Participatory Action Research for Professional Development

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Abstract

The sudden shift to online education during the Covid-19 Pandemic resulted in uncertainty and stress among teachers. This study investigates the role of Participatory Action Research [PAR] in supporting teachers' professional development in times of pandemic-induced chaos and how effective PAR is in tackling challenges that emerge. The study involved fourteen in-service teachers of English and 267 students at a Turkish state university. Through three cycles of PAR, professional development support was provided for the newly established English preparatory school. Data were collected through observations, reflections, and interviews. The qualitative findings revealed that PAR contributed to teachers' professional development and in-class practices. The chaotic environment which was caused by the pandemic and the mandatory implementation of technology-based teaching tools during that period were the primary challenges at the time of current study. These challenges directly reduced student participation. However, upon the implementation of PAR, the analysis of the emerging themes showed that the participant teachers regarded this kind of action research as the greatest impact on their in-class practices. Increased student participation in classes and the efficient use of technology-based teaching resources were the results of this contribution. This indicated that PAR significantly addressed the issues found in the needs analysis conducted at the beginning of the process. Furthermore, through its components of research, collaboration and reflection, PAR significantly supported teachers in addressing these problem areas. The major problem areas were the chaos environment caused by the pandemic and the implementation of technology-based teaching tools, which was mandatory during that period. These two problems directly decreased the rate of student participation in the lesson.

Keywords*: Participatory action research, Teacher training, Professional development, Action plan.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers can enhance their professional efficacy by engaging in professional development (PD) programs that enable them to acquire new knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Such involvement in PD activities might have both direct and indirect contribution to the quality of classroom instruction (Day 1999; Borg, 2015). Although the means for teachers to achieve this deliberate and continuous learning, namely, continuing professional development [CPD], may differ, the goal is the better learning of students (Borg, 2015; Dhanavel, 2023).

Today, there is a consensus on the significance of professional development to teachers as there are solid benefits of their involvement in such continuous learning. Opfer and Pedder (2010, p. 414) allocate these benefits to three categories: 'direct impacts' as desirable changes in the students, teachers, or school practices; 'indirect benefits' to teachers as career, status, or salary enhancement; and 'indirect benefits to the school' as increased recruitment or retention'. Yet not all CPD practices bring about the same outcomes. For professional development to be effective, it must address the contextual needs of teachers, relate to their day-to-day teaching, focus on instruction, be ongoing and, most importantly, involve collaboration (Somantri and Iskandar, 2021). Indeed, teachers building their own community of learning, along with taking part in PD activities together with their colleagues from school, is an important feature of effective professional development (Mercer, Farrell, and Freeman, 2022).

Literature shows collaborative professional development contributes to teachers' personal, social, and professional learning (Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen, 2015; Saberi and Amiri, 2016). There are also studies supporting the view that building a community of practice is essential for sustainable professional development (Liu, Miller and Jahng, 2016; Padwad, 2022). Still, there is a need for further research on how collaboration and a community of learning can be best integrated into a CPD programme, especially in times of turmoil which might emerge because of a global pandemic.

With the worldwide breakout of COVID-19 virus in early 2020, social distancing has become a part of everyday life, ensuing in many countries having to make radical changes to their learning systems because of this pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). As a result, the physical classroom - where the teacher and students were mutually present – has turned into a virtual one. Yet teachers, assigned to teach online from their individual homes, have received little to no training on how to deliver successful distance learning activities (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). Since teaching is already a stressful profession (Sokal, Trudel and Babb, 2020), there has arisen a need to support these teachers, physically estranged from their colleagues, to work collaboratively (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020). In other words, it is imperative to seek and find a medium of CPD with a collaborative approach to meet teachers' professional needs. Literature shows that participatory action research [PAR] might meet the criteria for effective CPD of teachers, especially in challenging times as it addresses issues within communities of struggle and problems that negatively impact teachers and learners (Creswell, 2012; Saldana and Omasta, 2016). This method is different from more conventional research techniques because it places an emphasis on teamwork and shared ownership.

A sub-category of action research [AR], PAR involves the researcher as an active participant in the research process which is co-designed and carried out by all the participants (Morales, 2016). Accordingly, PAR appears to be an appropriate means for supporting teachers in difficult times. It addresses the contextual needs of the teacher and the learner, collective problem-solving, teachers' active learning and inquiry, and collaboration as well as sustainability (Borko, Jacobs and Koellner, 2010). What is more, PAR might be helpful in solving issues of mutual concerns and challenges (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2013).

Additionally, along with personal development, teachers who take part in PAR benefit from fostered self-reflection - which brings change in their teaching practices - and, more importantly, a dissemination of practices (Morales, 2016). Thus, PAR seems to be an appropriate form of CPD during the time of COVID-19, a unique era that deprives teachers of their physical classrooms and isolates them from their colleagues. Yet, in Turkish contexts, collaborative PD activities are not so popular among teachers (Eroglu and Özbek, 2023). Furthermore, almost no PAR practices have been carried out for the professional development of language teachers working in Turkiye. Finally, students' perspectives have

not been sought to investigate changes in teachers after a PAR implementation, so there is a need to fill this gap.

For the given reasons above, to support teachers' professional development, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What is PAR's role in supporting professional development in the times of pandemic-induced chaos?
2. How effective is PAR in tackling challenges that emerge?

The destined endpoint of a PD programme is improved education, which is in parallel with better learning outcomes for students (Dhanavel, 2023). This can be realized by achieving change in teachers' classroom practices, attitudes, and beliefs (Borko et al., 2010). To this end, diverse PD models have been devised and proposed and currently PD practices consider teachers as the primary decision-makers in participatory, social, inquiry-driven, and evidence-based professional development that is situated in context (Borg, 2015). According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), effective PD supports collaboration, applies good practice models, offers coaching and professional support, provides feedback and reflection. It is also sustainable.

This view is also supported by the literature. Teachers may perceive professional development practices as ineffective if they do not meet their needs or actively involve them in the process (Koç, 2017). It is also important to implement research-based planning as well as forming a genuine connection between in-service training and teachers' everyday teaching (Huhtala and Vesalainen, 2017). Moreover, scaffolded learning and collaboration are crucial (Mustafa and Paçarizi, 2021) along with easy access to CPD (Balushi, 2021). Thus, it can be also inferred that a transformative model of PD will best suit teachers needs as it allows autonomy and involves collaboration (Kennedy, 2011).

