

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER AGENCY:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER AGENCY: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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This narrative inquiry explores how experienced English language teachers in a higher education context in Türkiye exercise teacher agency in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. The study also explores the perceptions of teachers regarding their professional roles and agency and the impacts of political, social and institutional factors on their agentic orientations. The participants comprise eight experienced language teachers and the data were collected through four semi-structured interviews with each teacher. Critical incidents, documents, ethnographic observations and field notes were used to triangulate the data. The content analysis revealed that agency across various domains was shaped by their personal histories and experiences in earlier figured worlds, including family, prior schooling, teacher education, and alternative certification programs, as well as by their aspirations and teaching philosophies. The study found that the designation of the institution as a research university introduced new priorities and various constraints, which affected the agentic orientations of teachers. Amidst neoliberal discourses, the teachers problematized practices and discourses that conflicted with their beliefs and values and constructed alternative

realities to exercise agency. When they felt rendered invisible and their contributions were disregarded, they engaged in *principled withdrawal* and created liberating worlds outside the school. The findings suggest that teacher agency is multifaceted, multilayered, and fluid and thus cannot be reduced to merely tangible actions. The study offers implications for policymakers, teacher educators, administrators, teachers, in-service professional development programs, and researchers.

Keywords: English Language Teacher Agency, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, English Language Teacher Education

ÖZ

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENİ ETKİNLİĞİ: BİR YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURUMUNDA ANLATI ÇALIŞMASI

KARATAŞ, Pınar

Doktora, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Bölümü

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Bu anlatı çalışması, Türkiye'de bir yükseköğretim kurumunda deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılımı ilgili olarak öğretmen etkinliğini nasıl sergilediğini araştırmaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca öğretmenlerin mesleki rolleri ve öğretmen etkinliğine ilişkin algılarını ve politik, sosyal ve kurumsal faktörlerin etkinlik yönelimleri üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Katılımcılar sekiz deneyimli dil öğretmeninden oluşmaktadır ve veriler her bir öğretmenle yapılan dört yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yoluyla toplanmıştır. Verileri çeşitlendirmek için kritik olaylar, belgeler, etnografik gözlemler ve saha notları kullanılmıştır. İçerik analizi, bu alanlardaki öğretmen etkinliğinin, öğretmenlerin kişisel geçmişleri ile aile, önceki okul, öğretmen eğitimi ve alternatif sertifika programları gibi önceki alanlardaki deneyimlerinin yanı sıra hedefleri ve öğretim felsefeleri tarafından şekillendirildiğini ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma, kurumun bir araştırma üniversitesi olarak tanımlanmasının öğretmenlerin etkinlik yönelimlerini etkileyen yeni öncelikler ve çeşitli kısıtlamalar getirdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Öğretmenler, neoliberal söylemlerin ortasında, kendi inanç ve değerleriyle çelişen uygulama ve söylemleri sorunsallaştırmışlar ve öğretmen

etkinliđi sergilemek için alternatif gerçeklikler inşa etmişlerdir. Görünmez kılındıklarını ve katkılarının göz ardı edildiđini hissettiklerinde, *ilkeli bir çekilme* sürecine girmiş ve okul dışında özgürleştirici alanlar oluşturmaya yöneldiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bulgular, öğretmen etkinliđinin çok yönlü, çok katmanlı ve akışkan olduğunu, bu nedenle yalnızca somut eylemlere indirgenemeyeceđini öne sürmektedir. Bu çalışma, eğitim politika yapıcılarını, öğretmen eğitimcileri, yöneticiler, öğretmenler, hizmet içi mesleki gelişim programları ve araştırmacılar için çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Öğretmeni Etkinliđi, Kalite Güvencesi, Akreditasyon, İngilizce Öğretmeni Eğitimi

To all the resilient teachers who uphold Atatürk's principles

&

To my family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoHE	The Council of Higher Education
DEDAK	The Association for Language Education, Evaluation and Accreditation
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English Medium Instruction
ENQA	The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
HE	Higher Education
IAP	The Institutional Accreditation Program
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
PDU	Professional Development Unit
THEQC	The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council
YÖDEK	The Commission for Academic Evaluation and Quality Development in Higher Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the context and background relevant to the study. It then addresses the significance of the study, emphasizing its potential contribution to the field. Following this, the purpose of the study is defined, and the research questions guiding this dissertation are introduced. Finally, key terms used throughout the dissertation are defined to ensure clarity.

1.1. Background to the Study

Becoming and being a teacher can be considered a multi-faceted and complex endeavor that goes beyond the mere acquisition of theoretical and pedagogical knowledge. It “involves the person intellectually, socially, morally, emotionally and aesthetically” (Beattie, 1995, p. 54). Toom et al. (2015) focus on the complex and dynamic nature of teachers’ work and state that:

Teachers are required to engage in innovative learning, adapt themselves to diverse requirements in their working environment, interpret and negotiate with both their colleagues and with parents the multiple possibilities implied by policies, make independent choices and find a balance between their personal preferences and shared collegial understandings. (p. 615)

Given the technological and social changes in the world, as well as organizations’ efforts to cope with economic pressures, within the current climate of reforms and policy changes in the educational domain, teachers are also expected to adopt new roles while trying to keep pace with the developments (Vahähäsantanen, 2015). They are engaged in a rigorous and ongoing decision-making and acting process as they endeavor to navigate the demands of the teaching profession, institutional constraints, and ethical issues (Prior, 2018). Cochran-Smith (2011) outlines the

increasing responsibilities of teachers and the myriad of expectations placed upon them in the following quotation:

In today's world, policy makers, politicians, educational leaders, the general public, and parents expect a great deal from teachers. Unlike our grandmothers' generation, we want teachers who know subject matter and know how to teach it to all students to world-class standards. (p. 12)

Rather than following a 'one-size-fits-all' teaching approach, teachers tailor their pedagogical decisions or choices to suit the evolving challenges in the changing praxis, the contextual factors, or the realities of their classes (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a; Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). The recent outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, for example, was one of those unexpected and significant changes that greatly impacted teachers' decisions and actions. It caused universities to close their campuses and initiate remote teaching. Teachers started teaching in front of the screen in a very short time, and students stayed at home and took courses online. While the evolving trends in English Language Teaching (ELT) presented areas of challenge for teachers, due to the urgent switch to remote teaching and the sudden shift in the mode of instruction and pedagogy without any proper planning, teachers were likely to face unique difficulties while engaging students, assessing their performance, giving feedback in online platforms, and even delivering instruction. As Bao (2020) highlighted, moving all the current courses online in a couple of days is a big, disruptive change or move. An extensive lesson plan design, teaching resources including audio and video content, and technological support teams are needed for an entire online course. However, due to a lack of prior online teaching expertise, early preparation, or support from educational technology teams, most teachers struggled with the rapid transition to online teaching following the recent outbreak of COVID-19. In short, the conditions within the educational landscape have notably become more demanding since the beginning of the emergency remote teaching, and COVID-19 has compounded the difficulties teachers encounter in their day-to-day work (Bao, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

While trying to navigate these changes and challenges, teachers confront a lot of pressure from educational authorities, school administrations, and parents, and they

face increasing restrictions on their autonomy (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). In other words, they are exposed to multiple discourses on how to behave and act as teachers. Feryok (2012) acknowledges that it is not an easy task to “develop a sense of personal agency that can meet multiple demands in a rapidly changing world—a world in which the international as well as the national increasingly affect the local” (p.107). One of these recent discourses that have permeated education, schools, and teachers is the neoliberal one. As Besley (2019) notes,

There has been a shift from state responsibility under former Keynesian-oriented welfare state systems to a neoliberal policy environment that uses responsabilization not only of teachers, but also of students as consumers, and associated forms of discourse, accountability and assessment regimes. This market rationality is employed to responsabilize the individual and to naturalize regimes of self-care. (p.180)

With the impact of the recession, the capitalist states in the world initiated revisions in their economic policies and began to seek global markets. The privatization of public industries and the worldwide spread of neoliberal policies ensued. Higher education institutions are not exempt from this. Market principles and neoliberal tenets have also made huge inroads into higher education, and education is now regarded as a key to winning the global competition. The emphasis on accountability, measurement, and regulation in education in the neoliberal era has prompts governments all over the world to initiate reforms, giving rise to notions like successful teaching and best practices (Karaman & Edling, 2021). Despite the complexity of teacher work and the dynamic nature of the profession, current approaches in education aiming to change behavior through some performance standards lead to the formation of a teacher identity lacking autonomy (Tochon & Karaman, 2009). Teachers (re)construct and (re)negotiate their teaching identities in multiple contexts with multiple voices and discourses pertaining to good or successful teachers and teaching. In the current educational milieu, where the salience of teacher agency is often disregarded, teachers find it difficult to critically reflect on global inequities. They may need to make more effort to challenge the common sense of privatization and regulation and develop a discourse of agency, critical thinking, justice, and civic engagement. They monitor their own practice based on “standards generated by global and domestic institutions with varied

interests and visions for public education which often do not situate educating for democracy and social justice as core priorities” (Karaman & Edling, 2021, p. 14).

In such a challenging time when teachers are rendered isolated, controlled, and deskilled, it is crucial to elevate the voices of teachers who can take a critical stance towards their practice, respond to injustices in society, engage in social issues, and contribute to the well-being of society.

1.2. Significance of the Study

COVID-19 pandemic has largely exacerbated and uncovered inequalities and generated concerns regarding equal opportunities in education. Research on teaching and teacher education during the pandemic has also highlighted equity and social justice concerns in the classroom as one of the four significant global variables impacting teaching and learning (Fu & Clarke, 2021). We have witnessed uneven access to online education and realized how critical it is to address equities and inequities in the world during the pandemic, as Giroux stressed, too (STAR Scholars Network, 2020). The effects of the pandemic on education have been so tremendous and widespread that it is also considered an opportunity to revise and reshape our current understanding of education policy. Referring to the neoliberal discourse prevalent today, Mooney Simmie (2021), for example, points out that:

The Covid-19 pandemic offers a global interruption to this discourse and provides an opportunity for a change in direction in public policy in education: either a continuation of human capital theory this time “on steroids” for a more intense focus on the competitive individual or new affordances for a more expansive societal view. (p. 22)

And she asks the following question:

How will all policy actors in a post-Covid-19 world, including teachers, work together for education as a public good, for a new politics of principled resistance in the direction of social justice for a just global world and a sustainable future for the planet? (p. 20)

In brief, the sudden shift to online teaching has revealed the unequal allocation of educational resources among different student populations. As a result, teachers, as

stakeholders, are now expected to think of equitable teaching strategies for all students, navigate through challenges, and enact agency to improve education.

During a recent language teacher agency webinar, Gao emphasized the importance of language teacher agency and asserted that it matters since the world ahead of us is complex and full of uncertainties due to the structural and political issues in addition to the pandemic, and this makes language teachers' job more challenging (Teacher Development Webinars, 2021). Language teachers need to exercise agency while working with students of diverse backgrounds, such as those marginalized socioculturally or sociolinguistically. Additionally, non-native English-speaker teachers, in particular, need to exercise agency to navigate the dominant native-speakerism discourse and ideology within the teaching profession. Teacher agency, therefore, operates throughout a teacher's professional trajectory as she responds to multiple issues in different ways (Teacher Development Webinars, 2021).

Zeichner (2019) stresses the inequities in education systems all around the world and states that "teacher agency and expertise are often underutilized in education systems throughout the world, and that by encouraging greater teacher agency and better leveraging and utilizing the collective expertise of teachers, educational systems can become more successful and more equitable" (p. 5). Accordingly, it became more important than ever to create a reflective space for teachers to engage with their own presumptions critically, use different discourses to reposition themselves, and negotiate multiple identities to improve their sense of agency.

Many educational researchers argue that "teacher voice and agency continue to be devalued in neoliberal discourses" (Karaman & Edling, 2021, p. 14), but this does not mean that teachers "cannot provide any discourses of good sense or counter-hegemony which may indicate sensitivity toward collective human conditions, social justice, and resistance to several forms of technicist and managerial assault on education" (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021, p. 177). They can demonstrate agency by authoring a unique identity in their worlds.

To better understand how teachers navigate the challenges in this neoliberal age and enact agency to make education better, there is a need to explore success stories,

counter-hegemonic work, and teacher voice. While the significance of teacher agency is apparent and the need to examine it is increasingly recognized, especially in neoliberal discourses, it is still an underexplored area in second language teacher education research (e.g., Erdem, 2020; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Lipponen & Kumpulainen; 2011; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2015b).

Studies on teacher agency mostly focus on pre-service teachers (e.g., Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016) or teachers outside the higher education context (e.g., Buchanan, 2015; Hiver & Whitehead, 2018; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017; Pappa et al., 2019; Sisson, 2016). Although pre-service teachers and those in their initial years of teaching are widely studied in primary, secondary, and high schools, there are few studies on English language teacher agency in higher education (e.g., Tao & Gao, 2017; Tran, 2019). Experienced or veteran teachers have also received far less attention, while research on teachers' lives has concentrated mostly on their initial years of teaching (Day & Gu, 2009). Despite the growing interest in teacher agency in the world, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, studies conducted in Türkiye are limited (Bütün Ikwuegbu & Harris, 2024; Gülmez, 2019; Mutlu, 2017) compared to those conducted abroad. Agency has not been adequately explored in the Turkish context and as Erdem notes, "Indeed, there is not a consensus even on the Turkish equivalent of the concept" (Erdem, 2020, p. 32). In their study, Ataş Akdemir and Akdemir (2019) also suggest, based on their literature review on teacher agency, that teacher agency should be explored in different contexts in Türkiye.

In his systematic review of international literature on teacher agency from 2009 to 2020, Cong-Lem (2021) selects 104 empirical studies based on several criteria and reports that the majority of studies are conducted by researchers in Western developed countries, highlighting the need for more research on teacher agency in developing countries. Concerning the theoretical frameworks used in the studies, the most dominant framework used by the researchers is the ecological perspective, representing 34.6% of the studies. He notes that figured worlds theory is among the less popular ones: "The category of others involves a number of less popular theories

and positions (e.g., poststructuralism, self-positioning theory, figured worlds), constituting 13.5% of the total studies” (p. 724).

Accordingly, the current study addresses the following gaps: a) language teacher agency remains underexplored, b) little attention has been paid to higher education settings, c) experienced teachers are not much focused on, and d) there are few studies exploring agency using the theory of figured worlds. Additionally, the setting is crucial since new priorities have gained momentum upon the university’s designation as a research university.

In Türkiye, The Cooperation Protocol for the Research Universities Support Program was signed between the Presidency of Strategy and Budget and the CoHE in 2022, and it aims to allocate resources to research universities based on their performance. On the website, the aim of the program is outlined:

The program aims to enhance the international competitiveness of research universities, increase R&D activities for high value-added production in the areas outlined in the Eleventh Development Plan, improve their rankings in international rankings, increase the number of publications, and elevate their brand value. (CoHE, 2022)

For many years, the school was accredited by an international body, Pearson Assured. Recently, it has become part of The Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP) implemented by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) and has been entitled to receive Institutional Accreditation. Given that the impacts of the accreditation process can be observed from the administration to the classes, the current study can contribute to our understanding of the accreditation process and its impacts on the teachers. It can have implications for policymakers, accreditation bodies, universities, schools, and teachers, and will shed light on how external quality assurance programs can impact the internal organizational processes and teachers.

Using a qualitative research design, the current study explores how experienced language teachers in higher education in Türkiye enact and understand their language teacher agency. How they make sense of their experiences and practices in their

figured worlds, what facilitates and hinders their agentic orientations, and how they navigate challenges in neoliberal spaces require a lot of attention. It is these specific research gaps the study sheds light on.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The current study aims to explore how experienced language teachers exercise and perceive their language teacher agency and how the political, social, and institutional environments are integrated into their agentic orientations. It aims to gain insight into how language teachers understand their perceived roles and agency in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation, describe the meaning-making processes of these teachers, and explore how they are engaged in different contexts and take stances. This qualitative study also integrates critical incident analysis to enhance the depth and scope of collected stories. The researcher and the participants engage in conversations about the events perceived as critical by the participants themselves and co-create new knowledge.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do experienced English language teachers in a higher education institution enact agency to promote change in their stories in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation?
2. How do participant teachers perceive their professional roles and agency?
3. What political, social, and institutional factors influence teachers' perceived agency?

1.4. Definition of Terms

Agency: Agency refers to “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p.112). According to Holland et al. (1998), agency is shaped within the space of authoring. Following Bakhtin, they describe agency as the orchestration of social discourses and practices to form responses, which involves improvisation. People navigate and respond to the perspectives and constraints imposed by others by

drawing on personal histories and available cultural resources. Agency “comes through this art of improvisation (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272).

The Council of Higher Education: The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) is “the main body responsible for higher education. It decides and coordinates main administrative and financial issues (e.g., student intake, appointment and dismissal of academic staff, supervision of university budgets, disciplinary issues, etc.)” (Yağcı, 2010).

Research University: A research university is a part of the Research Universities Support Program, which aims to “enhance the international competitiveness of research universities by increasing their research and development activities, improving their positions in international rankings, boosting the number of publications, and elevating their institutional brand value (CoHE, 2022). As of 2024, 23 universities in Türkiye have been designated as research universities by CoHE. The allocation of resources to a research university is contingent upon its performance.

Preparatory Schools: A preparatory year program is a part of university education in Türkiye that takes place before tertiary education. It is an intensive English language education program designed for newly admitted undergraduate students to equip them with the necessary English proficiency so that they can continue their studies in their EMI departments (Ayvaz & Mutçalıoğlu, 2019). In other words, the program aims to prepare “students to study their academic subjects through English” (Macaro et al., 2016, p. 52) so that they can pursue their undergraduate studies and transition smoothly into their departments. A preparatory school can be considered a “bridge between secondary education and tertiary EMI education” (Macaro et al., 2016, p. 52).

Teacher: In this dissertation, the term “teacher” specifically refers to lecturers working in preparatory schools in higher education. This definition is central to the study, which primarily focuses on these educators. In other contexts, “teacher” denotes K-12 teachers who work in primary and secondary education settings.

English Medium Instruction (EMI): It can be described as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (Dearden, 2014, p. 2; Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37).

Ministry of National Education: In accordance with the Presidential Decree on the Presidential Organization (2018), “the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for planning, programming, executing, monitoring, inspecting, and assessing all education and training facilities” (as cited in Özçelik et al., 2021, p. 1). As Özçelik et al. (2021) note, “MoNE conducts educational activities on a central level in the Republic of Türkiye. Administrators at each level, including Ministry headquarters, central organizations, and provincial organizations, are accountable to upper management” (p. 1).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical background guiding this dissertation. It is organized into four key sections. This chapter first discusses the neoliberalization of higher education and quality assurance. It then explores neoliberalization of English language teaching. The third section gives an overview of the relationship between identity and agency. After conceptualizing agency, it presents the theoretical framework used in this study. The final section offers a review of studies on teacher agency.

2.1. Neoliberalization of Higher Education and Quality

Defined and examined as “ideology, economic-political force, discourse, historical rationality, and/or governance” (Türken et al., 2015, p. 33), neoliberalism was promoted by Margaret Thatcher with “the dogmatic assertion that There is No Alternative” (Phillipson, 2008b, p.24). It has become so prevalent in different domains of life and “so integral to public and private life that thinking outside their parameters is almost unthinkable” as “neoliberalism has become the stamp of our age” (Holborow, 2012, p. 14). Harvey (2005) contends that:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 2)

In other words, while the free market uses the resources, the state is responsible for ensuring that the “free market” exists in public places. Neoliberalism is also

characterized by “a market centered philosophy of life, in which human beings and their actions are understood in terms of their market value and participation, intense competition is viewed as necessary, and virtue is aligned with entrepreneurship” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 335-336). It seeks to foster the idea that for something to be considered important, it needs to be measurable. In other words, what works is what counts now.

When Ward and England (2007) elaborate on the different understandings of neoliberalism, they also discuss neoliberalism as an ideological hegemonic project and governmentality. The former refers to the people and places that gave rise to it. They note that hegemony encompasses more than just political and economic power. As they conveyed, “it is also the capacity of the dominant group to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it accept it as “common sense,” even “natural” (p.12). This involves willing consent from individuals being subordinated as well as imposition. As for neoliberalism as governmentality, citing Rose (1996), Ward and England (2007) note that the state and economy play an important role in the construction of autonomous, accountable “neoliberal subjects” (p.13).

Concerning governmentality, a word is needed about Foucault and his understanding of neoliberal subjects. By linking government and mentality, Foucault (2008) refers to the practices the state employs to maintain power and foster self-regulation as governmentality. He describes it as the way “one conducts the conduct of men” (p. 186). Being “double edged”, governmentality “both targets the individual as the means with which to maintain social control, and, at the same time, it provides the individual with the very techniques with which to resist this government of individualisation” (Walshaw, 2007, p. 24). Accordingly, individuals monitor themselves and regulate their own actions in this surveillance society. Bevir (1999) explains how this surveillance works:

Modern power relies on constant supervision and control of individuals in accord with a certain concept of normality (...) Individuals police themselves by examining, confessing, and regulating their own thoughts and behaviour in accord with a certain concept of normality. (p. 66)

In other words, individuals internalize the rules and norms in society, which can be explained by normalization. Even if there are no concrete restrictions or limitations on the behaviors and actions of people, individuals believe that their actions are monitored in this surveillance context, so they restrict their own actions.

In his writings especially focused on neoliberalism, Foucault (1980) maintains that power is everywhere, and it underlies all social relations. His disciplinary power, however, “is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility” (Foucault, 1980, p. 187). In other words, subjects internalize the standards constructed before, and they monitor and regulate their own behaviors to conform to these norms:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. (Foucault, 1980, p. 155)

Neoliberalism is a form of governmentality in Foucault (2008), like in Gray et al. (2018) and Ward and England (2007). It focuses on the production of human subjectivity, which highlights Foucault’s theory of *homo economicus* defined as “the replacement every time of homo oeconomicus as a partner of exchange with a *homo economicus* as an entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings” (p.226). *Homo economicus* is someone who is “eminently governable” (Foucault, 2008, p. 271) or the desired neoliberal subject or economic man created and governed by the neoliberal governmentality.

Regarding regulation mechanisms and how power, control, and neoliberalism translate into the present, citing Leys, Apple (2007) explains that there are very few people left in any field who are not affected by the regulation:

proliferation of auditing, i.e., the use of business derived concepts of independent supervision to measure and evaluate performance by public agencies and public employees, from civil

servants and school teachers to university [faculty] and doctors: environmental audit, value for money audit, management audit, forensic audit, data audit, intellectual property audit, medical audit, teaching audit and technology audit emerged and, to varying degrees of institutional stability and acceptance, very few people have been left untouched by these developments (p. 7).

As a result of these pressures for measurement and evaluation, “auditees” or people who are getting prepared for inspection have emerged, and “inspection agencies were charged with ‘naming and shaming’ ‘failing’ individual teachers, schools, social work departments, and so on; private firms were invited to take over and run ‘failing’ institutions” (Apple, 2007, p. 7). According to De Costa et al. (2019), such audit cultures represent Foucault’s governmentality, in which individuals are:

led to govern their own conduct even in absence of immediate control... Audit culture functions as a mechanism for governmentality, as constant auditing practices in the form of comparison and quantification guides individuals and organizations to constantly monitor their own performance and strive to improve and compete with others. (p. 391).

Apple (2017) focuses on three kinds of control to be used to encourage more work: simple, technical, and bureaucratic (p. 251). Simple control is the visible or obvious one in that it entails simply telling people what you expect them to do. The technical one is less visible since it is incorporated into the physical structure of the work. That is, management strategies are embedded in it. Bureaucratic control “signifies a social structure where control is less visible since the principles of control are embodied within the hierarchical social relations of the workplace” (p.251). This entails bureaucratic rules ordered by the policies.

Apart from the understanding of neoliberalism as ideology and governmentality, Gray et al. (2018) claim that neoliberalism is also a linguistic phenomenon, encompassing the language of neoliberalism itself and the role individual languages play under neoliberalism. As for the former, they claim that “all kinds of institutional discourses and everyday speech have been colonized by terms normally associated with the market” such as quality assurance, customer, choice, and stakeholder (pp. 473-474). In a similar vein, Holborow (2012) states that neoliberalism is frequently referred to as “new capitalism”, and language and discourse have become central

components of the new system in a way that they were not before” (p.19). According to her, discourse and discourses refer to things that are not clearly stated or that have a specific social value, or a “subtext” (p. 24). As for the neoliberal keywords, she points out that they “have special meanings and associations within the framework of neoliberal ideology and reflect a version of reality which promotes the interests of capital” (p. 41). To put it another way, these keywords hold particular meaning within that neoliberal ideology framework and represent a reality that supports neoliberal economic policies and serves the interests of capital.

In neoliberalism, since economic productivity comes from “transforming education into a product that can be bought and sold like anything else” rather than investment in education by the government (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254), education has been particularly important to neoliberalism (Gray et al., 2018; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In line with the importance of education for economic growth, especially in Higher Education, market-dominated discourses and profit-oriented initiatives have become prominent. For example, on their official website, the European Commission (2021a) explains the importance of Higher Education Policy as:

Higher education and its links with research and innovation play a crucial role in individual and societal development and in providing the highly skilled *human capital* and the engaged citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, *economic growth*, and prosperity. (*italics added*)

Higher education is experiencing pressure to conform to a market-driven discourse. One of the initiatives highlighted on their website to “educate students to be successful in a complex and interconnected world that faces rapid technological, cultural, economic and demographic change” is entrepreneurship education (European Commission, 2021b), which “plays a key role for Europe’s competitiveness and for the continuous growth of Europe’s economy” (European Commission, 2021c).

Especially after the pandemic, the emergence of discourses around distance education or remote teaching has gained momentum in education. Distance education centers have been set up at universities. Attending online webinars and

digital courses and sharing certificates of attendance on social media have become trends in education, resulting in the emergence of a digital identity. Micro-credentials, for example, have gained momentum recently. Given that preparing economic citizens is the aim of education in higher education curriculum, individuals need market skills, leading to the discourses of 21st-century skills and micro-credentials today. Wheelahan and Moodie (2021) define micro-credentials as “industry-aligned short units of learning that are certified or credentialed, and they can (mostly) ‘stack’ or count towards a higher education qualification” (p. 212). Emphasizing the increasing popularity of micro-credentials, they contend that:

While micro-credentials were gaining momentum before 2020, Covid-19 has accelerated their introduction in many jurisdictions, as governments have sought to respond to the surge in unemployment as a consequence of quarantining measures, and universities sought to develop new markets, in part in response to the decline in enrolments by international students who could no longer travel to their host countries. (p. 212)

They are “premised on methodological individualism in which the sum is the total of the parts. The outcomes of learning are assumed to be observable, unproblematic, and transferable” (Slaughter & Leslie, 2007, p. 223). Ralston (2021) highlights the role of the micro-credential in the neoliberal learning economy and citing Patrick (2013), she notes, “In this economy, education resembles a commodity, a product, or service marketed and sold like any other commodity” (p. 84). As education is conceptualized as a commodity, institutions act like companies that seek profit, and students are regarded as clients. The commodification of the English language and the transformation of education into business-like structures have also changed the nature of higher education and the practices in those institutions. Olssen and Peters (2005) note:

The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with a [*sic*] institutional stress on performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits. (p. 313)

In this context, the development of skills like “creativity, synthesis and divergent thinking” does not improve scores on the multiple-choice tests; therefore,

administrators and educators are more likely to adopt didactic, or "drill and kill," teaching in an effort to promote the convergent thinking required to perform well on multiple-choice tests (Webb et al., 2009, p. 9). Since education is highly important for economic growth, seeing continuous reforms or policy changes in education, regulation mechanisms to monitor teaching and teachers, and fierce competition among institutions is not surprising.

The success of institutions is now primarily measured by international university rankings by policymakers from across the world. In higher education, a single university model has been detached from its cultural context and that specific model has been projected as the ideal to be followed. Considering growing pressure on universities to compete for students and resources (Forest, 2007), administrators often use the worldwide rankings as "proof" of their institution's higher quality to be noticed easily as they have been regarded as a new type of gatekeepers for higher education, deciding who and what is valued and to what extent (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014).

In short, universities today are expected to prepare students for the needs of the market. As Slaughter and Leslie (2007) state: "Universities are now required to ensure that their programs produce graduates for the labour market. They must be competitive in markets to ensure that they are responsive to market needs, and be quality assured through mechanisms of external evaluation" (as cited in Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021, p. 217). In this way, the new managerial culture is reinforced in higher education, where universities are viewed as "business-oriented enterprises" in lieu of institutions that serve the public good (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014, p. 5).

It is also worth stressing how neoliberal HE interacts with globalization, as the quality assurance movement in HE has spread throughout the world with the help of globalization (Forest & Altbach 2007). Globalization has led to significant changes in many disciplines, including higher education (HE), influencing its missions and aims on a global scale. Rapid advancements in instantaneous communication, the rise of multinational bodies, and increased global travel have had a profound impact on the ideologies, enrolment, curricula, outreach, and financial sustainability of

universities (Hobson, 2007). While some argue that globalization will liberate Higher Education, others claim that it exacerbates inequality in the world and “fosters the McDonaldization of the university” (Altbach, 2007, p. 121). Altbach (2007) defines globalization and discusses the key phenomena identified within the definition:

Globalization is defined as the broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world. These phenomena include information technology in its various manifestations; the use of a common language for scientific communication; the imperatives of society’s mass demand for higher education (massification) and for highly educated personnel; and the “private good” trend in thinking about the financing of higher education. (p.123)

In other words, globalization has impacted higher education (HE) through several key trends. For example, information technology has influenced HE through the use of digital tools and online resources. Globalization also promotes the use of a common language, often English, to facilitate scientific collaboration and communication. The trend of massification has led to increased enrollment rates due to a growing societal demand for HE. In addition, there is a rising need for staff with advanced knowledge. Additionally, globalization has fostered the perception of HE as a “private good,” which affects its financing.

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, developed countries have been undergoing a transition process to a knowledge society, marked by the knowledge economy, a new global economic structure where the economic power of individuals is determined by the level of their knowledge and education and the competitiveness of countries is determined by their human and social capital (YÖK, 2007). This process has multiplied expectations from universities, which are primarily responsible for the production and dissemination of knowledge. Confronted with increasing expectations and decreasing public resources, universities started to seek ways to increase and diversify their income sources (YÖK, 2007).

Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) also point out that the massification of HE and the rapid growth of knowledge in the second half of the 20th century presented a global challenge to HE, and a new emphasis on quality assurance emerged as a

result. During this period, the number of students enrolling in HE increased substantially and with the expanded enrollment rates, universities faced challenges regarding access and maintaining academic standards. Additionally, as Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) noted, “in the ‘knowledge society,’ the roles of higher education are multiplying, leading to the need to respond in different ways to different demands” (p.14).

In a similar vein, Süngü and Bayrakçı (2010) argue that as a process affecting the whole world, globalization directly affected the reforms in higher education, and all countries in the world faced two important problems towards the end of the 20th century: increase in the number of university students and financial constraints. As universities began to be seen less as public institutions and more as commercial organizations, the rapid and uncontrolled commercialization of higher education led to issues with quality, accreditation, and academic recognition, which paved the way for the initiation of the "Bologna Process" implemented by the European Union (YÖK, 2007). Given that the increase in educational quantity does not always guarantee an increase in the quality of education, to address the emerging issues, different stakeholders like policymakers, teachers, and administrators from different countries, including Türkiye, were expected to “adopt, customize, and apply a system to prove their quality of education” (Şivil, 2019, p. 76)

In brief, as higher education becomes crucial for the success of economies and people, countries all over the world are developing ways or mechanisms to ensure the quality of higher education institutions and the degree programs they offer (Grossman et al., 2010). In this context, discussions about quality have emerged, and steps have been taken to remove the differences between higher education systems in European Union countries. The Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 is considered the first serious step in creating a common European Higher education area (YÖK, 2006). A year later, in 1999, 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration, an intergovernmental cooperation of 48 European countries in the field of higher education, to foster the internationalization of higher education and “promote the European higher education system” (Schmidt, 2019, p. 179).

Quality of higher education, as Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) stress, “is one of the main drivers of the Bologna process” (p. 37). Quality assurance processes were given a boost, especially by the Bologna Declaration, which not only aimed to create a common higher education field but also aimed to provide quality assurance in higher education (Süngü & Bayrakçı, 2010). In short, the Bologna Process has accelerated the development and implementation of quality assurance in higher education. This development led universities in Türkiye to pay more attention to the quality of their language education programs since English is prevalent in the global market and quality language education can give students a chance to participate in the “international business arena and gain a competitive advantage” (Şivil, 2019, p. 76).

In 2000, The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established to foster cooperation in Europe in quality assurance in higher education. In 2004, it became the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education to maintain and improve the quality of European higher education and serve as a major driving force for the quality assurance development in all Bologna Process signatory countries (ENQA, 2022).

In line with the rapid spread of neo-liberal political economies throughout the world, higher education in Türkiye has also been affected (Akar, 2010). Consequently, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) was established by Law No. 2547 in 1981 to centralize planning, decision-making, and coordination of higher education institutions, and all higher education institutions in Türkiye have gathered under the roof of CoHE. From a critical perspective, CoHE may be seen, in part, as a representation of the diminishing autonomy of universities and their increasing dependence on CoHE, which raises concerns about government control (Akar, 2010). CoHE is mainly responsible for “the strategic planning of higher education, the coordination between universities, and most importantly establishing and maintaining quality assurance mechanisms” (CoHE, 2021). Şivil (2019) conveys that the primary reasons for the quest for accreditation and quality assurance are the increasing number of students, technology, globalization, reforms of the governments, and the prominence of English as the lingua franca. In Türkiye, the

demand for higher education has multiplied, and the emphasis of quality has gained more and more importance. The adoption of quality-focused policies for the growth of educational sectors, both public and private, at elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels has become a trend driven by globalization (Kotarska, 2019).

As Kotarska (2019) notes, “globalisation has created demands for defining international standards which centre around concepts such as transparency, communication of the learning outcomes, self-evaluation, continuous improvement and development or accountability” (p.55). She argues that the global expansion of the language education business, for example, has underlined the need for visible quality labels, leading to the creation of various accreditation schemes during the last three decades.

As far as the Turkish milieu is concerned, Akar (2010) examines how the higher education system in this developing country faces challenges posed by globalization, including growing demand for HE, faculty shortages, the internationalization of HE, the production of research and knowledge, and the process of funding HE. While differences in educational resources among universities already existed, the involvement of the private sector further altered the structure of higher education in Türkiye, leading to an increase in the number of foundation universities (Akar, 2010) and highlighting the need for improving the quality assessment system (Mızıkacı, 2006). Following Türkiye’s accession to the Bologna Process in 2001, quality assurance in higher education became a priority (YÖK, 2019), with both the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations playing crucial roles in Türkiye’s standardization efforts (Şivil, 2019). As Yağcı (2010) also notes, “The establishment of a national quality assurance system was not a primary concern until Turkey’s participation in the Bologna Process” (p. 591). The Bologna Process has provided an important opportunity for the Turkish higher education system to be restructured and internationalized (YÖK, 2014). Specifically, the Bologna Declaration has impacted the Turkish higher education system in two ways: aligning educational policies with the European Union integration process and prompting the government to develop strategies to achieve European standards of quality in higher education, especially in quality management and accreditation systems through the implementation of the

declaration (Süngü & Bayrakcı, 2010). Additionally, Yağcı (2010) notes that the Bologna Process has raised new concerns for the higher education system in Türkiye, including quality assurance, student councils, and qualifications framework.

In 2005, the Council of Higher Education established a national quality assessment system known as the Commission for Academic Evaluation and Quality Development in Higher Education (YÖDEK) and issued standards and guidelines essential for quality assurance of institutions (YÖDEK, 2007). The aim of this independent commission was to ensure external and internal quality assurance processes within universities regarding their administrative services, research and educational activities (Emil, 2017).

Currently, the quality assurance practices continue under the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC in English or YÖKAK in Turkish), which was founded as part of the “Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation” in 2015 when YÖDEK was abolished. The council was reorganized according to the Additional Article No. 35 added to Law No. 2547 on Higher Education, which granted THEQC both administrative and financial autonomy. The council consists of 13 members, including a student representative. Its primary responsibilities include performing external evaluation of higher education institutions, coordinating the authorization and recognition processes of accreditation agencies, and ensuring the internalization and dissemination of quality assurance culture in higher education institutions (THEQC, 2021).

In brief, accreditation processes and quality assurance have gained significant momentum in higher education in Türkiye. These practices are conducted by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC in English or YÖKAK in Turkish), although preparatory schools are predominantly accredited by international bodies such as Pearson Assured. Ayvaz and Mutçalıoğlu (2019) stress the need for a national accreditation scheme. In response, The Association for Language Education, Evaluation, and Accreditation (DEDAK) was established to evaluate and improve the language education programs at higher education institutions as a local or internal system.

Within this neoliberal climate, it is important to understand how these discourses translate into ELT and examine how individuals, specifically English language teachers, take stances and navigate and negotiate these invisible power relations as the interplay of globalization, education in general and ELT in specific is inevitable. Giroux (2011), for example, contends that political forces and historical contexts shape our current understandings of education and teaching, and explains how:

For example, each classroom will be affected by the different experiences students bring to the class, the resources made available for classroom use, the relations of governance bearing down on teacher–student relations, the authority exercised by administrations regarding the boundaries of teacher autonomy, and the theoretical and political discourses used by teachers to read and frame their responses to the diverse historical, economic, and cultural forces informing classroom dialogue. (p. 162)

Therefore, exploring micro, meso, and macro levels can help us capture the dynamics of different contexts and their interconnections (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This section discusses how these neoliberal discourses and practices are reflected in ELT.

2.2. Neoliberalization of English Language Teaching (ELT)

Given that languages are closely related to how power operates in society, the English language is viewed as linguistic and cultural capital, privileging its speakers through socioeconomic and educational benefits (Jordão, 2009; Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2011; Prior, 2018; Shin, 2006; Siqueira, 2017, Starfield, 2013). Increasing demand for English language learning and the disappearance of national borders due to the internationalization and global spread of English have implications for English language teaching and language teacher education (Saraceni, 2009; Siqueira, 2017).

Considering the privilege it gives to its speakers, English is considered a commodity (Pennycook, 1998) and a project promoted just like globalization (Phillipson, 1992), so English language teaching was a crucial part of the colonial enterprise (Pennycook, 1998). Given the increasing demand for English language learning and the current status of English, the research emphasizes the connection between the English language, globalization and imperialism and refers to the financial market or

industry around teaching and learning English (Jordão, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003b; 2016; Prior, 2018; Siqueira, 2017; Starfield, 2013). Kumaravadivelu (2016), for example, contends that in the educational field, “the hegemonic forces in our field keep themselves “alive and kicking” through various aspects of English language education: curricular plans, materials design, teaching methods, standardized tests, and teacher preparation” (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, pp. 72-73).

The role of governmental and private agencies, such as the British Council and World Bank, and non-government organizations that use aid programs and business activities for the spread of English and promotion of English and Western knowledge systems is also highlighted (Rubdy, 2009). Phillipson (2008a) makes a reference to the language policies related to the Bologna Process, which aims to create a single European higher education and research field and claims that the underlying message given is that “universities should no longer be seen as a public good but should be run like businesses, should privatize, and should let industry set the agenda” (p.252).

Regarding the role of individual languages under neoliberalism, Gray et al. (2018) stress the determining role of the market and cite Ball’s (2012) “edu-businesses” (p. 474). In his book Ball (2012) investigates the policy activities of these “edu-businesses” and states that private equity companies are purchasing schools, universities and education services universities as assets, adding: “Curriculum materials and pedagogy software and policy ideas such as inspections, leadership, school choice, and accountability are being retailed by western ‘knowledge companies’ and consultants across the globe” (Global Education Inc.). As the global lingua franca, this is especially evident in the case of English, according to Gray et al. (2018).

The belief that English is a key indicator of competitiveness in the market drives universities to pursue English Medium Instruction (EMI) (Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). EMI is viewed as “the primary means by which universities achieve internationalisation” (Dearden, 2018, p. 325). In other words, for higher education institutions in many other non-English speaking nations in the Middle East, including Türkiye, internationalization is equated with adopting English as the medium of

instruction or creating knowledge via English (Phan & Barnawi, 2015, as cited in Kırkgöz, 2019). As a result, the internationalization of higher education has led to a growing number of universities in these countries adopting EMI for the past few decades (Akşit & Kahvecioğlu, 2022).

English medium instruction (EMI) is known as a global phenomenon. At universities around the world, it is considered that internationalization can be achieved by EMI, which can be described as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (Dearden, 2014, p. 2; Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37). In fact, an examination of most Turkish institutions’ websites reveals that internationalization is included in their mission statements and strategic plans (Kırkgöz, 2017). The reasons why more and more universities around the world are offering their programs, both undergraduate and graduate, through the medium of English include:

- national cuts in HE investment; the need of the state sector to compete with the private sector” (Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37),
- “a desire to compete on a global education stage and attract the best academic minds; the desire to publish in English-speaking journals; to rise in the university rankings and, more practically but vitally, the need to attract students from abroad to ensure the future financial survival of the university” (Dearden & Akincioglu, 2016, p. 3).

As far as the Turkish milieu is concerned, as Kırkgöz (2017) puts it, since the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Türkiye has implemented planned education policies in response to worldwide English impacts in its educational system and:

With the implementation of policy to open to up to the Western world and the drive for modernization and internationalization, there have been several official measures to promote foreign language education, resulting in the spread of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the country. (p. 237)

Several governmental initiatives have been implemented to promote the spread of English as a foreign language (EFL) across the country, driven by a strategy to

engage with the Western world and advance the internationalization efforts. This has encouraged higher education institutions in Türkiye to offer EMI programs “with the aim of developing national human capital with proficiency in English. The number has significantly increased since the Turkish government allowed officially for private universities along with state universities to offer EMI” (Kırkgöz, 2019, p. 11).

Therefore, the increasing number of higher education institutions has also led to an increase in preparatory programs or one-year intensive language programs designed to equip students with the necessary English proficiency so that they can continue their studies in their EMI departments (Ayvaz & Mutçaloğlu, 2019). In fact, “Turkey is a leading country in terms of total faculty and student numbers in university intensive English programs, with an estimated 12,000 instructors serving approximately 200,000 students, annually” (Ayvaz & Mutçaloğlu, 2019, p. 152). To meet the country's growing demand for English education, policymakers in Türkiye and other Middle Eastern countries have increasingly adopted EMI in higher education, recognizing English as a “social, cultural, linguistic, political, educational, and economic capital” (Kırkgöz, 2019, p. 9).

2.2.1. Teachers

Professionalism communicates the idea of a subject-directed power based on liberal notions of autonomy, freedom and rights, and “it conveys the idea of a power given to the subject, and of the subject’s ability to make decisions in the workplace” (Besley, 2019, p. 190). Highlighting the importance of moral responsibilities and adhering to ethical standards, Sockett (1993) outlines the aspects of teacher professionalism: character, commitment to change and continuous improvement, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, obligations, and working relationships beyond the classroom. However, describing the current climate, Ball (2015) contends that “numbers define our worth, measure our effectiveness and, in a myriad of other ways, work to inform or construct what we are today. We are subject to numbers and numbered subjects” (p. 299). When the focus is on accountability, measurement and regulation, “different discourses of professionalism will circulate and gain legitimacy

and impact on how professionalism is conceived and enacted” (Sachs, 2016, p. 414). Hargreaves (2000) outlines the development of teacher professionalism through four historical phases: the pre-professional age, the age of the autonomous professional, the age of the collegial professional, and the post-professional or postmodern. After discussing two major developments in the post-modern age, economics and communication, Hargreaves (2000) explains how these changes have reshaped the profession and outlines the consequences teachers have to navigate, such as:

centralized curricula and testing regimes that have trimmed back the range and autonomy of teachers’ classroom judgement, and a market-inspired application from the corporate sector, of systems of administration by performance management (through targets, standards, and paper trails of monitoring and accountability). (p. 168-169)

In other words, the post-professional age has redefined teaching professionalism. Besley (2019) similarly argues that “professionalism is systematically at odds with neoliberalism” (p.191). In other words, the principles of professionalism conflict with the individualistic nature and practices of neoliberalism.

