, then the quality of the relevance and parallelly the quality of the training increase, and their commitments are also enhanced (Leu & Ginsburg, 2011). Another crucial point is that professional development policies and trainings should be consistent with the other education policies in the country, otherwise the teachers cannot implement what they are suggested in trainings to the real teaching practices (Barrows et al., 2007).

As practitioners of the teaching profession, recently teachers’ professional development has been an area of interest by many scholars. Especially after the emergence of studies on teacher cognition (e.g. Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002), different understandings about how teachers learn to do their work have developed. According to this research, L2 teacher learning continues throughout their lives and arises from experiences in a social context. Considering the ascending worldwide globalization and digitalization, it is most likely that the needs of the L2 teachers will also parallelly increase and vary in time as it has already been (Edwards & Nuttall, 2016). That is, in-service teacher trainings should be informed by these developments continuously.

While teacher learning might take place in different contexts such as direct learning (e.g. conferences, seminars), learning at school (e.g. critical friends, action research), learning out of school (e.g. university/school partnership, networks) (Lieberman, 1994), and ‘learning in the classroom’ (Day, 1999), depending on teachers’ needs, it is noted that one-shot, one-size-fits-all, short-burst, quick-fix initiatives could not be an answer to language teachers’ needs as their needs vary continuously (McCarty & Riley, 2000). Recent research has shown that teachers want to

receive trainings that meet their immediate needs. For example, Kohl (2005) conducted a study exploring the language teachers' needs for in-service education and the result revealed that the teachers needed discipline-specific trainings. Anderson (2008) replicated Kohl's study and she discovered that experienced and inexperienced teachers' needs were not the same, implicating that even in the same discipline the needs varied. In another study (Flores, Veiga Simão, Rajala & Tornberg, 2006), teachers in Portugal, Serbia, Montenegro, and Finland also indicated that INSET training did not meet their needs adequately, and they did not contribute to school improvement substantially. Teachers also added that their needs should be gathered at the school level and analyzed to determine the needs of the teachers in practice, and the training should be provided in line with the needs analysis.

Similarly, teachers in Turkey face significant deficiencies in terms of in-service education (Büyükyavuz, 2013). Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2013) found out that teachers had several problems related to in-service education such as one-shot, compulsory trainings; deficiency of need analysis, and so on. Regarding these, in the study of Daloğlu (2004), it was suggested that teacher education should be school-embedded, and the objectives of the programs should be framed according to teacher needs. Another point was made by Uysal (2012) that top-down and mainly transmission-based INSET trainings were still common. It was also revealed that collaborative and communicative activities were mostly not included, and evaluation and feedback phases could still not find their places in the trainings either (Bayrakçı, 2009).

Similar recommendations were made by different researchers who conducted research in different contexts. For instance, Dutto (2009) presented in-service education in Italy and stated that the system updates itself regularly as the needs of teachers change in time. It was also highlighted in that study that schools were suggested to be the focus for teachers' professional development, and more partnerships with different institutions such as universities, research centres, publishing houses were recommended. Dutto also noted that school-level professional development activities such as peer review, cooperative projects, etc. would decrease the cost of the education as well (2009, p. 10).

In another context, in Thailand, Meng and Tajaroenusuk (2013) investigated problems EFL teachers faced in their professional development and the results demonstrated that the teachers were dissatisfied with the limitation, discontinuity, and inappropriateness of the programs. Liu (2006) added another problem language teachers faced that theory and practice were not parallel and this poses a key role for teachers. Also in Turkey, teachers complained that they did not have time to do activities for professional development and they saw it as a luxury (Büyükyavuz, 2013).

While teachers pointed out several problematic issues, the positive insights on the INSET activities were quite limited. For instance, Flores et al. (2006) found out that they were content with the regular in-service education activities. Uysal (2012) stated that English language teachers were satisfied with the in-service training as they had the opportunity of active participation with real-life practices and they could collaborate with their peers. However, the number of trainings designed for active participation and collaboration was relatively few (Bayrakçı, 2009).