Action research [AR], a process involving the researcher as a participant in their attempt to bring about change through research (Sagor, 2010) might help individuals to find solutions to practical, real-life problems (Burns, 2009). There are three main approaches to AR: interpretive, positivist and critical. Interpretive AR addresses local and contextual problems whereas positivist AR is focused on solutions that can be generalised. Critical AR, on the other hand, seeks solutions for national and international problems (Dolapçıoğlu, 2019). PAR is considered as an approach to AR with a unique method aiming at personal and collective change in a specific context (Morales, 2016). It is also a very good representative of critical AR (Dolapçıoğlu, 2019). It consists of a cyclical process with sequential phases. The PAR process involves steps to identify an issue, collaborative planning of a potential solution, implementation of the suggested solution, observation of the outcomes, reflection on the outcomes, and then restarting the cycle by building on the existing outcomes (Chevalier and Buckles, 2019).
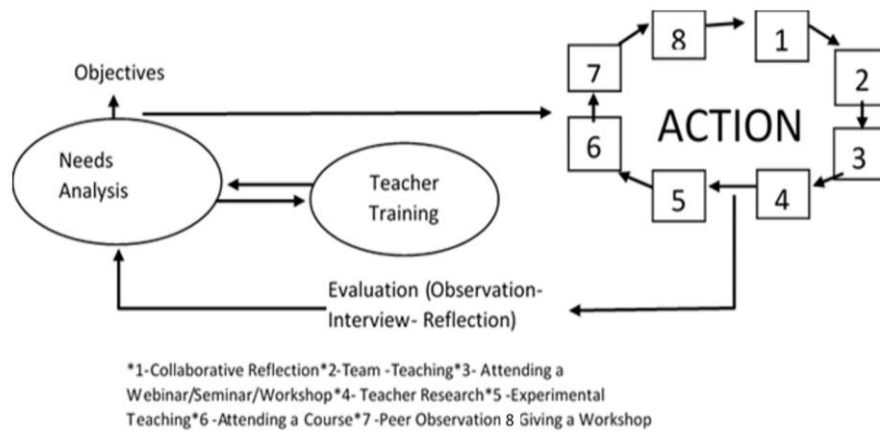
Yet, unlike AR, PAR is a professional development practice with participants, rather than for or about them (Chevalier and Buckles, 2019). It engages teachers in 'planning, carrying out, and applying the results' of their research (Morales, 2016, p. 159). Therefore, its potential to remedy teachers' contextual needs, to promote critical thinking and reflection, and to support collaboration cannot be underestimated (Ayaya, Makoelle and Van Der Merwe, 2020; Chevalier and Buckles, 2019).

There have been quite a few studies investigating the relationship between PAR and teachers' professional development despite its potential positive effects on teachers. PAR may be carried out to cope with challenges (Parrello, Iorio, Carillo and Moreno, 2019) and support teachers' professional development (Laudonia & Eilks, 2018). Additionally, through PAR, teachers may develop a more critical and systematic approach toward teaching, more active listening to student needs, and autonomous and professional learning (Lambirth, Cabral, McDonald, Philpott, Brett and Magaji, 2019). PAR may also improve teachers' PD- related perceptions (Miedijensky and Sasson, 2022) and allow them to explore topics of interest in depth and collaboratively (Nugent, 2019). Finally, PAR has the potential to improve teachers' behaviour, attitude, and intelligence (Pineda et al., 2022). In Turkish contexts, too, very few studies (Ördem, 2021; Uztosun, Skinner and Cadorath, 2014) have utilized PAR. However, none on these focused on teacher learning. For all these reasons, this study will contribute to the national and international literature.

METHODOLOGY

This is an action research study that monitors the progress towards solutions to the PD-related problems and needs of the teachers employed at a newly established English Preparatory program. The teachers in the program have received no training on how to deliver online classes, which has caused stress and anxiety. Thus, action research, based on interpreting an emerging problem in a context with the meaning attributed to it and searching for solutions (Cain, 2012), seems appropriate. It offers the participants the opportunity to discover and interpret the information in depth through stages of reflection, plan, action, and observation (Stringer, 2014; Willis and Edward, 2014). It also allows participants to interpret their own practices and implementations (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

The study focuses on the participation of students, teachers, and administrators in the preparatory programme, so it adopts a PAR design. PAR is inquiry-based research that involves all the participants as stakeholders, who identify a community problem, plan, and implement action to resolve it and reflect on their collective and collaborative experiences throughout the process (Stringer, 2014; Willis and Edwards, 2014). In addition, what distinguishes current research from others is the way it combines PAR and PD on teacher learning. The design of the research, where PAR stages are integrated into Richards and Farrell's (2005) grouping of PD practices, is shown in Figure 1:

*1-Collaborative Reflection*2-Team -Teaching*3- Attending a Webinar/Seminar/Workshop*4- Teacher Research*5 -Experimental Teaching*6 -Attending a Course*7 -Peer Observation 8 Giving a Workshop

Figure 1. *Participatory action research for professional development*

Eight different PD practices were introduced to teachers, and they were invited to implement one of them (Figure 1). Although collaborative PD activities are rare in Turkish contexts (Eroglu and Özbek, 2023), such freedom of choice, i.e., self-directed PD lowered teachers' anxiety (Bhatt, 2021). As a result, the teachers chose six practices from the list: Collaborative Reflection, Team Teaching, attending a Seminar or Workshop, Teacher Research, Experimental Teaching, and Attending a Course. Collaborative Reflection involved teachers watching each other's lesson recordings and reflecting on them based on predetermined focus points. Team Teaching involved two teachers delivering a lesson they planned together to the same students at the same time. The teachers who chose to attend a seminar or a workshop participated in an online or face-to-face session on a topic they were interested in an institution in or outside the city. Those conducting Teacher Research worked on a problem area they wanted to improve in their classroom practices and applied the suggested techniques to solve the problem under the guidance of the teacher trainer and evaluated the results and made new plans. Finally, in the Experimental Teaching practice, the teachers shared their experiences by applying a method or technique that they had never tried before in the classroom. The teachers who wanted to attend a course chose a course on a subject of interest or need. Different from a workshop participation, this practice spread over a longer-term process and was applied in a systematic way.