Individualization is viewed as a key strategy of neoliberalism, and in an individualized society, there is no one else to blame but yourself if you fail to achieve your goals (Harvey, 2005; Layton, 2010). Additionally, in Bauman’s (2001) discourse, the individual is “the one to blame for one’s own misery, seeking causes of one’s own defeats nowhere except in one’s own indolence and sloth, and looking for no remedies others than trying harder and harder still” (as cited in Türken et al., 2015, p. 38). This shapes the way teachers are positioned as well. For example, when schools and students fail, it is the teacher quality that is often questioned, and teachers are held responsible for the failures of new policies or practices, which results in “sensationalized headlines, and thus political intervention” (Sachs, 2016, p. 417). Within this climate, as highlighted by Türken et al. (2015), the importance of *working on self* is strongly underscored, with self-development framed as the need to “become a better version of yourself,” regardless of how successful you may already be (p. 34). Neoliberal strategies make individuals responsible for themselves (Besley, 2019). As Ball (2015) notes, “As neoliberal subjects we are constantly incited to

invest in ourselves, work on ourselves and improve ourselves – drive up our numbers, our performance, our outputs – both in our personal lives and our work lives” (p. 299). Therefore, individuals find themselves in an endless pursuit of development to accommodate the shifting demands in their contexts, which promotes the use of micro-credentials.

Neoliberalism in education, or seeing education through a market lens, has also led to the emergence of the following market-dominated discourses, which have implications for teachers:

increasing central control of what is taught in the form of national or state curricula; the detailed specification of teachers' work through professional teacher competencies and standards, coupled with the introduction of performance management systems and other audit mechanisms to monitor and control teachers and teaching; and the introduction of centralized high-stakes testing regimes to continually evaluate the output of teaching by rendering it visible, calculable and comparable. (Clarke, 2013, p. 230)

These educational discourses also attempt to create an educational domain that underscores quantifiable outputs and competition. In other words, as numbers intrude into classes, they reorient teachers' practice. These discourses reinforce the notion that frequent student testing and standardized test scores best determine student learning and good teaching, and they identify which teachers and schools are successful (Reeves, 2018). Therefore,

Regimes of inspection in schools, the frequent testing of pupils and the publications of test scores force institutions to compete for ‘customers’—the same goes for universities which are ranked nationally and globally on the basis of a range of criteria such as the productivity of their researchers, quality of teaching, student experience and so on. (Gray et al., 2018. p.475)

In many professional sectors, it is called “data surveillance.” It refers to coercion produced through explicit monitoring of performance data by the government “accompanied with threats of school closure, school reconstitution, teacher dismissal, and penalties of reduced school income” (Webb et al., 2009, p. 8).

Additionally, discourses around good and successful teachers have aligned with neoliberal ideals, influencing teachers' practices and decision-making processes.

Neoliberalism requires evidence that you are doing things in the “correct” way (Apple, 2007, p.7), so it fosters regulation mechanisms. When Sachs (2016), for example, emphasizes the mid-term and long-term effects of this regulation-based approach:

In the mid-term, this makes teachers risk averse, limits decision-making and starts to move towards a ‘teach to the test’ mentality. In the long term, it leads to a teaching profession who are timid in their judgements, whose skills are reduced and whose perception in the community is that of technical worker. (p. 417)

In other words, teacher agency regarding teaching is restricted or limited, and teachers start to lose control over their work. In addition, referring to prepackaged sets of curricular materials, including everything regarding goals, pedagogical steps, and evaluation strategies, Apple (2017) notes: “Not only does it prespecify nearly all a teacher should know, say, and do, but it often lays out the appropriate student responses to these elements as well” (p. 254). Like Sachs (2016), Apple (2017) points out that too much control over teachers’ work leads to teachers’ being first deskilled and then reskilled: “As teachers lose control of the curricular and pedagogic skills to large publishing houses, these skills are replaced by techniques for better controlling students” (p. 256). In other words, teachers do not have the opportunity to perform their profession as things are already pre-planned and prepared in advance, or they are not involved in the decision-making processes regarding curriculum, teaching, and evaluation:

Skills that teachers used to need, that were deemed essential to the craft of working with children - such as curriculum deliberation and planning, designing teaching and curricular strategies for specific groups and individuals based on intimate knowledge of these people -are no longer as necessary. (Apple, 2017, p. 255)

When teachers are provided with pre-packaged material, they carry out only the execution not the conception. In this context, with these materials, “the teacher becomes something of a manager” inside the class (Apple, 2017, p. 256), and teachers are only expected to control their students. In other words, they start to lose control over their own work and turn into those who only need to implement the

given policies, which also results in the devaluation of creativity. As Reeves (2018) note, “Teachers' professional judgment, principled beliefs, and philosophies of teaching become secondary or even irrelevant to the primacy of performance and compliance with the accountability regime” (p. 99). Besley (2019) notes that:

“Neoliberalism systematically deconstructs and destroys the space in terms of which professional autonomy is exercised. In effect these systems are a direct attack on professionalism that de-professionalizes teachers and professors and are a move towards centralized standardization and control” (p. 191).

In other words, she highlights the shift from a system in which teachers have more control over their work and decisions to a more centralized system. When there is an assault on their spaces of authorship where they could exercise agency, it paves the way for centralized standardization and control.

In addition, institutions prefer to use similar strategies, which prevents diversity. For example, they tend to follow best practices, thinking that “under audit culture, (1) the auditee is being evaluated not simply as an isolated unit but often in comparison with other auditees or peers, and (2) the measurements used in such evaluations are themselves not necessarily developed *sui generis* but are instead adopted from more established benchmarks” (De Costa et al., 2019, p. 391). In other words, diversity is restricted, and people follow the recognizable practices in their profession.

Regarding individualization, one of the strategies of neoliberalism, Giroux (FreireProject, 2007) tells Kincheloe that people are not social anymore during an interview. They are getting more and more isolated, and the collective labor of teachers has been underestimated despite its importance. As a result of the audit culture in the institutions, technical control, for example, results in increasing isolation among staff (Apple, 2017). Continuous regulation through pre-packaged material and systems influences school collaboration and staff interaction. Teacher interaction for curricular matters and other stuff is minimized, and teachers become isolated: “In essence, if everything is predetermined, there is no longer any pressing need for teacher interaction. Teachers become unattached individuals, divorced from both colleagues and the actual stuff of their work” (Apple, 2017, p. 257). In other

words, they are socially alienated from their colleagues. This is also detrimental to what Connell (2009) emphasizes: the occupational culture “which includes the shared social identity of teachers; the informal processes by which practical know-how is passed to new teachers in on-the-job learning (a major part of teacher education, which formal teacher education can support)” (p. 13).

In neoliberal spaces, amid regulation, quantifiable outputs, and competition, it may not be easy to navigate challenges, but it is not impossible. Teachers can react to the surveillance of their profession, resist the neoliberal practices and gaze and reclaim their autonomy through pedagogical *fabrications* (Ball, 2003) or “strategies that attempt to reclaim teachers’ practice from the coercive effects of neoliberal surveillance” (Webb et al., 2009, p. 10). Teachers can interpret and reinterpret various contexts and conditions with regard to their profession, and through negotiation and resistance, they can create a space for themselves to act within and enact agency. Reeves (2018) emphasizes the potential for the resistance and states that:

In this era of de-professionalizing discourses and policies, teachers' identity work may be spaces of potentiality for teachers to practice ethical, professional agency and speak back against educational policies that threaten ‘good’ teaching and define the ‘good’ teacher in narrow and limiting ways (p. 105).

Similarly, Kelchtermans (2018) notes that resistance is perceived as negative and unprofessional, typically associated with teachers’ being lazy and conservative. However, it is, in fact, a natural response of individuals who are deeply dedicated and professional in their practice. Upon seeing that their practice is challenged, they may perceive this as a threat to their self-esteem, task perception, and job motivation. Teachers who exhibit resistance or reluctance to adopt new normative directives for their practice are demonstrating an understandable initial response, given their commitment to their professional convictions. Buchanan (2015) also emphasizes the active involvement of teachers in the emergence of their professional agency:

Teachers therefore confront the policies and professional discourses they encounter not as *tabulae rasae*, but rather actively use their own preexisting

identities to interpret, learn from, evaluate, and appropriate the new conditions of their work in schools and classrooms. In this process, their identities are reformed and remade – and professional agency is carved out. (p. 701)

Kelchtermans (2018) also acknowledges that teachers lack control over numerous conditions in their workplace, such as material resources and policies, as they are largely predefined. They are compelled to act towards desired objectives and anticipated results and take action within their professional roles. However, he adds, “Even when teachers’ understanding of themselves is influenced, informed, and to some point determined by the context, there always remains space and leeway for their individual choices, motives, and preferences” (p.233). In other words, even if they are surrounded by constraints from various stakeholders, they can navigate these challenges, create a space for themselves to act within, “make active use their professional space” (Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017, p. 37) and still exercise agency (Feryok, 2012).

In short, where there is power, there is also resistance (Foucault, 1980). Therefore, although “our world is bathed in neoliberal ideology” (Holborow, 2018, p. 520), these neoliberal discourses might also lead to the emergence of counter-hegemonic perspectives and practices, which can prompt reconsideration of concepts like “good teaching” and “good teacher.” Kelchtermans (2018) explains, “They perceive situations, interpret them and—more or less consciously- decide on what to do, how to act. The verbs deliberating, judging, and choosing how to act all demonstrate teachers’ agency in their job” (p. 232).

2.2.2. Need for Public Pedagogy and Counter Narratives

It is suggested that we critically reflect on the market-dominated discourses in education. David Marquand claims that:

The language of buyer and seller, producer and consumer, does not belong in the public domain; nor do the relationships which that language implies. Doctors and nurses do not ‘sell’ medical services; students are not ‘customers’ of their teachers; policemen and policewomen do not ‘produce’

public order. The attempt to force these relationships into a market model undermines the service ethic, degrades the institutions that embody it and robs the notion of common citizenship of part of its meaning (as cited in Apple, 2007, p. 10)

Therefore, it is essential to question common sense and critically reconsider received norms or standards. Giroux (2003) suggests that to combat the commodification of all aspects of education, educators redefine education, especially higher education, given its vital role in fostering the civic life of the nation. He stresses the importance of justice, freedom, and the ability to enact agency. He argues that education also entails “matters of civic engagement, critical thinking, civic literacy, and the capacity for democratic agency, action, and change” (Giroux, 2015, p. 10). In addition to teaching, teachers are expected to promote social justice in their teaching and find ways to engage with some controversial issues in their teaching practice (Teacher Development Webinars, 2021). Accordingly, teacher education should foster an “awareness of the complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 24).

As the universities are “losing their sense of public mission” (Giroux, 2015, p.9), a strong need emerges for public intellectuals to address these issues. In this context, the role of intellectuals should be to be critical of our common senses and sometimes enter the risky territory by asking difficult questions and trying to uncover the unseen or unspoken. Educators should develop a discourse in which social responsibility and civic values “become central to invigorating and fortifying a new era of civic engagement, a renewed sense of social agency” (Giroux, 2015, p. 5). The bond between higher education and the common good should be highlighted, and public intellectuals should develop a culture of questioning.

In short, it is critical to redefine the roles of teachers as civic citizens and public intellectuals who contribute to the well-being of society and the common good. While acknowledging the difficulty of this task, Apple (2019) highlights the need to begin this endeavor without losing hope. According to Apple (2017), revealing those resistances is the first step. To do so, he suggests that we start with exploring the

deskilling, reskilling and technical work within the schools. Even if these struggles are not fully conscious, they matter as Gramsci puts forward: “Hegemony is always contested “(as cited in Apple, 2017, p. 270). At a conference, Apple (2016) argues that revolution begins with people and calls for more narratives or thick descriptions of teachers who improve education. He stresses the importance of success stories and counter-hegemonic work. He suggests that we keep these memories alive so that others think it is not impossible to do more democratic or counter-hegemonic work. Apple (2007) asks:

“Can we too act as secretaries for some of our colleagues in higher education, making public their partial, but still successful, resistances to the regime of regulation that we are currently experiencing? The narratives of their (our) political/pedagogic lives can bear witness to the possibility of taking steps toward building a reconstituted public sphere within the spaces in which we live and work” (p. 17)

Karaman and Edling (2021) provide narratives of what it means to be a good teacher, highlighting teachers’ voices from various contexts and the need for a situated understanding of a successful teacher. One of the recurring themes in the narratives is awareness of the unique context and purpose of education, through which teaching aims to create a society. Given the educational challenges, the teachers in the book “are forced to negotiate and balance various different demands as well as possible” and navigate in their context with its own tensions, as stated by Karaman and Edling (2021, p. 197). Citing Freire (1975), Moreira et al. (2021) note that while telling stories about their professional lives, teachers “reveal their educational priorities and question the status quo, by inquiring on current practices and visions of teachers’ work that hinder their understanding of difference, of solidarity and of liberating practices” (p. 58). In their stories, teachers reveal the way neoliberalism operates in their contexts. After all, every cloud has a silver lining!

2.3. Identity and Agency

Understanding teachers requires a deeper understanding of who they are, including the individual, professional, and cultural identities they claim or those assigned to them (Varghese et al., 2005). Sachs (2005) argues that, especially in the context of

multiple changes in education and uncertainty, teachers' professional identities are not stable. There could be "incongruities between the defined identity of teachers as proposed by systems, unions, and individual teachers themselves, and these will change at various times according to contextual and individual factors and exigencies" (p. 9). In other words, multiple contexts teachers engaged with, and the conflicts between claimed identities and ascribed ones continue to shape and reshape identities. This is why Olsen (2008b) contends:

I view identity as a label, really, for the collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems (each itself a fluid influence and all together an ever-changing construct) that become intertwined inside the flow of activity as a teacher simultaneously reacts to and negotiates given contexts and human relationships at given moments. (p. 139)

In addition to the way people view and understand themselves as teachers, identity is also about "how they come to "figure" who they are, through the "worlds" that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside of these worlds" (Urrieta, 2007, p. 107). Palmer (1997) highlights the importance of one's personal experiences, family, significant others, and sociocultural contexts when defining identity:

By *identity* I mean an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others, and to myself, the experience of love and suffering-and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human. (p. 17)

Mockler (2011) elaborates on the construction and reconstruction of teacher identity throughout their career and focuses on the three dimensions of their lives and what these three domains relate to: teachers' personal experiences (experiences of school as students themselves, extracurricular activities, interests, hobbies, roles held, activities engaged in and outside of the profession), teachers' their professional context (career histories, professional learning and development experience,

involvement in professional associations on small and large scales and teacher education), teachers' external political environment (discourses and understandings surrounding education external to the profession experienced by teachers through the media and development of government policy).

In addition to the impact of context on identity, the relationship between identity and agency is also discussed (Banegas & Gerlach, 2021; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2000; Burns & Richards, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Sachs, 2005). According to Burns and Richards (2009), for example, identity "reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings" (p. 5). The ongoing changes in the field, the shifting contexts teachers have been involved in, and teachers' positioning suggest a mutual and dynamic relationship between identity and agency. Due to the interplay between agency and identity, agency shapes and is shaped by identities. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), for example, underscore the criticality of the teacher identity to get a complete picture of agency and state that:

What may result from a teacher's realization of his or her identity, in performance within teaching contexts, is a sense of agency, of empowerment to move ideas forward, to reach goals or even to transform the context. (p. 183)

They argue that when teachers are engaged in reflection to better understand who they are and what their values and beliefs are, they explore their identities, which "may lead to a strong sense of agency" (p. 163). That is, teachers' awareness of who they are can pave the way for agency. Likewise, Mockler (2011) highlights the significance of teachers' understanding of their professional identities and states that those who are aware of their identity display a moral purpose and are better at making a difference in their classes and the community. As Banegas and Gerlach (2021) explain, "teacher identity and teacher agency operate in a synergistic space of mutual influence as teachers' awareness of agency strengthens their identity as independent professionals, which in turn strengthens their capacity for further agency" (p.3). Similarly, Sachs (2005) argues that identity "stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas

of “how to be,” “how to act” and “how to understand” their work and their place in society” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). In other words, teachers’ understanding of who they are shapes their agency, decisions, and interpretation of their place in society.

Beijaard et al. (2000) also argue that the way teachers perceive their professional identity influences “their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice,” which also highlights the importance of teachers’ own understanding of who they are in agency (p. 750). They argue that when teachers are engaged in reflection to better understand who they are and what their values and beliefs are, they explore their identities, which “may lead to a strong sense of agency” (p. 163). Regarding how they make sense of themselves as teachers, they draw on their histories and aspirations:

Teachers will define themselves not only through their past and current identities as defined by personal and social histories and current roles but through their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they hope to be in the inevitably changing political, social, institutional and personal circumstances. (Day et al. 2006, p. 610)

As for teachers’ sense of themselves, Kelchtermans (2018) elaborates on professional self-understanding in practice and highlights the importance of both teacher biographies and external influences. He claims that teaching as a profession evolves within its temporal (biography) and spatial (relationships between people in the social professional spheres, the organizational structure of the school, policy environment, curriculum, etc.) contexts. He notes that the journey of teachers’ practice begins early in their lives. During their time as students, they spend countless hours observing and engaging with teachers in different classes and schools and bring a lot of experience in educational environments, which can be described as Lortie’s (1975) “apprenticeship of observation.” This process leads them to form a specific understanding of teaching as a profession and eventually shapes their understanding of themselves as possible teachers in the future. Upon their enrollment in teacher education, fresh insights and experiences modify, reinforce, challenge, or dramatically alter their understanding of themselves in their job.

Throughout their careers, teachers construct a personal interpretative framework, “a set of cognitions, mental representations that operates as a lens through which teachers look at their job, give meaning to it and act in it.” (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 260). An essential part of it is their professional self-understanding, described as “teachers’ sense of themselves as teachers, how they conceive of and represent themselves in their professional practice” (Kelchtermans, 2018, p.230) and made up of five components: self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective (Kelchtermans, 2009).

As the descriptive component, self-image refers to how teachers characterize themselves as teachers. It is based on how a teacher perceives herself but is also influenced by how she is perceived by others. As the evaluative component, self-esteem is based on how teachers appreciate their performance (how well am I doing in this teaching profession as a teacher?). As the normative component, task perception represents their responses to the following questions: “What must I do to be a proper teacher?; what are the essential tasks I have to perform in order to have the justified feeling that I am doing well?; what do I consider as legitimate duties to perform and what do I refuse to accept as part of ‘my job’?” Job motivation refers to the incentives that drive people to opt for a career as a teacher, remain in the profession, or leave it and transition to another career. Lastly, the future perspective encompasses teachers’ professional expectations (how do I envision myself as a teacher in the years ahead, and how do I feel about it?). He also notes that narrating, navigating, and negotiating are the categories of action where teachers’ self-understanding can develop, become apparent, and be investigated.

Priestley et al. (2015a) highlight how agency is conceptualized in literature. Some people view it as a *variable* to better understand social action and aim to find out whether structure or agency is the more important in forming action. Agency is also considered an *innate capacity* of people or something they have. It is also viewed as an *emergent phenomenon* or something people achieve “through the interplay of personal capacities and the resources, affordances, and constraints of the environment by means of which individuals act” (p. 19). However, it is hard to define agency in a single way, just like identity. Definitions of agency vary, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of agency

“The ability to take action in the light of a conscious assessment of the circumstances”	(Layder, 1997, p. 35)
“The socioculturally mediated capacity to act”	(Ahearn, 2001, p.112)
“The property of those entities (I) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)”	(Duranti, 2004, p. 453)
“The ability to exert control over and give direction to one’s life”	(Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135)
“The capacity to shape our responsiveness to the situations we encounter in our lives”	(Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p.146)
“The state of agency enables individuals (and, to some, collectives) to make free or independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgment in the interests of others and oneself. It also can describe those who have the capacity to act on the behalf of others.”	(Campbell, 2012, p. 183)
“People’s ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation”	(Duff, 2012, p. 417)
Something “practiced when professional subjects and/or communities exert influence, make choices and take stances in ways that affect their work and/or their professional identities”	(Eteläpelto et al., 2013, p. 61)
“Teachers’ active efforts to make choices and intentional action in a way that makes a significant difference”	(Toom et al., 2015: 615)
“The capacity to participate and be responsible for their own learning”	(Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016, 318)
“Choosing actions that align with their commitments and values and with their sense of who they are as professionals, and continuously evaluating the effectiveness of their actions”	(Haneda & Sherman, 2016, p. 745)
“When applied to teachers’ professional practice, agency denotes the ability of teachers to step out of the contextual rules and regulations, and to act upon their own goals”	(Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017, p. 38)
“The power to put autonomy into professionally informed and environmentally supported action”	(Erss, 2018, p. 253)
Agency is “achieved by individuals, through the interplay of personal capacities and the resources, affordances, and constraints of the environment by means of which individuals act”	(Priestly et al., 2015a, p. 19)
“Multidimensional, individually varied, temporally imbued, and both socially and individually resourced”	(Vahähäsantanen, 2015, p.1)

Definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of agency, and common themes include:

- The ability or capacity to take action and make decisions
- Having some degree or control over one’s actions
- The alignment of agency with one’s identity and values

- Its potential for enabling personal and social transformation
- The influence of external factors and how agency is socially mediated
- The ability to surpass or navigate contextual rules

In their seminal work, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualize agency as “a chordal triad” comprising three elements: *iteration*, *projectivity*, and *practical evaluation* (p. 975). They define agency as an internally complex and:

a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment). (p. 963)

They note that examining the social action by situating it within the flow of time will help one fully capture the complexity of agency. They refer to people’s engagement with events in their lives and the dynamic interplay or interaction of these three temporal orientations or dimensions. All these three dimensions play a role in people’s actions, but the degree of their contribution to instances of action differs (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). In other words, their framework does not imply that the effect of these three dimensions is always equal. Referring to the dynamic nature of agency, the degree of orientations toward the past, present and future might change, and actors might switch between them.

Iteration, *projective*, and *practical evaluation dimensions* allow us to examine actions oriented toward the past, future, and present respectively. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) state that actors live in the past, present, and future simultaneously, and they “continuously engage patterns and repertoires from the past, project hypothetical pathways forward in time, and adjust their actions to the exigencies of emerging situations” (p. 1012). In other words, their current actions are rooted in their past experiences and future aspirations.

2.3.1. An Ecological Approach to Agency

Priestley et al. (2015b) develop Emirbayer and Mische’s three-dimensional perspective on agency and come up with their own ecological approach, which

serves as both a methodological and theoretical framework. It is also regarded as the “first and most comprehensive framework to conceptualize teacher agency” (Kayi-Aydar, 2019, p. 11).

Just like Biesta and Tedder (2007), who argue that conceptualization of agency as achievement implies that the “achievement of agency depends on the availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology” (p. 137), when Priestley et al. (2015a) expand Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) conceptualization, they claim that, in addition to the social ones, contexts can also be material and agency is “partly shaped by the availability of physical resources and the nature of physical constraints” (p. 25). They also add further components to each dimension that may influence how agency is achieved (See Figure 1).

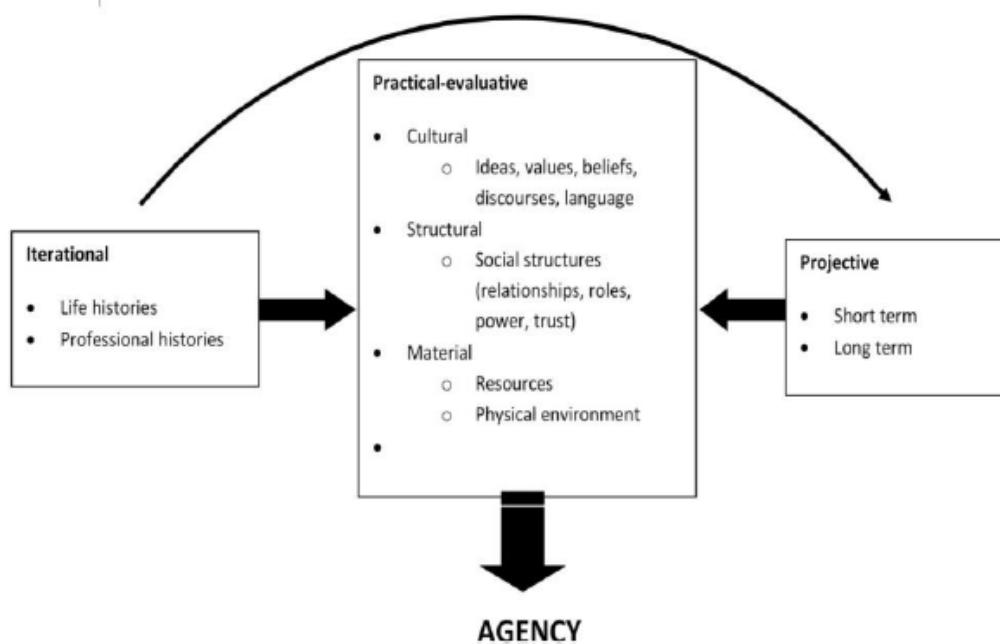


Figure 1. Dimensions of Teacher Agency Model (Priestley et al., 2015a)

Priestley et al. (2015a) conceptualize agency as an emergent phenomenon and argue that it “denotes a quality of the engagement of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves” (p. 22). Conceptualizing agency as an achievement rather than a capacity or something people have implies that agency is a dynamic process and a person can demonstrate agency in one context but not in others, which accounts for the possible fluctuations in their agency.

The model proposed by Priestley et al. (2015a) represents the key dimensions of teacher agency. With regard to the iterational dimension of teachers' work, the achievement of agency is shaped by past experiences of teachers, which encompass both general life histories or personal experience and professional histories, such as their education as a teacher and teaching experience.

Although Priestley et al. (2015a) refrain from conceptualizing agency as personal capacity, they recognize that capacity plays an important role in facilitating the emergence of agency. A broad repertoire of responses fosters agency by enabling teachers to maneuver among different strategies. Skills, knowledge, personal and professional beliefs, and values, which are rooted in past experiences, contribute to teacher agency. This highlights the importance of both initial teacher education and continuing professional development to contribute to this capacity-building process to "interrupt habitual ways of thinking about schooling and to encourage an innovative and questioning mindset" (p.31). In addition to professional education, teachers' day-to-day experiences, relationships with colleagues, and the school culture significantly contribute to their agency and professional experience.

The projective dimension of teachers' work entails teachers' short and long-term aspirations with regard to their work, and they are largely shaped by teachers' prior experiences. To illustrate, "a previous experience of a negative school inspection may make teachers risk averse in their work, and hence agency aspirations are narrowed, and agency circumscribed" (Priestley et al., 2015a, p. 32).

With regard to the practical-evaluative dimension of teachers' work, they distinguish between cultural (ways of thinking and speaking, beliefs, values), material (resources that foster or hinder agency and physical environment agency is achieved in and through) and structural aspects (social structures and relations that help the achievement of agency). Agency is related to the past and future, but it can only be enacted in the present. The practical-evaluative dimension encompasses teachers' day-to-day teaching environment. Teaching requires a lot of decision-making inside and outside the class and difficult decisions, "involving compromise and at times conflict with their aspirations, feeling coerced by what they might see as arbitrary

and unnecessary intrusions into their work” (Priestley et al., 2015a, p. 33). Their experiences shape their decision-making and actions, with tensions and conflicting pressures and relations in schools being part of this dimension. Cultural, structural, and material contexts can act as mediators, influencing teachers’ actions by inhibiting or supporting agency.

In brief, the development of agency is fostered through the interplay of people’s individual efforts, available resources, and contextual factors within their ecologies. As Priestley et al. (2015a) note, in their ecological understanding of teacher agency, in addition to the capacity of teachers, the conditions under which agency is attained or realized need to be considered. It is not a lack of regulation that is advocated. Instead, they stress “the importance of regulation so long as it is of the right sort; that is, the sort that recognizes the professionalism of teachers and enables them to achieve agency in their work” (Priestley et al., 2015a, p. 151).

Agency, as an emergent phenomenon, is “achieved by individuals, through the interplay of personal capacities and the resources, affordances, and constraints of the environment by means of which individuals act” (Priestly et al., 2015a, p. 23). This definition emphasizes the significance of both the capacity of the individual and contextual factors, situating agency as a complex and interrelated system. Thus, from this perspective, agency “is not something that people can *have*- as a property, capacity or competence- but is something that people *do*” (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626).

Highlighting the importance of Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) contribution to the concept of agency, Biesta and Tedder (2007) elaborate on their ecological model and contend that agency is not something people inherently have. It is something that they achieve. They also underscore the role of learning in achieving agency, which can account for the fluctuations in agency over time, given that people act and make decisions based on their past experiences. This underlines the criticality of reflexivity and life histories in understanding agency. Toom et al. (2015) further state that thinking of agency as something people do does not imply that mere teacher behavior can serve as the only criterion for agency. Citing Soini et al. (2016), they

note that “teacher behaviors combined with internal processes such as attitudes, emotions, and cognitive processing constitute the complexity of professional agency” (p. 619).

Kayi-Aydar (2019) emphasizes the criticality of emotions in her conceptualization of agency, arguing that language teacher agency “is best understood through an exploration of an identity, agency and emotions triangle. The complex identity–agency relationship is affected by and reflected in one’s emotions.” In other words, agency is not only what people do in practice. It is also how they feel. Day (2018) also argues that “identity is an amalgam of the personal and professional selves, and is represented through the dynamic interplay between efficacy, agency, emotions in the context of personal biographies, workplace structures and cultures, and policy influences” (p.61).

In brief, there is a mutual relationship between identity and agency. People construct multiple and subjective realities as they engage with the world, and the interaction between people and their specific working and living contexts shapes their interpretations (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, to better understand how teachers make sense of themselves and situations, position themselves, and exercise agency, it is crucial to focus on multiple contexts in which they are situated.

2.3.2. Figured Worlds

Drawing on Mead (1964/1932), Bakhtin (in Holquist, 1990), and Holland et al. (1998), Olsen (2008a) situates teacher identity inside “cultural studies of the person” (p. 24). He then explains how identity is conceptualized in the sociocultural model of identity:

This sociocultural model of identity considers that people are both products of their social histories, and—through things like hope, desperation, imagining, and mindfulness—move themselves from one subjectivity to the next, from one facet of their identity to another, and can in some limited sense choose to act in certain ways considered by them to be coherent with their own self-understandings. Applied to teachers, this view highlights both the

constraints/opportunities on a teacher deriving from personal histories and also the actual agency any teacher possesses. (p. 24)

In line with the purpose of the current study, to explore teachers' engagement in various contexts, figured worlds serves as an appropriate framework for this narrative inquiry. The concept of figured worlds is highlighted as useful if one wants to study identity and agency in education (Urrieta, 2007). This offers a framework to investigate developing identities and acts of agency, emphasizing that these processes are not isolated but deeply entwined with historical, social, and cultural contexts (Holland et al., 1998). Teachers occupy multiple figured worlds, and this framework allows for an analysis of how teachers maneuver and negotiate their roles in the figured world of education. It highlights the cultural resources teachers can access in specific social settings and examines how teachers utilize tools and symbols and how their positioning within various figured worlds mediates their agency.

2.3.2.1. Contexts for the Production of Identities

Holland et al. (1998) elaborate on four contexts of activity for identity and one of them is the figured worlds. Drawing on Bourdieu, Bakhtin, and Vygotsky, Holland et al. (1998) define a figured world as “a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. 52). In other words, people learn to value certain outcomes over others and recognize some acts; still, not others. It is “peopled by the figures, characters, and types who carry out its tasks and who also have styles of interacting within, distinguishable perspectives on, and orientations toward it” (Holland et al., 1998, p.51). We enter into these figured worlds, or we are recruited into them, and this depends on who they are and their history-in-person. Positions of people matter: “Some figure worlds we may never enter because of our social position or rank; some we may deny to others; some we may simply miss by contingency; some we may learn fully” (p. 41). As Urrieta (2007) notes, in these figured worlds, “people “figure” how to relate to one another over time and across different time/place/space contexts” (p. 109).

Urrieta (2007) states that although figured worlds are described as *as if realms* by Holland et al. (1998), “most are more substantial than fantasy.” In addition to emphasizing figured worlds as spaces of possibility (in terms of agency), their sociocultural practice theory of self and identity asserts that figured worlds are “a social reality that lives within dispositions mediated by relations of power” (p. 109). As highlighted in Urrieta (2007), using the concept of figured worlds can help a lot while studying identity and agency in education as it focuses on activity and emphasizes power relations. Agency, power, and positionality are explicitly centered in this framework. Likewise, Bennett et al. (2017) also contend that a figured world can help us better understand personal agency:

The concept of a Figured World emphasises the diversity of ways of ‘becoming’ within existing community values and practices. In doing so, it emphasises the agency of the individual in choosing how to make meaning of the world whilst recognising the social structures and fields of power within which such choices are made. (p. 255)

There are multiple ways of becoming, and the concept of figured worlds can help us better understand how people interpret the world in which they live with its own structures and power dynamics, and how they make decisions and stances. The figured worlds framework, with its particular attention to identity, agency, and power, provides a lens through which we can explore broader structures that influence and guise ELT and teachers today. It also highlights that participants can create their own new figured worlds or spaces for change within these existing structures.

This multifaceted process of interpretation and decision-making in figured worlds underscores the essence of human agency as conceptualized by Inden (1990), who defines it as:

the realized capacity of people to act effectively upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view. (p. 23)

While doing so, Inden (1990) also reminds us that people might also become the recipients of other's actions: "People do not act only as agents. They also have the capacity to act as 'instruments' of other agents, and to be 'patients', to be the recipients of the acts of others" (p. 23).

The concept of figured worlds emphasizes the "boundedness" of particular communities and their participants. It acknowledges that spaces like universities and classes are all unique and bounded in certain ways. Within these spaces, teachers are seen as actors who continually engage with and construct their worlds in response to changes and external demands. People tell others who they are, and these self-understandings or identities shape the way they act:

Persons develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors in socially and culturally constructed worlds, and these senses of themselves, these identities, to the degree that they are conscious and objectified, permit these persons, through the kinds of semiotic mediation described by Vygotsky, at least a modicum of agency or control over their own behavior. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 40)

"People "figure" who they are through the activities and in relation to the social types that populate these figure worlds and in social relationships with the people who perform these worlds. People develop new identities in figured worlds" (Urrieta, 2007, p. 108). In other words, this framework highlights the roles of people, activities, and relationships in shaping the figured world of teachers.

In addition to figured worlds, Holland et al. (1998) explore three other contexts of activity for identities: positionality, space of authoring, and making worlds. As a counterpart to figuration, positionality refers to the positions offered to people in different figured worlds. For example, a teacher could be positioned as "a good teacher," "a bad teacher," "a marginalized teacher," "an obstinate teacher," or "an effective teacher." When people are positioned in these ways, they are not so much engaged in self-making. Instead, they accept, reject, or negotiate these roles to varying degrees.

The space of authoring is the third context. Holland et al. (1998) build on Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, "the always present, always operating, always demanding job

of being in dialogue with others, with one's environment" or people's sense-making ability through internal dialogues (p. 189). As long as we are alive, we respond to things directed to us and interpret what is happening. Following him, they state that:

The world must be answered—authorship is not a choice—but the form of the answer is not predetermined... Authorship is a matter of orchestration: of arranging the identifiable social discourses/ practices that are one's resources (which Bakhtin glossed as "voices") in order to craft a response in a time and space defined by others' standpoints in activity, that is, in a social field conceived as the ground of responsiveness. Human agency comes through this art of improvisation. (p. 272)

They describe agency as the orchestration of social discourses and practices to form responses, which involves improvisation. People navigate and respond to the perspectives and constraints imposed by others by drawing on personal histories and available cultural resources. They emphasize that agency emerges through improvisation.

Regarding the diverse discourses from multiple figured worlds, Bakhtin suggests that the voices are heteroglossic. They are in conflict, but they must be arranged or put together somehow. He calls the orchestration of such voices "self-authoring." In this meaning-making process,

We "author" the world. But the "I" is by no means a freewheeling agent, authoring worlds from creative springs within In authoring the world, in putting words to the world that addresses her, the "I" draws upon the languages, the dialects, the words of others to which she has been exposed. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 170)

We can construct ourselves through communication, and we both obtain positions and maintain them in the figured worlds through discourse. As Holland et al. (1998) state, "Our communications with one another not only convey messages but also always make claims about who we are relative to one another and the nature of our relationships" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 26). Individuals navigate multiple figured worlds, and during their engagement, they also bring with them the cultural values and beliefs embodied within these historically situated worlds. When people participate in multiple figured that contain conflicting values and beliefs, they may

experience inconsistencies, and tensions may occur. While particular ways of knowing, being, and acting are privileged, others are marginalized through dominant discourses. This is why, as Sisson (2016) revealed in her study, critical incidents are important since they encourage and promote agency.

Making worlds is the last context for the production of identities. Holland et al. (1998) contend that “through “serious play,” new figured worlds may come about” (p.272). In these novel figured worlds, the possibility of creating new artifacts, acts, and discourses emerges.

To explain figured worlds, Clarke (2008) highlights the role of imaginative capacity highlighted in Vygotsky and the way children suspend everyday reality. They have the ability and desire to enter into their imaginary worlds and ignore, at least temporarily, those feelings and concerns irrelevant to these play worlds. The world of the games is treated as the real world. For example, one child can use a stick as a horse, while another can tap it on the wall and act like a teacher. These objects or mediating devices help people gain some control over their environment. Similarly, as Clarke (2008) argues, “Throughout our lives we all participate in socially meaningful activity by ‘casting’ ourselves and others into socially constructed roles. Together, these activities and roles make up what Holland et al. (1998) refer to as ‘figured worlds’” (p. 25).

Children's play worlds are similar to the more complicated figured worlds they enter as they age (Holland et al., 1998). Just as in children’s play, through social play, “the activities of “free expression,” the arts and rituals created on the margins of regulated space and time,” new social competencies in newly imagined communities can be developed. According to Holland et al. (1998), “Through play people acquire the key cultural means by which they escape, or at least reduce, the buffeting of whatever stimuli they encounter as they go through their days,” which can pave the way for new discourses, acts, and more liberatory social movements in these new figured worlds (p. 280). This is what they mean by “making worlds”, which leads us to the figured worlds or the first context of identity.

According to Holland et al. (1998), we learn to “inhabit the cultural world through play when it is instituted within us... Play is also the medium of mastery, indeed of creation, of ourselves as human actors. Without the capacity to formulate other social scenes in imagination, there can be little force to a sense of self, little agency” (p. 236). This is why they remind us of Bakhtin’s emphasis on the “ways play frees people from the generic forms that govern their actions” and his notion of carnival or the process of carnivalization (p.237). As Holland et al. (1998) note, “In a situation of heteroglossia different languages and perspectives come inscribed with differing amounts of authority,” and it might take a long time to develop an authorial stance in a figured world (p. 182). In Bakhtin’s words, “One’s own discourse and one’s own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other’s discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348).

Canagarajah (2004) explains this by elaborating on the common assumptions related to self and voice. The three constructs -identity, role, and subjectivity- can be imposed on people. Given that the self is shaped by multiple discourses and composed of different subjectivities with unequal power and status, the subject needs to negotiate these identities to achieve coherence. Canagarajah (2004) defines voice as “a manifestation of one’s agency in discourse through the means of language,” and it has to be:

negotiated in relation to our historically defined identities (such as race, ethnicity, and nationality), institutional roles (like student, teacher, and administrator in the educational institution), and ideological subjectivity (i.e. our positioning according to discourses such as ‘responsible citizen/lazy immigrant/dependent foreigner,’ or ‘authoritative native-speaker/blundering non-native speaker,’ which embody values according to the dominant ideologies in the society) (pp. 267- 268).

Although an emphasis on social constraints a lot leaves little room for agency, Holland et al. (1998) draw upon two theorists who address agency, Vygotsky and Bakhtin. They suggest that we not neglect the social and cultural contexts that “inform the playing field” to which human actions is directed and by which it is shaped” (p. 278). In other words, while people are compelled to respond to the

world, they still have the option to craft novel responses to events. By drawing on their experiences from multiple figured worlds, they can appropriate the given circumstances and create their own spaces for change. Agency within the theory of figured worlds encompasses not only what people can do in spaces they are afforded. It also encompasses how they take stances, make choices about the ways they are positioned, and position themselves. As Holland et al. (1998) argue, Bakhtin highlights the difference between people who can develop that stance and those who cannot:

“Yet he does write about differences between the neophyte, given over to a voice of authority, and the person of greater experience, who begins to rearrange, reword, rephrase, reorchestrate different voices and, by this process, develops her own “authorial stance.” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 183).

People bring their histories to the present and current situations. In response to the subject positions offered to one in the present, one improvises utilizing the cultural resources at hand. As they claim:

One’s history-in-person is the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present. The constraints are overpowering, yet not hermetically sealed. Improvisation can become the basis for a reformed subjectivity. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 18)

They acknowledge the active role individuals play in authoring their identities in a variety of social contexts and contend that:

We will try to show how one person plays and is played within these diverse fields—within a space of authoring, to make at last a repertory of potential identities and, from that repertory, something more than Foucault’s subject—though less than an imperial self. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 193)

In other words, while acknowledging the constraints or power structures, they recognize that their subjects go beyond being simply docile bodies Foucault describes in his earlier work. They engage with discourses, cultural resources, practices, and norms to create “a repertory of potential identities” and then navigate and negotiate their identities within different fields. In brief, individuals are not fully

determined by the discourses or structures. They actively author themselves and the world around them. They are “agentive beings who are constantly in search of new social and linguistic resources which allow them to resist identities that position them in undesirable ways” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.27).

Holland et al. (1998) explore two dimensions of figured worlds: conceptual and material. On the conceptual dimension, figured worlds provide the contexts of meaning for actions. In these worlds, people learn to ascribe new meanings to certain acts and favor certain activities and practices over others. They enact these senses of self or conceptual understandings of the material dimension. In return for their everyday performances, they gain prestige in and across figured worlds. They also highlight the importance of artifacts as the mediators of human action and identity, describing them as “psychological tools” to evoke figured worlds (p. 60). In figured worlds, people learn new perspectives of the world and ascribe people and artifacts like events, objects, and discourses related to those particular figured worlds with new meanings. Meaning making is mediated by available cultural tools, and when individuals internalize these artifacts, they make sense of themselves and motivate themselves to act.

2.4. Research on Teacher Agency

Using a socio-cultural developmental approach to teacher agency, Tao and Gao (2017) explored how eight language teachers exercised agency in relation to professional development during a curricular reform (shift from general English to English for specific purposes) at a Chinese university. Data were collected through life-story interviews, participatory observation data, conversations with administrators, field notes, and relevant documents. Regarding the three areas of professional development, the results indicated that participants enacted strong agency in teaching engagement and learning investment, but their agency in research practices varied. They took various agentic actions, and their choices to participate in these three areas in relation to the new curriculum were mediated by different identity commitments. Despite the limited resources for their professional development in their school, they engaged in self-directed learning.

In their study, Varghese and Snyder (2018) explore how four pre-service teachers in a monoglossically oriented teacher education program in Washington developed their professional identity and agency as dual language teachers through the figured worlds framework. Employing an ethnographic approach, they collect data through interviews, formal observations and field notes over the course of a year. Using figured worlds enables them to show the affordances and challenges teachers experienced while trying to be agentic and shape those figured worlds. The results show that teachers experienced different structural constraints and challenges in the program and their placement schools, but this did not prevent them from building strong connections with their students and families and maintaining commitment to their work. Although they experienced constrained agency, negotiating multiple figured worlds allowed these teachers to develop unique forms of agency shaped by their histories, TEP, and their lived experiences in their classes and larger contexts, including the sociopolitical milieu surrounding them.

Although this dissertation primarily focuses on teacher agency in higher education context, this section also includes relevant studies in K-12 settings due to their significant insights and connections. In their study, Hiver and Whitehead (2018) aimed to investigate whether and how English language teachers' agency in their pedagogical practice could provide insight into their ongoing professional identity construction. The participants comprised four Korean English language teachers at various stages of their careers in public schools. The data were collected through observational data, reflective journal entries, and an in-depth interview. Citing Connelly and Clandinin (1999), they note,

In the struggle to safeguard the coherence of their narrative identity, teachers often use *autobiographical reasoning* to establish connections between both past and current events and the self by drawing conclusions about the self from autobiographical episodes and instances in which they either did or did not exercise agency. (p. 72)

The results showed that teacher agency emerged from the intricate and ongoing negotiation between these teachers' sense of self (identity), personal characteristics, and their work environment. Teachers exercise agency in their pedagogical practice to deliberately enact their values, goals, and beliefs. Through autobiographical

reasoning, teachers internalized a transformation narrative, turning negative events into positive outcomes. They said: “For these teachers, agency gave their identity a purpose while their autobiographical reasoning gave the conscious narrative being built around that purpose a sense of coherence.”