Based on the previous research, it can be concluded that as a significant component of professional development for teachers, in-service teacher education requires an inclusive approach bringing different stakeholders of the INSET programs together to work collaboratively in the process allowing them to communicate their needs and evaluations reciprocally. As the first step of this approach, hearing the voices of different stakeholders of the specific context is necessary. For that reason, the purpose of this study is to investigate the current situation of in-service education of English language teachers in Turkey with a multi-perspective approach. With the aim of determining

whether there is a consistency between the in-service teacher education regulations and the reality in practice, an in-depth content analysis of the regulations and the interviews conducted with the stakeholders of the INSET, who were in-service English language teachers, school managers, and a director working at province national education directorate, was carried out. The results of the study are supposed to be informative for future adaptations of the regulations and practices in INSET programs in Turkey. The following research questions guided the current study:

1. How does the Turkish Ministry of Education's regulation frame in-service teacher education in Turkey at national and local levels?
2. How is the effectiveness of the Turkish Ministry of Education's in-service teacher education perceived by the main stakeholders?
3. Does the Turkish Ministry of Education's in-service teacher education regulation coincide with the perceptions of stakeholders in terms of its implementation?

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study used qualitative inquiry methods to explore the in-service teacher education practices in a southern city in Turkey. The main reason for utilizing qualitative inquiry emerged from the need for exploring the real-life application of in-service teacher education regulation. This perspective provides researchers with a thick description of the topic under investigation by including unique perspectives of participants and the dynamic nature of the contextual factors. As a specific method for qualitative inquiry, this study also adopted the explanatory multiple case study method (Yin, 2018) as it allows researchers to compare similarities and differences between cases, which increases the trustworthiness and rigor of the study.

### Participants

The sample population of this study was a convenience sample of all stakeholders involved in the in-service teacher education process in a southern city in Turkey. Sampling was based on the in-service education regulation of the Ministry of Education as in the regulation, teachers, school managers, and local in-service education directors are described as the stakeholders of the in-service teacher education in Turkey. The interviewed teachers and school managers were reached out from the pool of partner schools working in collaboration for pre-service teacher practicum experiences with one of the public universities located in the city.

Six in-service teachers participated in the interviews. All teachers had undergraduate degrees in studying language (i.e. English). Four teachers studied in English Language Teaching programs, while the remaining two graduated from English Language and Literature program. The main difference between these programs was that pedagogical training is included in the curriculum of programs running under the Faculty of Education, while literature majors take their pedagogical training as a separate optional training during or after their undergraduate education. All teachers stated that they participated in in-service teacher education activities before. Table 1 summarizes the background information of teacher participants.

**Table 1. Demographics of in-service English language teachers**

Teacher	Gender	Experience	Graduation	School of Work
Megan	Female	13 years	English Language and Literature	High School
Patricia	Female	30 years	English Language Teaching	Primary School
Emma	Female	13 years	English Language Teaching	Primary School
Jessica	Female	25 years	English Language Teaching	High School
Linda	Female	23 years	English Language Teaching	Primary School
Jacob	Male	25 years	English Language and Literature	High School

Besides, four school managers were interviewed. All of them had higher education backgrounds having undergraduate degrees in education. Table 2 summarizes the background information of school manager participants.

**Table 2. Demographics of school managers**

School Manager	Gender	Experience as a Teacher	Experience as a School Manager	Graduation	School
Olivia	Female	28 years	20 years	Education Institute	Primary School
Edward	Male	11 years	2 years	Turkish Language and Literature	Primary School
Daniel	Male	16 years	7 years	Turkish Language and Literature	High School
Richard	Male	23 years	5 years	English Language Teaching	High School

As well as school managers, a local director responsible for the administrative part of the in-service teacher education practices in the district was interviewed. Her mission for in-service education is officially defined as 'facilitating the coordination among school managers, instructors, committee members and teachers throughout the in-service education.' She is also responsible for dealing with all the paperwork and ensuring that the flow of the whole process is smooth.

## Data Collection

Data collection through the analysis of official in-service teacher education regulation of the ministry of education and face-to-face interviews and site visits were performed by the first author. The document analysis of the existing legal documents was decided to be the first step. As understood, the main resource used for the design and dissemination of in-service education in Turkey was the Ministry of Education's regulations on in-service teacher education. Therefore, it was analysed in detail in terms of its aims and principles, scope, definitions, and process. In addition, semi-structured interviews were developed to understand the real-life application of the main components of in-service education mentioned in the related regulation. They were also aimed to explore the opinions of the main stakeholders considering the strengths and weaknesses of the process.

