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**DOKUZ EYLÜL UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION  
PROGRAMME OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION  
MASTER THESIS**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PREP SCHOOL EFL  
INSTRUCTORS THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE  
GROUPS**

**BURAK AYDIN**

**İzmir  
2020**

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**2020**

## ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PREP SCHOOL EFL INSTRUCTORS THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE GROUPS**

It is an undeniable fact that teachers of English language need to be qualified professionals in order to meet the high expectations from them (Richards, 2008). For quality language instruction, these teachers need to be competent in their profession. Especially the EFL instructors teaching at preparatory schools of universities are required to be well-equipped to prepare their students for the academic expectations of departments as well as for the social and professional dimensions of language acquisition.


Based on this necessity of improvement and the fact that pre-service teacher education falls short of preparing language teachers for professional realities of their job, effective professional development (PD) is of utmost importance for these teachers. However, it seems that the majority of PD activities available for these teachers consist of traditional and top-down practices in the form of one-off delivery of events. Actually, the newer understanding of teachers' PD prioritizes reflection, collaboration, sustainability, bottom-up decision making, basis on classroom evidence and the ultimate goal of enhanced student learning (Bull et. al., 1994; Craft, 2000; Day, 1999; Day & Sachs, 2004; Knight, 2002). In this scope, the present study investigated Reflective Practice Groups (RPGs) as a way of teachers' PD (Day & Sachs, 2004) in an effort to find out the teachers' perspectives regarding their learning experience throughout the 9-week PD process. In particular, the teachers' insights about the RPG activity were analyzed to explore the developmental effect of the practice based on the interrelations of the emergent meanings.

This study was conducted in qualitative research paradigm as a single instrumental case study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) with 5 Prep School EFL instructors in a foundation university. The data was collected through a myriad of qualitative tools such as two semi-structured interviews, two reflective essays, a focus group meeting, visual artefacts, researchers' field notes and video-recordings of the RPG meetings. Data collection lasted for 14 weeks in total through which the teachers held 10 RPG meetings and delivered all the related research data. The data was analyzed by using the qualitative data analysis method suggested by Saldana and Omasta (2018) through which the meanings emerging from the themes were examined and synthesized.

The results of this case study demonstrated that the EFL instructors participating in RPG meetings benefited from the process, which is evident in their explorations about teacher

self, student viewpoints, teaching as a profession and the conduct of RPG process. While reaching these learning points, it was observed that the teachers made use of low affective filter, high collectivity, action orientation and reflective practice. These results suggest that RPGs could be considered as an effective developmental tool in line with the principles of the contemporary PD paradigm. The fundamental suggestion of the study is that collaborative reflection has a significant impact on teachers' PD. In the light of these results, several implications have been offered for researchers, educational institutions and language teachers for further considerations of RPG.

**Keywords:** Reflective practice groups, professional development, EFL instructors.



## ÖZET

### ÜNİVERSİTE HAZIRLIK OKULUNDAKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİM GÖREVLİLERİNİN YANSITICI ÖĞRETİM ÇALIŞMA GRUPLARI YOLUYLA MESLEKİ GELİŞİMLERİ

İngilizce eğitimi veren öğretmenlerin kendilerinden beklenen üst seviye eğitimi sağlayabilmek adına alanında uzman profesyoneller olması gerektiği yadsınamaz bir gerçektir (Richards, 2008). Kaliteli bir dil eğitimi için, bu alandaki öğretmenlerin mesleklerinde yetkin olması gerekmektedir. Özellikle üniversitelerin hazırlık okulunda görev yapan İngilizce öğretim görevlilerinin alanında donanımlı olmaları, öğrencilerinin bölüm derslerinin gerektirdiği akademik beklentilere ve bununla birlikte dil öğrenmenin sosyal ve mesleki boyutlarına hazır olabilmeleri açısından gerekli görülmektedir.

Söz konusu gelişim gerekliliğine ve hizmet öncesi öğretmenlik eğitiminin mesleki gerçekliklere tam anlamıyla cevap verememesine bağlı olarak, etkili bir mesleki gelişim bu öğretmenler için büyük önem taşımaktadır. Fakat, görüldüğü kadarıyla günümüzde dil öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimleri, geleneksel ve yukarıdan aşağıya kararlara dayalı olarak gerçekleştirilen bir defaya mahsus eğitimler yoluyla yapılmaktadır. Esas olarak, yeni gerçekliklere dayalı ve etkili mesleki gelişim anlayışları; yansıtma, işbirliği, sürdürülebilirlik, aşağıdan yukarıya karar verme, sınıf içi uygulamalara dayalı olma ve öğrenci gelişimini hedefleme gibi etmenleri barındırmaktadır (Bull et. al., 1994; Craft, 2000; Day, 1999; Day & Sachs, 2004; Knight, 2002). Bu çerçevede, bu çalışmada, öğretmen gelişimini hedefleyen bir aktivite olan Yansıtıcı Öğretim Çalışma Grupları (RPGs) (Distad & Brownstein, 2004) incelenmiş ve bu anlamda çalışmaya katılan öğretmenlerin 9 hafta süren mesleki gelişim süreçleri ile ilgili bakış açıları incelenmiştir. Özellikle, çalışma sürecinde ortaya çıkan sonuçlar ve bunların birbiriyle olan ilişkileri sonucunda ulaşılan anlam bütünlüğüne dayanarak RPG sürecinin mesleki gelişime olan etkisi saptanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Bu çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemi dahilinde tekli durum çalışması deseni yoluyla yapılmıştır (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Çalışmaya bir vakıf üniversitesinin hazırlık okulunda çalışan 5 İngilizce öğretim görevlisi katılmıştır. Çalışmadaki verilerin toplanmasında iki yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, iki yansıtıcı kompozisyon, bir odak grup toplantısı, toplantı görselleri, araştırmacının alan notları ve RPG toplantılarının video kayıtları kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama süreci 14 hafta sürmüştür ve bu süreçte öğretmenler 10 adet RPG toplantısı gerçekleştirip bu toplantılarla özgü bütün araştırma verilerini sağlamışlardır. Veri analizi

Saldana ve Omasta'nın (2018) önerdiği nitel veri analizi yöntemiyle yapılmış ve ortaya çıkan temaların ortaya koyduğu anlamlar incelenmiş ve sentezlenmiştir.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, katılımcı öğretmenlerin RPG sürecinden fayda sağladığını ortaya koymuştur. Sağlanan bu faydalar öğretmenlerin kendileri, öğrencileri, meslekleri ve RPG süreci ile ilgili vardıkları keşifler içerisinde gözlemlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin bu keşiflere ulaşırken duygusal anlamda engellerle karşılaşmama, kolektif olarak çalışabilme, eylem odaklı olma ve yansıtıcı öğretimi benimseme gibi etmenlerden faydalandığı görülmüştür. Bu anlamda, yeni mesleki gelişim prensiplerine paralel olarak, RPG çalışmalarının öğretmen gelişimi adına etkili bir araç olarak görülebileceği ortaya konmuştur. Temel anlamda ise işbirlikçi yansıtmanın öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişiminde önemli bir yeri olduğuna dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu sonuçlar ışığında, çalışmanın sonunda araştırmacılar, eğitim kurumları ve dil öğretmenleri için öneriler getirilmiş ve bu önerilerin gelecek RPG çalışmalarına ışık tutması amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yansıtıcı öğretim çalışma grupları, mesleki gelişim, İngilizce öğretim görevlileri.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of the study will be outlined along with the aims and purposes of the research. In addition, the problem statement, limitations, assumptions and definitions that are included in this study will also be briefly explained in order that the general framework of the research can be better understood and analyzed. Briefly, the researcher, as an instructor of English, aimed to conduct this study in the hope that his colleagues could be analyzed as to their professional development by the value given to their participation, agency and perspectives in the process. As a firm believer of social learning and acquisition through process, the researcher aimed to find out the parameters, advantages and drawbacks of teachers' union for their development. In sum, the researcher aimed to see what happens when teachers inquire their work through togetherness and for a period of time.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Teaching is an important profession which has a huge impact on the growth of individuals and societies by the service of education. As a key factor in students learning, teachers play a vital role in the orchestration of educational organizations from classrooms to wider social organisms. Therefore, quality teachers lead to better instructions for students, which is conducive to effective learning. In modern era, the functions of schools change rapidly. As Schleicher (2011) notes, the expectations from teachers are therefore raised day by day in such domains as teaching multicultural classes, addressing learners with special needs, making better use of communication technologies, being more accountable for learning, involving parents in decision making and dealing with various challenges in the course of their careers.

As the focus of this study, teachers of English language also need to be qualified as a response to the worldwide demand for competent professionals in this area (Richards, 2008). These teachers are expected to contribute to the careers and more generally the lives of their students by engaging them in quality language learning environment. As the participants of this research, EFL (English as a foreign language) instructors who work at tertiary level preparatory programs carry out a significant teaching mission in that regard. Since this one-year preparatory English program is the first year of tertiary level education – just before the students start studying at their departments – these instructors are expected to fully prepare their students for the multifaceted linguistic requirements of the future. For one, there are



actually many universities in Turkey, which offer English medium instruction in departments. Therefore, nearly all universities include these intensive programs which aim to equip the new students with language skills for academic expectations of the departments (Coşkun, 2013). Moreover, these universities also aim to teach English for students' social and professional lives as well, as exclusively emphasized in the mission statement of the university this research was conducted (Yaşar University Mission Statement, 2020). With all the aforementioned academic, social and professional realities, the preparatory year students are taught four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) with minimum degree of Intermediate level English. Based on their missions stated above, the professional well-being of these EFL teachers is seemingly very important. That is to say, these instructors need to be educated and developed for better language instruction.

Based on the literature and the practices of teachers, pre-service education is not enough to reach that professional quality. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981, p.7) maintains that "the impact of college is washed out by school experience". Therefore, the quality of university education does not guarantee qualified teachers. When teachers start their careers, they face many problems (motivation, individual differences, parents, materials etc.) in school environment (Veenman, 1984) and some of them even get discouraged from teaching, which is due to the perceived ineffectiveness (Stuart and Thurlow, 2000). Further, during their practicum, they also have many challenges such as literacy and languages, use of information technology, learning needs of students, engaging students, play-based learning and parental/societal dimensions of teaching (Geng, Black & Smith, 2017). It may be because pre-service education is either too theoretical (Öztürk and Yıldırım, 2014) or that it is away from meeting the particular needs of prospective teachers (Korthagen, 2001).

Therefore, teachers, including language teachers as well, need to develop further in the practice of teaching within a continuous process thanks to which they can build on their pre-service education to grow more in their professional area. Specifically, teaching English requires special knowledge derived from both academic and practical fields so there needs to be continuous efforts to raise its standards (Richards, 2008). That is because teachers always need to follow the expansion of knowledge by gaining expertise on new levels with the help of continuous professional development (Guskey, 2000). In short, theoretical education must be followed up with ongoing professional growth.

There are actually many opportunities for language teachers to develop in the profession but less for extended learning, choice for what they learn and support (Day, 1999). An effective view of professional development assumes an effective change in practice.

However, there are mostly ineffective professional development chances offered to language teachers, namely the top-down practices like experts delivering presentations and training courses. In Turkey, it is also very popular to hold one-shot events for language teachers in forms of seminars, workshops, conferences and so forth. As Atay (2006) notes, teacher training services consist of short-mode events in which teachers are rather passive and experts are the active deliverers of information. As such, this type of professional development is traditional, decontextualized and has little merit for teachers (Day & Sachs, 2004). The reason is that these one-off events do not include provision for development and there is no long-term effect in this sense (Johnstone, 2006). Also, as Diaz-Maggioli (2004) puts it, lecture, seminar and workshop type of events offer undifferentiated learning for teachers, unlike the expectation that teachers should also differentiate instruction for different learning needs of their students. Apparently, even though language teachers may benefit from the ideas presented in these events, it is highly unlikely that they can take away some ideas to apply in their certain teaching contexts and that they make this learning a continuous one.

Hoş and Topal (2013) assert that the low level of language education in Turkey may be due to these ineffective PD opportunities that language teachers receive. There is an obvious need for more effective understanding of profession development for teachers of English language. Therefore, there have been a variety of ideas for a better understanding of PD recently. Craft (2000) notes that effective development of teachers is the one which is school-based; that is, it specifically addresses the realities of teachers. Also, according to Johnstone (2006), it should be process-based as opposed to one-shot events with little impact. Another idea for effective professional development is that it should be done in communities of practice (Knight, 2002). That means teachers learn better in groups through sharing and adding to one another's teaching repertoire. For Bailey (2006), teachers should take control of their own development through autonomy and can better do it by inquiring their practice through reflection. This idea underpins the fact that development comes with investment of control and thought upon what and how to grow. Finally, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) note that effective professional development of teachers foregrounds innovation, teacher's needs and purposes.

Unlike the trends in language teachers' professional development in Turkey, a more beneficial outlook to their growth obviously requires a teacher-centered approach which is focused on the specific contexts teachers work in and that incorporates inquiry and continuity. This approach is more bottom-up and thus nourished by the realities of classroom teaching and learning. In a nutshell, this way of viewing professional development mostly prioritizes reflective inquiry, collaboration and process, which implies that teachers should be the active

constructors of their learning. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the prevalent pattern in developing language teachers in Turkey (Hoş & Topal, 2013; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019).

As the first prominent pattern in the perspective of effective professional development, reflection is apparently a powerful tool to be utilized. As Dewey (1933) propounds, reflection brings intelligent behavior with the meanings attached to what we do. Also, a reflective teacher assumes responsibility for his/her development and is high in awareness about classroom practices and is an agent in school change (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Effective language teachers, and thus effective EFL instructors in preparatory programs, can go beyond their potentials, achieve more and innovate in their work, which will yield influential language instruction for language students. These teachers will think deeply about their teaching and adapt to the day to day changes in the expectations of schools and communities.

Secondly, another upfront idea in the new outlook of development is that having teachers collaborate for their development in teacher groups will get them connected to one another, their learners and their profession as a whole (Nieto, 2003). The instructors of English, who are supposed to assume great responsibility in response to multiple expectations and accountability, can better benefit from sharing perspectives and expertise to grow in teaching. In addition, when reflection is the case, teachers who work together can qualify these reflective processes and their work. As Solomon (1987) and Van Gyn (1996) note, a social forum of teachers is an integral part of effective reflection. Through collaboratively inquiring their practices, teachers can tailor their PD for their needs and interests (Poehner, 2011). Therefore, along with reflection, collaboration can also promote a better understanding of professional development for instructors of English and more generally, for all language teachers.

For the fact that language teaching is a crucial work and requires quality teachers; and the reality that it is not mainstream for those teachers to receive reflective, collaborative and process-based development, in this study, a group of instructors are located within the new frame of professional development. More specifically, the instructors working in a preparatory program are exposed to a reflective, collaborative and process-based working group in which they find a chance to dig into their practices longitudinally. As opposed to the traditional, transmission-based developmental events, these language teachers practice collaborative reflection and then are consulted for their ideas about the practice afterwards. With the insights derived out of the process, the researcher's point is to add to the professional development of the instructors of English at universities.

## 1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Considering the aforementioned background to the problem of this research, the study aims to investigate the developmental effect of a collaborative reflection program called Reflective Practice Group (RPG) conducted for a period of time by engaging EFL instructors in the process and exploring their insights about it. The researcher aims to adopt a broad view to the study by assuming multiple perspectives such as individual, professional, institutional benefits out of the process and product of the study. That is to say, the researcher considers the impact of reflection, collegiality and long-term development in a wide spectrum through a deep analysis.

As in most studies, this study can yield insights for the participating teachers by giving them autonomy, decision making authority, a field to produce personal theories, collegiality and community learning. As to the institutional side, these teachers can act as agents of change in the school they work and more generally, they can develop a critical look to the improvement of the community. As such, the researcher's aim is to make these advantages possible by engaging colleagues in the project of the research. With all the ups and downs to be articulated, the researcher aims to learn more for the betterment of the reflective and collaborative practice as a part of language teachers' professional development.

As for the outcomes of the study, the researcher notes several purposes as below:

- This study can contribute to the existing studies by adding another outlook on how to implement collaborative reflective practice and how to conduct a research about it,
- As for both research and professional development purposes, this study can inspire various practices in a way that the tools and ideas used in this study can be replicated, modified or eliminated to create reflective practices unique and fit to other specific school cultures,
- This study can also inspire preparatory programs nationwide and worldwide to collaborate on regional, national and international levels to elaborate on the effect of collaborative reflective practices.

With these purposes, the significance of the study is that it can trigger a variety of ideas for the effective development of language teachers on levels of theory and practice. It is important to analyze teachers' development to create improvements about it. As the study is a part of a new approach to professional development, it can add to the limited number of studies especially in Turkey and help offer a perspective for the administrators of preparatory

programs in managing and supporting the quality of teachers' development. The fundamental idea is that effective development of teachers will make better learning opportunities for students.

### **1.3. Research Question**

Mainly, this research aims to find answers to the question: "What are the perspectives of EFL instructors about their professional development through a Reflective Practice Group?"

While addressing this generic question, it is aimed to reach more answers which might address other sub-questions related to the study itself, and other professional and personal dimensions. Therefore, the research question is designed to surface various sets of information likely to arise during data collection and analysis. The researcher follows an emergent approach to the outcomes of this research question. It is an open question, which can surface many opinions from different aspects.

### **1.4. Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of the study are outlined below:

- As a case study, the results of this research are limited to its context which is preparatory program at a foundation university,
- The results are also limited to the reflections and responses of the particular set of participants attending this study within the frame of their individual teaching contexts, workloads, backgrounds and gestalts along with their collective behavior and chemistry,
- The participants of this study do not happen to be grouped in a largely heterogenous pattern due to the voluntary nature of sampling, which might limit the diversity in perspectives.

### **1.5. Assumptions of the Study**

In this study, it is assumed that;

- The participants could find time and energy to concentrate on the study to be able to internalize the process and share detailed perspectives,
- They genuinely practiced reflections in, on and for actions and critically observed their own classroom practices for improvement,

- They also stayed objective with their reflections and contributions to the results without being biased by the presence of the researcher, video-taping or their colleagues.

### 1.6. Definitions of the Terms

**In-service Education and Training (INSET):** According to Day (1999, p.131), INSET is “... a planned event, series of events or extended programme of accredited or non-accredited learning.” These are basically the courses and trainings delivered by the experts coming from outside and which are for a limited period of time. In the past, it was considered to be the only means for professional development, but these days it is one of the options to develop in service, as Day (1999) notes.

**Pre-service Education:** This refers to four-year undergraduate education in which prospective teachers (also called student teachers) study at faculties of education (Eret, 2013). This is a period of education involving both theoretical instruction and practicum in related fields of teaching.

**Professional Development (PD):** It is a career-long process in which teachers improve their professional skills and knowledge in order to meet the changing needs of their students (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Guskey, 2000). Professional development is a complement to pre-service education, which enables teachers to grow more during their service and fine-tune their way of delivering instruction. As a far-reaching goal, teacher can also advance in their careers with the help of effective professional development (Perry, 1980).

**Reflective Practice:** It is a professional practice in which practitioners learn through continuous inquiry. Reflective practice comes into action by the cycle of identifying meanings, interpreting them and applying new ideas into action (Mezirow, 1991). Particularly for teachers, it is a process of consciously thinking about classroom events and received knowledge, turning them into actions and learning from experience by reflecting in, on and for actions (Killion and Todnem, 1991; Kolb, 2015; Rodgers, 2002; Schön 1983, 1987; Wallace, 1991). Dewey (1933) notes that reflective thinking takes us away from impulsive action and routine thinking; therefore, it fosters improvement in our actions. Schön (1983) also notes that our theoretical knowledge does not help solve professional dilemmas, so reflection is necessary to deal with day-to-day happenings in our professional lives.

**Reflective Practice Groups (RPGs):** Reflective Practice Groups are “... a systematic way to process classroom events in a supportive environment focused on professional growth” (Distad et. al., 2000, p. 49). This is actually a process-based group construct in which teachers regularly meet to inquire their practices. With the use of reflective practice tools such as video-audiotaping, journaling, observation, action research, surveys and lesson reports (Richards & Lockhart, 1996), teachers come together by bringing data from their classrooms to reflect on them to inform future practices. These groups involve some ground rules to follow (the biggest ones are trust and confidentiality) and rotation of facilitators in its course. It is a bottom-up way of developing professionally involving collegiality and reflection and it is free of judgment or professional evaluation.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this chapter, the conceptual and theoretical background for this study is outlined and detailed with the purpose of setting the fundamental grounds on which the study is structured. To that end, this chapter encapsulates the ideas such as professional development of language teachers, social constructivism in teacher development and reflective practice.

Firstly, professional development of teachers will be framed with its definitions and models, along with the developmental activities particularly for language teachers and the paradigm shift observed in the understanding of teachers' professional development. Secondly, social constructivist accounts on professional development, which set the philosophical stance of this study, will be discussed with an emphasis on how teachers' knowledge can be constructed by means of social interaction. Lastly, the review of literature will draw on reflective practice as a developmental tool for language teachers, based on the roots of reflective thinking. This will set the practical notion of this study which is reflective practice emerging in a group construct. In addition, the empirical studies in the field of reflective practice will be reviewed, whose findings will yield insights into the field as well as the conclusions of this study.

In sum, with the help of this theoretical background set in this chapter, the philosophical and practical fundamentals of the study will be clear-cut and conducive to the implementation of the research.

#### **2.1. Professional Development for Teachers**

Professional development (hereafter PD) for teachers has been a discussion point surrounded by different definitions and conceptualizations throughout history. Nevertheless, many definitions of PD, by and large, emphasize the idea of enhancement of professional knowledge which leads to improvements in student learning outcomes. In line with this ideation, Guskey (2000, p.16) defines it as "... process and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators so that they might in turn improve the learning of students". According to Diaz-Maggioli (2004, p.5) "professional development can be defined as a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs". From these definitions, the common point is developing teaching to improve student learning. On a slightly different note, Perry's (1980, p.143) definition goes beyond the abovementioned perspective and evaluates PD in relation with its power which transforms

teaching from “a job into a vocation” and from “expertise into authority.” From this perspective, it is more of an elevation in the status of the teaching profession than merely an enhancement of skills to teach better.

Influenced by different contexts and perspectives, teachers’ PD has been prone to be explained by a variety of terms which have been overlapping for the most part. There have been numerous terms for PD such as teacher development, in-service education, career development, staff development, lifelong learning and continuing education (Day & Sachs, 2004). In an attempt to clear the air, terms like *education*, *development* and *training* can be clarified at this point. According to Jiang (2017), *teacher training* signifies specific trainings to improve some teaching techniques, *teacher education* refers to the schooling of teachers to improve their theoretical knowledge and *teacher development* means focusing on the improvement of practical and cognitive sides of teaching by means of self-observation and reflection. In the conception of this study, neither in-service education and training (known as INSET) nor pre-service education defines the scope of PD. INSET actually means the short courses and trainings delivered for teachers by experts (Day, 1999). These trainings are of narrow scope and short time period. Pre-service education means the four-year undergraduate education that the prospective teachers receive at universities (Eret, 2013). It is a preparation period for student teachers to get ready for the profession theoretically through instruction and practically through practicum.

In this study, PD will rather be used in the sense of *teacher development* which is a ‘continuing’ dedication (also called as continuing professional development – CPD) for reviewing teaching to learn and improve more on it with the help of a variety of developmental resources. In this line of thought, we particularly refer to PD of the in-service teachers who already finished their theoretical *education* and are now dedicated to their professional *development* in a continuum. Perhaps, Day’s (1999) definition below may be a concluding remark to the scope of professional development in this study:

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be ... benefit to the individual ... to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which ... teachers review, ... acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice ... (p.4).

According to Richards & Farrell (2005), professional development of teachers is a highly important endeavour which aims to facilitate improvements in teachers’ understanding

of their skills and profession as a whole. In their line of thought, teacher development – with its far-reaching scope – is different from teacher training, which is merely furnishing teachers with skills for immediate goals.

In today's world of high achieving individuals and competition for learning more, teachers' engagement in professional development activities is the key for teacher growth which is conducive to learners' growth. According to Day (1999), teachers are the main figures in this the overall efficiency of learning since they are the greatest assets to a school, their work relates to broader socio-political contexts in which they teach, teachers have the main role of creating lifelong student learning and school improvement is a consequence of teacher improvement. Knapp (2003) also underpins this idea by emphasizing that the 'downstream' PD activities teachers practice have an effect on 'upstream' activities belonging to broader contexts such as policies and educational strategies. In a similar vein, according to Day and Sachs (2004), professional development functions to align teachers' practices with educational policies, improve students' learning outcomes and enhance the status of the teaching profession. With these insights, it is clear that teachers' professional well-being and development play a leading role in educational systems.

For Borg (2006), teacher cognitions (knowledge, understanding, beliefs, concerns and maxims) are crucial components that influence how teachers teach and these cognitions are mainly shaped by the teachers' experiences with schooling and professional development (which he calls professional coursework) along with classroom practice and contextual factors. Therefore, PD is actually a determining tool in the creation of a variety of parameters for teacher improvement. Richards and Farrell (2005, p.11) also provided claims for how teachers' professional learning not only improves teachers but also schools, with the consequence of enhanced levels of student learning as well as institutional development and career development opportunities.

How PD specifically reinforces teachers' in-class practices is also a valuable inquiry. According to Richards & Farrell (2005), the points below highlight the 'bottom-up' learnings created for classroom practices through teachers' involvement in PD activities:

- Understanding the nature of second language learning,
- Understanding how to adapt teaching in response to our learners,
- Understanding teachers' decision making,
- Reformulating our beliefs and principles of teaching,
- Recognizing different styles in teaching,

- Recognizing learners' perspectives of teaching activities.

These implications of professional development may bring up the discussion about its content as well. In other words, the question could be about what kind of teacher knowledge is expected to be promoted through professional learning. This is answered by some scholars (Shulman, 1987; Wichadee, 2011). Wichadee (2011) reviews ten tools of teaching to be developed through PD:

- Teaching skills & classroom management,
- Teaching materials,
- Curriculum,
- Teaching activities,
- Technology,
- Methodology,
- Psychology,
- Language culture,
- Testing & assessment,
- Language skills (pp.15-17).

Shulman (1987), in his influential review for PD, outlines knowledge bases and sources for teacher development as below:

- Content knowledge (subjects to be taught),
- General pedagogical knowledge (broad principles of classroom organization and management),
- Curriculum knowledge (grasp of programs and materials),
- Pedagogical content knowledge (a special form of professional understanding for how different topics and issues are organized for learners of diverse abilities and interests),
- Knowledge of learners (propensities, motivations, interests of learners),
- Knowledge of educational contexts (the character of schools, communities and culture),
- Knowledge for educational ends, purposes and values (historical and philosophical grounds) (p.8).

Shulman proposes that these knowledge bases are nourished by four sources: (1) scholarship in different disciplines of content, (2) settings and materials belonging to

institutionalized education, (3) research on a variety of perspective affecting what teachers do and (4) the practice of teaching itself. The knowledge grounds above affirm how skilled teachers are expected to be in terms of a variety of teaching dimensions; and the sources prove how many different channels teachers can benefit in their development.

Another inquiry in professional development literature is that the quality and effectiveness of developmental processes which are constantly questioned and reviewed. In other words, effective PD has been sought with a variety of different principles and elements explained by many scholars. For one, Bull, Buechler, Didley and Krehbiel(1994) maintained that effective PD is school based, incorporates coaching and follow up; it is also collaborative and located in the daily practices of teachers; finally it focuses on and is evaluated by student learning. In fact, this line of thought locates development in a context driven and social environment which calls for student learning as an end product. From a different viewpoint, Day and Sachs (2004) argue that effective PD allows inquiry, it is personal and ongoing, it is both individual and collaborative, also it is evidence based. Further, it is supported by schools, offers a variety of learning opportunities and happens in and out of schools. In this conceptualization, the scope of effective PD is actually broader and assumes a range of initiatives to be taken by teaching professionals.

For Guskey (2000), professional development is an intentional, systemic and ongoing process which should have a clear focus on learning, emphasize both individual and organizational change, allow small changes to be guided by broader vision and be ongoing and procedural. In this view, effective PD is again portrayed as a learning-based and process-based phenomenon. However, the addition of broad vision and organizational change takes the effect of PD a step further. In the same line of thought, Sweeney (2003) thinks effective professional development is cyclical, ongoing and divided into three steps: building of a vision, implementation and sustainment.

As a last note at this point, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) addresses PD developers for the effectiveness of the process. In her view, planners of PD should keep in mind that teachers are talented individuals who can perform different tasks during their work and thus, their knowledge must be explored in the construction of their PD. Also, teachers should adopt an active role in their development, own the process and work as a school community to be successful with it. She finally calls the administrators to perform a variety of roles as PD developers: (1) provider, (2) facilitator, (3) communicator, (4) organizer and (5) evaluator.