Mooney Simmie et al. (2016) explored experienced teachers’ narratives related to the concept of “good teaching” in Ireland and their interactions with their peers, school management, the academy, and the state inspectorate. The data were collected from 54 experienced teachers, mostly teaching in secondary schools, through an online anonymous survey with open-ended questions. Three themes emerged: multiple perspectives on good teaching, pedagogy of oppression, and low ethical trust. The results revealed a restrictive hierarchy centered on teacher seniority and administration. The official pedagogical discourse (ORF) constrained teachers’ practices (PRF) and their capacity to act as autonomous agents of change. Interactions at school were described as democratic in theory. However, 56% of teachers described the interactions as “a rather tokenistic and contrived democratic process, used as a functional strategy to avoid alienating teachers” (p. 65). The public’s distrustful perception was also seen as undermining teacher professionalism and hindering their autonomy. Despite a pedagogy of oppression and restriction through regulations and policies, there were some gaps or spaces for productive discourses. Although teachers expressed a desire to foster care and critical thinking, perceiving themselves as “agents of change,” when good teaching practices were evaluated merely through measurable ways, their capacity was shrinking.

In their study from a poststructuralist perspective, Nazari et al. (2023) explore the role of institutional power in shaping the autonomy, agency, and identity construction of experienced Iranian English language teachers in a private language school. The data were collected through narrative frames and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that teachers perceived institutional power as discursively limiting their autonomy, agency and identity construction as their beliefs conflicted with the school’s demands. However, they also viewed it as beneficial in maintaining systemic organization and providing a consistent framework.

In her case study, Ashton (2022) explored the agency of four experienced language teachers working in different contexts and institutions in New Zealand and the affordances and constraints in exercising agency during the sudden switch to emergency online teaching because of COVID-19. The data were collected through interviews, which were the primary source of data collection, as well as teacher notes, informal conversations, and emails. The study analyzed teachers' critical incidents, the agency they exercised, and the factors that shaped their actions. The results showed that social structural factors such as relationships, roles, and power dynamics played a significant role in their identities and enactment of agency. Two teachers experienced significant challenges when teaching online, which led to their deep reflection on their role. Despite limited motivation, they endeavored to exercise agency through pastoral care and support for their students. The study also stressed the importance of critical incidents since they can disrupt routines and make teachers reflect on their professional roles and identity before deciding how best to respond.

In their study, Ali and Hamid (2023) explored how two English teachers from a rural Bangladeshi school exercised agency despite facing strong political pressure to improve their students' test data. In other words, they examined how teachers navigated the pressures of standardized testing and datafication, which often results in negative washback effects on teaching practices. Datafication refers to the process of using data-oriented accountability measures to evaluate various aspects of teaching and learning, such as test scores and student performance metrics. Data were collected through classroom observations and interviews with the teachers. The findings suggested that while teachers' practices were affected by the examination and datafication, they weren't entirely determined by these factors. The exams did not assess listening and speaking skills, so students were more inclined to focus on the content that was tested. Despite these constraints, classroom observations showed that teachers exercised agency by adjusting their teaching methods and adapting the curriculum to better align with broader curricular goals and the needs of their students. Teachers' professional sense of being, along with professional, emotional, ethical, and moral values, also played a critical role in shaping their agency.

Although the participants in the following studies are not language teachers, they are still educators and provide relevant insights. In her qualitative study, Buchanan

(2015) explored how primary school teachers interpreted their professional identities during the reform. By focusing on agency and using teacher identity, she also investigated how teachers are shaped by the shifting contexts and discourses and how they situate themselves in their school and reform climate. Three teachers with at least three years of teaching experience from three different schools were selected, and the data were collected through in-depth interviews. Two interviews were conducted with each teacher. The results showed that teachers' prior teaching experiences had an important effect on teacher identities based on the analysis of the career history. When teachers encountered a mismatch between their identity and the school culture, they had to deal with that, illustrating how identity and agency intersect. There were two main kinds of agency exhibited by teachers: pushing back and stepping up. When they experienced a disconnect between their identity and the demands of the school, they chose to push back, which is a kind of resistance. When teachers' identities aligned well with the school culture, they made an effort to go beyond their expected roles.

In their narrative analysis, Loh and Hu (2014) examined the lived experience of Natalie, a beginning teacher, during her first two years in a neoliberal school system in Singapore. Her stories were collected through spontaneous storytelling (which arises naturally), story eliciting (related to critical events), and story asking (by making explicit requests for stories from the participant). In addition to the stories, 20 emails in which Natalie shared the critical events, questioned the reasons behind their occurrence, and asked for advice were also analyzed. The results revealed how a neoliberal school culture shaped an idealistic beginning teacher's teaching beliefs, practices, and lived experiences. Despite her attempts to resist the neoliberal school culture by expressing her concerns and doubts during staff meetings, over time, she realized that resistance was futile, so she decided to follow the rules and adopt the dominant neoliberal practices in her school.

Sisson (2016) explored identity, agency, and professional practice using cultural models theory in her study. Data were collected through the lived stories of an African American public preschool teacher in the United States. The results showed that CeCe's childhood stories and the figured worlds of home and school influenced

her developing sense of agency and identity. The findings also underscored the importance of critical incidents in shaping identity and agency. Given that her lived experiences affected her sense of belonging and identity at school, she aimed to create a classroom environment for her students similar to the caring community she experienced at home. She achieved that by establishing caring relationships in class with her students, advocating for them, and making covert improvisations in the curriculum. Enacting covert forms of agency within the class was empowering for her, but it served to “disempower her in public spaces as she silenced her own voice in order to be perceived as compliant” (p. 680).

Employing a narrative approach, Lutovac et al. (2024) explore the nature of teachers’ work. Data were collected from 25 teachers (primary school, special education and subject teachers) from diverse Finnish public schools, and each individual teacher was invited to share their experiences and perspectives on their work, changes in their work, and relationships in an interview lasting one to two hours. Among the themes that emerged are multiple teacher roles and the fragmentation of their work, teamwork, students’ diverse backgrounds, altered learning behaviors and skills, and the pandemic. Teachers’ narratives showed that teachers today need to assume multiple roles and handle various duties. Some of these tasks are unrelated to teaching, and teachers feel they lack expertise. Teemu, a teacher in the study, talked about different projects, paperwork, documentation, out-of-teaching workload, and expectation of constant availability. Yet, he finds teaching rewarding due to his relationships with students and the feeling of being needed, which helps him deal with the hecticness of teaching. Their stories also revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic led to several changes in teachers’ work, such as isolation, a heavier workload, and a need for rapid development of digital skills. Asta stressed the intensity of the workload and the feeling of loneliness. As for Henna, she emphasized the constant need to be prepared to cope with uncertainty. There were also teachers like Ulpu, who liked the calmer pace of work during the pandemic. Some teachers prioritized the well-being of their students over their own problems. Although the study does not specifically focus on teacher agency, it provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of teachers’ work.

As far as the studies in the Turkish context are concerned, Bütün Ikwuegbu and Harris (2024) explored 13 ELT teachers' experiences of reflective practice in Türkiye. They examined how agency functioned in reflection with respect to teacher growth. The data were collected through narrative interviews and critical incidents. The results showed that teachers engaged in both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Their agency shaped their ability for critical or emancipatory reflection, allowing them to reflect on a broader context and see how their classes relate to larger political, social, and educational realities. Unlike teachers with a present-oriented agency, who struggled with critical thinking as they perceived external factors as obstacles, teachers with a future-oriented agency were able to concentrate on their goals, overcome the present constraints, and engage in critical reflection.

In her small-scale study, Mutlu (2017) explored the factors that influence teachers' agency in relation to their perceived professional space. Data were collected from eight Turkish EFL teachers at different private and state schools through semi-structured interviews with each participant and storylines. Teachers were asked to draw two lines representing perceived and exploited professional space on one chart. Analysis revealed three types of trajectories: contested agency, gradual growth of agency, and failure to achieve agency. The results also indicated that while motivation, cooperation, and technological equipment fostered agency, a centralized curriculum, workload, and pressure from the administration restricted it.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology guiding this doctoral dissertation. First, it presents the methodological approach employed, followed by the researcher's role and the participants. It then explains the data collection and data analysis. Finally, it presents the ethical considerations, followed by the quality criteria.

3.1. Narrative Inquiry

In line with the social constructivist research paradigm, the current study acknowledges that people construct multiple and subjective realities as they engage with the world, and these interpretations are shaped by interactions among people and the specific contexts in which these people work and live (Creswell, 2014). As Holland et al. (1998) explain, "Selves are socially constructed through the mediation of powerful discourses and their artifacts" (p. 26). Given that there are multiple or situated perspectives or realities constructed in different contexts (Guest et al, 2013; Mack, 2010), the study aims to rely on the participants' views as much as possible and present their interpretations of the meaning (Creswell, 2013). In this regard, it focuses on the natural context where these feelings and meanings are experienced by the teachers.

Teacher beliefs significantly influence how teachers understand, interpret, and evaluate their situations, as well as how they respond and act. Teacher beliefs do not come from nowhere and they are deeply rooted in teachers' prior experiences, knowledge, and histories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Freeman, 2002; Borg, 2003; Golombek, 2009; Johnson, 2006; Lortie, 1975), and that they can also manifest as aspirations, leading or directing their actions. Therefore, there are references to the

teachers' early stages of lives, teaching careers, and their aspirations and future images as language teachers.

Using the theory of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), this study aims to explore the lived experiences of experienced or veteran teachers and uncover how they make sense of their experiences within the spaces they act or their figured worlds. As Miles et al. (2014) highlight, "Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's lived experiences, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them" (pp. 30- 31). To this end, the current study is designed as a narrative inquiry within the qualitative research framework to capture the detailed stories, the complexity of teachers' experiences, and their agentic orientations.

Narrative inquiry can be described as "the study of the ways human experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), "a way of thinking about experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.477), or "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.20). It creates a space for teachers to voice their stories. As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) note,

Humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. (p. 477)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) identify three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, and the study follows their three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: temporality, sociality, and place. On the temporal dimension, they claim, "a particular person had a certain kind of history, associated with particular present behaviors or actions that might seem to be projecting in particular ways into the future" (p. 479). Hence, a narrative researcher describes events by focusing on the past, present, and future. Individuals talk about their past, present, and future, and temporal changes are conveyed through their narratives. To this end, the current study explores the

participant teachers' early life, schooling, teacher education, and teaching experiences in the past, capture their stories during their participation in the study, and their future aspirations. As for the sociality or social dimension, researchers attend to both personal conditions (hopes, desires, feelings, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of the researcher or participant) and social conditions that form the individual's environment or context. For example, policy and administration may form the context of the teacher or teacher's social conditions. The relationship between participant and inquirer is another dimension of sociality. A narrative inquirer brackets herself into an inquiry. Finally, the specificity of location is of great importance. The qualities of place and their impact on the stories being told and lived need to be acknowledged.

Our life is a continuous meaning-making process of the stories we tell and listen to. We interpret our new experiences based on our previous experiences or stories, suggesting that the future will be affected by both past and present experiences. The stories available to us are constantly reconstructed as new events occur. This is why life stories are "always about both the reconstructed past and the imagined future" (McAdams, 2008, p. 244). We all need stories, which cannot be considered separate from real life. They help us interpret our experiences and shape our present and future:

Stories help us construct our *selves*, who used to be one way and are now another; stories help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience, the past with the present, the fictional with the "real," the official with the unofficial, the personal with the professional, the canonical with the different or unexpected. Stories help us transform the present and shape the future for our students and ourselves so that it will be richer or better than the past. (Genishi & Dyson, 1994, pp. 242–243)

Narrative researchers collect stories and documents about individuals' lived and told experiences. When people share their stories and experiences with narrative researchers, they reflect on and reveal how they see themselves or their selves (Creswell, 2013). As Drake et al. (2001) put it:

Stories, as lived and told by teachers, serve as the lens through which they understand themselves personally and professionally and through which they

view the content and context of their work, including any attempts at instructional innovation. (p. 2)

In narrative inquiry, “events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot,” and stories are used to explore and describe human action (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). People explain their actions and justify them through narratives, and narrative inquiry helps us better understand why people engage in different acts because stories reflect us. Identity is both the person telling a story and the story itself, or “self is both the storyteller and the stories that are told” (McAdams, 2008, p. 244). Selves, therefore, create stories, and they, in turn, create selves (McLean et al., 2007). By constructing stories about their lives or narrative identities, they construct and reconstruct their identities. McAdams and McLean (2013) call this narrative identity and define it as “a person’s internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose” (p. 233). Telling stories is not without a purpose. As pointed out by Bullough Jr. (2015), “One comes to think of the self as an agent, an actor with purpose and intentionality, a person with identity” (p.82). In other words, a person authors herself through stories, enacts agency, and acts. Teachers, for example, express who they are, how they came to be who they are, and how they think they will continue.

The emergence of stories through the interaction between participants and the researcher underscores the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013), which can be described as “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Participants and the researcher negotiate the meaning of the stories together, and the participants are actively involved in the research. They “feel listened to, and their information brings researchers closer to the actual practice of education,” so the stories told in narrative inquiry enrich the lives of both storytellers and listeners (Creswell, 2012, p. 501).

Citing Denzin (1989), Creswell (2013) notes that narrative stories often include “turning points,” and researchers highlight these specific tensions while telling these stories. They also collect information about the context since “narrative stories occur

within specific places or situations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 72). McAdams (2001) also observes that “life stories reflect the values, norms, and power differentials inherent in the societies wherein they have their constitutive meanings” (p. 118). This is why he argues that society and shifting contexts have a profound impact on stories and determine which stories unfold:

Life stories mirror the culture wherein the story is made and told. Stories live in culture. They are born, they grow, they proliferate, and they eventually die according to the norms, rules and traditions that prevail in a given society, according to a society’s implicit understandings of what counts as a tellable story, a tellable life. (p. 114)

Social, historical, political, cultural, and interpersonal circumstances all play a role in how stories are told (Blix et al., 2013). Stories are considered subjective accounts; however, they are told “at a historical moment with its circulating discourses and power relations” (Riessman, 2008, p, 34). As Bullough Jr. (2015) contends, “Development of audit cultures and inspectorial societies within schools and increasingly in teacher and higher education certainly count as such a change” that might influence the way stories are lived and told (p. 88). In other words, neoliberal discourses teachers are currently navigating, such as the trend towards more evaluative and performance-based cultures in education, represent another facet of the changing educational environment that can significantly impact the stories teachers live and tell.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), “education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories” (p. 2). Teachers are “storytellers” (Kelchtermans, 2018, p. 237), and stories are never neutral, as teachers position themselves within them, and teacher professional identity is both constructed and represented through narrative. Referring to Freire (1975), Moreira et al. (2021) point out that while telling stories about their professional lives, teachers “reveal their educational priorities and question the status quo, by inquiring on current practices and visions of teachers’ work that hinder their understanding of difference, of solidarity and of liberating practices” (p. 58). Therefore, narrative inquiry also

creates a space for teachers to voice alternative practices that might challenge commonsense discourses and shape power relations. In other words, these stories can sometimes serve as counter-narratives, providing inspiration to both the storytellers and readers. Genishi and Dyson (1994) also address this by delving into the necessity of our stories and emphasizing how they offer us hope:

Perhaps in the end, we need our stories to give us hope. They help us see possibilities, they give us what we need to envision a transformed future in which learners have satisfying social relationships, make sense of print, all see themselves in the world around them- in the dolls they favor, the books they choose, and the stories they tell, hear, read, write, perform. (p. 243)

Given the prevalence of neoliberal discourses and practices in the educational domain, this study helps unearth the voices of language teachers, offering insights into how teachers enact agency and navigate power relations and educational priorities in their decision-making processes. Narrative research is well-suited for this study because it provides a space for the participant teachers to engage in meaningful acts of storytelling, and as counter-narratives, these stories can contribute to a more diverse and inclusive understanding of the world, challenge existing norms or widely accepted beliefs or assumptions, and spark *hope*.

3.2. Researcher's Role

While it is true that participants' stories form the basis for explanations and theories in qualitative research, researchers play an important role in the study, too, and what they bring to it should not be ignored. In addition to discussing participants' stories, the researcher also needs to be reflective about her own background and experiences, which may shape her interpretations and the way stories are retold (Creswell, 2013). As Haynes (2012) puts it,

reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes. (p.72)

The way researchers perceive the world has a significant impact on the research process. It can enrich the quality of the study, promote rigorous research, and help

researchers critically engage with their methodological choices. Harwell (2011), for example, states that:

Qualitative research methods are also described as inductive, in the sense that a researcher may construct theories or hypotheses, explanations, and conceptualizations from details provided by a participant. Embedded in this approach is the perspective that researchers cannot set aside their experiences, perceptions, and biases, and thus cannot pretend to be objective bystanders to the research. (p. 149)

McNess et al. (2015) focus on the researcher's positioning related to the research and participants, and they examine the traditional ways of describing the outsider as detached and objective and the insider as culturally embedded and subjective. Researchers, they contend, are neither outsiders nor insiders. They are in the middle: "In one sense we are all newcomers, strangers or outsiders though, as researchers, we are rarely entirely on one side or the other – and in practice, we are often somewhere in between" (p. 303). Empathy is crucial here, and McNess et al. (2015) define it as the capacity to recognize and share thoughts or feelings experienced by others. Researchers are neither complete observers nor participants. Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative ones are in constant contact with the participants. As qualitative researchers Dwyer and Buckle (2009) note,

The stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals with us as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting. We cannot retreat to a distant "researcher" role. Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood. Within this circle of impact is the space between. The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords. (p. 61)

Reflexivity can be defined as a researcher's identification of vested interests, cultural influences, preconceptions, personal experiences, and hunches that may impact how they perceive the study data, and it is also referred to as bracketing (Fischer, 2009). Our research is shaped by the narratives we, as researchers, bring to each stage of the research process. It is crucial, therefore, to be mindful of the representations, power

issues, and our “selves” that we bring with us while conducting research. It is also critical that teachers and researchers move away from dogmatic truths about themselves and others and positivist ways of understanding the world (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014). As Creswell (2014) notes, “Inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status (SES) that shape their interpretations formed during a study” (p. 237).

Researchers employ bracketing to “mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). By doing this, they not only minimize the biases in the study but also declare to what extent and how their individuality affects the course of the study (Creswell, 2013). Regarding how and why to employ bracketing, Tufford and Newman (2012), for example, state that starting a reflective journal at the outset of a research project may allow previously suppressed memories or unconscious prejudices influencing the study process to surface. They also argue that some interview questions might elicit strong emotional reactions in both the participants and the researcher. Bracketing one’s preconceptions may also assist with managing intense emotional reactions in the researcher and those reactions to participant stories. They also give prominence to the exploration of diverse perspectives. In qualitative research, a participant holding a different point of view might reveal unexplored areas that have been overlooked, offer new lines of thought, and serve as a negative case example for a particular issue.

According to Tufford and Newman (2012), “Holding in abeyance one’s preconceptions may engender sensitivity to alternate perspectives thus permitting additional avenues of exploration and allowing apparent contradictions to emerge” (pp. 90-91). Therefore, bracketing also encourages researchers to be receptive to hearing negative cases. This also holds true for the data analysis stage as well. They state that if a researcher fails to examine her preconceptions, this might affect what she hears or not within participants’ voices while analyzing the data. This also influences the writing stage of the research, where participants’ voices come alive. Bracketing can also safeguard the researcher from “the temptation to foreground

certain voices while relegating others to a background position” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 91). In brief, bracketing fosters in-depth reflection on different stages of qualitative research: “selecting a topic and population, designing the interview, collecting and interpreting data, and reporting findings” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81).

Given that it is of great importance for readers to see the researcher’s background and viewpoints for the study, I need to bracket my own experiences or assumptions before describing those of my participants. I believe that self-disclosure or reflexivity by the researcher regarding their position or stance in the research contributes a lot to the credibility of the study. Therefore, rather than merely acknowledging my involvement in this current study and becoming aware of my stance and preconceptions, I did my best to seek them out throughout the research process. I also applied some strategies to create a third space, reduce or eliminate bias, and examine and re-examine my positioning in relation to methodology, theory, participants and the self, as suggested by Haynes (2012).

As the researcher, I have been working in preparatory schools for about 15 years, encompassing both my current institution and a previous one. This background as a language teacher in this context has provided me with valuable insights into the teaching environment in higher education. In addition to my teaching duties, I have also worked in the Professional Development Unit. However, during the research process, I was neither affiliated with any units nor engaged in administrative roles. This separation ensured that I maintained an unbiased position, avoiding any professional connections with the participant teachers.

Having already known my participants, my dual roles as both a friend and a researcher made it convenient to interact with them and gain gatekeeper approval without any difficulty. Therefore, I endeavored to utilize background and contextual information or resources via an emic perspective (Holliday, 2016) for a more nuanced analysis and interpretation of the data. I carried these teachers with me through all stages of the research and even into my dreams. Therefore, I was neither

a complete outsider nor a complete insider (McNess et al., 2015; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

My relationship with the teachers was not limited to the formal boundaries of the interviews. In addition to the interview meetings, we had several opportunities for informal conversations, during which we occasionally discussed various aspects of our ongoing lives. During these informal chats, however, I remained cautious to avoid any potential interference with the study. Mindful of the need for researcher reflexivity, I used some strategies to avoid bias. I started taking both theoretical and methodological notes during data collection and analysis to be more engaged with the data and gain awareness of and acknowledge my preconceptions. In addition to writing memos, I also began to keep a reflexive journal or diary at the start of the research, which continued throughout the research process to maintain that reflexive stance. In my reflexive researcher diary, I took notes related to my emotions and thoughts since the beginning of the data collection process. These notes helped me reflect on my position and maintain a neutral stance on participants' sharings. In addition to the data collection process, I also recorded the details of our casual talks in my diary so that I could later go back and determine whether our informal chats had an impact on the analysis. I also started writing analytic memos on the coding processes, code choices, emergent patterns, categories, and themes in my data as this helps the researcher "work toward a solution, away from a problem, or a combination of both," which contributes to researcher reflexivity on the data corpus (Saldana, 2015, p. 44). These memos would give me the opportunity to reflect critically on the things I did and the reasons why I did them. This is why Saldana (2015) suggests that "whenever anything related to and significant about the coding or analysis of data comes to mind, stop whatever you are doing and write a memo about it immediately" (p. 45). In summary, I began employing bracketing at the start of the study and maintained this practice throughout the research to address any preconceptions that might emerge at any stage of the research process.

Throughout the course of this study, I tried to help the participants feel comfortable while sharing their stories. Glesne (1999) observes that as participants become more acquainted with the researcher, they are more willing to open up their personal

issues, recognizing the researcher's genuine commitment to understanding their experiences. However, it is important to navigate this evolving relationship carefully. In line with Glesne's (1999) suggestions, my aim was to be accepted and trusted rather than to establish a friendship.

Given the nature of narrative inquiry and the role of stories in fostering a close relationship between the researcher and the participants, I can honestly say that at the end of every interview, I felt such intense emotions that I sometimes had difficulty sleeping at night. These emotions arose both from my participants' stories and from my reflections on my own experiences. During the first interview, when Derin began to talk about her primary school teacher, her role model, her emotions were so intense that her eyes filled with tears. It was a challenging moment for me, but I managed to remain focused on the interview while reassuring my participant that I had a genuine interest in her emotions and recognized them without judgment.

3.3. Sampling, Participants, and the Context

3.3.1. Sampling

In qualitative research, a sampling plan is crucial for making principled decisions regarding the selection of participants and for describing the parameters of sampling (Dörnyei, 2007). Designed as a narrative inquiry, this study utilizes a purposive sampling method (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling, as one of the purposive sampling methods, is employed to “review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 1990, p. 176). To this end, the following criteria were used in the selection of experienced teachers working in a higher education institution: at least 15 years of teaching experience, full-time employment, and at least five years of teaching experience in the current school.

Patton (2015) emphasizes the importance of selecting “information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (p. 265). The teachers were chosen based on their likelihood to provide rich, varied, nuanced, and in-depth insights into language teacher agency to

enhance the depth and quality of the data collected. Given that diverse profiles can enrich the study by representing different realities in the broader ELT context, the current study aims to capture a variety of profiles to achieve a more comprehensive analysis. In addition to the main criteria, further criteria were applied to ensure variety among the participants. These included different educational backgrounds (e.g., teachers with and without postgraduate degrees, those with an ELT background, and those with literature or other non-ELT-related backgrounds), diverse in-house duties (e.g., experience in various units or administrative roles), and a demonstrated commitment to contributing to school and societal improvement and actively engaging in academic work.

3.3.2. Participants

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) state that when narrative inquirers imagine an appropriate life space for the inquiry and think about the key participants with the commonplaces in mind, they will be able to identify specific schools “where the conditions for such an inquiry could be met” (p. 484). Given that Snowdrop is one of those contexts where neoliberal discourses and practices are observable, individuals who can provide insights into the phenomenon or serve as information-rich cases (Patton, 2015) are purposefully selected to yield an in-depth understanding.

The researcher’s responsibility to protect the rights of the participants in all studies involving humans is of paramount importance (Brenner, 2006). Given the relationship established between the participants, there are special considerations in qualitative interviews, such as potential power relations between the participants and the researcher, topics discussed, and the choice of methods for recording data.

The participants in the study comprise eight experienced language teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience in a preparatory school within a higher education institution in Türkiye undergoing an Institutional Accreditation Program. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their privacy (See Table 2 for descriptive information about the participant teachers).

Table 2. Descriptive information about the participant teachers

Teachers	Educational Background	Years of Teaching Experience
1 Derin	Language and Literature-Related Field English Language Teaching Post-Graduate Degree	20-25
2 Eylül	Language and Literature-Related Field Post-Graduate Degree	15-20
3 Zeynep	Language and Literature-Related Field Other Undergraduate Degree	25-30
4 Tuna	Language and Literature-Related Field Post-Graduate Degree	20-25
5 İpek	Language and Literature-Related Field Post-Graduate Degree	20-25
6 Pera	Other- English Language Teaching Post-Graduate Degree	20-25
7 Mila	English Language Teaching Post-Graduate Degree	20-25
8 Mabel	Language-Related Field, Other Post-Graduate Degree	25-30

It is more likely for these veteran teachers to have experienced the impact of more changes in their careers and confronted more tensions compared to their colleagues with less teaching experience. There is no clear-cut definition of a novice and an experienced or veteran teacher in the literature. A novice, for example, could be defined as a teacher with less than five years of teaching experience (e.g., Kim & Roth, 2011), a teacher who has less than three years of teaching experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Freeman, 2001; Wallace & Irons, 2010), or a teacher with two years of teaching experience or less (e.g., Haynes, 2012). Freeman (2001) suggests that experienced teachers have been defined as those with five years or more of classroom experience. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (n.d.), a veteran is "a person who has a lot of experience in a particular area or activity" and experienced is defined as "having knowledge as a result of doing something for a long time or having had a lot of different experiences." In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Thesaurus (2024), a veteran is "a person of long experience usually in some occupation or skill" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Rich and Almozlino (1999) explored the educational goal preferences among novice and veteran teachers of sciences and humanities. They used veteran and experienced interchangeably, and

the participants were 22 veteran teachers with at least seven years of experience. Day and Gu (2009) explore commitment, resilience, and quality retention of veteran teachers and define a veteran teacher as someone with 24 years or more teaching experience. For the purpose of this study, a veteran or experienced teacher is defined as a teacher with at least 15 years of teaching experience.

The following section presents individual accounts of the participants, focusing mainly on their educational backgrounds, language learning experiences, career choices, perceptions of their roles, and teaching philosophies. Each account is accompanied by a brief description of a typical day of their choice.

Derin: Derin graduated from a language and literature-related field. As part of her bachelor's degree, she completed her alternative teacher licensure program and obtained her teaching certificate. She holds a post-graduate degree in English Language Teaching. Her secondary school years did not go as expected. She described her family's financial struggles following her father's retirement and her sister's marriage. She managed to continue her education by getting the course books and a uniform from senior students to help lighten their financial burden. Her interest in English began in secondary school. Unlike other subjects like math or science, she saw English as a means to elevate its speaker's status: "As not everyone knows it, it had such a unique status, so that status was very precious to me." She also conceptualized English as "a flower that bloomed among all the dry straw" or "a flower that bloomed in that mess." In several parts of her statements, she expressed her love for teaching and how she enacted agency to change her career path to teaching after trying a few other jobs. She believes in the power of knowledge and identifies her role as a change-maker and life-long learner. She loves the sense of autonomy inherent in the teaching profession, saying: "I fell in love with that space of freedom in class. That's it, that's what makes me really passionate about this job". She describes herself as "Alice in Wonderland" and a horse in nature to express her sense of agency in class. She rejects being positioned as a machine, a secretary, a tool of the top-down processes, or a hostess and refuses to do anything outside her job description. Stressing the growing number of audits over their profession, she claims that it is detrimental to the core of teaching because teachers feel powerful as

long as they have autonomy. She has worked in various units in Snowdrop, such as material development and testing. Until the last meeting, despite the challenges at school, she maintained a strong sense of belonging to the school and was committed to contributing to its organizational processes. Finding it “suffocating” to be unable to exercise agency inside the school, she engages in different organizations and projects outside the school to keep breathing, such as voluntary work and international projects.

Derin is not a morning person. She needs some time in the morning to make herself some tea, read, and get herself together before her classes. She checks the coursebook to see what is on the agenda for that day, but after years of doing that, there is no tension anymore because she has a broad repertoire of instructional activities. She describes herself as flexible and self-confident in that regard, and she can leave the coursebook and continue without it. For her, the classroom is the place where she can keep breathing. She must be content and happy herself first; only then can others sense it. She arrives at school approximately half an hour early for tea and a quick conversation about lesson plans or personal matters with her colleagues. Her daily routine involves starting the day smiling, talking to her students in the corridor or courtyard, and singing a song as she walks into class. Following the coursebook word for word is not for her. She skips an exercise she does not like, and her instruction in one class is never the same in the other. She followed some different routines during the pandemic, but her strong sense of belonging to her school continues unchanged. She made an effort to maintain that in the online platform, too. She finds it somewhat contradictory, though, as she strives to maintain the tradition while simultaneously embodying the idea of someone who challenges the status quo and creates something new. With a compass example, she describes how she enjoys upholding tradition while also being open to change: “It’s like one foot of a compass standing at a point and exploring with the other foot... expanding its diameter and adding innovations, but never and never breaking away from here.” After the class, she drinks a cup of tea. Sometimes, she does not do anything. She calls her friends and mum, picks up her daughter, and heads home. She rests in the evenings, sometimes watching TV series and reading articles or books.

Eylül: Eylül earned her bachelor’s degree in a language and literature-related field. She paid for her alternative teacher licensure program and obtained her teaching certificate at university. She holds a post-graduate degree. Her primary school years were marked by adversity, yet she was able to get through those tough times thanks to the unwavering support of her parents. She characterized herself as “spiritual” and her parents as religious. According to her, the torments she went through improved her as a person. Despite her parents’ prosperity, she preferred public school education to avoid being a burden. Later on, in high school, she switched to a private school. Her early exposure to foreign TV channels and music sparked her interest in languages, especially English. She highlighted the importance of arts in her life and reported that she was so interested in American literature, culture, music, language, and movies, but not teaching. She did not initially plan to become a teacher. However, her trajectory shifted when her teachers in the alternative certification program inspired her to pursue a career in education. She is fair and she genuinely cares about her students. To her, students seek someone who believes in their potential and recognizes their skills and abilities. She describes herself as a mentor and role model for her students. She stresses the link between language and culture and incorporates activities that foster critical thinking in her classes. She has worked in various units in Snowdrop, such as material development and testing.

Eylül and her husband wake up very early in the morning, even before the call to prayer, to greet the sun. She has always been an early bird, which is a holdover from her childhood. She sleeps for 6 or 7 hours as she enjoys making the most of the day. She has breakfast, drinks coffee and tea, and starts her classes on time due to her obsession with punctuality. With the sudden shift to remote teaching, she finds herself spending a lot of time in front of the computer, as everything, including training sessions, attendance, and evaluation, is done online. She is eager to learn everything she can about digital learning and is particularly interested in online training sessions for personal development, such as taking Sufism classes. As a married woman, she feels responsible for preparing dinner when she gets home. After dinner, she and her husband watch news or football matches together. Regarding online education and communication with her students, she regrets giving her phone number to them since they send messages at odd times in their WhatsApp

groups. She notes that during online education, she ends up doing many chores at home and takes on additional responsibilities, but time flies in front of the computers, making it difficult to catch up with her work. In this journey, she feels alone and unsupported. Despite being a state school teacher, she bemoans not having access to essential resources like computers or the internet to maintain teaching. She, for example, had to buy a new computer herself when her old one crashed, as the school did not provide one. She adds, “I wonder if these things are as they should be or if we are pushing our luck”. She believes that she gives a lot of herself, which she feels is problematic. She engages in extracurricular activities for her students, like a music activity on a voluntary basis, and adds that no other teacher has carried out these voluntary activities except for her. This is why she believes she constantly gives more of herself without receiving anything in return: “I have served this school a lot... But there was something lacking, there was nothing motivating, so they did not reward me. Teachers should also be rewarded. I think this is a big deficiency in our institution, I think it is the same in most institutions. We need to live with a more Western mindset.”

Zeynep: Zeynep obtained her bachelor’s degree in a language and literature-related field. She completed her alternative teacher licensure program and got her teaching certificate as part of her undergraduate studies. Teaching is her second career, though. Despite her lifelong dream of teaching English, she had to study in another department due to a mistake in her university choices. Her well-informed decision to become a teacher was described as follows: “I didn’t think like that: Let me be a teacher first and then decide the subject when I set out. Only English language teaching.” Following the divorce of her parents, along with her mother and brother, she had to stay with her grandmother. She called those years tough times and the atmosphere there as chaotic. Despite the painful experiences in her childhood, she characterized herself as an ambitious girl who survived those difficulties and recalled herself as an enthusiastic, successful, and ambitious learner. She mentioned how much she loved her English language teacher in middle school. Just like many other teachers, she also has a stance in her life and exercises agency when she feels it is necessary. There is nothing that can stop her. She believes that her role extends beyond lecturing. She sees herself as a guide, cares deeply for her students, and

perceives being a teacher as making a positive impact on students' lives. Zeynep has worked in different units and mentored novice teachers. Regarding her life motto, she highlights the significance of striking a balance in life between giving and receiving and explains how this shapes her actions and agentic orientations:

There is always balance in life; there must be. You breathe in and you give out. Well, I get a lot from life, I am very lucky, my job is very good, we work in a very nice environment, my friends are very good... I am always grateful, so you cannot always take, you have to give as well.

She describes herself as responsible and highlights the importance of conscientiousness and professional ethics for her. She feels lucky to do what she loves, adding: "Retiring somewhat scares me, to be honest, because when I retire, it feels like I'll be shedding that cloak I wear." She expresses her sadness about the effects of Covid-19 on the student profile and ELT. In her teaching career, she claimed to have never encountered such unhappy, depressed, hopeless, aimless, and unmotivated students. Therefore, while she loves her job very much, she confesses that the COVID-19 pandemic and online education have tired her out a lot.

She usually wakes up early at around 7.00 o'clock, even on weekends. Then, she prepares breakfast amidst the morning rush as her children get ready for school. In the morning, she also cooks dinner ahead of time. Once she sends her children to school, she starts her own day and her teaching duties. She feels that her preparation for her class starts the night before when she sits down to study. After each class, she always takes time to reflect on her lesson. After dinner in the evening, if she does not have a class the next day, she relaxes watches a little TV, looks up some interesting topics. However, if she has a class the next day, she spends the evening preparing for it, often researching extra materials to make her lesson more engaging. She also admits that she often finds herself falling behind schedule due to these additional materials. Her schedule remains intense. For instance, she arranged and taught make-up sessions to catch up on the syllabus. She goes to bed around 11.30 PM after a busy day.

Tuna: Tuna received his bachelor's degree in a language and literature-related field, completed an alternative teacher licensure program, and obtained his teaching certificate as part of his post-graduate degree program. He developed an early

interest in English language and reading thanks to his grandfather, who served as a translator and teacher. Tuna recalls reading and discussing newspapers with his grandfather and explains how his exchanges with his grandfather shaped his path towards language and literature as a student in a technical high school. His advisor and professors in his department played an important role in broadening his horizon and shaping his professional trajectory by encouraging him to pursue his studies abroad. Throughout the interviews, he emphasized his professional role as a lecturer, highlighting his identity as a researcher rather than solely as a teacher. He described his initial years of teaching as a part-timer as “the most critical and stressful period” of his career. The way he shaped his professional learning and academic studies demonstrates how he gained awareness of the challenges in his working context, resisted injustices, and enacted agency to contribute to his professional development. Despite the systemic issues in education, he remains committed to his aims and contributing to the well-being of society. He has been engaged in social responsibility projects to educate young girls. Critical of the school culture in his working space, he notes that expertise in ELT is often neglected in school. Nevertheless, he remains optimistic about the future and advocates for urgent action instead of pretending everything is perfect. He does not give in to the institutional challenges or the school’s attempts to trivialize teacher professionalism. Academic integrity is one of the things that matters most to him. Like Derin, Tuna also strives to engage in professional networks outside the school and focuses more on his own academic work, finding that the current school environment leaves little room for teachers to breathe. For him, the interviews have served as therapeutic sessions, which do him good.

During his part-time teaching career, his days were quite long and tiring. He would teach from very early, at 8.30 AM until 9.30 PM, without any exaggeration. The pay was so low that, to make ends meet, part-timers had to work under such difficult conditions. He considered himself lucky because he was staying with his parents, but many others struggled to survive on their own. He recalls doing some other work, like translation, to earn more money. Currently, he has a stable position. He strives to publish articles, work on projects, and stay connected to different disciplines. He begins his classes early in the morning, and after the classes, he works on his

projects. He admits that, especially after the pandemic, however unpleasant it is, he has turned to a somewhat secluded life, like everyone else, within four walls.

İpek: İpek graduated with a degree in a language and literature-related field. Describing herself as a very good and curious language learner, she recalls her childhood spent listening to songs, reading books in English, and exploring different cultures. Her father played an important role in sparking her interest in English during secondary school by inviting friends from various countries to their homes and encouraging her to communicate with them in English. However, she was planning to study literature and never wanted to be a teacher. Her reluctance stemmed from her perceptions of the MoNE, which she associated with a rote learning system, formalism, strict rules, violence against students, constant monitoring, restrictions, and prohibitions, especially for girls. Inspired by her role models at university, she decided to pursue a career as a lecturer rather than teaching within the MoNE framework. She stresses the role of the teacher in HE as conducting research, which is a facet of the job she loves very much. Throughout her career in Snowdrop, she has worked in different units. She frequently addresses the challenges faced by both teachers and students during online education, stressing the lack of facilities and the inequality of opportunity that became apparent during this difficult period, which she describes as “the worst period” of her teaching career.

Due to the shift to online education during the pandemic, İpek’s daily routine has changed drastically, like other teachers. She is not an early riser. After getting up, she prepares herself and drinks her tea or coffee. She spends the entire day in front of the computer and interacts with her students through the screen. Even though some participate actively in the lesson, she finds herself striving to engage them and keep their attention. After the class, she does not have much energy left, but if she has time and papers to read, she does that. Despite the difficulties, she enjoys the classes. Before the pandemic, her routine was different. She would go to school and after the class, have coffee or a meal with friends before going home, and use the school’s pool before or after the class. Therefore, her days were more active. She finds it challenging and exhausting to sit continuously in front of a screen, so she looks

forward to the end of online teaching. However, she also believes that they should continue some classes online.

Pera: Pera obtained her bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching. She holds a post-graduate degree. She describes her boarding school years as depressing and expresses her happiness and appreciation for her teachers' capacity to cultivate happiness and trust among those little, sad children. Thanks to her language teachers in high school, she discovered her interest in English. She was so influenced by her teachers in the boarding school that she wanted to extend help and support to others, just like her teachers had done for her. However, she "never dreamed of becoming a teacher," and she started her career in a completely different field like Zeynep, so teaching is her second career. While working, however, she decided to take the university entrance exam again and started studying ELT. She believes that her role extends beyond lecturing. Her teaching philosophy is based on critical pedagogy, diversity, inclusiveness and respect for differences. According to her, the teacher should be brave, as Freire suggests. She describes herself as a liberalizer, especially following her administrator role. At school, she has worked in various units. She does not believe in the efficiency of education in preparatory schools. This is why she prefers to follow her own strategies and inner voice to guide students on their language learning journeys. Like Zeynep, Pera also claims that students have changed a lot after the COVID-19 pandemic in that they are gloomy and depressed. Teachers are no different, yet, they manage to keep going, thanks to their unwavering sense of responsibility and professional ethics. For her, the interviews served as therapeutic sessions.

Despite her experience, Pera always feels a surge of excitement the night before a lesson and in the morning before starting the class. She prepares a lesson plan a few days or even a week in advance, meticulously writing everything down, with backup plans in case something does not go well. When she wakes up for the lesson, knowing that everything is ready calms her down. She has breakfast, takes a shower, and leaves for the class. She always starts her lesson with an anecdote, video, song, quote, or something from a daily newspaper. She scans different newspapers beforehand to find something interesting and makes sure that she presents a variety

of perspectives to avoid ideological or political bias. Sometimes, she lets the students choose the topic, and they start the day by discussing the news as a warm-up activity. Especially during the COVID-19 lockdown, she continued to be supportive and accessible to her students, wanting to make her students feel that she cared about them. In her lesson plans, she utilizes various activities and methods to make her lessons more interesting and engaging, including recommending books, sharing videos, reading chapters from books, and relating them to a writing activity. Upon seeing that students are comfortable and ready, she starts the lesson. Citing her own issues with loneliness and unhappiness, she conveys that discussing them feels like therapy, and she realizes that she distances herself from those issues and enters another world while teaching. She then confesses, “I think what I am trying to do is the same for my students.” For example, sometimes they write to her or say they want to tell her something, which marks a sense of trust. Using different and controversial topics and videos, she tries to raise awareness of diversity, discrimination, and values among students. She also wants her students to feel that learning English can be enjoyable, thinking that perfect English is impossible to achieve in just a year. Just like how therapists need to unwind after their sessions, she also spends some time clearing her head after the class, reflecting on the lesson, considering students’ comments and suggestions.

Mila: Mila holds a bachelor’s degree in English Language Teaching, and she has a post-graduate degree. She describes herself as an autonomous language learner, keeping a diary and preparing her own dictionary. Even while studying English Language Teaching, she did not plan to become a teacher and instead intended to work in a bank. However, her teachers at university shaped her job decision around teaching. In her initial years of teaching, she worked part-time in the same school and did lots of work on a voluntary basis. She has worked in different units, such as testing and materials development unit. She described the school culture and teachers as collaborative and supportive back then. However, she also recalls the challenges, such as the low wages. She recalls being very strict initially and believed that rules were very important, but now, her teaching philosophy is based on empathy and flexibility. Although she feels that teachers have more autonomy in higher education than those in MoNE, through unit duties and other tasks, teachers are controlled in

higher education, which sometimes makes her feel like a secretary. She admits that she has learned how to play by the rules and adhere to them to avoid challenges in her school. Despite the top-down policies and tasks, she reports feeling free to make her own decisions in her class.

Mila wakes up late and it takes her a while to get prepared in the morning. She drinks tea and has long breakfasts. She prepares her lessons, including the materials to be used, USBs, and backups, the night before or weekly. She feels like a sleepwalker until she starts the class. She writes her lesson plan on the left side of the board, including the objectives and steps. She usually begins with a stimulating activity. While she generally follows the plan, she is flexible with the flow. At the end of the day, she gives small quizzes so that students can see what they have learned at their own pace. She hardly sits during class, so after a tiring day, she heads home and rests for a long time because she gets physically tired. In her initial years, she worked more intensely. After her therapist told her that she was a workaholic, she realized that she needed a healthier work-life balance.