Interview data were collected in the spring semester of 2016. In line with the approval from participants in consent documents, all interviews were audio-recorded. The length of the interviews ranged from 25-30 minutes. Following the collection of signed consent forms, participants were asked a set of semi-structured interview questions. The interviewer also asked some probing questions when necessary for clarification or elaboration of the participant responses within the flow of the interview period.

## Procedures

The researchers had contact with the in-service teachers and school managers as they were working at the partner

practicum schools of the university. Therefore, in-service teachers and school managers were approached by face-to-face short meetings during the practicum visits. And an appropriate time for an interview was scheduled with the local in-service education director via phone call. The researchers informed the potential participants about the aims and scope of the project and paid special attention to emphasizing the confidentiality of the data collection and analysis procedures, including the voluntary basis participation. Interview dates and times were negotiated with those who voluntarily accepted to participate in the project.

## Data Analyses

For the analysis of the in-service teacher education regulation, an eight-step process of O'Leary (2014) regarding document analysis was followed: (1) Gather relevant texts. (2) Develop an organization and management scheme. (3) Make copies of the originals for annotation. (4) Assess the authenticity of documents. (5) Explore documents' agenda, biases. (6) Explore background information (e.g. tone, style, purpose). (7) Ask questions about the document (e.g. Who produced it? Why? When? Type of data?). (8) Explore content. Through this process, the aim was to give voice and meaning to the target phenomenon.

For the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, content analysis was conducted as it uses "a systematic, replicable, observable and rule-governed analysis for the application of those categories" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 476). First, the recorded interview audio files were transcribed manually using word processing software and checked by two researchers. Second, in line with the research questions and the purpose of the study, transcribed texts were coded in terms of the strengths and the weaknesses of the in-service education process. This process was completed by the first and second author separately for each case to ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis. Finally, the cases were compared with each other regarding the strengths and weaknesses to explore the similarities and the differences across cases. In this study, the content analysis was guided by a set of steps suggested by Krippendorff (2004, p. 476-483): Define the research questions to conduct content analysis, define the population, define the sample to be included, define the context of the generation of the document, define the units of analysis, decide the codes, construct the categories for analysis, conduct the coding and categorizing of the data, conduct the data analysis, summarizing, making inferences.

## FINDINGS

### In-service Teacher Education in Theory: Official Regulations of the Ministry of Education

With the intent of exploring the current in-service education regulations in Turkey, the Ministry of Education's regulation was elaborately analysed to investigate its aims and principles. This regulation consists of eight chapters including "Aims, Scope, Basis and Definitions; Aims and Principles of In-service Teacher Education; Councils and Duties; Assigning Personnel for Educational Practices; Participants of the Trainings; Planning, Applying, and Evaluation; Financial Provisions; and Execution". The content of these interrelated sections was examined to have a broader understanding of the in-service teacher education process in general. The beginning chapters of the regulation (i.e. aims, scope, basis, and definitions) were excluded from the analysis as they only presented information about the content and flow of the regulation. Considering the aims of this paper, the analysis focused on participant selection, planning, applying and evaluation.

Regarding the overall aims and principles, the regulation suggests that in-service teacher education should be

conducted to meet the various needs of teachers. The main objectives provided within the regulation are to overcome the inadequacies of the pre-service teacher education practices, to provide information about developments and innovations in education, to improve professional competence and understanding, to ensure uniformity of implementations on main educational principles and techniques, to provide unity in interpreting the aims, principles, and policies of Turkish National Education, to transfer competent and ambitious personnel to upper positions, and to ultimately support the improvement of the education system. In addition, it is stated that education is an ongoing process; practices are organized depending on teachers' needs; managers are responsible for encouraging teachers to participate in in-service education; teachers' on-the-job training is valued; teachers are guaranteed the equality of opportunity to benefit from in-service education, the places where in-service teacher education is held should be appropriate for educational conditions; in-service teacher education programs should be continuously evaluated and improved; the collaboration with private and public associations should be strengthened; the development of teachers participating in in-service trainings should be followed up.

