

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS THROUGH THEIR WORK AND UNDERSTANDING THE CURRICULUM (TURKEY SAMPLE)

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Abstract

Teacher study groups consist of seminar and course groups are alternative structures for teachers' professional development. During the practicing of these kinds of study groups, the motivation of participant teachers and the contents of the structures are substantial. The paper explores that the teachers' perceptions and beliefs about research and inquiry-based learning and the inquiry-based practices during their classroom instructions by trusting their writings and how the activities of teacher study group influence on teachers' professional development. Additionally, assessing teachers' answers to the interview questions give an idea about the debates in the professional developments of classroom teachers in Turkey.

Keywords: Teacher study groups, elementary teachers, professional development

Introduction

The school improvement interventions in Turkey are designed for introducing new curriculum by emphasizing the required materials and teaching methods, but they are not designed to provide the opportunities centering discussions and group works for teacher learning that would be needed to change classroom instruction. Correspondingly with the applied elementary school curriculum, teachers' professionalization process is limited with some in-service training planned by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. The trainings are perceived and practiced as presenting of a repeated and boring theoretical knowledge for a large group of teachers.

In this country, like many other countries all over the world, teacher education is practiced as a system including experts, who are generally working at universities and teach this knowledge to prospective teachers. In the practice of this system, teachers try to transfer the taught knowledge to

the classroom as part of the teacher education system (Bullough and Gitlin, 1994; cited in Korthagenm & Kessels, 1999). Although the system is accepted as teacher education, it may have different education programs to the prospective teachers' instruction fields. According to Barone et al. (1996), many teacher programs consist of a collecting of separated courses in which theory programs consist of a collection of separated courses in which theory is presented without much connection to practice (cited in Korthagenm & Kessels, 1999). But, when teachers are in the updated educational developments and can contribute to focus and nature of program, they will be probably more productive.

Theoretical Background

Educational reform movements around the world are setting ambitious goals for student learning. Many factors contribute to achieving these goals. However, the changes in classroom practices demanded by the reform visions ultimately rely on teachers (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Spillane, 1999; cited in Borko, 2004).

In Turkey, teachers interact with curriculum after they received the curriculum materials, mostly the books affirmed by Ministry of National Education, tangibly. The way of enactment of the curriculum materials consciously and the teacher's interaction with those materials make the curriculum visible and effective in their classrooms. It is commonly ignored by curriculum makers and planners in national education that the instructional efforts taken in classrooms without making light of what they would take to make them work in classrooms. According to Cohen and Ball (1999) the teachers perceive curriculum planners' effort for improving the instruction and classroom learning by linking their instruction. But, changing the instruction is rarely occurred even adopting new curriculum materials is one of the most widely used interventions.

Professional Development

Professional development is the space where many teachers have the opportunity to rethink and change their classroom practices (Brown, Greeno, Lampert, Mehan, & Resnick, 1999; cited in Battey, D. Et al., 2007). Cohen and Ball (1999) define the professional development from the perspective of teachers' working capacity. They assert that why professional development is often seen as a primary strategy for capacity-building, it should be used as needed after that once capacity is built. Specifically, if teachers learn special methods and develop improved understanding of the curriculum, their capacity will increase. Therefore, teachers having more capacity may appeal for more and better professional development.

However, professional development is widely believed to be required for supporting implementation (Smylie, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; cited in Penuel, W. R., Fishman, B.J. , Yamaguchi, R. & Gallagher, L. P., 2007), and some large scale survey studies have shown how professional development can influence teachers' knowledge and practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Supovitz & Turner, 2000; cited in Penuel, W. R., Fishman, B.J., Yamaguchi, R. & Gallagher, L. P., 2007). The content of teachers' professional development included targeting improvements to content knowledge, pedagogical strategies, alignment of curriculum and assessment, and a range of other topics (Porter, Garet, Desimone, & Birman, 2003). Furthermore, within teacher inquiry groups, little attention is paid to what specific activities generate inquiry and the kind of learning that such inquiry might support (Ball, 1996).