Mabel: Mabel holds a bachelor's degree in a language-related field. She completed her alternative teacher licensure program and obtained her teaching certificate as part of her undergraduate studies. While her interest in English began at a very early age, her career decision was not initially shaped around becoming a teacher. After graduation, she started working full-time in a company. However, once she experienced teaching, she shifted her career trajectory to teaching. Different from her figured world of teaching in her childhood, she now views it as a profession that empowers teachers with autonomy and allows them to use their creativity. She values making a positive impact on students. She believes that language teachers occupy a unique position and have a distinctive stance. Over the years, she has become more adaptable in her teaching approach, showing greater flexibility with lesson plans and the order of the target topics in the syllabus. Her philosophy of teaching centers around flexibility. She observes her students, focuses on their needs, and tailors the syllabus accordingly. Instead of relying solely on one teaching strategy or method, she adjusts the syllabus by adding or omitting certain parts when

necessary and feasible, considering the students and their skills. She has worked in various units in Snowdrop, such as material development and testing.

Mabel wakes up early in the morning and fixes her appearance first. She finds it more important than breakfast as it significantly impacts her self-confidence. Afterwards, she makes sure to eat something as hunger makes her impatient and irritable. During the breaks, she enjoys socializing with friends, often gossiping about students, departments, and their own lives while drinking tea. In her initial years of teaching, preparing for the classes took as much time as the classes themselves, particularly in the first three years of her career. Over time, though, she found that she needed less time for lesson preparation as she had become more experienced. With the switch to online education, she adapted to using new tools in her classes. She also dedicates her time to her hobbies, including learning other languages and playing musical instruments. Along with online education, she has added checking emails regularly to her routine, as well as using another platform to stay informed about her duties. She acknowledges that she has not fully adapted to this yet.

3.3.3. The Research Context: Snowdrop

This study was conducted in a preparatory school, *Snowdrop* (pseudonym), which is in one of the oldest public universities in Türkiye. It aims to teach intensive English classes to newly registered students so that they can pursue their faculty studies. There are no novice teachers working in Snowdrop. Instructors' teaching experience ranges from 10-40 years. There were part-timers with more teaching load but lower pay than full-timers. They used to take evening classes in addition to their 30-35 hours of teaching load to make a living. Some of them had at least 15 years of teaching experience in the same institution despite the partial benefits and lower social security compared to their full-time colleagues. One day, they received the news that their contracts would not be extended into the following year, so they all started looking for new job opportunities. Fast-forward to today, there are no adjuncts working in Snowdrop.

When teachers in their forties and fifties reminisce about their initial years of teaching in Snowdrop, they recount a time when experienced teachers provided invaluable support in lesson plans, classroom management, and organizational duties. The camaraderie among teachers during that era remains deeply appreciated, and the respect for the guidance and assistance received endures. However, there has been a notable shift in the current landscape, where the sense of bonding among the staff has eroded, leaving teachers isolated in their professional journey. This change has had a ripple effect, extending to newly recruited teachers. The prevailing atmosphere of isolation creates a reluctance and hesitance among teachers to openly share concerns and seek assistance, which marks the departure from the collaborative spirit that once defined the ethos of Snowdrop.

One factor behind the lack of collegiality among staff is related to the facilities in Snowdrop. Due to the limited budget allocated for state universities, physical resources are limited in Snowdrop. For example, there is no teachers' room where teachers can come together during the breaks, have a chat, eat or drink something together, or simply get to know each other. This dearth of communal spaces makes it arduous for teachers, particularly new recruits, to establish themselves in Snowdrop and foster a sense of belonging. Considering the high number of teachers in Snowdrop, newcomers find it difficult to remember the names of their colleagues and it sometimes takes 2 or 3 years for them to build connections. The physical isolation, stemming from limited facilities, perpetuates social isolation among the staff.

The school culture influences the way teachers take stances in Snowdrop. At one end of the spectrum, there are teachers who resist everything from the administration without thoughtful consideration, adopting a stance of passive resistance. These teachers abstain from expressing their concerns and refrain from assuming responsibility for improving or altering the existing state of affairs in Snowdrop. At the other end of the spectrum, there are those teachers who are actively involved in decision-making processes in Snowdrop, resist unfair or unreasonable policies or practices, and accept responsibility in various organizational processes in different units such as professional development unit, material evaluation, testing and

curriculum to improve Snowdrop. However, over time, the enthusiasm and dedication of these teachers gradually diminish. Their initial zeal transforms into weariness and a loss of motivation as they do not receive any compensation for the additional workload incurred through their involvement in these units. Additionally, they cannot take more than 12 hours of teaching workload, which is the minimum number of hours for lecturers in higher education. This constraint not only prevents teachers from getting paid courses but also poses a formidable challenge for the administration in finding willing participants for these crucial units.

Within the corridors of Snowdrop, the dichotomy between passive resistance and active engagement underscores the intricate and dynamic interplay between the influential milieu and the teachers. The struggle for equilibrium, wherein dedicated teachers contend with burnout in the absence of adequate recognition or allowances, presents a complex challenge for the administration to navigate. The consequence is a delicate balance, where the institution's vital units teeter on the brink of understaffing, amplifying the urgency for a nuanced approach to teacher involvement and compensation.

Snowdrop has witnessed significant changes over the past decade, specifically marked by frequent turnovers in the management. These shifts have had a profound impact on the institution, influencing unit members, policies, textbooks, syllabi, and priorities. Each transfer of duty has created its own tension among staff and introduced a unique set of challenges considering Snowdrop's longstanding traditions and established practices. Within this dynamic, teachers' responses differ. On the one hand, there are teachers who are content with familiar pre-packaged materials that have been used for a very long time, so they do not want any changes. For them, keeping things as they are means that there is no need for interaction on curricular issues and materials, which increases the sense of detachment and social alienation among staff. On the other hand, there are teachers who keep raising problems regarding curricular issues and materials, expressing their concerns and questioning some commonsense practices during staff meetings. They voice these problems to improve Snowdrop, but at the same time, they run the risk of being marginalized when they question mainstream practices.

Teachers also diverge in their orientations towards professional development activities in the school. Some harbor skepticism and they are against these activities organized by the professional development unit (PDU), thinking that most trainers invited to school are often affiliated with publishing companies and their workshops serve as a platform for the subtle promotion of their course books. Despite PDU's call for teachers to share their "best practices" in these sessions, a palpable hesitancy lingers among the teaching staff. In an environment where academic accolades such as certificates, micro-credentials, webinars, and MOOCs are highly regarded among staff, the administration employs a strategy to encourage participation in workshops or conferences organized by PDU by informing teachers that attending these events will be rewarded with certificates of attendance, and this makes a difference.

Their perspectives on professional development also differ. On the one hand, there are teachers who champion an open-door policy, inviting and welcoming their peers who would like to observe their classes as part of their professional development. They stress the importance of such peer observations during the meetings and express their desire to observe others' classes. On the other hand, there are also others who resist this practice, which has caused the implementation of this activity to be postponed to a later date, thinking that the school is not ready for this.

The lure of international accreditation has swept through Schools of Foreign Languages in Türkiye, igniting a competitive spirit among institutions to attain such certification. Snowdrop, one of those schools eager to follow this trend, has diligently endeavored to meet the expected standards for Pearson Assured accreditation and get it. It is one of those universities which have been "assured for the quality processes underpinning the design, delivery, quality assurance and/ or assessment of the organization's own education or training programmes," as highlighted in the Pearson Assured Organization certificate on the website. Once Pearson Assured status is received, it is valid for a year. The evaluation period is very stressful, especially for the administrative staff and unit members. The tension and uncertainty surrounding Snowdrop's eligibility for certification affect Snowdrop's ongoing practices and instructional processes. Focusing on accreditation a lot shifts the priority from the quality of instruction to the paperwork, the red tape,

and the accumulation and organization of evidence—activities, practices, and measurable outputs—that demonstrate compliance with Pearson's criteria to show that they meet the criteria given and deserve the certificate. As a result, some teachers in Snowdrop question the true value and purpose of these accreditation processes. They suggest not compromising quality for the sake of success in these practices, expressing concerns that the essence of teaching and learning is being overshadowed by bureaucratic procedures and documentation.

In Türkiye, in 2022, there were 129 state universities, 75 private universities, and 5 private vocational schools (CoHE, 2023). Considering the number of universities in Türkiye and the emerging *need* to regulate the processes, the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) was established in 2015 to strengthen quality assurance systems in higher education. Every year, THEQC determines the institutions to be included in a program called The Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP), an external evaluation method that “enables the evaluation of quality assurance, learning and teaching, research-development, social contribution, and governance system processes of higher education institutions in accordance with the plan-do-check-act cycle” (IAP, 2022). Recently, the university has become part of the Research Universities Support Program (CoHE, 2022). The aim of the program is outlined below:

The program aims to increase the competitiveness of research universities in the international arena and to enable research universities to create products with high added value in the fields included in the Eleventh Development Plan by increasing R&D activities, moving up the ranks of universities in international rankings, increasing the number of publications and increasing their brand values.

It is also emphasized that the allocation of resources to the university is contingent upon its performance. Additionally, the university has become part of IAP implemented by THEQC and has been entitled to receive Institutional Accreditation. Although this program is not specifically designed for preparatory schools, Snowdrop, as part of the university, has also been impacted. The university’s designation as a research university has introduced new discourses and priorities in Snowdrop, including quality assurance, regulation, academic audits, measurable outputs, and performance indicators.

Since the university was included in the Institutional Accreditation Program (IAP), the number of social contribution and community service initiatives in Snowdrop has increased and become more organized. The voluntary teachers meet regularly, placing a significant emphasis on the social responsibilities inherent in their teaching roles and stressing their commitment to fostering a more equitable and just environment in Snowdrop. To help those students at a disadvantage due to the lack of essential technology like computers or tablets during emergency remote teaching, for example, these teachers have initiated a campaign to provide these students with computers so that students can participate in their classes, thinking that students shouldn't fall behind the others only because of coming from economically disadvantaged families.

Holland et al. (1998) assert that “Figured worlds, like activities, are not so much things or objects to be apprehended, as processes or traditions of apprehension which gather us up and give us form as our lives intersect them” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41). This perspective helps us understand how a figured world of policy is set up and how educational policies are transformed into traditions. The following section provides a descriptive overview of teacher roles as outlined in key documents at different levels: *Ethical Behavior Principles in Higher Education Institutions* (macro level), *the University Strategic Plan, 2023* and *The University Quality Policy* (meso level), and *the Snowdrop Strategic Plan, 2023* (micro level) (See Figure 2). These documents can be accessed through the university’s official webpage. They can help contextualize the environment in which the study was conducted and offer a framework for better understanding the institutional expectations placed on teachers.

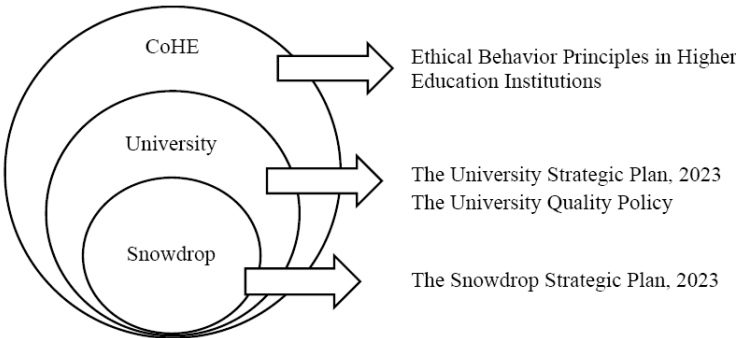


Figure 2. Documents at micro, meso and macro contexts

At the macro level, the document *Ethical Behavior Principles in Higher Education Institutions*, published in the Official Gazette in 2005, serves as a guide for members of HE institutions. It outlines ethical values and principles they must comply with while performing their duties and cautions that violations could result in various sanctions. According to the document, HE members stress the significance of upholding academic freedom, including freedom of expression, communication, learning, sharing of knowledge, and scientific research, to realize ethical principles and ideals. They emphasize the commitment to pursuing excellence and truth and providing equal opportunities and possibilities for everyone.

Among the fundamental values and principles in the document are academic autonomy, accountability, and academic merit. Academic autonomy entails the freedom of HE institutions to make decisions regarding academic affairs, independent of any external pressures. Accountability pertains to the obligation of members to transparently inform authorities about how resources they entrust are used and to what extent duties are fulfilled. Academic merit entails evaluating and selecting people for positions based on their abilities, experiences, and qualifications in accordance with the job specifications.

The document outlines several key responsibilities for teachers in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are required to adhere to the approved program, attend classes regularly, and avoid missing classes without a valid excuse or permission. The document also presents the responsibilities of the teachers towards students, including respecting students, creating a conducive learning environment, and upholding academic integrity. They are expected to establish clear learning outcomes, ensure fair student evaluation, provide timely feedback, and protect student privacy. They are also required to encourage independent thinking, professional development, and respect for ethical standards.

At the meso level, *The University Strategic Plan, 2023*, articulates the university's mission to address diverse research and educational needs, utilize research and development expertise for the benefit of society, and cultivate individuals who value core principles, adaptability, and scientific thinking. It emphasizes three key roles for

teachers: research, education, and community service. According to the vision statement, the university aims to achieve world-leading research status, establish strong networks with national and international partners, and become a student-centered, accessible global university with a robust financial structure. Several concepts highlighted in the mission and vision statements, such as innovation, leadership and economic contribution, global competitiveness, and networking, and the key values reflect neoliberal discourses. These concepts underscore the importance of continuous improvement, skills development to compete in the global education market, the role of education and research in economic growth, and the significance of partnerships in enhancing economic benefits. The prominence of these concepts is evident on the university homepage, which promotes itself with the following discourses: Research university, student-centered, high-quality education, quality assurance, fully accredited, award winner, the first and only university to receive the award, and institutional accreditation victory.

In the strategic plan, among the fields of activity are education, research, entrepreneurship and social contribution. Universities are assigned specific duties, and teachers are expected to assume multiple roles: educator, researcher, advisor, life-long educator, innovator, and collaborator. It is noteworthy that several discourses in the document align with neoliberal tenets, such as training individuals in key fields to meet market demands, developing human capital, and stressing the efficient use of resources and optimized resource allocation.

The document also includes a comprehensive analysis of the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and related action plans. In the education section, problem areas indicate that teachers are expected to build bridges, engage with industry stakeholders, enhance partnerships, evaluate their teaching performance, participate in performance evaluations, and use initiative in seeking professional development. In the research section, while teachers are expected to engage in multidisciplinary projects and participate in national and international scientific activities, it is acknowledged that resources are insufficient, and the university should increase its support for teachers. In the entrepreneurship section, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among teachers and offering incentives for such endeavors

are deemed essential. In the social contribution or community service, the last part, teachers are expected to identify community issues and actively engage in community service.

According to *The University Quality Policy* document at the meso level, teachers are expected to foster global partnerships, promote the university's achievements, enhance the quality of research and education, publish in international journals, and seek international recognition. The quality policy is divided into four sections: education and teaching, research and development, social contribution, and internationalization. While these sections outline institutional goals, they also have direct implications for teacher roles.

In the education and teaching policy, teachers are expected to improve education programs and learning processes to meet contemporary needs, integrate digital tools, promote student-centered education, make educational activities accessible to all students, increase distance education programs, and foster creativity, critical thinking, life-long learning, social awareness, respect for human rights. In the research and development policy, the university seeks to enhance the welfare, social structure, and economic growth at local, national, and global levels. Accordingly, teachers are required to carry out high-quality research that addresses the needs of society, disseminate findings, collaborate with public and private sectors on various projects, and conduct research that meets the demands of key sectors, such as industry and healthcare, while contributing to the training of qualified human resources in these fields.

The social contribution policy expects teachers to ensure the integration of education, teaching, and research development with social initiatives. They are also expected to contribute to the region's economic, social, and cultural development and collaborate with different stakeholders to ensure effective community service. In the last section, the internationalization policy emphasizes the significance of gaining international recognition in the global higher education landscape. Therefore, teachers are expected to contribute to the university's achievement of this goal through innovative and collaborative activities.

At the micro level, *The Snowdrop Strategic Plan, 2023*, sets specific expectations for teachers, emphasizing the need for expertise in language instruction, cultivating a culture of learning and inquiry in their classes, and fostering critical thinking. Additionally, the plan highlights several key principles, including the effective use of resources, adherence to ethical principles, respect for universal and human values, emphasis on academic merit, the promotion of inquiry, and the assurance of quality in education. The document acknowledges several key issues: inadequate facilities, teachers' reluctance to use initiative, and an insufficient budget. It notes that despite having a substantial number of academic staff with graduate degrees, it is difficult to encourage teachers with MAs and PhDs to participate in units. The threats section highlights that teachers are not compensated for work beyond their minimum teaching load and lists additional concerns, such as resistance to change, limited opportunities, and a lack of incentives for in-service training and professional development. It is further stated that some decisions made by CoHE and the university are not well-suited to the specific structure of Snowdrop. In summary, these documents emphasize the ethical, research, educational, social contribution, and internationalization responsibilities of teachers, offering valuable insights into the roles and expectations placed upon them, as well as the broader context in which the study is situated.

3.4. Data Collection

In this narrative study, semi-structured online interviews with experienced English teachers in the context of a higher education institution in Türkiye were the primary sources of data. In addition to teaching, professional development, organizational processes, and social participation, teachers' experiences of enacting teacher agency at micro, meso, and macro levels were also examined.

Since stories occur within specific situations and places, the researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the context (Creswell, 2013). To track the participants in their naturalistic environments, I spent considerable time in the setting where these teachers were located and collected information about the context of the stories. I had collegial conversations like a critical friend to gain deeper reflections and

situated accounts. In addition to the interviews, I integrated ethnographic observations, documents, and artifacts to triangulate the data, adhering to the principles of qualitative inquiry. As suggested, I kept a research journal throughout the study, particularly before and after the interviews and during the coding process (Borg, 2001; Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2005). I conducted ethnographic observations and took field notes on the activities of the individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2014). This ethnographic dimension provided a rich account of the relations within this particular setting and shed light on situated accounts and stories. In addition to my observation and field notes, I incorporated participants' relevant professional social media updates, documents from the official website of the university, as well as various artifacts (such as institutional memos, e-mail communications, operational documents) to better understand the dynamics within the educational setting.

3.4.1. Interviews

Patton (2015) contends that since observing everything is impossible, an interview can help us enter into another person's life and perspective through her words:

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 628)

Given the advantage of asking all participants the same core questions with different follow-up ones depending on the received responses (Brenner, 2006), semi-structured interviews with language teachers were the primary data source.

Tanggaard (2009) points out that the research interview can be considered a dialogical context to produce personal narratives and social life. To achieve this, she emphasizes the use of a 'Bahktian' approach to interviewing, which suggests that "interviewing is viewed as a social setting for the proliferation of polyphonic dialogues, in which there are many voices and discourses that cross each other simultaneously to produce knowledge about personal narratives and social life" (p.

1500). This implies that there is no one true story about participants in interviews. General themes can be identified within and across different interview data, but since stories are dialogical, participants can have different voices interacting with one another. In other words, in the dialogical sense of a Bahktian approach, “the stories and utterances are polyphonic” (Tanggaard, 2009, p. 1503).

It is also acknowledged that the stories and voices of the participants are located within the wider structures of power. According to Tanggaard (2009), our stories are “closely intertwined with those of others,” and they must be analyzed accordingly (p. 1504). Referring to Bakhtin (1981), Tanggaard (2009) notes that although the hegemonic voice of a group can suppress other views or voices and be authoritative, counter-hegemonic voices exist in every society, “there are counter hegemonic voices that may weaken and subvert the more authoritative ones” (p. 1505). Therefore, one can also explore these struggles and oppositions or dissenting discourses. As Tanggaard (2009) puts it, heteroglossia is when an interviewee or the interviewer evokes discourses specific to particular groups and contradicts prevailing or official political discourses. Rather than bias, this should be viewed as an opportunity to find out more about narratives and social life within a particular community.

Given that the study aims to explore agency, teachers may tend to weaken some of their voices or raise others while sharing their stories as there are many voices or authors. They may go between them or produce dissenting discourses. These were taken into consideration during the analysis part. The interview questions also encouraged them to reveal other authors and critically reflect on their own choices and decisions.

Way et al. (2015) suggest researchers use dialogic interviewing strategies like probing questions, member reflections, and counterfactual prompting in order to evoke the reflexivity of participant teachers. They argue that:

A dialogic approach allows people to suspend assumptions about the world, open themselves to new viewpoints, and abandon a win-lose perspective. When interviewers engage in dialogue, participants are met by kindness and

acceptance, enabling them to let down their defenses and listen to *themselves*.
(p. 3)

When interviewers provide participants with a safe space so that participants can hear themselves voice their beliefs and unpack their unquestioned assumptions, interviewers can explore and get a better grasp of their meaning-making process. In this current study, to allow participants to ignore real or imagined constraints and think outside immediate considerations” (Way et al., 2015, p. 9), I encouraged them to engage in counterfactual thinking during the interviews by using magic wand questions such as, “What would you change in their school if you had the opportunity?”

I carefully prepared the interview questions, and the construction of the interview entailed decisions regarding interview structure, question types, topics to be explored, and techniques to be used for in-depth interviewing (Brenner, 2006). Initially, I pooled out questions in the relevant literature, and following a review of previous questions, I wrote new ones in line with the aims of the current study around the focal areas representing micro, meso, and macro-level contexts. I cross-checked relevant literature to ensure I covered all relevant points.

The interview questions were designed to address personal and educational background, teaching experience, teaching philosophy, teacher role, professional development, and organizational processes (See Appendix A for the interview questions in Turkish and English). I designed the interviews to delve into different dimensions of teachers’ experiences. The interviews started with an exploration of their backgrounds and teaching philosophies (micro level), proceeded to an examination of their current classroom practices and school culture (meso level), and ended with discussions of policies and the broader context (macro level).

Additionally, I asked participants to recall critical incidents related to their schooling years and working context. According to Tripp (2012), a critical incident can mark an important change in an individual’s life and can be considered a turning point in a person’s understanding. Tripp (2012) explains that a critical event is created, or it is the analysis that makes an incident critical:

Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgement we make, and the basis of that judgement is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident. (Tripp, 2012, p. 8)

Thus, an event may or may not be deemed critical depending on the way we interpret its significance. A critical event may hold great significance to one person, whereas to others, it may be totally irrelevant and insignificant. Webster and Mertova (2007) further emphasize that it is the impact on the storyteller that makes an incident critical:

Critical events are ‘critical’ because of their impact and profound effect on whoever experiences such an event. They often bring about radical change in the person. These events are unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled. To the researcher, the opportunity to ‘access’ such profound effects holistically is an avenue to making sense of complex and human-centred information. (p. 77)

Such events, whether they are positive or negative, are likely to reshape the experience or understanding of the storyteller, and also influence their future perspectives and orientations. In their discussion of figured worlds, Holland et al. (1998) describe how members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) narrate their life stories and journey into AA. Storytelling, therefore, serves as a means for members to validate their AA identity. While recounting their stories, they gain a better understanding of why and how they become alcoholics and locate themselves in the figured world of AA. Holland et al. (1998) explain that “reconstitution takes place as the negative is exorcized and the initiate is allowed to return to her normal state” (p. 73). Disruption, in other words, allows for the transformation or reinterpretation of one’s self-image. Recounting these critical stories can contribute to this process of re-transformation. As they construct their narratives, they get the opportunity to reflect on their self-understandings and gain insight into who they are and why they act the way they do. Sisson (2016) also underscores the significance of critical incidents in shaping agency, noting that little attention has been given to the role and importance of these short but significant events or incidents in discussions of agency. For this study, I also requested that the teachers share their critical incidents.

3.4.2. Data Collection Procedure

After receiving the approval of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (Appendix D), I sent invitation e-mails to potential participants meeting the criteria to participate in the research. Once they agreed to participate in the study, I sent them the consent form via e-mail and informed them about the purpose of the study, procedure, voluntary basis participation, confidentiality, and other relevant details. I scheduled the interviews considering the participants' preferences and health advisories at the time of the meetings (See Table 3 for the time and duration of the interviews).

Table 3. Schedule of the interviews

TS	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4	Total Duration
	Time & Duration	Time & Duration	Time & Duration	Time & Duration	
Derin	December, 2021 2 h 33min	May, 2022 2 h 04 min	December, 2022 2h 05 min	July, 2024 1h 44 min	8 h 26 min
Eylül	December, 2021 2 h 26 min	April, 2022 1 h 34 min	June, 2022 1 h 49 min	December, 2022 1h 14 min	7 h 3 min
Zeynep	December, 2021 1 h 49 min	May, 2022 1 h 28 min	July, 2022 1 h 36 min	January, 2023 1 h 11 min	6 h 4 min
Ekin	January, 2022 2 h 52 min	May, 2022 1 h 43 min	June, 2022 2 h 12 min	January, 2023 1 h 18 min	8 h 5 min
İpek	January, 2022 1 h 54 min	May, 2022 54 min	July, 2022 1 h 26 min	January, 2023 1 h	5 h 14 min
Pera	March, 2022 1 h 12 min	May, 2022 1 h 12 min	October, 2022 1 h 01 min	April, 2023 1 h 21 min	4 h 46 min
Mila	January, 2022 1 h 08 min	May, 2022 51 min	June, 2022 57 min	January, 2023 46 min	3 h 42 min
Mabel	May, 2022 1 h 11 min	May, 2022 59 min	June, 2022 1 h 12 min	December, 2022 50 min	4 h 12 min
					47h 32 min

To allow participants time to reflect on their related experiences and retrieve stories, I provided them with only the first interview questions in advance. They were

reminded once more that all interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed. The data would be stored in password-protected computers and used only for research purposes. Upon their agreement, they signed the informed consent forms.

The data collection process started in December 2021 and ended in July 2024. I had planned to conduct four interviews with each teacher over a period of one to one and a half years, and nearly all interviews were completed within this timeframe. Initially, there were nine participants. However, due to their heavy workloads, two teachers were unable to schedule interviews and subsequently withdrew from the study. Mabel joined the study at a later stage, so her first two interviews were conducted at the beginning and the end of the same month. As for Derin, her busy schedule led to multiple cancellations and required a revised timeline for her interviews. Consequently, her interviews were spread out over an extended period. In total, I conducted 32 interviews with eight teachers.

I prepared the interview questions in English and Turkish, but all interviews were conducted in Turkish based on the teachers' preferences. While conducting them in Turkish may be perceived as a shortcoming due to concerns that meaning could be lost during the translation of the material from their native language to English, it is important to recognize that narratives are inherently subjective accounts. A person's first language often conveys richer and more nuanced information than languages acquired later in life. Hence, I thought conducting the interviews in Turkish would yield more in-depth data.

Before the interviewing process began, I conducted a piloting phase for the interviews to feel more comfortable during the actual interviews with the target participants and to assess the appropriateness of the questions. During this stage, I identified the need to remind participants when each section ended, clarify certain terms, such as "roles" and "positioning," and refine the questions. Specifically, I combined some questions and adjusted their order. All the interviews were audio recorded to better focus on the interview and accurately capture the participants' actual words (Brenner, 2006). As Patton (2015) and Seidman (2006) suggest, I also took focused notes during the interviews to better concentrate on the participants'

words and return to them when needed. After each interview, I immediately checked the recordings to ensure that the audio was recorded properly.

Encouraging participants to expand on their responses and share stories is regarded as part of the art of an interviewing process, and this is why participants are expected to speak more than the interviewer in a successful interview (Brenner, 2006). Patton (2002) offers an alternative Matrix of Questions Options. For the current study, in line with Patton's (2015) framework, experience and behavior, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, and background/demographic questions were asked to provide depth to the exploration of these topics. I am aware that the opening questions are of paramount importance, as they set the tone for the subsequent ones. Accordingly, the first interview questions were shared with the participants before the interview so that they could have a chance to think about the questions in advance and feel more comfortable during the interview. The interviews started with prior education and school experiences to "establish a possible commonality between the interviewer and informant ... that both may have experienced" (Brenner, 2006, p.363).

As the researcher and the interviewer, I am also aware of the importance of interviewing skills, which can affect the quality of the interviewing process and the data collected, such as asking open-ended and follow-up questions and probing judiciously for further details, avoiding multiple questions at one time not to confuse the participants (Brenner, 2006; Patton, 2015), being nonjudgmental, trustworthy and clear, listening to the interviewee and observing the interview carefully (Patton, 2015). Instead of probing into what participants say, Seidman (2006) suggests that we explore with the participant. This is why it should be done judiciously to prevent the interviewer from treating the participants as objects. During the interviews, I tried to convey "that I respect the people being interviewed, so what they say is important because of who is saying it... that their knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and feelings are important" (Patton, 2015, p. 670). This is why Seidman (2006) contends that having a genuine interest in others is the most important characteristic interviewers must have. I also paid attention to my stance towards issues and people. I listened to the participants without judging them for the things they expressed, which is highlighted as "empathic neutrality" or "understanding a person's situation

and perspective without judging the person—and communicating that understanding with authenticity to build rapport, trust, and openness” (Patton, 2015, pp. 670- 671).

In line with Patton’s (2015) strategies, I employed various question types to facilitate deep reflection from participants. These included *role-playing questions* that ask people to respond as if they were someone else, such as “Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the professional development unit and activities better. What would you do?”, *simulation questions* that ask people to imagine themselves in a different situation, such as “If I followed you through a typical day, what would I see you doing? What experiences would I observe you having?” and *presupposition questions* that convey the message that participants have something to say, such as “Can you please share one of the critical events you experienced?” The aim of these questions was to encourage teachers to visualize the given situation and retrieve as much detail as possible in their descriptions. In line with Seidman’s (2006) recommendations, I focused on listening more, talking less, following up without interrupting, asking for concrete details, and tolerating silence.

Patton (2015) also emphasizes the importance of relationships, which contribute a lot to the depth of responses, and warns researchers “not to get so caught up in trying to word questions perfectly that you miss the dynamics of the unfolding relationship that is at the heart of interactive interviewing” (p. 676). He also presents some strategies, such as summarization transition or summarizing the things mentioned before moving on to a new topic to let the participants know that the researcher is listening to them carefully and allowing them to make adjustments if needed. He emphasizes the importance of detail-oriented, elaboration, and clarification probes to enrich the interview data. He argues that during the interview, the interviewees also need feedback about the interview process. In other words, they have the right to be aware of the flow of the interview through reinforcement, verbal and nonverbal feedback, and closing questions. These strategies guided me throughout the interview process. As suggested by Patton (2015), my immediate reflections and notes on the process and content of the interviews helped me gain more awareness about the quality of the data received, evaluate the flow of the interviews, identify problems, and make necessary adjustments.

3.5. Data Analysis

In qualitative data inquiry, interview transcripts, field notes, documents, artifacts, e-mail correspondence, and so on can serve as data sources. In the data analysis stage, these data are transformed into findings, but there is no specific recipe or formula for this transformation, only guidance, as Patton (2015) notes:

In analyzing qualitative data, guidelines exist but no recipes; principles provide direction, but there is no significance test to run that determines whether a finding is worthy of attention. No ways exist of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. No straightforward tests can be applied for reliability and validity. In short, no absolute rules exist, except perhaps this: Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study (p. 762)

Patton (2015) states that the challenge lies in making meaning of large amounts of data. The researcher is responsible for conducting the data analysis with rigor, ensuring that the true meaning of the data is captured and conveyed in alignment with the purpose of the study. Miles et al. (2014) further highlight the issue of "overload," which arises from the multiplicity of data sources in qualitative research:

All of this information piles up geometrically. In the early stages of a study, most of it looks promising. But if you don't know what matters more, everything matters. You may never have the time to condense and order, much less to analyze and write up, all of this material. (p. 79)

They emphasize the need for selectivity in data collection but acknowledge that it does not solve the overload problem, noting, "You need roughly three to five times as much time for processing and ordering the data as the time you needed to collect it" (p. 80). In brief, data analysis remains a challenging process in qualitative research.

Several frameworks exist for analyzing qualitative data (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Riessman, 1993; Saldana, 2015). Creswell (2013) outlines the general process used for data analysis in qualitative research. The first step involves the preparation

and organization of the data for analysis, such as transcribing interviews. The second step is reading and memoing. The researcher reads or looks at the data and writes notes in the margins of the transcripts to gain a holistic understanding and to become reacquainted with the material. Then, the researcher moves to the description, classification, and interpretation of the data. This process involves forming codes or categories, reducing the data into a manageable and small set of themes, and making sense of the data. Finally, the researcher represents and visualizes the data. Qualitative researchers organize and analyze the data using inductive and deductive analysis methods. They construct their categories and themes “from the “bottom up,” by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). In this inductive process, they go back and forth between the themes and the database until a comprehensive list of themes is developed. This process also entails interactive collaboration with participants to allow them to contribute to the formation of emerging themes. Researchers also employ deductive logic “in that they build themes that are constantly being checked against the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45).

Riessman (2008) describes narrative analysis as “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (p.35) and focuses on several approaches, including thematic, structural, and dialogic/ performance analysis and visual analysis of images while analyzing narrative stories. In thematic analysis, themes told by participants are identified by the researcher. In structural one, the focus is on the nature of telling and organizing the story. In dialogic analysis, how talk is produced and performed as a narrative in an interactive (dialogical) way is highlighted. As Riessman (2008) explains, “Simply put, if thematic and structural approaches interrogate “what” is spoken and “how,” the dialogic/performative approach asks “who” an utterance may be directed to, “when,” and “why,” that is, for what purposes?” (p. 231).

Lieblich et al. (1998) propose a model for classifying and organizing types of narrative analysis based on two dimensions: holistic versus categorical and content versus form. In holistic approaches, a story is considered a whole within its context, whereas in categorical ones, the researcher identifies themes across data from

multiple sources. The content dimension of analysis focuses on what happens in the narrative, while the dimension of form emphasizes how the story unfolds (Liebliech et al., 1998). For Miles et al. (2014), qualitative data analysis is an iterative process consisting of three key components: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification steps. Data condensation refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials” (p. 31). It is an ongoing process throughout the research, occurring before the data collection (while deciding on the conceptual framework, research questions, and data collection approaches), during data collection (while coding and developing categories and themes), and after the fieldwork is over (while writing the final report). Therefore, it is not separate from data analysis. Data displays are “designed to assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis that the display suggests may be useful” (p. 32). Like data condensation, data display is also a part of data analysis. As for drawing and verifying conclusions, Miles et al. (2014) emphasize that qualitative researchers start interpreting data as soon as the data collection begins by noting some patterns, explanations, and links. However, they are also aware that definite conclusions may not surface until the end of the data collection process.

It is important to note that these guidelines and suggestions for procedures are not strict rules because each qualitative research is unique, as is the analytical approach employed. As Saldana (2015) notes, “Since qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights, and capabilities of the inquirer, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst” (p. 763). Judgment and creativity are essential while adhering to these guidelines. Since qualitative researchers operate from a “more fluid and more humanistic position” compared to quantitative researchers, as qualitative researchers, we are expected to document our analysis processes well so that the reader can understand how the data were analyzed. In this way, we can “reflect, refine our methods, and make them more generally usable by others” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 33).

Following Creswell's (2013) guidelines, I started the data analysis process with the preparation and organization of data. All the interviews were audio-recorded, filed, and stored in password-protected computers. The data were then transcribed verbatim, and I saved them as Microsoft Word files. Due to my full-time teaching responsibilities and the length of the interviews, I sought assistance with the transcription process, as it sometimes took weeks to transcribe a single interview. Then, I hired university students experienced in the transcription processes with a Confidentiality Agreement for the Transcription Service. Although it is thought that "verbatim transcripts frequently give a feeling of rawness with non-standard grammatical utterances, repetition, or informal phrases as they naturally occur in spoken interaction" (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 26), I meticulously listened to the recordings multiple times during and after transcription, carefully checking the documents for spelling and accuracy. However, I ensured the authenticity of the data and did not edit them for grammatical accuracy. As soon I received the documents from the hired transcribers, I applied the same process to them as well. Then, I proceeded with reading and memoing. I carefully read and reread the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Based on the research questions, I marked relevant sections and made notes in the margins. I jotted down preliminary words or phrases for codes on the hard-copy transcripts, as using a pencil to write codes allows for greater control and ownership of the work, as Saldana (2015) suggests. I hoped this initial understanding would inform a more detailed analysis later and inspire further data collection (Lester et al., 2020). Additionally, I started making entries in a research journal for future reference and generating memos to document my initial reflections on the data. MAXQDA, the data analysis software program used in the study, was highly useful in managing the extensive number of analytic memos.

I conducted data analysis concurrently with data collection, as recommended by Miles et al. (2014), because it "helps the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data. It can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots" (p. 78). Accordingly, I started coding as I collected and formatted the data. I employed Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach, which includes the temporal dimension (past, present, and future), social/

interaction dimension (personal and social), and place dimension. *Place* refers to the places where teachers grew up, were educated, started their profession, and taught at the time span of data collection. *Time* pertains to the narrator's past, present, and future stories. *Sociality* refers to personal and social conditions that shape teachers' environments or contexts. I analyzed the data using content analysis (Patton, 2015), categorical content analysis (Liebliech et al., 1998) or thematic analysis (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) to represent teachers' personal stories and show how they make sense of their own experiences. This process involved reading the data many times, coding and categorizing data extracts, and reorganizing them using thematic headings (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Content analysis is defined as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2015, p.453), and it involves searching for recurring words or themes. In line with this approach, being still in the data condensation stage (Miles et al., 2014), I continued with the description and classification of data (Creswell, 2013) before proceeding with coding.

3.5.1. Coding

A code in qualitative inquiry is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data" (Saldana, 2015, p. 4). Codes are "labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 78-79). Coding is linking, not just labeling (Saldana, 2015). It involves analysis and "deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data's meanings" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 79).

As the number of codes accumulated quickly and varied as analysis continued, I maintained a codebook to keep track of the emergent codes. This codebook included content descriptions for each code and a small data sample for future reference, which facilitated the organization and reorganization of the codes into primary categories and subcategories for analytic purposes (Saldana, 2015). MAXQDA was instrumental in this process, facilitating the storage, organization, and retrieval of the

codes and their descriptions in a codebook. According to Lester et al. (2020), codes by themselves do not tell the whole story. In order to convey the full narrative, the researcher must first comprehend the (inter)relationships and contrasts of codes with one another, leading to the emergence of categories. In line with the research questions and focus of the study, I assigned a statement or theme that was “inclusive of all of the underlying categories, as well as descriptive of their content, the relationships between them, as well as being responsive to any similarities or differences observed” (Lester et al., 2020, p. 101).

I also made the analytic process transparent by using a map of the analytic process to illustrate how I moved from codes to categories and how themes were developed. This included ensuring a detailed audit trail so that an external reader could understand the coding and interpretation process. In this process, I benefitted from Saldana’s (2015) categorization of codes. Saldana (2015) provides a comprehensive framework that entails first-cycle and second-cycle methods. First-cycle methods occur during the initial coding of data and include attribute coding, structural/holistic coding, descriptive coding, In Vivo coding, process coding, and/or values coding. Second-cycle methods are considered more challenging since they require analytic skills such as “classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building” and include eclectic coding, pattern coding, and focused coding (Saldana, 2015, p. 69).

While listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts, I took notes in the margins of the hard-copy transcripts and wrote analytic memos. After working on the printed data and getting familiar with the content, I transferred the Microsoft Word files to MAXQDA 11, the qualitative data analysis software used in this study, for further analysis (See Appendix C). While computers and software are instruments that aid data analysis, the analysis is not conducted by the software. Qualitative software tools facilitate the storage of the data, coding, retrieval, comparison, and connection, but humans do the analysis, and it requires human creativity, hard work, and intellectual discipline, which makes qualitative analysis unique (Patton, 2015).

I started the coding process in February 2022. Coding the data from the first interview, which focused on teachers’ early life and schooling experiences, teacher

education, teaching philosophy, and perspectives on teacher roles, proved to be the most challenging phase of the coding process. The complexity arose from the many overlapping and intertwined patterns, which required extensive thinking, revising, rethinking, and, at times, restarting the coding from scratch. For example, in August 2022, I revised my codes for the first set of interviews after careful consideration and continuous reflection on the research questions to enhance clarity and refine the analysis. While revisions continued throughout the coding process, they were less challenging compared to the initial round. As the codes emerged, I gained deeper insights into their relationships, which helped streamline the subsequent revision process.

I employed various coding methods, including exploratory methods (holistic and provisional coding), elemental methods (descriptive, In Vivo, and process coding), and affective methods (emotion, values, and versus coding). The coding process started with holistic coding as a preparatory approach before a more detailed coding. I assigned a single code to a large unit of data to gain an overall sense of its contents. Then, I employed provisional coding or researcher-generated codes based on related literature reviews, the conceptual framework of the study, research questions, and my previous knowledge and experiences. As Saldana (2015) notes, if you “become too enamored with your original Provisional Codes and become unwilling to modify them, you run the risk of trying to fit qualitative data into a set of codes and categories that may not apply” (p. 170). Therefore, I revised and modified these provisional codes as the data collection and analysis continued. After that, I assigned descriptive codes to the data to capture the topic of a passage and summarize it in a short word or phrase.

According to Saldana (2015), “Sometimes the participant says it best; sometimes the researcher does” (p. 109). To honor teachers’ voices, I used In Vivo coding or words or phrases used by the teachers themselves to better capture the essence of their experiences. I also employed process coding to capture activities performed by the teachers, such as getting up early, and more general conceptual actions, such as struggling. Emotions recalled or experienced by the teachers, or those inferred by me, were labeled with emotion codes since “our acknowledgment of them in our

research provides deep insight into the participants’ perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions” and “careful scrutiny of a person’s emotions reveals not just the inner workings of an individual, but possibly the underlying mood or tone of a society – its ethos” (p. 125).

In line with the aims of the study, I also used values coding to reflect teachers’ values, attitudes, and beliefs that shaped their biographies and were reflected through their activities. To identify people, groups, organizations, and processes in conflict with one another and reveal power issues at hand as they are perceived as dichotomies by people, versus coding including the categories of stakeholders, perceptions/actions, and issues was employed, too. Following this, using both inductive and deductive analysis methods, I constructed categories from the codes and themes from these categories, respectively, which was still part of data the condensation process (Miles et al., 2014). The data were then represented and visualized (Creswell, 2013) or the data display process (Miles et al., 2014) was completed. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified until the end of the data collection (See Table 4).

The extended duration of the data collection (from December 2021 to July 2024) allowed for a deep and thorough engagement with data, which contributed to an in-depth understanding of teachers’ experiences. However, this prolonged engagement was emotionally and mentally demanding. I acknowledge that three years of intensive coding and analysis could result in fatigue, influence the ability to remain objective, and reduce openness to alternative patterns. To mitigate these challenges, I employed some strategies, such as taking regular breaks to return with a fresh perspective and revisiting my codes regularly to ensure their relevance. Additionally, my reflexive journal helped me maintain a reflective and neutral stance throughout the process.

Table 4. The analysis process

-
- Preparation and organization of data
 - Transcription
-
- Reading and memoing
-
- First-cycle coding

Table 4. (continued)

- Holistic coding (e.g., Family)
- Provisional and researcher- generated codes (e.g., improvisation, teacher education)
- Codes generated inductively from the data
 - descriptive coding (e.g., norms)
 - In Vivo coding (“Customer is always right”)
 - emotion codes (e.g., content)
 - values coding (responsibility, fairness, academic integrity)
 - versus coding (social sciences vs natural sciences)

- Second-cycle coding for emergent categories and themes
 - Pattern coding (categories from codes and themes from categories)
 - Research questions and theoretical framework

- Data display
 - Representation of the data visually

- Conclusion drawing and verification
 - Interpretation of the findings and relating them to the literature

3.6. Ethical Issues

I started the data collection process for this study after receiving the approval of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (See Appendix D). Upon getting the approval, I informed the participants about the purpose of the study, procedure, voluntary basis participation, confidentiality, and other relevant details through the consent form. I obtained their consent before the interviews and assured them that they could withdraw from the research at any time they wanted. I used pseudonyms for any personally identifiable information of the participants and their workplace to protect their anonymity and to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, the names of other people and institutions mentioned by the teachers were also disguised when necessary.

