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EFL Instructors' Attitudes towards Professional Self-Development*

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Abstract

This descriptive study aimed to find out whether instructors practiced self-development activities, whether some factors hindered the practice of self-development activities, and to what extent the instructors implemented self-development activities in their classes to solve a problem. Additionally, it aimed to find out whether the instructors differed in the use of self-development activities in terms of age, gender, experience, education level, and teaching hours. This study was conducted with 348 EFL instructors and four teacher trainers. Three research instruments including a questionnaire, interviews with teacher trainers, and four EFL instructors were used to investigate the self-development activities which were journal writing, self-appraisal, peer-observation, reading, writing a research paper, and action research. The analysis of data revealed that EFL instructors practiced self-development activities on a limited scale except for peer observation, which was carried out as a school policy. The results also showed that the workload was the most important hindrance in practicing self-development activities. Additionally, EFL instructors did not transfer the information gathered from self-development activities in their EFL classes to solve problems and they differed in the use of self-development activities to some extent in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Keywords: Self-development, Professional development, Action research, Self-appraisal, Peer observation.

Introduction

Due to the rapid changes in the world of education, which also affect the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), professional development is receiving more attention at universities all around the world to be able to meet the needs of the educators who follow the latest innovations in this field (Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). This issue is also very important in Turkey, especially for the preparatory schools of universities (Ünal, 2010). In particular, despite the innovative education systems at universities, there is still a need for continuous learning and improvement for educators since the world of teaching is changing rapidly. This leads to the need of refreshing the knowledge of the instructors with new teaching techniques and approaches so that they could keep up to date and be competent although it may be difficult if instructors have difficulty in implementing new ideas and teaching approaches into their classrooms and teaching philosophies (Ünal, 2010).

Foreign language instructors are expected to be competent to adapt to the changes in their field and are expected to refresh themselves continuously (Ünal, 2010). To keep up with continuous learning, being competent is a necessity. To be competent and raise their awareness of innovations, instructors are expected to pay attention to continuous self-development since a language instructor is assumed to be proficient in using the language and be knowledgeable about the innovations in their field (Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). These innovations are the results of "changes in Teacher Development". Thus, "the pursuit of better methods" seems to be "a preoccupation of many teachers and applied linguists throughout the twentieth century" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, for being more professional, a continuous process of Professional Self Development (TD) is necessary for better outcomes. Therefore, instructors should professionally take responsibility which means that they should seek self-managed strategies of professional development.

Most of the English language instructors working at preparatory schools of universities receive some forms of teacher training for their professional development (Ünal, 2010). On the other hand, little is offered despite the considerable advances in language teaching approaches, methods, and strategies and that leads to a lot of

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difficulties. Although there are many informative journals, books, online articles on second/foreign language instruction, instructors can only reach them through individual efforts. That is why instructors have to deal with various changes in the ELT field (Alwan, 2000). Another problem is that most of the instructors working at the same university have different levels of language competency, and some instructors do not have a chance to practice the foreign language out of the school. Additionally, some of them do not read more than a few resources which are a part of a project conducted by a training program (Alan, 2003). If teacher training programs (TTPs) do not provide enough support to solve such problems, instructors are expected to improve themselves by using self-development activities (Alan, 2003).

In a study conducted by Balcioglu (2010), TTPs in universities are assessed and it is claimed that although they aim to help instructors to develop their skills and freshen themselves for the sake of their self-development, they seem to have short-term effects on instructors. Although many teacher trainers embrace peer observation, many instructors do not want their colleagues to observe them. There is also a huge need to find out why many instructors do not favor this type of self-development and provide some solutions. Also, to compensate for the lack of teacher training programs and to uphold present training programs, instructors should be informed about the potential professional development activities (Alwan, 2000). The present study also aims to find out the reasons for the lack of self-development activities and whether these activities are used to solve problems in EFL classes and to find out whether instructors differ in self-development activities in terms of age, gender, experience, education level, and working hours.

Teaching and learning English is considered as a big problem in Turkey. Students in Turkey study English for at least 10 years up to the university and at university, so they are expected to develop a total command of the language. After graduation, most of the students are not able to use the language appropriately. As a result, the blame is constantly laid on preparatory schools of universities for having unqualified instructors and inefficient curriculum (Balcioglu, 2010). Furthermore, it is claimed that preparatory schools' administrators blame their instructors although it seems that they have ineffective teacher training programs (Personn, 2014). Consequently, they look into the ways of activating the role of the instructors and helping them to improve themselves by making the language instructors be accountable for their professional development (Alwan, 2000). The need for the present study stems from this point.

One form of professional development that may be beneficial to teachers is self-development which is defined as professional development efforts toward self-fulfillment, either through formal study programs or on one's own (Villegas - Reimars, 2003). Self-development is a voluntary action that teachers do for their professional development. Professional awareness and continuous professional development are two basic requirements for achieving self-development (Villegas - Reimars, 2003). Recent studies and discussions on the theory and practice of self-development for English Language teachers underline the importance of contextualized experiences and decision-making skills (Burns & Richards, 2009; Richards, 2010; Gebhard, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Richards & Farrell, 2005). It is claimed that self-development is expected to help language teachers to analyze and evaluate their teaching and learning experiences and to improve appropriate teaching strategies accordingly. Namely, language teachers are to take a critical and reflective approach to their teaching. Moreover, they are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to conduct research and decide what is best for their students (McKay, 2009).

To achieve this aim, one of the most important ways of helping language teachers is to integrate critical thinking and reflection into their self-development. This can be managed through a lot of activities such as journal writing, self-assessment, peer observation, team teaching, action research, etc. (Gebhard, 2005; Burns & Richards, 2009; Richards, 2010; Richards & Farrell, 2005). The need for continuing self-development brings about the rise of teacher-led initiatives as action research and reflective teaching. Continuing self-development eases the growth of teachers' understanding of their teaching as well as of themselves as teachers and gives them a chance for reflective review since it involves strategies such as documenting different teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices, and examining beliefs, values, and principles (Korucu, 2011). As Richards and Farrell (2005) state, teachers are continuously exposed to a large number of opportunities for self-development, some of which are obligatory and imposed by teacher training programs, while others are undertaken by the teachers voluntarily. These volunteer opportunities include reflection by journal writing and self-appraisal, peer observation, professional reading, writing a research paper, and action research.

There are many studies conducted on self-development. Doghonadze (2016) researched to analyze the motives for instructors to be engaged in self-development and to find out what they did for professional self-development in Georgian schools and universities. They found out that the quality of training was not good enough and the instructors did not do much to improve themselves. Gheith and Aljaberi (2018) also conducted a

study to investigate the levels of teachers' reflective practices and their attitudes toward professional self-development in terms of gender, several workshops attended, and experience. They found out that teachers' attitudes toward professional development were positive. Also, Lejonberg, *et.al.*, (2018) analyzed the relationship between mentors' effort, self-development orientation, and theory use. They found out that pre-service teachers' perceptions of school mentors' effort and self-development orientation were positively associated with their perceptions of developmental support in mentoring. Additionally, Ferris and Samuel (2020) claimed that the professional development offerings for educational developers were sparse and they created a self-defined professional development approach. Grabsch *et al.* (2019) aimed to find out professionals' survey responses to investigate their self-reported needs for professional development and found out that there were some competency areas of inconsistency and other clear needs for professional development and emphasis in graduate preparatory programs. Moreover, in their research, Roberts, *et al.* (2020) aimed to analyze the effect of online professional development on preschool teachers' self-efficacy, burnout, and stress. The analysis of results showed that all teachers tended to focus on personal challenges within the course, however, teachers who participated in the conference and reflective writing supports benefited from the availability of emotional outlets and opportunities for feedback.