Objective of the study

A traditional education system dejecting the natural process of inquiry has been followed for decades in Turkey. Even all the educational programs and curricula have been changed and improved on all papers, to my observations and the unstructured conversations with the teachers, they are not clear about these modifications and they have not internalized them yet. In the traditional version of curriculum enactment, racing to finish the planned units is perceived a measure of success.

Due to the requirements of teachers might influence the effectiveness of professional development for promoting curriculum implementation; in the study, I've examined the perceptions and beliefs about research and inquiry-based learning and the inquiry-based practices during their classroom instructions. Accordingly, this article contributes to the discussion about what teachers think about the inquiry-based learning and their inquiry-based classroom practices by engaging teachers in the pursuit of questions and new understanding about their activities and discussions. In the study, the professional development refers to the teachers' implementation of the elementary school program and to improve their inquiry based teaching. According to the teachers' implementation of curriculum and practices vary from one setting or courses to another.

Method

Design of the study

In this study, the data was collected as part of a teacher training program supported by Turkish Scientific and Technical Researches Institution. The "in-service teacher education program" was arranged for elementary school teachers working in different schools belonging to the Ministry of National Education in nationwide. I designed this study to

enable researchers to examine the relationship between features of professional development that have been identified as describing the characteristics of activities arranged by the Ministry of National Education.

The description of the linkage between the design and conduct of professional development and subsequent improvements to both teacher practice and student learning outcomes form a frame for the study. Since action research can be used in almost any setting where the problems or a problem involving people, tasks and procedures for solutions of the problems, the study's method was determined as an action research. Action research can be used in a variety of areas, such as replacing teaching methods, adopting a learning strategy, improving one's evaluation methods, encouraging positive attitudes or values, managing or controlling of behaviors, and continuing professional development of teachers (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Holly and Whitehead (1986) asserted that action research can be performed by the individual teacher, a group of teachers working cooperatively within one school, or a teacher or teachers working alongside a researcher or researchers in a sustained relationship, possibly with other interested parties like advisers, university departments and sponsors on the periphery (cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). As supporting the useful relationship of teacher studies and action research, Noffke and Zeicher (1987) emphasize the dimension of action research about changing the definitions of professional skills and roles by increasing teachers' feelings of self-worth and confidence, increasing their awareness of classroom issues, improving their dispositions toward reflection, improving the congruence between practical theories and practices, broadens their views on teaching, schooling and society.

The study is designed as a collaborative action study because teachers from different cities in the country were involved in the planned practice including listening, observing, reflecting and sometimes acting. If the research is the collaborative inquiry, generating questions, taking action, collecting and analyzing data, reflecting, adjusting course and pursuing new questions are main subjects (Cunningham, 2011).

This research aims to make some improvements on using different teaching methods and on their understanding of these methods on creating a constructivist learning environment for in terms of students' learning process and sociability in a large teacher group including 30 classroom teachers. Therefore, in this study, it is intended that engaging the teachers in what they should know about teaching by providing opportunities for professional development and helping the teachers recognize their classroom practices, and also their beliefs and expectations about them.

Teacher study group

The classroom teachers in the national study group, 15 females and 15 males, volunteered to participate in the study. All of the teachers expressed their interests in improving their instructions in their classrooms. The teachers' accommodation and transportation expenses were paid after their participation to the study. They stayed in the course seven days in total.

The participated teachers teach in different-sized elementary schools in different regions of Turkey. The teachers' teaching experiences are changing between 4 and 33 years. Since it is thought that the participated teachers would have limited opportunities in their schools for their professional development, they were highly motivated for attending to the professional development program.

Teachers graduated from the national teacher training program implemented by some of the universities with a range of knowledge and beliefs about how they should interact with content and teaching process and some theoretical knowledge such as philosophy of teaching and what kind of classroom teachers in practice they are.

Data collection

I focused on teachers' answers, interactions and activities in the weekly work session. Since the data were embellished with informal conversations, interviews and observations and these techniques allowed the researcher to explore the complexity of social truths and particularly within a recent educational context and problems.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher asked the teachers to answer the open-ended and semi-structured questions for seeing their beliefs and practices of the inquiry-based teaching.