3.7. Quality Criteria

Philosophically positioning qualitative research among other forms “entails what one believes about the nature of reality (also called ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology)” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.8). Therefore, the standards

for rigor in qualitative research are different from those in quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) considering the ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences regarding the nature of reality, the nature of “truth” statements, the explanation of action, the nature of the inquirer-respondent relationship, and the role of values in inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given that the criteria for testing rigor differ in qualitative studies, the concepts used are named differently. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as substitutes for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Credibility focuses on how research findings correspond to reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and whether the findings of the study are credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following strategies are suggested to ensure credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks by Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in the data collection, reflexivity, and peer examination or review by Merriam and Tisdell (2015). For this current study, I employed triangulation or cross-checking, adequate engagement in data collection, prolonged engagement, reflexivity, and peer review. Teachers’ stories in the interviews were checked against my observations on-site and relevant policy and operational documents. To ensure *adequate engagement*, I continued the data collection process until I saw or heard the same things or until the data and findings did “feel saturated” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 246). I maintained close and intensive contact with the participants in the field to “assess possible sources of distortion and especially to identify saliencies in the situation,” which helped me to achieve *prolonged engagement* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 18). Regarding *reflexivity*, I positioned myself within the report and identified my standpoint as the researcher. As for peer review, each member of the dissertation committee was engaged in the research process throughout the study. They read the emerging findings and commented on them.

Dependability requires the consistency of results with the data collected, and strategies for ensuring dependability are triangulation, peer examination, the

investigator's position (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this current study, I used *triangulation* or multiple methods of data collection to get dependable data. The description of how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" in detail is called an *audit trail* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 252). Throughout the study, I kept a research journal, wrote analytic memos, and recorded my reflections on the research process, all contributing to the audit trail. Additionally, a solid audit trail was ensured through my supervisor's regular feedback and bi-annual thesis monitoring committee meetings. Writing thick descriptions of the study's context and the participants' profiles served transferability.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter aims to present the findings of the study by focusing on three research questions. The first question explores teachers' agency in teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation or teachers' agency in micro (individual level), meso (institutional level), and macro (broader) contexts. The second question aims to explicate teachers' understandings of their professional roles and agency. The third question investigates the contexts influencing teachers' perceived agency at micro, meso, and macro levels.

Understanding their agency trajectories inside and outside the classes and their interpretations of their professional roles and agency required an analysis of their past, present, and future lives in different contexts formed by the social contexts. In order to answer these questions, four themes were constructed to analyze teachers at the micro, meso, and macro levels and their agency trajectories in the last one. While doing this, their narratives were explored simultaneously through the lenses of Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three commonplaces: temporality (when), place (where), and sociality (who).

The first theme presents teachers' histories, including their families, schooling, career decisions, and teacher learning experiences in the past and at present. The second theme outlines teachers' experiences in their workplace and interpretations of their school culture by focusing on practices and discourses, people and interactions, and constraints to explore how these teachers are engaged in their working context, take stances, and make sense of their lived experiences. The third theme presents their problematizations of discourses within a larger framework by situating them in broader political and socio-cultural contexts. Finally, teachers' improvisations inside and outside their classes are presented (See Figure 3).

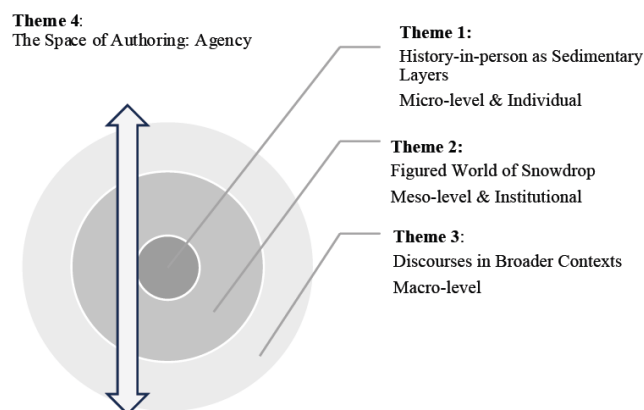


Figure 3. The representation of the themes at three levels: Micro, meso, and macro contexts

4.1. History-in-person as Sedimentary Layers

Even if everything else fades away, teachers' personal histories endure as sedimentary layers and serve to shape their decisions and actions. These past lives entail various dimensions, such as temporal (through time), place (in different locations), and social (in different social contexts), and this section presents teachers' history-in-person through their family and schooling experiences, job decision, and teacher learning experiences to better understand their agency trajectories inside and outside the class, as well as to gain more insight into their understandings of their professional roles and agency.

4.1.1. Family Experiences

Teachers' accounts of their early life experiences indicated that teachers reconstructed their childhood memories by emphasizing the impact of their family support and socioeconomic status on how they interpreted their schooling and career paths. Most teachers highlighted how their parents created an environment conducive to English language learning and acquisition by providing resources, such as books, educational materials, access to language learning platforms, and hosting an exchange student at home for a year. Mabel, for example, described her father's words of encouragement and guidance on language learning in her childhood. He would provide resources, such as Oxford English materials, for her on a weekly

basis, telling her that learning a language opens up a world of opportunities and will help her to get a job, stand tall, and overcome hardships in her path. Eylül was another teacher who underscored her family's socioeconomic status and educational background. She expressed gratitude for their support since they helped her overcome the challenges and influenced her interpretation of them. She described herself as "spiritual" and her parents as religious, adding that growing up with religious parents had taught her to look on the bright side, which will be further elaborated on in the following sections. According to her, it was her parents who emphasized the importance of language learning, guiding her on her language-learning journey and encouraging her to learn English through music and TV. As someone with a life-long interest in languages, she deeply appreciated the support of her father, who always conveyed the importance of knowing a language. Eylül reported that his father would relate knowing a language to owning a bracelet. In addition to her father, she also expressed her gratitude to her sister, who would read her short stories and share what she had learnt at school.

Like Eylül, Mila recounted how her mother, a primary school teacher, had written a letter to an organization in Ankara and applied to host a foreign exchange student in their home. Likewise, İpek reported how she got interested in English as her father invited his friends from different countries to their house. While staying with her parents in Greece for a month, she also had the opportunity to practice and improve her English. Regarding her interest in language learning, Pera did not mention the support she received from her family. However, she described how much she admired her father as a teacher, in contrast to his parent role at home, since she had a chance to observe him in his classes. While reflecting on his childhood, Tuna drew on how much his upbringing in a house with a grandfather and aunt, who were both teachers, had an impact on him. He often mentioned, for example, his grandfather and their critical conversations on news from four different newspapers and books at home. Citing one of his projects about learning a language that emphasized the direct connection between socioeconomic structure and language learning skills and success, he acknowledged the impact of his family's socioeconomic status on his interpretation of language learning and surrounding discourses.

It is worth noting that Derin and Zeynep prioritized critical incidents in their accounts over support. They described how they navigated the challenges and improvised in the given spaces through their maneuvers. Derin, for example, recounted how her father's retirement and her sister's marriage caused financial hardship for her family. Upon finding out that her parents could not afford to send her to school, she decided to find her own solution. She obtained the books and the uniform from upper-grade students to show her parents how much she wanted to pursue her education. Zeynep also talked about the challenges she faced following her parents' divorce. She had to stay with her grandmother, along with her mother and brother. With so many people at home and just one TV, she would watch English-language movies on TV whenever she had the opportunity. It is evident from their statements that these teachers went through tough times, yet their stories suggest that they opted to struggle against the difficulties and carve out spaces in their families and at school to act within. They narrated these critical incidents as success stories. In other words, they preferred to reconstruct these stories by prioritizing triumph over hardship or adversity.

In summary, across the narratives, it appears that most of the participants' linguistic journeys (Mabel, Eylül, Mila, İpek, Tuna) were greatly influenced by the support and resources provided by their families as family is the primary setting in which children are exposed to language in the early stages of life. Their accounts demonstrated how growing up in those families, who maintained support, guidance, and exposure to a range of resources, significantly impacted these teachers' language learning opportunities and fostered their enthusiasm and passion for language learning. In the lived experiences of language teachers in the study, family as a figured world with its members, interactions, and routines shaped these teachers' interests in language learning. The support provided by their families served as a foundation upon which they constructed their upcoming experiences.

4.1.2. Schooling Experiences

As part of their past lives, the teachers also talked about their schooling experiences, including their characteristics as students. As their accounts unfolded, some teachers

had negative recollections of their school years. Tuna is one of those who did not speak well of those years. He reported that compared to the education at school, he had learnt a lot more from his grandfather at home since reading and practice were intertwined in his daily life. For example, while reading a newspaper or a novel, his grandfather would explain a modal verb used in the news. Therefore, according to him, the education he received at home, rooted in critical conversations with his grandfather and the link between language and literature, could not be compared to the education at school with 30-35 students in the same class. In other words, he was not satisfied with his school education as it did not live up to his expectations compared to his nourishing, stimulating, and instructive conversations with his grandfather. His accounts revealed that he highlighted the importance of learning by doing, and he always valued his experiences of reading books, newspapers, and critical discussions with his grandfather over schooling and found them more effective.

As for Eylül and İpek, they claimed to have experienced violence in their schooling years. Eylül recounted how traumatic experiences she suffered at the age of six but survived those challenging times thanks to her parents. She said:

Our teacher used to use some violence against us...He would pull our hair, for example, he would pull our ears. Well, it was very traumatizing for me. When I told my family later, they complained to the school principal, and the teacher was changed, but ... I couldn't get over it for a long time until the age of 12. I was lucky, my parents were educated.

Eylül's remarks revealed how her interpretation of her early school years was shaped by the violence she thought she had experienced back then. She claimed to have learnt to read and write a little later than expected, and she believed that the mistreatment she had allegedly experienced in school had something to do with her poor grades, particularly in math. For this reason, although her parents were crucial to her well-being, she did not have a pleasant account of her early years at school. While constructing the story during the interview, though, Eylül reinterpreted her own experience, as can be seen in the following extract:

I learned this later, of course. I think everything we go through is actually something that we need to learn. This is my belief, I mean, in terms of our

soul's progress, our development... I think it was a blessing for me to see this in primary school... I couldn't always look at things from the positive side at that age, but I started with what my mother passed on to me, I tried to look at things positively, I tried to see the deficiency in me, I said ... that there must be a part of me that I need to develop, that God has brought me such a person... I never rebelled; I learned not to rebel... I honor my teacher now. That's what I should say. I remember my teacher well; I say thank you. Maybe his tormenting us improved us; I can say that he improved us in our life test.

In light of Eylül's statements, it can be interpreted that she considered her teacher's mistreatment as a lesson to be gained from and a favor God gave her to identify her "deficiency" and grow into a better person. While reconstructing her story, she resorted to values fostered in her figured world of family, such as the soul's progress and blessing from God. Her beliefs were so strong that she even reconceptualized her primary school teacher's mistreatment of her as an experience or spiritual evolution: "There is a door; we encounter all kinds of people until we pass through that door, for example, and seeing this in primary school was a blessing for me."

Similar discourses were evident in İpek's account as well. She recalled her first traumatic experience in primary school, where she was held accountable due to another student's error. She became a wrongful victim of her teacher's aggression as the group leader during a group project: "I remember feeling very upset about it, the violence. She hit my head on the board. It is a very humiliating thing." She considered that girls were especially subject to violence during her schooling years, and she described her observations of schools' being too strict with girls. She was punished by the administration for spending time at the café with friends, despite having informed her parents beforehand. She remarked on the punishment, stating: "I was the valedictorian of the school, but they didn't award me my title or certificate of appreciation due to a disciplinary offense." She hated school, feeling that girls, in particular, faced unfair treatment. Consequently, she transferred to a different high school.

As for the favorable schooling experiences, the teachers underscored their passion for learning English, aptitude, and interest. They characterized themselves as successful students in general, especially in English, and their stories indicated how

enthusiastic, curious, and autonomous they were when it came to English language learning. Derin, for example, described how she perceived her grades, exams, and learning process. She excelled in math even though she did not study much. She reported that she was more content with getting 98 out of 100 on tests than a 100 because she believed that 100 means you are done, and the task is over. 98 indicates that you are amazing, but there are still a couple of things you need to keep learning, which she described as her “learning passion.” She continued that learning a foreign language was always different for her. She found translating everything to English fascinating and thought that learning English was like solving a “puzzle.” According to her, knowing and being able to speak English also meant achieving what others considered impossible and gaining your teacher’s approval. In other words, she perceived herself not only as an enthusiastic and autonomous learner but also a bright one in class whose efforts were appreciated by her teacher as well. She noted that she could attain “the unique status” the English language holds by learning English. She recalled her own language learning experiences, stressed the importance of curiosity and happiness as they paved the way for exploration and expressed how she found her own ways to practice and improve her English: “This was not something that any of my teachers told me... I would record my voice and listen to it. I had made myself a listening material.” She stated that when you are curious and happy, you “find your own methods on your way,” meaning that you can take charge of your own learning and create your own resources, just like she did as a student.

Both Derin and Mila stated that language learning was more than a lesson. Mila, who claimed that studying English was her pastime, described herself as an autonomous learner who would buy books and coursebooks from an old bookstore, read and summarize them, make her own dictionary with the words she had learnt, learn song lyrics by heart, and keep a diary in English. Mila also mentioned the influence of her sister’s tutor on her, along with her curiosity regarding language learning:

I would watch them through the keyhole to see what they were doing in the room...She would lecture me at the end, 10 minutes, fifteen minutes... And she would bring me things, I don't know, a small gift, a reading book, or a dictionary... She was such an open-handed person, spreading light to everyone, helping everyone... She had a positive impact on me.

Likewise, Pera also characterized herself as a curious and enthusiastic language learner. In contrast to the traditional methods employed at schools, she discussed how she created her own space by improvising the given one: “I was creating scripts, writing plays and directing them by involving my friends... I didn't learn the language through conventional learning methods. Instead, I integrated it into my daily life, learning by living it”. She also stated that she was more successful in production-based tasks requiring more analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.

Like Pera and Tuna, Mabel claimed, “If you can live the language, you can learn it.” She portrayed herself as a curious and autonomous language learner. She had a keen interest in language learning and felt that books alone were not enough. She reported that she watched series in English, listened to music, kept a diary, and employed different sources like audio-visual materials while learning English without anyone telling her to do so. Then, she concluded: “I can truly be the ideal student type right now.” Zeynep was no different. While describing her interest in English, she also touched upon how English was perceived as a foreign language in her childhood and how students picked a foreign language in their schools back then. She said students would draw lots to choose a language among English, French, and German. She recalled crying a lot when she drew German in the lottery because there was a mentality like “English is the acceptable language, and the others are useless.” She described herself as an enthusiastic and curious learner, taking notes, finishing her English homework right away, and assisting her teacher in showing some job cards to the class. She then added: “The teacher would touch my hand like this. I liked that very much, thinking the teacher loved me. That's why she had a special place for me. Maybe because I loved her so much, I loved the language, too.”

Regarding her personality, she cited her uncle's diary entry about her, which stated: “You are always more mature than your age,” and she concurred, saying, “Maturity is probably the word that best describes me... Maybe I had to mature early, I don't know.” Like Zeynep, İpek stated that she has always been interested in language. Even though her teachers did not tell her to do so, for example, she would listen to and sing songs and read books in English, and added, “not simplified ones.” She continued reading even if she could not understand the best-sellers. She also

expressed her desire to communicate in English. She stated that during secondary school, seeing her cousins from the Netherlands speak to each other when they visited them piqued her interest: “At that time, I aspired to communicate in another language.” She was, therefore, curious when she began learning English. She also expressed her deep fascination with songs and different cultures. She highlighted the role of songs and cultures in her language-learning process, recalling how she sang foreign songs by heart in secondary school when her teacher asked her to do so. She also portrayed herself as a “very good language student,” like Mabel.

Eylül’s accounts revealed that her interest in language started with music. As she reported, she would still listen to foreign channels and the news even if she did not understand them, and added: “Emulating is not a bad thing, I was emulating... I would hear some French and English. I watched whatever channels were available.” She stated that she always preferred to learn things within the natural flow rather than following a set plan, program, and curriculum. As a language learner, she characterized herself as follows: “I think I was a very good visual learner, an audio learner.” Like Mabel and İpek., Eylül also portrayed herself as “a very good language learner.”

As teachers’ accounts unfolded, their curiosity and enthusiasm for English and their love of learning were evident in their stories. Despite some traumatic experiences, such as Zeynep and Derin’s family issues and the perceived violence Eylül and İpek encountered at school, they underlined their sense of achievement and self-confidence when reflecting on their schooling experiences. Despite the challenging situations at home following her parents’ divorce, Zeynep stated, “I always remember being a hardworking and determined student.” Likewise, Derin reported that she graduated from high school as a school valedictorian and said how much her teachers trusted and believed in her. She also added that she started teaching English and math to children in her neighborhood.

Eylül regretted not having a decent teacher to reveal her talent in primary school. Still, later in secondary school, she reported compensating for the lost time thanks to a new teacher and school environment, which enhanced her school performance.

Likewise, İpek also reminisced about how her teachers would encourage her to impart the subject to her classmates. As can be seen in their remarks, through maneuvers aided by teacher and school changes, family members, family values, and personal endeavors, these teachers were able to carve out their own spaces and chose to retell their stories with success above hardship.

In light of teachers' accounts, it appears that these teachers took responsibility for their language learning and tried to seek out resources beyond classroom materials. They were curious and eager to learn by doing, explore and experience the language, integrate it into their lives, and have fun while doing so. Analysis of the narratives uncovered that their figured worlds of family, which were inhabited by their family members, interactions, and routines, interacted with their figured worlds of school, which were inhabited by their teachers, interactions, routines, and policies. Tensions arose as they participated in various figured worlds with conflicting or opposing values and experienced discrepancies. For example, because he was raised in a family that valued critical thinking and stressed the importance of culture in language acquisition, Tuna expressed his dissatisfaction with the English language instruction he received at school. Additionally, Eylül and İpek, who were always grateful for their families' support, experienced tension when they faced perceived violence at school.

All these critical events required these teachers to take stances or accept, reject, or negotiate positions offered to them. More specifically, these conflicts influenced how these teachers constructed and interpreted their schooling experiences and shaped their stances. For example, Tuna prioritized his language learning experience with his grandfather over the instruction he received in school, and İpek stated that she detested school because of the mistreatment there. However, she changed schools, still maintained her interest in English, continued to sing songs and read books, and wanted so much to communicate in English. Eylül did not rebel because she grew up with devout parents and chose to reinterpret the perceived mistreatment as a blessing for her. She viewed her negative experience through the lenses of values fostered in her family and positioned herself accordingly.

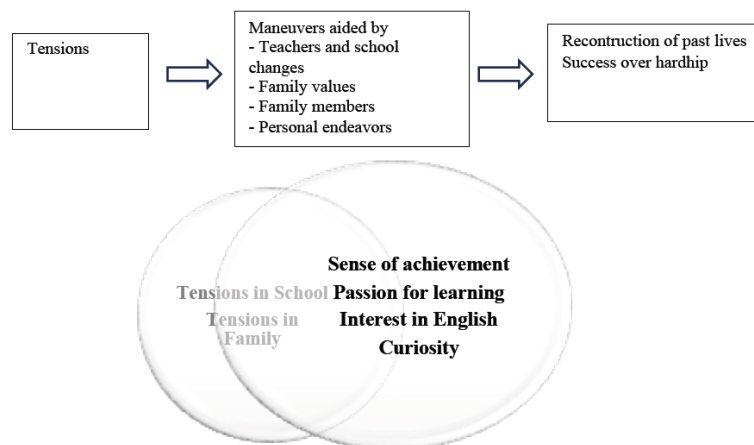


Figure 4. Teachers’ interpretations of their schooling years

In brief, when confronted with critical events at school, these teachers carved out authoring spaces where they reinterpreted their schooling experiences and acted accordingly through the interaction of their abilities, resources, and the values rooted in their families. Despite the challenges they encountered in their schooling years, they reconstructed those years by prioritizing success over hardship (See Figure 4).

4.1.3. Job Decision

As part of their histories, teachers further elaborated on why they had chosen to become English language teachers by focusing on their figured worlds in the past, including their families, schools, teacher education programs, and workplaces. As their stories suggest, almost all the participants had other career goals in mind. However, they brought up critical events that influenced their career decisions and explained how they shifted their career trajectories to becoming teachers.

The path to becoming a teacher was an informed and well-considered decision only for Zeynep. She talked about the status female teachers had in the past and reported that teaching was regarded as the best career choice for women and female teachers were highly regarded back then. Mothers wanted their sons to marry female teachers, so they were searching for teachers to marry their sons. Her grandmother was also seeking a teacher for her son, thinking that teaching was a solid career choice. “I never had any other professions in my mind,” said Zeynep, and teaching was a

deliberate choice for her. What is more, her goal was not to become a teacher but “it was to be an English language teacher.” Even though she aspired to become a teacher at a very young age, her family influenced her career trajectory. They had different expectations for Zeynep. This pressure prevented her from choosing an English language teaching program in the university entrance exam: “Someone said, ‘Why don't you choose medicine?’ The other one said, ‘Why don't you study architecture?’ My late grandfather used to say, ‘My daughter will be a judge.’” Then, she took the exam to study law and added, “This was why I couldn't get into teaching in the first year.” She studied in a different department, started working but retook the university entrance exam, saying, “I always had English language teaching in my mind,” and eventually qualified to pursue a degree in a language and literature-related field, following her genuine aspiration.

On the other hand, some other teachers, including Derin, Pera, İpek, Mabel, and Tuna, were not close to considering teaching as a career due to their figured worlds of being a teacher in the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and systemic concerns in the education system, but they explained how they ended up teaching. For example, in her schooling years, Derin believed that teachers in MoNE had a mediocre image. They would enter the classroom, sit in their chairs, go through the assigned material without much engagement and interaction with the students, and then leave, so she reported that she did not want to become a teacher, adding, “For me and many of my friends, teaching was ehh, so it was trash.” Pera also described her insights into MoNE by focusing on the traditionalism within the system: “The curriculum was set, and there was little room for deviation, so teachers had defined roles back then, and we were raised with that perception.” It can be interpreted that she believed teachers lacked opportunities to exercise agency and realize the role they wanted to play.

Despite their initial interpretations, inspiring teachers ignited a genuine passion for teaching and reshaped Derin and Pera’s perspectives. They claimed to have been inspired by their dedicated teachers, who left an indelible mark on their lives and altered their perceptions of being a teacher. For instance, Derin’s methodology teacher at university motivated her students to shatter any negative perceptions or

stereotypes of teachers in their minds by stating that the teaching profession involves creativity and that they can excel in teaching if they have a creative mind. Derin described that moment as “a turning point” since her teacher’s guidance positively transformed the image of a mediocre teacher in her mind into a positive one. She expressed how much she loved teaching and wanted to be on stage afterwards.

As a teacher who “never dreamed of becoming a teacher,” Pera’s journey into teaching was deeply rooted in her childhood experiences. As someone who felt lonely and unhappy in boarding school, she found solace and inspiration in the compassionate guidance of her teachers, which fueled her desire to make a similar impact on her future students. Stated differently, their ability to foster happiness, trust, and a love for teaching the English language ignited her passion for helping others, even as a preparatory class student in high school:

I admired them. I loved them so much. Being in a boarding school, being in the first year, being very young, being away from everyone, from mum and dad, being all alone, all these things had an effect. At that moment, the hand they extended to me felt so good that I said I would extend a hand to someone, just like that. Just as they sparked something inside me, I will do the same for others.

Just like Zeynep, Pera was also a second-career English language teacher. She mentioned her father was a teacher who was very strict at home but turned into a completely different person in the classroom, saying, “He never made me think of teaching and being a teacher at that time.” Like Zeynep, she graduated from university and worked in her field for a few years. While working there, however, she decided to retake the university entrance exam and started studying ELT. In brief, Derin and Pera had been inspired by their teachers, and they aspired to follow in their footsteps. Their entry into the profession and reinterpretations indicated that those teachers were so influential that they could wash away their negative interpretations. However, Mabel and İpek’s accounts revealed that their negative perceptions of teachers and MoNE persisted longer. Since these teachers associated teaching with MoNE and did not like these figured worlds, their views about teaching were not so positive. On the contrary, their stories suggested that they had nothing to do with becoming teachers. For instance, in her childhood, teaching was a

middle-class profession with a modest standard of living for Mabel. She reported that although she did not hold negative opinions about the teaching profession, she was not drawn to it. Then, she shared her initial understanding of the profession: “Teachers are middle-class people. Teachers marry teachers.... Women find time to care for their children; men care for the house; half days are free, etc. I didn't have a bad image of teaching, but I wanted to be different.” She reported that she had no intention of becoming a teacher because everyone in her family was in the teaching profession. She had always aspired to become an artist. As she recounted her story, she noticed the following contradiction: “Admiring my mother at work but not wanting to be like her.” She studied in a language-related field and started working at a company upon graduation. However, she described working under someone’s direction as dull and found “nine-to-five routine, entering the office in the morning darkness and leaving after dark, doing the same job repeatedly, and being under someone else's control monotonous.” While doing her job, she also worked as a part-time English language teacher at a school on weekends and attended the training sessions there. Her perspective on teaching shifted, and she thought, “Teaching is not bad at all!” when she realized that it could also provide her with time, space, and money to pursue her hobbies.

Another teacher who never dreamed of becoming a teacher was İpek. She believed she had talent, so her earliest career goal was to be a singer or theatre actress. However, at such a young age, her family did not want to send her out of the city for conservatories. After some time, she wanted to be a writer and lawyer. However, when she took the university exam, she chose to study in a language and literature-related field. Because of her portrayal of MoNE as “quite restrictive and disturbing,” observations regarding the challenges female students experienced, the rote system, and teachers’ “obsession with the hair and clothing,” she remarked, “I never wanted to become a teacher. Maybe an academic.” She did, however, note that she enjoyed the overall atmosphere when she began teaching after a teaching position opened up in her current workplace.

Regarding his career decision, Tuna drew attention to his concerns regarding the education system in Türkiye and the “oddity of the university system,” and he stated:

“Let’s sit crooked but talk straight. We don’t have the system that we can say, ‘I have had this profession in my mind since childhood.’” He thought it was not easy for them to have dream jobs and realize them due to the systemic issues. As for his career journey, he highlighted the significant influence his grandfather held within the family, not only on Tuna but also on his aunt and siblings. His parents wanted Tuna to be an engineer, but despite severe arguments with his family in high school, with a focus on engineering education, Tuna decided to change schools to pursue his studies in a language and literature-related field. To justify his decision, he mentioned reading four different newspapers with his grandfather and their conversations about the news. He argued that while there are multiple realities in the field of language or humanities, there is only one truth in his department, which bothered him a lot:

They would ask us to draw a machine part, with details... If it was dirty or when something happened, the teacher would tear it up. There was only one truth there. That approach did not make sense to me. When I realized that truth is relative and can vary in different disciplines and in different time periods, the idea that there was only one truth bothered me.

As for being a teacher, on the other hand, Tuna reported that he did not have a favorable view of teaching due to the “stagnant aspect of teaching in Türkiye,” and that he did not want to be a teacher “in the traditional sense.” Instead, he wanted to be a teacher committed to ongoing and active learning. He adds, “That is why I prefer to see myself as an academic rather than a teacher in the current conditions,” just like İpek. As for his current understanding of his profession, Tuna stated that he maintains his enthusiasm and patience while not being content with his standing as a teacher.

Eylül dreamed of professions other than teaching. She reported that she had always been interested in space and had a childhood dream of exploring the universe. However, her primary school performance, especially in math, was poor. She also recalled having a strong creative side and talent in music, so she decided to pursue a music career. However, her father warned her that “making a living solely through music as a girl might be challenging. You need to stand on your feet.” He advised

her to continue music as a pastime. While highlighting her father's impact on her career decision, Eylül also stressed the importance of her father's voice in her family and disclosed his position there in accordance with traditional Turkish family dynamics. She said:

My mother holds a secondary position, although she does have some influence over my father, but only to a certain extent. My father's decisions prevail, which has always been the case in our household... Hearing his words, I realized that my true passion was always with language and linguistics... That's how the idea of doing *something* related to foreign languages, particularly English, took shape in my mind.

That *something* was not teaching, though. Eylül said the idea of teaching put her off, and she did not want to study ELT because her sister had told her it was a difficult field. Instead, she studied in a language and literature-related field. Citing her teachers' lectures and styles, she expressed her teachers' strong influence on her career decision. She then decided to be a research assistant in the same department. However, when her father said, "You need to work to stand on your own feet. I'm cutting off your allowance," she felt the need to start earning money as soon as possible and began working as a part-time teacher instead of pursuing a post-graduate degree. In other words, as a young woman, to secure a stable income and a future for herself, she decided to pursue a career deemed appropriate for women: Teaching. As for Mila, she aspired to become a teacher and a dancer, inspired by her mother's profession and her love of dancing. However, she studied English language teaching. Her goal was not to be a teacher but to work at a bank. After taking one of her dedicated teacher's linguistics classes in her second year at university, she decided to become a teacher. She recalled how much her teacher had inspired them as he would practice what he preached regarding "how to manage a classroom, how to deliver a lesson, how to use the chalkboard – everything," she added. She also mentioned the impact of her sister and mother as strong teachers.

Teachers' narratives suggest that they had diverse figured worlds in the past, and they entered the teaching profession with a myriad of figured worlds, some of which they were members, refused to be members, or were not allowed to be members. The analysis of Zeynep's narratives revealed that although her family confused her and

their influence delayed her from achieving her goals, she re-authored her career and pursued her dream by retaking the university exam and studying in a language and literature-related field. In contrast to Zeynep’s deliberate choice, others did not initially aspire to become teachers but ended up in the teaching profession. They described their figured world of MoNE with its people and practices. The school system was described as restrictive. Due to their figured worlds with images of teachers positioned as passive transmitters of knowledge following the curriculum without any change or interaction with students and doing the same things under others’ control, these individuals did not initially want to become teachers. However, when these already formed figured worlds collided with those reformed by their teachers or significant others in their schooling years (for Derin, Pera), as well as those reconstructed at university (for Mila) or in the workplace (for Eylül, Mabel, İpek), they reconsidered their career decisions and developed a positive attitude towards the idea of teaching (See Figure 5).

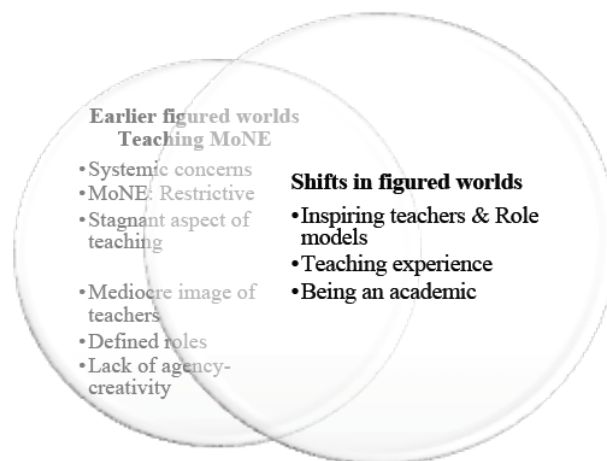


Figure 5. Negotiation of figured world’s leading to teachers’ career decisions

Regardless of whether choosing to become a teacher was an informed decision or not, they were all content with their career choices, as the following quotations attest:

“I’m so glad I chose this career every single day. It means a lot to me.”
(Derin)

“I love teaching. I am grateful that I chose this path. I’m thankful that I chose this profession. It’s spiritually fulfilling and it’s enjoyable.” (Mila)

“Yes, I am definitely doing the job that I love. It is a rewarding profession. A profession that brings you great spiritual satisfaction” (İpek)

“Contributing to the teaching and learning of English brings me immense joy.” (Eylül)

I never regretted it. I've found an ideal profession. I think it aligns well with my personality, and it's part of my life philosophy. Overall, I love it.” (Mabel)

Sighing in contentment, Zeynep affirmed she feels happy and fortunate to be a teacher, adding, “Retiring somewhat scares me, to be honest, because when I retire, it feels like I'll be shedding that cloak I wear.” Derin also expressed her gratitude for getting to do what she loves every day. Pera found the teaching profession exciting, and Mabel noted the emotional fulfillment and prestige of the profession.

The perceived satisfaction of teachers who lacked interest in teaching or were resistant to becoming teachers also underscores how they reconciled their previously formed figured worlds and constructed realities. Although teaching or language teaching did not appear to be an informed decision for everyone, a genuine interest in the language was shared among all. Their stories indicated their intense curiosity and passion for the English language. As they gained more insights and delved deeper into the realm of language teaching and being a language teacher, they needed to reconcile different figured worlds and found themselves at a crossroads. Despite their initial reservations, they embraced the teaching profession after careful negotiation through these multiple figured worlds. In brief, their accounts showcase the transformative power of navigating and continuously negotiating within and across these figured worlds or cultural realms of understanding.

4.1.4. Teacher Learning Experiences

This section outlines teachers' learning experiences relevant to the teaching profession, tracing their journey from former learners to teacher trainees and, ultimately, to current teachers. It begins with their apprenticeship of observation as former learners, followed by their learning experiences as teacher trainees in teacher education and alternative certification programs, and finally their learning

experiences as practicing teachers. It provides a detailed examination of how each phase has influenced their pedagogical practices and professional growth.

4.1.4.1. Learning Experiences as Former Learners: Apprenticeship of Observation

This section documents teachers' apprenticeship of observation of their former teachers and the invaluable lessons they reported to have gleaned about teaching. Teachers encountered different role models and scrutinized their teaching strategies, personalities, and attitudes in their unique journey from primary school to university and even to their workplace. They talked about the significance of their role model teachers, who served as a guide, inspiration, and motivation. They reported that they adopted some practices of their role models, who left long-lasting impacts on who they are and who served as catalysts as they shaped their job decisions highlighted in the previous section.

Analysis of their stories suggests that some of their role models ignited a passion for learning and fostered a sense of curiosity. Their accounts also indicate that based on their observations of their role models, they consider that they have picked up valuable teaching strategies and effective classroom management techniques. Tuna, for example, reported that in addition to his grandfather, who aroused a passion for reading, language, and literature, visiting professors at university and his thesis advisor also influenced him a lot. He preferred to frame his story about his role models around being an academic, which aligns with his perceived teacher role. As for Derin, she recalled her geography teacher in high school and mentioned how she was inspired by her lifelong learning mindset, adding: "I believe this reflects my character very well – always being different, always changing." In her narratives, Pera first described her father but prioritized his teacher role in his class over his father or parent role at home and indicated how much she fell in love with his teacher self. She also mentioned her literature teacher at university and reported that she had taught not only teaching or literature but other things as well:

Thanks to her, I now read books in a completely different way. My perception of music has changed... Whether it's a song lyric, a scene from a

movie, or just a sentence you hear in passing from a conversation with a friend, she taught me how to see every message that reaches me from different angles.

The teachers also stressed that they were impressed to see that their teachers themselves were applying what they espoused. Pera, for example, mentioned her methodology and vocabulary teacher at university, who practiced what she preached. She explained how: “So, let’s say today the teacher will teach the X technique, and she used that technique to teach the lesson on that day.” Similarly, Mila also talked about her linguistics and methods and approaches teacher, who also had an impact on her career choice: “After taking his classes, I decided to become a teacher. He was very meticulous. He really inspired us, and I felt I could do this job because he applied everything he taught himself.” In addition, she expressed her admiration for her teacher’s flexibility: “You know, we say, ‘reflection in action;’ that part was very fast.” As she indicated, her teacher would make quick decisions and adjustments in the classroom, and she compared herself to her teacher in this respect.

Based on their statements, participants also valued and admired way teachers taught pronunciation. Pera, for example, mentioned one of her teachers at university who had received education abroad, and she described her teacher as an extraordinary woman in terms of pronunciation:

She spoke as if she were singing and listening to her mesmerized me. She used to teach our speaking class and a few other lessons that also left a profound impact on me. I said I would speak just like her, look at texts just like her and adopt her teaching techniques... She had her own style, and I dreamt of having that kind of impact too.

İpek was another teacher who pointed to her teacher’s emphasis on pronunciation. As she reported, her teacher would give equal weight to each skill and emphasize pronunciation. She pointed out that she tried to implement what she had learned in her classes, too: “I always try to apply them... by imitating my role models.”

The way their role models taught also inspired teachers in the study. For example, in addition to her father, Eylül talked about two university teachers who explained things by giving examples from their lives. She claimed she never got bored in their

classes: “I really enjoyed their way of presenting the material. They provided wonderful examples from their own lives, going beyond the textbook knowledge.” Inspired by their anecdotes, she said now, “I always try to provide such examples, references, and experiences from daily life and my past to share with my students.” She added that her teachers were “truly well-equipped people.” One of them, for example, had visited many states in America and while discussing culture in her classes, she would give examples from those experiences. Derin reported how much she was influenced by her methodology teacher at university, who incorporated creative activities into her lessons and encouraged students to develop a different mindset by considering other viewpoints and asking different questions. She added, “This nourished my character a lot.” It is also worth mentioning that her eyes were filled with tears while talking about her teacher. Zeynep explained how much she enjoyed the way her teacher used drawing to explain things in secondary school. İpek indicated she admired her drama teacher at university, who turned the class into a theater. Mabel talked about her university teacher who always started with a warm-up and finished with a task. She added that her teacher would inform them of the lesson plan every day and use the board effectively.

Teachers like Derin and Zeynep also drew on the significance of teacher approval and recognition and how much being engaged in the teaching and learning process by their role models inspired them. Derin, for example, reminisced about a secondary school teacher who would ask for assistance with classroom errands. She said that she would feel happy, self-confident, and honored to be on the stage and help her teacher. She indicated that receiving approval and recognition from her teacher by hearing things like “you are doing this well. Teach it to your friends” not only served as a source of inspiration but also impacted her as she believed that the teacher really trusted her. Similarly, Zeynep’s narrative also revealed her enthusiasm for language classes in secondary school, and she also underscored the important role of teacher approval and recognition on her. Just like Derin, Zeynep also highlighted her assistance with errands in class, which left a profound impact on her:

There used to be jobs cards like pilot, fireman, etc... I would hold it and show it to my friends. The teacher would touch my hand like this. I liked it very

much, 'the teacher loves me.' Maybe because I liked him so much, I also liked the language very much.

Teachers' narratives also suggest that they were influenced by the overall atmosphere within the classroom, enhanced by their role model teachers' kind demeanor, personalities, human touch, and classroom management strategies. Mabel, for example, talked about her reading and writing teacher at university and reported how much she admired his smiling face and equal treatment of the students. She also mentioned another teacher at university and her way of building relationships with students: "Everyone would know their limits. For instance, in the classroom, you know when to talk, when to raise your hand, and you won't interrupt your friend's speech." She added that it was perhaps her personality that made her special.

Mila recalled how her linguistics and methods and approaches teacher could find a solution to every problem in his class: "How to manage the classroom, how to teach the lesson, how to use the board, everything, everything, everything." She now knew there was a solution for every issue in the class. Mila also had another teacher who was strong in classroom management: "She would plan the lesson in such a way that you would have to be ready until the end of the class. I liken myself to her."

Eylül reported that in the alternative certification program, she had learnt how to mentor and guide students and deal with challenging circumstances or students. Her teachers stressed the importance of handling anger and maintaining patience, empathy, and calmness, which greatly influenced her. They would address the students formally using "you" (2nd person plural/formal). Eylül reported doing the same to maintain a certain distance from her students, thinking it was necessary.

Highlighting the human touch, Zeynep appreciated her secondary school teacher's calm demeanor and love of her students and profession and her high school teacher's joy that make everyone forget sorrow. While talking about her high school teacher, she compared her use of the board to her teacher's board use. She claimed he wouldn't use the board properly and said: "I don't use the board properly, either. I realize now." She also described her teacher as active in class, calling them up to the board, asking them to write or speak, and observing them while moving around.

Zeynep had another role model at university who greatly impressed her with his stance and calmness. She remarked that “he never lost his temper” even when he was enraged, adding she was striving to do the same. İpek mentioned that she admired one of her teachers at university and her dialogue with students, and said, “I wish I could teach like her,” and she was also “a good role model as a woman.” Mabel was the only teacher who pointed to the physical appearance of her teacher. She reported admiring the physical appearance of one of her teachers in secondary school a lot: She was “a very pleasant young lady. We used to observe everything about her, from her nail polish to her haircut and even her skirts.” In brief, their role models contributed a lot to these teachers’ personal and professional lives and had important impacts on the way they defined themselves.

A close analysis of their accounts indicated that throughout their educational journeys, these teachers were exposed to diverse figured worlds, one of which was inhabited by their role model teachers, their practices, relationships, and discourses. Their stories highlight the profound influence of their role models on their personal and professional lives by fostering curiosity and learning passion and showing them how to view things from different perspectives. As their accounts suggest, teachers pointed to their role models’ instructional strategies, relationships with their students, and classroom management techniques. In the light of their accounts, it appears that the demeanor of some role models, their reactions in specific situations, and the close and patient relationships they established with their students occupied a noteworthy place in the minds of these teachers, too. They were also influenced by their role models’ physical appearance and personalities.

It was also evident in their stories that teachers pointed to their anti-role models, whose attitudes and practices served as cautionary examples. They reported that those negative-exemplar teachers also had lasting effects on them and acted as cautionary references in their professional lives whose strategies should be avoided. For example, Mabel recalled how, after getting a zero on the listening exam, her university teacher broke her heart by strictly asking her how she would keep studying in her department. She pointed out that negative examples could also be important since she learnt from this experience that one shouldn’t break hearts like

that. She added: “I have promised my students that I will not do what he did, and these are also instructive.” Eylül brought up the perceived aggression she experienced from her primary school teacher. Zeynep, who always highlighted the importance of human touch, talked about her high school teacher and explained why she did not like her. She reported that her teacher was cold and distant from the students, adding, “She would teach us and then go.”

In the light of their examples and stories, it appears that teachers brought their figured worlds inhabited by their role models and anti-role models with their practices, discourses, and relationships to their classes, both in the present and earlier years. For example, İpek and Zeynep noted that they were trying to implement what they had learned in their current classes, and Eylül mentioned that she was providing anecdotes like her role models and doing the same to maintain a certain distance from the students. Mila found her teaching persona aligned with that of her role model, or she perceived a strong resemblance between her own teaching persona and that of her role model. In contrast, Mabel eschewed the practices she observed in her anti-role model’s class. Teachers stated that they refrained from adopting the attitudes and practices of their anti-role models as they disapproved of them, which will be further discussed in their teaching philosophies in the following sections.

In a nutshell, teachers picked up effective teaching methods, strategies, and classroom management techniques from their role models and learned to steer clear of things they encountered in their anti-role models’ classes. These figured worlds inhabited by role models and anti-role models interacted with these teachers’ identities and their pre-existing figured worlds constructed through family and schooling, and the interplay between the constructed realms they navigated and their identities shaped the way these teachers perceived and positioned themselves within their classes, school, and the teaching profession, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1.4.2. Learning Experiences as Teacher Trainees

This section scrutinizes teachers’ learning experiences as teacher trainees. It first presents findings from the narratives of teachers who attended a teacher education

program. It then analyzes accounts from those who graduated from non-teaching departments.

4.1.4.2.1. Teacher Learning in Teacher Education Programs

This section examines teachers' stories, focusing on their experiences in teacher education programs. Their narratives revealed that only two teachers, Pera and Mila, among the participants, studied English Language Teaching (ELT). Their narratives indicated that teacher education was effective in developing pedagogical knowledge or the knowledge of how to teach, establishing a solid foundation in the English language and providing opportunities for teaching practice as part of practicum. Teachers also highlighted the essential teacher qualities or attributes highlighted in the program. While discussing their experiences, Pera and Mila also pointed to the encouraged teacher roles fostered in their teacher education programs.

Pera reported that the program was intense, with a strong emphasis on practicum and methodology courses, but it also included extensive studies in literature and linguistics. She indicated that project writing, testing and evaluation were all part of the training provided to teacher candidates. Regarding the teacher educators, Pera highlighted their enthusiasm, positive attitudes, and love of their profession, all of which contributed to her having a great learning experience. She characterized her teachers as content with their profession and described how profoundly they instilled a love for the teaching profession in teacher trainees. Moreover, she thought they had a major influence on the program's practice-oriented nature. As her story suggests, her teachers encouraged students not to apply anything directly as it was written in the book. Instead, they were encouraged to adapt their teaching methods and approaches based on the student profile and their own perception, which might all change over time. While appreciating the efforts of her teachers, she also revealed a common criticism about ELT graduates and how her teachers struggled against that:

There is sometimes a criticism that... literature graduates have a much stronger command of the language, and that teaching graduates have better teaching skills but may have a slightly weaker command of the language, which may be a correct observation, but they have made earnest efforts to prevent this.

According to Pera, the program aimed to prepare teacher trainees for the following roles: An educator teaching English, a leader, and a facilitator, “doing things for what kind of learning they are inclined to” and providing guidance. She also clarified that her earlier conception of the leader role, similar to a manager in class, had shifted to encompass inspiration.