This study aims to find out whether any self-development activities are conducted, to investigate the factors that hinder the practice of self-development activities, and the frequency of using self-development activities in the presence of problems in EFL classes. It also aims to find out whether instructors differ in the use of self-development activities in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D., and workload.

The research questions in this study are:

1. To what extent do the instructors engage in self-development activities?
2. What are the factors that hinder the practice of self-development activities?
3. To what extent do the instructors implement self-development activities in their classes to solve a problem?
4. Do the instructors differ in the usage of self-development activities in terms of age, sex, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D., and teaching hours.

Method

The present study is a descriptive study that uses a mixed-method design including both quantitative and qualitative research for the triangulation of data.

Participants

The participants for this descriptive study included teacher trainers and all EFL instructors working at preparatory schools of four foundation universities in Ankara. Additionally, four trainers and teacher trainees who were chosen with a convenient sampling method were interviewed. There were several reasons for choosing them as participants. First of all, teacher trainers were chosen since they were responsible for designing the teacher training programs. They also had a say as to whether the trainees needed instruction and what their performance was. Secondly, EFL instructors, the trainees, were chosen for this study since self-development was the main aim of the study. Not only the teacher trainers but also the trainees were accountable for their professional self-development since it was expected to be a joint responsibility.

The main issue for this study was choosing the group of representative samples of the research population. There were several reasons for choosing the participants from four foundation universities. In the first place, it was found out that although some Professional Development Units were established in preparatory schools of state universities in Ankara, they were not active. In other words, teacher training activities were not being conducted by teacher trainers working at state universities for the contribution to the professional and self-development of EFL instructors. Accordingly, trainers and trainees working at foundation universities were chosen as the representative samples of the research population. Another reason for choosing four foundation universities was that in some of the foundation universities, teacher training units had not yet been established. Additionally, some of the foundation universities with teacher training units did not want to share any information about their institutions with the researchers. Consequently, teacher trainers and instructors working at these four foundation universities were chosen as the representatives of the research population.

Four teacher trainers, 348 EFL instructors working at preparatory schools of four foundation universities in Ankara and four instructors who were chosen with a convenient sampling method participated in the study.

23,9% of the participants were aged between 20-30, 33,3% of them were aged between 31-40, 32,8% of them were between 41-50 and only 10,1% of them were 51-60. 77,6% of the participants were females, while 22,4% of them were males. 80,2% of the participants were teaching between 12-18 hours per week, 12,1% of them were teaching from 5 to 11 hours and only 7% of the instructors had more than 19 teaching hours per week. As for years of experience, 50,3% of the instructors had more than 16 years of teaching experience, 35% had six to fifteen years' experience, and 14,7% had less than six years experience. In terms of qualifications, 57,8% of the participants had bachelor's degrees in EFL, 37,9% of them had master's degrees in ELT while only 4,3% of them had Ph.D. degrees. As for certificates or diplomas related to ELT, only 5,2% of the participants got CELTA, and 6% of them had DELTA Certificates. 88,8% of the participants didn't have any certificates or diplomas related to ELT. In terms of the participation in conferences, seminars, or workshops for self-development, it is obvious that 92,8% of the participants were not attending any of them while 7,2% participated in less than 5 seminars in a year. This table shows that most of the instructors working at preparatory schools did not prefer attending conferences for their self-development.

Data Collection Tools

One of the instruments used was a structured questionnaire which was prepared to collect data about current self-development methods practiced by the instructors. The questionnaire used by Alwan (2000) was adapted. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts. The first part was Part I which aimed to gather personal data. There were nine questions prepared to identify the respondent's personal, academic, and work characteristics. The purpose of this was not only to provide an easy start but also to see whether there was any correlation between any of these factors and the responses to the rest of the questionnaire. Furthermore, Part I ensured that the sample consisted of subjects who had the characteristics of the research population.

The second part was called Part II which aimed to gather information about Self-Development Activities. It consisted of five sub-groups of questions that dealt with the most well-known self-development activities which were journal writing, self-appraisal, peer observation, academic reading and writing, and action research. Each sub-group of questions aimed at gathering as much information as possible regarding the activities that were practiced on an individual basis, and whether they could be generalized. To be able to test the validity of the scale, SPSS 22 was used. The results revealed that all items in the questionnaire were validly proven by the score of Correlation Item-Total Correlation ≥ 0.30 . Additionally, the reliability of the whole scale was measured at 90% (0.90). This was accepted as highly reliable for social sciences. Although it changes according to the scale type for social sciences, more than 60% Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis coefficient is accepted as a proof of reliability (Ural & Kılıç, 2006). So, the questionnaire was valid and reliable to be used.

In this study, interview questions for teacher trainers were firstly aimed at gathering personal information, which was essential for the study. Then, the interviews focused on gathering information about self-development activities practiced in a year from the perspective of the trainers. Interviewees were consulted on what might be done to boost professional self-development by introducing self-development activities. Interviews for instructors were conducted with four volunteer instructors from different institutions. The interviews were structured in that the instructors were asked to expand on their responses to the questionnaire. Moreover, they were encouraged to elaborate on matters relevant to their self-development. All unstructured interviews were dynamic and comprised of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were necessary since a variety of responses were expected. To collect data and investigate the use of self-development activities as journal writing, self-appraisal, peer-observation, reading, writing a research paper, and action research, the instruments including a questionnaire for EFL instructors, interviews with teacher trainers and EFL instructors were utilized.

Data Collection Procedure

In this study, data were collected through three research instruments, the questionnaire, interviews with four teacher trainers, and interviews with four instructors. All were of equal importance to the study, as they were mutually complementary and offered accurate information.

For triangulation, three research instruments were used in this descriptive study; the questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while interviews with teacher trainers and trainees were used to collect qualitative data.

Analysis of Data

SPSS 22 was the basis for analyzing the data acquired through questionnaires. In addition, interviews with instructors and trainers were analyzed and used for triangulation through in-depth content analysis. It took roughly 15 minutes to complete each interview in English. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The permission for recording the interviews was granted by the entire sample. The findings were evaluated using qualitative interview data, and the corresponding literature assisted to interpret the conclusions.

With the SPSS 22 program, the data were analyzed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test examined whether the normal distribution was reached in the sample. The analysis showed that the data provided a normal distribution ($p > .05$).

After the piloting phase, the reliability of the whole scale was measured at 0.90. This was accepted as highly reliable for social sciences. The variables were also measured higher than 0.60 which shows that the scale used was reliable.

Results

Journal Writing

Table 1 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of journal writing, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or PhD., and teaching hours.