In alignment with these numerous characteristics and features of teachers' professional development, literature has offered numerous activities for teachers (some of which for

language teachers exclusively) to improve their teaching skills and understanding of their professions. These activities are to be defined briefly as follows:

*Workshops* are short-term and intensive learning sessions in which participants gain insights through hands-on activities that are to be used later in their own classes (Richards & Farrell, 2005). These sessions are mostly led by experts and offer benefits such as motivating teachers, serving input, offering practical classroom activities, promoting collegiality and innovations. Nevertheless, for Lumpe (2007), in spite of being a popular tool of development among schools and teachers, workshops do not offer merit for teachers since teachers seldom apply the practices they learn through workshops.

*Attending conferences/seminars* are useful PD events with carefully organized and designed sessions (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). However, these events, due to their hectic scheduling, do not necessarily lead to enhanced levels of learning. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) puts forwards some suggestions for making these events an effective learning opportunity: (a) Reviewing conference/seminar content carefully and creating hopes, (b) taking field notes during the events and (c) writing up a summary after the events and reflecting on them.

*Self-monitoring* is a systematic review and evaluation of one's behavior for its betterment (Richards & Farrell, 2005). For language lessons, teachers can use several tools such as lesson reports, audio-recording and video-recording a lesson. By the collection of evidence and data from classrooms, this activity sets basis for making decisions about classroom procedures to decide what to keep or what to change for better teaching. Some advantages of self-monitoring have been provided by Hager (2012) as (a) providing additional feedback by lessening the burden on supervisors' part, (b) being readily available for student teachers as well, (c) research supporting its use and (d) being a continuing source of feedback.

*Teaching journals* are ongoing written documents consisting of observations, reflections and happenings in a classroom which sets basis for evaluation and discussion (Richards & Farrell, 2005) and which links educational theory and classroom practice (Tompkins, 2009). Ussher & Chalmers (2011) maintains that in order to exploit teaching journals as an effective tool, it must incorporate both actual events and personal thoughts about them. In this form, this can be a resourceful tool for deeper analysis of the events that normally may go unexamined.

*Teaching portfolios* are the collections of documents and items that provide information about his/her work. These portfolios facilitate professional development by creating a collection of documents and materials which teachers can later reflect on and observe their progress with (Bastidas, 1996). These portfolios cover documents like certificates, diplomas, student comments, teachers' appraisal data, own reflections and such.

These portfolios can be ‘working portfolios’ in which teachers gradually work on a specified area of development or a ‘showcase portfolio’ that portrays the depth of overall skills a teacher has (p.99). Portfolios are invaluable sources for teachers to be able to mirror or map their professional development, to reflect on progress and learning and to enhance collaboration with colleagues by sharing of portfolios.

*Peer observation*, as a reflective approach, refers to teachers’ observation of each other’s lessons to develop professionally by self-reflection and self-awareness (Cosh, 1999). Peer observation, as opposed to administrative observations, is of developmental nature in which teachers count on their trusted colleagues and eliminate the authoritative feeling created by the latter type of observations (Day, 2013). By doing peer observations, teachers find a chance to discover teaching skills that they do not normally have in their teaching repertoire, create reflections on their own practices by seeing other practices, develop collegiality and enjoy social benefits of the practice by finding an opportunity to get feedback from others (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

*Peer coaching and peer mentoring*, although they seem the same processes, actually offer different explanations for collegial partnerships (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003). *Coaching* is based on the idea of planning, observing and giving feedback on a colleague’s lesson in order to deliver insights on what and how to develop. *Mentoring*, on the other side, is a collaboration between a more experienced teacher and a novice teacher towards the construction of ideas about understanding school culture, enhancing student learning and such. In coaching, as opposed to peer observations, the observer takes the role of a critical friend who delivers suggestions and feedback to the practicing teacher (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As to mentoring, it is important to separate it from tutoring since tutoring goes *to* learners while mentoring goes *with* them, which means the latter is not a top-down system with a certain agenda (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

*Team teaching*, in a collaborative understanding, two or more teachers teach a class in which they jointly plan, instruct and evaluate learning experiences (Sandholtz, 2000). This activity fosters collegiality, various roles teachers can take, combined expertise, teacher-development opportunities and benefits for learners. For team teaching to be successful, it is highly important to have a strong team planning, high levels of integration and interaction between teachers (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999).

*Analyzing critical incidents* is a type of reflective inquiry on the unexpected incidents occurring in a classroom, which enables the identification of good practices and those which do not work, in order to create a sense of professional awareness (Joshi, 2018). It can be a



focus on high points or low points in a teaching moment to be considered later with deep reflection. This PD activity boosts self-awareness; and when done under collaborative lenses, builds collegiality (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 115).

*Case analysis*, somewhat similar to analysis of critical incidents, is the information collection about a teaching case for better understanding of a situation and derive principles in the end. It may be observing learners with good communication skills to better understand the principles of this skill or may be analyzing a videotaped class on which techniques work best for classroom management; or may be another case. Case analyses are usually done by writing reports about the cases and with the reflection on them afterwards (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

*Action research (AR)* is defined by Johnson (1993, p.2) as “deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted”. It is a cyclical and spiral-based process incorporating plan, action, observation and reflection on classroom practices. AR brings benefits for teacher development as it is a bottom-up approach, has contextual implications, allows further development in teaching and learning practices and encourages teachers’ agency to deal with their own classroom puzzles (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). As AR can be conducted as an individual initiative, it can also take the form of a collaborative work in which colleagues work together to address the common issues arising from their collective needs.

*Teacher support groups* (Richards & Farrell, 2005) or *critical development teams* (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004) are collaborative meetings in which teachers gather to discuss their goals, concerns, experiences or design lesson materials, plans and instructions. This is a network among ten or fewer teachers (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 117) who voluntarily meet over a period and in groups that can take the forms as follows:

- Topic -centered groups
- Research groups
- Reading groups
- Issues discussions groups
- School-based groups
- Job-alike groups (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, pp. 120-121; Richards & Farrell, 2005, pp.56-57).

These groups, whatever form they may take, include reflection as their core tool for development (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003).

*Lesson study* is a focused research on a planned lesson after which the teacher and the observer meet to reflect for its betterment (Lewis, 2009). In the cycle of lesson study, team members set goals for students' learning, then plan a research lesson, teach it (while one teaches, the other observes learners and learning) and finally reflect on the evidence gathered to improve the lesson for further teaching. Uştuk & Çomoğlu (2019), in their recent review of lesson studies conducted both in Turkey and internationally, maintained the benefits of lesson study for both pre-service teachers (in pedagogy and with the elimination of the puzzles they face in practicum) as well as for in-service teachers (by fine-tuning teacher education with the help of observation and inquiry).

*Certification in the field*, according to Barduhn & Johnson (2009), is a recent trend to develop and train teachers by a number of certification programs: CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), SIT TESOL (School for International Training – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Trinity Certificate in TESOL. Although these programs incorporate teacher development into qualification – since they qualify advanced English speakers as language teachers through an intensive schedule – and they link subject knowledge into practical experiences, Barduhn & Johnson (2009) put forward some suggestions for these courses to be more effective and beneficial, some of which are below:

- Higher language proficiency to be expected from non-natives,
- More rigorous assessment,
- Improved curriculum toward practical rather than academic,
- Taking psychological aspects into account,
- Partnerships of these programs with national educational bodies,
- More scholarships for teachers,
- More employment opportunities after these courses (pp.63-64).

### **2.1.1. Models for Professional Development**

Throughout the history of teachers' PD, there have been different patterns and approaches as to the knowledge bases and learning aims emerging out of PD processes. In this sense, how PD is conducted has been framed with relevance to where the knowledge comes from, how the knowledge is shaped and where the learning takes place, within different models (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Grenfell et al., 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Kennedy, 2005; Lieberman, 1995; Wallace, 1991).

As an early consideration, Wallace (1991) puts forward three models of teacher education that appeared on the stage in a chronological order:

- The craft model,
- The applied science model,
- The reflective model.

In *the craft model*, teaching is seen as a craft to be demonstrated by expert teachers to the novice ones in the name of passing the skills from one generation to the other. It is a very static way of evaluating teaching, in which apprentices learn from masters and it is very conservative and imitative in nature.

*The applied science model*, not strikingly different from the craft model, sees teaching as a one-way transmission in which scientific knowledge (from experts) is conveyed to teachers' classrooms for application. There is a clear dichotomy between experts and practicing teachers in this scheme.

*The reflective model*, shaped out of the insights of Schön (1983), projects that practicing teachers take 'received knowledge' from research and 'experiential knowledge' from practice (Wallace, 1991) to reflect in and on action to create professional competence. Through this form of development, there seems to be room for teachers to theorize out of their practice and practice what they theorize.

As an addition to Wallace's (1991) models above, Grenfell et al. (2003) also put forward *Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) model*. In this model, teachers are supposed to possess a list of competencies to be able to teach effectively and these competencies are drawn from Shulman's (1987) knowledge bases.

Hargreaves (1994), offers another modelling to PD. It assumes three stages of development (similar to Wallace's model above): (a) *Pre-technocratic model*, which assumes initial, theoretical knowledge, (b) *technocratic model* – the dominant model in PD still – which resembles the applied science model and refers to the scientific knowledge to be relied on and (c) *post-technocratic model* in which knowledge develops through experience and reflection – similar to the reflective model. In this modelling, the understanding of continuing PD is mentioned under the post-technocratic model, which includes teacher competencies and school-based competencies.

Lieberman's (1995) modelling offers three types of learning bases for teachers, namely *direct teaching, learning in school, learning out of school*. Direct teaching comprises

one-off trainings delivered by experts; learning in school refers to togetherness and being actively involved in a school-based learning community and finally, learning out of school means building partnerships between schools and/or teachers to share and proliferate professional learning. According to Lieberman (1995), when learning in and out of school is included in PD activities, it does not only foster teacher learning but also contributes to the development of school effectively.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (1999) modelling particularly focuses on the types of knowledge and their ramifications in classrooms. They offer three knowledge types as knowledge *for*, *in* and *of* practice. In this taxonomy, firstly, *knowledge for practice* is derived from experts – as in the applied science model and technocratic model – and there is a distinction between experts and teachers. Second, *knowledge in practice* is generated in action – as experiential knowledge in Wallace's (1991) – and this time, there is a distinction between experienced and novice teachers, as in the craft model. As the last point, *knowledge of practice* corresponds to the knowledge generated by inquiry and collaboration with others, in which teachers use their classrooms as sites of development, without any distinction between theory and practice as in the first two models (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). As a follow-up to the last modelling, the authors also suggested the framework named *inquiry as stance*, which includes exploration, collaboration and reflection for sustained teacher development.

As an additive consideration, Day & Sachs (2004) attaches *knowledge of self* to Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (1999) taxonomy. This knowledge type, according to the authors, underpins the idea that any PD enterprise should include the education of self, with values, purposes, relationships and emotions as its core component.

A recent modelling has been offered by Diaz-Maggioli (2004) under the name of *Teacher's Choice Framework*. This approach specifies four levels of knowledge-awareness axis according to which teachers may be advised to develop themselves professionally. In this framework, teachers might be aware of what they know and what they do not; or they may be unaware that they know or do not know some aspects of teaching. In this frame, awareness expected from teachers are: (1) Technical awareness, (2) personal awareness, (3) problematic awareness and (4) critical awareness. On the other hand, the knowledge base expected from teachers – in line with Shulman's (1987) ideas – are (1) content knowledge, (2) general pedagogical knowledge and (3) contextual knowledge.

Another recent modelling is by Kennedy (2005) which outlines eight models historically and also added a ninth one named *Transformative Model*. These models are as

follows – with first four being ‘transmission models’, next three ‘transitional’ and last two ‘transformative’:

- *The training model*: Pre-determined agendas of delivery by experts; technocratic.
- *The award bearing model*: Completion of award bearing programs and courses mostly offered by universities.
- *The deficit model*: Remedying perceived weaknesses of individual teachers; no collective or reflective component.
- *The cascade model*: Disseminating the information received through training events.
- *The standards-based model*: Creating a system of teaching; behaviorist and prescriptive in nature.
- *The coaching/mentoring model*: Enhancing learning through dialogues with colleagues.
- *The community of practice model*: Involving more than two people to mutually develop; powerful sites for transformation.
- *The action research model*: A critical look into classrooms; teachers as researchers.
- *The transformative model*: Combination and integration of various models in line with the purpose of PD (Transmission, transition or transformative/facilitative).

### **2.1.2. Paradigm Shift in Professional Development**

With a closer look at the PD models and approaches above, it becomes clear how knowledge bases and learning processes in teachers’ development vary in terms of their structuring (top-down or bottom-up), sourcing (experts, experienced colleagues, community, reflection), content (research, dissemination, courses, trainings, gatherings) and ends (transmission, transition, transformation). From the course of the emergence of these models, it is apparent that there is a paradigm shift in teachers’ PD in an attempt to boost its productivity and effect. There are plenty of ideas drawing the scene from old perspectives to the new.

As a start, Knight (2002) asserts that PD has been prominently based on event delivery models but now the direction is towards communities of practice in which learning emerges and proliferates. He puts that the focus on events and courses now decreases, which will eliminate the limitations of such a practice. In the same vein, Day and Sachs (2004) allege that PD goes from one-shot workshops and lectures to a lifelong learning which incorporates maintenance, change and improvement. Traditionally, teachers were expected to listen to an

expert pouring ideas but now professional learning encapsulates modellings, applications and practice (Sweeney, 2003). Also, Craft (2000) notes that domination of course-led models (INSET courses) fades as more group focus and school-based improvement are regarded more important for PD. The shift needed at this point, according to Nieto (2003), can be configured by the questions on 'why' instead of 'what' and 'how'. In this perspective, teachers are always in the state of becoming and decontextualized expert talks offer little merit in this regard.

As Bailey (2006) notes that the gradual change in the understanding of the language development in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (towards learner centeredness, self-assessment and such) also initiated the shift in teachers' professional development. The ideas of teacher autonomy, reflective teaching and action research came into view as a result of this new movement. Correspondingly, Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize the major movement towards both collaborative (in collegial forms) and self-directed learning (by exploring teachers' own contexts). In terms of these new movements, Creemers et al. (2013) assert that competency-based PD approaches of 1970s, which put emphasis on a list of skills to be developed to adopt Communicative Approach effectively, later evolved into reflective practice approaches in 1980s, which assumed teachers as analysts of their classroom procedures. According to Creemers et al. (2013) effective PD can be formed when these two approaches – skill development and reflection – are merged.

This shift for newer ways for PD can be better portrayed in specific terms with numerous ideas from different scholars. For Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), the important components of the new understanding are being innovation-based, continuous and involving both formal (trainings) and informal (teacher exchanges) structures. In their perspective, effective PD takes account of teachers' purposes, them as a person, context and culture of teaching. In addition, Hargreaves (1994) reports from Wales and England about the changes in professionalism due to the governmental reforms practiced in these countries. He reports that the 'new professionalism' follows those specific turns:

- From individualism to collaboration,
- From ones to twos,
- From hierarchies to teams,
- From supervision to mentoring,
- From INSET to professional development,
- From liaison to partnership,
- From authority to contract,

- From process to product,
- From survivalism to empowerment.

Another specification on this change towards the new understanding of PD comes from Diaz-Maggioli (2004, p.6) between traditional and visionary professional development in Table 1.

Table 1

*Characteristics of traditional and visionary professional development*

<b>Characteristics of Traditional Professional Development</b>	<b>Characteristics of Visionary Professional Development</b>
Top-down decision making	Collaborative decision making
A “fix-it” approach	A growth-driven approach
Lack of program ownership among teachers	Collective construction of programs
Prescriptive ideas	Inquiry-based ideas
One-size-fits-all techniques	Tailor made techniques
Fixed and untimely delivery methods	Varied and timely delivery methods
Little or no follow-up	Adequate support systems
Decontextualized programs	Context-specific programs
Lack of proper evaluation	Proactive assessment
Pedagogical (child-centered) instruction	Andragogical (adult-centered) instruction

The new understanding of PD also prioritizes the need for considering teachers as a human being, with a focus on their well-being and emotions (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017; Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Gkonou and Mercer (2017) note that teaching is a social act based on a continuum of relationships, which makes it important to attend to teachers’ emotional (EI) as well as social (SI) intelligences for their professional development. In particular, teachers need to have a strong base in terms of their emotional awareness of self and motivation, which is conducive to their social well-being and consequently, their positivity in teaching. In addition, Mercer and Gregersen (2020) note that teachers’ physical, mental and emotional well-being should be considered in the way of enhancing their skills. More specifically, they suggest that PD should aim growth, not repair; and it should consider the fact that the personal and professional lives of teachers are fundamentally intertwined.

Overall, as can be noted from the ideas above, the newer understanding of PD brings changes in the way of more effective professional growth. As a more ‘continuing’ approach, today’s professional development foregrounds teachers’ priorities, purposes, personal quests, passions and the communities they work in (Anderson, 2018). Continuing professional development is also a bottom-up construct (Mann, 2005), which prioritizes inquiry, collaboration, school-based approaches, continuity and personalization. This way of

understanding PD actually sheds light to the structure of this study which will be detailed in this chapter.

## **2.2. Social Constructivism and Professional Development**

Social constructivist understanding of learning emerged upon Vygotskyan (1978) ideas that learning is a social act because higher-order cognition develops through socialization, mainly influenced by culture and context, and through mediation of thought. On a more practical note, our participation in cultural, historical and linguistic settings and our group interactions influence the way we develop (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Through Vygotskyan *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), learning, in this sense, happens when we interact with others in reaching potential development from actual development.

Based on this line of thought, social constructivist paradigm associates learning with the context it takes place (McMahon, 1997). That is to say, what we learn is shaped by how we learn it. In more specific terms, social constructivists see learning as “sense making” rather than “acquisition of knowledge that exists outside the learner” (Oldfather, West, White & Wilmarth., 1999, p.9). This idea emphasizes the fact that learning is rather constructed than merely filled in our cognition and accumulated there. Within this paradigm, therefore, it is true that reality, knowledge and learning can be viewed through a different lens (Kim, 2001). Specifically, social constructivists believe that reality is the construction of human understanding and activity. In addition, knowledge is also generated out of human acts and humans’ interaction with each other. In its totality, learning is seen as a meaningful activity emerged out of socialization.

Tudge (1992) clarifies how learning is created out of socialization and construction with *intersubjectivity*. According to this idea, although individuals have different understandings in the beginning, they reach a common ground through the course of communication, which eventually turns into a personalized understanding. That means what is social becomes psychological within social constructivist thought. At this point, Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997) note that intersubjectivity occurs via cognitive apprenticeship (appropriation of thought through reflection) and critical thinking (examination of different points of view). Mercer (2000) puts forward a similar construct he calls *interthinking* which means thinking together. He notes that it is a co-learning experience which has a mutual focus and is directed by use of language. In the same line of thought with Vygotsky, he offers *Intermental Development Zone* (IDZ), which focuses on the maintenance of quality dialogue



between individuals to create a co-learning experience. He emphasizes dialogue more than the developmental gap between actual and potential levels noted in ZPD.

Another detailed account of social constructivist understanding comes from Adams (2006), who puts forward that experimentation and dialogue lead to learning with the help of discussion and solution of problems. As for learners, social constructivists focus on learning (not performance), view learners as active constructors of knowledge, promote guidance (not instruction), value engagement in tasks and support assessment based on the development of shared understanding (p.247). In his theory *Spiral of Knowing*, Wells (1997) reflects another detailed explanation of how social construction happens. In this model, knowledge is created through experience, information, understanding and knowledge building dialogue. He emphasizes knowledge building dialogue as an end of learning cycle as well as the beginning of another one. According to Wells (1997), knowledge building has important social and constructed aspects as below:

- It is an intrinsic part of “doing things”,
- It is created between people,
- It occurs in their collaborative meaning-making through discourse (p.16).

As seen, social constructivists see learning as a procedural act which is embedded in our socialization and gradual construction. Before outlining the repercussions of social constructivism in teacher development, it is plausible to refer to Beck & Kosnik’s (2006) ideas which offer substantial overview of the paradigm and which might correspond to social constructivist PD:

- Knowledge is a personal synthesis rather than a transmission,
- Knowledge is based on experience,
- Learning happens inclusively in communities,
- Many aspects of a person are marked in learning such as values, attitudes, emotions (pp.9-14).

These ideas can be valuable for teachers’ professional development for they correspond to the new paradigm of PD mentioned earlier in the previous section. Especially these ideas are in line with Hargreaves’ (1994) ideas of collaboration, teams, partnership and

empowerment; and Diaz-Maggioli's (2004) emphasis on collaboration, collectivity and growth.

Another important note from Beck & Kosnik's (2006) could be the contribution of social constructivism to teacher education. Although they refer to pre-service teachers, the ideas can also be conducive to the growth of in-service teachers. Three components of social constructivist teacher education are as follows:

- Integration: Between theory and practice, knowledge and experience,
- Inquiry: Interpretations, reflection and development mindset,
- Community: Collaboration as well as mutual emotional support.

Having highlighted the philosophical grounds of social constructivism and some possible notes for teacher education, the focus can be turned to its influential ramifications for 'continuing' professional development of teachers. On a scientific and philosophical look, Johnson & Golombek (2011, 2016) deliver important insights about how teachers' learning is actually built upon a sociocultural basis. They assert that turning scientific and tacit knowledge into practical activities for students comes through the formation of ZPD as a developmental tool. That is to say, teachers' subject matter knowledge (what to teach) is meaningful when it is combined with pedagogical knowledge (how to teach); and this combination is only possible when teachers' cognition is mediated through social relations in a dialogic manner (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

In their 2011 work, they emphasize that teacher development happens through social-collective mind and within ZPD. Therefore, as they note, it is important to assess teachers' ZPD through *strategic mediation*, which occurs through teachers' interaction with more knowledgeable others. In their 2016 work, Johnson & Golombek (2016), more specifically, use the term *responsive mediation* to specify the intrinsic workings of social constructivist teacher education. Responsive mediation means "... exploiting the potential of what Vygotsky called symbolic tools – social interaction, artifacts and concepts – to enable teachers to appropriate them as *psychological tools* in learning-to-teach and ultimately in directing their teaching activity" (p.21). With this insight, the idea of teacher learning is apparently not only a dialogic act but also a dynamic one which shapes and evolves the ways of teaching continuously.

Education and development of language teachers have changed over the past 40 years due to a number of factors such as teachers, learners, sociopolitical context and varieties of

English (Johnson, 2006). More specifically, the understanding of teacher growth has changed in line with the changes in the perspectives of language learning. While in 1970s, method learning was paramount, in 1980s information processing caught attention and teachers were expected to make their tacit knowledge explicit. However, in 1990s a *sociocultural turn* emerged and defined teachers' – as well as learners' – learning as a social activity (Johnson, 2006). This turn actually led to a reinterpretation of teacher learning and set new trajectories for teachers to follow as a developmental path.

In line with this turn, in 1990s, Post-method Condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) also took over the earlier method-based instruction and development, which also changed the perspectives toward teacher development. It champions the ideas of particularity, practicality and possibility; and foregrounds teachers' inquiry and principles related to their specific teaching contexts. From a post-method perspective, teacher development is not a predetermined pedagogy, but rather a composition of dialogically constructed insights (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). On another note, as Rupp (2015) asserts, Vygotskian social constructivist outlook created a new paradigm for teacher learning and supported collaborative frameworks.

The new social constructivist paradigm which promotes collaboration, construction and dialogue led to numerous ideas related to teacher development, in the form of community based developmental organisms such as *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), *communities of practice* (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), *inquiry as stance* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and *professional learning communities* (Hargreaves, 2007).

Firstly, *legitimate peripheral participation* is a situated activity in which learning happens through the knowledge and skills acquired in social practices of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The idea rejects the abstract knowledge and devalues cognitive focus but values the social practice and full participation in learning. It is *legitimate* because everyone can be a member, *peripheral* because no individual is central but every participant is around the activity and *participatory* because learning is created out of the involvement in it (Flowerdew, 2000). Legitimate peripheral participation is not strictly a pedagogical construct, but actually a way of conceiving learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), so it can be attributed to teacher development as well as schooling itself. Particularly for professional development, the implication would be teachers' involvement in learning communities to develop their teaching, which in turn enhances students' learning. The bottom-line idea, therefore, could be that our school communities are actually invaluable settings in which teachers can achieve social

constructivist way of professional development by means of being peripheral to institutional collaboration.

As a similar but more detailed construct, *communities of practice* (CoP) also promote collective thought as a tool of social constructivist professional development. CoP is “...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al., 2002, p.4). Although the term actually started to be used as a broad one with implications for companies and working places rather than schools, it cannot be denied that CoP is viable and feasible in teacher learning. According to this collective formulation, learning is a social human act, tacit knowledge can only be shared through dialogue with others and knowledge is dynamic (pp.8-11). Three elements of CoP are domain (issues to be discussed), community (a group of people) and practice (a practice to be developed) (pp. 45-46). According to Fontaine and Millen (2004), there are individual (development), community based (group benefits) and organizational (institutional) benefits of communities of practice. In a social constructivist look, it is obvious that CoP holds the similar position with the dialogic and collective premises of the paradigm, which is conducive to the bottom-up growth of teachers, in line with the contemporary understanding of PD.

Another idea of social constructivism in professional development is *inquiry a stance* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), which posits that “teachers and others who work together in inquiry communities ... toward knowledge and ... practice” (p.288). Inquiry as stance, rather differently from legitimate peripheral participation and CoP, takes a holistic approach which involves all school communities into the understanding of development of both teachers and learners. As opposed to the idea of knowledge construction from traditional development models, this approach offers a “rich descriptive talk or writing” that makes day-to-day events to be processed by communities (p.295). Therefore, in PD perspective, teachers can be expected to be deeply inquiring about their practices and doing this in collaboration of school shareholders (parents, learners, administration), in line with the idea of *inquiry as stance*.

As the last social constructivist PD paradigm, *professional learning communities* (PLCs), not unlike the former three, posits the idea of rich conversations and relationships between teachers to improve teaching and school. Hargreaves (2007) lines the features of PLCs as below:

- Depth (deep learning to be promoted),

- Breadth (inclusive of all),
- Endurance (lasting long),
- Justice (equal partnerships),
- Diversity (promoting pedagogical varieties within a school),
- Resourceful (renewing people's energy and resources),
- Conservation (drawing on past for future) (pp.185-192).

According to Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006), effective PLCs have a shared vision, collective responsibility, reflection, collaboration and individual as well as group learning. PLCs, with all these features, could generate a rewarding developmental experience for teachers, within a social constructivist outlook.

With social constructivism permeated into teachers' professional development, the ideas above all assert the similar position, which is collectively learning in communities. As Nieto (2003) notes, the key idea here might be to provide support and time for teachers to collaborate. Professional learning of teachers – in line with the contemporary approach towards PD and social constructivist learning as the philosophical stance – can be enhanced when colleagues put heads together for common targets. Social development, as a ground, can be the starting point and a developmental route for many teachers (see Bell & Gilbert, 1994) to be able to benefit from such a dialogue-based growth. That said, it is clear that social construction is or might be the key for teachers' PD when certain conditions are founded both within school and between teachers. In this sense, the next section will set a background for the PD activity –used as our instrumentation – by outlining the ideas of reflective practice and reflective practice groups, which are inspired by the social constructivist paradigm and the contemporary perspectives toward teachers' professional development.

### **2.3. Reflective Practice**

*Reflection*, generally a loosely defined term through the literature, is actually a specific kind of thought which focuses on problem solving through its critical and constructive nature (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Dewey set the fundamentals of the idea by specifying reflection as a distinct way of thinking and activity (Dewey, 1933). In his view, there are three types of what we call 'thinking' and reflection is different from all of them. Specifically, it is not a stream of consciousness type of thinking since reflection is a consequence of ideas rather than an overflow of a mixture of ideas. It is also not like thinking as drawing pictures in mind, nor dreaming, since reflection relates to real life and aims to reach

conclusions – unlike the open-ended mind picturing. Lastly, reflection is not thinking as belief since reflection does not originate itself merely from beliefs, but rather by questioning and reaching them through deep inquiry. For him, reflection is “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends to constitute reflective thought” (Dewey, 1933, p.9). In addition, for Dewey, reflection is a thorough thinking activity which starts with a state of doubt and revolves around act of searching and inquiring (p. 12-14).

Within Dewey’s understanding, there is a differentiation between routine activity and reflective activity. Reflective activity, for him, “... emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity” (p.17). Routine activity, on the other hand, is a dictated activity which “... fails to develop ability to understand” (p.147). Learning, in this sense, can happen through reflective inquiry rather than adhering to unconscious, everyday practices. As another important point, Dewey calls some set of attitudes for reflective activity to take place, which are open-mindedness (being free from prejudice, open to new ideas), whole-heartedness (sincerity, being absorbed in the action) and responsibility (considering the consequences of taken steps) (pp. 30-33). These traits make reflection an effective tool of learning through a constructive thinking process. Clearly, with these ideas, Dewey was ahead of his time and his ground-breaking ideas set the grounds for reflective thinking with clear ramifications for the thinkers and practitioners focusing on reflection.