Mila was another teacher who received education in ELT. Like Pera, Mila also reported that it was an intense program, building solid foundations. She then described how much she enjoyed her linguistics and methods and approaches courses since the teachers would practice what they preached regarding, for example, managing the class, giving instruction, and using the board properly. When asked to talk about encouraged teacher roles in the program, she first praised her teachers for being fair and well-prepared and pointed out that they respected teacher candidates just as they taught them. She elaborated on what teacher qualities were accentuated in it. For example, they were taught that a teacher needs to be well-prepared, proficient, and fair, have a good command of her subject, and present it well. The importance of foreseeing or anticipating students’ needs and identifying them was also reported to be highlighted in the program.

As she discussed the merits of the program, she also shared a critical event which had a profound impact on her understanding of her teacher role as well. On a challenging day, she missed one of her linguistics classes at university, just like a very hardworking student in the same class. When she overheard her friend giving the teacher her excuse and asking permission to ask a question, the teacher refused, saying, “If you don’t show up, you must live with the consequences of this.’ That really affected me... I was scared to death that I would miss his class.” In other words, her teachers had clear rules and preferred not to compromise. While she was reconstructing her experience, she also related that to her online education experience and described how she benefitted from the lessons she had learnt from her teacher educators:

This is a good thing on the one hand because, you know, as a teacher, now I see that there is no end to it. WhatsApp messages never end, for example,

during online education. I mean, students are constantly asking for help. You explain something, and it's written there. They all come and ask you again... I think it is best not to run after students like that helicopter mom, you know, spoon-feeding all the time... For example, I had set a boundary for myself... When I had an announcement, I would leave it with a video, and shoot how to do it on the screen, and then say, 'Watch this video. If you have any questions until this hour, ask them. After that, none of your questions will be answered. And in the evenings, please don't write after 9 p.m.'

As can be seen in her account, the methods or approaches that initially unsettled her had turned into methods she consulted over time. In other words, as they gained more insights about becoming language teachers and navigated through different figured worlds, they also reconstructed their own interpretations of their roles and stances. Pera, for example, argued that her understanding of "the teacher as a leader" in her teacher education courses changed later as she gained experience in teaching. Similarly, even though Mila found the teacher's discourses and practices in her figured world of teacher education program unsettling, she acknowledged that she was also trying to set boundaries in her current class, saying: "To be honest, I was trying to set a limit in that way."

4.1.4.2.2. Teacher Learning in Alternative Certification Programs

Another cohort of teachers, Eylül, Zeynep, Tuna, Mabel, and Derin, pursued a different route, alternative certification, to become English language teachers. In other words, they had graduated from an English-related department and then enrolled in an alternative certification program for teacher licensure. Their stories revealed that they participated in this program either voluntarily or as required by their department. Moreover, getting that certificate was free for some teachers but paid for others. Their stories mostly elaborated on the content of the program, teacher roles encouraged in the program, and teacher educators.

Regarding the content, the teachers pointed out that while the program provided opportunities for practicum or hands-on learning experience and some guidance on classroom management and materials, they were superficial, so they considered the program insufficient. Eylül stated that the certification program was voluntary or

optional. Despite her initial reluctance to pursue the certificate, she paid for the program, and once enrolled, she invested in the program and dedicated herself fully. As she remarked, there was some room for the teaching practice, and she tried to make the most of it. For example, she said, “The lecturer would give a topic... I would prepare and explain it quite like a teacher,” using visual aids. She also reported that the teachers would teach them how to handle difficult situations with patience and understanding. Regarding the materials, teachers stressed how important it was for the instructional materials to be “as simple and straightforward as possible.” Despite all these positive aspects, she argued that the alternative certification program was “a waste of time” and could have been more practical. Moreover, she thought that culture and critical thinking were neglected in the program, and the practicum was solely geared towards offering language education to different groups in MoNE. However, they started working in higher education, so she suggested the program be fundamentally changed. Referring to her lack of field knowledge compared to ELT graduates, she said, “I could have done a minor, for example, if they had allowed me to do so. I should have taken courses for two years at the faculty of education.” Her remarks indicated that she preferred to enroll in ELT courses in the ELT department over those in the certification program.

Zeynep reported that she felt fortunate since the program was offered to students during their university education, so she did not pay for it. However, she was one of the teachers who felt that the program lacked depth and practical experience, saying: “Well, to be honest, it wasn't very practical. It was very theoretical. I don't think it was enough.” Moreover, the lecturers were “not competent,” and the program was outdated. However, she also mentioned her methodology course and expressed how much she gained from it.

Derin was relatively more positive about her experience in the program. She reported that the year-long course served to build the foundations and then she felt ready to receive any further information. That served as her reference point or benchmark, and in the subsequent pieces of training, she nourished that base and established and strengthened the connections between them. In brief, she was content with the program and particularly loved her excellent lecturer. Like Derin, Tuna also

indicated that the program aimed to acquaint them with some perspectives and concepts or lay the groundwork. He added that he could not say it did not contribute to him for any course: “Although I do not remember many concepts in detail, I am sure that I learnt there or learnt from the discussions there.” He reported that it was a compulsory course for post-graduate students, so the lecturers might not have done much beyond the time they devoted. He claimed that the issue was more with the structure of the program itself. It was no different for Mabel. Regarding the program, she said, “It might have made a very general contribution and answered the question ‘What is teaching?’ No one was trying to teach me anything during the practicum. It's just what you learn.” In other words, it was up to them to make the most of it, or it was incumbent upon them to fully utilize it.

Teachers also discussed the encouraged teacher roles in their programs. Tuna stated that the teacher was seen as an instructor transmitting knowledge. Despite the communicative approach fostered back then, Derin also remarked that the teacher was still on stage with her knowledge transmitter role, initiating the interaction and giving feedback to students’ responses (initiate-response-feedback pattern). She also added that she had certain misconceptions after hearing, “Teaching is a creative process, and teachers are always on stage.” She assumed that she would always be on stage and entertain her students, which turned into pressure, as she had worked so hard to find games in her initial years of teaching. Similarly, Zeynep noted that traditional teacher-centered roles were encouraged, and just like Derin, Zeynep also stressed the knowledge transmitter role encouraged in the program. In addition to the traditional roles, Eylül reported that the certification program also encouraged planning and organizational roles as well as mentoring and guiding students.

A close analysis of teachers’ accounts indicated that both teacher education and alternative certification programs, with their people, practices, relationships, and discourses, constituted figured worlds that teachers entered or declined to do so. It is worth mentioning that while the teachers with ELT degrees expressed how satisfied they were with the program and teacher educators, almost all the alternatively certified teachers raised concerns about their programs’ effectiveness, depth, and quality. The collective feeling of this group was that the training leaned too much

towards a theoretical framework. They asserted that such training did not adequately prepare them for the complexities of their real classes as it was outdated, so it did not significantly shape their professional teaching practices.

In their figured worlds of alternative certification programs, teachers expressed how traditional teacher-centered roles were primarily encouraged, and teachers were mostly positioned as knowledge transmitters. While expressing encouraged roles in the certification program, teachers' accounts also revealed that the teacher as a mere knowledge transmitter was not in complete alignment with their desired teacher role in their figured worlds of teaching.

4.1.4.3. Learning Experiences as Teachers

As part of their histories in general and teacher learning in particular, teachers elaborated on their teacher learning experiences after becoming teachers, including the nature of support they received from the administration and colleagues, if any, in-service training activities, and self-directed learning to further their professional development. Such efforts involved pursuing post-graduate degrees and attending teacher development activities and courses outside their school.

In discussions concerning institutional support for teachers, a prevalent opinion among some teachers was that it depended on the administration in office. İpek was one of those teachers who focused on the change in the school, and she stated that while she had previously received support from the administration, she was unsure about it now: "Is the current administration supportive? I don't know." Tuna was another teacher who highlighted the change in institutional support and stated that the support offered varied from time to time, depending on the administration. For example, while expressing his gratitude for the support he received in the past, he also said, "Those were the times when the university operated as a genuine academic institution," implying that this is no longer the case. He added, "I don't see any support at the moment, frankly." When asked to rate the support offered by the administration for their professional development, while Mabel pointed out that she truly received support whenever she requested it, Eylül pointed to her desire to better

herself but acknowledged the current dearth of opportunities available to them. Similarly, Pera also talked about her initial years of teaching and stated that she did not receive any support. She claimed that coordinators observed her classes, not to give feedback and contribute to her development but to supervise. Derin also stated that she received no financial support for attending conferences and delivering presentations, except for one event. The only thing she received was “permission,” but she clarified that it was in fact her legal right. As her account revealed, they did not provide her with any financial support. On the contrary, people questioned the number of events she wanted to attend. Despite people’s attempts to marginalize her, she unwaveringly stood up for what she believed in and attended the events regardless of the lack of support.

In light of their statements, it can be interpreted that the level of perceived support was contingent upon the administration in office. Through the figured worlds framework, the perception of support was intricately connected to social realities constructed in different administrative realms. In other words, the dynamics within the school and the prevailing social realities fostered by the administration in office in Snowdrop resulted in varying degrees of perceived support among the teachers in the study. Teachers negotiated their roles and interactions within each constructed world guided by shared norms and understandings. Considering the role of the administration in office shaping these figured worlds and the dynamics through policies, practices, discourses, and interactions, it appears that teachers perceived different levels of support depending on the figured world they were members or participants of. Some of them, for example, inhabited figured worlds where administrative support was abundant, and the school culture was supportive, so teachers felt empowered and rated the support high. On the other hand, others inhabited figured worlds with a less supportive culture, so they perceived inadequate support.

In addition to support provided by the administration, teachers also rated the support they obtained from their colleagues. Tuna argued that he did not receive any assistance from his colleagues. On the contrary, his closest friends engaged in activities that allowed them to gain an advantage without telling him, such as

reducing their class hours, advancing academically, or taking advantage of some academic opportunities within the school without informing him in advance. Derin noted that she enjoyed attending the workshops given by her friends in PDU. She remarked: “Even if it is something I know, I find myself questioning something else,” but she also mentioned that she gave her friends more support than her colleagues did.

Across the narratives, some teachers reported gaining valuable insights through the exchange of ideas, experiences, and resources provided. İpek, for example, underscored the value of having her colleagues’ support, especially during her early teaching years. She said that she had requested to observe experienced teachers’ classes and added:

It was the experienced teachers there who trained me first. I tried to learn by observing them, which has contributed a lot to my learning. Experienced teachers were always ready to share in this way. Whatever I asked, they supported me and helped in some way.

Similarly, Eylül and Mila also conveyed their gratitude for the assistance and support experienced teachers provided in their early years. Mila described the school environment as collaborative back then and reported feeling grateful for those teachers who invited her to observe their classes and went through her lesson plan. At present, she specifically highlighted her colleague who significantly contributed to her professional development: “Every meeting we have serves as a valuable professional development opportunity. We can't help but get excited. We get excited as we converse and learn from one another.” Mabel also stated that she received support when she asked for it. Pera argued that, in the past, she benefited from exchanging ideas with her close friends about what worked well in the classroom, which was not only beneficial and but also her favorite time.

Analysis of teachers’ narratives uncovered that even though some teachers lacked the support of the administration during their initial years of teaching and the degree of support varied significantly from administration to administration, many teachers benefited from collegial support. Specifically, interactions and collaborative

discussions among their peers were particularly beneficial in their initial years of teaching, allowing them to refresh and consolidate their teaching methods and increase their motivation. In their lived experiences, they found that drawing on the expertise of their colleagues was a rich source of personal and professional growth.

Teachers' accounts also revealed their perceptions regarding in-service training activities in their school organized by the Professional Development Unit (PDU) and their own efforts, including post-graduate degrees and teacher development activities and courses outside the school. Teachers, such as Derin and Zeynep, expressed that because they were open and willing to learn, they enjoyed participating in their friends' workshops and listening to them, even if they already knew the topic being discussed. To put it differently, they attended these sessions without expecting to see anything new. Based on their statements, it can be interpreted that social dynamics and interaction among colleagues may have an impact on teachers' engagement with the community and activities in school.

While Mabel noted that she attended the seminars within the school, İpek shared that she was trying to participate in professional development activities that piqued her interest. In other words, she emphasized being selective when choosing which events to attend. As she reflected on her initial years of teaching, Eylül recalled that she had benefited from the orientation program, in which she observed other teachers' classes, and her classes were observed by them, which served as a "backup."

As their accounts unfolded, teachers appeared to follow the professional development activities and events in their school. Some of them attended the ones they were interested in. Only Pera clearly stated that she chose not to participate in any activities in the school and explained why: "It's more about the individuals organizing them rather than the administration itself... Partly due to the high workload here... Also because I tend to be somewhat reactive in my approach."

While reflecting on the professional development activities, Mila said that although teacher participation in those activities might be considered low in their school, "this is everyone's own journey." As adults, teachers want to "act autonomously" and

added: “We want to decide for ourselves what we want to learn and what we don't want to learn.” Then, she positioned herself as “autonomous and self-directed in this sense.” Based on her statements, it can be interpreted that some professional activities did not align with the interests, needs, and goals of some teachers, so they felt less motivated to attend these events. Mila saw nothing wrong with the observed lack of motivation in PDU activities as everyone’s journey is unique, with different preferences and decisions. This also accounts for İpek’s selective participation in events.

Through the lens of Figured Worlds Theory, teachers construct and engage in sense-making, share knowledge, and collaborate with others in these PDU events or dynamic contexts. These communities can also be considered platforms where teachers can negotiate their roles, exercise agency, and act in alignment with their identities and goals. Teachers’ narratives revealed that some teachers perceived these activities as social experiences where they listened to and communicated with their friends. Others chose to invest their time and energy in activities that aligned with their interests and needs.

In addition to in-service teacher training activities, teachers also reported pursuing post-graduate degrees and participating in teacher development activities and courses outside their school to further their professional learning and stay updated. Prioritizing his role as an academic throughout the interviews, Tuna reported that he was working on his publications, projects and paper presentations in symposiums for his ongoing professional development. Derin, who has a post-graduate degree, talked about her making presentations and participating in teacher development activities outside the school as much as time allowed. She also remarked that she completed an intensive one-year teacher development course in which she had the opportunity to design activities, go through relevant literature, prepare action plans, conduct micro-teachings, and write reflection papers. As she indicated, she had learnt everything from where to place her hand and arm in class to how to teach reading. “I can say the course equipped me a lot,” she said and kept attending other courses as well, adding, “The subsequent training sessions are like a spice for them... You add spices and further enrich it.” Similarly, Mila, who holds a post-graduate degree, stated that she

also completed a teacher training course, which she found beneficial as it contributed substantially to her professional learning. Additionally, she said that she enjoyed attending workshops on topics of interest whenever she had the opportunity rather than those “forced training sessions at school.” Recently, for example, she said, “I tried to attend trainings in the fields of leadership, mentoring, and relations, such as professional leadership, mentoring, training coaching, psychology-related teacher leadership, and Erasmus programs.” As her account revealed, she also participated in those micro-credentials or short and focused programs designed to equip people with different competencies. In a similar vein, Pera, who has a post-graduate degree, stated that she also attended free webinars and seminars and followed some training offered by TÜBİTAK and OECD. Eylül reported attending online workshops and training sessions, especially the ones about distance education and found them helpful when the professional development activities were suspended during the pandemic.

The only teacher who declined to participate in the alternative certification program was İpek. She claimed that the reason was partly due to her fear and anxiety of becoming a teacher in the MoNE. In other words, she kept eliminating the possibility of becoming a teacher. Although an alternative certification program was available at the university, she made no effort to obtain the certificate. She added: “I think the impact of traumatic experiences and the fear of working in the Ministry of Education influenced my decision not to take it... I didn’t attempt to get the certificate.” As is evident, she became tense at the mere prospect of working as a teacher in the Ministry of National Education was enough to cause tension, which led her to refrain from pursuing the certification program. However, once she started teaching, she attended teacher training courses. Regarding these programs, she reported that teachers were expected to have a good command of the subject, integrate four skills in context, be both prepared and flexible, monitor and guide the students, involve the students and ensure they do most of the work, and adeptly “know how to get lost in the classroom.” In other words, the importance of a moderate level of involvement-not being over-involved in students’ work and learning to step back when needed-was stressed. She further pointed out that she was also reading articles as much as possible to stay updated.

Given that only Pera, Mila, and Derin had backgrounds in ELT, while reflecting on their learning experiences, the others pointed to their perceptions regarding their positions in the profession and the implications for their learning experiences. As a graduate of a language and literature-related field, İpek stated that when she started teaching, she knew “literature and teaching were not the same,” so she sought teacher development courses. To this end, she first completed internationally recognized teacher training courses where she was initially exposed to theory, asked to apply it, and then she received feedback. In other words, the courses combined theory and practice, which benefited her professional development and which she found valuable. She reported that she had recently completed an online course and was trying to attend the meetings of a professional organization on a regular basis. She believed these events contributed to both her professional and personal development as they offered opportunities to connect with others.

As a graduate of a language and literature-related field, Zeynep did not perceive it as a drawback. On the contrary, she believed reading various materials nourished her a lot. However, she also remarked that her pedagogical knowledge was not as strong as that of ELT graduates. Therefore, she attended online and face-to-face workshops organized by the British Council and followed live broadcasts on Instagram. She also described YouTube as “a huge learning channel” with useful channels like INGED (the English Language Teachers' Association in Türkiye). She stressed that she still has a strong sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and expressed that being appreciated or thanked for attendance at events was nice. For example, she mentioned that different from the past, teachers now earn certificates for attending the workshops in their school, adding, “This is actually a bit of formalism, but still it is nice to say, ‘You participated, thank you, you were there.’” Stated differently, she expressed her gratitude for being appreciated.

Eylül pointed to how she followed Oxford, Cambridge, and TESOL for webinars and seminars on ELT and tried to attend them. Like İpek, Eylül also noted that completing an alternative certification program and earning an ELT degree were different. Still, she emphasized the significance and role of literature and culture in language teaching, like Zeynep. Eylül reported reading about minorities, African

Americans, Mexicans, injustice, and inequality and planning to address these topics in her thesis. Unlike the other teachers, Mabel reported that she did not participate in PDU events outside the school much, but she did read about topics, such as digitalization.

Teachers' accounts also revealed how much they valued getting feedback from their students and their own self-evaluation methods that fostered their professional development. Tuna, Mila, Pera, and İpek, for example, underscored the criticality of student feedback in teacher learning. Pera stated that she invited her friends from different departments to her classes, asked someone to record her lesson, evaluated her own performance, and then reflected on her lesson, calling that process "self-evaluation." She added: "After each lesson, sometimes I watch the recordings again, sometimes I think about what I did at work and I say, well, this did not work out like that, I write it down... If I use it next time, I should not do it like this... There needs to be that self-criticism." İpek also stressed her ongoing reflections on her classes and noted that she got written feedback from students, a practice Tuna employed, too.

Teachers' stories also unveiled that despite the lack of support for professional development, teachers actively sought out alternative environments or figured worlds where their attempts to better themselves and further their professional learning were acknowledged and supported. Tuna, for example, reported to have made quite bold decisions when he was about to complete his post-graduate degree. Despite all these challenges, though, he persevered, navigated the obstacles and got permission for his post-graduate degree. He also reported that thanks to his efforts, other lecturers started to follow his lead. Although there were times when he felt helpless, he strove to improvise for his professional learning. Similarly, Mila discussed her challenges in pursuing a post-graduate degree, describing it as "a turning point" in her career. She reported remaining determined, navigating these constraints, and completing her degree. Based on their statements, one can interpret that investing in their own professional development and seeking out learning experiences outside their workplace underlined their strong commitment or dedication to maintaining life-long

learning, staying updated, and creating more effective teaching and learning environments.

4.2. Figured World of Snowdrop

Snowdrop is a figured world with its unique realm of practices, discourses, people, and interactions, which reflect the values of the school and guide teachers' actions. This section analyzes the teachers' workplace, Snowdrop, and describes this unique context by focusing on these elements in their accounts which coalesce to create that dynamic culture shaping teachers' identities, decision-making, and understanding of what it means to be part of that culture, along with the temporal, place and social dimensions.

4.2.1. Situated Practices: Instruction, Norms, and Rituals

Practices hold significant importance within the framework of Figured World because they reflect the expectations, routines, standards, and values that all contribute to the construction of a community, and teachers' interpretations of them shed light on the practices they embrace or reject, decisions they make or abandon and actions they choose to take or not. This section encompasses teachers' accounts concerning the practices in Snowdrop, including the quality of instruction and assessment, as well as the norms and routines that teachers engage in as members of this socio-cultural realm, Snowdrop.

Given the shifting of the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, the narratives of Tuna and Mabel underscore the multifaceted challenges teachers faced during and after the pandemic. For example, they emphasized their perception of a shift in the quality of instruction provided to students because of the simplification of the exams due to the pandemic and the lack of resources in their school. More specifically, Tuna pointed to the change in the exemption exams and tasks and explained how that shift affected the quality of instruction negatively. He reported raising his objection when writing was removed from the exemption exam, but it did not work. After that, he said, listening and speaking were excluded. Then, those

classes were removed and tasks were introduced instead of them. After the pandemic, both the tasks and the exams were simplified. He argued that four skills were reduced to two, reading and limited writing. In brief, Tuna's narrative, which begins with a critical examination of the change in the exam and tasks, highlights the shift towards a reductionist approach in student assessment, only with reading and limited writing.

Eylül, Zeynep and Mabel also mentioned issues related to the poor quality of instruction during online education. Zeynep claimed they were losing those students since they did not have proper listening courses and materials, a proper program and homework policy, adding: "Because things are always changing. We are always postponing, procrastinating." Mabel also mentioned that listening was removed from the program. After transitioning to face-to-face education in different departments, she had to skip the listening parts because the teachers were not provided with computers. They were left on their own in different faculties, and she did not carry her laptop to school, unlike other teachers like Tuna, Zeynep and Mila, who carried their own computers to their classes every day. Later, she brought her mother's small wireless speaker and used her personal hotspot, but she said, "It's not practical, it's a waste of time. It's a burden to you." In other words, teaching practices were badly affected by the inadequate resources available to teachers. They were expected to compensate for inadequate resources by bringing or using their own computers, speakers, or internet. Mabel's account revealed not only the systemic inadequacies in providing teachers with essential technological resources such as computers but also the institutional reliance on teachers' self-sufficiency in the face of constraints given that Mabel, Tuna, Mila, and Zeynep used their personal devices and hotspots.

In addition to the quality of instruction, teachers like Eylül, Derin, Zeynep, Pera and Tuna also critically reflected on the teaching materials used in their school. Eylül, for instance, argued that they are limited and outdated. Despite the administration's directive that "Original course books must be purchased," the majority of students used photocopied or secondhand versions as they could not afford the originals. When her students told her that they could afford the books, she reported telling them to "buy a secondhand one" then. However, they lacked access to the online

resources available to original book owners. As a teacher, she felt very uncomfortable because she couldn't provide access to the additional materials, tests, and quizzes due to copyright issues. She also stated: "We recommend 100 online platforms to the students, but it is not clear what will come out of these platforms. We do not know all the content." While sharing the extra materials of the coursebook with students was deemed a "crime," sharing a list of online platforms was not considered a problem, as she reported. She was also critical of the writing materials prepared by the school as they contained some mistakes, and she found them outdated. Considering the move towards digitization in education, she stated:

There is still very old information in it, so we are stuck with those texts. We should be telling brand new things and talking about the metaverse, the digital world. We should read texts about COVID-19, for example. We should talk about what is happening in the world...I think that our materials in preparatory education are very limited and inaccessible.

In other words, she stressed the importance of updating materials to better address the needs of the students. For example, instead of traditional phone calls, written communication through digital platforms like e-mail and social media was getting more and more popular. Therefore, she suggested that teaching materials evolve to address these and teach students relevant skills such as writing resumes and application letters.

Derin expressed her reservations regarding the use of market-oriented materials in the school, particularly focusing on a language learning platform in which students were required to do the exercises and submit their certificates to their teachers as part of their overall grade. She recalled one of her graduate courses and stated that she was "totally against" the idea of using that "mechanism of the capitalist order to be used by students at a state university," and explained her concerns. She expressed discomfort with the assignment given to all the preparatory class students. Then, she asked, "Are there any other personal interests at play here? That would be my principal question. Does this person have a personal interest?" Unfortunately, her inquiries went unanswered, or she felt her voice was ignored. Zeynep was another teacher who also problematized using the same self-directed language learning

platform in her classes. She recounted numerous grievances voiced by her students, who questioned whether she had her own sources rather than the mandated ones. She also described the practice as “strange” as she could not link the handing in of their certificates to a tangible progression in students’ qualifications. “They got 15 points... Have they learned anything? No”, she pondered, questioning the real educational gain from such activities. She also stated she thought it would be far more beneficial for students to describe a picture in the class with a partner. Teachers, such as İpek, Eylül, Mabel, also stressed the inadequate resources and infrastructural problems in the school. Mabel remarked: “We need to have easy access to the internet in the classroom in this day and age.” She then expressed frustration at having to use her personal hotspot in the class and added, “The school needs to provide such resources for both students and teachers.”

In summary, during the interviews, especially at a time when the pandemic was reshaping the educational landscape, some teachers candidly voiced their concerns about the lack of resources available during their classes and expressed how the pandemic affected the quality of instruction, exams, and materials. In addition, the oversimplification of the exams, the removal of listening and speaking lessons from the exams and the curriculum, and the use of outdated, market-oriented, and inefficient teaching materials were also brought up during the meetings.

Teachers’ stories also revealed their perceived norms at school or unwritten codes that guided behavior and communication in their school. These involved ensuring transparency by informing the school of everything to be done, strict conformity to all regulations, and avoiding any potential issues. Starting and finishing the classes on time, maximizing English in class, refraining from voicing the issues, and being ready for last-minute changes were also included. Their accounts unveiled the invisible cultural thread that steered teachers’ behaviors and relationships. For example, Derin stated that notifying the administration of leaving the city was a norm, saying, “If you are going out of the province, you must inform the institution.” She also stated that teachers were expected to adhere to the established rules and maintain compliance, which was perfectly acceptable, according to Derin. However, she said, “Rules can’t always be right. They are correct in their context.” Then, she

described a critical incident she experienced with the administration, and her eyes filled with tears while describing that moment. After learning that her husband's grandmother passed away, they had to leave the city at 4.30 in the morning to attend the funeral. As her husband was devastated, Derin decided to drive. However, she was also the proctor for an exam at school that day, so she texted the administration on her way to let them know how serious the situation was. Contrary to her expectations, she received the following "cold" message: "Today you have an official exam assignment. Well, whatever you do, today you have to deliver the death certificate to the institution before five." She was surprised since no condolences were offered, and she expressed her sorrow, disappointment, and anger:

There were many people around me and a coffin. And she called me to tell me that the document needed to be approved there... I said this cannot be the institution I serve... I said I refuse to be an orderly for someone who has not recognized my basic human needs...I said, 'Look, can you hear the voices right now? These are the cries of people. What do you want from me? I don't understand. I will bring that document, I will have that document before five' and hung up, but I was crying... It was traumatic.

Derin picked up the document following the burial of the deceased and tried her best to arrive at school before they left. When she got to school at 5.15, she selected three people and requested their signatures on the document to be on the safe side. The intensity of her feelings caused her to lose track of how it got there in the interview, so she asked me to repeat the question. Although she had worked hard for the school and grew up there, she said, "I completely lost my sense of belonging to that administration that day...I lost my faith and trust in the administration... I mean, it's a serious lack of trust. I don't know how we came to this topic." She then problematized norms and rules, questioned the utility of rules, and asked: "Is that rule never flexible?" She claimed that if you cannot use the initiative, "you turn into puppets."

In a similar vein, Tuna mentioned the expectation of compliance at school as an unwritten rule. He talked about what was or was not expected from a teacher, citing the following discourse at school: "Let's not look too much at what she is doing, whether she is attending the class or not. She shouldn't cause fights or add

unnecessary workload.” Eylül also shared this. Everything was fine as long as the teachers started and finished the classes on time. “When other problems arise, they are buried under the rug so that no one hears about them,” she added. According to her, the curriculum shouldn’t be changed frequently. She also pointed to the burden on teachers’ shoulders, especially during online education, since they had to check different communication channels, such as her e-mails or WhatsApp groups, for announcements or last-minute changes, and strained to ensure they did not miss anything. In other words, teachers were expected to comply with the given instructions and avoid voicing the issues.

Teachers’ stories indicated an administrative preference for not being overwhelmed by additional duties, too. This was apparent in Pera’s account, for example. She conveyed her surprise upon encountering the administration’s following request from the teachers at a staff meeting: “Encourage your students to take the exemption exam during the interim period so that they can pass and there will be fewer students in the second semester.” She also highlighted the tendency towards reducing the workload and a lack of motivation among teachers, which reflected the school culture, according to Pera. Still, she added she would not be one of those people.

Moreover, she stressed the importance of compliance at school by focusing on how teachers were positioned, too: “The image of the teacher is as follows: enter the class on time, do whatever you do inside, but don't speak Turkish, leave on time, enter the grades on time, you know, follow the rules and don't cause us any problems.” Similarly, İpek mentioned that the top priority is completing the courses properly and starting and finishing lessons on time. She also added that success in exams was also expected. Like İpek, Mabel reported entering and leaving the classes on time was a norm. Using English as much as possible was also expected. She also pointed to “the completion of the units in books, and if they're not finished, making up for them... attending meetings” and added: “Attendance is usually taken and required.”

Given that figured worlds are socially and culturally constructed realms where identities are crafted, meanings are negotiated, and certain actions and norms are valued over others, in this figured world of Snowdrop, too, there weren’t only

explicitly mentioned norms but also unwritten rules that reflected the priorities in the school, guided teachers' actions and underlined the deep-rooted expectations about what was considered acceptable within the borders of the school setting. Across the narratives, it appeared that those who complied with these norms and values aligned with the institutional values. Teachers' narratives also revealed their perceptions regarding the rituals, or established practices that foster a sense of unity within the school. Within the framework of Figured Worlds, rituals hold importance as they foster teachers' sense of belonging and shape the organizational culture where teachers navigate and negotiate their roles. In the lived experiences of language teachers in the study, frequent meetings and get-togethers fostering collaboration, interaction, and a sense of community and belonging characterized the figured world of school in the past. For instance, Pera reported that the staff used to come together on special days, and they would socialize more in the past: "Charity fairs would be held for disabled children or individuals with special needs, and we would all participate without fail." She also added that priority was given to such events as people had a strong sense of responsibility. Derin also stated that the school used to organize charity fairs in the past and claimed that it was not difficult to cultivate a collaborative school environment. Later, however, the school started to prevent people from coming together, negatively affecting teachers' sense of belonging to the institution. In a similar vein, Mila articulated a notable shift in the school culture and contended that there was a lot of emphasis on a sense of belonging in the past, adding: "Now, there is an attempt to change this a bit." Then, she highlighted that the focus shifted from fostering a sense of belonging to promoting success and measurable output: "Currently, there is a somewhat greater focus on success rather than belonging. There should be achievement, at least this much, standard, and easier to measure. There are norms. Like a post-graduate degree." This explains why İpek suggested organizing more social events like New Year parties to improve the school culture. In contrast to the current emphasis on individualism, teachers noticed that the staff used to get together, collaborate, and share more than they do now. As their narratives unfolded, it became apparent that there was a shift in the school culture, relationships, and practices away from shared rituals, gatherings, and an emphasis on a sense of belonging towards a school culture marked by isolation and a heightened focus on individual success. This shift had an impact on teachers' sense of belonging

to and within the school, which will be further discussed in the section about school culture (See Figure 6).

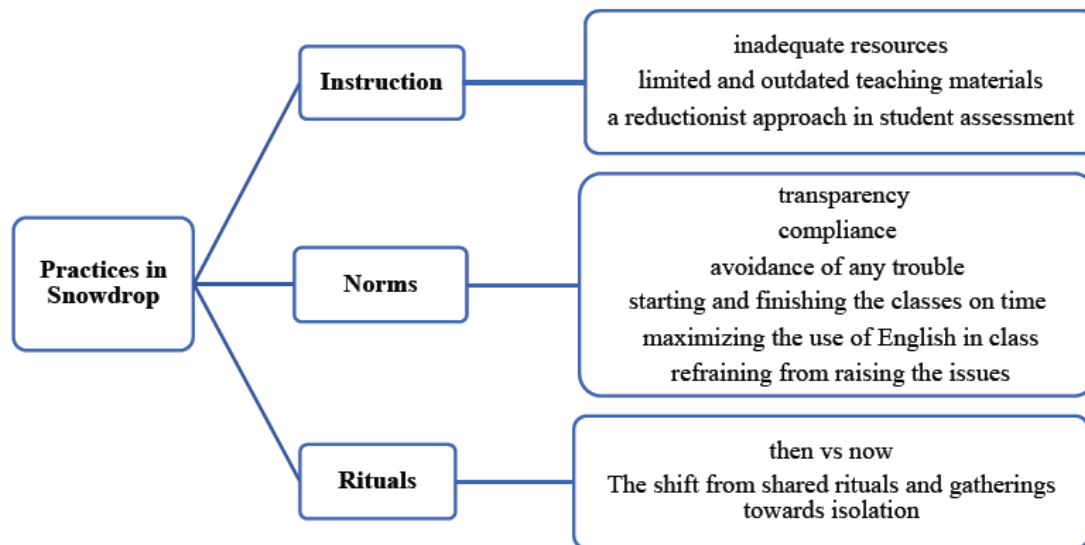


Figure 6. Key aspects of practices

4.2.2. Circulating Discourses

In line with the Figured Worlds framework, discourses encompass the language and stories used in the school and play a pivotal role in constructing meaning and interpreting experiences. In addition to guiding teacher behavior and influencing the way teachers interpret their roles and responsibilities, they also shape the organizational culture and reinforce values within their school.

The teachers in this study discussed the discourses circulating in their school and problematized the ones that conflicted with their beliefs and stances. As their stories unraveled, it appeared that being designated as a research university by the Council of Higher Education has resulted in many changes, including the redefinition of quality and positioning of students and teachers, and it paved the way for the emergence of some other discourses like *quality assurance*, *accreditation*, *student-centered instruction*, *deskilling*, *teacher accountability*, and *othering*. Together with the impacts of neoliberalism on the school, discourses such as *university-industry partnerships* and *market orientation* have also surfaced.

4.2.2.1. Quality Assurance: “What you call quality actually turns into a mechanism of control.”

Teachers underscored the university’s emphasis on quality assurance, control, accreditation, and the university and industry partnership following its transition to a research university status. They problematized these discourses, expressed their nuanced observations of their impacts on the school, described how they navigated them, and discussed how they manipulated the given space when they felt “suffocated.”

Teachers began by expressing their perspectives on quality, a shared discourse prevalent in their school, and then discussed the other discourses that emerged through quality. Derin, for example, first expounded her understanding of quality and then problematized the way it was redefined by the school and morphed into a method of control. She defined quality as the “state of doing the best of what one is capable of” and asserted that it cannot be developed using an external motivational tool like accreditation. Instead, as she reported, quality surfaces when you are genuinely passionate about your work and want it to be excellent. Throughout the interviews, she frequently mentioned how much she admired Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, and illustrated what she really meant using his words. Once again, citing Atatürk, she stated that the perseverance Atatürk demonstrated was needed to achieve quality and then explained how to foster it:

When you love something very much, quality starts to come by itself because you want what you do to be good... You aren’t doing it because someone else wants you to do... That’s goody-goody behavior, but quality is not goody-goody... Learning, institutional development, individual development, and country development, as in everything else, will start with that spirit first... First we need to ignite it.

However, for Derin, quality had been manipulated by the accreditation mechanisms. In other words, she said accreditation shifted towards an authority mechanism used to exert control. According to her, the language of “ensuring quality” was just a cover:

The authority turns it into control... The accreditation process is becoming a system where an authoritarian regime, an authoritarian understanding of management, is packaged with buzzwords such as democracy, quality... I do it for the sake of quality. But it is actually 'I do it for the sake of my control.' 'I do it for the sake of controlling you.' That's the point, but you don't question it because it's a stereotype. It's quality. He asks, 'Don't you want quality? Do you want to be of poor quality?' 'No, of course not,' you say. 'Then how can you criticize accreditation?'

Equating accreditation with quality, she stated, made it impossible to be critical of accreditation, as even questioning it was enough to label you as someone who did not value quality. For example, she talked about one of the quality trainings in their school where she asked a question and received the following reaction: "I don't understand, don't we want quality to come?" She then continued:

Who said we don't want quality? But it depends on what you understand by quality. I said, it's turning into George Orwell's Animal Farm. A pig used to write the rules for something there... 'All is equal, but some are more equal.' The word 'equal' is being emptied out. Here, the essence of quality, unfortunately seems to be sculpted differently, too. What you call quality turns into a mechanism of control... At that point, I referred to George Orwell's story. 'All animals are equal; some are more.' What is equal? What is quality for you? It was such a strange dialogue, you know. So, in such a situation, uh, words unfortunately lose their meaning.

To put it differently, Derin thought the word quality was hollowed out and replaced with another word. It became a method of control. She also claimed that quality assurance and accreditation systems were systems created by capitalism. According to her, first, "They make you feel inadequate as an institution or teacher, and then offer you a way to achieve this quality for a price. You feel hopeful, thinking there's a way out." However, she noted that quality is already inherent in the university, so "aligning with an external quality process diminishes its stature."

Tuna also brought up the top-down issues and audits in HE and discussed how they were seen in MoNE: "There is an approach like controlling the field and trying to manage it a bit like MoNE," which he found excessive. For instance, referring to the change in the teaching law that would classify teachers in MoNE as the head teachers, he argued that while it appeared nice, it was not actually the case. He

claimed that the new policy would create a hierarchical structure among teachers: “Teachers are under control, from top to bottom. It is very political, but in a negative sense.” He said even the slightest disciplinary action would prevent teachers from advancing or moving to a higher category, “pushing you out of the system somewhere.” Then, he asked, “Is this good?” In short, he articulated skepticism regarding the policy that suggested designating teachers as head teachers, positing that it actually served the purpose of audit or control.

Teachers also asserted that quantity orientation has gained momentum amidst the following discourses: quality assurance, audits, and accreditation. According to Derin, external tools could not understand the inner dynamics of the school, so they could not accurately assess quality. The only thing they could do was ask quantity questions. Therefore, she pointed out that these accreditation mechanisms were quantity-oriented and required teachers to provide evidence for the number of activities they conducted, such as the number of PDU activities organized and the number of attendees. However, she contended teachers sacrificed creative thinking when pressured to show evidence for every activity and focus more on quantity. She then questioned whether quantity guaranteed quality: “Does the fact that 700 teachers have participated in this training session really indicate that it increases the quality?” Derin was not the only teacher who stressed the quantity-orientation at school. While reflecting on the changes at university, Mabel also argued that they were heading towards an administration paradigm where “quantity is in the foreground, and quality is in the background,” like the number of tasks completed or ticks in the performance metrics. Then, she questioned, “Who set these performance criteria? ... We need to establish them, too.” To put it differently, she underlined the need for teachers to have a voice and to be included in this quality assurance and accreditation process.

In a similar vein, Tuna stated that university administration demanded figures or reduced everything to numbers, pushing teachers, for example, to increase social responsibility projects or enroll as many master's and doctoral students as possible, as he heard from the university administrators many times during the meetings. He claimed that this implied a drop in quality. Referring to the university administration,

for example, he said: “Their interest is in numbers and visibility.” He continued that accepting these would mean renouncing your professionalism and commitment to the university, and he insisted that he did reject them: “Frankly, I don't want to accept this because on the day I do... I need to leave the university.” As can be seen, he refuses to compromise his professionalism.

İpek was another teacher who also observed an increase in social responsibility projects following the university's designation as a research university. She did, however, add that those initiatives were based on a “more capitalist approach” or profit-oriented as opposed to being for “the benefit of society.” She then suggested that state universities conduct research beneficial to society by using “a social state approach” such as “education campaigns and social responsibility projects.” In a similar fashion, Tuna and Derin acknowledged the importance of these projects and clubs, but they also cautioned that quality shouldn't be sacrificed. Tuna, for example, reported that he found these initiatives important as long as they were meaningful. However, he claimed that the growing attention and focus on quantity rather than quality had resulted in the proliferation of “nonsense responsibility projects” and student clubs doing nothing. Derin also focused on the growing number of social responsibility projects and social activities based on the internationalization criteria of universities, and asserted that the needs of the school were what mattered. In addition to the dramatic increase in social responsibility projects, Derin also addressed the school's efforts to share them regularly on social media. She first questioned the pressure on universities to increase their indexes and share them on social media under “dissemination”: “You see, I have done many projects... We have increased our indexes.” People say, “I don't know how many photos I shared on social media for now. I've done a lot of dissemination.” When people said what they meant by dissemination was sharing photos on social media, she said, “I say ‘stop there for a minute.’ I criticized it... Taking a photo of you meeting at X place and posting the thing. This is not a complete dissemination. It means, ‘Look, I did that. I'll show you my cuties’.”

While Derin mainly described quality and accreditation as a method of control, Tuna additionally focused on the interest relationship between these accreditation bodies

and schools, expressing concern about the profit-driven nature of this transaction. He contended that accreditation, much like selling books and exams, was perceived as a business or marketplace designed for profit generation. According to him, accreditation was often used to conceal academic shortcomings and issues, so upon getting the certificate, he said, “They put it in the tearoom, put it on the internet, put it here, put it there.” In other words, he highlighted how these certificates were advertised on different platforms to create the impression that “everything is working perfectly here.” Tuna further argued that when people prioritized their own interests, they undermined the profession and the integrity of the school.

Just like Derin, Tuna also recalled a meeting with an accreditation company and described his reaction to the auditor’s conceptualization of the university and its students while providing details about their program. During one of the meetings, when the auditor referred to students as “customers” and teachers objected, the auditor explained that the term “customer” was applied to those who benefited from the quality management. Tuna concluded that the program was not designed specifically for HE, but rather for companies, so the university was also regarded as a company. He expressed disapproval of viewing students as customers. According to Tuna, referring to individuals as “customers” implied a transaction: “It’s a transaction, which has a financial aspect... In a transaction, there will be a buyer and a seller, so even the starting point is flawed.” He revisited the relationship between the accreditation companies and the schools, expressing concerns regarding the profit orientation in these processes. He then added, “People say, beware of the places where capitalism enters the university.” According to him, the school purchased the certificate and prominently displayed it on the school website and in visible areas. By doing this, the school aimed to convey that it was an “institution with a system of excellence.” While problematizing accreditation, Tuna also said he was not against all accreditation systems. Then, he explained the sine qua non of a successful audit: An independent mechanism guided by academic considerations. In other words, he stressed the significance of a mechanism operating without commercial interests. According to him, it should be an independent institution, free from administrative and political influence from the government.

It is important to note that resistance to accreditation was also evident in teachers' stories, as they claimed they were not appropriately informed about the process. Derin, for instance, admitted that teachers were neither sufficiently briefed on the accreditation details nor were they involved in the procedure. İpek was another teacher who also claimed that accreditation was imposed top-down: "Did we have much of a say in this thing? We did not have. It came to us, and we were told it would happen like this." Therefore, as she claimed, resistance was no surprise, and she added: "It is debatable whether it is bad or good, but we still got into the clothes given to us." She noted that there should be a more bottom-up approach instead. Derin also discussed how the accreditation process raised teacher resistance at school. In one of the training sessions of an accreditation body, she remembered questioning why their university should go through an external audit process. She highlighted top-down requests and reported to have spent a day writing the reports:

Activity plan, activity report, activity plan, activity report. In the activity plan, you write what you will do in a week. In the activity report, you write what you finished a week ago. You're getting to the point where you'll write a report if you go to the restroom.

Derin wanted the administration to find someone just to write the reports or reduce her course load, as she had no time left for anything other than the workload of accreditation. According to her, the purpose of all those activity reports was to monitor everything teachers were doing:

Asking you for reports can control you very well. They can watch everything you do... But this time, it takes away your freedom to do flexible work. ...you are worried about whether you will be able to realize what you have committed on the road... We tried to further quantify the things we were already doing... Evidence, evidence, evidence, evidence...Just, just for the sake of doing it. Just to put the ticks in the boxes.