Table 1. Journal writing

<i>1. Do you write your reaction to teaching events and analyze your work for reflection?</i>		
	YES 20 (5.7%)	NO 328(94.3%)
<i>1.1. How many hours do you spend on writing a journal each week?</i>		
a.1-3	19	
b.4-6	1	
c. More than 6 hours	-	
<i>1.2. How many times a week do you write a journal?</i>		
a. When I have a problem	18	
b. Daily	-	
c. 2-4 times a week	-	
d. Once a week	2	
<i>1.3. Which of the following may be the reason for not keeping a journal? You can choose more than one option.</i>		
a. It is a burden on time		155
b. It is useless		121
c. It requires energy		151
d. I have not heard of it		51
e. Other		18
<i>2. How did you learn about keeping a journal?</i>		
	Frequency	Percentage
a. I have never heard of it before	95	27.2%
b. I have read about it	109	31.3%
c. In a teacher training course in my institution	15	4.3%
d. From a colleague	60	17.2%
e. At university	69	19.8%
f. Other	-	0
<i>3- To what extent do you implement journal writing in your classes to solve a problem?</i>		
	Frequency	Percentage
Never	328	94.3%
Rarely	18	5.1%

Sometimes	2	0.6%
Always	-	0

As it is indicated in Table 1, a very small number of participants (5.7%) claimed that they had written journals. All the instructors who practiced journal writing were males and had MA or Ph.D. degrees. All of them had more than 11 years of experience. 5.4% of the instructors spent 1 to 3 hours on writing journals each week. One of them spent 4 to 6 hours each week. Moreover, 5.1% of them preferred writing journals when they had a problem, while two of them were doing it once a week. As the results showed, only 5.7% of the instructors wrote journals. Interviews with teacher trainers and instructors also revealed a parallel finding as none of them mentioned positively about this practice. While only 5.7% of instructors were writing journals, 94.3% of them were not doing it. As regards the issue of the reasons for it, it was clear that the time and effort required were the major factors that affected the practice of writing journals. Additionally, most of the instructors thought that it was useless and they did not need to do it. Cross tabulation revealed that there was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the findings. 5.1% of the respondents stated that there were other reasons for not conducting journal writing. 4% of them stated that it was unnecessary. Interviewee instructor (T.8) also mentioned the obstacles in practicing self-development activities by saying: "As you know, we need time and energy for self-development as well as a supporting environment. Unfortunately, school activities take up most of our time and we have little time for development activities. If we do any, be sure that it is done at our inconvenience. I believe that our workload is to be minimized". Similarly, the interviewee instructor (T.5) said: "I cannot do journal writing since I do not have enough time. I don't have enough time as I am overworked. In better work conditions, I believe that it will be possible for us to practice other self-development activities. As instructors, we need encouragement and support".

As regards the issue of the source of learning about journal writing, while 27.2% of the instructors stated that they had not heard of it before, 31.3% of them stated that they had read about it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. Only 4.3% of the instructors stated that they learned it in a teacher training course in their institutions. This indicated that Teacher Training Programs did not include self-development activities such as journal writing as a part of the content. The interviews also backed up this finding. All trainers interviewed claimed that the content of the course was planned according to the needs of the instructors in their classes although none of them had mentioned that self-development activities were covered even theoretically. Similarly, the interviewee trainer (T.4) explained that: "In my opinion, instructors must know more about the opportunities or possibilities available for them. Moreover, teacher training programs are to aim at informing them of different means of self-development. Unfortunately, this is missing in most of our programs. We really would like to do more for our instructors but we have to adhere to what is assigned to us by the institution or what the instructors need in their classes".

Concerning the issue of the frequency of implementing journal writing in EFL classes to solve a problem, a vast number of instructors, 94,3%, stated they never used it in their classes, while only 5.1% of them rarely used it to solve a problem. Just 2, out of 348 instructors stated they sometimes used it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. The interviewee instructors' responses also verified this finding. All of them stated that they never implemented journal writing in their classes to solve a problem. Interviewee instructor (T.5) said: "I can never implement journal writing, self-appraisal, or action research in my classes to solve a problem. Journal writing is a time-consuming process. I do not have enough time to write a journal".

Self-Appraisal

Table 2 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of self-appraisal, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Table 2. Self-appraisal

<i>1. Do you assess your performance by writing, filling in a form, or completing a checklist of required criteria for reflection and self-development?</i>	YES – 34(9.8%)		NO – 314 (90.2%)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>1.1. How many times do you assess your performance?</i>				

a. When I have a problem	26	7.4%
b. Daily	1	0.2%
c. 2-4 times a week	5	1.4%
d. Once a week	2	0.5%
<i>1.2. Reasons why you do not practice self-appraisal, you can choose more than one option.</i>		
a. It is a burden on time	201	64%
b. It is useless	52	16.5%
c. It requires energy	183	58.2%
d. I have not heard of it	191	60.8%
e. Other	9	2.8%
<i>2. How did you learn about self-appraisal?</i>		
a. I have never heard of it before	191	54.8%
b. I have read about it	65	18.6%
c. In a teacher training course in my institution	20	5.7%
d. From a colleague	46	13.2%
e. At university	26	7.5%
f. Other	0	0
<i>3- To what extent do you implement self-appraisal in your classes to solve a problem?</i>		
Never	314	90.2%
Rarely	30	8.6%
Sometimes	4	1.2%
Always	0	0

As Table 2 shows, 34 participants claimed that they assessed their performances by writing, filling in a form, or completing a checklist of required criteria for self-reflection and self-development. In the practice of self-appraisal activities, there was no significant difference between male and female instructors of all ages. On the other hand, 8.2% of the respondents who practiced self-appraisal were experienced instructors whose working experiences ranged from 6 to 10 years. 1.6% of them were also experienced instructors who had been working for 11 to 15 years. As the results indicated, only a very small number of instructors (9.8%) were conducting self-appraisal activities for reflection and self-development. Interviews with teacher trainers and instructors also revealed a parallel finding as none of them mentioned positively about this practice. Interviewee teacher trainer (T.4) said: "The instructors working at our institution are evaluating themselves from time to time. They are aware of their weaknesses and they are trying to find out ways to improve them. On the other hand, they do not observe their development since they do not register anything."

As regards the issue of the frequency of self-appraisal activities, 7.4% of the respondents stated that they were assessing their performances when they had a problem. While 1.4% of them were assessing their performances 2-4 times a week, 0.5% of them were doing it once a week and 1 of them was assessing his performance daily. Since the responses of male and female respondents were similar, it could be claimed that there was no significant factor that affected the findings of the study.