The regulation also elaborates on the organization and duties of two councils responsible for in-service teacher education practices. The first council is the Education Council, and the second one is the Department of In-service Education. It is found that their duties are to identify the frames of politics of the ministry in terms of teacher education, establish in-service education needs of teachers, and evaluate the outcomes of in-service education practices. Moreover, these councils have some other duties, one of which is to assign instructors who provide in-service training. This is the responsibility of the Department of In-service Education; however, the governor's office is in charge of assigning instructors for local training. Besides, participation in in-service education is regulated in detail, stating that for central training, teachers are chosen by the Department of In-service Education while for local training, they are selected by the governor's office.

In the regulation, the flow of the in-service teacher education is explained step-by-step. One of the most important links in the in-service teacher education chain is the workflow of planning, evaluating, and improving the practices. The regulation gives additional information on which steps are taken in an annual in-service teacher education plan prepared by the Department of In-service Education. In defining these steps, teachers' in-service education needs, views and suggestions of the relevant departments, the reports of the Ministry's inspectors, and the research results are taken into consideration. Afterward, the plan is carried into effect subsequent to the approval of the authorities. For the local annual in-service education planning, the provincial directorate of national education takes the responsibility of planning based on local needs and makes the arrangements accordingly including training topics, places, and instructors. After receiving approval from the governor, the directorate puts the plan into practice. Finally, the regulation illustrates the overall evaluation of in-service training. It is pointed out that the instructor decides on the assessment strategies for evaluating participant teachers' success in reaching the desired outcomes of the training. The assessment activities could include but are not limited to oral, written, applied, or integrated examination. Based on the examination results, if the participants can get a satisfactory score stated in the regulation, they are awarded a certificate of achievement. If they cannot, they only get a certificate of participation.

### **In-service Teacher Education in Practice: Views of the Stakeholders**

In addition to the analysis of in-service teacher education regulation, six in-service EFL teachers, four school managers, and a local in-service education director were interviewed using semi-structured interview protocols aiming to identify the in-service EFL teachers' needs of in-service teacher education, their opinions about strengths and weaknesses of

the current in-service education programs/opportunities, and their suggestions for a more efficient in-service teacher education. The analysis of the results is presented in the following section, starting from in-service teachers, and moving forward with the other stakeholders respectively.

The main stakeholder of the in-service education practices was teachers. The analyses of the in-service teachers' interviews yielded mixed results. Two teachers asserted that they were partly satisfied with the current in-service education practices, whereas the other four teachers were found to be unsatisfied with the in-service education opportunities they received. One teacher who was partly satisfied with the in-service education opportunities commented:

*"In-service training opens at least a way for us to develop ourselves; we know that there is always something we can do to improve."*

Regarding the content and scope of the in-service training, the identified number of weaknesses was higher than the strengths. The perceived benefits of the training were *realizing the need for both personal and professional development activities, being informed about new developments in one's field, and having the chance to review pedagogical knowledge*. Concerning weaknesses, teachers believed that the in-service training lacked *branch-specific knowledge, revisions in the content of the training, concern for genuine progress, opportunities for practice and needs analysis*. Among those, the lack of needs analysis was noteworthy among participants. They believed that needs analysis should be performed before the training was designed, just as Linda pointed out:

*"I participated in a ministry-led training specific to EFL teachers only once in 23 years. It was not up-to-date, and I did not learn anything new."*

In the statement above, Linda emphasizes the necessity of modifications to in-service training content in line with the current developments in the subject domains of the teachers as well as the necessity to conduct needs analysis, especially for specifying local needs. However, the questionnaires applied by the ministry for detecting the needs for in-service training practices were perceived as just a formality by teachers, rather than an actual implementation during in-service training practices. Further, it was evident that the teachers were not informed about needs analysis results. For this reason, they insistently stated that need analysis was a must and results should be shared. They also added that need analysis should be separately carried out for different school levels, different branches, and experienced-inexperienced teachers, which can be inferred from Patricia's utterance:

*"The main actors of education are teachers. Yet, their views are never valued; instead, they are always ignored."*