Derin stated that the administration wanted to be informed about everything, so teachers were expected to include everything in the activity plan and then implement those or explain if they couldn't, which was "like putting handcuffs on yourself." It was said to be democratic, but she claimed that it was in no way democratic at all. This is why she called that "engineered" or "pseudo-democracy." Additionally, she

noted that it was demotivating and that people often hesitated to or did not write anything in their plans. Once, she had a project idea and asked the foreign relations department to check. However, the administration did not like being uninformed about that first, and she said:

Why do you need to know? ...You will already learn about it in the activity report...We were clashing a lot because I wasn't saying yes. Afterall, it sounded silly... Am I going to tell you why I'm going to the restroom?

During the staff meetings, Derin also expressed her concerns, saying, “What we call quality is not just ticking boxes. It is what we are doing to improve the quality.” Therefore, she also problematized the school’s request for an external accreditation body and their interpretation of it. “There is nothing more humiliating than an institution wanting to have its quality checked by a private institution ..., when it has the power to run so many quality things, namely quality processes on its own,” she said, expressing her anger and sadness. Then, she shared one of those audits where unit members rushed to document everything. Everyone started getting prepared for the audit and was very stressed out. When Derin was informed about the procedure by the administration, the excitement at school surprised her a lot: “Do they expect me to change myself, that is, my clothes...What kind of preparation is this? ... And it felt unnatural, so unnatural to me, it's so unnatural...I said you are a big university, so what is the excitement? What will happen?” She continued by describing how it felt to know that this mechanism “is used by a certain power is very boring, suffocating,” and explained how excessive control harmed the very essence of teaching and constrained teachers’ space of agency:

It's as if when they ask you for quantification, you know they are asking you to control you. ...It takes away all your autonomy... Now, with the new administration, everything is being controlled. Everything... This... is very damaging to the very essence of teaching. Teaching is a profession that should have its own autonomy. If the teacher feels powerful, she creates an impact in the classroom. If the teacher does not feel that power, she becomes a robot. A person who is a robot cannot come up with anything original.

Instead, Derin suggested employing those existing models to create their own internal mechanism and added: “Otherwise, it seems improper to me. That's why I

fought so hard for it.” In her closing remarks, she emphatically expressed her disapproval of external audit mechanisms. She positioned herself as a proponent of bottom-up internal quality improvement within educational institutions: “I am against external audit processes! The institution will create quality itself. I think that if it trains the lecturer very well and provides an environment of trust to achieve autonomy, the quality will automatically increase by itself.”

Pera reflected on the process from a former member of an administration perspective, saying, “Even though I was in a group that was not ignored, I was never asked for my opinion.” She looked back on her opposition to how accreditation was undergone. She claimed that although she managed to make her stance known and voiced her viewpoint, her efforts were in vain:

We don't know what accreditation is. We don't know for what purpose it is done. We do not know its contribution to education. We don't know what it will bring to us, etc. We should have been involved in the process to voice our objections and positive opinions. I really resisted there for a long time, but it didn't work at all. We became accredited, and we still are.

Pera said teachers should have been informed about what an action plan was, why they were writing it, and how it would benefit other teachers. Her objection stemmed from the fact that the whole process was top-down, and teachers were not involved. Therefore, they wanted to change the system and the accreditation agency. Since accreditation was a top-down decision teachers had no idea about, opposition was inevitable, according to her. She shared how resistance emerged once again at a new meeting with a new agency and described how she interpreted it:

We encountered severe resistance in the training sessions related to it... Due to the resistance we encountered, we abolished the idea... saying that although I do not agree with some of them, they also have a point of view, and we cannot do this without convincing them... That's why resistance is important. Its reasons are important. It needs to be taken into consideration.

Her remarks supported Derin and Tuna’s accounts regarding the accreditation meetings and resistance to accreditation. From an administration standpoint, her account suggested that as a member of the administration, she perceived the

resistance they encountered as more than just opposition. Instead, she saw it as a determined form of self-expression that should not be dismissed lightly. Should accreditation be deemed truly necessary, she suggested changing the accreditation body to prioritize its contributions to education over paperwork, filing, and bureaucratic processes:

Rather than being accredited this way, let's not be accredited. You know, is it documented, is it signed, is it dated, are minutes kept? These are, of course, very important, but these alone are nothing. Well, that's why I resisted it so much at that time. It doesn't contribute to the practice, the teaching process, teachers' development, and students' progress. On the contrary, it had adverse effects on them.

In summary, teachers problematized and resisted the quality assurance and accreditation processes in their school, observing that these top-down procedures turned into a means of control, disregarding teachers' voices, reducing everything to numbers, prioritizing paperwork and checks over quality, and helping cover up their flaws. Their accounts also revealed that quality assurance mechanisms can enhance quality and efficiency provided they are driven by academic concerns rather than commercial ones. However, they noticed the prioritization of measurable outcomes over qualitative ones in their school, indicating a shift towards more tangible metrics of success and a possible influence of neoliberalism. Ultimately, this approach undermined rather than enhanced the school and school culture in their stories.

4.2.2.2. Market orientation at university: “When there is a profit-oriented policy, there is less demand for the quality of education.”

Across the narratives, it seems that there were commonalities between how some teachers problematized quality assurance and how they problematized policies in Higher Education. Teachers' remarks showed that their perceptions regarding Higher Education centered around university-industry partnerships and a market-driven approach in their school. Tuna, for example, articulated that being short of resources, universities were gravitating towards the industrial sector, focusing more on the acquisition of immediate and visible return and profits: “In recent years, there has been a shift in understanding that wants the profits to be visible, which draws the

universities a little more concretely, closer to the industry and closer to that kind of production.” Additionally, he reported how a university administrator explained the shift towards technical fields and university-industry partnerships, noting that these areas are prioritized for their quick results.

Similar discourses were apparent in İpek’s accounts as well. She observed and stated: “Unfortunately, higher education currently has to train qualified staff for the market in Türkiye.” She further elaborated on the transformation of the university following its designation as a research university, noting in particular the growth of its social responsibility projects and the strengthening of university-industry partnerships.

According to Tuna, this quantity-oriented system had implications for the way the social sciences branch was perceived, too. He claimed that because of the university-industry partnerships or the “capitalist perspective,” “for 15 years, humanities and social sciences have always been under attack.” The university started to ask for fast outputs. He compared it to consuming sugar, stating: “When you eat sugar, it suddenly manifests its effect in the blood, it rises fast ... There is also something like this... at the university.” However, he also cautioned that a quick rise in sugar could have negative consequences: “Let it rise quickly, but beware, it will drop quickly.” His remarks showed that while numerical data may first seem to demonstrate high success rates, they often fall short of fully capturing all the subtleties and complexities. These achievements may not last long or may lose their impact rapidly.

Another discourse that emerged from teachers’ remarks was the market orientation in their school. Teachers like Derin, Tuna, Eylül, Pera, and Mabel, for example, were critical of the profit-driven practices and accounted for the reasons behind their problematizations. As discussed in the practices part, Derin, for example, questioned the use of market-oriented materials in the school and explained that she was “totally against” the idea of using that “mechanism of the capitalist order to be used by students at a state university.” He also talked about his observations regarding the teaching materials, noting that in the past, the administration would collaborate with some teachers and ask them to write a reading or writing book. However, he reported

that it was just a “compilation, bringing together pieces from here and there.” He claimed that teachers wrote their names on the compiled material, which were then photocopied at school and sold without an invoice, generating some financial support for the school. As for today, he said, programs are developed based on publishers’ books. In other words, schools choose the books before creating the curriculum.

Eylül recalled that surveys had been conducted by the school administration to solicit teachers’ opinions over the choice of coursebooks. She argued that some coursebooks were not appropriate, especially for online education, and they lacked diversity, so teachers voiced their concerns. However, nothing changed since they already had a finance agreement with the publishing company. While working in a unit, she had learnt that the primary consideration was the cost-effectiveness of purchasing of multiple books rather than focusing on the content and the contribution of the book to the students and teachers. In a similar vein, Pera focused on the market around coursebooks and compared that to pharmaceutical companies. Similarly, she said, despite the constant revision of the coursebooks and feedback given by teachers, not much changed in them, like shampoo commercials that promised: “We have this in our new shampoo. Your hair will be like this.” According to her, every time with a new coursebook, they assert: “There is this in the book, the students will learn English better, come on.” Then, she reported, everything starts anew, and the cycle repeats itself: “Money will be spent on it, and students will be required to buy it.” She concluded that the main purpose was not teaching English at all.

Teachers’ remarks also highlighted the impact of neoliberal discourses and privatization on the campus, noting how these changes have shaped the social and physical environments. Tuna, for example, elaborated on the privatization of spaces on the campus, claiming that certain sites had been transformed into “coffee shops, small shopping centers or other profit-making places.” Similarly, Mabel asserted that privatization can be observed everywhere, from healthcare to education. She recalled, for example, that teachers were asked to write a book or digital materials intended for sale to students, but she felt it was not appropriate to sell their own work. In addition, highlighting the trend towards privatization in the world, she asserted, “When there is a profit-oriented policy, there is less demand for the quality

of education.” Mabel explained how privatization negatively influenced socialization among staff, stating, “Teachers are almost no longer socialized.” She highlighted the changes on campus, especially after the pandemic. The canteens, for example, were “completely transferred to private enterprises or expensive coffee shops opened,” and there were no affordable meeting places or cafes left where the staff could have meals at reasonable prices. As Derin noted, reduced spaces on the campus hindered student interaction, too. According to her, this had implications for language education. She reported that the lack of social interaction among students prevented them from engaging in critical thinking and classroom discussions on complex topics. In brief, the changes on the campus significantly impacted the social life at the university and language instruction in the classroom.

In addressing systemic problems in HE, Tuna compared a research university to an ecosystem, arguing that removing some elements while keeping others disrupts the system’s ability to function properly. He then compared it to the ecological restoration of Yellowstone Park and explained what he meant:

They used to hunt and kill wolves there. Then, in the 1990s, they started reintroducing wolves to the area... After reintroducing wolves, they observed how the ecosystem restored itself scientifically... At a research university, when you say, 'I'll remove this, I'll remove that... I'll only allow wolves, lambs, and rabbits. Buffaloes can stay, too,' that doesn't create an ecosystem. You have a healthy ecosystem with all its components, or you don't.

In brief, he underscored the significance of a system with different stakeholders and highlighted the criticality of ensuring their adequate representation for the overall success of the system, much like in ecosystems. Teachers’ stories revealed that their perceptions regarding the status of HE mostly focused on the university-industry partnerships and market orientation. In other words, teachers elaborated on how educational practices and priorities were aligned with market demands. This might involve focusing on making fast and visible profits, training qualified staff for the market, and prioritizing research areas which align with the interests of the industry. Teachers also pointed to the market around coursebooks, the commodification of education, the relationship between schools and publishing companies, and the privatization at university. They attributed these to the neoliberal policies and the

operation of universities within market-driven frameworks. This university climate, defined by quality assurance, control, accreditation, and market orientation, had an impact on the way students and teachers were positioned, too.

4.2.2.3. Being student-centered: “The customer is always right.”

Teachers’ narratives indicated that the concept of research university stimulated a discourse through which students came to the fore: “Be student-centered.” Derin and Mabel, for example, explained how teachers and the administration utilized that discourse and then discussed how it trivialized teachers’ positions while prioritizing students’ rights. Derin stated that “this is again a democratic discourse” and acknowledged the importance of giving students the right to speak and involving them in decision-making. However, she claimed that many people, without fully understanding its true meaning, used the discourse by hollowing out the meaning of a word and “turned it into a shackle on the teacher’s feet.” She was against “pretending to be student-centered” or “ignoring the well-being of the lecturer.” She argued that the administration should not “give too much of the reins to the students” or “give the students too much say than necessary,” and added, “too much here in quotation marks.” According to Derin, when a student complains to the administration about a problem, for instance, the administration should know where to stand, saying:

When the teacher refuses to accept the student's late writing paper... Do you know what happens to this discourse in the hands of the administration? ‘Oh, you are so right. We are student-centered.’ He pats the student who is irresponsible on the back and who neglects to come to class and then tells the teacher, ‘You can get him to do it in your free time.’

Derin described this behavior as interfering with the teacher’s order: “Maybe there is an order implemented by the teacher in the classroom. And when you interfere with that order, you muddy the waters. It means adding water to a fully cooked dish and spoiling the whole thing.” In other words, this discourse hindered how teachers exercised agency, according to her. She also mentioned the mentoring system suggested by her, and said: “Based on cognition and self-regulation, let's see the students and mentor them: How does the student study, is his study plan healthy or

not, at what points does he have problems? Let's listen to these.” Then, they began to implement the mentoring system, but she asserted that her suggestion took different forms as a result of “incorrect practices and a lack of understanding of what being student-centered really meant.” In other words, according to Derin, being student-centered was also misunderstood or misinterpreted by the teachers, which led to the emergence of wrong pedagogical approaches:

They say, ‘We will be student-centered,’ well... Yes, that's right but how much of the activity you do in the classroom really needs an active decision-making mechanism for the students?... There may be situations where a teacher with experience and strong pedagogy must decide... Our professional competence is present there, and the student may not see it.

Therefore, Derin said, skipping things just to be student-oriented might disturb the balance, and “it may lead us to wrong pedagogies.” She mentioned one of her colleagues who had a student experiencing a panic attack and described how she was researching a treatment to recommend to her student. Derin said, “You are not a psychologist. You will try to understand how it affects the student’s learning. You will send her to a psychologist.” However, the teachers said, “Oh, I am student-centered. I listen to students’ problems.” Derin argued that while purporting to be student-centered, teachers engaged in wrong practices and pedagogies based on their interpretations of the discourse.

Looking back on her own schooling years, Eylül mentioned that education was not student-centered back then, and in the following interviews, she also identified being too student-centered as one of the main problems in Snowdrop as too much focus was on students and their rights, which resulted in sacrificing discipline. While students’ rights were explained in detail in the student handbook, there was nothing about the teachers’ rights: “What are our professional rights? I'm a teacher. No one tells me about my rights.” She then expressed that she also wanted to be informed in detail about her rights and the related policies. While reflecting on teacher accountability, Mabel also shared her ideas about being student-centered and described how that discourse was interpreted in the school:

I don't accept that the student is always right... Yes, I mean, thinking like a customer, you know, ‘The customer is always right,’ which is never the case

even there, you know, there are courts, Consumer Rights, etc. It's not so simple... I mean, the student should also be held accountable. It is not enough that only the teacher is accountable.

In brief, she claimed that the discourse “being student-centered” was reshaped into “the customer is always right” discourse, and “the fact that the teacher had no sanction against the student bothered” her the most. Mabel also asserted that she resisted the adoption of that discourse at school since she believed it prioritized students’ rights and undermined teachers’ initiative. According to her, the shift towards being student-centered did not always yield positive results, and the saying ‘the customer is always right’ did not really fit with her philosophy: “It did not always work. I think it even backfired... I think I resisted at that point. Yes, the student has rights, but the teacher has rights, too.” She added that some of the initiatives should also lie with the teacher.

As can be seen in teachers’ remarks, they had reservations about focusing only on students’ rights and needs and problematized the ways in which students were perceived as customers. A customer-centric approach promotes the transactional relationship between the students and schools and views education as a commodity to be purchased. It can be interpreted from their stories that while aimed at empowering students and making education more responsive to their needs, the discourse often resulted in sidelining teachers' professional autonomy and neglecting their rights. This imbalance undermined the educational environment and complicated the effective implementation of student-centered strategies. Teachers' experiences suggest a critical reevaluation of what it means to be truly student-centered, advocating for a model that genuinely integrates and respects both students’ and teachers’ contributions and rights.

4.2.2.4. Deskilling: “I am a machine for them.”

Surrounded by discourses of quality assurance, accreditation, audits, and rankings teachers interpreted how they were positioned in their school and HE. As teachers working in Snowdrop, they reported to have found themselves navigating being academics and teachers. On the one hand, they were expected to succeed in their

academic endeavors and to increase the university's rankings by conducting research. On the other hand, they were not considered academic staff but positioned as grammar teachers or robots. Their statements revealed that teachers had to negotiate between these conflicting expectations. Derin, for example, presented a discourse that once again influenced teachers' stances: "Teachers' becoming robots," which emerged as a result of not engaging teachers in decision-making processes, and she explained how:

It is as if you are putting laundry in the washing machine... You put everything. You put the laundry in it (students). You put the detergent in it (curriculum). You say 'Come on, this is the manual. Look there, the deadlines are set, and your only task is to press the button, and it will work,' but we are not like that. The machine also has a spirit.

Derin, therefore, focused on the spirit of teachers and claimed that if this is ignored, teachers turn into robots, simply doing what is asked. She added, "I don't need to explore the magical learning spaces. They don't expect that from me anyway. I am a machine for them." She argued that due to too much control over their work, teachers were being deskilled and positioned as robots ready to do whatever was asked and incapable of feeling anything and enacting agency. She recalled when all teachers with varying degrees of testing experience were required to prepare an exam for the following year using a rigid template and its predetermined question format. When Derin was asked to write an intermediate group exam, she discovered that almost all the questions in the template were true-false questions. She was teaching intermediate students. Relying on her expertise and teaching experience, she suggested employing different question types based on the content, such as inference questions. After her exam was rejected, she told them it was the best she could do and requested training. "They remained silent," she added. She felt like a robot, saying, "They never want me to change the template; they disregard my years of professional experience." She asserted that while specific criteria could be set, teachers should also be provided with some space to explore things themselves. However, confining them too much within a framework "disrupts their cognitive experience." Then, they cease to be teachers and turn into robots. She asserted that under these circumstances, teachers cannot create anything and then added: "How

can a person who can't create anything be happy? I can't." Derin further problematized the way she was positioned at university. When she was assigned to provide information about the school during its promotion days, she said: "I am a lecturer. I am not a hostess to work at the stand... It seems very humiliating to me." She resisted being positioned as a hostess and reminded them of her job description: "You can give me three proctoring assignments if you want, but don't assign me this task... I don't want to do it, and it's not in my job description."

Mila also questioned the positioning of teachers. She claimed that when units were established in response to needs, teachers were asked whether they preferred to prepare materials or conduct projects. She said, "Maybe I have a better idea," and added, "You say to a little child, you know, you're going out, do you want to wear green or pink shorts? You've given them a choice, but there is no freedom. There are only two options." She expressed how she feels if there is too much control over her work: "You feel like a secretary." Tuna was another teacher who raised concerns regarding the positioning of teachers at school. He mentioned that the role of foreign language teachers was seen as secondary, saying, "We are support pillars of fields such as science and medicine that will actually conduct research." In a similar vein, İpek thought that teaching English was simply seen as a tool or instrument in their school. She also rejected teaching at a place positioned as a language school teaching grammar or as a school translating documents for the university. She said, "We should no longer be seen as a school necessary for translation" and that "We are always treated ... as if we were airbags."

In response to the remarks of some university administrators about teachers in Snowdrop, Zeynep acknowledged that while there could be some teachers with a casual attitude who might not prioritize student learning in their school, saying, "I'll do it, and I'll go. I don't care, but whoever learns will learn," it was incorrect to generalize this attitude to most teachers. The university administration, she reported, tended to focus on that image, leading to the following perception:

There is an understanding that marginalizes us, that foreign language teachers are this and that, that they are so-and-so, that the professors in the faculties, in

the departments, are superior. We are inferior, and they don't take our work seriously. They don't take us seriously.

Teachers' stories reflected a recurring theme of perceived de-professionalization. Through the eyes of the participants, they perceived an assault on their professionalism. Their statements revealed that their professional judgment, expertise, and autonomy were undermined and that despite their contributions and expertise, teachers in Snowdrop found themselves marginalized. They were constrained by excessive control over their work, prescribed curricula, and top-down requests, which left little room for teacher agency and creativity. Compared to the professors in the faculties, they felt positioned as inferior. They sometimes found themselves taking on the roles of a robot, a hostess, a secretary, or a transmitter of grammar. As a result, they had to navigate between those imposed positionings and multiple roles while performing the teaching profession.

4.2.2.5. Teacher accountability and control mechanisms: “Should there be a control mechanism to ensure that I am performing my duty correctly?”

As teachers' accounts unfolded, it appears that while the space of authorship or the place where teachers could exercise their professional judgment and agency was restricted or destroyed, expectations of teacher accountability persisted and remained high. Teachers engaged in critical reflection regarding teacher accountability, focusing on teacher evaluation and highlighting its complexity. Their stories further revealed that while they acknowledged the significance of being able to justify their decisions or choices, they also placed considerable emphasis on the importance of maintaining moral responsibility and following professional ethics teachers should have to guide their journeys.

Mabel problematized the discourse around teacher accountability by first challenging the notion of student-centeredness. She asserted that teacher accountability does not mean undermining respect for or dignity of teachers. According to her, holding solely the teacher accountable was not enough, and students also needed to be held accountable. She continued, saying: “But of course, you need to be able to explain

what you have done. For the benefit of the class.” In other words, she claimed that adopting a student-centered approach should not entail holding teachers responsible for every failure or problem. However, she acknowledged that teachers should be able to justify the decisions they make in their classes.

Similarly, Eylül pointed to the teacher evaluation forms, which included questions that directly evaluated the lecturer’s performance. While she asserted that it was not incorrect, she wondered why teachers were never given this kind of survey to find out more about their needs for assistance, health concerns, and challenges:

A survey that actually evaluates the lecturer directly is sent to the students. Information about the lecturer is obtained. I think this is correct, but no one has sent us a questionnaire. Are you satisfied with your conditions? Are you happy with the place where you are lecturing? Is your health in place? There are so many problems. How can we help you? No one asked me about my conditions.

Furthermore, Eylül conveyed that she wanted to see the results and questioned the authority behind it: “Who is the authority? Do these people understand testing and evaluation, or is there someone there who understands the psychology of the teacher? Who are they?” Regarding the regulation, they also recounted an incident where some teachers were selected for monitoring in the school. They were observed or monitored by people who posed as students to ensure compliance with the standards and to report back to the administration as part of the teacher accountability process, which served as surveillance. She once observed this practice when she was part of the administration and realized how unfair it was.

Concerning teacher accountability, İpek asserted that “there should be accountability to authority” and that there should be a sanction when there is abuse or misuse: “If I don’t go to class for three days, of course, whoever is in charge of this issue has the right to call me and ask why... Of course, they can hold me to account within the scope of my job description.” She also noted that they should all be accountable as there were circumstances in which they should be held so. However, she problematized that by posing the following question: “Should there be a control mechanism to ensure that I am performing my duty correctly? I would say that

everyone should do it themselves, if possible.” In brief, while reiterating the circumstances under which control mechanisms should be in place, she also questioned the need for those control systems, emphasizing the teacher’s own responsibility. Her account suggests that she valued moral responsibility or professional ethics more than teacher accountability. She also described how teacher evaluation was perceived in the school. She claimed that most teachers feared it, wondering who would evaluate them, whether the person would be qualified, someone inside the school or an external evaluator: “There are questions about the competence of the person... There are those who say the broken arm stays hidden inside the sleeve,” implying that internal sufferings, difficulties, or shortcomings should not be made known to people outside the school. Others, on the other hand, contended that they should be visited and evaluated by an outsider. As can be seen, teachers had various concerns regarding the teacher evaluation process.

Mila drew attention to the power issues and authority raised in discourses around teacher evaluation. Regarding the balance of power, she stated: “When someone is in a position to evaluate another person, I feel like there is an authority there, and I think that power is a bit dangerous.” As a result, she said, teachers might become resistant to feedback as they feared they wouldn’t like what they heard. She, therefore, suggested self-reflection instead of teacher evaluation at first but later developed her own problematization: “If there is an economic sanction at the end, how honest can people be in their self-assessments?” Consequently, she proposed an alternative to evaluation: “They call it appraisal instead. They ask a question like, ‘This year was good, and what goals do you want to set?’ or like, ‘You set this goal last year, and how well did you achieve it?’” In other words, she stressed how teacher evaluation, when conducted in the form of managerial observation, could create concerns, tension, and resistance among teachers due to the power issues and the potential punitive consequences.

Similarly, Derin problematized teacher accountability, rejected the commonsense discourses surrounding it, and then positioned herself. She argued that teacher accountability was significantly shaped by the quality assurance and accreditation processes. Through some “democratic-looking mechanisms,” teachers were

encouraged to share their suggestions during the meetings. As soon as they voiced their ideas enthusiastically, they were expected to implement them immediately and held responsible for these tasks, which was overwhelming for teachers. Derin reported:

First, the system gives you freedom, saying, “Go ahead, brainstorm in the free space.’ However, behind the scenes, it puts in place such democratic-looking mechanisms that you are forced into a situation where your genuinely idealistic and naïve vision of that environment turns into, ‘Alright, this is your responsibility.’ However, I think we don't have the luxury to say such things where there is no infrastructure.

Derin emphasized the gap between expectations and reality, arguing that teachers were often expected to implement ideas without adequate consideration of the available infrastructure and resources. She noted that teachers lacked the capacity to manage physical conditions or resources, so it wouldn't be fair to hold them accountable for outcomes. As a result, Derin reported hesitating to share their ideas and suggestions during the meetings. She emphasized that accountability was of great importance to her, but she also advocated for transparency, describing it as “playing cards openly with people you have a relationship with.” For example, during her participation in a project, she willingly continued her online classes despite having no prior commitments. She noted that she thoroughly read the legislation to understand what might be required of her and aimed to maintain transparency.

By saying, “When I go to bed, I want to have a clear and comfortable conscience,” Derin demonstrated her attitude to accountability. Stated differently, she stressed the importance of moral responsibility, just like İpek, and conscience, and explained her own interpretation of accountability, which is transparency. Similarly, Zeynep described her stance regarding teacher accountability, control, and evaluation and stressed the importance of self-discipline and character. She was careful while utilizing the sources to avoid squandering money, paper, electricity, etc. For example, while working in the testing unit, she would always use scrap paper or turn off the lights when not in use, and she added, “You have to behave like that at work, so you can't say, 'This is not mine, I'll leave this light on.' Something to do with

resources...This is not only about our institution, not about the country... This is something related to the whole world". In brief, her actions and agentic orientations were led by her beliefs, character, and unique perspective on life, just like Derin's.

Pera argued that teacher evaluation in her school was often associated with criteria such as speaking English in class, covering the book thoroughly, and starting and finishing classes on time. However, she asserted that evaluation should be based on communication skills and the ability to create a positive learning environment and be a good role model. While highlighting the importance of teacher evaluation and observations, she favored peer observations, which involve observing others' performance and reflecting on them, over administrative evaluations. However, she noted that "this is something that does not exist" in her school culture. She also observed that the following discourses began circulating among teachers when they received feedback from others:

Who is she to judge me? She is not even a teaching graduate. She doesn't even have a post-graduate degree. She's not an administrator. She must be outside our university. Someone from our school cannot evaluate me. She is not better than me.

Pera problematized the way observations were interpreted in school and stated, "It shouldn't be like that. They want to evaluate my lesson. It's great that we will learn something from each other... I wish we could establish such a system." Rather than the managerial evaluations, it seems she emphasized the need for developmental observations, which can foster reflective and collaborative practice.

Teachers' remarks suggested that while some considered accountability essential, placing excessive emphasis on it by trivializing teacher autonomy and dignity might constrain teachers' space of authorship and create a culture of fear and compliance. According to some teachers, being held accountable to someone in authority implied a lower social status. Therefore, when teacher observations took the form of managerial observations solely for accountability purposes, they were found to cause resistance and tension among staff due to power dynamics. Through developmental observations, on the other hand, teachers could have a chance to reflect on their own

practices, pinpoint areas of improvement and engage in meaningful conversations with colleagues to enhance their teaching. In addition, in their figured world of teaching, teachers' sense of moral responsibility, conscience and professional ethics, which guide their actions and decisions in the classroom, were valued and emphasized.

4.2.2.6. Othering: “Even thinking differently becomes a crime.”

As already discussed in the situated practices section, teachers in Snowdrop were expected to abide by the rules, avoid causing any problems, and not burden the school with additional workload. In line with this, teachers' stories revealed that discourses around marginalization or othering emerged when they voiced problems in the school, questioned established practices, became more visible among the group, or stood out for their successes. Tuna, for example, pointed out that when he raised issues or questioned practices, people began to marginalize him. He claimed that when he tried to defend and assert his own space, certain discourses emerged: “He's incompatible” and “You can't work with him.” On one occasion, during a meeting where he asked questions regarding the accreditation process, for example, he reported being labeled as “quarrelsome.” As he put it, there was a structure that either excluded or left him out, where “even thinking differently becomes a thing, a crime.” In other words, one did not have to say anything to be deemed guilty according to him. Just thinking differently was enough to pay the price.

İpek also listed the following discourses that circulated around and hindered teacher agency when, for example, she spoke up at a meeting to share her ideas and suggestions: “Don't get us in trouble again,” “Shut up and let the meeting end quickly,” “As if anything would change if you did that way,” “Don't fuss about it.”

Derin contended that teachers were not given enough space to voice their concerns and opinions. She added that those who did speak had already been tagged, saying: “They say she talked a lot in this meeting...Therefore, no one wants to speak during the meeting.” She began by outlining the advantages of face-to-face meetings over virtual ones before problematizing the lack of space where teachers could speak up and raise their voices:

They can say, "Oh, our time is up," and close it. They can kick us out very easily because it is online... You don't organize a meeting. You can't bring us together physically. You locked me in front of the screen and are holding a meeting that you regulate; you set the limits, so where am I going to get my voice heard?

As a teacher who often stressed the significance of bravery, Pera perceived herself as possessing "a personality that some people might describe as out of the box and marginal," so she believed her colleagues might have labeled her as such.

Some teachers claimed that achieving success also resulted in the marginalization of teachers within the community. Tuna, for example, argued that as you gain academic prominence, the tension you encounter increases:

Your academic success increases within this structure, your visibility rises, and let's call it autonomy... As that increases, their attitude towards you begins to get tougher. Things against you start to increase, become more visible, and tensions begin to arise.

In other words, according to Tuna, the more he shone with his achievements, the more attention he attracted, which further increased the tension. In a similar vein, Derin acknowledged the power she gained from research and projects. She shared how others viewed teachers like her: "Only someone with ambitions for a position does this." She stated that some people could not understand those who pursue such efforts without thinking about titles, so they misinterpreted her power and saw her as their rival, although she was unaware of it.

As their remarks suggested, both teachers who expressed concerns and opposed practices that did not align with their beliefs and those who attracted attention among the staff with their achievements were targets of marginalization. This marginalization might explain the frequently used discourse, as Tuna raised: "Everybody is equal." He added: "The school developed a very interesting discourse. The discourse, 'everyone is equal,' was repeated in the meetings. Universities are hierarchical places. Universities are not places where everyone is equal." He then explained why people employed such a discourse. He argued that this discourse emerged when people realized they did not have the qualities of their rivals and

thought, “If an academic system truly worked here, no one would listen to me. Let me prevent this by framing it as a discourse. Let me assert that everyone is equal here.” He further remarked, “When everyone is equal, you eliminate the academic system, and it doesn’t function efficiently.”

Different from Tuna, Eylül maintained that everybody should be equal, saying: “Regardless of our position, regardless of our status, when I say regardless of our status here, I mean, whether I have a doctorate, a master's degree, or a 4-year bachelor's degree. I think we should be equal.” However, it is worth noting that during the same interview, she also expressed her disappointment and frustration at not receiving any privileges or conveniences regarding her post-graduate courses and program. In other words, while advocating for equality, she felt that her status as a teacher pursuing her post-graduate degree should have warranted different treatment. Although it may appear contradictory, her expectation, in essence, was not at odds with Tuna’s remarks.

Within the framework of Figured World, we are able to construct ourselves through interaction and discourses, enabling us to acquire and maintain positions within these figured worlds. While certain ways of knowing, being, and acting are valued, others are marginalized by dominant discourses. In this study, teachers were positioned within the Figured world of Snowdrop, where particular discourses and norms determined and reinforced their roles. Individuals who did not fit within these standards, conform to these norms, and adopt these discourses faced exclusion and marginalization. Teachers’ remarks revealed that they rejected positions offered by problematizing these discourses and norms at the expense of being othered.

4.2.3. Sociality: People and Interactions

Figured worlds are inhabited by actors or characters, and entry into these worlds is contingent upon who you are. Moreover, certain actors or characters are more recognized and valued than others. This section presents teachers’ interpretations of the powerful people or those who are more recognized, as well as their understanding

of the school culture and their relationships with students, colleagues, and administration in their figured world of Snowdrop.

4.2.3.1. People with greater recognition

As for the people who were recognized more in the figured world of Snowdrop, teachers' narratives revealed that teachers who complied with the assigned duties, displayed positive behaviors, and actively participated in professional development activities were reported to be given higher recognition in the school. Additionally, unit members, administrative staff, and those close to the administration were acknowledged. "You will say yes. You will stick to the predetermined order. You won't say out-of-order things," said Derin, for example. She noted that doing activities to raise the university rankings was also valued in the school. Similarly, Eylül stated that teachers who behave well, are open to criticism, and have no problems with their students are considered "good" teachers. However, at the same time, she continued by describing the kind of teacher who should be praised: "A teacher who should be valued is one who behaves correctly and honestly," but she was not sure "if honesty is valued right now."

Regarding active participants in PDU events and academic studies, Zeynep, İpek, and Mabel asserted that teachers striving for professional development and sharing or presenting what they had learned with the school were valued. Eylül, on the other hand, stated that teachers pursuing academic careers should really be strong and be at the top of their status. Still, this view was not "accepted that way at school because most teachers are not the ones who do these things anyway." As for Mabel, although she argued that teachers who actively participated in PDU events received greater recognition, she also asserted during another interview that teachers with PhDs were not trusted when giving out assignments, and unit duties or teachers' academic backgrounds were not considered. According to Mabel, the administration would prefer to assign unit duties to teachers who get along with them rather than those with post-graduate degrees. According to her, teachers who spoke a lot during the school meetings were recognized more, but she cautioned that this increased visibility might not necessarily result in a favorable reputation. Stated differently,

people who talk a lot during the meetings might have a poor image and reputation because of their marginalization. Mabel's account further supported İpek's observations regarding the meetings and the responses she received from others when she voiced her opinions in the school meetings, as discussed in the discourses section.

In addition, İpek stated that the principal and the vice-principal were seen as powerful figures. Teachers like Zeynep, Mila, and Mabel also claimed that unit members or teachers involved in organizational processes were valued. For example, Mila recalled how the teachers in the materials development unit who had written the supplementary materials were still recognized and respected:

Even if the school didn't do anything, they completed the materials back then. Whatever encouragement or acknowledgment they received, I still feel like that scent still lingers on them like perfume... I still see teachers walking around with that thing, you know. Confidence.

Similarly, Mabel asserted that "the exam committees are well-known" and "coordinators always have a little more say." In addition to the unit members, teachers close to the administration were also reported to be recognized more. "You have to be close to the administration. You will be their buddy", said Derin. Tuna explained this using "the clique tradition" and reported how cliques replaced norms and shaped values:

Clique. It has a set of group values. You align with that group's values and act according to them. This is actually a matter of self-interest. Everyone knows it's a matter of self-interest, and they intentionally get involved. What we call a clique contradicts academic integrity, ethics, etc. It conflicts with them. It is fuel for rule-breaking, empowered by a unity of power.

He stated that the powerful teachers were "the people who were closest to one of the administrators" in such a school environment. Their schedules would be organized as they wished, and even if they missed a class due to an illness, it would be handled somehow.

Teachers reported that rather than people with good communication skills and academic credentials, those who did not deserve it also held significant roles in the

school. According to Eylül, for example, rather than optimistic, affectionate, and cheerful teachers good at communicating with others, those with big egos and a “snobby” demeanor were more recognized and assigned administrative duties in the school. These teachers could easily say, “No, this is how we do it,” and acted like the president of the United States:

These types do not burn out in a short time. People who are more affectionate and optimistic and attach more importance to human relations get offended easily. These types are accepted; they are the types who know how to say ‘no’ all the time. They have a bit of a high ego.

Zeynep also described those in the administration as people who “act out of ambition and ego.” Pera observed that teachers who communicated well with others and were proficient in the language, as well as those who pretended to know a lot, relying on their certificates or credentials even if their knowledge is limited, were highly recognized in the school. In summary, teachers’ remarks indicated that those who adhered to the rules, participated in professional development events, effectively marketed themselves relying on their certificates, worked in units, and maintained close ties with the administration received significant recognition. Teachers pursuing or holding post-graduate degrees, however, were not recognized and valued as much as they deserved, as teachers reported.

4.2.3.2. School Culture

Teachers stressed a diverse spectrum of attitudes and behaviors among the staff, and their remarks revealed their perspectives on the way school culture shapes teachers’ actions. They also discussed what being a teacher in their school is like. Complacency was reported to be an issue among the teachers. As Derin, Pera, İpek, Zeynep, Eylül, and Mila noted, in contrast to teachers with a strong sense of commitment and responsibility, there were also those with poor motivation and a low sense of belonging. These teachers refrained from doing additional work beyond teaching and were critical of various aspects of the school. For example, when Derin sought to form a research team, she claimed nobody wanted to collaborate with her due to a lack of motivation and a low sense of belonging to the school. Likewise,

Pera mentioned teachers who avoided work and constantly criticized everything around them. In a similar vein, İpek reported that some teachers did excellent work and liked sharing their experiences and expertise with others. Although she was always proud of them, she also stated that few people were eager and willing to follow in their footsteps due to a lack of drive.

Like Pera, Zeynep also touched upon teachers who continued to criticize everything while refusing to attend meetings and professional development activities. Zeynep expressed gratitude for the efforts made by the teachers who conducted workshops and shared best practices with the entire staff during PDU sessions. She respected these teachers and attended their sessions even though she had heard the topic before. However, she noted that not many teachers were willing to share with others. Instead, they constantly complained, saying: “‘Oh my God, she always tells the same things,’ or ‘Oh my dear, we already know these things’ or ‘I can do better’,” but they never did, which upset and angered her. In addition, as Pera stated, “No one comes up with a real suggestion, a real action.” Eylül also mentioned that some teachers chose not to move one inch, and despite their lack of receptivity to criticism, they always criticized others. In brief, their accounts revealed that the school culture was heavily influenced by teachers who were quick to criticize yet failed to take concrete steps to enhance and contribute to the system and engage in meaningful action.

Like the chicken and egg scenario, most teachers’ poor motivation and reluctance to assume additional responsibility were also attributed to the deeply ingrained and entrenched school culture, as well as the fact that they were working at a state university. Pera, for example, argued that the most important reason behind the lack of motivation was the school culture established years ago. She further stated that teachers with the potential or capacity to thrive and contribute significantly were hindered or influenced by this existing school culture. The school culture that had developed over the years was also, to a large extent, the reason why teachers preferred to focus on their own academic studies, she said. Similarly, according to İpek, managerial issues were a contributing factor, but “a culture that was established years ago and unfortunately socialized in this way” was the primary reason for this poor motivation.

Zeynep claimed that teachers did not value their personal and professional development much. She attributed this problem to teachers' sense of job security while working in a state school and noted their words: "Well, anyway, I am a civil servant now." She characterized the working environment as "too comfortable." She stressed that the primary issue was the grave lack of supervision in the school, like Eylül, who also emphasized the need for more supervision. Similarly, Mila contended that it "is a state university and there are not many sanctions. The teachers are so comfortable, as if they were in Ali Baba's Farm." The phrase suggested that the teachers were so at ease in their profession that the school seemed like an environment of excessive comfort:

Teachers act as they please. They can enter the class late, leave early, and teach only in their native language... There is no internal control regarding how well I am doing my job. There is no external control. Some things start to depend entirely on the teachers' internal motivations.

According to Mila, excessive comfort and lack of rules might have some unfavorable consequences. Some teachers developed poor habits in such an educational setting where there were not enough regulations to guide their behaviors. She claimed that in the absence of internal and external control, the fulfilment of responsibilities relied solely on teachers' intrinsic motivation. Mila and Mabel attributed the lack of professionalism to the following discourses prevalent in the school: "We are a family," "family institution," and "family business." However, Mabel pointed out that she never viewed the school environment as a family, stating, "This is a professional institution. We are not a family." Similarly, Mila disapproved of the discourse and noted that she did not find it very professional. When asked to elaborate on "family business," she conveyed that when organizational processes in the school are contingent on relationships, it can lead to favoritism.

Lack of work or professional ethics was also reported as an issue among the teachers. Pera, for example, claimed that teachers differed in their work ethics and conscience. According to her, being surrounded by people who are as open to growth as you could be helpful. However, when the school culture is toxic, teachers start asking, "What's the need? Why am I wasting myself? I'm getting the same salary. I'm not

appreciated,” which perpetuates the toxic culture in the school, just like the circumstances in MoNE and Türkiye. In a similar vein, Eylül also stressed the importance of ethical codes:

Justice is fundamental. Being responsible. Respect for autonomy, professional responsibility... That is, the teacher behaves in accordance with working standards and ethical principles in his attitude towards his colleagues, his own family and society. Does he have the knowledge, effort, and concern to fulfill his profession fully?

Eylül noted that some teachers did not develop a strong code of ethics and described how these people could influence the whole school: “Imagine, we are laying fruits and apricots in the sun to dry. An insect comes and eats them all.” In other words, some teachers lacked ethical codes, and this could ruin the whole school environment. Similarly, Zeynep hypothesized that the negative image of Snowdrop at university resulted from the teachers having problems with ethics. She described them as being not “open to criticism”, having “no enthusiasm, no joy of life,” and being “tired of their job.” She concluded, “If you don't like it, don't do this job anymore.” When asked to elaborate on the teachers who acted in ways that harmed the reputation, she mentioned teachers who were not conducting their lessons without giving an excuse or prior notice and added: “Even if you have an excuse, you should definitely make up for the missed session.” She contended that some teachers did not fully understand the significance of their duties. According to her, people did not even attend the compulsory meetings and had closed themselves off to innovation. Once, when they were reflecting on the whole academic year after the meeting with the director, she reported that only around fifteen or twenty teachers remained. Zeynep was surprised and said: “We're evaluating the whole year, I mean, how the tasks went, what we can change, etc. What a shame. They say, ‘Oh dear, we know them all’,”

Similarly, Eylül also claimed that some teachers were unwilling to gain new things and were closed to change, so their participation in the meetings and workshops was also poor. According to Tuna, when they said, “Well, we are teachers anyway,” they meant, “Well, we don't actually need to conduct research.” In other words, teachers

positioned themselves only as teachers and showed little interest in engaging in academic studies and professional development endeavors. İpek also mentioned the lack of participation in projects or sessions, but different from Zeynep, İpek was critical of the content of the activities and reported that when sessions began to repeat similar content, she started to understand why some teachers chose not to participate in them. She believed that they have different needs and goals, so she found attending sessions that do not align with her interests “meaningless”: “It is obviously not very reasonable to participate just for the sake of participation.” Therefore, she stated that diversity was essential since teachers had different needs, and in line with their needs, they could evaluate the alternatives and choose the best one for them. In other words, she reported that some people might prefer not to attend some sessions or workshops and that it does not make much sense to attend just for the sake of attending. Resistance or poor attendance, therefore, may not necessarily indicate reluctance for professional development. Similarly, Mila also highlighted the lack of participation in school events or activities and the discontent of the administration. Just like İpek, Mila also admitted that the administration could interpret it as the lack of participation in events, but she said:

Everyone has their own journey. Sometimes, you look at it and see someone studying at a second university in a very unrelated field, but this is her journey, and she continues to learn... I think it's a bit of an adult's trait that everyone acts autonomously in this regard... We want to decide for ourselves what we want to learn or not. In this context, I also believe that I am autonomous and self-directed.

In brief, she believed that each teacher’s journey unfolds on its own, and as a teacher, she enjoyed the autonomy to choose what she wanted to learn. Mila also problematized the staff’s resistance to PDU activities, arguing that they were right to some extent. For example, once, the school invited a foreign speaker and after attending the session, she realized that people had a valid point when they criticized such activities and chose not to participate in them, explaining why: The speaker “does not know anything about our context, the lack of motivation among people, or the real sources of motivation problems in the institution. He is not one of us.”