While only 9.8% of the instructors were assessing their performances, 90.2% of them were not doing it. As regards the issue of the reasons for it, it is clear that the time and effort required were regarded as the major factors that affected the practice of self-appraisal. Furthermore, 16.5% of them thought that it was useless and they did not need to do it while 60.8% of them had no idea about what self-appraisal was. There were other reasons mentioned by the instructors in the questionnaire. One of the reasons was that instructors did not care about the results of their teaching experiences. In other words, they were just teaching and ignoring the rest. Another reason was that some of the instructors did not want to face their weaknesses. The third reason mentioned was that the self-appraisal technique required sincere attempts, so instructors were to overestimate themselves. Besides, another reason for not doing self-appraisal was the burden of conducting this process as a written activity. An instructor wrote that self-appraisal could be done orally, so there was no need for the writing process. The fifth reason was the lack of self-confidence. The last reason stated by the instructors was that self-awareness was not a necessity; as a result, the instructors did not have to conduct such activities. Cross tabulation revealed that there is no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. Interviewee instructor (T.7) conducted self-appraisal yet she mentioned time restrictions by saying: "I have used self-appraisal and peer observation. In my opinion, the instructors can do anything if they have enough time and energy for it. Most of the instructors are responsible for preparing extra materials and exams. Additionally, there are lots of ex-curricular activities that are a burden for them. As a result, they do not have enough time to assess themselves. As instructors, if we have extra time, we can practice all self-development activities". Similarly, the interviewee instructor (T.8) said: "Except for peer observation, I have not tried the other self-development activities since they are time-consuming and I do not need them. I do want to be encouraged to assess my performance by the trainers; this

element is missing in the current TT activities. As you know, we need time and energy for self-development as well as a supporting environment. Unfortunately, school activities take up most of our time and we have little time for development activities. If we do any, be sure that it is done at our inconvenience. I believe that our workload is to be minimized”

As regards the issue of the source of learning about journal writing, 54.8% of the instructors stated that they had not heard of it before while 18.6% of them stated they had read about it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the findings. Only 5.7% of them stated that they learned it in a teacher training course in their institutions. This indicated that Teacher Training Programs did not include self-development activities such as self-appraisal as a part of their contents. While 13.2% of them learned about self-appraisal from their colleagues, 7.5% of them learned it during their academic studies. As it is clear, in addition to the university, a work colleague could be an informative resource for self-development.

As regards the issue of the frequency of implementing self-appraisal in EFL classes to solve a problem, a vast number of instructors, 90.2%, stated they never used it in their classes, while only 8.6% of them rarely used it to solve a problem. Just 1.2% of them sometimes used it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. Although most of the interviewee instructors stated that they never used self-appraisal to solve a problem, only one of them (T.7) said: "I can never implement any of them except self-appraisal and peer observation. Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to implement them.”

Peer Observation

Table 3 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of peer observation, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Table 3. Peer observation

<i>1. Do you practice peer observation?</i>	YES- 328 (94.2%)		NO- 20 (5.7%)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>1.1. How many times do you practice peer observation in a year?</i>				
a. 1-3	242	73.7%		
b. 4-6	60	18.2%		
c. More than 6 times	26	7.9%		
<i>1.2. What is the main reason for observing your peers?</i>				
It is recommended by the trainers.	89	27.1%		
I feel a need for learning from my colleagues.	46	14%		
It is a school policy.	190	57.9%		
Other	3	0.9%		
<i>1.3. Is there a focus of observation?</i>				
I observe everything in the lesson without writing anything.	5	1.5%		
I focus on some of the important points in the lesson and take notes.	153	46.6%		
I use a checklist provided by the trainers.	170	51.8%		
<i>1.4. Do you have a post-meeting after the observation?</i>				
Yes	288	87.8%		
No	9	2.7%		
In some cases	31	9.4%		
<i>1.5. Reasons why you do not practice peer observation, you can choose more than one option</i>				
It is a burden on time.			20	100%
It is useless.			4	20%
We are criticized by our colleagues who observe us.			18	90%
I have not heard of it.			4	20%
Our timetables are overlapping.			16	80%
Our timetables are overloaded.			19	95%
I feel anxious when I am observed.			6	30%
It is boring to observe my colleagues.			5	25%
Only new instructors are to observe more experienced instructors.			6	30%
We cannot learn something new from old instructors.			4	20%
I do not need to visit my colleagues' classrooms.			6	30%
Other			0	0

2. How did you learn about peer observation?		
	Frequency	Percentage
a. I have never heard of it before	4	1.1%
b. I have read about it	66	18.9%
c. In a teacher training course in my institution	198	56.9%
d. From a colleague	38	10.9%
e. At university	36	10.3%
f. Other	6	1.7%
3- To what extent do you implement peer observation in your classes to solve a problem?		
	Frequency	Percentage
Never	20	5.7%
Rarely	268	77%
Sometimes	50	14.3%
Always	0	0

As Table 3 shows, only 5.7% of the instructors did not practice peer observation for their self-development. As it was clear, peer observation appeared to be the most widely used self-development activity in the preparatory schools of foundation universities in Ankara. 94.2% of them were observing their colleagues 1 to 3 times in a year. Cross tabulation revealed that female instructors had a more tendency to practice peer observation than the men since 22 out of 26 instructors who observed their colleagues more than six times were females. When the other factors were taken into consideration, it could be claimed that there was no significant factor that affected the results obtained.

The most common reason for practicing peer observation was the school policy. It was clear that the instructors were urged to observe their colleagues improve themselves. Another important motive was the recommendations of teacher trainers. Only 46 out of 328 instructors were practicing peer observation as they wanted to learn something from their colleagues. Cross tabulation revealed that there was no significant factor such as age, gender, or academic qualification which affected the findings. As for the number of years of experience, there was a significant difference between the experienced and inexperienced instructors. While experienced instructors were practicing peer observation as a school policy, the ones who considered it as an opportunity for learning were inexperienced instructors.

These findings were backed up by the interviewee instructor (T.5) who said: "Most of the instructors working at universities are experienced ones. As a result, the more experience they have, the least they are willing to observe their colleagues. On the other hand, they have to practice peer observation as a school policy. That is, it is a duty that should be done". Similarly, the interviewee teacher trainer (T.2) said: "Experienced teachers usually imply that they are fed up with peer observations as they have been practicing it for too many years so two years ago, we introduced some new forms of reflective teaching activities". Additionally, most of the interviewee instructors said that they had experienced peer observation since it was a school policy. Although it was a school policy and the instructors were asked to practice peer observation, they were not conducted as asked. Interviewee instructor (T.8) explained this situation by saying: "I tried peer observation since it is a school policy. The trainers ask us to observe our colleagues' classes. Most of the time we are not observing our colleagues, we are just writing reports as if we did the observation. It is unnecessary".

As for the focus of peer observation, 98.4% of the instructors were using a checklist provided by the trainers, focusing on some important points in the lesson and taking notes. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the findings. Policies of peer observation might vary from university to university. Interviewee teacher trainer (T.4) explained that by saying: "I think, peer observation makes up for the lack of the practical aspect in training courses. Principals in this field recommend that instructors are to observe each other's lessons to be able to complement the training on the aspect of performance. Instructors are classified according to their instructional skills. As a result, the observers are asked to focus more on these points. Some instructors are great in some aspects of performance. It is a great chance for the observer instructors to focus on these aspects during peer observation process". On the other hand, interviewee teacher trainer, T.1, assured that, in her institution, "When the peer observations are focused, they work better as teachers focus on one specific area. We give them a checklist and ask them to focus on these points".

87.8% of the instructors were having a post-meeting after the observations, which showed that there was a systematic approach concerning peer observation. There was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or gender. Interviewee instructor (T.6) focused on the importance of checklists and stated that: "After each peer observation practice, we conduct post observations which are very important with the observed instructors. Teacher trainers give us a checklist to help us focus our

attention on certain aspects of teaching and we use them to discuss the lesson". As he stated, holding post-observation meetings was also a school policy. On the other hand, another interviewee instructor, working at another institution, T.8., referred to time constraints that the workload caused and said: "When it comes to post-observation meetings, we do not have enough time for such extra activities. If we have time, they can be conducted easily."