The most difficult part of the study is to choose the elementary school teachers be participated to the course program. In the first step, it was got the Ministry of National Education's permission and support officially. Then, all the national education directorates in thirty cities were informed of the study by the ministry. The criteria of selecting the participant teachers were; the teachers should work in a ministerial elementary school at least five years- at most twenty years. It was preferred that the teachers had any or very limited opportunities for their professional development in their work life.

An open-ended questions

One questionnaire was used at the beginning of the study. The questionnaire has six open-ended and three directed questions. The questions were for understanding the teachers' perceptions, beliefs and ideas about research and their inquiry-based practices in their classroom. In the questionnaire and during the teachers' meeting in the week including learning about different subject areas, sometimes open-ended questions were

preferred. It was expected that this kind of questions would facilitate to understand deeply about what the teachers think about inquiry-based learning and how they practice it. Also, it was predicted that this kind of questions would facilitate collaboration and discussion about the topic among teachers during their meetings.

In this context, the teachers' ideas about the learning situations, the learning experiences and the learning environments arranged by them, their perceptions of being a good teacher and affecting their students were investigated specifically. Each teacher identified her / his thoughts and preferences for one of the teaching methods or strategies.

The teaching modules

In the first part of the workshops, teaching models and techniques were discussed theoretically while it is expected from the teachers to show their performances of the preferred teaching methods to the group in the second part. In the first part of the workshops theoretical knowledge about learning models practiced at different parts of the world, learning strategies and styles, creativity and project-based learning in science, technology supported math teaching, technology and education integration, collaborating learning and teaching methods, teaching design, educational guidance, communication in classroom, thinking education and drama principles and techniques were taught and practiced. Therefore, it was expected that the teachers would discover their own methods. At the end, they discussed with their colleagues and answered the questionnaire for sharing their understanding and interpretation.

The workshops were conducted at the end of the teaching modules that were practiced by experts especially just before and late after the noon. They were led by the experts, who were lecturers and group facilitators at the same time. Each workshop was practiced in different time gaps such as from 5 minutes to 20 minutes. Specifically, drama module was almost fully with workshops to different subjects.

Data analysis

In the study, two kinds of data were acquired: *the solutions written on the individual activity papers* and *video recording of problem solving process in groups*. In the coding process, I followed the coding words for identifying themes and some new codes reproduced that parallel the findings during the data analysis. The coding was done by two researchers separately and then they discussed the coded themes, words and situations. Although the compatibility and consistency among the codes of two researchers was high (93%), a teacher working in a different elementary school also coded a part of the data. At the end of this process, codes falling under the themes were tabulated for the purpose of ensuring the inter reliability.

Data analysis

The primary data consist of the answers to the questionnaire; talk with the teachers in the study groups and the researchers' observation in the lectures in teaching modules. The lectures and the teachers' study-discussion groups were made visible by videotaping. Because the analysis of different data would strengthen the study, a combined approach was used to examine the construction of dilemmas and how they negotiated in interaction (Lynch, 1993; Gee & Green, 1998; cited in Crockett, 2002).

The data were analyzed by the researcher for comprehending how teachers begin to construct an active relationship with the new curriculum and what they think about inquiry-based teaching. For understanding the teachers' responses about the questions, the content analysis was performed. All answers of all participated teachers were read one by one and the common themes were determined to the coded similar concepts and words.

The Study

I created a conceptual model including teacher responses to how to present the findings including the participant teachers' perceptions, beliefs and ideas about research and inquiry-based practices in their classroom instructions. Because the study proposed to take into account the effects of integration of professional development and the classroom activities, the teachers' answers to the questionnaire gave us positive and negative ideas about their classroom performances.

Findings acquired from the questionnaire

The participated teachers answered 9 main questions and their sub questions assembled under six themes in the questionnaire. These themes range from "Determining teaching content and the time to change it", "Thoughts about learning experiences, which are in or out of classroom", "The vulnerability of (your) teaching", "Manipulating of learning environment", "Perceptions of themselves as teacher and the level of their teaching profession" and to "Teachers' beliefs about the effects of their background knowledge, education, professional experiences and some other factors".