Donald Schön (1983, 1987), years after Dewey, elaborated on the understanding of reflection by applying and enhancing his principles, leading way to the idea of reflective practice. He brought forward the term ‘reflective practitioner’ for the professionals who could act for and deal with day-to-day situations arising in work life. According to Schön, technical rationality, which means the dictated knowledge received before we start our professions, fails to address professional issues effectively. Therefore, ‘reflection-in-action’, as the key term in his books, is the solution to make tacit knowledge (our unquestioned routine practices) surface at the level of awareness. For Schön, reflection-in-action is “the art by which practitioners deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict” (Schön, 1983, p.54). It is a process in which we learn by keeping alert about the issues arising and deal with them on the spot, during the activity. To this specific way of reflection, Schön also adds ‘reflection-on-action’, which means thinking back about our actions and reflecting in a retrospective way (Schön 1987, p.26). Through these fragments of reflection, Schön sees a way for new discoveries through appreciation, action and reappraisal. Reflective practice, in this sense, builds on Dewey’s ideas of reflective thinking and is a continuous and

sophisticated way of learning through inquiry. In a way, reflective thinking is embedded in all aspects of living, but reflective practice is rather focused on professional practice (Fook, 2015).

Lyons (2010) states that reflective practice can be taken as a mode of thinking with Dewey (1933), a way of knowing with Schön (1983, 1987) and as critical reflection with Freire (1970). Therefore, apart from reflective thinking or acting, reflection is also a means for changing the society, which is thus called as ‘critical reflection’. According to Freire (1970), reflection when merged with action is a way of transforming the world. He assumes bigger roles for reflection by making it a sociological tool. However, some scholars do not tend to use the term critical reflection as an ideological entity but simply a type of reflection that can create fundamental changes in practice (see Brookfield, 2017; Fook, 2015). Specifically, for teachers, Brookfield (2017) states “critical reflection is, quite simply, the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions” (p. 3). In sum, critical reflection is an action-oriented part of reflective practice, either professionally or ideologically.

Upon the legacy of Dewey and Schön, reflective practice for teachers has gained significant attention with a wide range of ideas as to its structure and components. For one, Killion and Todnem (1991) adds reflection-for-action to Schön’s (1983, 1987) in and on action. They note that reflection has an ultimate aim of generating knowledge for future actions; therefore, reflection in and on action will eventually lead to reflection-for-action. This new cycle encompasses past, present and future in knowledge building.

Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe there are some social components missing in Schön’s work. That is to say, reflective practice does not need to be a solitary act as an individual reflection in and on action, but can be enhanced as a socially constructed thinking. Also, for them, Schön misses the importance of reflection regarding schooling and society, and confines it as a classroom practice. Therefore, in their view, reflection can be a more sophisticated approach which can relate to a wider society and can be done within dialogue with others.

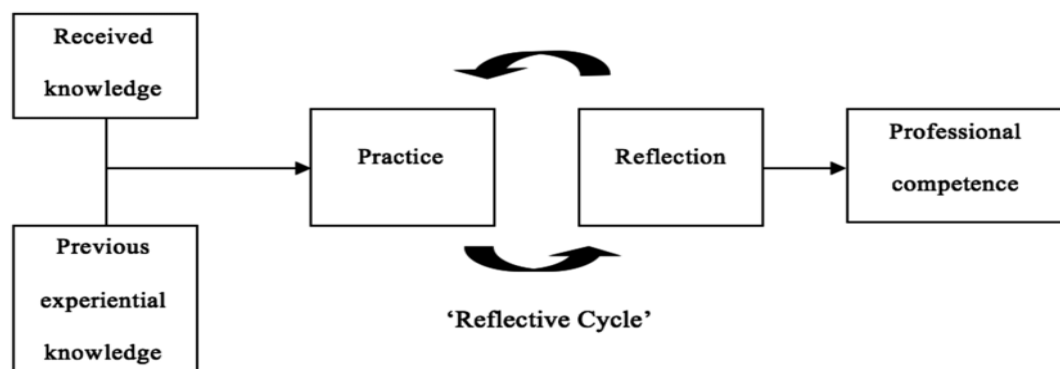
Rodgers (2002) is another scholar who adds a great deal to the understanding of reflective practice. She distils 4 big ideas from Dewey’s prose, which qualifies the idea of reflection in a concise manner. These ideas are paraphrased and summarized below:

- Reflection is a continual meaning making process. It connects experiences and leads to the progress of individuals and society,
- It has roots in scientific inquiry and is a systematic and rigorous way of thinking,

- Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others,
- We need certain attitudes that enable personal and intellectual growth through reflection.

For Rodgers (2002), in a nutshell, reflection is a cycle of moving from “practice to theory and theory to practice” (p.863). Also, her understanding of Dewey above supports that reflection is a special way of thinking, has social dimensions and requires readiness and dedication in the effort.

The specific workings of reflective practice (or reflective teaching for teachers) may show how teachers can benefit from this way of thinking and acting. At this point, similar to Rodgers’ (2002) idea of theory-practice formation, Wallace (1991) makes a clear schema in terms of how reflective practice can shape the way we teach. It is asserted that teachers generate professional knowledge through two sources: Received knowledge and experiential knowledge. Received knowledge is derived from science and research while experiential knowledge comes from teachers’ classroom practices. Both knowledge types have downsides and neither is enough to create teaching competence alone. Therefore, Wallace (1991, p.15) offers a reflective cycle to make these knowledge sources turn into professional competence in Figure 1 below:



*Figure 1.* Reflective cycle (Wallace, 1991, p.15)

As seen in Wallace’s (1991) schema, reflection facilitates professional competence with an ongoing synthesis of teachers’ knowledge bases and by shaping and reshaping professional practice. This is a concise demonstration of how reflective teaching actually



works. Also, this is the indicator of how teachers are supposed to adopt reflective practice in order to develop professionally.

For teachers, there are the specific routes and steps of reflective practice, which can be found through literature. For Mezirow (1991), reflective practice is an intentional learning experience through problem posing and validity testing. Namely, it starts with identifying meaning of an experience, continues with reinterpretations of that meaning through reflection and finally ends with the application of the new insights in focused action. Griffiths and Tann (1992) note a more detailed approach to reflective practice. According to them, teachers benefit from both theory and practice and there is no divide between them. There are both personal theories and public theories. It resonates with Wallace's (1991) idea that received and experiential knowledge both feed into teacher's competence. Moreover, Griffiths and Tann (1992) offer 5 levels of reflection that involve both theory and practice for a complete understanding of reflective teaching as summarize below:

- Reflection-in-action/rapid reaction: Immediate action in the midst of practice,
- Repair: Pause for thought in the action, to interpret an issue,
- Reflection-on-action/review: Considerations after the action,
- Research: A longer consideration through collection of information, analysis and evaluation,
- Retheorizing/reformulating: Rigorous reflection over a long period and challenging personal theories in a wider scope.

The first three levels are nourished by personal theorizing while the last two are not possible without reading public theories (Griffiths & Tann, 1992, p. 79). This formulation is really inclusive and merges all aspects of reflection as well as theory/practice constructs in a meaningful and structured manner. These reflection levels may be noteworthy for any teacher wondering about the workings of reflective practice.

Kolb (2015) is another scholar qualifying reflective practice by placing it in his theory of experiential learning. According to Kolb, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 49). The experiential knowledge, in this line of thought, is generated when concrete experience (CE) is reflectively observed by watching the experience (RO), abstractly conceptualized by generating interpretations and theories related to the experience (AC) and then finally is actively experimented (AE) in the light of new ideas and decisions. Experiential learning, in a sense, is a cyclical activity of

action/reflection and experience/abstraction (p. 51). Reflective observation is the key item in experiential learning for it helps transform the experience by making it a learning through unlearning and relearning. Kolb's (2015, p.51) Experiential Learning Cycle below (Figure 2) clearly demonstrates how experience becomes learning through reflection:

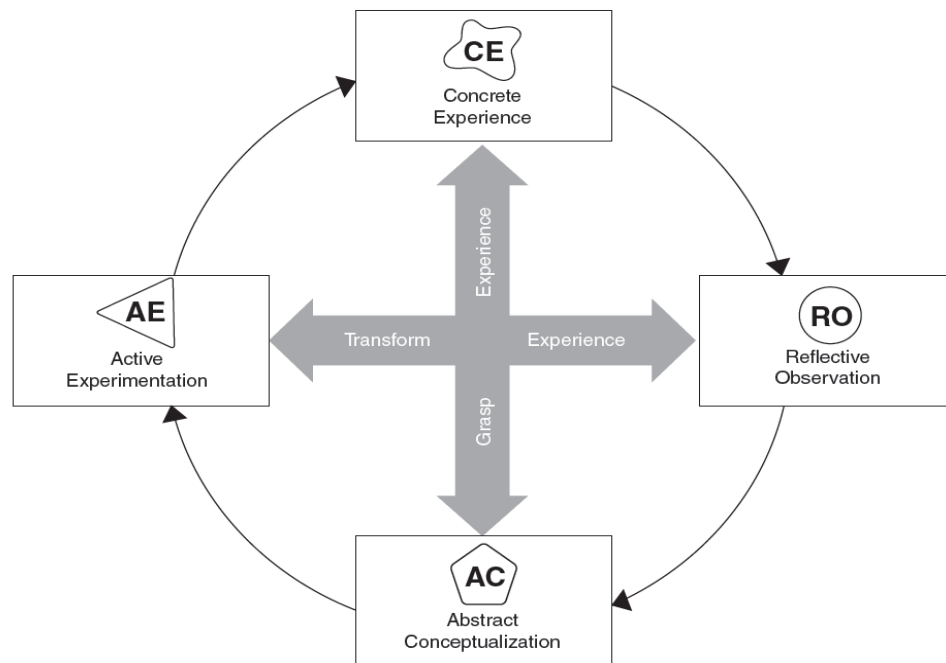


Figure 2. Experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 2015, p. 51)

Along with the significant elements and routes reflective practice is devised around, there are also some reflective tools to create data for reflection. As reflection is an evidence-based inquiry, we need to be able to capture classroom events to reflect on. To that end, the tools below are offered by Richards and Lockhart (1996):

- Teaching journals
- Lesson reports
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Audio and video recordings
- Observation
- Action research (p. 6).

As a notable tool for teachers, reflective practice obviously offers many benefits for their professional growth. Ur (1996) notes that teachers always have their major tool of reflection with them to progress in their profession, but it is not always a disciplined, organized or collaborative activity. She adds that teachers always reflect on their work unconsciously and in fragments, which it is not enough to yield sound insights. Therefore, it needs to be a more structured approach. Moreover, Farrell and Ives (2015) assert that reflection also helps teachers surface their beliefs and realize the impact their beliefs have on their practices. It resonates with Schön's (1983, 1987) idea of tacit knowledge coming at the level of consciousness, which helps create change in practice. As beliefs are strong and tacit constructs, they need to be articulated and reflected for change.

In a nutshell, reflective practice helps teachers in many ways such as helping break the routine, facilitating intentional actions, educating teachers and gaining experience (Farrell, 2003). Reflective practice in teacher education programs should aim the following points, according to Calderhead & Gates (1993, p. 2): Analytical approach to practices, appreciation of social and political contexts, examining moral and ethical issues in the classrooms, taking responsibility for personal and professional growth, facilitation of teacher theories and empowering teachers in decision making. It is an influential tool in the area of teaching and deserves more attention. Gün (2011) states that reflection is generally practiced at surface level – like calling previous lesson as either being a disaster or a perfect one – by teachers; therefore, there needs to be a training for reflection, which will enable teachers to take a more critical look at their practices. All in all, reflection has a major role in teachers' professional lives in terms of a growth mindset and ultimate development.

### **2.3.1 Reflective Practice Groups**

Upon the emphasis put on reflection, and reflective teaching, it is also important to see that reflection is facilitated more in collaboration with others. According to Van Gyn (1996), collaboration is an integral part of reflection and there needs to be a structural approach to facilitate collaborative reflection. Additionally, Solomon (1987) notes that constructive reflection on our practices necessitates a social forum for discussion, and without this social construct it may be difficult to achieve "healthy construction of personal beliefs" (p. 271). With that said, literature offers a social forum for reflective practice, under the name of *Reflective Practice Groups* (RPGs hereafter) (Cady, Distad & Germundsen, 1998; Distad, Chase, Germundsen & Brownstein, 2000; Distad & Brownstein, 2004).

Distad et. al. (2000) define RPGs as “... a systematic way to process classroom events in a supportive environment focused on professional growth” (p. 49). They state that RPGs have two aims: Revealing teachers’ challenges and analyzing one’s own practice. These groups are clearly the sites for meeting for sharing. Distad and Brownstein (2004) define it correspondingly: “... a particular way for teachers to regularly and systematically reflect on their practice in a supportive, collegial environment free from evaluation” (p. 2). This definition is broader in the sense of emphasizing reflection as the principle and the absence of evaluation. In addition to these principles, the same authors also stress trust and confidentiality as being the core elements of these groups. That is, these groups are the platforms to share ideas with sincerity and respect.

Reflective Practice Groups originated from an induction project conducted in Minnesota, USA (Cady et. al., 1998; Distad et. al., 2000). As a part of supporting new teachers in the districts, a few schools agreed to run regular meetings to support beginning teachers in the districts and held monthly (2 hour) meetings to reflect on their practices. The groups included new teachers, their mentors, several experienced teachers and district administrators. The groups were run for eight months. There was no performance review intended and the participants followed a 10-step approach in these meetings. The 8-step version is shared below with reference to Distad and Brownstein (2004), who offer a structural approach for RPGs with a generic guideline:

1. Each person writes a critical incident experienced since the last meeting,
2. Each person briefly shares his or her incident in the group,
3. The group chooses one of the incidents to analyze deeply,
4. The teller is asked for more details about the incident,
5. Each person inquires the effective and ineffective beliefs and approaches behind the incident,
6. Each person shares their reflections,
7. The group discusses the lessons learned out of this incident and actions to be taken,
8. The group facilitator brings a closure by summarizing the meeting and projecting for the next meeting (p. 17).

There are other details as to these meetings. For one, there is a facilitator for each meeting who moderates the discussions and maintains the focus. It is a rotating duty for each participant. Also, the very first meeting is really important and some specific objectives should

be achieved for the newcomers (Distad & Brownstein, 2004, p. 34): Getting to know each other – creating rapport, setting clear expectations, goals and ground rules, and explaining how reflective practice works. These are important elements of these groups, which will surely make the theory of RPG turn into a practice easily.

RPGs create a consequent learning experience as in Figure 3 below. It is a site for continuous reflection in which past experiences are examined and future experiences are informed. Thus, it is actually a bridge between past and future (Distad & Brownstein, 2004, p.8).

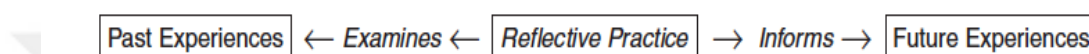


Figure 3. RPGs as a bridge between past and future (Distad & Brownstein, 2004, p.8)

Through RPGs, teachers find a chance to construct new knowledge in a social arena and do it on a regular basis. At this point, as Cady et. al. (1998) note, “teacher reflection in a collaborative environment enhances professional development and planning. Teachers gain insight from the experiential knowledge of their colleagues as their practice is confirmed and honed” (p. 460). Reflection, when done in a social-constructive environment as such, apparently serves many learning experiences for all that participate in these groups.

RPGs aim better student learning specifically through teacher efficacy which is achieved through the collaborative and democratic nature of these groups as well as the open environment for discussion (Distad & Brownstein, 2004). When teachers have a chance to deliver reflections about their challenges and practices, it transmits into increased learning in class. As Distad et. al. (2000) put forward, this type of shared reflection will improve not only the effect of teaching and student learning but also teachers’ professional satisfaction. Thus, it aims to flourish a variety of benefits for education as a whole.

Reflective Practice Groups can take many forms and many names such as dialogue, study or support groups; action research groups, lesson plan groups, teaching-strategy groups and on-line chat groups (Distad & Brownstein, 2004, p. 6). In literature, there can be found many interpretations of RPGs with similar collaborative reflection but variant perspectives. These varieties are adding to what we understand from collaborative reflection –or specifically RPGs.

Glazer, Abbott and Harris (2004) call the similar construct under the name of Collaborative Reflection Group. As they put it, in this group, teachers explore reflection in depth and develop collaborative processes to learn more about their practices. They worked with 5 teachers from elementary school and conducted meetings for one semester, for one hour each session. Their group adopted the rotating facilitator approach as well and some ground rules as below:

- Participate in the discussions,
- Be respectful,
- Embrace confidentiality,
- Speak as yourself – as individuals,
- Do not bring past issues that has no merit for future actions (p. 34).

In this group, topics were selected by participants and were not prescribed by the scholars. They noted great benefits that teachers reported at the end of this process. Namely, they found a chance to discover themselves, released stress and found opportunities for leadership due to the collaborative and reflective aspects.

Another reflective group is named as Teacher Reflection Group by Farrell (1998, 2001, 2003, 2013) and Farrell and Jacobs (2016). They contend that it is a teacher-initiated group with the principles of reflection and collaboration. After the experience of reflection groups in Canada (Farrell, 2013) and Korea (Farrell, 1998, 2001), Farrell notes crucial elements embedded in the practice. For one, there are several core elements in these groups as below (Farrell, 2003, p. 17; Farrell, 2013, p. 10):

- Providing different opportunities for teachers to reflect: Use of many reflective practice tools such as teacher journals, classroom observations, critical friends and discussions,
- Negotiating some ground rules: Chairing, responsibilities,
- Making provisions for four types of time: Individual time as being ready for dedication to these groups; activity time as time for observations and journaling; development time as the time needed for the group development and rapport; reflection time as the time bound individuals and groups have to reflect within,
- Providing external input for reflection: Using classroom instances, colleagues' experiences and theory to reflect on,

- Providing low affective state: Building trust to one another and building a non-threatening and low-anxiety atmosphere.

Farrell and Jacobs (2016) put forward other principles such as heterogenous grouping, teaching collaborative skills, group autonomy, maximized peer interactions, equal opportunities to participate, individual accountability, positive interdependence and cooperation as value. Apparently, the construction of these groups requires serious consideration and harmony among group members.

As noted in PD section earlier, Richards & Farrell (2005) and Diaz-Maggioli (2004) also refer to similar RPG construct with more generic terms as Teacher Support Groups and Critical Development Teams, respectively. These groups are similar to RPGs but with a wider scope and understanding. Richards & Farrell (2005, p. 10) define teacher support groups as a site where teachers discuss important issues, support and help each other in a non-threatening environment – similar to the definition of RPGs. They name various reflective practice tools to make data for these meeting such as team-teaching, class observation, action research and peer coaching. Perhaps the most important contribution they provide for RPGs is the type of activities to be conducted in these meetings. According to Richards and Farrell (2005) teachers can reflect on teaching, develop materials, observe videotapes, hold peer-observation post discussions, write articles, invite speakers for expertise, conduct research projects and plan seminars. These reflective meetings can obviously take many forms and host many activities inside.

Diaz-Maggioli's (2004) Critical Development Teams, as another generic approach, "... are small groups usually ten or fewer, that convene regularly to explore teaching and learning issues" (p. 117). These teams are voluntary, analytical, participative, and they help theory and practice integrate. Diaz-Maggioli's (2004) major contribution to RPGs comes with her suggestions for these meetings. She cautions practitioners that at first there is high motivation but little direction, so some protocols and guidance will be of utmost importance in the beginning (p. 121). Also, she states that these meetings are not regular staff meetings to discuss school issues, nor an in-service training activity or cathartic complaint-based sessions. Instead, these meetings are supposed to be developmental gatherings to support and motivate teachers, enhance student learning, reflect on concerns and provide feedback to one another (p. 119).

As the last note for RPGs and similar collaborative and reflective meetings, the number of participants may also vary according to contexts and expectations. There is not a

certain rule for the number, yet different views on it. Richards and Farrell (2005) note that the ideal number of participants is between 5-8 since too many members may inhibit participation of passive members. On the other hand, Distad and Brownstein (2004) assert that the ideal number is 10-12 for lively and diverse discussion. By extension, the number of participants may be at practitioners' discretion in terms of purpose and context.

As to the literature of the empirical studies within RPG construct, there are different perspectives. While most of the studies are about its impact on teachers' PD, some studies inquire the reflective practice tools, participants and development areas in different contexts and understandings. The review of the literature clearly shows that teachers gain a number of benefits out of collaborative reflective practice.

As a start with notable studies, Farrell (1998, 2001, 2013), who is a pioneer in the configuration of these collaborative reflective practices – along with Cady et. al., (1998), Distad et. al, (2000), Distad and Brownstein, (2004) – conducted significant studies in Korean and Canadian contexts. Initially, his study with 3 Korean teachers (Farrell, 1998) for 16 reflective meetings under the name of 'Teacher Development Groups' surfaced big ideas about this group construct. He inquired what teachers talked about in these meetings, whether they were descriptive or critical in their reflections and how their reflection developed over time. At the end of the process, he found that teachers mostly talked about their personal theories and the problems they had in teaching. Also, they were descriptive in their discussions without much critical look on professional issues. Finally, he found that not much development occurred in the course of 16 meetings in that specific group. The biggest takeaway from this study might be that reflection needs more time and guidance to become more mature and effective.

Another important study by Farrell is actually the one he published three years later, in which he studied one single participant (Heeson) from his Korean study (Farrell, 2001). In this research, Heeson was inquired for what benefits she gained after group discussions as well as the observations and journaling embedded in the process. The results were critical since they showed Heeson's different acts and attitudes in different reflective practices. In group discussions, she talked about her personal theories and motivation of students. In observations, she emphasized her anxiety during the practice and was not really critical about teaching. Lastly, in her journals, she roughly noted about her classroom procedures, again without a deep, critical look. Heeson's ideas thus showed that group discussions promoted more reflection when compared to observations and journaling. She also noted that journaling



requires training and observations should be non-judgmental. These ideas add to the important insights for the conduct of collaborative reflective practices.

Farrell also studied in Canada with 3 ESL teachers over two-year period in a self-initiated reflection group (Farrell, 2013). In this group, the teachers were observed to talk about three emerging topics: school context (school administration, collaboration among colleagues), perception of self as a teacher (balancing work and life; fun and learning) and learners (lack of attention). As a result, the reports of the teachers underscored that group discussions were empowering, promoted improvements in their teaching, helped them become aware about their practices and provided support for one another, which would not be possible by working alone. In a nutshell, Farrell's studies in Korea and Canada make it clear that collaborative reflective practice (RPG construct) actually fosters professional development in a number of ways but with the reminders that there needs to be a certain amount of time to develop reflectively, critical reflection should be promoted and some instruction and trainings are needed for the internalization of reflective practice tools. After those studies, Farrell could propose some important components for collaborative reflection as noted earlier (Farrell, 2003, 2013).

Other set of studies have been conducted in the context of our study, namely teaching of English in tertiary level (Arslan & Başağa, 2010; Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Christodoulou, 2013; Fakazlı & Kuru-Gönen, 2017). In Turkish context, Arslan and Başağa (2010) studied a reflective development program with 4 EFL instructors working at preparatory English program. The reflective development program included observations and action research, so the teachers had a chance to work with their colleagues practically and theoretically throughout the process. The teacher reports at the end of the study revealed that there were several themes emerging out of the process. To exemplify, teachers felt ready for their teaching, they were able to make changes freely and their motivation increased. Also, they had a chance to think back after their lessons and to collaborate with their colleagues. Lastly, they felt themselves like a researcher.

In the same context, Fakazlı and Kuru-Gönen (2017) took a more specific approach and particularly studied teachers' perceptions about the reflective practice tools used in reflective meetings. They worked with 8 tertiary level instructors of English and for 15 weeks. In this study, the teachers had 2 reflective meetings; one after the use of video recordings and another one after using reflective diaries. For diaries, teachers noted that they could remember their past experiences clearly and therefore, reflected on them easily. As to reflective video analyses, teachers emphasized objectivity for reflection as being the upfront benefit. Referring

to reflective meetings after the tools were used, the teachers thought that they enabled them to provide solutions for their problems, they were able to share their experiences and awareness as to materials, strengths and weaknesses. Clearly, the teachers all provided positive comments for reflective practice tools and the meetings; and they obviously benefited for their PD.

Burhan-Horasanlı and Ortaçtepe (2016) studied an online reflective discussion community in the same context. They studied with 9 instructors of English who were in-service training – an EFL methodology course. The research questioned what types of reflection (in, on, for action) the teacher engaged during these discussions and what they talked about. As results indicated, the teachers reflected ‘on’ the topics like their motivation, personal characteristics, autonomy and language learning experiences. They reflected ‘in’ their beliefs and ‘for’ some actions related to improving their teaching, enhancing learning and contributing to instructions. The resolution of the research is that reflection is an embedded – involving the cycle of in, on and for actions – and a collaborative process. Despite all the insightful outcomes of the study, it had a limitation that teachers did not teach during the process, so the changes in their practice could not be traced.

In the tertiary level context of Greece, Christodoulou’s (2013) doctoral dissertation is a comprehensive study which aimed to question not only the impact of collaborative reflection on teachers’ PD but also more generically the ideal workings of this construct as a part of teacher improvement. He worked with 5 instructors of English over a 13-week guided reflective practice period. Along with journals, dialogue sessions, online chats and holistic interviews, he studied a reflective group construct named ‘Reflective Inquiry Group Meetings’. He collected data through the meetings, journals, field notes, surveys, interviews, online chats and observations. The results showed that there were 5 emerging data out of these meetings: Awareness, reflecting on the positive, critical reflection, therapeutic value of the meetings and reframing practice. More specifically, the teachers noted that sharing was like a therapy, they became more aware of their self, they critically reflected on learners and institution, positivity fostered more reflection and they found support through collaborative reflection. The summary notes after the study are as below:

- Reflection is transformational – with the development of knowledge of self,
- Reflection requires time,
- It is a guided process – with the help of a mentor or a peer,
- Reflection is appreciative – should be focused on the positives,
- It also requires free will.

Some other reflective group studies have been conducted with diverse participants, rather than merely language teachers (Berkey et. al., 1998; Kuh, 2016). Kuh (2016) investigated a ‘Critical Friends Group’ in an Elementary school in the USA with 9 participants; a coach, several classroom teachers and para-educators. The research was based on the inquiry about the mechanisms helping or hindering reflection in these meetings and the relationship between the discussions and students’ learning. Kuh’s findings were analyzed under that traits of communities of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. As to mutual engagement, she found that the participants all benefited from social and emotional support in the meetings and also felt comfortable with sharing their reflections. As a part of joint enterprise, they mostly talked about school-wide issues, and less about students’ learning and their teaching practices. As to shared repertoire, the participants noted that these meetings had their own agenda and protocols, which guided teachers for effective feedback, differently from other teacher gatherings. Apparently, all the parties benefited from the meetings they held, which is indicative of the functionality of reflective groups. Kuh also noted broad takeaways out of her study as below:

- For effective reflection, the purpose of these meetings should mostly be student learning, rather than school-wide issues,
- Protocols are vital in guiding participants and creating collaboration and trust among them,
- Reflection and building trust take time,
- Critical friends groups are inexpensive way of developing professionally,
- These groups are more than creating a social network – rather a site to discuss about teachers’ work.

Berkey et. al.’s (1998) study goes beyond in terms of the diversity in participation by including school administrators as well. As a part of an inclusive ethnographic research in Michigan, USA, this study was conducted as a project entitled ‘Teacher Development and Organizational Change (TDOC)’. The project group included researchers, teachers and principals and lasted more than 4 years. The aim of creating the group was to make tacit knowledge of educational shareholders articulated for improvement, to effectively respond to student needs, to recognize teachers’ knowledge and practices and to provide support and audience for reflection. After the study, very important themes emerged exclusively for the

researchers, teachers and principals. For teachers, these meetings brought newer perspectives, promoted reflection, broke off the isolation, taught them to communicate more effectively and enabled them to re-examine their beliefs. For principals, the meetings provided opportunities to understand teachers' ideas more deeply through dialogue, to share power and encourage teachers to reflect more. Lastly for researchers, the meetings taught them to be non-judgmental and to be effective feedback givers. The suggestions of this research are similar to Kuh's study and other studies on collaborative reflection: Reflection needs time, trust and respect need to be built for reflection to take place and both oral and written accounts have essential role in facilitating reflection.

As another research category, some studies primarily investigated the effects of reflective meetings on students' learning of specific language skills (Bintaş & Dikilitaş, 2019; Passman & Duran-Klenclo, 2002). Passman and Duran-Klenclo (2002) examined the reflective meetings of 6 language teachers in a school district in Texas. The meetings were held under the name of 'Reflective Practice Discussion Group'. The teachers sampled in this study decided to set this group in order to improve the writing scores of the Elementary campus of the research school. They actually aimed to create and impact in students' learning of writing, by discussing ways to improve instruction on the skill. Over a year-long period, the changes in perspectives and student success were observed. The results indicated that students' overall writing scores improved after the changes applied in teaching. Also, teachers' attitude changed towards teaching writing; more specifically, they ceased to blame students for lack of success in writing. The teachers also noted that they had a chance to take risks to create an impact and assume leadership in the process.