A total of three cycles are presented here, with each cycle lasting one semester (17 weeks). Implementation of the action plan is still ongoing.

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2.1 Research Context and Study Group

The study took place in the school of foreign languages at a newly established Turkish state university, where undergraduate students receive English language education. Two months prior to the current research, the school set up a Professional Development Unit [PDU] to provide in-service support for the development of the language instructors.

The head of the unit is a teacher trainer and a member of the research team. She has a teaching experience of twenty-five years and holds a Cambridge Delta [Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages]. She is also a PhD. candidate in English Language Teaching. The second researcher is the director of the same institution and an expert with many academic studies in the field of program development. The third researcher has conducted numerous studies on program development and action research at a state university in southeast Turkey. The study was initiated by the school director, who invited the third researcher to the study for her expertise in action research.

The school has 19 female teachers in the preparatory program with a workload of 20-25 teaching hours weekly. Three of the teachers are employed on a part-time basis, whereas the remaining teachers are employed full-time. The study was carried out with fourteen full-time teachers who volunteered to take part. The demographics of the participant teachers can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1 *The demographics of the participant teachers*

Teachers	Educational Background	Years of Experience
T1	BA in ELT, MA in ELT	14
T2	BA in ELT, MA EL	14
T3	BA in ELL, MA in ACL	8
T4	BA in ELL, MA in ELL	4
T5	BA in ELT, MA in ELT	13
T6	BA in ACL, MA in ACL	12
T7	BA in ELL, MA in ELT	16
T8	BA in ELT, MA in ELT	9
T9	BA in ELT, MA in ELL	13
T10	BA in ELT, MA in ELT	10
T11	BA in ELT, MA in TFL	16
T12	BA in ELL, MA in ELL	12
T13	BA in ELL, MA in ELT	12
T14	BA in ACL, MA in ELT	14

ELT: English Language Teaching/ ELL: English Language and Literature / ACL: American Culture and Literature /EL: English Linguistics /TFL: Turkish as a Foreign Language

The teachers who participated in the study had a total of 267 students. These students were placed in different classes based on their level of English: A1, A2, B1 and B2, ranging from beginner level to upper-intermediate level according to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). They were required to reach a level of proficiency in English before they started their faculties of Dentistry, Education, Science and Letter, Fine Arts, Law, Economics and Administrative Sciences.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools are explained in two categories: Interviews and observation forms.

2.2.1 Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, which allowed flexibility to gather in-depth data. The focus of teacher interviews was PD and PAR's support in solving PD related problems (Figure 2). In the semi-structured interview form prepared for the teachers, the questions were designed to respond to their needs of in-class student participation and professional training.

2.2.2 Observation Forms: Observations were carried out by the teacher trainer via lesson recordings, followed by suggestions focusing on classroom practices. 28 lesson recordings were observed to give the teachers suggestions for problem areas that needed improvement and allow self-reflection. For each teacher, written feedback on lesson evaluation was given by the researchers once in

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each cycle. Based on the recordings, the lessons were analysed to monitor students' in-class participation and teachers' professional development needs and progress.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

For the evaluation of lesson observations, lesson recordings were reviewed and transcribed by the teacher trainer. The teachers wrote their reflections on each of their recorded lessons for observation. Both records along with the interview transcripts were analysed via the NVivo 12 Pro program. All qualitative data were analysed together as a whole.

When deemed necessary, a committee consisting of experts from different fields was established to provide consultancy and to examine the interview-observation codes. Depending on the problem areas, these experts were a group of researchers who worked in the fields of instructional design, curriculum, collaborative studies, action research and language education professional development.

For the interview data, the inter-rater reliability was calculated using the reliability formula recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 64) and the value of .91 was obtained. In addition, to eliminate the researcher bias and ensure the internal validity of the themes, before each coding, the coding and the thematic analysis were continued by the committee until the researchers reached a unanimous agreement,

In the study, data were collected using four different instruments (observation, teacher interviews and reflections). For the presentation of the interview and observation findings, verbatim quotes were used to show the situation as it is.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, a total of five committee meetings were held before and after each cycle. Information flow was ensured in two steps: first, among the researchers and secondly, between the researchers and the teachers.

Having carried out a professional development practice of their own choice and for their individual needs, the teachers shared their experiences and learning in written and/or oral form by meeting with other teachers. These meetings held at the end of the academic year were recorded to allow easy access and dissemination.

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FINDINGS

The findings are presented in two separate groups: the effects of PAR on professional development and the reflection of it in classroom practices. Since the total amount of data collected exceeds what can be properly provided in this part, the teachers who demonstrated their development with similar expressions are grouped together. Looking at the codes in the NVivo program, the teachers were placed in three groups. Group 1 includes T1, T6, T11, T12, T14, Group 2 includes T2, T4, T10, T13 and Group 3 includes T2, T4, T10, T13.

Effects of PAR on professional development

Based on PARPD, the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the teachers revealed three main themes: current problem areas [f (23); r (45)], contributions arising from the components of PAR [f (37); r (88)] and contributions to in-class practices [f (38); r (165)]. When the codes related to these themes were examined, the teachers pointed out that the PARPD model provided the biggest contribution to their classroom practices [f (38); r (165)]. These contributions emerged as effective use of technology-based teaching tools [f (33); r (61)] and as a result, an increase in students' participation in the lesson [f (36); r (79)]. This shows that PAR had a significant contribution in the problem areas [f (23); r (45)] that came out in the needs analysis conducted at the beginning of the process.

The major problem areas were the chaos environment caused by the pandemic [f (22); r (25)] and the implementation of technology-based teaching tools, which was mandatory during that period. [f (12); r (22)]. These two problems directly decreased the rate of student participation in the lesson [f (12); r (18)]. Identifying problem areas has an important place in defining current needs and making action plans for these problem areas. Moreover, PAR made significant contributions to teachers in coping with

their problem areas through research f (16); r (23), especially reflection f (33); r (47) and collaboration f (31); r (51).