These reasons related to not practicing peer observation, which measured the instructors' attitudes, were listed to find out the ways of improving the peer observation process. There was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex. All of the instructors who did not practice peer observation (n.20) considered it as a burden on time. However, 4 instructors found it useless. They considered it as a useful practice. Additionally, 90% of the instructors did not want to practice peer observation so as not to be criticized by their colleagues, although peer observation was a school policy.

Four of the instructors stated that they had no idea about what peer observation was. Overlapping and overloaded timetables were considered as the main reasons connected with the work environment that affected the practice of peer observation while anxiety and boredom were not regarded as major factors that affected the practice of peer observation. 70% of the instructors thought that peer observation was not for only novice instructors. Moreover, they were aware of the learning opportunities when observing more experienced instructors. Similarly, 70% of the instructors thought that they needed peer observation to develop themselves.

Considering the issue of the resource for learning about peer observation, 56.9% of instructors stated that they had learned about the peer observation process in a teacher training course in their institutions. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the findings. Only 1.1% of the instructors stated that they had not heard of it while 18.9% of them had read about it before. 10.9% of them had learned it from their colleagues while 10.3% of them had learned it at university. As it was stated, peer observation was a school policy and teacher trainers were giving importance to it. The instructors who had chosen others stated that they had learned about peer observation on their CELTA and DELTA courses.

Concerning the issue of the frequency of implementing peer observation in EFL classes to solve a problem, a vast number of instructors, 77%, stated that they rarely used it in their classes, while 14.3% of them sometimes used it to solve a problem. Just 5.7% of them never used it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. Although all of the interviewee instructors stated that they had to observe their colleagues since it was a school policy, they did not use them to solve a problem in their classes as (T.6) He said: "I can never implement journal writing, self-appraisal, action research or reading and writing in my classes to solve a problem. When there is a problem, I just talk to my colleagues or teacher trainers to solve it. Twice a year, we have to conduct a peer observation, but they do not help me to solve the problems I have encountered in my classes since we cannot choose the focus of the lesson to be observed. As a result, none of these activities help me to solve the problems in my classes"

Academic Reading and Writing

Academic Reading

Table 4 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of academic reading, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Table 4. Academic reading

	YES – 167 (48%)		NO – 181 (52%)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>1. Do you read books, articles, etc. on teaching techniques to improve your teaching skills?</i>				
<i>1.1. How many books related to your field do you read in an academic year?</i>				
a. 1-5	141	84.4%		
b. 6-10	16	9.5%		
c. More than 10	10	6.1%		
<i>1.2. Why do you feel the need to read?</i>				
When there is a problem.	77	46.1%		
When I write a paper for my academic studies.	78	46.7%		

For self-development.	10	5.9%			
Other	2	1.1%			
<i>1.3. Where do you get books and journals from? (More than one option can be chosen)</i>					
School or public library.	32	19.1%			
Internet	118	70.6%			
A teacher resource center	6	3.5%			
Trainers	13	7.7%			
Own library	86	51.4%			
Colleagues	75	44.9%			
Other	5	2.9%			
<i>1.4. Which of the following may be the reasons for not reading educational references?</i>					
I have enough experience.			1	0.5%	
I cannot find enough sources to read.			10	5.5%	
I do not have time for reading.			33	18.2%	
It is not necessary.			81	44.7%	
All the resources are repeating themselves.			4	2.2%	
I do not like reading academic articles.			52	28.5%	
Other.			0	0	
<i>2. What can be done to encourage reading for self-development? (Please rank the following statements according to the order of importance. Put 1 for the most important one)</i>					
	1	2	3	4	5
a. An assignment to complete can be given to instructors.	76 21.8%	138 39.6%	50 14.3%	50 14.3%	34 9.8%
b. Instructors can be asked to prepare presentations.	85 24.4%	186 53.4%	30 8.6%	39 11.2%	9 2.6%
c. A resource room can be provided for easy access to the necessary materials.	250 71.9%	75 21.5%	11 3.2%	7 2%	5 1.4%
d. A timetable of free time can be made for reading.	146 42%	118 34%	53 15.1%	25 7.2%	6 1.7%
e. Workload can be reduced.	256 73.5%	72 20.6%	10 2.8%	6 1.7%	4 1.1%
<i>3- To what extent do you read to solve a problem in your classes?</i>					
Never		180		51.7%	
Rarely		160		46%	
Sometimes		8		2.3%	
Always		0		0	

As it was indicated in Table 4, nearly half of the instructors, 48%, claimed that they were reading books, articles, etc. in their fields to improve themselves. While there was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex, 88% of them who read for self-development had MA or Ph.D. degrees. As these qualifications required reading a lot, it could be claimed that instructors were reading as a part of their post-graduate studies.

When the results of the number of references read in an academic year were analyzed, it was clear that 84.4% of instructors read 1-5 books in an academic year. While there was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex, all the instructors who read more than 6 books for self-development had MA or Ph.D. degrees. Interviewee instructors (T.5) who had Ph.D. degrees and (T.6) who had MA degrees verified these findings. Interviewee instructor (T.5) said: "I read articles, a huge number of articles indeed and wrote a lot of articles and research papers. I did them since I wanted. No one told me to do so".

Regarding the issue of the reasons for reading on methodology, while 46.1% of instructors preferred reading when there was a problem, 46.7% of them who had MA or Ph.D. degrees were reading for their academic studies. Although there was no significant difference in responses gathered concerning nationality, sex, or years of experience, academic qualifications played a great role as motives of reading. Moreover, 5.9% of the respondents stated that they were reading books for self-development. Other reasons mentioned were the need to update themselves and enrolment for post-graduate studies. Additionally, reading was encouraged in some institutions. Interviewee teacher trainer (T.3) said: "We have a reading club activity; it is called a discussion club. We read articles each week with volunteer instructors and we come together, share our ideas and reflect on those articles that we read. In this module, we have also integrated the IATEFL conference sessions there. We watch the videos on the British Council website since they are available and we come together with the instructors and we watch them. Beforehand, we come together and reflect on the ideas in

those plenary sessions. It also part of my job to organize these. It is voluntary. About ten instructors are attending in discussion club. We have about forty instructors so ten out of forty is a good number. There are lots of instructors attending. Sometimes depending on nature or the hectic workload specifically, the number of instructors is less than ten, but sometimes more than ten instructors are attending, but usually, we have 8 to 10 teachers attending each module"

As stated, reading activities could be encouraged by the trainers although they were voluntary activities. 70.6% of instructors got reading materials from the internet, 44.9% of them got books from their colleagues, and 51.4% of them read the books in their libraries.

Regarding the issue of reasons for not reading educational references, 44.7% of instructors stated that it was an unnecessary activity. 28.5% of them stated that they did not like reading academic articles and 18.2% of them said they did not have enough time to read, while 5.9% of them had problems with finding enough sources to read. These are the main reasons for not reading for self-development. Similarly, the interviewee instructor (T.8) said: "I also do not have enough time to read academic references. By reading, instructors may develop themselves, but like me, most of them do not read due to the overloaded timetables".