Besides, the teachers shared their concerns about the lack of practical activities in in-service training practices. It was obvious that the in-service education solely contained theoretical knowledge, which prevented teachers from experiencing significant professional progress. The last weakness of the current in-service education was related to the evaluation process, in that the teachers perceived the process as vague. They suggested that special attention should be paid to feedback throughout the in-service training practices so that teachers could have an idea of their progress following their professional experiences. Apart from all these, Emma had difficulty in proposing any strength of the in-service education provided by the ministry as is clear in the excerpt below:

*"There is nothing good about the training provided by the ministry. Only university-led practices are good, but they are too rare."*



Teachers also evaluated the organization of the in-service teacher education practices. Their evaluations revealed one perceived strength, which was the advantage of being in a novel environment different from the school. Despite this, they mentioned weaknesses such as the lack of support from the local universities, the obligation for participation, and the inappropriate time and location for the training. To overcome these, the teachers thought that it was important to initiate collaborative practices between the local universities and the ministry. Moreover, participation should be on a volunteer basis so that teachers do not feel obliged to take part in the practices. Although the teachers were pleased to visit different places for in-service seminars, they also emphasized that the time and locations of some practices are not scheduled taking their workload or the distance from their workplace into consideration. However, they were still interested in being involved in the in-service education practices taking place in foreign countries. Overall, they believed that the organization and procedure of the practices needed a complete renovation.

In addition to the content and organization of the training, the teachers commented on the qualifications of the instructors who provided the in-service training activities. Teachers found the efforts of instructors valuable and appreciated those efforts made for preparing quality training. However, they recommended that in-service education could be provided by more qualified instructors or native speakers of English specialized in foreign language teaching. Independent from the perceived weaknesses, teachers' suggestions for improving the current in-service education were to ensure the harmony between the scope of the training and the realities of the local classroom contexts. Besides, it was advised that the instructors should make regular self-criticisms in order to become more qualified in their profession. Megan expressed her ideas on this issue in the excerpt below:

*"Instructors are a crucial component of in-service teacher education, but unfortunately we think that instructors are not qualified enough...."*

Teachers also evaluated themselves as the passive receivers of the in-service training practices. Interestingly, they could not think of any strength in their own performance in the in-service training. Megan clearly emphasized teachers' lack of awareness in this context:

*"Firstly, teachers should criticize themselves objectively and be open to improvement. The first thing that they should do is to gain an understanding of professional development and life-long learning."*

Moreover, they believed the allocated number of participants for each training activity and the selection procedures of the participants were other weaknesses. They believed that the quota for participant teachers was inadequate, and the participant selection criterion was vague. It was obvious that teachers believed the in-service education should be organized for training higher numbers of teachers and the selection criteria should be more transparent so that teachers could be ensured about fair selection procedures.

As another important stakeholder of the in-service education process at the school level, school managers shared their insights for the in-service education practices. Of four, two school managers declared that they were partly satisfied with the current in-service training; however, the other two were not satisfied with it by any means. The school managers satisfied with the process and practices expressed their gratitude regarding the content and scope of the in-service training. They seemed to believe that the current in-service education was a chance for teachers to make self-evaluations and gain useful experiences contributing to their professional development. They also claimed that teachers' needs were examined in detail through regular needs analyses. This was evident in the following statement of Edward:

*"The ministry asks teachers to fill in questionnaires to identify in-service education needs; however, teachers do not fill in them, they see it as a burden. If teachers do not commit themselves to their jobs, they cannot develop themselves. They should be able to criticize themselves before blaming the ministry or others. In the last needs analysis, only 42.000 teachers out of 865.000 teachers filled in this questionnaire. It shows that they are not eager to make their needs explicit."*

On the other hand, the school managers, who were not satisfied with the current in-service education, commented that the needs analysis was mostly perfunctory, and local needs were ignored to a great extent. In this respect, the teachers and school managers agreed upon the same mind-set that needs analysis results were not disseminated, which made them believe the identified needs were not taken into account. The school managers also highlighted that teachers' feedback for the practices should be valued, thus adopting a branch-specific needs analysis perspective was a must. Concerning this, the school managers believed that small, branch-specific groups for the practices could be more beneficial. In addition to the suggestion for the branch-specific topics for the training, the school managers also suggested integrating technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) into the practices.