*f (file number); r (code number)
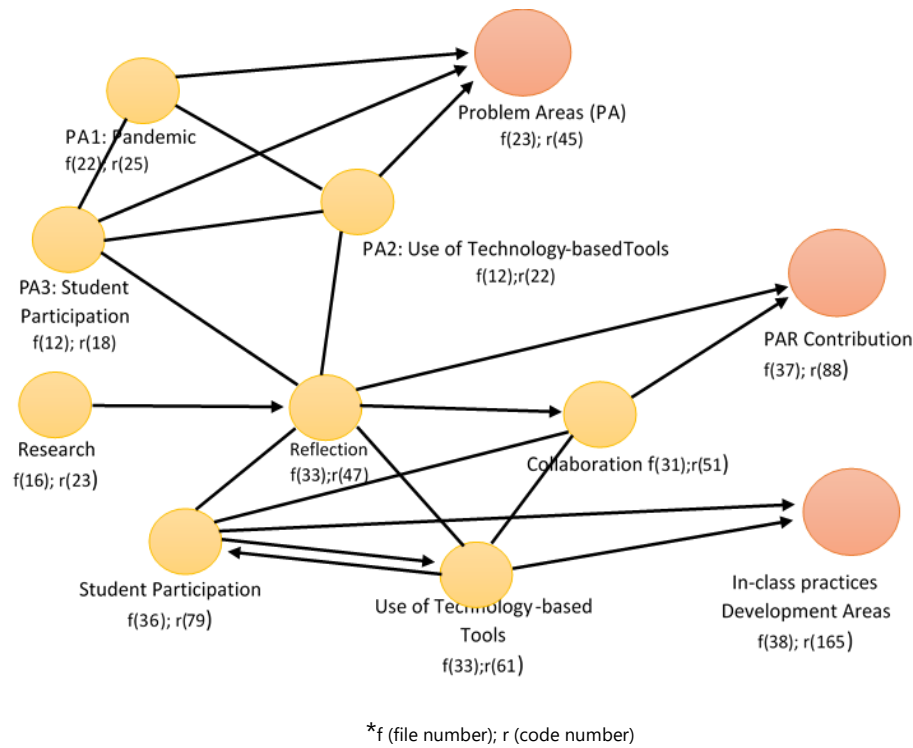
Figure 2. *NVivo 12 Analysis findings of PAR*

The action research approach supported the solution of existing educational problems by responding to the professional needs of teachers due to its ability to examine a problem in a context and solve it in a cyclical structure (Dolapçıoğlu, 2019). Equal participation of all teachers, both as researchers and as participants, was ensured through PD practices.

T12, who carried out Teacher Research to increase student participation, had had difficulties in making the students active despite all her efforts at the beginning. In conformity with the above-mentioned PAR principles, this problem area was worked on, and significant developments were realized in the process. At the beginning, the teacher expressed her problems as follows:

> In the reading lesson, I tried asking comprehension questions about the text and using Kahoot as a game but still had trouble having students actively participate in the lesson. I was expecting a higher level of participation, but it was not so high (T12, First cycle, Interview).

In addition, it was observed that the teacher strictly followed the course book without involving the students in the process. The excerpt from the lesson observation by the teacher trainer is as follows:

> (T12) read the instruction for the activity in the book and had students read aloud the sentences to find the given references. She corrected their pronunciation as they read. The students sounded unwilling. (T12, First cycle, Lesson Observation).

Teachers' involvement of students in the lesson and integration of collaborative activities were also worked on and significant improvements were observed:

> Most students were able to perform the task properly. I always tried to guide them while they were on the task. It was a nice lesson with students working collaboratively on a topic and creating texts using the new grammar they learned. (T12, Second cycle, Interview).

Similar improvements were observed in the lesson delivered by T1. The researcher noted:

> She introduced the Padlet app and shared her screen, reminding students how to use it. Then she shared the Padlet link with each group and visited every group in the Breakout rooms, offering help

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when needed. The students were all fully engaged and helping each other share their work on Padlet. (T1, Second cycle, Observation).

The teachers who participated in the research decided to share their PD experiences in written or oral form by holding a meeting (PD Day) at the end of the year. In this meeting, the day and time of which were decided unanimously, the teachers shared their experiences with each other in the form of posters, reports, and presentations:

> PAR supported us greatly during the pandemic. Through workshops and trainings, I learned a lot. The best example was the PD Day. I watched the recording for the parts that I missed. I even tried Reciprocal Reading, which was done by (T5) I also want to try Team Teaching in the future. (T6, Second cycle, Interview)

When the practices of T2, who chose Experimental Teaching were examined, significant improvements were observed concerning the use of technology and integration of collaborative activities in the lesson. Initially, there were problems:

> Since I started teaching online for the first time this year, I'm a little anxious… even though I plan the time and pace for the activities in the lesson, I cannot follow this plan, or I feel that I may lose the students' interest. I have problems with the use of technological tools and timing. (T2, First cycle, Interview).

The excerpt from the first observation shows similar findings:

> It was a lesson where the voice of the teacher was mostly heard. Participation was low and the teacher had problems with time management related to technology use. (T2, First cycle, Observation).

Written feedback containing suggestions based on the lesson observation and evaluation was shared with the teachers. The presence of expert researchers working on action research and programme development in the study created an opportunity to discover the lack of collaborative activities in the classroom. In PAR, if one wants to evaluate anything, s/he must be in it and work with different experts for it. Moreover, collaborative participation provides the opportunity to gain new knowledge from their own experiences (Kemmis et al., 2013). After actions, like T2, the teachers tried Experimental Teaching achieved significant improvements in using technological tools to increase collaboration:

> After the video, I created a speaking exercise on Word Wall where I asked them to find the correct preposition for the verb phrases and then answer the questions. Basically, speaking is a tough skill. That's why I chose to do a speaking activity after the video. (T4, Second cycle, Interview).

Similarly, T11 said:

> Of course, we all do action research in our classroom. 'What went wrong? What went well? What if I fix what?' We're trying to answer such questions all the time. …. I had heard of mnemonics, but I'd never tried it myself. Now after seeing it there, I said to myself, 'What if I tried it, I wonder how it would go?' (T11, Second cycle, Interview).