Considering the ways of encouraging reading, the most important factor was the reduction of the workload then came providing a resource room for easy access to the necessary materials. Following these two important factors, then making a timetable of free time came. Preparing presentations was considered as another important factor that encouraged reading. The least important factor encouraging reading was giving the assignment to be completed.

Concerning the issue of the frequency of reading academic references to solve a problem, 51.7% of them stated they never read to solve a problem in their classes, while 46% of the instructors rarely read. Just 8, out of 348 instructors stated they sometimes read academic references to solve problems. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. Although most of the interviewee instructors stated that they did not like reading academic references, only one of them (T.5) said: "I can never implement journal writing, self-appraisal or action research in my classes to solve a problem. When there is a problem, I just read to solve it"

Table 5 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of writing research papers, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Academic Writing

Table 5. Academic writing

1. Have you ever written a research paper?		YES – 156(44.8%)		NO – 192 (55.2%)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.1. How many references approximately do you use to write a research paper?					
a. 1-5		28	18%		
b. 6-10		16	10.2%		
c. More than 10		112	71.8%		
1.2. Why do you write a research paper?					
When there is a problem.		4	2.5%		
When the trainers ask me to do it.		5	3.2%		
For my academic studies.		147	94.3%		
Other		0	0		
1.3. What is the approximate length of a research paper you write?					
a. 1-5		109	68.9%		
b. 6-10		32	20.5%		
c. More than 10		15	9.6%		
1.4. What is the reason for not writing a research paper?					
a. I have enough experience.				26	13.5%
b. I do not have easy access to the materials.				6	3.1%
c. I do not have enough time for writing.				80	41.6%
d. There is nothing new to learn.				29	15.1%
e. I am not interested in writing.				46	24%

f. Other.			5	2.6%
2. Do you have easy access to the following?				
	A computer		An internet	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
	340	8	313	35
	97.7%	2.3%	90%	10%
3- To what extent do you write a research paper to solve a problem in your classes?				
	Frequency		Percentage	
Never	348		100%	
Rarely	0		-	
Sometimes	0		-	
Always	0		-	

44.8% of the instructors had written a research paper, while 55.2 % of them had not done it. While there was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex, out of 156 instructors who had written a research paper, 147 of them had MA or Ph.D. degrees. As these qualifications required reading and writing academic papers a lot, it could be claimed that instructors were writing a research paper as a part of their post-graduate studies. In the questionnaire, some of the respondents wrote: "I have written a research paper to be able to graduate from the university". This was the proof that they had written research papers for academic reasons. Interviewee teacher trainer (T.3) supported this finding by saying: "The instructors doing DELTA are aware of some of the professional development activities. They try something that they have not tried before in their classrooms and they see if it works or not. Doing research and writing a research paper is a part of Module 2 and they do that as a part of it. For others, who are not doing DELTA, we haven't introduced the professional development activities, yet".

71.8% of the instructors stated that they used more than 10 references to write a research paper. After cross-tabulation, it could be claimed that the ones who used more than 10 references had MA or Ph.D. degrees while there was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex. As table 5 suggests, the main reason for writing a research paper was academic studies. After cross-tabulation, it could be claimed that all respondents who said they were writing for academic reasons had MA or Ph.D. degrees while there was no significant difference in responses concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex. Interviewee instructor (T.5) who had a Ph.D. degree verified this finding by saying: "I read articles, a huge number of articles indeed and write a lot of articles and research papers for academic reasons. I did them since I wanted. No one told me to do so".

68.9% of the instructors produced short research papers. The ones who wrote more than 10 pages were Ph.D. candidates. The major reason for not writing a research paper was time. Another important reason was that the instructors were not interested in writing. One of the respondents wrote: "I am not interested in doing an MA or Ph.D." as a reason for not writing. Additionally, an interviewee instructor (T.7) said: "I didn't write a journal or a research paper since it is unnecessary. I didn't conduct an action research study. I do not like reading academic articles. I used other techniques efficiently so I did not need to use them". As she had stated, most of the instructors found it unnecessary.

97.7% of the instructors had a computer either at home or at school. However, 10% of them did not have access to the internet. Cross-tabulation results showed that all the instructors who did not have an internet connection were aged between 51-60.

Regarding the issue of the frequency of writing a research paper to solve a problem in EFL classes, all of the instructors stated they never used it in their classes. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. It was considered a time-consuming activity. Similarly, the interviewee instructor (T.8) said: "I can never implement any of them in my classes to solve a problem. They are all time-consuming and unnecessary. We have to observe our colleagues as a school policy, but they are not useful. We are observing our colleagues just to do what the trainers ask us to do. Especially, journal writing and writing a research paper are the most time-consuming activities. I can never use them to solve a problem"

Action Research

Table 6 presents the instructors' usage frequencies of conducting action research, the factors that hinder the practice of it, to what extent the instructors implement it in their classes to solve a problem, and whether the instructors differ in the usage of in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. and teaching hours.

Table 6. Action research

<i>1. Have you ever conducted an action research to solve an immediate problem in the classroom?</i>				
	YES 18 (5.1%)		NO 330 (94.9%)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>1.1. What was the aim of the action research study that you conducted?</i>				
To improve listening/speaking skills	4	22.2%		
To improve reading/writing skills	5	27.7%		
To improve vocabulary	6	33.3%		
To avoid the use of L1	3	16.6%		
<i>1.2. What is the reason for not conducting an action research study?</i>				
a. It is a burden on time.			74	22.4%
b. I have no idea about it.			139	42.1%
c. It does not help us in any way.			20	6%
d. It requires a lot of energy.			50	15.1%
e. It is not necessary.			42	12.7%
f. Other.			5	1.5%
<i>2. How did you learn about action research?</i>				
	Frequency		Percentage	
a. I have never heard of it before	137		39.3%	
b. I have read about it	43		12.3%	
c. At a training course	12		3.4%	
d. From a colleague	71		20.4%	
e. At university	63		18.1%	
f. Other	22		6.3%	
<i>3- To what extent do you implement action research in your classes to solve a problem?</i>				
	Frequency		Percentage	
Never	338		97.1%	
Rarely	10		2.9%	
Sometimes	0		0	
Always	0		0	

94.9% of the instructors had not carried out an action research study while only 5.1% of them had experienced it. After cross-tabulation, it could be claimed that all respondents who said they had conducted an action research study had MA or Ph.D. degrees while there was no significant difference in responses regarding concerning nationality, years of experience, or sex. Although the interviewee teacher trainer (T.1) said "We have collaborative projects such as action research, special interest group, article club, video coaching, and team teaching", the instructors stated they had not experienced it so far. Additionally, interviewee teacher trainer, T.3., emphasized the importance of action research by saying: "Instructors are attending courses, conferences and discussion activities but other self-development activities are not introduced, yet. However, action research is very helpful for them. Conducting any kind of research in the classroom to reflect on their teaching is also helpful. In the future, I want to have active research groups and ask them to conduct action research to solve some specific problems that they encounter in their classes. That is one of the things that I have in mind".