Under the first theme, the teachers were asked that how they decide what to teach or not to teach in their classrooms and the time to change their teaching topic or context unit. As related with this theme, four sub themes were created according to their answers. One of these sub themes is curriculum. They talked about the power of national curriculum and their obligations about its implementations. Teachers also talked about students' readiness, needs, environmental conditions and comprehension level as factors affecting their decision of what to teach or not to teach in their classrooms. And they asserted the assessment and evaluation theme by

emphasizing *feedback*. To their answers, teachers decide to their students' learning and understanding level about the subject by considering their classroom behaviors and the number of right answers at written and oral exams. Teachers asserted that if student can explain the topic, if their behaviors change even slightly, if their implementation time of teaching units is in line with the time in central curriculum plan for teachers, their presentation and communication competences, determining if mastery learning is accomplished or not.

Table1. How teachers decide what to teach in their classrooms and change the context unit with the new one

Themes	N of responses
Curriculum	7 times
Readiness to learning, needs, environmental conditions, comprehension level	20 times
Talking about both themes	19 times

The second theme was including the questions about which learning situations of out of their classrooms would be valuable for their students and what kind of educational experiences are important for their students. For understanding teachers' beliefs and perceptions of what their students think about their classes, it was expected to be completed a sentence starting with "I like to be in her / his class, because..." The teachers' beliefs and complementation the sentence were focused on experience, student performance on academic tasks and the implementation of social and cultural values, and use of method and techniques. As related with the experience, teachers fulfilled the sentence "...because..." it provides learning through experience, as being active individually or sometimes with group, as connecting the teaching topic with real life experiences by using drama and role play.

Also teachers completed the sentence with some topics such as; the students' performances on research and investigation based homework that they like their dignification to the students' respect to social values, such as being respectful and support these students' good social and protective cultural behaviors as valuable.

Teachers believed that their students like to be in their classes because they let them to work and learn individually by questioning, asking and answering to the questions, repeating, making some organizations, transferring and problem solving. Teachers' characters and some specific behaviors such as loving students and their job, easy availability for their students, being friendly, dignifying, caring, respecting and behaving equally to all their students, being fair and entertaining, not being humiliating to students, loving communication and sharing, using gestures, mimics and

body language, smiling mostly, telling their students some funny and humoristic words sometimes, were some of the reasons that students like to be in their classrooms.

Additionally, teachers thought that the students like to be in their classrooms because of their method and techniques use. They think that their students love to be assigned by them for some classroom work and find them the most trustful supporter for their work. Also, teachers' beliefs and thoughts about their students' preferences among the assortment of teaching experiences, which are in or out of classroom focused on the good learning experiences related to the teachers 'classroom performance. Under this theme, teachers completed the sentence "I like to be in her / his class, because..." she is bringing us in some good behaviors about social and cultural values, sense of humor and so on. Their use of active teaching methods, such as drama and role playing, doing experiments in their classrooms, communicating and collaborating with Counseling Research Center for solving students' problems, use of real life experiences in their learning, letting their students investigate about a specific topic, reinforcing and praising them were other points to complete the sentence.

Table2. The valuable learning situations of out of the classrooms

Themes	N of responses
Experience	16 times
Student performance	12 times
Social and cultural values	7 times
Use of active method and techniques in their teaching	17 times

Third theme was focusing on the teachers' beliefs about the vulnerability of their teaching and it was shaped under the question of what the issues affecting their teaching are at both school and state level with some examples. The participant teachers put forward four different factors, which affect their teaching internally and externally. *One of them* was family factor. The teachers talked about the lack of relationship between family and student and the insensible families mostly. *Another factor*, which affects the teachers' decisions and the way of teaching, was Physical inconveniences and inadequacies that the teachers had met. In this category, the teachers mentioned the lack of book and some technological resources in classroom, school environment, and some language issues for the students coming from different social and cultural background, where Turkish language were not used or used hardly ever. Also, the students' different learning capacities, inconsistency between the textbooks and the classroom level, crowded classrooms and students' class attendance were other issues mentioned under the physical inconveniences and inadequacies category. *The third factor*, which may change the teachers' teaching, was program/curriculum, school

management and the way of teacher's practicing. In this theme, they verbalized that changing education system throughout the country, losing reputation of teacher profession, the society's negative and unscientific viewpoint about education and teaching profession, the negative effects of media and bureaucracy barrier. The fourth factor was related with individual differences, age level and school adaptation.