Another critical point similar to teachers' demands for in-service education, the school managers attached special importance to the contributions of the ministry, universities, and other related institutions to the practices. Yet, different from the teachers, the school managers argued that the training was effective, especially in terms of providing teachers with useful teaching resources. Even so, the teachers and school managers were in consensus that the in-service education lacked an efficient evaluative phase when teachers could easily share their comments on the effectiveness of the practices.

The planning and the organization aspect of in-service education emerged as another agreement point between teachers and school managers. The school managers thought that the inconvenient dates and locations of the training might impede the quality of in-service education. This also negatively influenced the participation ratio of the teachers. Common sense was that teachers were not able to participate in in-service training activities they desired to attend. Besides, the school managers emphasized that the in-service training practices should not be compulsory as in-service education needs vary from teacher to teacher. This is evident in the following utterances of Edward:

*"It should totally be based on teachers' voluntariness to participate in the training. Otherwise, teachers consume their energy unnecessarily if they are forced to attend any training in which the topic is of no interest to them."*

It was a common perception among school managers that the instructors leading the in-service education were generally not qualified enough, except for the professors coming from universities. They believed that the instructor selection criteria should be revised so that more qualified instructors could be chosen. With this in mind, it was interesting to see that the school managers expressed their dissatisfaction with the teachers. They stated that teachers generally had little commitment, interest, and motivation toward the practices. To clarify, the school managers believed teachers needed to be much more motivated and encouraged. On this issue, Olivia added that teachers should at least be able to suggest a way to develop themselves in various aspects. Raising teacher awareness to take action for contributing to their professional development was crucial to accomplish this goal.

Last but not least, the school managers and teachers also had similar ideas on the inadequate quota for teachers who could participate in the trainings and the vague selection process of teachers as Daniel indicated:

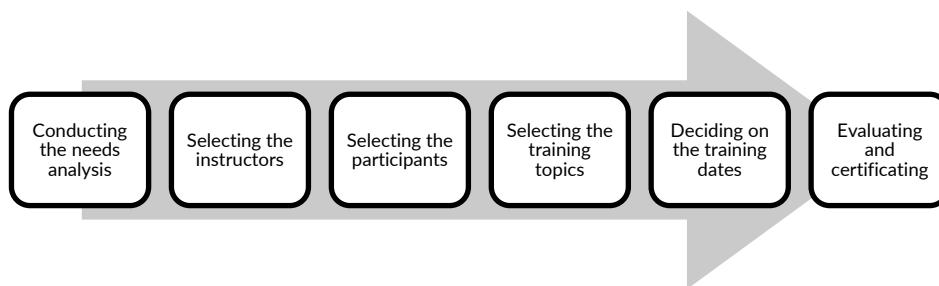
*"Teachers apply for being a participant in any of the training through the website of the ministry, but we do not have*

*precise information about how the quota and the participants are determined.”*

Moreover, the school managers provided extensive information about the delivery of school-level training for meeting specific needs of teachers at schools over a broader scope of training design and scheduling. Of four, only one school manager stated that they were able to organize school-level training with the permission of the district directorate. The other school managers expressed that they only provided their teachers with district- or province-level in-service education opportunities. As a matter of fact, the school managers stated that the practices organized by the universities, and the central training held by the ministry were better for the improvement of teachers than the local ones.

Representing the highest responsible body of in-service education in the local context, the in-service teacher education directors are the ones who possess invaluable information about the steps of in-service education programs. Considering that, the local director was approached to clarify the administrative process with all the details and comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the current in-service education practices. The process explained by the director, Lily, is illustrated in Figure 1:

**Figure 1.** The administrative process of the in-service training defined by the local director



Lily stated that she and her team obtained the needs analysis data through questionnaires collected from teachers in different schools from each district. She claimed that teachers' in-service education needs were investigated at regular intervals. Referring to instructors conducting the in-service practices, she stated that teachers meeting the effective teacher trainer qualifications could be appointed as an instructor. However, interestingly, the instructor selection was a top-down process performed by the Ministry of National Education. She extended her comments on this top-down selection process by giving more details on how the participants were selected. According to her, the selection was performed by the ministry's central training council. There were predetermined selection criteria, and the teachers who met these requirements were potential participants of central training. However, for the local training, all teachers had an equal chance of attending.

