



A case study on the perceptions of professional development unit members at an EFL program

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Abstract

Prior research focusing on teacher training indicated that professional development is considered as a continuous process, and trainings are essential for teacher development. In this qualitative case study, researchers examined the perceptions of professional development unit (PDU) members regarding the training sessions they offered at a foundation university in Turkey. After ethical committee permissions were obtained, the data were collected through semi-structured interview questions besides note taking during the interviews. There were five PDU members as participants. Content analysis was utilized after all the notes and transcriptions were brought together. To carry out the content analysis, the researchers employed a modified van Kaam method as defined by Moustakas (1994). Thematically analyzed data indicated three main findings: continuous professional development, good rapport, and motivation. These themes are discussed as reflected by the participants and implications are provided for future professional development series.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction of the problem

By its very nature, language teaching, along with language learning, is an ever-changing process. In this respect, language teachers are expected to keep up with the changes in the field, which also requires institutions to adapt to these changes so that

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they can provide teachers with the opportunities to pursue professional development. Among these opportunities, in-service teacher training is essential for teacher development, which is often categorized as *training* and *development* (Richards & Farrell, 2012). Short courses, conferences, and workshops fall under the category of training which is mainly focused on practice and teaching skills (Glower & Law, 1996). On the other hand, development encompasses strategies such as work-shadowing, paired-observations, and mentoring (Glower & Law, 1996). Thus, as an integral part of teachers' lives, professional development activities are considered a long-term process for individuals' profession. In general, a professional development unit (PDU) is responsible for the training and development of teachers as well as benefiting the institution as a whole. Therefore, in the present study, the researchers examined a professional development unit (PDU) as a case to investigate if this unit helps PDU members in their professional development.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

According to Vygotsky (1978), development of cognition fundamentally depends on complex interaction among individuals. In his conceptual framework, adults are considered as vital sources of knowledge for children to internalize for their cognitive development. As children interact with their parents, or more experienced peers, their level of cognition increases so that they can advance beyond where they currently are in terms of intellectual ability. In his Sociocultural Theory (SCT), Vygotsky (1978) expounds this phenomenon under the concept of *zone of proximal development* (ZPD).

Coined by Vygotsky (1978), the ZPD refers to “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). That is, providing the individual with appropriate assistance can help them move through the zone of proximal development, and this can be achieved through interaction. Although SCT is mainly associated with cognitive development of children and/or students, it has also been adopted as a theoretical framework for teacher education (Smith 2001; Welk, 2006).

In the context of ZPD, interaction and collaboration between the trainee and trainer or between a mentor and a teacher can enable the trainee or teacher to become capable of doing more. Identical to child's cognitive development, interaction also plays a vital role for development of teachers. When considered from the learning point of view, professional development activities can also be viewed as a part of teacher education that continues after graduation from teacher education programs. In this regard, due to its emphasis on interaction and the teaching of more knowledgeable members of the

community to the less knowledgeable ones in this context, SCT was adopted as the theoretical framework of the current case study.

1.3. Literature Review

Obtaining information about the PDU members' perceptions and attitudes towards the program itself is important for the institution, as this process may reveal the needs of the PDU members. It may also guide the PDU organizers in choosing appropriate materials and tasks because, in most of the cases, trainees do not feel creative if these tasks do not match with their needs and interests (Yurtsever, 2013). As a result, the institution could take action towards addressing such needs and perceptions so as to maximize the efficiency of the PDU.

Throughout their professional career, teachers experience numerous problematic situations they are expected to solve. Resolution of such dynamic and non-linear problems largely depends on "personal agency, or how teachers define tasks, employ strategies, and view the possibility of success" (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003, p. 14). The concept of personal agency and people's beliefs about their capabilities of regulating incidents affecting their lives are interrelated (Bandura, 1989). In this regard, perceptions on individuals' own capabilities refer to one's confidence in their potential to plan and carry out necessary actions to cope with prospective circumstances. Thus, it is reflected in the way people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (Bandura, 1999).