At the beginning of the process, the PD-related problems and the support teachers needed were identified. Relevant experts were contacted for teachers to receive training in these areas. Following this process, an excerpt from the second observation showing the development of T10 is as follows:

> It was a very well-planned lesson. Obviously, the teacher had spent a lot of time and effort for the preparation. Technology-based activities that help recycling target vocabulary items for group work were frequently included (T10, Second Cycle, Observation).

Additionally, two teachers, T7 and T8, who chose to attend a Workshop (on the use of technology to create collaborative tasks), made significant progress in terms of integrating collaborative activities in their lessons. Many action research theorists (Kemmis, 2010; Stringer, 2014) frequently emphasize transferring knowledge from theory to practice. The initial reflections of T 7 on the subject are as follows:

> When I watched my lesson recording, I saw that I talked too much for too long. When I checked the attendee list on the meeting channel to see who wanted to join, those who weren't actively attending may have distracted me. (T7, First Cycle, Interview)

An excerpt from the observation on the same lesson is as follows:

It was a vocabulary focused lesson to review targeted vocabulary in specific contexts. The teacher was wasting time by frequently warning the students to participate. (T 7, First Cycle, Observation)

After PAR-based training, reflection and replanning were carried out on these problem areas, the developments reflected by T7 regarding her in-class practices are as follows:

I'm familiar with the features of MS Teams now. So, I preferred Breakout rooms for group work. It wasn't that hard. The students were able to discuss, take notes, exchange ideas, and help each other. Breakout rooms also helped slower or shy students to keep up with the pace of others. (T7, Second Cycle, Interview)

The same lesson recording indicated considerable increase in the use of technology and student participation compared to the first semester. An excerpt from the second observation is as follows:

It was a very productive lesson that kept the students fully engaged. All students actively participated, and the lesson objective was clearly achieved. Breakout Rooms allowed for a lot of collaborative discussion. I can say that technology was used efficiently and effectively. It was a great idea to make the students presenters, which allowed them to share their screens. (T7, Second Cycle, Observation)

The first cycle-work in the dimension of technology use was reflected in the second cycle and all the teachers started to use web tools in their classroom practices. The training workshops and the post-observation meetings with the teachers yielded the most effective results. However, there are still participants in need of improvement concerning student collaboration and participation in the classroom. The committee decided to continue the action research and use its power. Work on this issue will continue in the following semester. This cyclical continuation is the most important feature that distinguishes action research from other studies and is an indication that our study is based on action research.

According to Willis and Edwards (2014), action research is a repetitive cycle. After an action is completed, each cycle continues as observation, analysis, and action again. After the first cycle, the researchers mostly worked on improving classroom practices and reflecting on these practices. In this process, the teachers (n=3) who chose Course Participation as their PD practice shared their training experience with all the teachers. The course content was Curriculum Development (n=2) and Assessment/Evaluation (n=1). The teachers stated that the education they received supported them with student participation and collaboration in the chaos during the pandemic:

Student participation was low in the beginning because there was online education due to the pandemic. However, even a small technology-based tool, which I learned in the workshops, during my own research, or in the courses I attended, created a collaborative working environment. This encouraged my students to participate more. (T9, Third Cycle, Interview)

An excerpt from the lesson observation for the same teacher is as follows:

She was able to integrate technology into the lesson effectively. She seemed confident and comfortable with the Microsoft Teams and its functions. She allowed students to share their screens, and it was indeed a practical idea that allowed collaboration. (T9, Second Cycle, Observation)

All the teachers stated that PAR made the chaos more bearable by providing them with guidance during the pandemic:

When I look back at all the trainings, including the Assessment/Evaluation course, PD studies helped me to improve myself in this period by making it a little more bearable (T5, Third Cycle, Interview).

..... I felt bored as a teacher, and the students looked bored, too, when I used too many technological tools. Then I decided to continue with the ones that went better. As a result, I had the opportunity to discover the most useful tools (T11, Third Cycle, Interview).

Two teachers chose Collaborative Reflection as a PD practice. The trainer participated in the practice as the third teacher and guided the participants through the process. These teachers had the opportunity to enrich their professional knowledge, to recognize technology-based tools that support student participation, and to improve their teaching by observing each other's lessons:

I want to be involved in these collaborative reflections in the future, too. I can say that getting feedback from you improved me immensely. My lessons are much better thanks to these lesson

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observations. I started to find more activities, to monitor the students better, practice more and look at new things. I did a lot to increase student attendance and participation. (T4, Second Cycle, Interview)

Two teachers carrying out Team Teaching stated that PAR provided them with the opportunity to reflect and collaborate. In fact, all the teachers (n=14) frequently stated that PAR provided collaboration between teachers and allowed for both individual and mutual reflection. They added that these two highlighted PAR effects supported their professional development and helped them cope with the current problems caused by the pandemic:

> Before the PDU, we taught classes online but we felt like fish out of water because the pandemic that had just begun at that time. I think the biggest support of PAR was in terms of morale. We tried to overcome this difficult time with projects, trainings, reflections, and cooperation. Our PD practice was especially fun, it literally stopped us from giving up. (T14, Third Cycle, Interview)

The other teacher expressed the contribution of reflection to professional development as follows:

> I have never collaborated so much before. Hours of meetings before and after Team Teaching, which changed my perspective on teaching. Student participation was the highest so far. Also, all the work we have done, the online materials we have prepared, and the sharing of platforms have all had an impact on student participation. (T3, Third Cycle, Interview)

Teachers' opinions were taken to evaluate the reflection of the professional development of the teachers on their classroom practices.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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4.1. Effects on professional development

According to Kindon et al. (2007), an important feature of PAR is that it removes the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participant as well as the one between action and research by replacing it with much more equal role specifications for all involved. Additionally, PAR enables teachers to take part in positive and constructive collaboration with ready and instant collegial sharing and helping (Ayaya et al. 2020; Nugent, 2019). The teachers benefited from collegial learning and collaboration thanks to the equal and active involvement that PAR brings. The careful and regular flow of information throughout the process led to a sincere participation in the dissemination of experiences among the teachers and the researchers alike.