Table3. The issues affecting teachers' teaching at both school and state level

Themes	N of responses
Family factor	11times
Physical inconveniences and inadequacies	19 times
The issues based on curriculum, school management and teachers' practices	9 times
Individual differences	3 times

Another theme was about manipulating the learning environment. This theme was determined for two questions about how the teachers intervene to learning environment (mostly classroom) to maximize students' understanding and in what ways they orient learning environment for creating ultimate understanding for their students. Teachers thought that they can manipulate the physical conditions of their classrooms by providing the students good listening conditions in their courses. They also emphasized the importance of using means and technology, using the bulletin board often for demonstrating the creative works, and motivating the students with some physical arrangements such as different seating organizations and class books.

Teachers thought that they can manipulate the learning environment (their classrooms) through organizing interesting, attractive and intriguing classroom activities or teaching methods, such as brain storming; daily life experiences, through relating to the subject matter and concepts. They told that they use some examples in social life, entertaining anecdotes, puzzles, short stories, motivating their students for the course by gestures and mimics. They also highlighted the importance of creating the suitable milieu for questioning and evaluating the students' educational attainments by some measuring instruments such as exams. The active teaching methods in classroom practices vary and teachers scaffold the students during their applications.

Table4. How to manipulate the physical conditions of the classrooms by using means and technology

Themes	N of responses
Technology and material use for making motivation higher	17 times
Classroom practices	22 times
Use of active teaching methods	13 times
Family support, participation and cooperation	6 times
Teachers' professional tasks, individual features	6 times

Teachers mentioned that they can communicate with parents for providing their students with family support. Additionally, they said that they can manipulate some professional tasks, their behaviors, class preparation, classroom management, their emotions and thoughts for making their teaching better.

Under the theme of the participant teachers' perceptions of themselves as teacher and as their teaching profession, they answered the question about when they recognize if they are a good teacher or becoming a good one and if they have a positive effect on their students and their beliefs about whether they do the right things about their profession. Also, it was asked from the teachers to give some examples and specific cases if they like.

The teachers interpreted their students' practices of what they taught and their academic achievements as the feedbacks, which giving them on inkling of their teaching profession. Their skills of managing the classroom well, teaching the first-year pupils how to read and write, encouraging their students for working in any project, supporting and encouraging the girls' school attendance in rural areas and making the students feel valuable themselves were the other features for being a good teacher or becoming a good one from the viewpoints of the teachers.

The teachers, who think that they are good teachers, asserted that their students succeeded about some competitions in some specific areas even city or country wide, such as chess, sports or so on.

Remarkably, some teachers believe that they are good teachers because they've already thought to some inclusive students reading and writing even if just a drop and also they've taught reading, writing and numbers to the students at different ages in multi grade classrooms.

They believe that they can success permanent learning of concepts with integration of daily life and contents in the classroom by motivating their students. They also talked about their activities for evaluating the students' knowledge and skills. Moreover, they concerned the students' behaviors, which are giving them some clues about their emotional relationships with their students such as loving their classes instead of fearing and desiring to come to school due to their good communication

skills with their students, desiring for being a teacher in their future life because of their modeling effect. Some of the teachers thought that the positive thoughts of the students’ parents about them, the openness to learning and disciplining their works are other factors that affect teachers’ perceptions of themselves about being a good teacher.

Table5. Teachers’ perceptions and beliefs of themselves as teacher and as their teaching profession

Themes	N of responses
Experiences about teaching profession	12 times
Feedbacks about students’ affective domain	12 times

The last determined theme is “the effects of teachers’ background knowledge, education, professional experiences and some other factors on their teaching”. This theme was created for the question of if the teachers can draw a circle chart for showing what factors influence their teaching methods, how they show the proportional distribution of factors such as their acquired knowledge and experiences before graduation, in the period of graduation, with professional experiences and other.