An action research study was carried out to solve an immediate problem in a classroom. As Table 6 indicates, the most common problem that instructors faced in their classes was vocabulary and reading/writing skills. Not having an idea about what action research was the main reason for not carrying out an action research study. Another important reason was not having enough time and energy. In the 'other' section, some instructors wrote: "I do not know how to conduct an action research" which showed that it had not been introduced in Teacher Training Programs.

As regards the issue of how the instructors learned about action research, 39.3% of the instructors stated that they had never heard of it before. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the findings. Only 3.4% of the instructors stated that they had learned it at a training course while 12.3% of them had read about it before. 20.4% of instructors had learned it from their colleagues while 18.1% of them had learned it at university. In the 'other' section, some instructors wrote: "I do not know what it is but I have heard of it before" As Table 6 suggests, most of the instructors had no idea about what action research was. Additionally, the interviewee instructor (T.8) emphasized the importance of time constraints and workload by saying: "Except for peer observation, I have not tried the

other self-development activities since they are time-consuming and I do not need them. I do want to be encouraged to assess my performance by the trainers; this element is missing in the current TT activities. As you know, we need time and energy for self-development as well as a supporting environment. Unfortunately, school activities take up most of our time and we have little time for development activities. If we do any, be sure that it is done at our inconvenience. I believe that our workload is to be minimized".

Regarding the issue of the frequency of conducting action research to solve a problem in EFL classes, a vast majority of the instructors, 97.1%, stated they never used it in their classes, while only 2.8% of them rarely used it. There was no significant factor such as age, gender, academic qualification, or year of experience which affected the results obtained. It was considered a time-consuming activity. The responses of all interviewee instructors verified this finding. As they stated action research was not preferred in the presence of a problem.

Discussion

Findings are discussed over the related literature in the light of each research question.

Research Question 1: To what extent do the instructors engage in self-development activities?

The first research question investigated the usage frequencies of self-development activities by the instructors working at the preparatory schools of four foundation universities regarding interviews with instructors and questionnaire, the analysis of research results indicates that the instructors working at the preparatory schools of four foundation universities in Ankara are not very familiar with and do not use self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, reading academic references, writing a research paper and action research. The only self-development activity which the instructors are familiar with and use frequently is peer observation since it is a school policy. However, the interviews with instructors reveal the fact that instructors do not learn a lot from observing their colleagues. Very few instructors know about action research. Instructors consider self-development activities which are essential for being reflective and critical about their teaching as a burden on time and unnecessary. This, in turn, explains why they do not use them for their self-development. This result is in line with the results of the article of Genç (2012). In her study, she states peer observation is the most widely used self-development activity among EFL teachers. The findings of the questionnaire and interviews are quite important if the current trend in self-development, which consists of an exploration of instructors' teaching processes in an attempt to understand what they do and why they do it, is considered. As a result, it can be claimed that instructors have to conduct self-development activities to become better teachers.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that hinder the practice of self-development activities?

The second research question investigated the factors that hinder the practice of self-development activities by the instructors working at the preparatory schools of four foundation universities in Ankara.

As the results of the study indicate, the instructors are not using self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, reading-writing, and action research to improve themselves. Therefore, the second question of this descriptive study was designed to investigate the factors that hinder the practice of these self-development activities.

The "workload" is considered as the most important hindrance in practicing self-development activities. Most of the instructors agree that they do not have sufficient time at school to practice self-development activities. The "effort required" to conduct self-development activities is the second most important cause of less frequent participation in these activities. When these activities are examined one by one, the reasons for not using them are explained as follows; Journal writing is one of the least used self-development activities. "Time" and "effort required" are regarded as the major factors that affect the practice of it. Additionally, it is considered a "useless activity". Self-appraisal is not practiced by the instructors, either. Again, "time" and "effort required" are regarded as the most important hindrance in practicing this self-development activity. Another most important factor that hinders the use of it is "not having an idea about what it is". Although peer observation is the most widely used self-development activity, the most important reasons for not practicing it are "time", "overloaded timetables", and "the critics of observers". These factors can be used to find out the ways of improving the peer observation process. While some instructors in particular those with MA or Ph.D. degrees prefer reading educational references to develop themselves, most of the instructors are not doing so since they consider it as an "unnecessary activity". Other reasons are stated as "not liking the process of reading" and "not having enough time for academic reading". When it comes to writing, the major reason for not writing research papers is "time". Another important reason is "not being interested in it". "Not having an idea about what an action research is" the main reason for not carrying out action research. Other important reasons mentioned in the questionnaire and interviews are "not having enough time and "energy".

The results are in line with the results of the article conducted by Yaşar (2019). In her study, she claims that cost and time are the most important factors that hinder the practice of self-development activities. Similarly, in their studies, Kulbak (2019) and Yüksel (2021) find out that time is the most important barrier to self-development activities.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the instructors implement self-development activities in their classes to solve a problem?

This research question was designed to find out whether self-development activities were preferred by instructors to solve their problems in EFL classes. In the questionnaire, instructors were asked to rate four scales from never to always regarding their views about the implementation of self-development activities into their classrooms to solve a problem they have encountered. As drawn from the responses given to this item, it is clear that the rates equally gathered around two scales “never” and “rarely”. That is, out of 348 instructors, a noteworthy number of them believe that they never or rarely transfer the knowledge they get from self-development activities into their teaching contexts.

To provide more insight into this issue, 4 instructors were selected among the participants and interviewed. The main aim of this process was if or to what extent teachers were able to use self-development activities to solve their problems in their classes. As a result, they were requested examples and explanations from their classrooms as to how they could implement the knowledge they gained from self-development activities in real teaching circumstances or which problems they encountered most in transferring that knowledge into classroom situations. The responses of these interviewee instructors could be gathered into two groups. The first group involved instructors who believed that they were not able to implement at all what they got from self-development activities into their classes to solve a problem. The second group consisted of instructors who sometimes could apply what they acquired from these activities and who sometimes could not manage it. During the interviews, interviewee instructors listed two reasons, which are crowded classes and worry about covering the pacing on time, as to why self-development activities do not help them solve their problems in EFL classes. As a result, the information gathered from self-development activities is not implemented in classes to solve problems. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies conducted (Yüksel, 2021; Yaşar, 2019).

Research Question 4: Do the instructors differ in the usage of self-development activities in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D., and teaching hours?

This research question is designed to find out whether factors such as age, gender, teaching experience, academic qualifications, and teaching hours have a role in using self-development activities. According to the findings gathered from questionnaires and interviews, all these factors play a great role in the self-development process.

a. Age; In general, cross-tabulation results show that nearly all of the instructors who have no idea about self-development activities except peer observation and who do not use any of them are aged between 41-50. Especially, the ones aged between 51-60 have not practiced any of them and find these activities unnecessary. Similarly, the ones aged between 20-30 have not practiced self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, and action research.

b. Gender; The gender of the participants is not a significant factor that affects the use of self-development activities since 78 males and 270 females participated in the research. However, cross-tabulation results indicate that all the instructors who practice journal writing are males. Additionally, it is found out that female instructors have a more tendency to practice peer observation than men since 22 out of 26 instructors who observe their colleagues more than six times are females

c. Teaching experience; Teaching experience is an important factor in the practice of self-development activities. The more experienced the instructors are, the less they give importance to self-development activities. More experienced instructors have no idea about what an action research is. Moreover, they have not written journals, evaluated themselves by writing self-appraisal reports, and read or written academically. The only self-development activity they engage in is peer observation. While experienced instructors are practicing peer observation as a school policy, the ones who consider it as an opportunity for learning are inexperienced – novice - instructors. What is more, the instructors who read and write academically have 11-15 years of experience while all of the instructors who write journals have more than 11 years of experience.