Literature shows PAR brings a change in the point-of-view of the practitioners, with a strong shift towards self-reflection on their pedagogical and teaching-related beliefs (Laudonia and Eilks, 2018; Pineda et al., 2022). PAR allowed teachers to reflect on their own teaching and comparing their teaching-related beliefs to those owned by the other participants and the researchers as well. The collaboration among the teachers and between the teachers and researchers helped the participants work on their needs. Thus, they were convinced that development is possible at every stage of their career. This echoes the idea that after successful implementation of PAR, teachers turn into activists of their own learning, they begin to start their own initiatives and ask questions about the content and potential future activities of implementation and dissemination (Nugent 2019). It is also echoed in our findings that through PAR, teachers can address their every-day issues in their teaching (Lambirth et. al., 2019).

Furthermore, PAR brings about innovation and risk taking, new pedagogical knowledge and understandings, and increased confidence (Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou, 2015). PAR trainings allowed the participants to experiment new teaching techniques and use new technological tools more confidently and enthusiastically. This was possible since the participants did not feel any kind of hierarchical pressure throughout the process. On the contrary, they were actively involved in the mutual development stages. They frequently mentioned the positive effect of the comfort and support they received both from the researchers and the other participants. Such collaboration is essential for effective PD (Mercer et al., 2022). In addition, this aligns with the argument that PAR allows peer feedback and facilitator's feedback (Bayram & Canaran, 2018; Miedijensky and Sasson, 2022).

4.2. Impact on classroom practices

PAR brings changes and improvements in teaching methods and practices (Laudonia and Eilks, 2018; Nugent, 2019) and our findings indicate PAR has evidently helped teachers improve their use of technology in the classroom. Moreover, with PAR, there are positive changes in attitudes and competencies regarding testing and implementing new ideas (Ayaya et al., 2020). Majority of the participants came up with creative ideas to use the technological tools in their lessons. This resulted in increased confidence about teaching online. Because, the increase in the use of technology in distance education is one of the reasons why teachers prefer face-to-face education (Toprakçı and Hepsöğütlü, 2022).

There is a transition from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred one (Miedijensky and Sasson, 2022). This is enabled by teachers learning to listen more actively (Lambirth et. al., 2019). PAR helped teachers to use their time more effectively during online lessons. This was possible by reducing teacher talking time [TTT] and increasing student talking time [STT]. The technology-based tools presented in the trainings, too, led to increased student involvement in the lessons.

Based on these findings, the PAR researchers formulated the following recommendations:

The study took place in a newly established school with very few teachers, who were coincidentally, all females. Thus, it is recommended that future studies be carried out in schools with a larger and more diverse group of teachers, both in terms of gender and experience, to investigate whether the results would differ in such a varied setting.

Even though PAR improved the teachers' capacity for reflection, teamwork, and research in the School of Foreign Languages, further studies should be conducted to foster collaboration between other departments and faculties.

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The contributions of PAR to coping with challenes in chaotic environments and supporting student participation can be further validated through experimental studies that evaluate student perspectives and measure academic skills. What is more, PAR's role in supporting professional development can be expanded through more research.

Last but not least, all institutions should undertake efforts to improve academic achievement and teaching quality by involving the reflection, collaboration, and research-based components of PAR. In addition, to overcome limitations, it is essential for other educators and administrators to support the PAR process.

Mesleki Gelişim İçin Katılımcı Eylem Araştırması

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Özet

Covid-19 Pandemi dönemiçevrimiçi eğitime ani geçiş, öğretmenler arasında belirsizlik ve strese neden olmuştur. Bu çalışma, pandemi kaynaklı kaos dönemlerinde öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimlerini desteklemede Katılımcı Eylem Araştırması [PAR]'nın rolünü ve PAR'ın ortaya çıkan zorluklarla başa çıkmada ne kadar etkili olduğunu incelemiştir. Çalışmaya Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde yabancı diller yüksekokulunda çalışanon dört İngilizce öğretmeni ve 267 öğrenci katılmıştır. Üç PAR döngüsü boyunca yeni kurulan İngilizce hazırlık okuluna mesleki gelişim desteği sağlanmıştır. Veriler gözlemler, yansıtmalar ve görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Nitel bulgular, PAR'ın öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişime ve sınıf içi uygulamalarına katkıda bulunduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Pandeminin neden olduğu kaotik ortam ve o dönemde teknoloji tabanlı öğretim araçlarının zorunlu olarak uygulanması, mevcut çalışmanın yapıldığı dönemdeki temel zorluklardı. Bu zorluklar doğrudan öğrencinin derse katılımını azaltmıştır. Ancak PAR'ın uygulanması üzerine ortaya çıkan temaların analizi, katılımcı öğretmenlerin bu tür eylem araştırmalarını sınıf içi uygulamalarının gelişimi üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip araştırma türü olarak gördüklerini göstermiştir. Derslerde öğrenci katılımının artması ve teknoloji tabanlı öğretim kaynaklarının etkili kullanımı bu katkının sonuçlarıdır. Bu, PAR'ın sürecin başında yürütülen ihtiyaç analizinde bulunan sorunları önemli ölçüde ele aldığını göstermiştir. Dahası, araştırma, işbirliği ve yansıtma bileşenleri aracılığıyla PAR, öğretmenlerin bu sorun alanlarını ele almalarına önemli ölçüde destek olmuştur. Başlıca sorun alanları pandemi kaynaklı kaos ortamı ve o dönemde zorunlu olan teknoloji tabanlı öğretim araçlarının uygulanması olmuştur. Bu iki sorun doğrudan öğrencilerin derse katılım oranını düşürmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katılımcı eylem araştırması, Öğretmen eğitimi, Profesyonel gelişim, Eylem planı.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Öğretmenler yeni bilgi, tutum ve beceriler edinmelerini sağlayan mesleki gelişim (MG) programlarına katılarak mesleki yeterliliklerini artırabilirler. MG faaliyetlerine katılım, sınıf içi eğitimin kalitesine hem doğrudan hem de dolaylı katkıda bulunabilir (Borg, 2015). Öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi gerçekleştirme araçları farklı olsa da, amaç öğrencilerin daha iyi öğrenmesidir (Borg, 2015; Dhanavel, 2023). Bugün, öğretmenlerin sürekli öğrenmeye katılımlarının somut faydaları olduğu için mesleki gelişimin önemi konusunda bir fikir birliği vardır.