Task-specific assumptions determine one's preference and endeavors when faced with a difficult situation (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). To illustrate, they have been considered as essential components of prevailing views regarding motivation and self-confidence (Graham & Weiner, 1996). They have also been found to be connected to conscientiousness and ongoing learning (Martocchio & Judge, 1997), which are also considered as mediating variables related to teacher effectiveness (Saks, 1995). From this standpoint, teachers' beliefs about their capabilities are of great significance with respect to professional development efforts.

Alshehry (2018), in her qualitative study, focused on teachers' control of their own professional development and how professional development affects their teaching skills by using semi-structured interview questions. Her findings indicated that Saudi Arabian EFL teachers would welcome professional development opportunities because they believed that professional development would foster positivity and develop a collaborative environment as well as improving their teaching skills.

Furthermore, Louw, Todd, and Jimarkon (2016) carried out a study to investigate teacher trainers' beliefs about feedback on teaching practices. In their study, they

collected the data through classroom observations and teacher trainers' feedback on each observation. Their findings revealed that teacher trainers' beliefs about feedback were mainly based on trainers' personal experience or experiential beliefs as well as received beliefs. Received beliefs are associated with the social pressure under which the trainers feel they have to conform to. Based on the decisions of the administration, trainers followed certain procedures and teachers' perceptions indicated improvement in the quality of instruction in the institution.

Dahri, Vighio, and Dahri (2018) conducted a study on the acceptance and use of web-based training system. This training system was offered for 56 in-service teachers as a continuum of their professional development. In their study, they used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 46 items to measure teacher perceptions on the integration of web-based training. It was concluded from the study that in-service teachers at Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) were satisfied with the use of web-based training system (WBTS) and were fully-motivated to utilize new web-based training system for their continuous professional development.

Sixel (2013) carried out a qualitative study on teacher perceptions of professional development required by the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative (PI34) focusing on the lived-experiences of the participants. It was found that teachers chose autonomous learning opportunities appropriate for themselves and their students. The researchers emphasized the importance of autonomous learning as follow:

Mandated professional development plans through the PI 34 process were not motivating factors to improve educators' learning. Professional educators' motivation to improve their craft and help their students succeed, combined with collaboration and time were perceived by educators as factors necessary to change classroom instruction and impact student learning. (ii)

Moreover, Al Asmari (2016) focused on the attitudes and perceptions of English language teachers toward professional development activities. According to the result of the data collected through a questionnaire, teachers were found to be aware of the importance of professional development for the improvement of their academic and management skills. The participants in this study claimed that teamwork and collaboration helped them to set better goals and improve their teaching professionally. In this study, professional development activities were "perceived as a learning activity, a challenge to think creatively and critically as a learner and as a teacher, and learning with and from their colleagues" (p. 122).

Yurtsever (2012) also investigated EFL teachers' beliefs on professional development and preferences for improving their skills by making use of quantitative data obtained

from instructors working at different state schools. Yurtsever found that many teachers regarded professional development programs as helpful training sessions; however, the participants also indicated that these trainings should be carried out in a way that novice teachers would like to seek in their careers.

In addition, Bullough (2005) carried out a case study and investigated to what extent mentors' accepting their roles and identities is important in teacher education. The researcher collected the data by means of peer interviews with interns and teachers, a mentoring log, and transcripts of a mentoring seminar. Based on the various data, it was found that attending to identity fostered the commitment to the role of mentors.

Overall, the studies conducted in this field indicated that professional development activities may motivate trainees if the activities are based on trainees' needs and interests. According to the literature, the most helpful professional development sessions were usually the ones that took the attitudes and perceptions of teachers. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of PDU members at a foundation university to understand how the PDU helps them in their professional development. The research questions were as follows:

1. How does PDU contribute to PDU members' professional development?
2. What are PDU members' perceptions on how PDU helps with the quality of instruction at a foundation university?
3. What are PDU members' perceptions on professional development trainings?

2. Method

This section describes design, data collection and analyses in detail. In this section, detailed participant and setting information is also provided.