The other important step was determining the training topic, and the frequently required training topics were the branch-specific ones. Lily frankly stated that the branch-specific ones were rarely held, and those were only for psychological counsellors or pre-school teachers. Even so, schools were given the flexibility to communicate their inquiries about the training topics to the district directorates, who would forward these suggestions to the province directorate, and finally, the suggested topics could be evaluated there. Moreover, she explained that the quotas, dates, and places were arranged by the ministry. Likewise, instructors from the universities were rarely invited to collaborate

for in-service education as the faculty members would not be available for five-day long practices.

The last step was evaluating the effectiveness of the training practices and delivering the certificates to the participants. According to Lily, there were two kinds of in-service education: The training and the seminars. To clarify, she explained the difference between them in that the teachers were required to pass a knowledge assessment following the training whereas seminars were not followed up with these assessments. Finally, she also stated that teachers were awarded certificates of participation upon the completion of the training program to honour their presence.

In sum, Lily's insights for this administrative process in which she was involved was positive in that she believed the current in-service education offered new opportunities for teacher personal and professional development. Surprisingly, she found nothing negative about the procedure of how the regulation was put into practice; therefore, she made no suggestions for improving the administration of the in-service education process:

*"Actually, no. I do not think that there is anything we should improve in terms of in-service education. The overall flow and organization of the practices are smooth and flawless."*

## **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

With a multi-perspective approach, the present study aims to understand the gap between in-service education in theory and in practice through the analysis of the official regulation and eliciting different stakeholders' views on the issue at hand. First, it was obvious that the procedure to be followed throughout the in-service education practices was clarified step-by-step in the official regulation. The main purposes of the in-service education highlighted in the regulation were compensating for the inadequacies of the pre-service teacher education and the importance of in-the-job training. To this end, an emphasis was put on the in-service education needs of the teachers and the collaboration with the related institutions. Second, the views of the stakeholders indicated that teachers, school managers, and the local director were in consensus that there was no chance to receive branch-specific training within the scope of the current in-service teacher education. Yet, as Kohl (2005) revealed, one of the important needs of language teachers for in-service education is discipline-specific training. Similarly, Anderson (2008) discovered that experienced and inexperienced teachers' needs differed, which indicates that even in the same discipline, needs varied to a certain extent. Third, both teachers and school managers drew attention to such negative factors influencing the quality of the in-service education as the lack of a realistic and transparent needs analysis, the non-availability of qualified instructors, the insufficient support or collaboration of other associations, and the vague criteria and procedure for the selection of the participants. In relation to needs analysis, Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2013) uncovered some deficiencies in needs analysis as one of the several problems encountered during in-service education. It seems that the teachers, who were English teachers in the present study, desired to be trained not only by qualified instructors but also by instructors who are native speakers of English specialized in English language teaching. As the teachers suggested, including situated experiences such as taking some training in a foreign country or inviting native speaker instructors for training purposes might be considered to increase the effectiveness of the in-service education. Hence, teachers could be encouraged to rethink and revitalize their efforts for professional improvement from a broader perspective. Other deficiencies stressed by the teachers were exposure to outdated content, which was also mentioned by Flores et al. (2006), the lack of hands-on endeavours, and quality feedback about their progress in the training. Likewise, Bayrakçı (2009) claimed that the feedback and evaluation phases could not find a place in the in-service training.

In line with these weaknesses, teachers recommended being involved in in-service training that could meet their real needs in the local context; and if possible, they demanded school-specific training, which was also considered as significant by Dutto (2009) and Flores et al. (2006). This is vital since one-shot, one-size-fits-all, short-burst, quick-fix initiatives could not be an answer to language teachers' needs as their needs vary continuously, and teacher learning is an ongoing process (McCarty & Riley, 2000). Obviously, teachers believed that the current in-service education needed to be completely renovated to overcome deficiencies. Particularly, such a renovation should be primarily accomplished in order to meet teachers' real needs in their own teaching contexts. Further, school managers emphasized the necessity for the integration of TPACK supporting Flores et al. (2006) into the content of the practices, for attaching importance to teachers' feedback for the effectiveness of the in-service education practices, and for increasing the teachers' commitment to the practices. In other words, school managers underlined some weaknesses stemming from such as the content of the practices, ignoring the views of the teachers toward practices, and the little commitment of the teachers in the practices.