Bintaş and Dikilitaş's (2019) 'Critical Friends Group' also aimed to make an impact in students' writing scores, but also revealed generic outcomes as to the perceptions of teachers about the group. They worked with 3 high school language teachers working in preparatory program. The group had 6 meetings and utilized journal writing, peer observations, self-monitoring and video recordings. As an instrumental case study, the data were obtained through video recordings of the sessions, interviews, researcher notes and reflective essays. The researchers aimed to seek answers to the questions such as teachers' perceptions, aspects of CFGs that assisted reflection, challenges experienced and changes occurred after the meetings. As the results indicated, the meetings created a successful change in writing lessons. Other generic implications for the conduct of the meetings are as below:

- As being a voluntary group, the teachers were motivated to reflect without major stress or pressure,
- Self-monitoring was chosen to be the most practical way of collecting data for reflection,
- Collegiality and collaboration served a venue to speak out real classroom issues and address them,
- Theoretical instructions in the beginning of these meetings tuned out the teachers but reflection sessions rather engaged them,
- Instead of one-shot seminars, these meetings enabled real classroom issues to be dealt with and addressed teachers' real needs.

These two studies above show how specific skills can also be focused by the help of reflective discussion groups. Instead of talking about the school-wide or nation-wide issues as the core of reflection, focusing on specific classroom issues might bring clearer results out of this collaboration. This actually resonated with the results of Kuh's (2016) group mentioned before.

There are some other studies with interesting content such as analysis of multiple reflective practice cases (Ohlsson, 2013) and teachers from different disciplines (Fazio, 2009). Ohlsson's (2013) research indicated the different dynamics among different group constructs. He formed 3 different 'Teacher Teams' in different schools in Sweden. In Group A, there were 8 teachers teaching young learners (aged between 6-11) whereas in Group B, there were 8 teachers teaching junior-high (aged between 12-15) and in Group C, another 13 teachers teaching junior-high. These groups held 14 meetings lasting for about 1-2 hours. Ohlsson's findings indicated that the teams differed in collectivity, dialogue and collaboration. More specifically, Group A collaborated more than B-C, Group A planned more joint tasks, Group B talked more about student learning and Group C discussed more about teaching routines. The study suggested that there should be more planning of joint tasks and collective reflection loops – that is, going from concrete to abstract, from talks to joint constructions. This is a really important study since it shows how different teams have different chemistries and approaches, which underpins that there is no certain recipe in the formulation and conduct of RPGs.

Lastly, Fazio (2009) conducted reflective meetings with science teachers. Despite investigating another discipline, this study is still a significant one for the fact that its results are valid for our understanding of RPGs. He sampled 4 science teachers from a graduate level

program for 12 meetings of 1-2 hours. The focus was the nature of science and scientific inquiry, rather than exclusively student learning. These meetings also adopted an action-research perspective in which participants also conducted their research to reflect on within the meetings. The findings of the study showed that there were two types of reflection occurring in the meetings: Collaborative and communal. As for collaborative reflection, the teachers noted that they were able to solve problems jointly, reach theories out of practice and examine teacher-student relationship in science classes. For the communal side, the teachers found a chance to discuss government curriculum and the social and cultural tradition of teaching and learning. The results are actually in line with the insights gained out of other studies mentioned above.

As seen, the literature broadly pictures RPG constructs as a beneficial site for professional development and student learning, with the help of support of colleagues, reflection and internalization of newer perspectives. Also, for effective reflection to take place, they underscore the importance of guidance, non-judgmental behaviour, effective collaboration, devotion of time, specificity of focus and teaching simultaneously with the process. This study is also believed to yield positive results and to contribute to the literature with a new perspective to teachers' PD and the components of RPGs in that sense.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This part aims to lay out the structure of the study by delivering details about the design and participants involved as well as the data collection procedures and tools utilized. Also, towards the end of this section, data analysis methods will be highlighted to demonstrate how the results of the study were reached and interpreted. Finally, the researcher's role in the data collection process will be mentioned and this section will be concluded.

#### 3.1. Design

This study was designed within the qualitative research paradigm, which foregrounds verbal accounts as opposed to numerical statistics. Creswell (2007) notes that qualitative research is initiated by “assumptions and a world view” and aims to find out “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social and human problem” (p.37). In other words, qualitative research prioritizes the meanings constructed related to our world and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Thus, in this paradigm, since researchers seek to explore multiple interpretations and meanings attached to reality which is constructed through interaction with others, it can be noted that this type of research is social constructive and interpretative (Creswell, 2007). In this sense, it is highly suitable for this research to be qualitative in nature for the fact that the study process and expected outcomes require in depth-analysis of participant interpretation and perspectives.

There are some elements of qualitative research that particularly relate to this study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). For one, it enables researchers to collect data in a natural setting. The researcher of this study collected data in the process of conducting the study, in a longitudinal fashion. Other than that, it allows multiple sources of data collection, which was the primary aim of this study to elaborate on the research question as much as possible. Qualitative research is also bottom-up and emergent and it helps the findings of this research come merely from the participants without any pre-expectations based on theory. Lastly, qualitative research is also holistic and this study aimed to reach a wide scope of parameters related to the content of the study.

By researching qualitatively through extensive collection of data, the problem in this study was explored thoroughly and deeply, which led to a thick description with complex and detailed understanding of the issues. It also empowered the voice of the participants by making them the agents situated in the center of the research. Moreover, not only the viewpoints of

the participants were surfaced, but also the reasons behind them were explored through qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2007).

As a part of qualitative research paradigm, this study is conducted as a single instrumental case study with multiple participants. As noted by Merriam (2009), a case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit” (p.203). In a case study, typical to qualitative research, researchers explore a bounded system with deep data collection with various tools such as interviews, audio-visual materials, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007). In this case study, the researcher aims to explore the details of the process by observing the case for a period and by collection of thick data to yield many perspectives into the findings. As such, as Patton (2002) maintains, a case study is both a process in which data is collected and interpreted systematically and a product which is shaped through the analysis of the very process.

The ethical considerations have also been made meticulously throughout the study. As this is a case study that necessitates sensitivity to individuals’ ideas and identities, the researcher made sure a variety of measures were taken to secure consent and confidentiality. Before the study, a proposal was made to the Institutional Review Board of the school hosting the Master’s program, which, with an official letter, asked for the consent of the university at which the study was conducted. Both committees from the schools approved the research and permitted the research through official notices (Appendix 2). In addition, before the study was conducted, the participants were asked to give their consent by signing a consent form (Appendix 3) which informed them about the requirements of the study as well as about their rights of withdrawal. As another ethical consideration, the names of the participants were kept secret and pseudonyms were preferred to that end. The participants were allowed to choose their pseudonyms before the dissertation was scripted.

### **3.2. Participants of the Study**

The participants of this study are five instructors of English who work at the school of foreign languages of Yaşar University, a foundation university in İzmir, Turkey. They were sampled on voluntary basis in line with the nature of reflective practice and reflective practice groups (RPGs). As noted before, for Dewey (1933), reflection is a process for which one should be whole-hearted, open-minded and responsible. Also, Harvey et. al. (2020) note that reflective activities should be voluntary, which will create a safe and respectful environment. Therefore, on voluntary basis, the participants were called for this study through an e-mail sent to the whole Faculty and with an attachment clarifying the requirements and the tentative plan



of the study process. The participants were invited to consult the researcher for further information and to assign themselves for the study. There were six teachers nominating for the study, but five of them were admitted since one teacher had a schedule which was not suitable to join the rest of the group.

It was aimed to keep the number of participants limited for lively discussions to take place with equal share of individuals. As Richards and Farrell (2005) note, the ideal number is between 5-8 so that each individual can have many opportunities to participate. The participants also had enough chances to facilitate discussions as equally as possible and with enough time to deliver their insights, comments and stories.

The instructors sampled are all female and they coincidentally have varying levels of experience in teaching – ranging from 4 to 8 years. They all work in the preparatory English program and teach a variety of skills (Integrated Skills, Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) and levels – ranging from repeating Elementary to Upper-Intermediate. One of them completed her studies in Master of Arts, and others hold Bachelor's degrees. Interestingly, all teachers are graduates of literature departments. However, they all hold certifications in the field of language teaching. Also, all except one have had various administrative roles in the school. These varieties in expertise, roles and levels of English taught were conducive to the enrichment of the data collected with multiple perspectives. The table below shows the demographic and academic backgrounds of the participants who are named with pseudonyms:

Table 2

*Demographic and academic background of the participants*

Name	Age	Degree	Certification	Teaching Experience	Current Level / Skill Taught	Administrative Roles
<b>Teacher B</b>	32	BA in English Literature	Pedagogical Education Certificate  Material Development  SIT TESOL Certificate	8 years	Elementary (Repeating students) / Integrated Skills	Supervisor (currently)
<b>Teacher G</b>	26	BA in English Literature	SIT TESOL Certificate	4 years	Pre-Intermediate / Integrated Skills, Reading, Writing	-

<b>Teacher J</b>	29	BA in English Literature	SIT TESOL Certificate	7 years	Pre-Intermediate / Integrated Skills, Reading, Listening, Speaking	Supervisor (previously)
<b>Teacher M</b>	28	BA in American Culture and Literature	Pedagogical Education Certificate	5 years	Upper-Intermediate / Integrated Skills	Test Administrator (currently)
<b>Teacher S</b>	28	BA & MA in American Culture and Literature	Pedagogical Education Certificate	6 years	Elementary (Repeating students)	Educational Coordinator; Testing, Curriculum and Materials office member (previously)

The courses mentioned above can highlight the experiences of teachers in terms of reflective practice. Specifically, the SIT TESOL Certificate is a course delivered by the research site school in conjunction with SIT Graduate Institute, USA; and scholarships are offered for full-time instructors of the School of Foreign Languages. It is a one-month intensive course and it incorporates reflective teaching and experiential learning as its core (SIT Graduate Institute, 2020). The participants involved in this course can be regarded as experienced with reflective practice. On the other hand, as another teaching course, Pedagogical Education Certificate is mainly a course offered by faculties of education in various universities to train teacher candidates – specifically literature graduates – with basic teaching skills as to teaching foreign languages, educational psychology, teaching approaches, methods and techniques. There is less room for reflective practice in this course when compared to SIT TESOL Certificate Course.

Also, the participants' administrative roles need to be clarified and this information is reported by the participants themselves. Firstly, supervisors (a position in research site university) are coordinators of the program, who work in conjunction with the main coordinator of the school. Supervisors are responsible for coordinating a group of teachers and fulfilling the duties such as announcing and introducing institutional decisions, proofreading exams and materials, dealing with issues related to the program and the administration of online learning tools. Test administrators work in the administrative side of assessment by creating exam schedules, assigning exam duties, creating and organizing exam packs, ensuring exam security and checking irregularities in test results.

As Teacher S's administrative duty in the former university she worked, educational coordinators work as the designers of syllabi and teaching schedules. Material and curriculum officers prepare syllabi and materials for particular levels and skills and testing officers prepare proficiency exams as well as the exams for different skills and levels.

In order to portray the workplace setting of the participants more clearly, the administration of professional development activities at the site school need to be explained. In the university, there is an office responsible for teachers' development, called 'Continuing Professional Development Office (CPDO)'. The researcher of this study is a member of this office and also a teacher trainer for SIT TESOL Certificate Program. Upon the requirements of the school accreditation and administration, the primary roles of the CPDO are to deliver developmental trainings to teachers and to conduct bi-yearly classroom observations for each teacher. The observations are run on a three-step approach: Pre-observation meeting, actual observation and post-observation meeting. Prior to the pre-observation meeting, the teachers send their lesson plans to CPDO member to be discussed in the meeting. The observations are done for one class hour, and CPDO member is present in the class, observing and taking notes. After the observation, both the teacher and the CPDO member meet to reflect on the lesson and plan for actions for the following year.

As to the developmental activities of the office, the members deliver workshops, organize events coming from outside experts, conduct focus group meetings to share ideas with teachers, announce developmental events around and conduct needs analyses. Also, CPDO runs a framework in which each teacher chooses among 7 developmental activities (self-monitoring, peer observation, class observation, team teaching, conducting research, mentoring, delivering workshops) to address their learning goals annually. The members help teachers to set their goals, conduct them and reflect on them.

Actually, the site school is highly dedicated to PD and give full support to the CPDO along with the teachers. It also takes a reflective stance, holding a reflective teacher training course every year (SIT TESOL Certificate Course) and also offering teachers chances to develop themselves in a reflective manner all year long. The analysis of the current PD conditions of the site school is highly significant for the results of this study.

### **3.3. Data Collection Process and Tools**

In this study, data was collected through the meetings of a Reflective Practice Group (RPG) formed by the five instructors of English. The whole meeting process, as the case itself, was the site for data collection with a variety of data collection tools. The primary aim of the

researcher was to collect data in a process, by investigating the case from multiple dimensions to enrich outcomes.

More specifically, the RPG was constructed as a group of teachers who met weekly for one to two hours. These meetings were called ‘RPG meetings’. Teachers had 10 RPG meetings in total, in 9 different weeks. Teachers had two of these meetings as pre-RPG meetings and in one single week. These meetings were for the preparation of teachers for the reflective practice process (Pre-RPG meeting 1) and to brainstorm ideas of discussion for later meetings (Pre-RPG meeting 2). The rest of the meetings – 8 RPG meetings – were held in a weekly fashion. By the time all the data collection ended, the process had lasted for 14 weeks. The RPG meetings were conducted between December 2019 and March 2020, during track 2 of the 3-track modular system the school runs on – which consisted of 11 weeks of study with two weeks of semester break in the middle. The RPGs were held during the study weeks, so RPGs were run in a fashion that the reflections can go hand in hand with teaching practice.

As noted above, the RPG itself was the process for data collection with a variety of tools utilized. Therefore, the construction of RPGs will be detailed for a clear understanding of the process. The RPG within this study was structured in a way that it is mainly based on the ideas of Distad and her associates (Cady et. al., 1998; Distad et. al., 2000; Distad & Brownstein, 2004). However, some components of the group were shaped through the ideas of other scholars who added to the meaning of RPGs considerably (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Eitington, 2001; Farrell, 2003, 2013; Glazer et. al., 2004; Killion & Todnem, 1991; Kolb, 2015; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Schön, 1983, 1987; Wallace, 1991). The group was constructed as noted below:

- The purpose of the RPG was to raise teacher efficacy to improve student learning (Distad & Brownstein, 2004) and teachers were given the autonomy of choosing any topic they relate to their students’ learning and the freedom of reflecting on each topic to whatever extent they desired,
- The core principles of RPG were trust and confidentiality (Distad & Brownstein, 2004) and main components were ground rules, group autonomy, external input, equality, low affective state, positive interdependence, individual accountability and collaborative skills (Farrell, 2003, 2013),
- Reflective practice was adopted with reflection in, on (Schön, 1983, 1987) and for action (Killion & Todnem, 1991) in order to analyze past experiences to inform future (Distad & Brownstein, 2004),

- Both received knowledge and experiential knowledge were appreciated as data of analysis in RPG meetings (Wallace, 1991),
- To specify reflection in the meetings, Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Cycle was mentioned as a note of reference,
- To analyze data reflectively in the meetings, some reflective practice tools were suggested to participants such as teaching journals, surveys and questionnaires, audio-video recordings, observations and action research (Richards and Lockhart, 1996),
- Apart from discussions, there were some suggested activities for the RPG meetings such as reading, lesson planning, studying and researching (Distad & Brownstein, 2004; Richards & Farrell, 2005),
- Except for the two pre-RPG meetings facilitated by the researcher, each meeting was facilitated by a different participant as a rotational duty (Distad & Brownstein, 2004; Glazer et. al., 2004). Facilitators' duties were gathering the group, maintaining discussions and rules (Distad & Brownstein, 2004), keeping the group on task, promoting participation and equality and clarifying group goals (Eitington, 2001),
- The participants were cautioned that RPGs were neither regular staff meetings to discuss school issues nor in-service trainings or complaint-oriented sessions (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

In pre-RPG meeting 1, by emphasizing the notes above, the researcher introduced RPGs to the participants through a PowerPoint presentation. It was also printed for participants as a guide so that they could refer to it occasionally to maintain the RPG principles. The detailed account of the activity within RPG meetings can be better observed through the RPG Activity Log (Table 3) below:

Table 3

*RPG activity log*

Meeting Name	Date / Length	Facilitator	Activity
<b>Pre-RPG Meeting 1 (Introduction)</b>	18 December, 2019 - 105 mins	The Researcher	-Introduction to the Study – presentation about reflective practice, RPGs and reflective practice tools, -Consent forms and bio information collected, -Journal notebooks given to participants,

			-Task given: A critical incident to be journaled for an ongoing puzzle.
<b>Pre-RPG Meeting 2 (Brainstorming)</b>	20 December, 2019 - 120 mins	The Researcher	-Participants sharing incidents, -Finding common issues, brainstorming more issues and poster making,  -Next Topic: Motivation (Student & Teacher), -Reflective practice tools to be used: Collecting information through students/teacher surveys and reading literature about motivation.
<b>RPG Meeting 1</b>	27 December, 2019 - 120 mins	Teacher S <i>Student &amp; Teacher Motivation</i>	-Survey info shared, -Common topics and categories reached, -Only S motivation was dealt (limited time),  -Next topic: Student motivation (continued), -Reflective practice tools to be used: More reading and journaling (on specific classroom issues) decided for more insights.
<b>RPG Meeting 2</b>	8 January, 2020 - 120 mins	Teacher J <i>Student Motivation</i>	-Teachers sharing articles that they read – analysed, -Teachers sharing journals for incidents – analysed,  - Next topic: Student motivation (continued), - Each teacher derived action points to try out until the next meeting: Teacher S: Being flexible to Ss’ mistakes, Teacher G: Using a pair system, Teacher J: Improving graded readers with extra materials, Teacher M: Setting baby-step goals for students – one at a time, Teacher B: Creating awareness for self-development & practicing flexibility (like Teacher S), - Reflective practice tools to be used: All teachers intended to use journaling. Teacher M might use videotaping and Teacher B might add a questionnaire for self-awareness.
<b>RPG Meeting 3</b>	15 January, 2020 - 85 mins	Teacher G <i>Student Motivation</i>	-Each teacher sharing their experiences with their takeaways from last meeting and reflecting on them, -Closure with prominent themes (related to student motivation),  -Next topic: Teacher motivation, -Reflective practice tools to be used: Journaling (the factors motivating them in their profession).
<b>RPG Meeting 4</b>	12 February, 2020 - 65 mins	Teacher M <i>Teacher Motivation</i>	-Teachers sharing their notes from the journals – about what motivates them, -Reflection and closure of ideas (related to teacher motivation),

			-Next topic: Use of L1, -Reflective tools to be used: Reading literature.
<b>RPG Meeting 5</b>	19 February, 2020 - 60 mins	Teacher B <i>Use of L1</i>	-Teachers sharing their insights from articles & reflecting on their learning experiences as students, -Teacher J also sharing a survey (conducted with her students),  -Next topic: Use of L1 (continued), -Reflective practice tools to be used: Surveys for student perspectives & voice-recording for teachers' use of L1.
<b>RPG Meeting 6</b>	28 February, 2020 75 mins	Teacher S <i>Use of L1</i>	-Teachers reflecting on the survey results & voice-recordings, -Closure with the prominent themes (related to use of L1),  -Next topic: Time management, -Reflective practice tools to be used: Finding a skill, level and a teacher to plan a lesson for (with time management focus).
<b>RPG Meeting 7</b>	4 March, 2020 150 mins	Teacher M <i>Time Management (Lesson planning)</i>	-Teachers plan a lesson together (Intermediate level & 50-min lesson),  - Next topic: Time management (continued) & Closure, - Reflective practice tools to be used: The lesson plan given to Teacher T (the practicing teacher outside the group) & inviting her to the next meeting.
<b>RPG Meeting 8</b>	11 March, 2020 100 mins	Teacher B & The Researcher <i>Time Management &amp; Closure</i>	-Teacher T (the invitee) shares her reflections on the lesson with the focus of time management -Teacher G and Teacher J also share their reflections (they also conducted the lesson),  -Closure (writing thank you letters & last remarks).

As a part of qualitative research, multiple sources of data were utilized in this study. Specifically, the data was collected through video recordings of the RPG sessions, the researcher's field notes, visual artefacts produced in the meetings, two semi-structured interviews, two reflective essays and a focus group meeting. In fact, the data was thus collected in a multimodal fashion incorporating visual, written and aural tools (Jewitt, 2016), which qualified the understanding of human experiences in the study. The data collection process and tools can be noted through Figure 4 below:

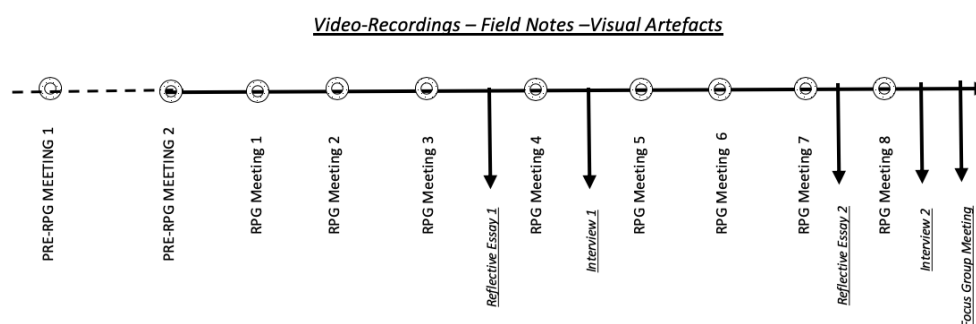


Figure 4. Data collection process and tools

As can be noted above, the data collection process started with pre-RPG meeting 2 (with video recordings and field notes) since it was the session in which participants started to contribute to the process as opposed to the very first meeting in which the participants were merely listeners for the researcher's introduction. However, that is not to say that there were no data collected in pre-RPG meeting 1. Visual artefacts were actually the only tool used in that meeting. The rest of the data collections tools will now be analyzed in detail.

### 3.3.1. Video Recordings and Field Notes

These tools were used to collect data about the topics discussed, reflections utilized and interactional instances observed in the RPG meetings. The video recordings and field notes, as noted above, were used starting from pre-RPG meeting 2, namely brainstorming meeting. Particularly, the researcher took field notes by using a holistic protocol (Appendix 4) which incorporated information about date, length, facilitator, topics and summarized points of the discussions. The field notes were highly descriptive with rich language-focused and contextual information as well, which was conducive to coding and reflection done by the researcher later (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The main aim was to document the happenings in the sessions by focusing on the discussions, multiple interactions, critical incidents and reflective tools and cycles observed. The video recordings were used to reinforce the field notes both by providing visual accounts of real-time interactions and by serving verbal accounts related to meeting instances. They were used to confirm and elaborate on the data documented in notes.



### **3.3.2. Visual Artefacts**

These artefacts were mainly the posters participants produced in the RPG meetings. At those instances when teachers prepared some visuals related to the content of the sessions, the researcher collected them by taking their photos to be analyzed as data. These visuals were mostly on brainstormings, rules, roles and topics created by the participants related to the content of their discussions and reflections.

### **3.3.3. Reflective Essays**

The participants were also asked to write two reflective essays – one after RPG 3, another after RPG 7. The essays incorporated some questions to be answered and these questions particularly inquired the learning points in RPGs as well as the collaboration in the process (Appendix 5). Differently from aural and visual data gathered, reflective essays were utilized in order to make the participants stop and think about the previous experiences to create a written reflection. While doing that, it was considered that the act of writing required rigorous thinking in search of ideas and allowed fewer contradictions when compared to aural data (Farrell, 2013). Other than that, the reason why two essays were required was firstly to see the differences in thinking possibly to occur between the two narratives. Secondly, it was another way of reaching data saturation and triangulation to make data more credible.

### **3.3.4. Semi-structured Interviews**

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted – one after RPG 4 and another after RPG 8. The interviews were held a week later than reflective essays so that the participants would not deliver merely the same ideas in both formats. Through interviews, it was sought to collect special and deeper information that cannot be easily observed (Merriam, 2009). To that end, the participants were asked multidimensional questions related to the nature of RPGs and the lived experiences (Appendix 6). As in reflective essays, the reason why two interviews were conducted was to collect more data and to note the differences in ideas. Also, based on the first interview, the researcher could take another opportunity to probe further the areas that were not detailed enough. Therefore, as an addition to the paraphrased version of the questions from the first interview, in the second interview, the researcher also asked some other questions to obtain more data based on the extension of ideas by the participants.

The interviews were semi-structured, which means that they were run by a list of open-ended questions without any strict order and which enabled instantaneous, follow-up questions to elaborate on ideas (Merriam, 2009). To make the interviews flexible as such, in the final

part of the interviews, the participants were also allowed to share everything they desired related to RPGs. Each interview session nearly lasted 30 minutes and the conversations were videotaped for further analysis. The researcher also jotted down the upfront ideas as bullet points to help the videos be analyzed more easily afterwards.

### **3.3.5. Focus Group Meeting**

A focus group meeting was held with the presence of all the participants at the very end of the RPG process. The meeting lasted for about 30 minutes. The participants were asked similar questions to the ones in reflective essays and interviews but they were also asked some questions to deliver feedback about the parameters of RPGs, its use as a PD tool along with other future considerations (Appendix 7). The focus group meeting was also held for a few reasons: (1) Focus groups make it possible that the participants also interact while delivering their thoughts (Field, 2000), (2) participants also find a chance to elaborate on their reflections in the context of others' perspectives (Merriam, 2009). Within this perspective, it was thought that this way of interviewing is also suitable for one of the premises this study is built upon: Social-constructivism. Lastly, for saving purposes, the researcher took sketching notes in the session and the meeting was also video recorded for later analysis – as in the interviews.

The data collection processes were run smoothly and nearly all the teachers delivered their written and oral responses to the researcher. However, there were only a few pieces of missing information in interview 2 and the focus group meeting for the fact that Teacher G could not attend to the last interview and the focus group meeting; and Teacher S could not attend to the focus group meeting due to unavailability. Also, the video recording of the RPG Meeting 3 was lost due to technical errors of the recording computer. Except for these shortcomings, all the data collection procedures were run with the presence of all five teachers and with the records of all the happenings and reflections in the study process.

Credibility of this study was secured by the researcher with different methods. Particularly, the internal validity of this qualitative research was achieved through triangulation and confirmation of the data through several sources (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Initially, different sources of data collection were used to enrich data saturation – field notes, video recordings, visual artefacts, interviews, a focus group meeting. Also, the researcher used different sources to confirm the data. Member checks were applied with the review and correction the participants made on the collected data. Also, another researcher was consulted to review and confirm the data by watching the videos recorded and observing

the data analysis process in general, as suggested by Patton (2002, p.560) under the name of ‘analyst triangulation’.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed through the qualitative data analysis method suggested by Saldana and Omasta (2018). Within their perspective, the data was examined for emergent patterns and their relationships which contributed to the formulation of meanings created through the case. There were several key points considered in the analysis (Saldana & Omasta, 2018):

- Condensing data,
- Noticing patterns,
- Unifying different things,
- Understanding action, reaction and interaction in human behavior,
- Interpreting routines, rituals, roles and relationships (p. 30).

On a more specific note, multiple data collection tools were analyzed one by one with relevant parts through coding and categorizing and the emerging categorizations were synthesized with the intent of reaching wider themes and concepts. Through this process, the participants’ lived experiences, stories, actions, reactions and interactions along with values, beliefs, roles and relationships were detailed so as to reach a more meaningful understanding.

To be more specific with the analysis, first of all, the semi-structured interviews and the focus group meeting were transcribed from video recordings as verbatim. Then, the data was condensed and coded based on ‘in vivo coding’ by Saldana and Omasta (2018, p.182), which is defined as using participants’ own language as symbols for analysis. With the help of in vivo codes, the researcher also extracted the relevant quotations adding to the understanding of meanings. The participants’ sentences were condensed for coding purposes, but used as verbatim for quotations. The video recordings were checked over to confirm the quotations as accurate.

The reflective essays were also coded and categorized as in the interviews and focus group meeting. The essays were already condensed and concise, so the researcher only focused on the analysis of the patterns, especially those that were convergent with the interview data. The visual artefacts were analyzed in the same manner and the researcher tried to find out the relevant data appearing in the posters. As these documents created in the RPGs were about the

conduct of the meetings and the discussion topics, they were analyzed whether there was any relationship between these notes and the articulated themes in the interviews and essays.

Finally, the field notes and the video recordings of the RPGs were used to refer to the happenings in the meetings and critical actions, reactions and interactions to be quoted. Through the field notes, the researcher was able to note the RPG details such as discussion topics, facilitation, data and length; and through the video analysis, he noted the interactive and dynamic parameters relating to these elements. Therefore, these tools were merely analyzed for the happenings and to see if there was any relevant instance adding to the meaning of the emerging themes in other data collected.

All these codings and analyses were done in conjunction with the abovementioned co-researcher. The co-researcher is the colleague of the researcher and works as an instructor of English at a state university. In the transcription process, both researchers took an active role and shared duties. During transcription, both researchers consulted each other. In the coding process, the co-researcher worked in collaboration with the researcher and confirmed the codings as they were made. She also checked and proofread the quotations and helped for the analysis of the codes for the formulation of generic themes. Before all this process began, the researcher informed her about the study in detail and provided all the data collected for her. She also took some time to watch the videos herself, to check all the field notes, essays and documents and then shared her ideas with the researcher.