Opfer ve Pedder (2010, s. 414) bu faydaları üç kategoriye ayırmaktadır: öğrencilerde, öğretmenlerde veya okul uygulamalarında arzu edilen değişiklikler olarak 'doğrudan etkiler'; kariyer, statü veya maaş artışı olarak öğretmenlere 'dolaylı faydalar'; ve artan işe alım veya elde tutma olarak 'okula dolaylı faydalar'.Gerçekten de, öğretmenlerin kendi öğrenme topluluklarını oluşturmaları ve okuldaki meslektaşlarıyla birlikte mesleki gelişim faaliyetlerine katılmaları, etkili mesleki gelişimin önemli bir özelliğidir (Mercer, Farrell ve Freeman, 2022).

Bir mesleki gelişim programının hedeflenen son noktası, öğrenciler için daha iyi öğrenme çıktılarına paralel olarak eğitimin iyileştirilmesidir (Dhanavel, 2023). Bu, öğretmenlerin sınıf içi uygulamalarında, tutumlarında ve inançlarında değişiklik elde edilerek gerçekleştirilebilir (Borko vd., 2010). Bu amaçla, çeşitli mesleki gelişim modelleri geliştirilmiş ve önerilmiştir ve şu anda mesleki gelişim uygulamaları, öğretmenleri katılımcı, sosyal, sorgulamaya dayalı ve bağlam içinde yer alan kanıta dayalı mesleki gelişimde birincil karar vericiler olarak görmektedir (Borg, 2015)., Darling-Hammond, Hyler ve Gardner'a (2017) göre, etkili PD işbirliğini destekler, iyi uygulama modellerini uygular, koçluk ve profesyonel destek sunar, geri bildirim ve yansıtma sağlar. Ayrıca sürdürülebilirdir.

Katılımcı eylem araştırması (PAR), öğretmenin ve öğrencinin bağlamsal ihtiyaçlarını, kolektif problem çözmeyi, öğretmenlerin aktif öğrenmesini ve sorgulamasını, işbirliğini ve sürdürülebilirliği ele alır (Borko, vd., 2010). Ayrıca karşılıklı endişe ve zorluklarıçözmede yardımcı olabilir (Kemmis, McTaggart ve Nixon, 2013). Buna göre, Katılımcı Eylem Araştırmaları mesleki gelişim problemlerini çözmek için uygun bir araç gibi görünmektedir. Ayrıca PAR'a katılan öğretmenler, kişisel gelişimin yanı sıra öğretim uygulamalarında değişiklik getiren ve daha da önemlisi uygulamaların yaygınlaşmasını sağlayan geliştirilmiş öz-yansıtmadan yararlanırlar (Morales, 2016). Bu nedenle, PAR, öğretmenleri fiziksel sınıf ortamından mahrum bırakan ve meslektaşlarından izole eden COVID-19 döneminde uygun bir mesleki gelişim yöntemi gibi görünmektedir. Türkiye'deişbirlikçi MG etkinlikleri çok yaygın değildir (Eroglu ve Özbek, 2023). Ayrıca, Türkiye'de çalışan yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimi için PAR uygulamasına yönelik yeterince araştırmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu nedenle bu araştırma bu boşluğu doldurması beklenmektedir.. Bundan dolayı bu araştırmada mesleki gelişimi desteklemede Katılımcı Eylem Araştırmasının rolü derinlemesine incelenerek sonuçlar tartışılmıştır.

Öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimini desteklemek için bu çalışma aşağıdaki soruları ele almayı amaçlamaktadır: Pandemi kaynaklı kaos dönemlerinde mesleki gelişimi desteklemede PAR'ın rolü nedir? PAR, ortaya çıkan zorlukların üstesinden gelmede ne kadar etkilidir? Pandemi kaynaklı kaos zamanlarında mesleki gelişimi desteklemede PAR'ın rolü nedir? PAR, ortaya çıkan zorluklarla başa çıkmada ne kadar etkilidir?

Yöntem: Bu çalışma, yeni kurulan bir İngilizce Hazırlık programında çalışan öğretmenlerin PD ile ilgili sorun ve ihtiyaçlarının çözümüne yönelik ilerlemeyi izleyen bir eylem araştırmasıdır. Programdaki öğretmenler, çevrimiçi derslerin nasıl verileceği konusunda hiçbir eğitim almamışlardır ve bu da stres ve endişeye neden olmuştur. Bu nedenle, bir bağlamda ortaya çıkan bir sorunu ona yüklenen anlamla yorumlamaya ve çözüm aramaya dayanan eylem araştırması (Cain, 2012) uygun görünmektedir.

Çalışma, Türkiye'de yeni kurulan bir devlet üniversitesinin lisans öğrencilerinin İngilizce dil eğitimi aldığı Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Mevcut araştırmadan iki ay önce okul, dil eğitmenlerinin gelişimi için hizmet içi destek sağlamak üzere bir Mesleki Gelişim Birimikurmuştur. Okulun hazırlık programında haftalık 20-25 ders saati iş yüküne sahip 19 kadın öğretmen görev yapmaktadır. Öğretmenlerden üçü yarı zamanlı olarak istihdam edilirken, geri kalan öğretmenler tam zamanlı olarak çalışmaktadır. Çalışma, katılmaya gönüllü olan on dört tam zamanlı öğretmen ile yürütülmüştür.Veri toplama araçları iki kategoride açıklanmıştır: Görüşmeler ve gözlem formları. Ders gözlemlerinin

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değerlendirilmesi için, ders kayıtları öğretmen eğitmeni tarafından incelemiş ve yazıya geçirilmiştir. Öğretmenler, gözlem için kaydedilen her bir ders hakkındaki düşüncelerini yazmışlardır. Her iki kayıt ve görüşme transkriptleri NVivo 12 Pro programı aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın geçerliliğini sağlamak için her döngüden önce ve sonra toplam beş komite toplantısı yapılmıştır. Görüşme verileri için, Miles ve Huberman (1994, s. 64) tarafından önerilen güvenilirlik formülü kullanılarak değerlendiriciler arası güvenilirlik .91 olarak hesaplanmıştır.