In addition to these drawbacks, there were effective aspects of the in-service education detected from the views of the stakeholders. To exemplify, teachers were found to believe that the practices helped them raise awareness and be informed of new developments in education and review their existing knowledge about teaching. Moreover, school managers were of the opinion that the practices provided useful resources from which teachers could benefit in their teachings. From the local director's point of view, the practices were all maintained in a trouble-free process. Contrary to this, Emma, one of the teachers, proposed that there was nothing positive or advantageous about the practices.

Evidently, there were some disparities between the views of each group of stakeholders concerning the effectiveness of in-service teacher education in Turkey. Teachers, in this study, seemed to be either partly satisfied or unsatisfied with the current in-service education although Flores et al. (2006) and Uysal (2012) concluded that teachers were content with the practices they were provided with. Uysal (2012) clarified that this satisfaction was because teachers had the opportunity of active participation in real-life practices, and they could collaborate with their colleagues. In contrast, there were too many obstacles faced throughout the in-service education practices in Turkey (Büyükyavuz, 2013), especially on the part of the teachers who are the receivers of in-service education practices. However, the implementers of the practices were more pleased about the content and procedure of the practices. To be more precise, school managers put forward a certain number of positive aspects of the practices as well as the negative ones. Most importantly, the local director was quite satisfied with the way through which the in-service education practices were put into practice.

Taking these findings into account, it seems that there are several inconsistencies between the principles in the official regulation and what is experienced in reality. On one hand, it is evident that the necessary steps documented in the regulation were taken while implementing the in-service education practices. On the other hand, the real implementations somehow failed to accomplish the objectives effectively. Ideally, the policy and the real-life in-service education practices must be compatible; otherwise, the quality of education cannot be promoted because teachers as the practitioners of education cannot professionally improve themselves (Darling-Hammond & Prince, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to involve teachers in the preparation of the policies for in-service teacher education to reach the expected outcomes (Uysal, 2012). If all the stakeholders participate in the process, the relevance and quality of the training increase, and their commitments are also enhanced (Leu & Ginsburg, 2011). This bottom-up

approach may be crucial for implementing efficient in-service education practices in local contexts. Besides, we need continuous, practice-based scaffolding that supports teachers' professional learning during in-service education (Kauppinen, Kainulainen, Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2020) to enhance the effectiveness of our bottom-up stance.

The results of the present study could be informative on many levels: highlighting the discrepancies between the regulation on in-service teacher education and the practice in the field, the common challenges faced by different stakeholders in the process of in-service teacher education, and potential solutions suggested by these stakeholders. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for realistic needs analysis taking the branch-specific needs, timetables, experience, and age more into account, and a detailed evaluation of the trainings after their completion so that future trainings might be modified based on the evaluations of the stakeholders. The regulation put into action by the ministry already mentions meeting the needs of pre-service teachers before they actively start working as teachers; however, there are no target-specific practices informing pre-service teachers about in-service education. Whereas they could be involved in the in-service education system during their practicum in the partner schools which collaborate with universities so that they could get more constructive support for a smooth transition from pre-service to in-service. In addition, the involvement of higher education institutions in in-service teacher education for more efficacious training should also be one of the priorities by the policymakers as one of the complaints made by the teachers was the trainers' lack of pedagogical and content knowledge. Through this adaptation, providing context-specific training, which is currently rather scarce, could also be more easily arranged.

This study already presents a closer look into the intersection of regulation and practice in in-service teacher education; however, conducting a broader study still stands as a crucial need on the way of discovering in-service education evaluations of teachers from different disciplines, school managers from different school levels, and local directors in different regions. The results of such an evaluation could benefit the Ministry of Education greatly in creating a framework for updating the in-service teacher education regulation by diminishing the discrepancies between theory and practice and increasing the satisfaction levels of all the stakeholders involved.

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