All in all, in collaboration with another researcher, the researcher of this study tried to use a coding system to reach certain categories that were then assembled to reach wider thematic interpretations. A complete understanding of the case was aimed in this study. As Saldana and Omasta (2018) note, “if human experiences are the primary focus for investigation, then the analysis of human actions and their meanings should be the primary focus...” (p. 30). Therefore, the whole experience of the participants was aimed to be portrayed as in depth as possible.

### **3.5. Role of the Researcher**

As this is a qualitative case study, the researcher was an indispensable part of data collection and analysis. As such, he joined all the RPG sessions, conducted interviews and the focus group meeting. Therefore, he took a variety of roles in this process. First of all, he conducted the first two RPG sessions (pre-RPG meeting 1 & 2) to introduce the study and the process and to set the tone in the very beginning. In these meetings, he took the role of a facilitator, which was transmitted to participants from RPG Meeting 1 onwards. Later, the

researcher took the role of a coach rather than a facilitator. As the coach, he encouraged applications of new ideas, experiments with different reflective practice tools and acquisition of new skills (Eitington, 2001). While doing this, he functioned as a catalyst rather than a prime knower of issues. At the end of each RPG, he also took the lead for approximately 15 minutes to wrap up the sessions and help the planning of the following sessions.

In general, the researcher took a peripheral role in the RPG meetings (Saldana & Omasta, 2018), by not participating directly in the discussions. He took a different seat away from the participants and took an active role only when the participants invited him to answer some queries or to address some issues. Also, in a few cases of off-task discussions and unrealistic reflections, the researcher guided the participants to change their perspectives in the discussion by asking some reflective questions and delivering examples.

More to the clear-cut roles mentioned above, the researcher, as a part of qualitative inquiry, was also dedicated to and immersed in the meaning making process of the study. In an attempt to have a grasp on the actions, reactions and interactions in the process, he took a reflective stance free of pre-assumptions or surface understanding of the issues, which Dahlberg (2009) conceptualizes as 'bridling'. Based on the idea, the researcher aimed to "...reflect upon the whole event when meanings come to be" (p.16). In the same vein, the researcher was devoted to the understanding of the case by adopting a purpose, belonging and meaning (Saldana, 2018). More specifically, the purpose of the researcher was to do something significant for the colleagues on personal and professional levels. He also assumed belonging in the group by continuously collaborating with the participants on and off the RPG site. Lastly, the researcher added meanings to his life as well by grasping another chance to analyze human life based on his reflections.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of this qualitative study will be presented in a way that they enable the depiction of the meanings created within the research process. The findings will be outlined in a connected order and within verbal accounts as a part of qualitative study design. As a result, with the data presented in this chapter, the research question will be addressed with a variety of different themes and sub-themes emerging out of the analysis.

The themes in this study were reached out of the prominent patterns based on the content and frequencies of in vivo codes. The titles in this chapter were formulated with these themes which are deeply analyzed and discussed in the later section. That means the data delivered in this chapter do not present deep discussions on the analysis, but rather give a detailed description of the whole body of the collected and categorized data. Before the delivery of analysis, the themes and sub-themes of the study are outlined in Table 4 below:

Table 4

*Themes and sub-themes emerging from the study*

Themes	Sub-themes
Affect	Friendship Openness Therapeutic Effect
Collectivity	Help Shared Wisdom
Action Orientation	Teacher Agency Practicality
Exploration	(Re)explorations about Teacher Self Explorations about Student Aspect of Teaching Explorations about Teaching as a Profession Explorations about Professional Development through RPG

#### 4.1. Affect

In the study, affect showed itself as a prominent theme which was traceable through a variety of connections with other patterns. Emotional side of the RPGs was emphasized many times by the participating teachers as the core of the learning process and as the powerful determiner of the nature of this developmental construct. At this point, Teacher M's statement is really comprehensive as to the inclusion of emotions in teaching profession as below:

I always thought there was a strict line between being a human and being a teacher. I felt if something bad happen and if I cry in my office about something, that would make me unprofessional. But in these meetings, it made me see that actually they are together, our emotions and our ways to teach. And I feel better about using my emotions. Do you remember my last journaling I shared? It was about my feelings in the classroom. How I feel connected to my class. Normally, I would feel ashamed to share such a story based on my feelings because that would not seem professional to me. Now I don't feel that. I saw that even though we talk about something in a professional way like methods and Latin words, I saw that we always include our feelings (Teacher M – Interview 1).

Adding to this generic statement about the affective side of RPGs, the teachers stated many other beliefs as to the impact of emotional dimension of this PD activity. Through the analysis of data related to affect, it was notable that teachers emphasized three sub-themes: Friendship, openness and therapeutic effect.

#### **4.1.1. Friendship**

It is important to note that the participants of the RPG were already colleagues in the school and had a friendship background before the study. They stated this fact in their sentences and underscored the importance of their existing relationship for their performance and learning in this process. This fact seems to be the main source of their positivity towards sharing and learning in the meetings. Teacher B remarked how happy she was about working with her friends as follows: “Specifically in this RPG group, I am really happy with my group mates because we already know each other very well, we are also friends outside these meetings, so this is a big plus for us” (Teacher B – Interview 1).

Teacher J also appreciated her relationship with her partners in the study, by using the term *rapport*:

It is really enjoyable because we have a good rapport. Everyone likes to share, everyone wants to find a solution. And everyone is very willing to give their best although they don't have that much time, so you really appreciate them being here and you also respect that everyone sets aside some time to share, so it is a really positive experience. I don't have any negative feelings (Teacher J – Interview 1).

To highlight how it worked for their professional development in RPG meetings, the teachers also explained the developmental benefits of their friendship. They made various

comments as to its involvement in their RPG work (emphasized in italics), as in the extracts below:

It was a big plus for us to work with not just our colleagues but friends. Because we are close friends and know each other very well, we felt more comfortable while we were *giving feedback or advice*. Also, this made these meetings less formal. (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 2).

You feel *more connected* to people. Even though you are not in the meeting, I feel like I can talk to these people in the group. They are more special for me. I remember talking to Teacher B (pseudonym). I remember talking to Teacher S (pseudonym). We just were talking in our break time and we were brainstorming about our lessons (Teacher M – Interview 1).

From these statements, it is clear that the teachers were able to be comfortable with and connected to each other, which made it possible for them to share and learn without being affectively filtered. The existing friendship also seemed to be evolving among the teachers through the process of RPG. The data showed that their rapport continued to grow more and evolved into a stronger and more professional relationship with time, as can be seen in the extracts below (emphases in italics):

My favourite part of this process is actually working with my colleagues. It might be the people I had the chance to work with, but I believe we *developed stronger bonds with each other* despite the people I worked with were already my closer friends in our institution (Teacher G – Interview 2).

We actually shared something and felt better connection with my colleagues than before. They were my close friends earlier, but I felt like it also helped me build *a better relationship as a colleague* with them (Teacher M – Interview 2).

A critical incident in RPG Meeting 4 also adds to the strength of friendship in this construct. In this instance, teachers had been sharing what motivated them as a teacher and at the end of the discussion, Teacher M asked a critical question. The answers showed the importance the teachers adhered to friendly relationships among colleagues:



Teacher M: Let me ask you a hypothetical question. Would you prefer high-level students who are really interested and not looking at their phone or would you prefer good colleagues to be motivated? I mean, good students are better or good colleagues are better?

Teachers agreed with *good colleagues*. Teacher B concluded as below:

Teacher B: We have good students and bad students. We have challenges. That is OK. But having bad colleagues would be a nightmare (RPG Meeting 4).

The importance of the friendship among the teachers in this study is upfront by all means. It is evident that the strength of their relationship was central to their efficacy in the RPG process and that they were actually privileged to start strong without any affective filters. The professional relationship was apparently facilitated out of this connection and this collegiality, according to Teacher J, would continue after the study thanks to the trust and reliability created:

To be honest, the thing I will do from now on, without forcing myself to do, is to go to those who I worked in the group because there is some kind of trust and reliability now between me and my peers. I think, if I have something in my mind I will go to them and talk to them about it, because now we had the same experience and know how to think about it so I trust those people to share my experiences with them. (Teacher J – Interview 2).

#### **4.1.2. Openness**

The teachers always emphasized that they felt free of judgment and stress of being evaluated in this professional development activity. In addition, their existing friendship seemed to support openness in the discussions, which was conducive to collaboration and support among them. Teacher B and G described the open atmosphere they had in their RPG as below:

Open, you know. I don't think that I should restrict my thoughts because everyone is open for feedback or open to new things, new ideas so I am open to tell something. I don't think "what will she think of it?" or "how will she react?" so we are all relaxed and it's not a stressful atmosphere even though we are sharing some puzzling moments (Teacher G – Interview 1).

The most significant one is that we are all open to improve ourselves as teachers which means we love getting feedback and reflecting on our performances. Because we do not think that we are criticized, we could analyze cases together and try to help each other (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 1).

As noted in the beginning, openness apparently came from teachers' friendship. Due to this fact, they were able to share their perspectives comfortably and honestly (emphasized in italics) as stated by Teacher B, M and J below:

If I don't know somebody very well, maybe I cannot be that much honest to them, or sometimes I can refrain myself of giving some kind of feedback to them. But when we are *friends*, we are more close, *more honest* to each other because we know that they will not get offended because of our opinions, so it is okay. It is a big plus for this kind of research groups (Teacher B – Interview 2).

I was actually lucky because I worked with my colleagues who were also my *good friends*. That means if I had someone in this group who I didn't feel comfortable with, *I wouldn't share all those things*. For example, do you remember we mentioned using L1-L2 in the classroom? I wouldn't be so eager to talk about that because, there is the prejudice about English teachers if you use like L1, you are a bad teacher. But I know none of the teachers here were bad teachers and they were so relaxed about talking about their ways of teaching so I *felt comfortable*, too. It makes things easier but I think I was the lucky one, it could have been otherwise with other people (Teacher M – Interview 2).

First you have the feeling that you could be judged, but you are not, but you could be, though. We just had some jokes or something, it was not judging. No, I felt really comfortable. I think that's because of our group, I don't know how it would work with other groups (Teacher J – Interview 2).

Teachers also evaluated professional development in terms of the involvement of openness in it. They were clearly in favor of open atmosphere to be able to obtain some levels of freedom to talk and to avoid judgment in the endeavor. In this sense, Teacher S compared RPGs with other forms of PD:

The highlight of these meetings is working with colleagues for me. Professional development activities are usually mandatory and they give the

impression of evaluating the teacher more than enhancing the teacher's abilities. With our meetings, I never felt that I was being judged or criticized (Teacher S – Reflective Essay 1).

Teacher M made a similar statement by making a comparison between RPGs and peer observation in terms of stress and limitations (emphases in italics):

I think sincerity is the most important thing because when it comes to like PD activities, for example peer observation, you feel like you have to do the best. Someone is going to watch you, you have the *stress all over your body*. And here you can be yourself and not worry about anything. When you do a PD activity, you are mostly *limited*, but here I don't feel limited (Teacher M – Interview 1).

In a similar line of thought, Teacher J stated the following sentence which emphasized the importance of openness in PD activities: “This process helped me realize that I need an environment where I can freely talk about issues that arise during teaching and ask for assistance without the fear of being judged” (Teacher J – Reflective Essay 1). These quotations make it clear that open-mindedness is the backbone of collaborative reflective practices like RPGs. The importance of not being judged and being open-minded was actually traceable in the poster the teachers created in the very first meeting (Pre-RPG Meeting 1), in which they carved out ground rules to follow in the upcoming RPG Meetings:

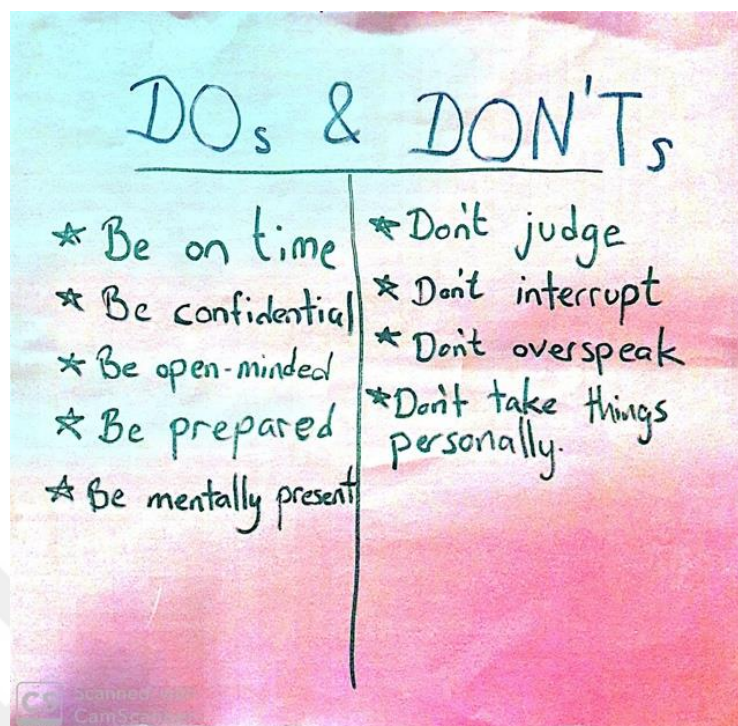


Figure 5. Poster on ground rules for RPG meetings

As a final note, Teacher G made a clear conclusion regarding how openness got the teachers closer and enabled them to relate to each other's feelings and puzzles:

Here I get the feeling that I can say whatever I want and they are open to listen and give feedback. We got closer. That's another thing. Outside the meetings. Because we share a lot here, we share our puzzles here so everyone can relate now. When I see someone outside I say "I know why she is feeling like this". We can relate to each other now (Teacher G – Interview 1).

The openness in the RPG meetings clearly affected the way this sharing community benefited from this activity. It was reinforced by the existing friendship and these constructs effectively completed each other. The teachers valued openness as much as their close relationship in the act of developing professionally.

#### 4.1.3. Therapeutic Effect

The analyzed data in this study also showed that RPG meetings had a therapeutic effect on the teachers' psychological well-being. Although it is not as prominent as friendship and openness and cannot be directly related to any professional learning act, the therapeutic side of RPGs is still worth exploring as a sub-theme. To start with, Teacher S and M clearly

explained how RPG meetings nourished them emotionally as a therapy and a place to relax (emphasized in italics):

It is both professional and at the same time it helps me more *emotionally*. Well, being here, five people sitting here and talking. Talking like this is just another form of *therapy for me*. We talk and we try to better ourselves and it gives me a feeling of wholeness in the institution (Teacher S – Interview 1).

I actually feel like I have *a place to relax*. I can listen to my own feelings as a teacher, that's something important for me because while working in a corporate place, you feel like you are a part of a big thing, but you never consider yourself as an individual. But here I feel like an individual (Teacher M – Interview 1).

The teachers apparently saw RPG meetings as time-off taken from the stress of teaching and as a place to listen to themselves. In RPG Meeting 2, there was a good example of how Teacher J used a therapeutic warm-up activity prior to the discussions:

OK. Before we start, I want all of you to relax and rest your muscles. Close your eyes. While your eyes are closed, I want you to smile very sincerely. All of your muscles relax, do you feel it in your muscles? Very good. We are happy, and we are smiling. Take a deep breath. We are in a different environment. Now, open your eyes (Teacher J – RPG Meeting 2).

The teachers also noted that this therapeutic and emotional side of RPG meetings highly motivated them. Related to motivation, Teacher B noted that the meetings supported her especially while she was teaching a low-level class: “Specifically, in this track, it made me more motivated in my Repeat Alpha class because otherwise I feel very bad in that atmosphere but here we try to find some solutions together and some strategies, so it made me more motivated” (Teacher B – Interview 1). Teacher M also stressed motivational benefits due to the effect of what she called emotional feedback (emphasized in italics):

We come to our meetings and we talk to others, we share our story, and even when sharing, I feel like they are listening carefully and they will elaborate on that. Feeling that *gives me more motivation* to give more details. So, when I give details, I can see the spark in their eyes. After I finish reading, even though they don't have any comment on it, they just say so many *positive things* like “it was so thoughtful”, “it was emotional”. They have this

*emotional feedback*. I think that's the most important thing. They don't always have to come up with solutions. Sometimes even just emotions matter (Teacher M – Interview 1).

Another instance reinforcing the motivational side of the meetings is the question Teacher J asked after her therapeutic warmer mentioned above. This one was her second warmer and it promoted a motivational start to RPG Meeting 2:

Teacher J: Now I want everyone to share their highs of this week today. Good memories from your class. When did you feel really good?

Teacher B: We played a Kahoot game, all students answered one question all correctly. In Repeat Alpha (repeating Elementary level), it is a big thing.

Teacher S: One of my students tried to form a sentence, normally she can't. She was so happy that she made me happy.

Teacher M: I was happy on one day, because for the first time I saw a class who was really interested to learn about the difference between be used to, get used to and used to.

Teacher G: I was happy because there was a student. She was trying to say a long sentence and all others helped her to make this sentence so I was really happy. A long English sentence together.

Teacher J: I had many highs this week but one of them was this morning. One student, Student K (pseudonym), he is not normally very interested, you might know him. He attended the lesson so encouragingly. He did all the exercises so I was really happy (RPG Meeting 2).

As a conclusion to the effect of therapeutic side of RPG, Teacher B suggested *talk sessions* for further RPG meetings, which she thought could help teachers emotionally: "They can talk about their materials, their lesson plans or their way of teaching. Frames or activities they use in their classes. They can share whatever they want. And sometimes there can be just talk sessions, not talking about the topics or problems, just talk session maybe" (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

In a nutshell, affect showed itself as the driving force in the impact of RPG meetings on teachers' PD in this study. They always foregrounded the affective parts of these meetings and how they ignited them in the way of sharing and exploring more. For this fact, Teacher S made a powerful comment as to the centrality of low affective filter in PD activities as below:

Knowing that the only concern of the others is to help out a problem eliminated the negative feelings that we have when talking about our problems. The feeling of kinship raised the helpful environment and I believe that should be the focus of every professional development activity (Teacher S - Reflective Essay 1).

#### **4.2. Collectivity**

With the undeniable influence of affect, the RPG participants in this case study were able to show a pattern of collective spirit by which they formed a unified body of decisions in forms of supporting each other and exchanging ideas and experiences. That is to say, thanks to the teachers' strong start to the RPG process without the interference of any affective filter, there was an organic collectivity among them and it seemingly added to the efficiency of their professional development.

More specifically, the teachers emphasized the importance of working in a group and how they benefited from this collective learning opportunity. Regarding that, Teacher B's quotation below shows an example of the appreciation for working with colleagues in RPG. Teacher B stated that she had always been appreciative of working in a team and RPG served that purpose as well:

I love working in interaction with people because I started working in a team in my work life. We were a team of 12 people. It was an export and import company. I was a member of foreign trade specialists there, so we shared all the jobs in that department. So, if one doesn't complete their job, the others will also be affected very negatively, so I know how to coordinate with people. And I love being a member of a group, but of course, it depends on the group. In all of my jobs, like foreign trade or as a teacher, we are always a member of a group, so we need to work together (Teacher B – Interview 1).

Teacher J also made a similar comment about the value of working collectively, as follows:

I am also amazed by how well we work together assisting each other despite having very different personalities. It made me aware that I should not refrain from asking my colleagues for assistance (Teacher J – Reflective Essay 1).

Obviously, this case had no shortage of collective behaviour by the group members and they were able to work in their group really comfortably. This stage of co-learning showed itself in two main sub-themes under the name of collectivity: Help and shared wisdom.

#### **4.2.1. Help**

As a highly affect-oriented aspect of collectivity, *help* has been found a very prominent theme which was central to teachers' responsibility for one another in the act of professional learning. The teachers in the RPG created a professional bound in which they showed many acts of supporting each other and it was apparent by the fact that the teachers used the word "help" in so many of their sentences.

The helpfulness was observed to be originated from the existing friendship between the group members. Teacher S made a clarifying statement as to this point, by emphasizing the value of helping in RPG:

To sitting here, talking with my friends and trying to help with their problems in the class. I realize then actually I do know something then I can help these people as well as they can help me, so it feels pretty good. (Teacher S-Interview 1).

Another reason for the culture of help to stand out in this study has been the commonalities in teachers' puzzles. At the very start of the process, teachers were able to address the topics they formulated out of their common puzzles. In Pre-RPG Meeting 2 – that is, brainstorming meeting – the teachers sketched a creative poster in which they documented their common puzzles to be worked on in the RPG meetings:



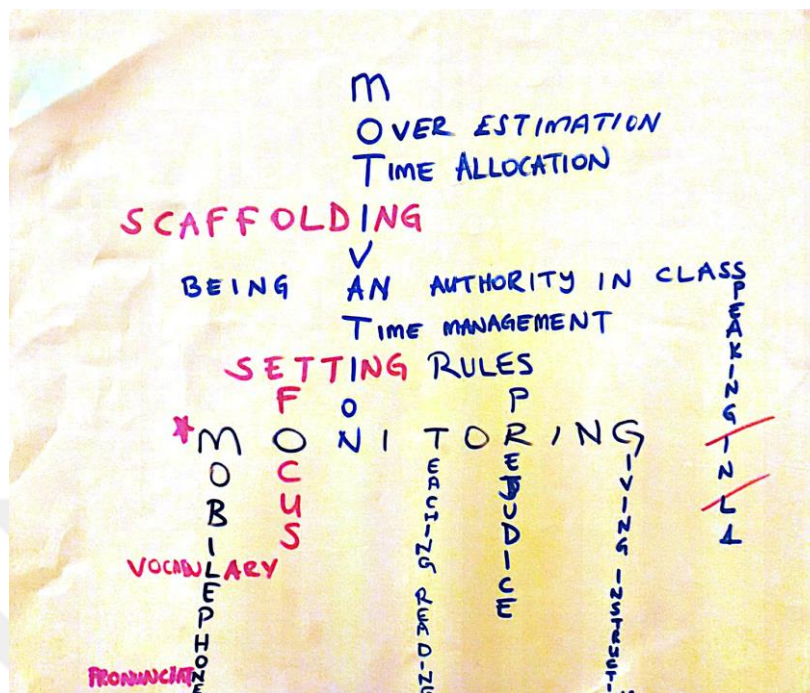


Figure 6. Poster on common teaching puzzles

Through the items in this poster, the teacher got to work on motivation (student & teacher), use of L1 and time management respectively (see the RPG Activity Log – Table 3). They prioritized the selection of topics and extent of the discussions, based on their freedom of choice. The quotations below by Teacher S clearly shows how she found out the commonality in puzzles and how this fact ignited a culture of help between the teachers (the common puzzle in italics):

I realized that there are many problems they are going through. Beside my problems and we have some similar problems and some different ones and I didn't use to think that many teachers have that kind of problems for that. When I realize that in our group, there are some really good teachers and when they say something, for example Teacher J (pseudonym). When the thing she said about *class management*. I was shocked. I didn't think she would ever have a problem like that and when she said it, I was shocked. I said OK, we have the same problems [...] When Teacher J (pseudonym) had a problem with *class management*, when that meeting finished, I was going home on bus, I checked the Internet to see what other tools we can use to be better on class management. To help her because I don't have many problems on class management. But I couldn't imagine Teacher J (pseudonym) having that problem, *what can I do to help her?* Because I know I am doing something

right, *I wanna help her*, so I looked and checked and I couldn't find anything. But still *I wanted to help her, that's why I checked* (Teacher S - Interview 1).

This culture of support in the form of help was appreciated by the teachers in the act of addressing common problems. In teaching profession, obviously, teachers may need helpful colleagues around them. When there is none, it may become an issue as can be observed through Teacher M's sentences below which is about how working in isolation challenged her once:

I think mostly student activities because when you try to plan something for students, as a teacher, you always find yourself alone. But here, I can feel like if I am planning something, I can actually find a partner to help me. For example, last year, I had a plan about how to motivate students. I turned their example final questions into these QR codes. Then I did a scavenger hunt with them. I put QR codes all over the campus and students searched for it. And it was actually something many students participated and many more wanted to participate, but couldn't. Why? Because I didn't have enough help from teachers. I couldn't deal with more than a hundred students on my own. But now, I have this group, I have these friends. Last year if this was the case, I would just go to them directly and ask them, but I didn't have that connection before (Teacher M – Interview 1).

The RPG construct seemingly eliminated the loneliness teachers may have suffered before in the career. It created a site in which teachers found it valuable to support one another. According to Teacher J, helping colleagues also created a learning opportunity in their meetings:

It is team work, so it is not only you. It is sharing and it is actually more enjoyable than just work on yourself by yourself. Work on others while they work on you. I mean while you have the opportunity to help someone else analyzing their problems, you also have the benefit. You can also benefit from other teachers' experiences. So, doing both makes me feel much better than just someone analyzing you or you analyzing yourself, so that mutual involvement in the project feels good (Teacher J – Interview 1).

In the exchange of help in this RPG, reflective practice was actually observed as a primary tool which facilitated the collection of data – through reflective practice tools – for the service of others' puzzles. That is to say, teachers found value in reflecting in, on and for

teaching action to offer help for other teachers. Teacher S stressed the utility of journaling in helping others:

The thing I did for Teacher J (pseudonym), I can do more for others, because we talk about other problems here, I think it would be really good for me to try my best and help the others by reading articles and coming here back. Maybe I can journal about them. When somebody said they are having problems, maybe I can journal what works for me. So, this happened, I did this and it worked. Maybe it can help you. When I am journaling, besides working on my own action points, maybe I can write some notes for my friends for their action points (Teacher S – Interview 1).

Teacher M also stated the benefit of collecting data for others through reflection, with an emphasis on the feeling of responsibility:

Meet the preparational process. I always felt the necessity to come here full. Even though I read something, I journal something, it just doesn't feel enough [...] Coming here with the (journaling) notes made me feel like I was prepared, you know I was good. I had many things that I could offer to my friends. And then it turned out not to be a liability, but like not a mission actually, but something I actually want to share (Teacher M – Interview 1).

It is clear that the teachers created a helpful approach to one another and reflected on practice to offer better help. This shows this RPG was formed as a strong community in which every member felt responsibility for others' learning. This must be a rare outcome in a case study, but certainly the one that would be desired in all collective PD activities.

#### **4.2.2. Shared Wisdom**

The teachers in this RPG also showed the signs of collective behavior in terms of exchange of ideas and expertise as well as working jointly. As an addition to the culture of help which was an affective-collective behavior, the teachers also valued shared wisdom through which they were able to witness other practices and perspectives and had a chance to work in collaboration with others. In a way, teachers emphasized the value of shared wisdom in two forms: Adding to each other's ideas and reaching the same target collaboratively.

In terms of the valuable exchange occurring in the RPG meetings, the teachers underscored the variety of standpoints – with the spread of the codes 'perspectives' and 'experiences'. At this point, Teacher J valued the chance of comparing experiences and

Teacher M valued the chance of hearing from many people on her practices – differently from peer observation (emphases in italics):

It (working in RPG) worked well, I was able to *compare my experiences* with those of the other teachers, especially because we were working on the same topic, on the same issues. It worked well, I think it was pretty efficient and you don't really have to change something in the way you are doing things but get *a new perspective of things*. That you can see: "Oh OK! It can work this way, too or that way, not just my way is the high way" (Teacher J – Interview 2).

I think it is actually better than peer observation and such things, because in peer observation only one person sees you and you only get one perspective. But here, you tell about your lesson from your own perspective and you hear *many other ideas from many other level teachers*. For example, one teacher says "if I was a Repeat Alpha teacher I would do this", "if I was a Delta teacher, I would do this". So, you can see *every perspective* and also one teacher shares about two classes, for example. All of them are in the same level but their reactions are different and you see them, too. So, it is not just one thing, all the things. It has a really important place in our professional development, in general (Teacher M – Interview 2).

For a more specific understanding, how shared wisdom worked for the teachers can be clearly seen in an instance from RPG Meeting 2, when the teachers shared perspectives as to how to deal with the mockery against one of Teacher S' students – while discussing the topic of motivation:

Teacher S: I want to ask for your ideas about a student of mine, you know him, he is socially awkward. Student M (pseudonym). He was really upset today.

Teacher G: Really. Why?

Teacher S: I don't know, I guess there is something between him and the others and I can't figure it out. I couldn't make others stop laughing at him. There must be an inside joke, I can't stop them. Maybe if you have anything?

Teacher B: What can we do about that?

Teacher M: Maybe you can ask one student that you trust, who is objective, what is going on. Another student from the classroom.

Teacher B: Yes, a good idea. Also, everybody mocking at him, maybe you can do the same. You can make them feel the mockery.

Teacher S: I do. It doesn't work. That class likes making fun of everything.

Teacher M: I had a student like this before. He was autistic actually. What I did was basically pairing them up and finding a good pair for him. Not for 5 mins. I was teaching full class always in pairs. When I asked a question, they could only talk to their pairs. The humiliation was over. They couldn't speak about others.

Teacher B: You can try Teacher M's (pseudonym) method. For the whole hour, pairing him with others.

Teacher G: But pair others, too. So, they won't have a chance to mock.

Teacher M: You can also talk to the administrator. What can be done?

Teacher J: We are now focusing on your class.

Teacher S: Yes, I think we should focus on this class (RPG Meeting 2).