2.1. Design

The nature of this study is qualitative, and it seeks to explore a social phenomenon that focuses on individuals' attitudes about a particular case (Polit & Hungler, 2003). So as to explore a social phenomenon, qualitative research relies on non-numerical data and "refers to the meanings, concepts definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things" (Berg & Lune, 2017, p. 12). Touching on its complex characteristics, Creswell (2007) relate qualitative research to "an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (p. 35).

The present study adopts a case study design, and it can be defined in different ways. For example, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describes it as "a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p.

54). Hagan (2006), on the other hand, defines it as “in-depth, qualitative studies of one or a few illustrative cases” (p. 240). To this end, in the present study, a case study design was adopted because it allowed the researchers to gather sufficient systematic data about the participants and the professional development units at a foundation university in Turkey.

2.2. Setting

This current study was conducted in the Department of Basic English of a foundation university in Ankara, Turkey. As a part of the School of Foreign Languages, the Department of Basic English aims to provide its students with English language education that enables them to pursue their undergraduate studies at their departments where the medium of instruction is 100% English. The program, which is compliant with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), admits local and international students coming from 57 different countries. The program has a highly qualified teaching body of approximately 100 local and international instructors in total.

The Department of Basic English is comprised of several academic sub-units, such as the Testing Unit, the Writing Unit, the Academic Research Unit, the Material Development Unit, and the PDU. Along with performing unit-specific tasks, each unit works in collaboration to maximize the general quality of instruction in the institution. PDU at the institution where the current study took place consists of 11 instructors who are responsible for carrying out activities within the scope of teacher development. Its main mission is to contribute to the development of instructors so as to ensure the quality of instruction in the institution. Professional development activities provided by the unit include in-class observations, organization of peer observations, workshops, seminars, and arrangement of external training sessions. Before the class observations, one PDU member and the instructor come together to decide on the date and the hour of the observation. Then, the PDU member provides the instructor with the observation criteria so that the instructor gets familiar with it before the observation. After the observation, the PDU member requests the instructor to write a post-lesson reflection to be submitted to the PDU member. Additionally, the PDU member and the instructor agree on a day for a post-conference meeting to discuss the observed lesson.

Another responsibility of the PDU members is to organize peer observations in which two instructors visit each other's classes to observe their lessons and share their ideas about the lesson afterward. The PDU members are also responsible for organizing workshops, seminars, and external training sessions related to the professional development of instructors. The topics of such sessions are chosen by the PDU members and the instructors in the institution together.

2.3. Participants

In accordance with the department's research procedures, among eight PDU members, five were selected to represent the whole group and the researchers made use of a convenience sampling of the PDU members in this case study. The participants, who had at least 10 years of teaching experience, responded positively and volunteered for the study after they were provided with the questions and the consent form before the interview.

The selected PDU members were all Turkish female nationals. Their ages varied from 33 to 45, and they were graduates of various departments related to the English language: one from Linguistics, two from English Language Teaching, one from Translation and Interpretation, and one from English Language Literature. Table 1 shows the demographic information about the PDU members, PDU related activities, years of experience as well as pseudonyms of the participants in the present study.

Table 1. Demographic Information about PDU members

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Educational Background	Years as a Teacher	Years of Experience as a PDU Member	Length of PDU
Delilah	Female	Turkish	33	Linguistics	10	1 year	3 weeks
Elaine	Female	Turkish	32	English Language Literature	12	1 year	3 weeks
Olivia	Female	Turkish	41	ELT	17	1 year	3 weeks
Ashley	Female	Turkish	33	Translation & Interpretation	12	1 year	3 weeks
Madelyn	Female	Turkish	51	ELT	19	1 year	3 weeks

2.4. Data Collection

The data for this study were collected via semi-structured interview questions which allowed the researchers to use some other prompts depending on the answers of the participants for further clarification if needed (see Appendix A). The researchers took notes of the answers of the participants during the interviews and each interview was recorded in order not to miss out any details. This also enabled researchers to refer back to the responses of the participants when necessary. Each interview, ranging from 35 to 45 minutes, was carried out in a designated room for the interview in order to avoid unexpected interruption. The whole data collection process was completed approximately within a month.