Table6. Teachers’ background knowledge, education, professional experiences and some other factors affecting their teaching

Themes	Percentage of responses (%)
Before the undergrad degree	16.93
Graduation	19.55
Professional Experience	50.77
Other	17

Through professional development, teachers’ prior thought was about how to teach and the students’ thinking and learning about their teaching. According to the teachers’ thoughts about their profession, I’ve developed a model (see the figure below), since that the ideas would shape in which order the teachers’ tasks follow to each other and the opportunities of practicing about the teaching for professional development.

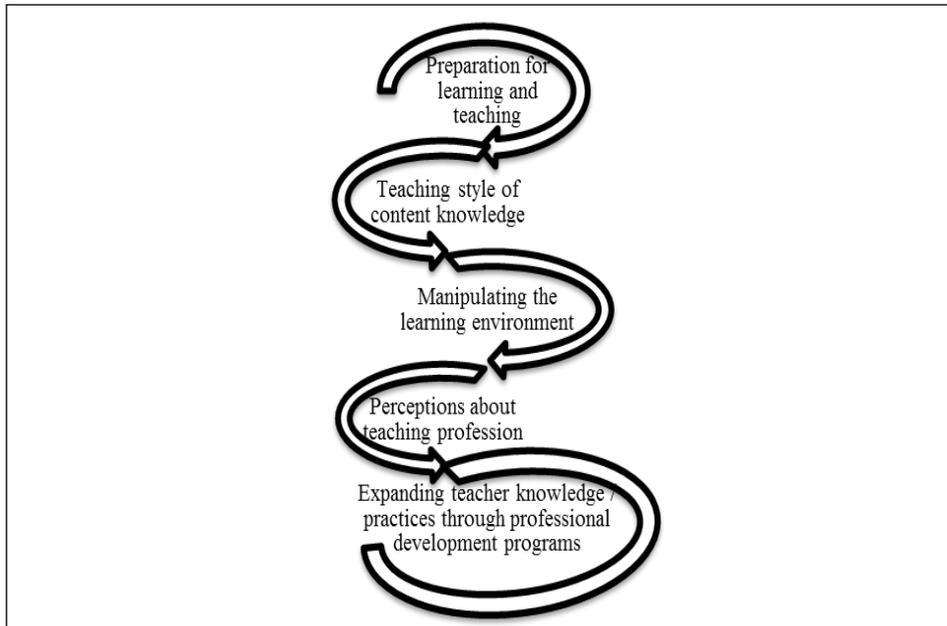


Figure 1. Understanding the classroom teachers' perceptions about their profession

Concluding Remarks

The teachers in the course were thought as a curriculum evaluator as well as curriculum implementer. The lectures in the course were the samples of curriculum inquiry including the teachers' critiques and share their experiences with other colleagues in the course. As part of a kind of curriculum inquiry study, the teachers attending to the lectures discussed with other teachers and the researcher. In the discussions, the teachers revealed their ideas about some theoretical knowledge and especially course practices in their schools. Additionally they talked about their roles playing in the development knowledge and application of it as connecting their learning and teaching in classrooms. Engagement of teachers with their teaching deeply can be done by planning, enacting, and revising curricular units, and all these activities may help to understand more fully the principles of effective curriculum (Spillane, 1999; and Spillane et al. 2004), professional development, which is able to incorporate time and instruction and considerate and discuss the principles, theories and the implementation of curriculum, would engage teachers with their teaching and the realities under curriculum.

In this study, the data collected for understanding what the teachers' perceptions / beliefs about research or inquiry-based learning and the inquiry-based practices during their classroom instructions are. Moreover, It was expected to see the how the activities in workshops and seminars contribute to the participant teachers' discussions.

In this country, courses and seminars for professional development were provided by Ministry of National Education and sometimes by coordination with Educational Faculties as supporting the programs at academic base. But, the seminars and workshop activities in this study were designed as separated from this kind of professional development program. Even the objective data on implementation of the elementary school curriculum were not obtained from the lesson observations, it was thought that the teachers' ideas and beliefs about their inquiry based teaching capacities acquired from the interviews and the survey elicited their background knowledge as well. Additionally, it was remarkable to see the participant teachers' pleasure and motivation during the course program.