Bulgular ve Sonuç: Bulgular iki ayrı grupta sunulmuştur: PAR'ın mesleki gelişim üzerindeki etkileri ve sınıf içi uygulamalara yansıması. PAR'a dayalı olarak öğretmenlerden toplanan nitel verilerin analizi üç ana temayı ortaya koymuştur: mevcut sorun alanları [f(23); r(45)], PAR bileşenlerinden kaynaklanan katkılar [f(37);r(88)] ve sınıf içi uygulamalara katkılar [f(38);r(165)]. Bu temalarla ilgili kodlar incelendiğinde öğretmenler, PAR modelinin sınıf içi uygulamalarına en büyük katkıyı sağladığını belirtmişlerdir [f(38); r(165)]. Bu katkılar, teknoloji tabanlı öğretim araçlarının etkili kullanımı [f(33);r(61)] ve bunun sonucunda öğrencilerin derse katılımının artması [f(36);r(79)] olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu, PAR'ın sürecin başında yapılan ihtiyaç analizinde ortaya çıkan sorun alanlarında [f(23);r(45)] önemli bir katkısı olduğunu göstermektedir. Başlıca sorun alanları pandemi kaynaklı kaos ortamı [f(22);r(25)] ve o dönemde zorunlu olan teknoloji tabanlı öğretim araçlarının uygulanması [f(12);r(22)] olmuştur. Bu iki sorun doğrudan öğrencilerin derse katılım oranını düşürmüştür [f(12);r(18)]. Sorun alanlarının belirlenmesi, güncel ihtiyaçların belirlenmesinde ve bu sorun alanlarına yönelik eylem planlarının yapılmasında önemli bir yere sahiptir. Ayrıca PAR, özellikle yansıtma f(33);r(47) ve iş birliği f(31);r(51) ve araştırma f(16);r(23) yoluyla öğretmenlerin sorun alanlarıyla başa çıkmalarına önemli katkılarda bulunmuştur.

Alanyazın, PAR'ın uygulayıcıların bakış açısında bir değişim yarattığını, pedagojik ve öğretimle ilgili inançları üzerinde özdüşünümsel düşünmeye doğru güçlü bir kayma olduğunu göstermektedir (Laudonia ve Eilks, 2018; Pineda vd., 2022). PAR, öğretmenlerin kendi öğretimleri üzerine düşünmelerine ve öğretimle ilgili inançlarını diğer katılımcıların ve araştırmacıların sahip olduğu inançlarla karşılaştırmalarına olanak sağlamıştır. Öğretmenler arasındaki ve öğretmenler ile araştırmacılar arasındaki işbirliği, katılımcıların ihtiyaçları üzerinde çalışmalarına yardımcı olmuştur. Böylece, kariyerlerinin her aşamasında gelişimin mümkün olduğuna ikna olmuşlardır. Bu durum, PAR'ın başarılı bir şekilde uygulanmasının ardından öğretmenlerin kendi öğrenmelerinin aktivistlerine dönüştüğü, kendi girişimlerini başlatmaya başladıkları ve uygulama ve yaygınlaştırmanın içeriği ve gelecekteki potansiyel faaliyetleri hakkında sorular sordukları fikrini yansıtmaktadır (Nugent 2019). Ayrıca, PAR aracılığıyla öğretmenlerin öğretimlerinde günlük sorunlarını işbirliği ile ele alabilecekleri durumlar oluşmuştur.

PAR, öğretim yöntemleri ve uygulamalarında değişiklikler ve iyileştirmeler sağlamaktadır (Laudonia and Eilks, 2018; Nugent, 2019). Araştırmada PAR'ın öğretmenlerin sınıfta teknoloji kullanımını iyileştirmelerine destek olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Dahası, PAR ile yeni fikirleri test etme ve uygulama konusunda tutumlarda ve yeterliliklerde olumlu değişiklikleri ortaya çıkarmaktadır (Ayaya vd., 2020). Bu çalışmada katılımcıların çoğu derslerinde teknolojik araçları kullanmak için yaratıcı fikirler ortaya koymuş ve çevrimiçi öğretim konusunda kendilerine olan güvenlerinin arttığını ifade etmişlerdir.

Ayrıca PAR, yenilikçilik ve risk alma, yeni pedagojik bilgi ve anlayışlar konusunda gelişim sağlamaktadır (Ioannidou-Koutselini ve Patsalidou, 2015). PAR eğitimleri, katılımcıların yeni öğretim tekniklerini denemelerine ve yeni teknolojik araçları daha güvenle kullanmalarına olanak tanımıştır. Bu, katılımcıların süreç boyunca herhangi bir hiyerarşik baskı hissetmemeleri nedeniyle mümkün olmuştur. Aksine, karşılıklı gelişim süreçlerine aktif olarak katılmışlardır. Hem araştırmacılardan hem de diğer katılımcılardan aldıkları desteğin olumlu etkisinden sıklıkla bahsetmişlerdir. Böyle bir iş birliği, etkili MG

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için önemlidir (Mercer vd., 2022). Ayrıca, bu, PAR'ın akran geri bildirimine ve işbirlikli geri bildirimine izin verdiği argümanıyla uyumludur (Bayram ve Canaran, 2018; Miedijensky ve Sasson, 2022).

Öneriler

Bu çalışmanın örneklemini yeni kurulmuş bir yabancı diller yüksekokulunda görev yapan kadın ve mesleklerinin ilk yıllarında olan öğretmenler oluşturmaktadır. , Bu nedenle, gelecekteki çalışmalar, hem cinsiyet hem de deneyim açısından farklı öğretmen grupları üzerinde uygulanabilir.

PAR, Yabancı Diller Okulu'ndaki öğretmenlerin, ekiple çalışma, düşünme ve araştırma becerilerini geliştirmiş olsa da, diğer bölümler ve fakülteler arasındaki iş birliğini teşvik çalışmaları yürütülebilir.

PAR'ın kaotik ortamlarda zorluklarla başa çıkma ve öğrenci katılımını destekleme konusundaki katkıları, öğrenci bakış açılarını değerlendiren ve akademik becerileri ölçen deneysel çalışmalar yürütülebilir.

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Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence

There is no direct or indirect contribution of artificial intelligence in any part of the article.