2.5. Trustworthiness

In order to validate the accuracy of the data, the researchers requested the participants to review the transcriptions of their interview, which is referred to as member checking technique (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Furthermore, with the aim of fostering the accuracy and validity of the interview questions, an external audit was carried out. Finally, the transcriptions of the interviews were also double-checked by each researcher so as to increase the credibility of the data. Additionally, on the purpose of being truthful to the participants, they were informed about the study and given the interview questions beforehand to validate the authenticity of the study. Lastly, the audit strategy was utilized so as to establish conformability. An external auditor reviewed the whole research process along with the design, data, findings, and interpretations to avoid potential researcher biases and corroborate objectivity.

2.6. Analyses

Content analysis, which is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. To carry out the content analysis, the researchers employed a modified van Kaam method as defined by Moustakas (1994) so that they were able to narrow down the detailed data into categorized significant themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, the research team listened to the recorded interviews and transcribed the data before the participants were shown the transcriptions for member checking. After this step, the transcriptions were color-coded into words and phrases some of which emerged as main themes of the study. A case diagram was created to visualize those themes. Lastly, some excerpts were added to make the associations of the themes clearer when necessary.

3. Findings

In the light of the thorough analyses, certain main and sub-themes emerged (See Figure 1). The main themes were continuous professional development, good rapport, and motivation. Continuous rapport theme included two sub-themes: Constructive feedback and openness. Constructive feedback refers to PDU members’ constant professional development and information refreshing through the constructive feedback received from the participants of the training sessions. Also, openness refers to PDU members’ being open to new trends and changes. Openness was a theme emerged naturally because offering professional development series required PDU members to stay on top of every kind of updates about ELT topics.

The second main theme was good rapport and it included three sub-themes: good relations with instructors, good relations with students, and mutual support and interaction with these bodies. PDU members reflected that these three sub-themes were important for the continuity of the sessions because instructors would not be interested in the sessions and development if they did not have good rapport with them, which would eventually affect the rapport that they would establish with students. They indicated that they felt more successful when there was a mutual support and interaction between them and the trainees.

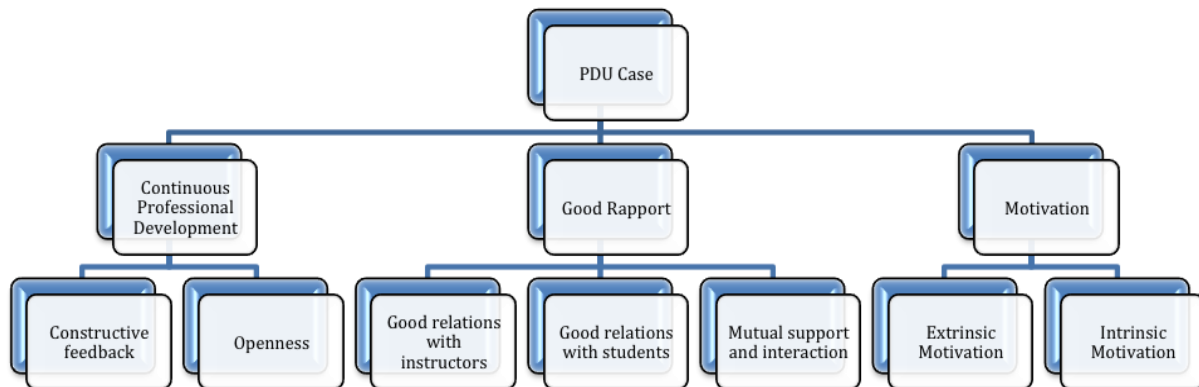


Figure 1: *Emerged themes.*

The third main theme was motivation, and it had two sub-themes: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Offering professional development series made the PDU members feel more confident, as they received constructive feedback. They were willing to do more for the trainings and for improving the quality of instruction at their institution, as it was intrinsically motivating for them to organize the workshops and trainings they offered. In addition, the PDU members had reduced course load because they were supposed to allocate time for the workshops. This idea was offered by the administration and it motivated them extrinsically. Another external element that was motivating them was recognition and awards they received as a token of appreciation during the meetings. These themes and sub-themes will be detailed below.