Discourse analysis of the answers to the questionnaire was concluded that the teachers having little work experience described their classroom practices as student centered. Although their discourses about classroom practices were talking about their students' needs, the teachers having more work experience emphasized the experience in learning.

The data collected and analyzed for understanding the teachers' proficiency on inquiry based teaching was around the subjects; *perceptions of themselves as teachers in the sense that efficiency on subject matter or content knowledge and on understanding their students' thinking; their instructional practices and manipulating or creating the learning environment*. Also, It was investigated that *how and what issues affect their inquiry based teaching and the development of their teaching profession at both school and state level*.

Under this investigation, it was tried to understand that in what degree their teaching is vulnerable and the reason of this vulnerability. The findings show that the relationship between family and student is mostly missing and this situation makes the effect of teacher instruction very weak. Also, the inadequacy of physical conditions is another significant factor that affects the way of teaching and its variability. Teachers did not forget to emphasize their necessity to apply the curriculum to coordinate with the school management and the ministry of national education. This idea is consistent with Rivet's (2006) interpretation about that a strong influence of the social context of schools on teachers' interpretation and thus their decisions about how to enact or resist the innovations in education. If the teachers' ideas about the society's viewpoint to teaching profession are considered, it may be concluded that teaching profession would be affected by people's unscientific and negative viewpoints in the society, media's unfavorable broadcast and the restrictive bureaucracy.

The teachers' perceptions of the students' individual differences and the difference among their school adaptation as one of the affecting factors of their teaching profession can indicate that the teachers not think the

differences in their classrooms are richness for their challenge to teaching, but their teaching should be standard mostly.

In the study the teachers were exposed to context knowledge about the teaching subjects. During the presentations and group works, they talked about the instruction process, made some connections among their ideas and shared their teaching experiences. In their discussion, they mentioned about the students' understanding and how to evaluate it.

Discussion

Professional development is a kind of gate for teachers supporting them by addressing the innovations and the problems of curriculum, fixing those problems, by understanding the curriculum intentionally. Then, teachers can focus on the students' learning and thoughts about their learning. Teachers confront many of challenges when they are implementing the curricula, especially if it is new. For example, some topics and the tasks wouldn't be clear enough for implementing. Therefore, the synchronization of the goals of the curricula and the content of professional development can support teachers' teaching profession by addressing the issues or challenges in curriculum.

This study requires the teachers to reconceptualize their teaching and to focus on developing children's thinking with inquiry-based teaching. Some teachers in the study declared that they teach more than knowledge of subject matter in the curriculum, therefore their teaching seems broader and more effective than knowledge of the curriculum. Of course, the opportunities to learn that teachers have in their classroom environments shape their instruction. Additionally, the opportunities to revise and to improve teachers' work may affect their teaching, because teachers can think about the resources and the students in their classrooms.

Providing teachers with professional development in instruction and instructional materials may be interpreted as creating inequality in opportunities for some other teachers, but professional development is a kind of activity on a volunteer basis. In this study, the participant teachers stated that they learned about new instructional methods, strategies and theories of learning and teaching. When the teachers were expressing this situation, they did not mention about that their owned knowledge and teaching may be missing, wrong or questioned.

In general, teachers can show a tendency to perceive that professional development programs are designed to acquire just subject matter knowledge. So indeed, it is realistic. Even the professional development programs are planned by considering contemporary reforms of curriculum, sometimes valuing of knowledge and its practices are not enough to solve teachers' problems in their classrooms. Cohen and Ball (1999), support this

tendency by emphasizing that the in-service activities are rarely based on a curricular view of professional development. They also specify that teachers' thought need about "updating" rather than opportunities to learn about curriculum, students, or teaching.

What expected from the attended teachers after this professional development program are listening to the teachers' responses including some new ideas or suggestions, developing skills for understanding and interpreting their students' thoughts and words for deciding about their progression, recognizing the intentions of the curriculum in order to have resources to use in their teaching and perceiving their role as a critical person in order to use the curriculum well. The growing consensus about that teachers need professional development, which is interactive with their teaching practice, allows for multiple cycles of presentation and has some other processes such as assimilation of and reflection on knowledge makes some changes on their teaching (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991; Kubitskey, 2006; cited in Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, Gallagher, 2007).

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