Through this instance above, it is clear how many perspectives can be offered for one single issue. In fact, the high number of perspectives was highly appreciated by the teachers, suggesting that more perspectives bring more learning for them. For one, Teacher G thought more people brought more perspectives and she saw plurality as a significant resource:

It's a good way or it's a good place to share. I feel that before this thing we had no opportunity to share something, but only with our closest. We only had one person's opinion or something, but now doing this group we have more different opinions about something so it's good to share and to gather more information because you know we are different characters. So, everyone has a different idea about something, which is good because you can listen and take what you want, the ones you think is the best for you (Teacher G – Interview 1).

Working in a reflective group gave me the chance to hear the observation of four colleagues on my own teaching experiences. Thus, I had many different thoughts on one of my problems whereas I only would be able to think of one solution at best. Working with people who also are enthusiastic about sharing experiences and listening to others in order to help each other is a great opportunity to improve oneself in a very active process (Teacher G – Reflective Essay 1).

Teacher S also appreciated the plurality in terms of the increased amount of data (emphases in italics):

RPG meetings are different because we have a chance to work with more people which in my experience is more advantageous as we have more chance to hear different opinions and different solutions to our current problems. Also, we have more chance to *collect more data* as there is more people to do the tasks (Teacher S – Interview 2).

The reason I have become more prone to group studies is that it is more effective in terms of the amount of research increases with more people. To give an example, when we worked on student motivation, we *collected a lot of data from surveys to academic readings* and that resulted in learning more in less time (Teacher S – Reflective Essay 2).

Teacher B appreciated multiple perspectives with regard to the diversity in background. She noted that the teachers had different qualities; therefore, they got to hear about various experiences:

We have different groups in our jobs. For example, one has three years of experience, one has TESOL, one has pedagogic formation, so we have different qualities, different backgrounds. For example, one is German, the other was grown up in Germany, so this affects the meetings in a positive way because we can have some evidences from our own experience in classroom and also our backgrounds in life. I think this is a big plus (Teacher B – Interview 1).

This community naturally promoted learning for themselves due to the high level of shared wisdom. Sharing actually created learning in the form of re-adaptations for self-practices and more generally, self-awareness, as can be noted from Teacher G and B's sentences below (emphases in italics):

These meetings have shown me that learning through sharing experiences is more “convincing” for me, since I am able to see the direct effects in the teaching experiences of my colleagues and *readapt them to myself* (Teacher G – Reflective Essay 2).

I feel very nice because we share our ideas. I love getting feedback and giving feedback to my colleagues. This giving feedback makes me more *aware of my strengths* and also my job description. And also, sometimes when we feel ourselves stuck in some situations, in some cases in the class, it helps a lot to take some opinions from the colleagues (Teacher B – Interview 1).

Maybe the most striking quotation came from Teacher G regarding how sharing wisdom in community created learning for an individual:

I have a journal already, I write everything down but the problem was that I couldn't find someone to really share and take some feedback because only when I found someone, when someone has time, when I can catch someone on the corridor or something. But now we have our meetings every week, one day. Everyone comes together and have time to share and get feedback [...] I need somebody to share and someone who says "yeah I think that, too" or "why don't you think that way". I need someone to give another thought on it so I can form my own thoughts (Teacher G – Interview 1).

Reflection, again, played an important role in the formulation of shared wisdom. As it was included in the facilitation of the culture of help, reflective practice – more specifically the reflective cycle adopted in the meetings – added to sharing of perspectives and experiences in this process. Teacher B, who had a reflective history (SIT TESOL Certificate Course) made two powerful statements as to how reflective practice qualified sharing and vice versa (emphases in italics):

I practiced it before in TESOL session and it was my first time practicing there. I loved it because it is like seeing yourself outside. I realized that for example we don't remember most of the lessons when we go out of the classroom. But when we use these reflection tool and this reflection cycle together, our memory about our lessons and experiences get stronger. And then when you have a data from your lessons, you can see your weaknesses and your strengths in that specific part. Also, when you share this with your colleagues, always there is something that you can't realize in the lesson, but somebody tells you what if you try this or what if you don't do this in the second lesson So this is, I think, *a very good idea to share and reflect on your own performance* (Teacher B – Interview 1).

I am used to reflect on my lessons because I do it from time to time. Especially when something goes wrong in my class, I always think about it after the class like "what caused it to be like that in my class?" or "did I do something wrong?" or "how can I change my students' attitudes?" So, I always think

about it, but again it is an individual thinking for me. I never shared it with somebody. Sometimes I share it with my partners, IS (Integrated Skills) partners, to ask them what I can do more or what they do in their classes to solve the problem, but it is not a reflective cycle. It is like just asking for advice or help. This time, we all bring some data to the table and then we share and we take out from them, so sometimes when I say something about my takeaway, somebody else can use it, too, so it is not individual anymore when you share it. *We can use it as collective thing, so this is different than any other reflective cycles* (Teacher B – Interview 2).

In short, shared wisdom was apparently the backbone of so much learning occurring in this RPG. It is evident from the number of entries with the codes of sharing perspectives and experiences. It was also seen as an internalized, adopted way of developing professionally in this RPG. It is noteworthy to see Teacher M's sentence below, which was about her story of collaborative reflection with one of her office mates in the testing office:

I feel like when I do something good, I feel the necessity to share it with my partners. And that actually helped me a lot because I get a lot of positive feedbacks from teachers. For example, one of my office colleagues asked me for an idea and then I told her about just an example from our meeting. And she said it wasn't good for her level. Then we sat together and found a way together to make it work in her classroom. Mini version of this. So, I actually asked her questions like "how would it work?", "how would it feel after that?" and it let her think about her lesson, too and she actually gave me feedback after the class. This is something I learned here. And I applied it without even knowing that I applied it. Then I realized it was something I just copied it from here. I feel nice about it (Teacher M – Interview 1).

Apart from sharing reflectively in the form of exchange of ideas and expertise, the teachers also seemed to benefit from working jointly in the RPG meetings. More clearly, the teachers took steps collaboratively and worked as a unified body. Teacher J emphasized the collective decision making and Teacher B emphasized teamwork as a note of comparison with other forms of PD (emphases in italics):

You don't decide for yourself, you either *decide for the group* or *the group decides for you* or *someone in the group decides for the others*, so that's how it is *different* (Teacher J – Interview 2).

*Differently than the other PD activities*, not all the seminars or workshops in the school that we work, we had many PD activities every year professionally, but they were all individual things, not with somebody or as a pair or as a



team. So, this was the first time that we tried *a team activity like a professional development activity* (Teacher B – Interview 2).

Maybe the most featured sign of working jointly in this RPG was the time the teachers planned a lesson together during which they truly collaborated for a shared objective. Teacher M noted how much she favored the activity in terms of collectivity – more specifically shared wisdom:

I really liked preparing a lesson plan together although I couldn't spend so much time on it. I really liked seeing the reflection of another teacher (Teacher T – invitee for RPG Meeting 8), outside this group. I didn't know we could do this, if it is possible. But, seeing that she is enthusiastic, we were again, lucky about this. She gave us feedback and it was a great idea that some of us did the same lesson, too. Seeing that we have the same feedback from different teachers without talking to each other was really nice for me (Teacher M – Interview 2).

Based on the recording of RPG Meeting 7 and the field notes of the researcher, the specifics of this lesson planning session can be found below. Also, how the teachers assigned roles and worked jointly will also be outlined:

RPG Meeting 7: Teachers planned a 50-min lesson for Intermediate level on Reported Speech for Simple Present and Past tenses. In this meeting, they used a class with a projector to plan their lesson. Their roles were as below:

*Generic roles:*

Teacher J, B and G: Planning of Lead-in and Presentation part.

Teacher S and M: Planning of Practice & Production tasks.

The Researcher: Monitoring the whole process.

*Specific Roles:*

Teacher J: Using computer, projecting on the board. Taking ideas, preparing slides and word documents.

Teacher B & G: Brainstorming ideas for Teacher J to note them down.

Teacher S: Using another computer to prepare practice tasks.

Teacher M: Pairing with Teacher S and helping her to write the items for the tasks.

In the end, all teachers calculating times, acting out some tasks and choosing Teacher B to send the documents to Teacher T (the invitee) for the execution of the lesson.

In a nutshell, collectivity was found to be a significant theme through the RPG process. It was facilitated by low affective filter and promoted effective learning experience for the teachers in terms of helping one another and sharing wisdom. Reflective practice was also found to be the core of this collectivity, qualifying the exchanges with more data from classroom practice.

### **4.3. Action Orientation**

Apart from collectively working with one another, the teachers within this study also benefited from the action orientation of RPG, which means that the developmental process was actually fostered by classroom realities and the reflective data gathered directly from teaching practice. In this perspective, the teachers were generally appreciative of the solution-oriented, experience-based and active side of these meetings and thus surfaced this general theme of *action orientation*. More specifically, these teachers found opportunities to actively work on their true practices by staying focused on their teaching in and out of the classroom.

Within this understanding, the emergent sub-themes gathered by the researcher were *teacher agency* and *practicality*. Teacher agency was categorized as the teacher activity in the meetings and practicality was categorized in line with the fact that RPG discussions were informed by the practices in teachers' classrooms.

#### **4.3.1. Teacher Agency**

Through the RPG process, it was found that teachers valued the fact that they were really active in RPG meetings, dealing with their own practices, being the center of decision making and engaging in having an impact on student learning. The teachers actually made lots of efforts in the way of creating solutions for their classroom puzzles and used the RPG meetings as a site for exploring improvement. Teacher B stated how she appreciated the teacher activity in the RPG meetings – when compared to other forms of PD – as below:

In the workshops or in the seminars, conferences, we are mainly mostly inactive. But in RPG meetings, we are the main elements that follow the procedures and that do the meetings together, so this was an active action for all of us. We need to read something, we need to search for something and then we need to share them (Teacher B – Interview 2).

At this point, Teacher M, S and J emphasized how this activity was different from other teacher meetings focusing on complaint (emphases in italics):

Before these sessions, I had witnessed many colleagues *complaining* about students, lessons, school rules etc. But it was actually the first time I came together with my colleagues to *actually do something* about our problems, rather than just talking and demotivating ourselves (Teacher M – Reflective Essay 1).

When we interact outside here, it is more of a *whining* and not to help each other, but to help each other emotionally [...] But here, I said OK this doesn't work, what can I do? And all the others try to help me. But outside here, that is not our objective. We know we have *an objective here*, to sit here and do this. When somebody knows you have to do this here for two hours, you do it. But outside, I never think of it. We go out, I spend most of my time with two other colleagues in this group, Teacher G and B (pseudonyms). We never had the same interaction that we had here before. Of course, we talk about our classes. Of course, we share materials and do things, but not like here. This is a more *professional* side of the office (Teacher S – Interview 1).

When I talk with colleagues usually, it ends with "Oh yeah, I understand you. I know. I have the same problem. Oh well, what can I do? These are our students. Don't give up". But here it is more *analytical* and we focus more on solutions. I think what I can get out of here is that afterwards when I talk with my colleagues about what happens, like any problems, I could be more *solution-oriented*, like not just the complaining, but also what can we *do* (Teacher J – Interview 1).

These quotations above bear specific codes such as *do something*, *have an objective*, *professional*, *analytical* and *solution-oriented*. These codes all show that the teachers actually saw the RPG meetings as a site to work on their improvement, instead of being passively listening to the ideas of other experts. This teacher agency obviously affected their learning positively in this process.

The appreciated teacher agency was supported by reflective practice tools in the meetings. More specifically, the teachers had a tendency for reading literature as a form of external input, especially when they initiated a new topic of discussion. As could be seen from the RPG Activity Log (Table 3), the teachers read literature for student motivation (RPG Meetings 1 & 2) and use of L1 (RPG Meeting 5) and reflected on their readings to synthesize information which supported their reflections on and for their classroom practices. As a resource, teachers favored benefiting from theory to inform their practices. The instance from RPG Meeting 5 below is a clear example of how the teachers used reading as a reflective tool as a part of teacher agency. In this instance, the teachers were sharing insights from the articles they selected regarding the use of L1:

Teacher S: I guess we all read the same one. The thing that was surprising for me is that CEFR now have statements including competencies like translating. Did you know that? It is really surprising. Their “can do’s” changed recently and they now have translation.

Teacher B: I found an article from a professor on Linguistics. He talks about the positive effects of L1. He says some foreign language teaches believe that students should have a native like language proficiency so students are encouraged to suppress the use of L1. However, SLA revealed that the errors made in second language learning cannot be totally attributed to L1 interference.

Teacher J: Using only L2 in the class was really popular in 80s and still the majority of teachers think L1 should be completely banned in class. (Then she reflects). I also used to think that, but now I change my mind about it, because I also started using L1 in my class (RPG Meeting 5).

Teacher agency, in the form of staying actively focused on professional learning, was also used as an everyday tool outside the meetings. Teacher G’s sentences below is a clear example of how these teachers kept actively inquiring their practices:

I think everyone is taking something out of this. You know we are not just coming here, waiting for the time to pass. Everyone is taking some information and I see outside the meetings. I saw Teacher J (pseudonym), she was like “aha did you try this? Did you do this?” Everyone is very motivated to take some things out of it and try out. So, everyone is using it very efficiently (Teacher G – Interview 1).

It is obvious that teachers liked being the agents of their own improvement and constructed development actively. In the RPG meetings they always worked on solutions for improvement and tried to take away an action point out of them. However, Teacher S cautions us against working beyond achievable outcomes. She stated that not everything is solvable in RPG meetings:

The first challenge that comes to my mind is to find a takeaway. I see others having that, too. Not all of our problems can be solved by us. Some problems are just beyond our reach, like student behaviour problems. I can't do much about it. I can try some things, but if a student is gonna misbehave, they misbehave. It is not my job to fix their behaviour. I am there to teach them. So, when we have problems like that, we don't have anything to do. And we don't have a takeaway on that. Just small ones maybe (Teacher S – Interview 1).

This quotation is a reminder of how to stay realistic in RPG meetings. It may be because some topics are really too generic to reach solutions for (some student behavior issues as mentioned above) or it may be that the teachers could not come up with ideas in a particular meeting. In sum, teacher agency is valuable for those teachers and it is better when used for reachable outcomes.

#### **4.3.2. Practicality**

Along with being the agents of their own development, the teachers also favored the fact that the meetings were basically informed by the classroom happenings; that is, real critical incidents from the classrooms. In a way, teachers were able to practice what they discussed in the meetings and could also join the following ones with insights from their practice. Working in RPG required something to do in class, another type of action orientation, and Teacher J found it really valuable (emphases in italics):

Every time I leave the meeting, I *have something to do*. And I have something to realize, to work on and to think about for my next classes. And that gives a feeling of responsibility which makes me more aware in the class about what I am going to do and what have to view things that *happen in class* (Teacher J – Interview 1).

In terms of practicality of doing something in class, teachers actually reached solid outcomes after some meetings to be tried out in their classes. In the instance from RPG Meeting 2 below, after a considerable amount of discussion, the teachers derived good ideas for motivating students to be tried out until the following meeting:

Teacher B: I will have a session with them. I want make them realize their mistakes in speaking English. What their problems are in English.

Teacher M: I will try focusing on the upcoming Quiz with the students. One at a time. I will see how it motivates them.

Teacher G: I will have a pair system to motivate students. Whenever one pair is stuck, their partner has to jump in. Maybe they will be more comfortable to talk that way.

Teacher S: I will work on making students feel OK when they make mistakes.

Teacher J: There are things that I am already working on but maybe working on materials to make reading classes more enjoyable or tolerable. Engaging (RPG Meeting 2).

The teachers also presented their ideas as to how this practicality helped them develop professionally. In the quotations below, Teacher G made a generic statement that doing in class helped learning, Teacher J focused on authenticity of practice compared to other forms of PD and Teacher M emphasized the experiential side as beneficial (emphases in italics):

For my PD, I think when I see it as what I can learn out of it, it has a huge impact on it because I can take it and do it in the class and you know it is on point. It's not before or after something, it is during something so it's *very helpful for my development* because *I can try it out*. So, it's very helpful, I think (Teacher G – Interview 1).

It was much more fun than observation or peer observation. Just coming together with your own stuff, with your own load, putting them on the table, sharing with everyone. It's much *better than observation or peer observation* because it was *authentic*, it *wasn't fake*. Peer observations are not very authentic, other observations are fake. Observations are best practices, you know (Teacher J – Interview 2).

When we don't have something much to read, maybe we don't have materials, but we have our experiences. That's better than actually reading something

because you know *how it is used in the classroom*, you know *how students react* (Teacher M – Interview 1).

In a deeper sense, teacher agency and practicality were actually facilitated by reflective practice, as noted by the teachers. It was apparent in the data that working on the things to be ‘done’ in the classroom and the desire to make a change during those meetings were made possible thanks to the aid of reflecting in, on and for actions. Related to that, teachers stated the importance of thinking back and inquiring deeper as below (emphases in italics):

It has lots of benefits for me. I feel that, you know, every time in the class when I *think back* “Ahh, we talked about that, that happened in Teacher J’s (pseudonym) class, that happened in Teacher M’s (pseudonym) class”, “she did like that so I can do like that”. So, it helps me (Teacher G – Interview 1).

I wasn’t a person who did reflection, even on my own. I like to think about my lessons but now I realize that I looked at it in *a wider perspective* that I need to *get into details* (Teacher M- Interview 2).

These quotations stress that classroom actions inform these meetings effectively when reflective practice is used as a tool. In other words, reflective practice is the bridge between practicality and teacher agency, between classroom and meetings, and between theory and practice. At this point, teachers emphasized the utility of reflective practice tools – such as journaling, audio-recording and surveying – as being the core of making use of the practice in class and working on it actively. Teacher J remarked the importance of these tools in capturing classroom events as data (emphases in italics):

When you don’t have *data* when you come to those meetings, it is just your idea, you know. And it is just your memory combined with what you think about what you got through. But when you have these reflective tools, it’s *evidence* of so much going on (Teacher J - Interview 2).

Upon this generic comment by Teacher J, there were also other pieces of quotations with the codes stressing the value of each tool individually. In this study, the teachers seemed to benefit considerably from journaling – it was the most used reflective practice tool (see RPG

Activity Log – Table 3). The teachers found it really effective in terms of remembering classroom events and being able to reflect on many details accordingly (emphases in italics):

Journaling makes me think back right after the class, I usually take notes not during the class, so it is hot reflection, I think. So, it makes me *relive in the moment*. Because when you don't journal, sometimes you have some feelings but they *vaporize* sometimes. But if you have it on paper, you have some data that you can use to work on (Teacher J – Interview 1).

I mostly used a journal to keep track of both my own and my students' actions in class. I believe journaling is an *effective way to reflect* on the issues both in class and after class. I have never had the chance to *elaborate on my actions this intensely* (Teacher S – Interview 2).

Journaling was something I have never done before. But while I was doing it, I wasn't even taking notes in my classroom. So, I found if I didn't do that, I *would forget* most of it. I normally feel like I don't forget it. But as it turns out I do and it helped me a lot. And I actually started using it outside our RPG meetings. I like taking notes what my students say to just *remember*, not use it maybe, but when a student says something, then I *have a record* of what they said previously. And *reflecting on the journal* was something else for me, I have never done that too [...] So it is actually fun. It's actually working to *remember more details*. You think you have the details, but when you *go deep into it*, you realize there are more details into it. So, it actually feels like a *self-discussion to me*. I always thought, I did it by myself, my inner talks. But I saw that *writing is a kind of different and deeper aspect* of doing it (Teacher M – Interview 1).

In terms of remembering and reflecting functions of journaling, it was highly stressed that it allowed teachers to get deeper into details. At this point, it is worth observing an instance from RPG Meeting 1, during which teachers were sharing journal entries as to the demotivated students in their classes. In these excerpts, teachers were seemingly delivering plenty of details about the students and situations:

Teacher G: It was an IS (Integrated Skills) lesson. One student was trying to say something, express her idea, while we were doing speaking. I was motivating her saying "try to say that in English". And there was a student behind her, she caused demotivation because while she was trying, the student gave away some words. She was thinking of words and trying to find. But the other was giving away and she said "OK! Teacher. Enough". Because he was saying it, she stopped trying.



Teacher S adds to G's story: Today, I was eliciting the difference between subject and object pronouns. I have a student from last year in the class. He just kept giving me the answers. I asked him to stop. This time he got demotivated.

Teacher J: In IS (Integrated Skills), Student S (pseudonym) always believes that the only reason she is in prep class is that she missed the September FLAT (proficiency exam at the university). She is currently preparing for it so she does not feel the need to actively participate (RPG Meeting 1).

Another tool the teachers used with the purpose of collecting classroom data was surveys. They utilized two surveys in the study – one for student/teacher motivation and another one for use of L1. Basically, teachers benefited from open-ended questions in their surveys, to reach students' and teachers' perspectives about the aforementioned topics. They valued the use of surveys in terms of reaching students' viewpoints and gathering specific data (emphases in italics):

Surveying. You *find out more* than you actually experience. Not necessarily from the teachers, they were very similar to what we said, but the students' surveys. They were very interesting (Teacher J – Interview 1).

I also used survey with my students. It was perfect because my students found that I prepare some questions and take some answers from them and analyze it and then we talked again in another session about my results. They felt that I really take care of them and I really *wonder their reasons* and I will try to help them out about *their problems*. So, it worked a lot and also I had some *specific data* with their answers, *concrete data*, so it was perfect as a tool (Teacher B – Interview 1).

The last tool used by the teachers was audio-recording. Teacher B emphasized its benefits under the codes of *remembering*, *realization* and *specific data* (emphases in italics):

Audio-recording is also very useful because it is impossible for us to *remember* all the lesson, so when you listen to your lesson, sometimes you *realize* that I will do it differently in the second time because it didn't work. So, you *realize* your behaviour in the lesson (Teacher B – Interview 2).

I tried audio-recording to *remember* the all of the lesson. It worked a lot, but it is also time consuming because you need to listen to the lesson from the beginning. But of course, it is *more specific* because you can just find your data in one sentence and you can use it in your reflection, so it is more useful.

Sometimes we can't find enough time to journal some cases in the classroom (Teacher B – Interview 1).

All in all, the teachers in this study favored the action orientation in the RPG process, stressing the value of teacher agency in actively building improvement and practicality in informing their discussions with classroom evidence. Obviously, reflective practice and its tools were an integral part of the basis on classroom action. In sum, along with collectivity, being active was also identified as the pathway of learning professionally in RPG.

#### **4.4. Exploration**

In this study, the participating teachers worked on the topics of motivation of students and teachers, use of L1 and time management. Throughout the process, they used the reflective practice tools such as reading, journaling, audio-recording and surveying (see RPG Activity Log – Table 3). Toward the end of the study, utilizing collectivity and action orientation of RPGs, and qualifying them with reflective practice, the teachers seemingly reached some major explorations which are worth considering in this part. The *in vivo* codes generally included 'awareness' and 'realizations' and it makes it clear that the teachers made discovery learning about their profession through the 9-week RPG period. The sub-themes related to the explorations of teachers could be divided in four categories: (Re)explorations about teacher self, explorations about student aspect of teaching, explorations about teaching as a profession and explorations about professional development through RPG.

##### **4.4.1. (Re)explorations about Teacher Self**

Although the teachers in this study were reasonably experienced in their profession, it was noted through the data that they reached (re)explorations about their self-practices and beliefs through RPG process. In other words, they could still explore some new ideas which initiated re-considerations about their existing practices. Teacher M made a generic point about her exploration of her own style of teaching as below:

In the meetings, I have witnessed two types of teachers, one type is consisted of those who can enjoy their lessons when they actually fulfil their lesson plan, and those who do not consider the lesson as a whole and enjoy the flow in general. I believe I am in the second group (Teacher M – Interview 2).

Teacher S made another exploration, questioning her routine teaching behaviour and possibly demotivating teaching acts – with the help of journaling (emphases in *italics*):

I got used to doing the same things. I have been using Empower (the course book used in the school) for four years now and it was just *automatic*. I was *doing everything automatically*. But with the journaling, I just stopped and take a look at myself. And why do I do that? Why did I say that? And I *realized that one point that I use many negative adjectives* in the class, for example and it might affect badly, my students badly. So, journaling made me *realize the things I do in the class that might be negative* to the students (Teacher S – Interview 1).

Although there was self-questioning in the former quotation, the same teacher realized the power of her existing practices as well, in exploring her own self. She made a point about her feeling of empowerment due to the RPG process. She confirmed her skills in teaching, as below:

I had the chance to learn more about myself in the process. Also, reflecting on other people's problems made me realize what I already know and what kind of things I am doing well in the class (Teacher S – Reflective Essay 1).

I didn't see myself as one who knows a lot to give other teachers speech. "Okay, I did this, it worked. Maybe you can try this". I don't think I was like that kind of authority. Now I feel like I am because I see it is just sharing experience. No one have to come. The ones that want to come will come and maybe they can learn something from me. That's it. Now I don't think I have to be an authority to give advice to someone [...] I realize that all of us are authorities in a way. Even a one-year experienced teacher, no experience teacher at all and ten years of experience. We are all our own authority in a way. We are the authority in a class any way (Teacher S – Interview 1).

As such, the teachers also made lots of discoveries about some specific teaching skills. Teachers apparently had some epiphanies that sparked some learning moments through their discussions. Below, there are some examples of specific learning points through discovery (emphases in *italics*):

I remember Teacher J's (pseudonym) reading ambition. Actually, let me think what to do in my *reading* class, because I realized *I didn't pay a lot of attention to my skills in general*. So, seeing her being ambitious about it made me think

myself. I always prepared something, but I wasn't that into it like her (Teacher M – Interview 1).

To be honest, with the audio-recording, I never listened to it afterwards because I was working on, I wanted to see how much Turkish I speak so as I explained in the reflection paper, I realized that *I do not speak Turkish in class when I know that I am recorded* (Teacher J – Interview 2)

I found out that *I was wrong to think that students want me to speak Turkish in class all the time*. It turned out the majority only feels the need for Turkish explanation whenever they feel really stuck and actually enjoy being forced to speak English in class, which was a positive surprise for me! (Teacher J – Reflective Essay 2)

Upon our talks with my colleagues in these meetings, I have realized that *I should be more patient in some behavioral and learning problems of students*. Another discovery about my teaching is *I also need to be motivated like students in order to be more efficient* in the classroom (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 1).

The last critical exploration came from Teacher M, when she made a discovery about herself related to how she developed herself professionally. It was a point directly related to her PD, rather than classroom practice. She mentioned how learning in collaboration contributed her:

I didn't know that the power of unity was that strong in me. I always considered myself as an individual learner due to the fact that I always performed my best when I studied alone, however, these meetings proved me otherwise as I felt stronger while learning in collaboration. This situation also made me look at things from a different perspective and I believe I'll make use of peer collaboration more often (Teacher M – Reflective Essay 1).

It is safe to say that RPG process made the teachers question their self-practices and beliefs in a positive way. They apparently found a space in which they could inquire themselves in the midst of collaborative action and it is noteworthy to see how specific they were with their explorations.

#### 4.4.2. Explorations about Student Aspect of Teaching

In the data collection process, the teachers also noted that they were able to see through students' perspectives with the help of their discussions and reflective practice. On a specific note, they made some explorations about students' ideas and feelings. In this context, Teacher S noted how she was being a teacher and a student at the same time while she was journaling in class:

It made me realize my own actions in the classroom, journaling especially. Before, I was just on my own in the class. I was the teacher and I was interacting with the students, but with journaling, I started being the student and the teacher at the same time. I started like "OK, what would I do if I were the student?" "What would I react when my teacher said this to me?" So, it made me realize the student aspect of the classroom more because as teachers it is really difficult to feel like a student again. [...] I forgot how frustrating it is, how difficult it is and with my reactions and the student reactions, I realized that just I need to think more on the student side more than the teacher side of it because they are the ones who are really struggling in the class than us (Teacher S – Interview 1).

The teachers also noted some specific realizations regarding students' standpoints. A very good example can be Teacher M's point about the difference between the teachers and students in terms of the resources they utilize for learning languages:

In addition to learning about my teaching, I had the opportunity to learn about my learning. While commenting on my colleagues' classes, I had to look at the situation from a student's perspective. When one of my colleagues said "my students don't enjoy and do not attend when I speak in L2", it made me realize that I would have felt the same way. We mostly criticize the way our students learn, mostly because it is different from ours. We were not born into technology and for the tasks we had to complete, we had three sources; our family, teachers and the books. Now that I think about it, I see that I would rather get help from my computer, instead of these three sources (Teacher M – Reflective Essay 2).