3.1. Continuous professional development

All of the participants emphasized the importance of being open to new trends and changes in the field of ELT. They stated that every single observation and training contributed to their professional development in a positive way, as they all consider learning as a continuous process. In this regard, all the PDU members expressed that the PDU training sessions, seminars, and workshops had useful implications on both their professional and personal development.

Another point they touched upon was that the PDU training sessions provided them with the opportunity to refresh their knowledge on ELT in terms of the terminology used and various techniques and strategies used in language teaching. Elaine, a 32-year-old PDU member stated, *“I refreshed my ELT knowledge as it had been six years since I had my Master’s Degree in ELT when we attended that training. The trainers showed us really nice techniques.”* In addition, Olivia who is a 41-year-old PDU member, also said, *“We remembered the terminology. It was actually very helpful in terms of bringing my ELT knowledge back.”* The PDU training sessions mainly included suggestions on taking notes during observations, giving clear and constructive feedback, and choosing the correct language while giving feedback to teachers.

Furthermore, constructive feedback they received during and after the sessions made the PDU members to reflect on what worked and what did not work during the trainings. They mentioned that obtaining feedback from the instructors provided the opportunity for them to redesign some sessions and find ways to increase the amount of learning on the instructors’ part. For instance, Ashley stated,

It was great to hear that the PDU session I offered helped instructors and motivated them. They said that the last activity I designed was very effective and almost all of them tried it in their classes. They even wanted more examples from me to use as a follow-up activity. They said that I was very knowledgeable and I modeled the tasks well. When I hear those kinds of things, I want to do more for the PDUs.

It is seen that the activity that Ashley conducted worked well and instructors wanted to adopt it. This also made her be more motivated for future sessions she would offer.

3.2. Good rapport

Good rapport was one of the essential themes that emerged as a theme since all the PDU members stated that their relationship with instructors improved quite a lot after becoming a PDU member. For instance, Elaine said, *“Teachers are now quite positive because after post observations while talking to them, they understood we were not judges. I mean we don’t have any bad ideas or we are not gossiping about them. So, they feel more*

relaxed.” She indicated that the instructors think that PDU members are also instructors at the same institution and they are not very different than them. This attitude also made the PDU members approachable. When the instructors were able to approach them comfortably, the PDU members had more opportunities to learn what worked and what did not work after their sessions. They had the opportunity to closely talk about the details of their sessions.

According to the participants, their relationship with instructors got better especially when the instructors realized that the PDU members were not judging them. Instead, they were guiding them to help them discover better teaching skills and techniques. For instance, Elaine pointed out a very good aspect of why this relationship between the PDU members and the instructors is important. She said,

You know, I am 32 years old, and honestly, people always hesitate in asking for some advice if the person they are talking to is younger than they are. I know I should not think like this but some of the instructors’ ages have been preventing them from checking with me as a PDU member when they need advice on a lot of things, especially technology. Some instructors didn’t grow up with technology but they had to learn it. So, it is normal for them to ask questions to me but when they hesitate or when they cannot approach me, the communication breaks down. As PDU members, we offer a lot of strategies that we can use at labs. So, it is very important for the instructors to be able to talk to a PDU member like a good friend so that they can ask technology-related questions.

Elaine’s words indicate a very good point. If the PDU members provide good rapport with the instructors and listen to their needs and expectations, there will be more room for improvement in future sessions as well as in the quality of instruction.

The PDU members stated that constructive feedback also helped them to build a good rapport with instructors, which connects this concept to the sub-themes of the previous theme, continuous professional development. The importance of language while giving feedback was emphasized by the participants, too. Ashley said *“We talked about the language we should be using during feedback. If I hadn’t had that training, I would be using a different language now, or I would be very direct or offensive.”* In this sense, the PDU members said they emphasized the importance of using appropriate language when they provided feedback to the instructors so as not to hurt or offend them.