This result is not in line with the results of the article of Sarıyıldız (2017). The results of her study revealed that “There are few differences between the perceptions of novice and experienced teachers towards self-

development like teachers' taking the action for their professional development, teachers' being involved in the evaluation of their teaching skills and knowledge, and willingness' being important in this process, on which experienced teachers were found to agree more than novice teachers". However, as for the issue of teachers' trying to keep themselves up to date changes and improvements in ELT, novice teachers were found to agree more than experienced teachers. On the other hand, this study found out that neither novice nor experienced instructors give importance to self-development activities.

d. ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D.; This is the most significant factor that affects the practice of self-development activities. Most of the instructors who read academic references for self-development and write research papers by using more than 10 references have MA or Ph.D. degrees. As these qualifications require intensive reading, it can be claimed that instructors are reading as a part of their post-graduate studies. When the results are analyzed, it is clear that a vast majority of instructors who have BA read 1-5 books in an academic year, while all the instructors who read more than 6 books for self-development have MA or Ph.D. degrees. Similarly, while some of the BA level instructors prefer reading when there is a problem, the instructors who are reading for their academic studies have MA or Ph.D. degrees. It is also the same concerning writing. While most of the MA-level instructors write short research papers, the ones who write more than 10 pages are Ph.D. candidates. In addition to reading and writing academically, all respondents who say they have conducted an action research study have MA or Ph.D. degrees.

e. Teaching hours; One of the most important factors that hinder self-development is the workload. The instructors who consider all self-development activities as a burden on time are working 19 or more hours a week while the instructors who work 5-11 hours a week have experienced all self-development activities. As a result, it can be claimed that the more the instructors work, the less they practice self-development activities. All in all, it can be claimed that the instructors differ in the usage of self-development activities to some extent in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D., and teaching hours.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the usage frequencies of self-development activities by the instructors. The results indicate that instructors practice self-development activities on a limited scale. The most widely practiced self-development activity is peer observation in all four institutions since it is a school policy. Academic reading and writing are practiced just for postgraduate studies. Self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, and action research are rarely practiced. It has been discovered that some instructors do not even know that such activities exist. On the other hand, the ideas are welcomed by instructors on the basis that work conditions are improved to allow for the time and effort needed for these self-development activities. The second finding in this study shows that workload is considered the most important hindrance in practicing self-development activities. Most of the instructors agree that they do not have sufficient time at school to practice self-development activities. The effort required to conduct self-development activities is the second most important cause of less frequent participation in these activities. The third finding of this study shows that, although it is necessary, instructors do not implement the information gathered from self-development activities in their EFL classes to solve problems. The last finding in the study was that instructors differ in the usage of self-development activities to some extent in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D., and teaching hours. As the results suggested, most of the instructors, aged 41-60, have no idea about self-development activities except peer observation and do not use any of them. Similarly, the ones aged 20-30 have not practiced self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, and action research. Since 78 males and 270 females participated in the research, the gender of the participants is not a significant factor that affects the use of self-development activities. As for teaching experience, the more experienced the instructors are, the less they give importance to self-development activities. Besides, the most significant factor that affects the practice of self-development activities is the ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or Ph.D. Most of the instructors who read academic references for self-development, write research papers by using more than 10 references and conduct action research in their classes have MA or Ph.D. degrees. As for teaching hours, the more the instructors work, the less they practice self-development activities.

In conclusion, instructors practice self-development activities by themselves on a limited scale. Since peer observation is recommended as a school policy, it is the most widely practiced self-development activity. Time and workload are considered as the most important hindrances in practicing self-development activities. As another finding, instructors do not implement the information gathered from self-development activities in

their EFL classes to solve problems. Finally, it was found out that instructors differ in the usage of self-development activities to some extent in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, ELT qualifications like BA, MA, or PhD., and teaching hours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented, this study holds the following overall implications for educational practice: It seems that self-development activities are not introduced or practiced in TTPs. Teacher trainers are expected to introduce certain self-development activities such as journal writing, self-appraisal, academic reading and writing, and action research for the sake of better educational practices. It is also essential that educators become aware that each self-development activity has a good effect. Instructors need to be able to perform these activities and be encouraged to keep a portfolio to record a record of development. Additionally, planning for presentations is a prerequisite that facilitates the instructor's attempts at self-development. Moreover, providing well-resourced libraries and making the internet available for instructors to benefit from the vast databases and teaching resources that it encompasses may encourage them to develop themselves. Self-development practices such as research writing and presentations can also be encouraged. Instructors may also be encouraged to create a resource file with a collection of new instructional strategies and activities gained at training courses or by individual reading efforts.

As the findings of the study show, peer observation is the most common self-development activity. When there is an emphasis such as writing a description of the lesson or utilizing a checklist, the observation results improve. It turns out that all instructors are familiar with peer observations. It does not, on the other hand, pursue a systemic approach that increases its benefits. There is greater opportunity for improvement of peer-observation practice by giving time for post-observation discussion, by not focusing on bad characteristics of the instructors observed, and lowering working hours.

As for the possible factors which hinder the practice of self-development activities, instructors were found to mostly agree on excessive workload and time. Constructing flexible timetables to allow for professional self-development activities to take place is a necessity for each institution.

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Appendices

Appendix-1. Interview Questions for Teacher Trainers

1

- 1- How long have you been working as a teacher trainer?
- 2- As a trainer, what are your job responsibilities?

2

1. What is your opinion of the current teacher training program in your institution?
2. Who plans the training activities for the instructors in your institution?
3. What topics are usually covered in teacher training activities?
4. What form do the teacher training activities take?
5. Who runs these teacher training activities?
6. How do you decide on the needs of your instructors?
7. Do you use any evaluation systems for these training activities? What do you do for evaluation?
8. To what extent has this approach in teacher training helped in teacher development? How do the instructors respond to inter-visitations in general?
9. How do the instructors respond to peer observations?

10. What other forms of self-development activities do your instructors practice?
11. How can you encourage instructors to take up their professional accountability? Would you like to add anything?
12. Which self-development activities are introduced in your training courses? What else can be introduced?

Appendix-2. Interview Questions for Instructors

1

- 1- How long have you been working as an instructor?
- 2- Are you pursuing any further degree? (MA, Ph.D., etc.)

2

1. Do you think the activities of Teacher Training Units in your institution are sufficient enough for self-development? Why/Why not?
2. Are you familiar with the self-development methods such as journal writing, self-appraisal, peer observation, reading articles, and writing research papers and action research? Could you describe them shortly?
3. Have you ever used any of them for self-development? Which ones did you use?
4. If you did not participate in these activities, which ones were they? What were the reasons for not participating in them?
5. To what extent do you implement these activities in your EFL classes to solve a problem? Why?
6. What do you expect from self-development activities?
7. Do you implement the information you gathered from self-development activities into your EFL classes to solve your problems? If yes, could you give an example? If no, what is the reason?