It is clear that the teachers ceased questioning, if not criticizing, the ways of students in learning a language. They were actually really keen to understand the nature of student learning and made deep analyses in that regard. Student motivation, as the longest discussion point in this RPG, was one of those critical areas that the teachers tried to discover students' viewpoints. To that end, they applied surveys to find out motivational and demotivational

factors in students' performances. Below, there is the poster the teachers created after analyzing results of student surveys:

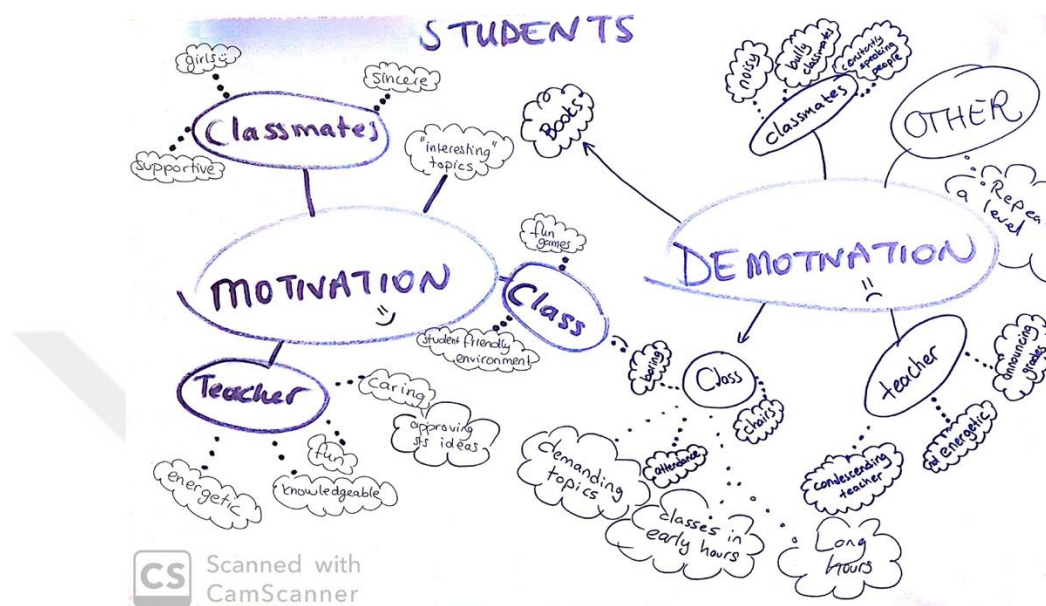


Figure 7. Poster on analysis of (de)motivational factors for students

The poster above is a really clear picture of how these teachers were endeavoring to figure out students' ways of thinking in terms of motivation. As another clear note for motivation, Teacher G reached a good realization about students:

When we talk about specific things, we did all the motivation thing, I didn't even realize that I had issues about it because I am normally positive kind of teacher and I said "ooh yeah everything is manageable and positive". But now I see it, I learned to see how things can be done, what things may cause issues for students, not for me but for them. So, it helps me in very specific kinds of cases (Teacher G – Interview 1).

Teacher B made a deeper discovery about the motivation of her repeating class with the utility of survey. Her words below are really detailed and show her deep inquiry about her students (emphases in italics):

I have learned that I like digging into problems, trying to understand underlying reasons and find solutions for them. Instead of accepting the situations as they are or just complaining about them, I find it better and more useful to deal with them. To give a vivid example, almost all of the instructors at this university think that there is nothing we can do to motivate repeat students, they are not able to pass the prep class; if they fail in the Elementary level, we cannot make them enthusiastic to learn English anymore. However, for our RPG meetings I did a small questionnaire and talk sessions with my students to find out the reasons of their failure and the areas they should improve themselves to achieve their goals. After these, I observed that *80% of my students felt more confident and eager to progress in English*. For me the reason is that *they felt to be understood and supported by somebody to help them discover and solve their problems in English learning* (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 1).

Similar deep inquiry was also done about students' expectations as to the use of L1 by their teachers. In RPG Meeting 6, the teachers discussed the results of another student survey in which they asked the following questions to students (Turkish questions are translated into English below):

1. Do you think Turkish should be used in a language class? Why?
2. Do you need to hear Turkish from time to time? If yes, when and in what skills?
3. When you are asked to use only English, how does it affect you? Positively or negatively?
4. Do you have other ideas?

After the discussions, Teacher M summarized the students' approach to the use of L1 with this sentence: "So the thing we understand from this is that they want to be forced to speak English but they don't like us to speak in English. They want instructions in Turkish, lesson in English" (Teacher M – RPG Meeting 6).

In sum, the teachers inquired student perspectives really deeply and made specific learning points out of it. They saw RPG as a really rewarding tool to explore students' views and to reflect on their teaching accordingly.

#### **4.4.3. Explorations about Teaching as a Profession**

As an addition to teachers' explorations related to their existing practices and student perspectives, they also noted some discoveries about their job. Teaching was, in this sense, analyzed by the teachers as a profession in terms of what it is (not) and how it can be improved.

As a start, Teacher B stated an exploration that teachers need to be lifelong learners (emphases in italics):

I have *learned that I love searching and reading something about ELT*. Since I am a literature graduate, I had limited knowledge on ELT before; however, when I started learning more about the field at TESOL times, I realized that I enjoy enhancing my repertoire about my job [...] *We should always be lifelong learners as teachers* (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 2).

She clearly revealed that RPG meetings were a follow-up to her former experiences in learning about the field of teaching English. Also, interestingly, being a non-ELT graduate was emphasized by her as a deficit. It was stressed by Teacher S as well in her lines below about her exploration that teaching is not about knowing ELT jargon (emphases in italics):

I am not an ELT graduate. I feel bad myself on this because I realize all big words like ELT words like interpretation, generalization and planning. These words scared me usually because I don't know them. I know them but I didn't study them. Well, in these meetings, I learned a lot of them and besides learning *I realized that I don't have to know all of them because I use them in my class*. I don't know the names but I do happen to use them. So, this realization really helped me as a teacher because I felt more, how can I say it, I felt more professional when doing these things (Teacher S – Interview 1).

Despite the fact that these teachers valued being an ELT graduate, they also found value in their existing experiences and working on them for improvement. They also stated that they found value in reflection and it was another exploration about their belief in their professional improvement. Teacher G and B explored that teaching required continuous reflection (emphases in italics):

While we were discussing about specific situations, different suggestions came up, yet, they did not work out the same as expected in all classes. Therefore, I now think that *teaching contains a continuous reflection*. In order to address your students and their weaknesses properly, one has to reflect on this specific class and type of students thoroughly and act upon it afterwards. It is always good to hear different techniques and ways of dealing with specific situations, but one has to be aware that it might not work out the same in your own teaching experience (Teacher G – Reflective Essay 1).



In these meetings I have learned that *self-reflection is very essential in teaching*. Managing to *observe yourself as an outsider* and try to work on the weak parts is the key to be a more aware and successful teacher (Teacher B – Reflective Essay 1).

Very related to the statements above, these teachers discovered that teaching is not a one-size-fits-all skill. That is, it does not contain techniques that always work well, which might be the reason teachers valued continuous reflection above. Supporting this point, Teacher M, S and J made crucial statements as to their discoveries that failing is normal in teaching and there is no specific way to teach (emphases in italics):

It (RPG) helped me see that *failing is okay and that it actually helps us find better ways* of implementing our lesson plans. So to say, regarding the earlier meetings we have conducted, it can be said that there is *no specific way to teach*. Teaching is indeed a journey, where you find yourself and learn about others on the way (Teacher M – Reflective Essay 1).

As I did not study ELT in university, I always had insecurities as a teacher. Although I still have those insecurities, these meetings helped me realize that studying approaches and techniques are just one piece of a *huge complicated machine*. By reading about the subjects we worked on the meeting, I realized that I apply some of the techniques without studying them. This made me realize once again that *teaching is highly subjective and there is not a specific way to teach* (Teacher S.- Reflective Essay 1).

As a quotation related to failing and the value of reflection in teaching, Teacher J shared a critical learning moment based on her experience of motivating students (emphases in italics):

I thought of working on being a figure of authority and someone else wanted to be more flexible in the classroom, we all decided that all of the students were in need of encouragement, so we worked on the topic “*motivation for students*”, integrating our own specific action points. My action point was to encourage the students to read a book outside of class, by preparing tasks such as checking understanding questions to be answered in class. To my disappointment, *I learned that believing that I have a good idea, does not necessarily mean that it will work* (Teacher J -Reflective Essay 1).

This is true that the teachers' explorations about teaching went beyond the practices in the class in this section – they even inquired what teaching is. It was crucial that teachers were really reflective about their profession and RPG process actually facilitated their reconsiderations about their jobs and developments. Teacher S' words below are really inclusive about the nature and value of teaching. She explored that teaching is difficult but rewarding, and teachers need to keep learning (emphases in italics):

The thing I learned about teaching is that it is *a difficult job*. It is not as simple as preparing a lesson plan and teaching it. We have a lot of things that we need to take into consideration. The amount of work we put into a class or even a student is a lot more than most people realize and we still believe that we might be doing more. Despite being demanding, teaching is also *a highly rewarding job*. The reward might be high rising student motivation or a simple corrected sentence of a struggling student. No matter what the reward or difficulty is, I believe we all need to keep improving ourselves as the students and their needs keep changing over the years. Working on problems and realizing the rewards are the things that make teaching fun and interesting. For me, each class is my study field and I learn a lot of things from my students and I hope to teach them as much as I can. I think *teaching would not be so fun and effective if we stopped learning* (Teacher S – Reflective Essay 2).

#### **4.4.4. Explorations about Professional Development through RPG**

As it can be inferred from teachers' reflectivity and high awareness about a number of dimensions of teaching, they were in the position to deliver feedback about the nature and conduct of their RPG journey. The focus group meeting – along with the data from other tools – was specifically used for collecting data as to the teachers' explorations about the developmental program of RPG. It was noteworthy that based on their experiences, these teachers delivered specific insights into how RPGs can be designed successfully. There are 9 ideas categorized from this reflective data and they will be shared in suggestive sentences below. There will not be many elaborations on them since teachers' words are already expressive of the full content – with the emphases in italics.

*(1) RPGs should be voluntary:*

In my opinion, it *should be voluntary*. Like, just as we are doing, we are able to choose our PD activities. But not compulsory (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

Teachers stated reasons for it:

I think *voluntary basis should not change*. If we do it, like mandatory, if people just feel obliged to do it, there would just be *superficial ideas* all around (Teacher M – Focus Group Meeting).

It would be just an *administrative meeting*, you know, if you do it compulsory. It will be like “you are *kindly asked* to attend the meetings” (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

*(2) The participants should have rapport and come from different backgrounds:*

Ideas about good rapport:

I would prefer of course, *friends to come together*. But if I had another chance, if I had to do something different, at least I would choose some *people who can get along well*. Otherwise, if we don’t know the partners in that group or if you are not that close, sometimes you might hesitate to tell your ideas honestly. It’s important to choose people like this (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

Maybe those people who get along with each other is not necessary. But, they should at least *not have a bad history* (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

Ideas about different backgrounds:

Choosing people from *different perspectives* like, for example, 2 or 3 years of experience in teaching, the other has 10 years. One working at a private school, one started teaching at this university, the others worked in other sectors, for example. So, everybody has *different experiences* about their jobs, so it’s a good combination. Our group was perfect because we had many

*different profiles* in our group. Good combination works a lot, I think (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

(3) *The meetings should not hold more than 4-5 teachers:*

The way we did it. *5 people*. It is pretty good I think, better than 4, better than 6. You know 6 would be too much, I think (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

I agree. The number of teachers might be also 4. Why I tell this? Because sometimes in some topic, maybe they can work as a pair. And but 6 would be very much. *4 or 5 I think is OK* (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

I think if there were 10 people, I don't think the atmosphere will be as genuine, sincere. The people sharing their feelings. So, it is also important to express how you feel about a thing (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

(4) *The frequency of RPG meetings should depend on content and period of study:*

Idea of weekly meetings – not losing track:

*Once a week*. Because I think it is important to come together once a week and not more, because you *wouldn't be able to accomplish something in less than one week*. Not less, *because I would forget* a little about what I was supposed to do, I *would lose track*, you know (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

Idea of bi-weekly meetings – more data:

When we did some research about L1 and we needed a lot of data and we didn't have enough time to ask all of our students. If we had time maybe we could *come up with more data* there. And *2 weeks would be effective* (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

Idea of bi-weekly and monthly meetings – nature of discussion topics; extent of project:

Doing it once a week is a good idea but it is sometimes *hard for everybody to attend*. That's why I said once a month. It depends on the *topic* and it depends on the track of these meetings. If you want to come to a conclusion in three months, of course once a week is OK. But if it is a *project for 6 months or 8 months*, it can be like *once a month or twice a month*. It depends on what time you want to come to the conclusion (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

(5) *Freedom of choice is an important aspect of RPGs:*

*You can choose what you want to work on*. That's a big difference because when you have workshops, and you can choose if you want to join or not, but here you choose it with the group. And usually they are mutual feelings and mutual problems (Teacher J – Interview 1).

*Leaving the topic choice to the group members* is a good idea. Because when you assign as a researcher, when you assign the topic to us, it will be by force. But when we choose it, it means that we are determined to use it in our classes and it is one of our big concerns as a teacher, so I will take this away. Again, *leaving the choice of research tools to the group members* is a good idea because, for example, I can say that Teacher G (pseudonym) you will video-record your lesson, but sometimes it is not appropriate for that week or for that class or for that grammar topic, so she knows which way is better for her class (Teacher B – Interview 2).

(6) *Facilitator (as a rotational duty) is an important role in these meetings:*

*Leadership is good* because sometimes we are going around the topic and we are lost, somebody should get us to the point, so leadership is good. It is not a big responsibility, just you talk, you can continue what you think about, this is all. Every meeting, every kind of gathering needs a leader, I think (Teacher B- Interview 2).

The teachers assigned some duties for their facilitators (they called leaders) as can be seen in the poster below:



Figure 8. Poster on facilitators' roles in RPGs

(7) *A leading coach is necessary in RPGs – with professional and friendly attitude:*

There *needs to be a leader* in this kind of meetings I think. And a leader should be *both professional and also friendly*. Not just a colleague but a friend. I think it's *important to have a facilitator* (Teacher B – Focus Group Meeting).

Someone who is *professional, on time and friendly* at the same time. Where we do not feel the need to hide what we really think or we can be comfortable (Teacher M – Focus Group Meeting).

If there was *no facilitator*, it would also be *too informal* I think (Teacher J – Focus Group Meeting).

If we have meeting *without a facilitator*, I think it could *turn into a chaos* because without a facilitator, something voluntary basis wouldn't be so together (Teacher M – Focus Group Meeting).

(8) *Teachers need time to dedicate to RPG meetings to benefit from them:*

The only thing I feel like challenge is *finding proper time*. It was a problem, but I think it was mostly about my working hours apart from my friends. You know I work in an office and it gets hectic sometimes (Teacher M – Interview 1).

*Time*. You know it's OK for me that we have only one meeting in a week, it's not much. But with all the other things, all the other responsibilities, it comes together and it is huge. Sometimes I feel bad because I sometimes *don't have time to focus more* because I would like to focus more on our you know. Doing our researches or getting more data for journaling, I'd love to do more. But sometimes I feel that I don't have time for it (Teacher G – Interview 1).

Just to *catch up with the time*. Sometimes, we are so busy and we have this meeting and we need to read something before the meeting. Sometimes *I couldn't find enough time to read or search something* (Teacher B – Interview 1).

(9) *RPGs can be versatile and be used functionally:*

As a supervisor, I will try to do *small RPG meetings with my group members* if we can in the track 3 because everything will be new for us. I will try to do that because I think while sharing, we all improve ourselves, so just sharing is also positive effect for teachers. Just sharing, listening to somebody, sharing your idea. Maybe somebody can get some positive things and can apply it in their classes, so I will try to *use it in my supervising group* (Teacher B – Interview 2).

I think we could do something like, we have *units* in our schools. Like *testing or materials offices*. They can establish 4-5 PD sessions for this and I would ask for volunteers to join whichever they want. For example, a group only focusing on school exams. And I would interchange the people. Like one month, going there, the other month going somewhere else. And at the end of a semester or a year, I would ask for teacher feedback and I would *use them in my unit at the school* so that it could also help my school (Teacher M – Focus Group Meeting).

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. Discussion

In this chapter, the deep analysis of the findings will be presented in the light of the research question, problem statement and the review of literature. The emergent themes will be outlined with their interrelations with one another, through which the reached meanings will therefore be presented clearly.

More specifically, as the qualitative research paradigm foregrounds the construction of meanings of lived experiences (Merriam, 2009), the section will start with the depiction of this specific RPG case. To that end, Figure 9 below has been patterned in an effort to present a brief overview of the emergent meanings gleaned out of the findings. Accordingly, a detailed account of these relationships will be revealed to the end of discussing how these emergent meanings add to or are nourished by the literature. From all angles, the research question will be addressed with a myriad of explanations and evaluations.

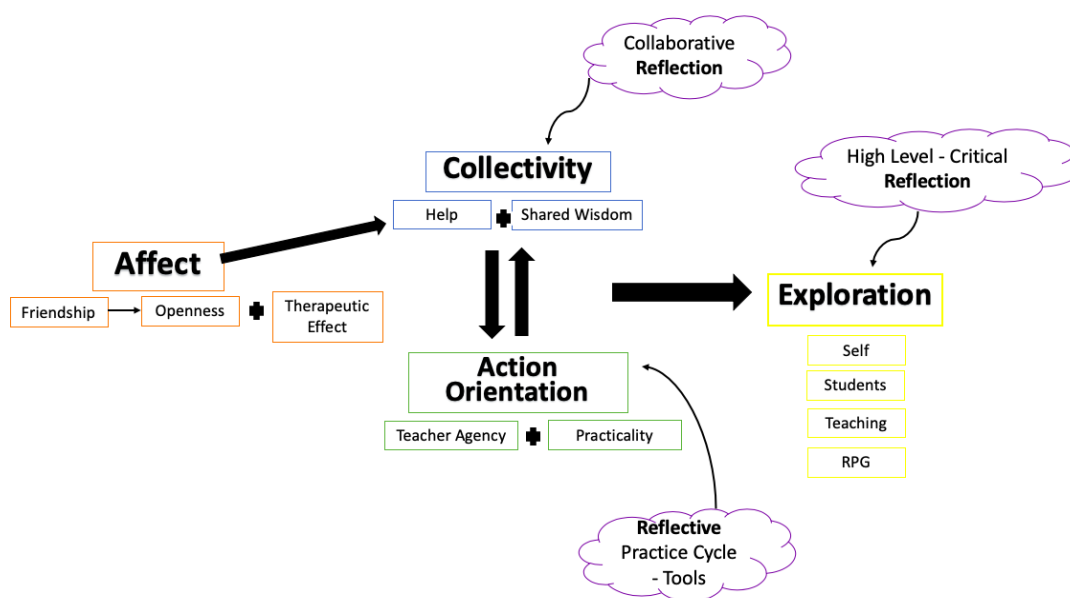


Figure 9. Overview of the emergent meanings within the RPG process



To start with the rough description of the Figure 9 above, basically, the Reflective Practice Group of this case study was seemingly grounded upon the interplay of such factors as affect, collectivity, action orientation, exploration and reflection – as outlined in the results section as well. To be more specific, *affect* seemed to be the primary source of the functioning of this RPG, exclusively facilitating *collectivity* among the teachers. In other words, it is clear from the findings that the strength of emotional ties between the practicing teachers positively reinforced their collaborative learning behaviour and support for each other. Despite not being directly influenced by low affective filter like collectivity, *action orientation* showed itself as another factor which was in interplay with *collectivity* in the construction of professional learning aimed in this PD activity. That is to say, teachers performed in the cycle of actively constructing their learning in the class and then reinforcing it collectively in the meetings. Therefore, classroom and the meeting site were in hand in and with each other; namely, teachers were trying in class and analyzing in the meetings as a part of their professional progress.

With *collectivity* in the meetings and *action* in class, teachers finally got to *explorations* about a variety of aspects regarding teaching (teacher self, students, teaching, RPG). As noted in the results section, the teachers reflected on their discoveries really deeply and it might be due to the long-term interplay of their collective and action-oriented work. As it is revealed in the figure, lastly, *reflection* was the reason why all these factors worked efficiently in the construction of professional learning – as reflection was in play within each factor. In particular, regarding *collectivity*, collaborative reflection was favored as being an integral part of learning in a group. In *action orientation*, reflective cycle and reflective practice tools were the core of capturing classroom instances and inquiring them in depth. Finally, critical reflection showed itself in the entirety of the teachers' *explorations*. In a nutshell, in this RPG study, the teachers set off with high affective bound, worked well together due to their rapport, inquired classroom practices deeply and actively in constituting new insights and all this trajectory was qualified by reflective practice. Now, the detailed description of how these factors actually worked will be analyzed with in-depth discussion points.

As far as *affect* is concerned, it seems that it was the driving force of this particular RPG case. The frequency of affective content in teachers' data made it notable that it was one of the major highlights of how this RPG worked really affectively for these teachers. In the construction of this collaborative PD activity, the teachers stressed many times that especially their existing friendship made a huge mark for their positivity and readiness for developing

reflectively and collaboratively. Not necessarily making it a must to be friends in RPGs, it may still be true that strong humanly relationships are the indispensable part of working in collaboration with others, especially through long-term development programs like RPGs. It is therefore important to note that these teachers appreciated being friends but this can be evaluated under the umbrella term of ‘good rapport’.

This firm basis on emotional fitness for PD activities is actually resonated in Gkonou and Mercer (2017) and Mercer and Gregersen (2020), under the name of ‘teacher well-being’. These scholars coin the aforementioned term meaning the value in teachers’ positive fundamentals in their physical, mental and emotional situations, which leads to positive experiences in teaching and developing as a teacher. Parallel with this idea, in this RPG construct, it was also upfront that the positive relationships enriched these teachers’ collegial relationship fundamentally. As teaching is a socially negotiated work, the presence of any affective filter was already eliminated in the way of development. As for its social constructivist side, Johnson and Golombek (2016) also focuses on emotional well-being, which works in interplay of cognitive performance as an influential factor for how a social experience is evaluated. In the aspects of development and social construction, therefore, this RPG was not hindered by any social obstacle, which might be one of the prime reasons of high appreciation of the process by these teachers.

The fundamental thinking behind RPGs also underscores the necessity of emotional strength. Namely, Distad & Brownstein (2004) prioritizes trust and confidentiality as the cornerstone of RPGs and they also reveal the priority of low affective filter within their definition, noting that there needs to be an environment free from evaluation incorporating support and collegiality. Very similarly, Farrell (2003, 2013), another rigorous thinker of the concept, emphasized that low affective filter is the pre-condition of collaborative reflection. Therefore, it is clear that teachers’ professional development, especially that incorporates social constructivism and reflection, require good rapport as a condition.

Very specifically, the teachers in this study showed that strong rapport (friendship) allowed an open atmosphere necessary for collaborative reflection. Many times, the teachers stated in their words that friends should be chosen as participants and participation should be voluntary. Clearly, good rapport made it easy to set up an open environment required for an RPG. Actually, it may remind us of Kuh’s (2016) study in which teachers needed ample amount of time to build collaboration and trust before openly reflecting for development. Conversely, as a non-judgmental and open group already, our RPG took little time – only two pre-RPG meetings – to develop effective group discussions.

Apart from the interplay of good rapport and open atmosphere, another intriguing finding was the therapeutic value of RPG for the teachers in this study. This stress releasing aspect of RPGs was resonated in Christodoulou's (2013) study as well. Notably, RPGs can also be considered as a site of wellness in which teachers can release their stress, motivate each other and feel better. This was also crucial in making stronger relationships among the participants. Although therapeutic dimension cannot be expected in all RPG programs, it should be a good point to consider, especially in school atmosphere where teachers can hardly reach professional psychological support. As Teacher B suggested in her words, there might be therapy sessions in which teachers can solely talk to each other to release their feelings. This is another justification of the importance of teachers' well-being for better performance and development.

In the case of *collectivity*, it is also true that affective strength of this RPG played a vital role in creating a community which was supportive and collaborative in nature. As a notable result from the teachers' quotations, they felt a great responsibility to *help* one another in the way of professional growth. In particular, Teacher S' quest for finding solutions for Teacher J's classroom management puzzle; Teachers M's endeavor to journal harder to bring more data for their friends and Teacher J's appreciation of learning through support all reveal that developing within a professional group is a crucial element in RPGs. This is not to say all RPGs can be formed by fully supportive teachers, but it might still be a good idea to consider creating a culture of help before starting reflection.

The teachers in this study were particularly in an effort to leave nobody behind, which was an evident proof of collegiality. Sometimes they were analyzing an issue of one single teacher and sometimes they were trying to address their common concerns all together. This type of collegiality can also be found as a prominent theme in some other studies (Bintaş & Dikilitaş, 2019; Farrell, 2013). This 'all for one, one for all' mentality – as a result of collegiality – is a clear indicator of how impactful a collective base is for the conduct of RPGs. Naturally, there might be different outcomes as to this in different studies. In this study, the prime reason for this particular collegiality and culture of help was fundamentally teachers' strong rapport for each other; therefore, the feeling of responsibility appeared in the group through the course of the study.

Also, teachers seemed to prioritize *shared wisdom* in forms of sharing perspectives and working jointly as another *collective* side of RPG. At this point, a full appreciation of social constructivist approach in learning is recognizable. Social constructivism – more broadly Sociocultural Theory of learning – suggests that learning is a sense making activity

through interaction with others (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Oldfather et. al., 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Well, 1997). In particular, learning starts in social plane – dialogically as a social act – and then is internalized by psychological plane – as sense making, in mind. This way of perceiving development is also parallel with the newer understanding and models of PD. Simply, as opposed to the traditional models of PD and in line with social constructivism, learning through RPG is not the one which was transmitted from one person to another. Instead, it is a socially negotiated one incorporating approximations to the end of collaborative development, shared understanding and dialogic orientation. In the same vein, Knight (2002) argues that there is a shift from event delivery models to communities of practice in the newer understanding of PD. Also, Kennedy's (2005) 'community of practice' model and Lieberman's (1995) 'learning in school' refer to the same content in which teachers come together to develop within their own context by addressing their common areas of development.

Teachers' collaboration in RPGs, then, can be evaluated under the particular constructs of social constructivist learning paradigms. For one, it can be called a 'community of practice' – "...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p.4). Additionally, it can be called a practice of 'legitimate peripheral participation' – a situated activity in which learning happens through the knowledge and skills acquired in social practices of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, RPGs can be assumed a 'professional learning community' – the idea of rich conversations and relationships between teachers towards how to improve teaching practices and the school in general (Hargreaves, 2007, p.182).

From the commonalities of the constructs above, RPGs can be considered as socially constructed learning sites in which individuals come together in a purposeful activity of resolving their common puzzles. Therefore, RPG was a situated practice in which teachers had a chance to address their own context of teaching, in a dialogic activity, with the participation of shareholders and by breaking off isolation – as can be observed in the results of some other studies (Arslan & Başağa, 2010; Berkey et. al, 1998). Without a doubt, the most favored parts of this community were, firstly, being able to solve common puzzles and secondly, eliminating the feeling of loneliness as a professional, which are really significant points to consider in further RPGs.

The aforementioned social construction in RPG can be detailed under the lenses of Johnson and Golombek's (2016) 'responsive mediation', which means developing true

concepts through the mediation of others. Parallel with this concept, in this study, the teachers seemingly enjoyed sharing expertise and so mediating each other's thinking for improvement. Responsive mediation took place as a bottom-up construct, in a dialogic activity, without necessarily having an expert to transmit information. The external input was actually gleaned from teachers' own data from their readings and reflections in classroom and thought was clearly appropriated in the course of meetings through collaborative analyses. Tudge (2002) calls this process 'intersubjectivity'. It is basically becoming ourselves through others; that is, forming thoughts in the act of sharing perspectives. Mercer (2000) aligns this way of learning with the term of 'interthinking', which is an intellectual co-learning process of reaching a shared understanding in a community. Teacher G's words are worth recalling at this point as a note of reference: "I need someone to give another thought [...] so I can form my own thoughts (Teacher G – Interview 1). In sum, the teachers appreciated others' thinking, expertise and support in this study, and it is a significant example for how bottom-up mediation works for teachers' professional development.

Reflection was the core of this inter-mental, collective development. The findings indicate that these teachers favored adopting reflective practice through which they could enhance their learning through reflecting collaboratively and using reflective practice tools in the endeavor. It is clear that reflective practice had a facilitative role for their support for each other and to the end of surfacing a variety of perspectives for responsive mediation. At this point, collaborative reflection can be analyzed as a note of reference. As Rodgers (2002) and Zeichner and Liston (1996) posit, reflection should be done in interaction with others. In fact, despite being an already reflective group, these teachers seemingly had found rare chances to reflect collaboratively before the RPG. They were appreciative of how their togetherness worked effectively with reflective practice, which suggests that when reflection is the case, collaboration is a need and vice versa.

Alongside collectivity, *action orientation* is another domain worth discussing in terms of its effect on teacher learning in this RPG process. As can be seen in Figure 9, the active side of RPG worked hand in hand with the collective side of it, thus yielding developmental outcomes for these teachers. Basically, the teachers seemed to favor the active side of RPG both in the meetings and in the class. They benefited from the action they assumed for their practices and discussions, as the agents and practitioners of their own growth. Apparently, they were able to glean major insights due to the interplay between their theories and practices in this active PD process.