Delilah stated, *“First we were just colleagues, then thanks to the observations, feedback sessions and meetings we became people who help each other for a common purpose.”* The instructors’ feeling the mutual support and interaction was encouraged by professional development activities, which was another factor that was attributed to building a good relationship between the instructors and the PDU members.

In addition, establishing good rapport between the PDU members and the instructors helped both parties increase the quality of relationship among the instructors and students. However, only one of them reported this because the other PDU members probably did not check this with the instructors. It may be important for the PDU members to check with instructors and learn how their sessions are affecting their relationship with students. Regarding this, Olivia mentioned,

Recently, I offered several strategies in the session I conducted to show the instructors how to check their students' understanding of the subject matter besides offering some reading strategies. I mean I tried to help them understand how to make students listen to them when there is a clash of ideas between the instructors and the students. Actually, I was not sure if I did a good job but checking with one of the instructors [by the way she is also my friend], I learned that her relationship with her students improved much more after my session because she set the rules in class as I described in my session.

What Olivia mentioned not only helped the instructors but also helped students in terms of having a good communication between their instructors. As mentioned in Vygotsky's (1978) SCT, communication helps individuals clarify vague points. PDU members' checking with instructors, and instructors' check with students kept each party in the loop.

3.3. Motivation

Motivation can be regarded as the key consideration for the continuity of professional development trainings. The researchers analyzed motivation under the two sub-headings as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic factors were listed as the appreciation of administration and colleagues, reduction of teaching hours as a reward, praise and, recognition. For some PDU members, it was very important to have reduced course load so as not to feel burnout. For example, Delilah stated, *"I wouldn't have the same amount of teaching hours but I understood the value of being with students and I tried to spend my time in the classroom as maximum quality as possible when I had reduced course-load. I tried to look for other ways of teaching."* Even though the participants mentioned the heavy workload as a unit such as lesson observations, attending and preparing workshops, weekly meetings and training sessions, meeting the needs of the instructors, increasing the quality of instruction motivated them both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Furthermore, participants stated that they were motivated by professional satisfaction, empathy and positive attitudes of their colleagues towards them as a unit intrinsically. Along with these, being in a PDU made them feel more self-confident, have better teaching skills and provide better rapport with students, which contributed to their intrinsic motivation. Ashley stated, *"I feel more confident now that I offer trainings. Of course, I work hard to develop the sessions and try not to make any mistakes, but when*

I am done with the session I offer, I always say ‘Yes! I made it!’ I get more excited for the next training.” In addition, Madelyn said, *“I have many years of experience in teaching English, but being a PDU member has been a unique experience for me in that I improvement my own teaching skills while trying to improve the instructors.”* She seemed very positive about being PDU member and she was intrinsically motivated to offer more and learn more.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate the perceptions of PDU members at a foundation university to understand how the PDU helps them in their professional development. The present study revealed that the PDU members were quite open to developing themselves in their profession and called it an unceasing process. In the context of ZPD, instructors’ interaction and collaboration between the trainee and trainer enabled them to build on their existing knowledge and contribute to each other’s knowledge. As mentioned earlier, identical to child’s cognitive development, interaction played a vital role for their skill development as teachers. In this regard, due to its emphasis on interaction and the teaching of more knowledgeable members of the community to the less knowledgeable ones in this context, the instructors learned from each other in a sociocultural environment. Besides, they drew attention to the usefulness of training sessions, workshops, seminars, namely any activity done under professional development. That is to say, the participants were all eager to participate in professional activities. Similarly, Kabilan and Veratharaju (2013) suggested that teachers feel the urge for improvement along with new trends and challenges in the field. This finding also aligns with Louw et al. (2016) in that PDU members followed certain procedures based on the decisions of the administration and their continuous efforts in development indicated the improvement in the quality of instruction at the institution.