First of all, *teacher agency* emerged from the data as one notable sub-theme of action orientation. It refers to the activity of teachers in the RPG process as decision makers and executors. As opposed to being passive receivers of information, these teachers were the agents of their own development, which Bailey (2006) conceptualizes as ‘teacher autonomy’ and Richards and Farrell (2005) calls ‘self-directed learning’. In line with these new concepts of PD, teachers are supposed to decide what they want to improve, how to do it and analyze their own growth. In this way, this teacher group adopted a teacher-centered approach towards PD, finding a chance to work on their particular needs. This result is consistent with the newer understanding and models of teachers’ PD which promote growth-driven and context specific way of improvement (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

Teacher agency actually implies a ‘continuing’ way of development (CPD) which foregrounds change, improvement and maintenance, as Day and Sachs (2004) argues. Within this understanding, teachers are given a huge responsibility to monitor their own growth and offer better teaching for their students in a continuum. Since teachers should be lifelong learners as Teacher B formerly noted, this continuity in teacher agency will surely yield better results for teachers and students. As such, one-off delivery models of PD are contrasted in this study with the implication of better outcomes with continuing teacher control over PD activity.

Secondly, *practicality* is another notable result gleaned from the data – with regard to action orientation. Unlike some studies (Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016), the RPG process in this study was run in the teaching period of academic calendar, enabling follow-up classroom practice after the discussions. Therefore, the teachers in this RPG found opportunities to try the actions they planned in the meetings. In fact, practicality is resonated in Kumaravadivelu’s (1994, 2006) understanding of ‘post-method’, which suggests that teachers’ real classroom experiences can be depended for their professional learning, as opposed to one-size-fits-all approaches of dictated expert knowledge. As he notes in his book, “the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice” (p.29). Thus, the results of this study are in line with the paradigm of post-method since the teachers were always in favor of how their real experiences informed their development by serving them data to analyze.

This experiential side of the RPG process can also be evaluated within the newer understanding of teachers’ PD. Unlike the old models, this way of development relates to the idea of learning through classroom as suggested by some models like ‘knowledge in practice’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), ‘reflective model’ (Wallace, 1991) and ‘post-technocratic model’ (Hargreaves, 1994). The commonality of these models is that they value experiential

knowledge as a source of development, which embeds close inquiry of practice. In this way, RPG proves once again that it is compatible with the new paradigm of professional development.

As a part of new shift in PD, the RPG process can also be identified with action research (AR) paradigm. Obviously, learning through classroom practice in RPGs has a remarkable correlation with AR since the teachers seemingly followed an AR type of trajectory in finding solutions to their puzzles; namely, planning, taking actions, observing and reflecting. AR is a bottom-up approach, creating development through teachers' agency (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017), which could be observed through the action-oriented side of RPG process.

Just as in collectivity, reflection showed itself as the guide of this action-oriented process. There is ample amount of data suggesting that these teachers qualified their classroom practices thanks to reflection and it created a bridge between class and the RPG meetings. Therefore, they could obviously adopt a qualified and systematic inquiry for the happenings in their classroom. Moreover, they could also follow a reflective cycle (Kolb, 2015) through which they could stay in the track of better analysis. This can remind us of Dewey's (1933) idea of reflective activity – as opposed to routine activity – that eliminates repetitive behaviour and that engages in enriching inquiry of practice. In particular, teachers internalized a good understanding of Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle by following a course of reflecting in, on and for action (Killion & Todnem, 1991; Schön, 1983, 1987). This RPG adopted a 'data in and data out' policy in which the teachers brought stories from their classes to build action points for future classes. As such, they could move from their personal theories to classroom practice and move from practice to theory building again (Rodgers, 2002). The reasonable amount of data appreciating the reflective aspect of these meetings makes it clear that RPGs – aiming to incorporate teacher agency and practicality – will function better through adoption of a reflective practice cycle.

The RPG teachers made use of both their experiential and received knowledge to inform their action in classroom. While doing that they utilized reflective practice tools for the aforementioned reflective cycle. They used literature as received knowledge and used journaling, audio-recording and surveying as a part of their experiential knowledge. By using them, they actually qualified their discussions. From the data, their most favourite tool seems to be journaling. They stressed that it was really handy and beneficial for remembering and reflecting on classroom practice. These two functions of journaling are also resonated in Fakazlı and Kuru-Gönen's (2017) study. Obviously, the act of sketching notes and reflecting

on them promotes learning by leading to deep considerations. Moreover, when compared to audio-recoding and surveying, journaling seems to be a more practical way of collecting data in class. However, despite being used scarcely, audio-recording was also favored for its objectivity and surveys were favored for giving a clear picture of students' viewpoints. In sum, the use of reflective practice tools can be considered as an important note of reference for further RPGs, considering its role in action-oriented aspect of the construct.

As a final note for reflective action-orientation, it normally takes time to build reflections in teacher groups as stated in some studies (Christodoulou, 2013; Farrell, 2013). Nevertheless, apparently, the teachers in this RPG were already reflective thanks to their background of reflective courses and experience with reflective observations. Therefore, it is not surprising to see them activating reflective practice in a short time, which can be another consideration for further studies. Perhaps, as Gün (2011) notes, teachers need to be trained for reflective practice to better reflect on their practices.

Finally, the theme of *exploration* can be considered as the totality of reached outcomes of the whole RPG process in this study. After the analysis of the depth of teachers' learning points, it is easy to say that these teachers obviously achieved a high level of reflection about a variety of dimensions of teaching after ten meetings. It was due to their ongoing collectivity and action-oriented efforts to enhance their teaching. As teacher efficacy is the backbone of RPG work (Distad & Brownstein, 2004), it is a remarkable result that the teachers were able to articulate philosophical perspectives as to teaching by achieving high forms of reflexivity and reflectivity. In other words, they were able to reach beyond the basic forms of reflection such as problem posing and validity testing and reached reformulation and reframing of their practices (Griffiths & Tann, 1992).

It is obvious that, within Dewey's (1933) understanding, these teachers have been able to produce conclusions that might trigger further reflective thought. In Schön's (1983, 1987) understanding, they were the reflective practitioners who were able to surface tacit knowledge to the level of awareness. These perspectives confirm that the teachers actually reached the level of critical reflection through their development in RPG and it is manifested in their explorations in forms of personal theories – similar to Farrell's (1998, 2001) outcomes. As Brookfield (2017) notes, critical reflection is reconsidering our teaching assumptions in a maintained process, which these teachers were able to do throughout and by the end of the course of RPG action. This result contradicts with Farrell's (1998) study in which teachers were mostly descriptive and not critical in their reflections.



Teachers' explorations can also be analyzed through the lenses of social-constructivist learning theory. As sociocultural perspectives see teacher learning as a goal-directed activity with the help of responsive mediation, these goals were actually articulated by the teachers, which McNeill (2005) calls 'growth points' (also see Johnson & Golombek, 2016). According to McNeill, growth point means coming into being and unpacking learning through the process of thinking for speaking. Therefore, the explorations surfacing out of this study confirms that teachers' verbalizations of their learning clearly portray their whole sense making with the help of social mediation. In other words, teachers' sentences can be regarded as their construction of learning through the act of articulating it.

Teachers' growth points and reformulations were categorized into four: Teacher self, teaching, students and development in RPG. It is striking that teachers could reformulate many different dimensions of learning via RPG. Each category is worth analyzing in terms of how it is compatible with the literature and which different perspectives are surfaced.

Reformulations of teacher self remind us that reflection is a transformational experience (Christodoulou, 2013). As far as teacher self and teaching as a profession are concerned, teachers' growth points are supported by reflexivity by which their own beliefs and practices were questioned and reframed. Firstly, for teacher self, the teachers stated that RPGs empowered their skills and beliefs about themselves. Some teachers validated their own practices and explored how much they could actually do in class despite not being an ELT graduate – which they believed they lacked. This is a crucial outcome in line with Arslan and Başağa (2010) and Farrell (2013), that teachers felt stronger after the discussions. In Arslan and Başağa's (2010) study, teachers felt themselves like a researcher and in Farrell's (2013), teachers found the discussions empowering. Similarly, in our study, teachers had a chance to justify the power of their own classroom practices.

Among their exploration of teacher self, the teachers also criticized their own practices very honestly, which shows that they were wholehearted and open-minded about making improvements in their teaching – which is a pre-requisite of reflective practice (Dewey, 1933). It is resonated in some other studies that RPGs create improvements and reframing in teaching (Arslan & Başağa, 2010; Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016). It might be generalized that when reflection is experienced to its full extent, teachers can be open for changing their practices and beliefs through RPGs.

Apart from teacher self, teachers were also really reflective in terms of teaching as a profession. This must be such a far-reaching goal for any PD activity; thus, this exploration actually emphasizes the high potential of RPG work in terms of professional development.

Among the sub-themes of this category, the teachers firstly stressed the importance of lifelong learning in teaching, which confirms the idea that reflection is a continuing (Rodgers, 2002) and cyclical (Wallace, 1991) process. It also approves the idea that PD should be an ongoing endeavor (Day & Sachs, 2004; Guskey, 2000; Sweeney, 2003). We could argue that it is such a significant perspective for PD itself and in terms of how RPG could contribute to the considerations about PD as a concept. Another idea was that knowing ELT jargon is a minor part of teaching and it is actually the experiential part of it that matters, which is in good agreement with Kolb (2015). These teachers were not ELT graduates and they tended to assume this as an important shortage; therefore, it is critical for them to see teaching is a practical act rather than a merely received skill. This outcome contradicts with traditional PD models such as 'craft/applied science models' (Wallace, 1991), 'pre-technocratic model' (Hargreaves, 1994), 'direct teaching model' (Lieberman, 1995), 'knowledge for practice model' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and 'training model' (Kennedy, 2005). Finally, the teachers also noted that in teaching there is no single style, but teaching is actually a complex interplay of many dimensions (see teacher cognition by Borg, 2006). This, again, contradicts with the idea that teaching is a one-size-fits-all activity.

Another deep exploration of the teachers was students' perspectives, which must be the backbone of teaching and any PD activity since the ultimate goal of these activities is to raise standards of learning. In other words, student side is a significant exploration area as PD aims growth that translates to enhanced student learning (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Guskey, 2000). Particularly, these teachers favored the use of surveys to the end of discovering about students, which reportedly led to changes in their lesson planning. This outcome is consistent with Dewey's (1993) idea of responsibility in reflection, which means assuming liability for the application of reflective thought. The teachers analyzed what motivates their students, how do they view the use of L1 in classroom and more generally their learning styles to be able to make changes in their teaching agendas, as a part of responsible teaching. In Passman & Duran-Klenclo's (2002) study, teachers changed their views about blaming students for poor writing performance and in our study, teachers mostly questioned themselves for the motivation of students and their speaking (L2) performances, rather than blaming them. It is a notable outcome that teachers may develop empathy for students' through critically and collaboratively reflecting on students' learning.

As the last exploration point, directly related to the PD process itself, was teachers' perspectives about their development through participating in an RPG. They made crucial points for how to construct RPGs and they were really reflective and specific about its

parameters. There are some outstanding perspectives worth analyzing for further RPGs at this point. For one, they stated that RPGs should be voluntary for open and better sharing to take place. It is very much in line with the voluntary nature of reflection (Harvey et. al., 2020). Another idea is that rapport is necessary among the participants of RPG meetings. This corresponds to the theme of affect as being a notable pre-requisite of collective development. Therefore, the teachers in this study seemingly suggest a similar connection for the teachers of future RPGs. Moreover, regarding the number of participants, the teachers noted that 4-5 participants should be ideal for RPGs, which is close to Richards and Farrell's (2005) idea that there should be 5-8 teachers in a teacher development group. Further, they supported the ideas that RPGs can be used for different functions – in line with Richards & Farrell (2005) – and that frequency of the meetings can depend on a variety of factors – implying flexibility in the construction of RPGs. The teachers also favored freedom of choice for the topics and reflective practice tools, which is in line with newer perspectives of PD, more specifically, teacher autonomy (Bailey, 2006).

Another, important point the teachers made was the importance of facilitation and coaching. Namely, they both appreciated the presence of researcher as the guide of this process and the presence of rotating facilitators who keep the discussions on track. This is a clear indicator that effective professional development requires effective mediators (Johnson and Golombek, 2016), or in other terms, effective guides (Farrell, 1998). The last point teachers made was time as being their challenge in the process. They stated that time is needed for reflection and dedication for RPG work, which again confirms the idea that reflection takes time (Christodoulou, 2013; Farrell, 1998, 2013; Kuh, 2016). They mostly stated that they could not find enough time to prepare for the meetings for better reflection. Therefore, this point can be noteworthy for school administrators to consider allocating enough time space for RPG teachers for quality reflection to take place both in the meetings and in the class.

All in all, the evaluation of the themes surfacing out of this study has been made in an effort to paint a clear picture of the study as well as suggesting for further studies. The summation of these discussions suggests that the RPG process in this study succeeded in yielding notable results with the meaning connections mentioned. In the conclusions and implications part, more generalizations will be made in his regard for further studies in this field.

## 5.2. Conclusion and Implications

This qualitative study addressed its research question with a detailed depiction of the emergent meanings (see Figure 9) and with thorough descriptions of the interrelations between them. The totality of the meanings out of teachers' lived experiences through a 9-week RPG study clearly demonstrates that these teachers experienced an effective period of PD to enhance their skills for better student learning. In particular, the emergent perspectives show that they were in good terms with one another (affect), worked effectively together (collectivity), actively addressed their real classroom practices (action orientation), consequently reached major discoveries related to teacher, teaching, student and RPG (exploration) and seemingly accomplished this course of learning with the support of 'reflective practice'. This inclusive picture creates a notable outcome for this study; namely, Reflective Practice Group is an efficient way of developing professionally for language teachers. This can also be proved exclusively through the deep explorations emerged out of this PD process.

This PD outcome is due to fact that the teachers' perspectives about RPG significantly correlate with the contemporary understanding of PD, which is supposed to be efficient, long lasting and one that translates into enhanced student learning (Day & Sachs, 2004). The major parameters of efficient, contemporary PD perspectives are matched with the themes of this study, confirming that this RPG case is a good example for further cases in terms of development of language teachers.

Synthesized from literature, effective PD should be reflective (Day & Sachs, 2004; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004), collaborative (Knight, 2002; Johnson & Golombek, 2016), bottom-up (Craft, 2000; Mann, 2005), ongoing (Day, 1999; Sweeney, 2003), evidence based (Day & Sachs, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2006) and should focus on enhanced student learning (Bull et. al., 1994). With respect to these parameters, this RPG was reflective, which is evident from how reflection permeated in the major themes of this study (collectivity, action orientation, exploration). It allowed socially constructed knowledge base to inform teachers' practices. Also, it was bottom-up, allowing a teacher-centered, context-specific understanding of development through freedom of choice and practicality. Further, it was sustained and process-based, including follow-ups and reflective cycles of practice in a period. Moreover, it was evidence-based and learning was created from and for real classroom practices. Finally, it was aiming teacher efficacy, which means working specifically for enhanced student learning instead of complaining about problems.

In being efficiency-oriented and thus aligned with new PD perspectives, this RPG was informed by two major scholars of teaching: John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky. In particular, Deweyan perspective of reflective action and Vygotskian social constructivism merged successfully in this study, possibly adding to the positive perspectives of the teachers. We believe that effective PD should also be informed by these scholars in terms of its philosophy.

Within these positive outcomes, this RPG case seems to diverge from the traditional, ineffective way of professional development which prioritizes top-down plans, one-off events and merely INSET modes of learning. Although it is true that the language teachers in this study constantly participated in these PD activities, they reported dissatisfaction with them when compared to their RPG experience. This is a fact that traditional ways of PD should be reconsidered and RPGs can have a say in that. Apart from INSET, RPG can also be complementary to teachers' pre-service training which, the literature suggests, does not suffice in the way of dealing with professional issues effectively.

After these outcomes, it is clear that this developmental process has been influential in a number of ways. First, it apparently benefited the participating EFL teachers, as reported by them, in the way of betterment of their classroom practices. Therefore, apart from being a research, this study was also a true developmental program for this group of teachers. Secondly, it is assumed that the RPG process has benefited the site school, either directly or indirectly, with the collegiality and professional learning experienced by these teachers. After all, effective PD translates into students as well as institutions, also as a far-reaching goal into the community in the long run (Day, 1999). Lastly, this study is believed to add to the limited number of studies in this field with the detailed trajectory of learning that can inspire other studies. Apparently, literature has little to offer in this field so RPG cases should be multiplied for a generic understanding of the phenomenon. Also, schools can embed RPGs as an option of development, which will again be informative about its impact on teacher learning. Therefore, this RPG case can yield insights both for research-based RPG cases and for the developmental RPG projects as a part of school CPD.

This case study has some implications for further practice, which can be grouped for researchers, institutions and language teachers. As mentioned, RPGs can be associated with both theoretical studies and practical projects; thus, the implications for theory will refer to researchers and the ones for practice will be dedicated to institutions and language teachers.

#### Implications for researchers:

- This particular study can be adopted, added or modified with respect to the different contexts it will be conducted,
- As this RPG case consisted of the teachers who were already friends, further studies can be carried out with the participation of teachers who do not necessarily have close relationships, which can yield other results as to affect,
- As the teachers in this RPG were not substantially diverse in terms of their experiences, researchers may also consider sampling teachers purposefully from a variety of backgrounds,
- As the teachers in this study were already familiar with reflection, other studies may need to train teachers for reflection beforehand, or can merely gauge the effect of RPG without major emphasis on reflection,
- RPGs can also be conducted with primary/secondary level teachers with whom there has not been many studies conducted,
- As the results of this study are based on teachers' perspectives rather than actual student improvements, researchers may also consider implementing analyses for how RPGs may directly or indirectly impact students' learning,

#### Implications for institutions:

- School administrators should provide time and support for RPGs by assuming a number of roles – as Diaz-Maggioli (2004) notes – such as provider, facilitator, communicator, organizer and evaluator,
- Schools administrators and/or CPD offices should promote collaboration and reflection among teachers,
- Schools should gauge the needs of their teachers and implement a bottom-up way of professional development – in line with the newer perspectives of PD,
- Schools should connect with other schools in order to build RPG networks regionally.

#### Implications for language teachers:

- Teachers should engage in collaborative reflection – if not particularly RPGs – by consciously following a cycle of reflection in, on and for action (Schön, 1983, 1987),

- Teachers should stay open-minded, wholehearted and responsible (Dewey, 1933) for their development as a professional,
- They need to be aware that neither pre-service education nor traditional, top-down PD activities is enough to respond to the high expectations from language teachers; therefore, they need to make sure they are engaged in effective professional development for genuine, ongoing growth.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1.

#### STUDENT'S CURRICULUM VITAE

Kişisel Bilgiler			
Adı ve Soyadı	Burak Aydın		
E-postası/Web Sayfası	<a href="mailto:burak.aydin18@gmail.com">burak.aydin18@gmail.com</a>		
Bildiği Yabancı Diller	İngilizce		
Uzmanlık Alanı	İngiliz Dili Öğretimi / Öğretmen Eğitimliği		
Öğrenim Bilgileri			
	Üniversite	Bölüm	Yıl
Lisans	Ege Üniversitesi	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı	2011
Tez Başlığı	Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors through Reflective Practice Groups		
Tez Danışmanı	Doç. Dr. Hatice İrem Çomoğlu		
Akademik Eserler			
(Makale, kitap, kitap bölümü, bildiri, poster, sergi, konser vb. eserlerden kaynakça yazım kurallarına göre en fazla 10 eser yazılmalıdır.) Tezden üretilen yayınlar * ile işaretlenmelidir.			
Aydın, B. (2015). <i>The recruitment and training of school principals in Finland, Germany and Turkey</i> . Paper presented at International Congress of Educational Supervision, Aydın, Turkey.			
Aydın, B. (2019). Individual differences among preparatory school students: Learning orientations and strategies. <i>Balıkesir University Journal of Social Sciences Institute</i> , 22(41), 1-20.			
Alanıyla İlgili Bilimsel Kuruluşlara Üyelikler			
TESOL Turkey SIT Graduate Institute			
Alanıyla İlgili Aldığı Ödüller			
Yasar University, 15 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Foundation, “Bilim Birlik, Başarı” Awards: “Success in Education” Award for the English Instructor of the Year (March 30, 2016)			

## APPENDIX 2.

## OFFICIAL NOTICE(S) OF ETHICAL PERMISSION



T.C.  
DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı

E-İmzalıdır

Sayı : 15563195-302.08.01-E.102500  
Konu : Araştırma İzni (Burak AYDIN)

11/12/2019

## EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : a) 11.11.2019 tarihli ve 67493393-302.08.01-2800 sayılı yazınız.  
b) Yaşar Üniversitesi Rektörlüğünün 09.12.2019 tarihli ve 30694532-050.05.04-E.3286 sayılı yazısı.

Enstitünüz Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Öğretmenliği Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Burak AYDIN'ın "Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors Through Reflective Practice Groups" konulu tez çalışması kapsamında uygulama yapma isteğinin uygun görüldüğüne dair Yaşar Üniversitesi Rektörlüğünden alınan ilgi yazı fotokopisi ve ekleri ilişikte gönderilmektedir.

Bilgilerinize ve gereğini arz ederim.

Metin ÇAĞLAR  
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanı

Ek : İlgi (b) Yazı Sureti ve Ekleri (3 Sayfa)



Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü  
Adres: Cumhuriyet Bulvarı No 144 35210 Alsancak / İZMİR  
Tel: 0(232) 412 1212 Elektronik Ağı: www.deu.edu.tr  
Kep Adresi: dokuzeyuluniversitesi@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi için İrtibat:  
Dilek ÇETİNOZ  
Dahili: 0232 412 14 11  
E-Posta: dilek.kaya@deu.edu.tr



Bu belge 5070 sayılı e-İmza Kanununa göre Metin ÇAĞLAR tarafından 11.12.2019 tarihinde e-imzalanmıştır.  
Evrakın http://dogrulama.deu.edu.tr linkinden EBA50EEAX2 kodu ile doğrulayabilirsiniz.

SDP : 50.05 - 05 - Konseyler  
Evrak No : 23708841-50.05-180722  
Evrak Tarihi : 10-12-2019

KEP 10.12.2019



T.C.  
YAŞAR ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ



09/12/2019

Sayı : 30694532-050.05.04-E.3286  
Konu : Etik Komisyonu Kararı

DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE  
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı

İlgi : 15/11/2019 tarihli ve E.93711 sayılı yazınız.

İlgi yazı ile talep edilen, Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Öğretmenliği Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrenci Burak AYDIN'ın "Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors Through Reflective Practice Groups" konulu tez çalışmasının görüşüldüğü, Üniversitemiz Etik Komisyonunun 26 Kasım 2019 tarihli ve 3 sayılı toplantısının 7 no.lu kararı ekte yer almaktadır.

Bilgilerinizi rica ederim.

e-imzalıdır  
Prof. Dr. Mehmet Cemali DİNÇER  
Rektör

Ek: Etik Komisyonu Kararı (2 sayfa)

Evrakı Doğrulamak İçin : <http://195.142.121.227/enVision.Sorgula/BelgeDogrulama.aspx?V=BELCM5ZD>

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Unvanı: Memur  
Dahili No: 7084



Bu belge 5070 sayılı e-İmza Kanununa göre Metin CAGLAR tarafından 11.12.2019 tarihinde e-imzalanmıştır.  
Evrakınızı <http://dogrulama.deu.edu.tr> linkinden EBA50EEAX2 kodu ile doğrulayabilirsiniz.



SDP : 50.05 - 05 - Konseyler  
Evrak No : 23708841-50.05-180722  
Evrak Tarihi : 10-12-2019



T.C.  
YAŞAR ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
ETİK KOMİSYONU

Toplantı Tarihi: 26.11.2019

2019-2020 Akademik Yılı Toplantı Sayısı: 3

**GÜNDEM 6:**

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığının 15.11.2019 tarihli ve 93711 sayılı yazısı ile sunulan, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Öğretmenliği Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Burak AYDIN'ın "Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors Through Reflective Practice Groups" konulu tez çalışması kapsamında Yaşar Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda uygulamayı planladığı fokus grup ve mülakat sorularına ilişkin Etik Komisyonu onay talebinin görüşülmesi.

**GÖRÜŞME ve KARAR:**

Yaşar Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu 26.11.2019 Salı günü, saat 10:00'da Prof. Dr. Mehmet Cemali DİNÇER başkanlığında ve üyelerin katılımlarıyla toplanmış, gündem maddesi değerlendirilmiş, aşağıdaki karar alınmıştır.

**KARAR 6:**

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığının 15.11.2019 tarihli ve 93711 sayılı yazısı ile sunulan, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Öğretmenliği Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Burak AYDIN'ın "Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors Through Reflective Practice Groups" konulu tez çalışması kapsamında Yaşar Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda uygulamayı planladığı fokus grup ve mülakat sorularının uygunluğuna oy birliği ile karar verildi.

*(Handwritten signatures and a circular stamp)*

Bu belge 5070 sayılı e-İmza Kanununa göre Metin CAGLAR tarafından 11.12.2019 tarihinde e-imzalanmıştır.  
Evrakınızı <http://dogrulama.deu.edu.tr> linkinden EBAS0EEAX2 kodu ile doğrulayabilirsiniz.

## APPENDIX 3.

## CONSENT FORM

## GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIMCI ONAM FORMU

Bu formun amacı katılmanız rica edilen araştırma ile ilgili olarak sizi bilgilendirmek ve katılmanız ile ilgili izin almaktır.

Bu kapsamda "Professional Development of Prep School EFL Instructors Through Reflective Practice Groups" başlıklı araştırma "Burak Aydın" tarafından **gönüllü katılımcılarla** yürütülmektedir. Araştırma sırasında sizden alınacak bilgiler gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırma amaçlı kullanılacaktır. Araştırma sürecinde konu ile ilgili her türlü soru ve görüşleriniz için aşağıda iletişim bilgisi bulunan araştırmacıyla görüşebilirsiniz. Bu araştırmaya **katılmama** hakkınız bulunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda çalışmaya katıldıktan sonra çalışmadan **çıkabilirsiniz**. Bu formu onaylamanız, **araştırmaya katılım için onam verdiğiniz** anlamına gelecektir.

**Araştırmayla İlgili Bilgiler:**

**Araştırmanın Amacı:**Yansıtıcı Öğretim Çalışma Grupları'nın (RPGs) öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimindeki katkısını öğrenmektir.

**Araştırmanın Nedeni:** Yansıtıcı Öğretim Çalışma Grupları ile ilgili bu tecrübeye dahil olan öğretmenlerin görüşlerinin alınmasının önem arz etmesi.

**Çalışma Süresi:** 12 hafta (Haftada 2 saat) (9 Aralık 2019- 13 Mart 2020)

**Araştırmanın Yürütüleceği Yer:** Yaşar Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu

**Katılımcılardan Beklenenler:** -Haftalık 2 saatlik Yansıtıcı Öğretim Çalışma Grubu toplantılarına katılım

-Yansıtıcı Öğretim araçlarının ders içi kullanımı (günlük tutma, ekran gözlemi vb.)

-45'er dakikalık 3 adet görüşmeye katılma (2 görüşme ve 1 odak grup toplantısı olmak üzere)

-2 defaya mahsus olmak üzere 500 kelimeyi geçmeyecek şekilde dijital yansıtıcı raporlar yazma.

**Çalışmaya Katılım Onayı:**

Katılmam beklenen çalışmanın amacını, nedenini, katılmam gereken süreyi ve yeri ile ilgili bilgileri okudum ve gönüllü olarak çalışma süresince üzerime düşen sorumlulukları anladım. Çalışma ile ilgili ayrıntılı açıklamalar sözlü olarak araştırmacı tarafından yapıldı. Bu çalışma ile ilgili faydalar ve riskler ile ilgili bilgilendirildim.

Bu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

**Katılımcının (Islak imzası ile)**

Adı-Soyadı:

İmzası:

**Araştırmacının**

Adı-Soyadı:

e-posta:

İmzası:

**APPENDIX 4.****FIELD NOTES PROTOCOL****Researcher Field Notes Protocol - RPG Discussion Sessions**

Meeting No:  
 Date:  
 Start/Finish Time:  
 Length :  
 Discussion Point(s):  
 Discussion Leader:

Summary Notes

**Types of Reflection Utilized**

Teacher	Reflection Types	Researcher Notes
T1		
T2		
T3		
T4		
T5		

**Reflective Practice Tools Utilized**

Teacher	PD Tools	Researcher Notes
T1		
T2		
T3		
T4		
T5		

**APPENDIX 5.****LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS**

- What have you learned about yourself and your learning?
- What have you learned about working with your colleagues?
- What have you learned about teaching in general?



**APPENDIX 6.****LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

- How do you feel about being a part of RPG meetings?
- How do you evaluate RPG meetings in terms of your professional development?
- What are your thoughts about reflective practice and reflective practice tools used in RPGs?
- What are your thoughts about working in interaction with colleagues in RPGs?
- Have you experienced any challenges during RPG meetings? What are those?
- Any other comments you want to add?



**APPENDIX 7.****LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP MEETING**

- How do you think RPGs can be used as a PD activity for personal/institutional levels?
- What would you keep the same?
- What would you change or suggest?
- What would you suggest to those teachers that will be involved in this PD activity in the future?