Another essential key issue that emerged from this study was a good rapport with the instructors and also indirectly students. All of the participants established good relations with colleagues. This was also motivating for both themselves and the instructors. Mutual positivity and interaction fostered empathy that also resulted in constructive feedback. This is supported by Sixel’s (2007) study. The aim of the PDU activities was not only on student achievement but they also enabled both PDU members and instructors to learn from each other by means of interaction and collaborative work such as workshops, conferences, etc. Also, Bullough (2005) stated that feeling the responsibility to be members of PDU contributes positively to their performance as mentors. Correspondingly, developing collaborative professional relationships depended on constructing professional knowledge and skills and reflecting on practice with colleagues as emphasized by Gregson and Sturko (2007).

The last key issue arose from this study was motivation, which was also found to be the underlying factor of professional development. Wlodkowski (2003) suggested that the organizational and personal support must be encouraged by the administration to help their personnel to learn and assimilate practices further. This encouragement could motivate the personnel as long as the administration could balance the pressure with support. According to Dahri et al. (2007), PDU members who were enthusiastic about the PDU activities and considered the alternative ways for training were also more efficient. Therefore, the PDU members should be encouraged by the administration. In addition, the PDU members were satisfied with the attitudes of instructors as they are fully aware of the significance of PDU activities for their professional and personal development (Al Asmari, 2016). Based on the data gathered from the interviews, it could be concluded that PDU members found the PDU training sessions and activities useful and tried to make the best out of those when they felt motivated and willing to improve themselves. Last, our findings were consistent with what Alshehry (2018) expressed. PDU members and instructors are supposed to work in collaboration which creates positivity in the institution. As aforementioned, professional development of language instructors plays a great role in the improvement of ELT professionals and institutions. Hence, motivation, attitudes and perceptions of PDU members are of utmost importance in this continuous process.

5. Conclusions

For several decades now, professional development for language teachers has become a popular topic, as it is seen as a key to improve the quality of instruction. In the ever-changing context of teaching, both teachers and institutions are expected to be aware of current developments in teaching. This study aimed to approach professional development through the perceptions of PDU members. The study revealed that the continuous development of teachers relies on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as the establishment of good rapport between teachers and PDU members. As former studies on professional development referred only to teachers, the focus of this study was trainers or PDU members. In this respect, this study can be insightful in understanding the viewpoints of PDU members in professional development of language teachers.

In addition, this study may contribute to PDU organizing committees in terms of considering the needs and expectations of PDU members. For instance, motivation was one of the important components in this study and PDUs can increase the motivation of PDU members through awards, recognitions at their meetings. This would help both the PDU members and also instructors and students, as these are the groups that benefit from the application of training sessions.

However, the findings of this study may constitute some limitations. The first limitation that needs to be addressed is the sample size of the study. Although the

number of participants of this study is considered to be sufficient for qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), a study with a larger sample size could have been more generalizable to the population. This would also enable the researchers to generalize the findings in different contexts.

The second limitation is the lack of diversity among the participants. This study was conducted with 5 Turkish participants. Had the study been carried out with participants coming from different countries, the results could have been diverse due to the cultural perspectives of the samples. Another limitation is the context of the study. This study was carried out at a foundation university in Ankara, Turkey. Perceptions of PDU members might have been different in different contexts, such as state universities, high schools, and colleges

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Appendix A.

A.1. Interview questions

1. Have you applied for the membership of the PDU or have you been chosen by the administration?
2. Do you think you are an ideal teacher to be in the PDU?
3. Have your trainings been effective in term of your professional development?
4. To what extent do you think the PDU trainings have helped you?
5. How do you think the PDU trainings have a reflection on the quality of instruction?
6. Has your membership in the PDU affected your relationship with the instructors?
7. Do you think your workload is heavy? If yes, how does it affect your performance?
8. Do you think the frequency of training sessions is sufficient for you?
9. What kind of activities and techniques have you found useful in training sessions?
10. Who do you think should support and evaluate your professional development?
11. Have you been able to develop your training skills so that you could be a role-model for the teachers?

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