Teachers’ accounts also revealed ripples of dissent and resistance among teachers within this long-established school culture when new policies, practices, and

procedures were introduced. Mabel noted that the school culture shifted from a “we are a family” discourse to a “we are an institution” one. In other words, it was undergoing the process of institutionalization. When asked what triggered that change, she answered: “Accreditation.” İpek also noted that the school culture was changing, but due to the long history and the deeply ingrained school culture, some teachers were reluctant or resistant to changes. Similarly, Zeynep also characterized the teachers as resistant, stating that it “is our biggest problem” as they objected to changes in coursebooks, class hours, and attendance taking. Derin also raised the issue of resistance, arguing that some teachers who once shared their ideas and opinions got offended and chose silence after seeing they were ignored or disregarded. She claimed that teachers feel “the material I produce has no value” and “Nothing I do is valuable,” which resulted in a loss of motivation and autonomy among teachers. In other words, underlying the resistance were disappointment, resentment, and a lack of autonomy and motivation.

Teachers’ narratives also revealed their perceptions concerning what it is like to be a teacher in their school, their sense of belonging to the school, and their stances regarding the roles available. Teachers like Zeynep, Mila, İpek, Derin, Eylül, Mabel, and Tuna expressed that they were quite content with being a teacher in Snowdrop. Zeynep attributed her love of teaching in Snowdrop to her friends or colleagues who support, see, and meet each other inside and outside the school in social life and pointed out that even during the pandemic, they tried to keep in close contact through online meetings. She then expressed how happy and fortunate she felt to work there. While accepting the shortcomings in the school, Mila also reported feeling very lucky and happy in Snowdrop, just like Zeynep. Similarly, İpek remarked that there were more pros than cons, making her experience as a teacher in Snowdrop enjoyable. Derin conveyed that she was so proud to be a part of this university and had a very strong sense of belonging: “My belonging to the institution is so strong that there is such an emotional bond that binds me here. I mean, I don't want to leave it and go.” She also stressed that her bond with her school was much stronger before the pandemic.

Mabel expressed that she felt content with working in Snowdrop because there were no conflicts in their school as everyone was equal: “Everyone is more or less in the

same position, so I like that. I mean, we are in an equal position.” Like Derin and Zeynep, she also perceived equality as positive, considering that it created a sense of fairness in the school. Eylül, and Zeynep also stressed their high sense of belonging to the school. İpek remarked, “I have always wanted to be in a place that we consider to be the center of science, research, learning, and development,” and she added that she felt a sense of belonging to the university context in general, not just their university.

After discussing the constraints or challenges he experienced in the school, Tuna stated that he was reaching the point of leaving as the “school culture has collapsed.” Regarding a sense of belonging to the school, Tuna first highlighted the significance of certain values fostered in his family, noting that these values tied him to the school. He listed the commitments they can never abandon: “Being a good citizen and a continuous learner,” “Being beneficial to the institution I work for and not causing any harm.” He also pointed out that his sense of belonging extends beyond the department or university to society at large, reflecting his commitment to changing things and making a meaningful contribution to the community. He found that a deep sense of belonging to his country, profession, and society, and upholding these ideals enabled him to find inner peace amid daily conflicts and focus on what truly matters. As can be seen in his account, as a responsible citizen, despite the challenges at work, he believed he could contribute positively to school, university, society, and country as he prioritized values like “good citizenship” over the difficulties he faced at school. Similarly, referring to the workplace problems she experienced, Derin noted that nothing could take away from her deep sense of belonging to the school.

Mila reported that while she had a strong sense of belonging to the school, she also expressed how uneasy she felt due to the frequent turnovers of the school administration and top-down decisions. In addition, she acknowledged that dissatisfaction with the practices of some administrations could have a detrimental effect on one’s sense of affiliation. However, she clarified that she is a positive person and despite the challenges, she always strove to be a teacher who performed her duties well.

Unlike these teachers, Pera clearly stated that she had lost her sense of belonging to the school since she never felt that her effort was appreciated. Mabel and Mila expressed how much the common discourse in the school, “We are a family,” undermined their sense of belonging to the school. Mabel stated, “I never feel completely devoted to a group, an institution.” In other words, she did not prioritize building emotional bonds. She also conveyed that her sense of belonging was damaged due to the school administration’s attitudes towards them, leading her to contemplate retirement. Later in the interviews, Mila reformulated her remark regarding her affiliation to the school, noting that her sense of belonging had shifted because the school operated more like a family institution. In brief, teachers’ accounts indicated that the prevailing school culture was marked by complacency, a lack of solid work ethics, and resistance to change among the staff. A lack of appreciation and the “We are a family” discourse diminished teachers’ sense of belonging.

4.2.3.3. Relationships

Teachers’ remarks also revealed how teachers perceived their relationships with their students, colleagues, and administration. In line with the Figured Worlds framework, relationships play a significant role in shaping teachers’ interpretations of the social contexts they are engaged in and their roles within them. Moreover, they reinforce shared meanings and values within figured worlds and influence teachers’ sense of belonging to the school. As they interacted with students, other teachers, and administration, for example, they took on or rejected certain roles that were accepted and validated in those contexts.

4.2.3.3.1. Relationships with Students

Teachers discussed their relationships with their students and the nature of the rapport established, focusing on how they positioned themselves and cared for their students. For example, Mabel reported that she was present, and her students were free to come closer to her or stay farther away, allowing them to modify or adjust the relationship however they wanted. Eylül mentioned that the quality of interaction

with her students depended to some extent on how students perceived language learning. She explained how much she enjoyed contributing “to the teaching and learning of English.” She added: “The most popular thing that makes us the most popular, or rather the most accepted, is that we teach the most popular language in the world.” She reported that she told her students about the benefits of learning a language and explained how it would open many doors using instances from her own life. In other words, she perceived language learning as capital, and the nature of her relationship with her students was shaped by the needs and perceptions of her students about language learning.

While describing her relationship with students, Pera likened the classroom to the depths of an ocean with different types of fish. She positioned herself as the leader fish, transferring her leadership role to others from time to time:

I'm under the ocean, in its depths. I'm like the leader fish, but I often blend with them. Sometimes I hand over the leadership to someone else. There are many types of fish, not just one type. Well, I'm not the biggest. I'm not the smallest. I'm not the most colorful. We all have our best traits. At the same time, I am one of those and share life with them in that region. If we think of that place as a lesson, I communicate with my students both during the lesson and outside of it, which is actually the case with many foreign language teachers.

Similarly, Zeynep described how much she cared for her students. She also touched upon the differences in teacher-student interactions in preparatory schools and departments. She claimed that most teachers in the school were very close to students, treating them “like a mother, sometimes like a sister”:

They can come to us and tell their problems and ask for support... Most of them are leaving their homes for the first time, coming from out of town... And I try to help them in every way, I listen to their problems, I do whatever I can to help them... Many of them say that they miss their preparatory school very much.

According to Zeynep, students missed their teachers in preparatory school because she contended that department teachers had a “more professional, more academic approach,” making them more distant from the students in their departments. She

added: “To be honest, we have an environment that is not very academic.” Mila and Derin also touched upon how close they were to their students. Derin, for example, stated how much she loved her students and enjoyed sharing things related to language or independent of the lessons with her students in their WhatsApp group: “They teach me something and I teach them. I believe we mutually support each other’s growth.” Her account revealed that she cared a lot about her students and their feelings, emphasizing how crucial it is for students to feel appreciated, valued, and important. In a similar vein, Tuna also explained how much he valued student voices and opinions:

I always collect written feedback from students. I take it seriously. At the beginning of the semester, I tell the students that their ideas are important to me and that their opinions will be valued from the first day until the end of the semester.

In brief, teachers did not position themselves as the sole authority. Instead, they valued their students’ opinions and contributions to their lessons and felt close to their students. They showed a genuine interest in their students’ well-being and academic performance. Therefore, they tailored their instruction to meet the needs and interests of the students, expressing how much they cared for their students and enjoyed contributing to their learning process.

4.2.3.3.2. Relationships with Colleagues

Teachers’ accounts revealed that having a close friendship with colleagues acted as “psychological therapy.” They did, however, also observe the recent shift in the school culture towards individualism, marked by teacher isolation, a dearth of interaction and opportunities to socialize, cliques, and a lack of solidarity and collective agency in contrast to the collaborative school environment in the past, which provided teachers with socialization opportunities through charity events and get-togethers.

Mila remarked that they had a close friendship in the school. She expressed how much she appreciated helping one another and sharing resources, as well as

challenges and problems in “the form of psychological therapy.” Similarly, Zeynep talked about how much she loved her colleagues’ support of one another. Even though some teachers did not get along with each other, the majority were cheerful, lifting each other, spending breaks together, and supporting one another. She attributed this positive working environment to the lack of “superior-subordinate relationships between people.” She added: “All our friends are instructors. No one puts their ego too much forward.” She emphasized having a “pretty wide circle of friends” and that they also met outside the school for yoga and shopping. However, she observed that as she grew more conscious of the value of time, she began to spend more time alone. In addition to reiterating the small groups, Derin highlighted the school’s warm and friendly working atmosphere, with teachers helping and supporting each other. She described the platform or the school context as “egalitarian.” She added that they were not “exposed to any war” since there was no career advancement or promotion, similar to what Zeynep mentioned.

Cliques were reported to be another issue by Zeynep, Tuna, Eylül, and Pera. Zeynep highlighted the groupings and polarization in the school. They were called “interest groups” by Tuna. He also brought up the conflict or tension between two groups of teachers who favored practical or real-world experience over further graduate-level studies. While some teachers got along well and enjoyed working with those pursuing graduate-level studies, others questioned their purpose, asking, “What is the point?” and alienated them. Eylül also noted the groupings among the teaching staff, the lack of group consciousness, and the importance of professional ethics. According to her, groupings even shaped how new unit members were assigned. When choosing members, she said, unit members selected the person closest to them, and they said things like “I get along very well with her, and she reads the coffee fortune, etc.”

Pera stated that she was unable to integrate into the school culture formed long before she started working there, so she decided to take a unique or individual route. She also highlighted the lack of collective agency in the school: “I struggled a lot, but it didn't work out... Even if I show courage alone, when the person next to you does not show that courage, you become the other and you are marginalized.” In

other words, Pera claimed to have struggled a lot to change the school culture, but she realized that it could not be done alone as you could easily be labeled as “the other” and “the marginal.” Like Pera, Derin also mentioned a lack of solidarity among the staff. She conveyed her disappointment with her colleagues, describing how isolated she felt during the meeting. While they acknowledged her concerns, they did not support her when she raised the issues. Derin felt upset and hurt by their tendency to remain silent during the meeting.

As can be seen in teachers’ narratives, the school culture was already experiencing negative shifts in terms of interaction among the staff. Online education further exacerbated the increased isolation among them. For example, Mabel claimed that teachers did maintain communication in WhatsApp groups, but there was not as much communication as in face-to-face education. She said they were on their own or isolated from one another during online education and could come together only in seminars. Similarly, Derin also mentioned WhatsApp groups as the only way of keeping contact and sharing issues and concerns, and then problematized the lack of other platforms where teachers could meet and discuss the practices and issues.

While Derin stressed the importance of self-taught education and learning from veteran teachers, she pointed out that the lack of school gatherings resulted in the lack of collaboration and exchanges of expertise and experience among teachers. She related this to a kind of management strategy: “When the meetings that brought us together were cancelled, people did not come together. Like ‘divide and rule.’” She explained her perception and interpretation of the school culture, noting that it remained strong until she quit as a coordinator, which marked the rupture. She likened the school to the human body:

What kind of person would this university be if it were a human being? She is active, agile, and dynamic, but she also protects her cultural values and has a traditionalist side, but on the other hand, her eyes are more like Atatürk’s.

However, as Derin claimed, for the culture to flourish, there should be some gatherings where teachers come together and socialize: “In order to establish a family culture, you need to gather around the table at least once a day for a meal.”

Sadly, though, she reported that their get-togethers were interrupted. Furthermore, teaching in different faculties harmed the interactions and connections among the staff, too:

People can't come together, and I miss our warm conversations every day, the cheerful jokes during coffee breaks, and the reflections on lessons... The absence of a mechanism that can bring us together severely challenges our institutional belonging because you can't establish any emotional connection with anyone.

Derin's account highlighted the importance of a physical space that could foster a sense of institutional belonging among teachers. She also mentioned a lack of a big teacher's room for teachers to come together and communicate with each other and described how this could affect the socialization of teachers: "I have heard of something called the Dubaization Effect. Divide people. Put them between small walls, cut off their communication with each other, and robotize them." In a similar vein, Tuna also mentioned the lack of interaction among teachers, and he noted that the shift system prevented teachers from working together as it was difficult to hold even a single meeting for all the staff. Zeynep cited teaching in different faculties and admitted that the interaction among the staff, as well as that among students, was influenced negatively.

While sharing her observations, Eylül explained the significance of tea in our culture and how it served as a unifying symbol, saying: "Tea is the only element that brings together, the right-wing, left-wing, irreligious, religious people in Türkiye." She mentioned that even a simple cup of tea might bring teachers together. However, the school never offered it, and teachers always had to pay for it. In a similar vein, Pera also highlighted the individualism in the school. She resembled the school to a forest and teachers to trees. Although there were some areas where groups of bushes were communicating more closely with one another, she positioned herself more as "a single and free tree." She also elaborated on society and described the current situation resulting from the economic crisis after the pandemic as "a social collapse," which has led to the lack of stability. She illustrated this by pointing to the frequent turnover of the school administration. Eylül acknowledged that not everyone in the

school had the same sort of ties, but she personally got along well with everyone. She mentioned her interest in human energy and its impact on creativity: “Negative energy kills creativity. An optimistic and cheerful mood gives people positive energy, and you spread that energy around you.” According to her, teachers at school would support one another in the past, but the nature of interaction among the staff shifted. Teachers seemed to have lost the ability to say nice things to each other. Instead, they expressed gratitude with simple thanks, which was insufficient for her, so she added: “There are people who don’t have the balance of giving and receiving.” She emphasized a lack of engagement with others and more focus on personal interests: “We have become too individualistic, too introspective, too inward.”

Tuna argued that despite the friendships and greetings, in a school environment with limited resources, “people start attacking limited resources” “because they want to access those scarce resources as quickly as possible, and this is called anomie when it occurs at the social level.” Then, he said, “There is no ethics. The academic thing, principles, integrity. Things that make us who we are disappear. All the ethical bonds are unraveling.” He described the school environment as a place void of professional unity or academic integrity by citing the famous words of Hobbes, “homo homini lupus,” meaning “a man is a wolf to another man,” highlighting the tendency of people for self-interest. In other words, he argued that teachers could be cruel and selfish toward one another in a place devoid of academic integrity.

Like Pera, who likened the circumstances to those in MoNE and Türkiye, Tuna also noted that the school was formed at the micro level by the structure at the macro level: “Whatever the macrocosm is, the microcosm is the same. Whatever the political structure is above, or whatever that neoliberal structure is, the same thing is going on below.” In other words, according to her, political environments or neoliberal trends were mirrored in the school setting. He then described how much he longed for collaboration and support rather than competition:

We are not rivals. We will make more joint publications together. We will travel together, earn money and publish together. As long as we can work

together, our visibility will increase. As we support each other, we will rise together. I mean, not by constantly pulling each other's legs.

In brief, he problematized the neoliberal discourses and expressed how they should be replaced with collaboration and support. His account revealed that within this school environment, teachers prioritized individual progress and personal achievement, and they were more interested in pursuing their own interests, all of which had a detrimental effect on community building in the school context.

4.2.3.3.3. Relationships with Administration

Teachers' relationships with the administration play an important role in shaping the school culture and fostering an effective work environment within an educational setting. Their remarks revealed that teachers stressed the frequent turnover of the administrative staff, which will be discussed in the constraints section. They reported that their interaction was contingent on the principal in charge. In addition, while reflecting on their relationship with the administration, some teachers also elaborated on why they could not envision themselves as an administrator and why they preferred to continue teaching instead of pursuing a career in administration, even if given the opportunity.

Teachers emphasized that administrators frequently changed within that political system, causing shifts in their relationships. Tuna, for example, emphasized how the political structures affected the administration. "Relations with principals are constantly changing, of course, as managers change. It changes as their policies and desires change," said Mabel. She also reported that compared to earlier times when "decisions made were more inclusive and less top-down," current communication with administrators had become increasingly challenging. She characterized the current relationship as "very unpleasant," claiming that the principals had made it apparent during the first meeting that they were not happy or satisfied with the teachers and were there to fix the problem or address the issues in the school. In a similar vein, Mila contended that under the current administration, there was a lack of collaboration between the instructors and the administration. Pera also discussed

the effects of the frequent changes in the administration from a former administrative staff perspective. She portrayed herself as unable to contain her emotions and anger and could not pretend that nothing had happened. As a teacher with some experience in administration, she presented a different perspective regarding the previous administrators. She claimed that the school was used to a system in which administrators were only concerned with leaving a positive impression. It did not matter if things did not go smoothly. A favorable reputation was what mattered. According to her, these attitudes were detrimental to the preparatory schools, so she emphasized the importance of finding a middle ground between being overly rigid, strict, and highly irregular, as these behaviors could undermine the foundation of the institutions.

While reflecting on their communication with the administration, teachers like Mila, Zeynep, and Derin contended that they would prefer to be in the classroom environment rather than in a managing position, implying their understanding of what an administrator should be like differed from how they see themselves in their roles. Mila admitted that while she always got “along well” with the administrators, she “never had a very close relationship with” them and added she liked being in the classroom more. Similarly, Zeynep described her relationships with the administration as “generally good.” She elaborated more on her passion for justice and expressed how she could not tolerate the abuse of rights. She reported taking action to address injustices and defending others’ rights upon seeing that they were violated. Like Mila, she also said she enjoyed teaching and staying in the class. She thought that she would have to behave differently as an administrator, so it was not something she was interested in since adopting a political demeanor, staying away from the classroom, prioritizing quantity over quality, holding a lot of meetings, and writing reports did not align with her beliefs and principles.

In a similar vein, Derin reported that she was not qualified to be an administrator, adding, “Yes, I have my own self-control or autonomy. Yes, I have a strong character, I accept that, but frankly, I have never had the personality to manage someone. I’m more of a collaborative, cooperative type of person.” She then described how she would act if she found herself in that position: “I wouldn’t want

people to agree with everything I say. I always recall Atatürk's quote: 'If one day my words contradict science, choose science.'" She stated that she was not close to the people in the administration. Derin also admitted that she did not have a very good relationship with them because, as she put it, they were obsessed with regulation "under the wings of democracy" described as "fake," which will be discussed in the constraints section. She claimed to have lost faith in the administration as she did not see any attempts on the part of the administration to involve teachers in decision-making processes and felt as though her voice was ignored.

Overall, teachers maintained that their relationships with the administration in office were heavily influenced by frequent turnovers. While reflecting on their interactions, some teachers also expressed their reluctance to take on administrative roles, fearing they would have to navigate political dynamics, pretend to accept things that did not align with their beliefs, and remain silent when faced with injustices.

4.2.4. Constraints

As teachers' narratives unraveled, people appeared to perceive several constraints within their workplace. In line with the framework of Figured Worlds, how teachers navigate constraints is important since they influence how teachers make decisions inside and outside their classes, enact agency, and interpret their identities and interactions. As they respond to various constraints and navigate them, they interpret and reinterpret their identities and make necessary improvisations, as "The world must be answered - authorship is not a choice" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272). Therefore, it is important to understand constraints as this can shed light on how organizational cultures impact teachers' experiences and actions.

4.2.4.1. Workplace Injustices

Teachers' narratives revealed that part-time working conditions and perceived favoritism surfaced as workplace injustices they had to navigate. Some teachers perceived working part-time before getting tenure as a constraint. Their accounts revealed how they interpreted their experiences and made decisions accordingly.

Some decided to work at another university when they lost hope of getting tenure, and they later returned when they achieved it. Others toiled away for years under trying circumstances. Mabel felt lucky to receive tenure in a short time. Yet, Mila, İpek and especially Tuna's stories indicated their circumstances were highly challenging.

Mila talked about the challenges she faced in her initial years of teaching while working part-time. She stated that in addition to working 20 hours a week, she completed a lot of work at school and worked in various units so that she could become a permanent teacher. She claimed that since getting tenure depended on those significant people or the administration's judgments, she went above and beyond to understand the job and get noticed by them. Despite her efforts, though, her pay was below the minimum wage. However, it was not these difficulties that made it difficult for her to endure. She realized that she was not respected and recognized at school.

Teachers' accounts also stressed the severe financial difficulties they had to navigate back then. As İpek mentioned, some teachers had to take evening classes to make ends meet, for example, and Eylül was one of them. After graduating from the university, she started to work part-time, and brought up the challenges part-timers experienced, such as poor wages, evening classes, and no insurance. Tuna stated that part-time employment was one of the biggest concerns for him and described that time as what he perceived as "a heavy period in which human labor was exploited." He shared how challenging that period was. With a trembling voice, he said: "We were relying solely on the sugar in our tea we drank between classes; we got energy from the sugar of the tea we drank" as the pay was too low. He took 42- 43 hours of classes a week and, in return, received about one-third of the salary, so he felt fortunate to be living with his parents. Then, he described his daily routine back then:

I'm not ashamed to say this... You have to teach a lot to earn money... I start at 08:30 in the morning. I have classes until 12 or 12.30, sometimes until 2. In the afternoon, there are post-graduate degree courses. Then, evening classes begin. If you add the commute- an hour each way- it is 13-14 hours or

something like that...You can't be sick or anything. Well, you don't have insurance anyway. Thank God we were younger then.

Closely related to this constraint, favoritism was a further workplace injustice or issue brought up by teachers. Derin, for example, mentioned a grant for a project and claimed that an administrative staff member had awarded it to a teacher, disregarding the transparency principles of the project. She rejected the decision, stating that criteria should be established. After people apply for the grant, the most qualified one should be chosen. Eylül mentioned a similar incident about a conference abroad. When she sought an explanation, the person in the administration responded: "I had promised it to her, my dear." She considered this instance a traumatic experience that diminished her motivation.

Mila reported that there were many part-timers, all vying for tenure. She did, however, note that sometimes they overheard an administrator praising a particular person in a way that suggested she would be granted tenure, which created feelings of discouragement among other part-timers. She stated that the school administration had all the authority or complete discretion over which teacher would be granted tenure at those times. Tuna's account confirmed Mila's assertion that lecturer selection exams would be conducted at school by administrators and teachers who had good relationships with them, "or more precisely, whoever received the most favoritism, whoever made the phone calls would secure tenure." This practice continued until the central examination system was implemented, as he reported. While stressing the severity of the problems, Tuna drew attention to bystanders or teachers who chose to align with the more powerful side or the administration even if they recognized the injustices. He cited an article that pointed out how this whole process makes the school barren, suggesting that those who do not resist or who turn a blind eye today will experience the same tomorrow, which perpetuates a toxic culture in the school.

4.2.4.2. Top-down Decisions and Limited Autonomy

Another constraint that surfaced in teachers' stories was their concerns about the autonomy of the university and its implications for both the teachers and the overall

system at the school, such as the frequent changes in the administrative staff. Furthermore, they noted how the lack of autonomy on the part of both the school and university administrations left them with “no space to breathe.” They discussed how they navigated and carved out spaces for themselves to keep going.

Zeynep talked about the frequent changes in exams and course books, viewing the school as a microcosm of the broader educational system in Türkiye, which is characterized by frequent changes. Similarly, Pera attributed the frequent changes in the administration to the political climate in the country, saying,

Things change more frequently than ever before. One administration leaves, and another comes. Each new administration disrupts the previous one’s system. This is the situation in the country. This has always been the case in administrative situations, but I think it has become even more severe.

Pera stated that there was no sustainability. Instead, every new system followed the same understanding: “Delete everything and create a new one.” She described the situation in their school, highlighting the frequency of change in a short period of time. She explained how each change shaped the organizational processes and decisions regarding the books and the programs: “One of them comes, doesn't like the book and changes it. Another one comes, changes the program, removes a course, and adds another.” She confessed that she aimed to fight against these changes, but admitted, “I couldn’t manage it in my own way.” She maintained that the dominant ideology should not affect education in this way. In brief, both Zeynep and Pera argued that the frequent changes in the school reflected broader trends in Türkiye. Likewise, İpek attributed the frequent changes to hierarchical issues and stressed that the changes in the administration resulted from top-down decisions made outside their campus yet had a significant impact on the university.

Derin’s statements and her changing feelings about the administration revealed that the administrative staff had undergone three changes during the data collection. In the first interview, she expressed appreciation for the administration’s efforts, but by the third one, her mood had changed. Zeynep also stated that things were always changing in the school. She asserted that there was no consistent management policy

guiding these changes, which resulted in issues like a lack of a proper curriculum. While problematizing the frequent turnover of the administrative staff, Zeynep elaborated on one of the most stressful periods in the school and revealed the origins of this change. She mentioned a satisfaction survey conducted many years ago. According to her, each course had a coordinator who had overseen their course for fifteen years. Upon the administrator's poll, it turned out that their constant presence was quite unpopular, leading them to resign and retire in response. "It was a very turbulent period," she said. She also mentioned the new procedure, which involved a duty shift after three or four years. In other words, she clarified the reason behind the ongoing turnover of the administration and the shifting policies and practices.

Mila was another teacher who brought up the frequent turnovers of the school administration, adding that rapid administrative changes meant shaking of the ground, which each time added to the tension. She also expressed concerns regarding the limited autonomy of the administrators. She asserted that universities should be places of freedom, but she felt that they were influenced by specific audiences or political views, which also impact teachers. As Tuna stated, interfering with that autonomy could result in issues, such as not giving teachers enough room to breathe. He also insisted that universities should be autonomous since he claimed systems lacking autonomy would be devoid of quality.

In addition to the lack of a breathing space, teachers expressed concerns regarding the appointments of the school administrators. They noted that they thought that the school administrators appointed by the university administration had nothing to do with Snowdrop or English language teaching. "This top-down issue is bad. It is wrong to have an administrator with no background in English or language teaching. I would change this," Mabel said. Eylül also believed that the director should have a degree in ELT. Zeynep also mentioned that they never had a director who embraced the school for years, so they always waited on pins and needles and were always left wondering who would come and go next. Zeynep also described the administrator as "someone who has nothing to do with us," and added, "We need a principal who is an educator and understands foreign languages," like Derin, who touched upon this issue.

Tuna attributed the problem to the operational issues, the violations of rules, and some discourses circulating inside the school, such as “Everyone is equal.” According to him, this “ruins the institution and undermines it.” Regarding the exams, for example, he claimed that the administration did not hold anyone accountable for the exam preparation, which relied solely on two skills. He added, “If you can't even do the top down properly, you will see how this intervention from above can hollow out universities and programs.” He asserted that this leads to a situation in which the field of teaching is no longer left to the teacher. In other words, their space of authoring is interfered with and restricted. While reflecting on the autonomy of universities, Derin also brought up and problematized teacher deskilling as well. She argued that the lack of autonomy on the part of the school administration also led to teacher deskilling, just as the previous administration impeded teacher autonomy. Once, for example, Tuna was asked to evaluate the program designed for literature students in their school and reported his observations: “We saw that a C-level program is taught at school, but the exam applied is B, and the regulation is not actually appropriate.” When they suggested changing the exam since it was against the rules or poor quality, their suggestion was declined:

We said, 'Let's change this and we will write the exam.' The management said, 'No, there is no need. You are creating trouble for us. You will handle this for a few years now, but who will take over these tasks after a few years? Who will write the exam?'

Once again, Tuna referred to the discourse prevalent in the school: “Adapt. Don’t cause any problems, and don’t cause us any more trouble.” He argued that in order for the opposite of this discourse to be realized, there must be administrators who are “willing and open to hearing the voices of teachers and who are not affiliated with a certain political view or a certain group.” He also underscored the critical need for administrators to truly internalize the principles of academic and institutional development and to be committed to implementing relevant international legislation.

As teachers’ accounts unraveled, it became evident that they felt the administration did not truly involve them in decision-making. For example, Eylül stated that although a survey was conducted to get teachers’ opinions and include them in the

decision-making process during the coursebook selection, they heard later that the school had already chosen the coursebooks based on their agreement with the publishing house. Mabel stated that they were given the materials and told to cover them. The decisions in the school, she said, were made without taking teachers' opinions into consideration, and Mila added, "No matter how much they try to include teachers, you inevitably feel that hierarchy." According to Pera, the same applied to the demands from the university, which she considered top-down, too.

According to Tuna, there was such a system in school where teachers were excluded from the decision-making process, which hindered teacher agency. He thought that since teachers attend the classes, they know what works and what does not, so they should be listened to. However, as he reported, the problem lies in the top-down approaches and management. "Such people make some important decisions, but it seems like we are informed at the last second in the implementation part," Zeynep said. She complained about the lack of a management policy in the school since every change in the administrative staff paved the way for other changes in the system.

According to İpek, a bottom-up approach, in which teachers' voices are heard, could, in fact, improve the school culture. However, she again related this to the top-down approach at the macro level. She asserted that the hierarchy was still very evident, and when both micro and macro levels were considered, "This inevitably affects the school culture." Derin mentioned the administration's so-called attempts to include teachers in decision-making but noted that these efforts were merely for show. She claimed that general assembly meetings, for example, were not to listen to teachers or get their opinions truly. Instead, they aimed to inform teachers of decisions and held "We-will-tell-you-something" meetings. Derin did not find them sincere, as she felt they did not genuinely care about teachers' opinions and ideas. According to her, they merely pretended to do so: "There is an effort to appear democratic, but in fact, you see that democracy is actually a fake effort to appear democratic through surveying by saying, 'let's ask questions, let's include everyone,'" which all resulted in a loss of trust in the administration. She referred to this type of fake inclusion as "designed democracy," "constructed democracy," and "fictionalized democratic environment," and continued, "If you try to create a fictionalized democratic

environment, then all the mechanisms you put in place are actually fake. And this is exactly what I feel right now. That's why you stop saying anything anymore.” In other words, she pointed out that their opposition to decisions and policies at school was not taken seriously. This is why she described it as “fake inclusion” and pointed to their attempts to control or regulate people “under the guise of democracy.” For instance, she mentioned the needs analysis survey conducted by the curriculum development unit and stated that it did not include any inquiry concerning the extracurricular activities teachers incorporated:

Among those questions, there is no question about what you do outside of the curriculum... They want me to answer which activities are going well and which are going badly. Apart from that, they have no motivation to listen to something that I, as a teacher, have put effort into and designed myself... I think it's just a formality, a reporting process based on ticking boxes.

Derin implied that they were interested in a box-ticking exercise as part of the accreditation process rather than valuing or appreciating the extracurricular activities. Despite her efforts and desire to be more involved in decisions about testing, curriculum, or material development, she reported being rejected and excluded. While Derin admitted the administrators’ role in the school as signatories, she also stressed their responsibility towards others. She recognized that they hold the authority, but when exercising that authority, she cautioned that they must include other members as well. She added, “If democracy is our thing, if it is pluralism, everyone must make decisions. That's why I sometimes act more like an opposition party.” In other words, while she reiterated her claim that teachers were not genuinely engaged in decision-making processes, she also signaled that despite this, she would not give up her efforts to make her voice heard. She suggested that universities empower teachers and foster autonomy.

Tuna’s account confirmed Derin’s remarks about fake inclusion. He also mentioned the regular meetings held to gather feedback on ongoing practices and exams. He observed that although teachers raised concerns about the ineffectiveness of the exams in measuring progress, they were met with the following response: “Don’t keep saying the same things all the time.” He argued that there was a lack of meaningful action, and these meetings were merely for show. Pera was another

teacher who felt she did not have much control over the decisions made in the school, like coursebook selections. Even if she presented solid proof of things that worked, she did not believe it would make a difference.

In order to highlight the significance of bottom-up systems and teacher support, Tuna brought up the ecosystem analogy and said, “Just rabbits, lambs, I don't know, it's not an ecosystem. They need those wolves like in Yellowstone.” He asserted that support from the bottom should be just as important as support from the top and that “your substructure and superstructure need to be matched” for the system to function properly - just as clubs and social responsibility projects did not. He said, “The system doesn't work just when it comes from above. It needs support from below as much as from above.” In other words, he argued that when top-down decisions did not have the backing of teachers and did not align with their beliefs, they couldn't lead to success.

4.2.4.3. Lack of Incentives and Resources

In addition to the constraints related to workplace injustices and top-down decisions, teachers' accounts highlighted further concerns within this figured world: a lack of appreciation, support, and incentives for both academic studies and unit work. Some teachers believed that teacher appreciation was more common in the past. Mila noted that, in the past, the administration would recognize contributors to organizational processes by applauding, thanking and awarding certificates: “They would be noticed more. They would be heard more.” She observed a shift in how the administration now appreciates teachers' efforts. Derin was another teacher who pointed to the current administration's lack of gratitude. She emphasized how she felt that the administration undermined her expertise. For example, she reported investing significant effort into the planning stage of a professional development event. However, she claimed she received no acknowledgement, and her efforts were disregarded: “It's invisible, it's ignored... It hurts people.” In response, she asserted: “You don't value me, but this is who I am.”

Although Zeynep remarked that she wasn't expecting anything from others, she discussed a recent school policy with appreciation. She reported feeling content with

the current practice of receiving certificates for attending workshops and listing teachers who completed academic studies or received certificates. She remarked, “This is actually a bit of formalism, but still, it is a nice thing to hear: ‘You participated, thank you, you were there.’” She highlighted the importance of feeling appreciated, noting that, as a teacher with experience in community service and charity events, it was gratifying to receive meaningful support and encouragement for her efforts from colleagues.

Eylül highlighted the importance of financial and moral support, as well as motivation, incentives, and rewards for academic performance. She suggested that people pursuing post-graduate degrees, for example, should have reduced class hours or less demanding programs so that they could better contribute to the school. However, due to the lack of support, she felt reluctant to actively participate in organizational processes, thinking her efforts would go unrewarded. Consequently, she reported feeling disappointed and becoming more reserved. Like Tuna, she chose to withdraw into her own shell. During the interview, Eylül also recalled instances where teachers requested training for the specific unit duties they were responsible for but did not receive any. Derin reported requesting funding to attend a conference and give a presentation, but she did not get any, so she claimed that she had to cover the costs on her own. She also stated that while the universities abroad recognized, celebrated, and voiced her capacity, her own school trivialized her expertise. She remarked, “There are circumstances here that force me... I always find myself struggling for something” in the school. She, therefore, highlighted the absence of incentives like promotion, appreciation, and the lack of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The teachers at the school were also not valued. Tuna also mentioned how challenging it was to obtain academic incentives. He asserted that while incentives once served to foster academic inquiry and research, they now serve the opposite objective.

As can be seen, teachers were craving some sort of recognition and appreciation for their efforts in the school. However, when they lacked support and suffered financial and moral setbacks while working in units, they chose not to perform unit-related duties. For example, Eylül was incredibly busy reporting, writing documents, and

typing during her unit work. She said: “Honestly, it has placed a heavy burden on us.” As for what she got in return, she said she got nothing but what she gained for herself. In other words, the only thing was what she acquired personally. She explained how stressful her working experience as a coordinator was without any financial reward in return: “Staying at school in the evening, not being able to take off my shoes, not being able to take a shower, not being able to eat, etc. I couldn't meet my basic needs.” During the interview, she said: “I realized that they were exploiting my goodwill.” Mabel also identified a teacher not getting paid when preparing an exam instead of teaching classes as a problem. Their accounts revealed that teachers disapproved of overworking without anything in return.

Zeynep also highlighted the same constraint, a lack of support for unit work. She claimed that teachers were not enthusiastic about working in units since they had no support at all. According to her, there was even a constant endeavor to find fault: “Not everything has a monetary value, but there should be a moral value for these types of duties, in my opinion,” such as a sense of feeling valued, a sense of belonging to the school, some sort of recognition. However, she said, “We seem to lack that a bit, and there's always this attempt to find flaws or faults. People don't really want to express their appreciation.” She clarified that teachers have a minimum work requirement of 12 hours per week, and if they teach more, they get paid more or receive additional pay. In units, she said, she was working for a minimum of 20 hours but got paid for 12 hours. Then, like Eylül, Zeynep also stated that after working in these units under such conditions for so long, she no longer wanted these responsibilities. She noted that her expectations were not just financial and that simply feeling valued would be enough for her to continue, but there she received neither monetary nor moral encouragement.

Tuna noted that the real problem was not the shortage of money and resources but that SFL was solely seen as a tool or means of teaching grammar. According to him, calling testing and evaluation a bleeding wound had become a cliché, but he inquired why no one was assigned to receive training in Türkiye or go abroad to specialize in these areas to address the deficiency. He said it was not impossible to establish international and national collaborations and join forces to produce projects. In brief,

he questioned whether they genuinely intended to enhance the school. In a similar vein, Derin also questioned the motivations behind the practices at school by elaborating on a social responsibility project in which teachers visited a school and taught English. She said: “You have not provided enough resources for your own lecturers yet... Then you say something odd is happening here. You notice other things when you think critically.” That is why Derin conveyed that if there is a top-down request, she begins to think about who it benefits or what it is beneficial for.

Teachers’ stories also revealed that in addition to a lack of support or incentives for academic or unit work, teachers also experienced facility-related difficulties at school and the repercussions of financial problems in Türkiye. Eylül, for example, reported that the school had only two printers for the teachers, but since they were used in the testing room, teachers couldn’t access them. She also mentioned that they had always lacked computers and had to cover costs out of their pockets. She further claimed that living and working conditions in their school were poor, with a lot of women having to wait in line for the two available restrooms for years. “I wouldn't want to pay for every tea and coffee I drink at school. It's ridiculous”, she added, noting that not even tea was supplied to teachers.

As teachers reported, during online and hybrid teaching, they were asked to bring their own computers to school, but they were not asked whether they had a computer. Moreover, lecturing in different faculties on the campus made the situation even harder as they had to handle technical issues on their own. Mabel pointed to the lack of facilities and added that they did not have a designated room or a table. She, for example, had to move around to find a place to eat the food she brought herself. Eylül stated that she was teaching in a faculty without heating, computers, or projectors. She reported having carried her own computer around to different faculties on the campus every day. She claimed that she was mentally and physically split: “I walk around with a bag on my back. When the electricity goes out, I search for an alternative solution. If the classroom is cold, I look for another way to stay warm. Physical conditions can be very tiring as well.” She also pointed to the inequality of opportunity among students, calling it “discrimination.” She conveyed that while some students could benefit from different facilities in their “super

technological classes,” others received education under poor conditions. She conveyed that she used initiative in homework submissions and tried to support her students who faced technological difficulties and economic challenges. This was also brought up by Zeynep, who mentioned that her classes were relatively more comfortable than others. Even though she carried her computer and speaker every day, she felt fortunate to have an internet connection, a projector, and a warm classroom. She also expressed her appreciation for the helpfulness of the staff in the building whenever she had technical problems. Similarly, Pera also felt fortunate to have access to the internet and a projector. She also did not need to bring her computer as she was provided with one in her classroom. She did acknowledge, though, that small and crowded classes impacted language instruction negatively. Like Zeynep, Mila also mentioned that she carried her computer and speakers every day. While she did not consider it an obstacle, she admitted that the lack of facilities definitely affected ELT negatively.

Tuna mentioned that some classes were inappropriate for effective ELT. He claimed teachers were trying to teach in small classes without access to the internet and technology. He reported that he carried his computer and speakers everywhere. They all encountered different obstacles, as he noted, adding: “It's good if you get 20% 25% efficiency from those lessons because you are dealing with a lot of technical problems” He noted people expect efficiency under these circumstances and argued that this resulted from the university's allocation of resources to profit-making areas. He claimed that they never received any support from the school and encountered the attitude of “you're on your own.”

In addition to the challenges teachers faced, Tuna also raised the lack of resources and inequality of opportunity students encountered, especially during ERT, as Eylül also mentioned. There was no support from the school, and students without computers, smartphones, internet connections, and available rooms in their houses were ignored, which is why Tuna described those days as a “social crisis.” In a similar vein, Derin noted that while smart boards in the classrooms contributed to effective teaching and learning, there were discrepancies in students' access to these resources due to financial problems. Students from economically disadvantaged

backgrounds could not afford essential educational materials, such as online resources provided through textbooks, leading to inequities and disparities in access to resources. She also drew attention to those students with limited exposure to technology, especially in state schools, which shaped teachers' pedagogical decisions in class considering the need to address digital literacy:

Here's how it affects language education: You move beyond language, and the matter extends to other areas. You need to focus on content development and work on developing these competencies. Digital literacy, leadership skills, and soft skills are among the various competencies that students need, and you need to address all of them within the classroom.

While feeling fortunate to have an internet connection, Zeynep also touched upon the dearth of resources and claimed that despite their best efforts, they couldn't create the desired environment as the institution needed more integrity. Referring to the COVID-19 and online education period, Zeynep went on to say that the education policy was and is still flawed:

Frankly, I do not see any improvement and think there is a serious loss of education during the Covid period. Many children who went to public schools couldn't attend classes because there were no lessons... They did not have a computer, and perhaps the lesson was not taught. That's why those children somehow passed the class, were passed, without learning anything.

She admitted that for the first time in her career, she had thought about taking unpaid leave as her profession did not satisfy her due to the poor physical condition of the classes. Similarly, İpek described that period as the worst in her career. Mila contended that the resources were limited, and teachers had no incentives since it was a state university and added: "It is like the Sahara Desert. It is so dry."

İpek spoke about how the economy influenced her and her students, saying that she needed to be more careful with her expenses like coffee and transport. She said, "If this affects me like this, I think it will affect the students even worse." Likewise, Pera stressed how the economy affected the university, focusing on the decline in funding, the increase in the value of the dollar, and restrictions on services provided for academics. She argued that this could lead to a discourse like, "We have become a

research university. This needs to be done, but... because the dollar has risen so much, we can't afford it, which reduces quality and motivation.” In other words, the economy affected the budget of the universities and the resources available to teachers, which in turn impacted the quality of education.

4.2.4.4. Trivializations of Teachers' Qualifications

Another constraint participants reported navigating was the trivialization of their qualifications. They described the administration's attempts to restrict their spaces of authorship and render them invisible. Tuna, for example, pointed to the following discourse of “everyone is equal” and mentioned that their academic titles were not displayed on their office doors, which trivialized their academic expertise. He remarked that this discourse aimed to convey, “Your academic title doesn't matter here. You are an instructor, and that's it.” He asserted that universities are highly hierarchical structures, and this discourse suffocated teachers and rendered them invisible. “You know what they call it; they call it a glass ceiling,” he added. In other words, it constituted an invisible barrier for teachers with advanced graduate degrees, preventing them from rising to higher positions and hindering their advancement. He reported that some PhD holders, for example, couldn't cope with these problems and quit the institution upon realizing they had no future there.

Teachers also stressed that their expertise was undermined, and they were not treated as academic staff, which contributed to rendering them invisible. Mabel described how the university administration trivialized their expertise and made top-down decisions disregarding teachers' insights and experience: “They intervene a lot ...OK, needs are important, but we are the ones who teach the language. We are the ones who are trained in that subject. We are the ones who have experience in that subject.” She criticized the school administration, stating that teacher expertise was sacrificed to the top-down decision-making process.

Being positioned as a lecturer was also reported to affect the support given negatively. Derin stated she was not supported in attending a conference to share her research and explained why, “Because it turned out I was a lecturer, and I didn't have

a title. How wrong. I thought it was a research university.” İpek also stated that they were beyond a language school, but the university couldn’t make the most of them and added that they were not afforded enough opportunities to use their expertise. İpek also observed that while STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) were very popular and attracted significant investments, social sciences were undervalued. It was challenging to get tenure in the social sciences, initiate projects, or get approval for them. What bothered her was that “social sciences are not taken very seriously,” and the world was moving toward STEM.

Teachers’ narratives also indicated that certain negative behaviors were used to render teachers invisible when they began to stand out among the staff and gain a voice. They felt that success was often seen as a threat by those who were jealous, competitive, or insecure. Tuna, for example, mentioned, “There is a system ready to whack you in the head with a hammer as soon as you start to rise.” He claimed that the negative treatment often began when they stood out from others. While Tuna believed it was not entirely impossible to overcome these obstacles, he pointed out the lasting stigma that often followed: “Maybe you can still make your voice heard, but then you will be stigmatized as ‘He is already quarrelsome; you cannot get along with him anyway’.”

İpek focused on the difficulties teachers would encounter when they had to work on their own to further their careers. She remarked, “A friend who wants to do research has to go somewhere else and do research there,” as the current environment does not support such endeavors. She maintained that teachers who wished to further their professional development were forced to invest considerable effort, “give more of themselves,” and use initiative. Additionally, just like Tuna, she mentioned they could feel strain from their surroundings. In a similar vein, Derin observed that when the administration perceives a teacher as successful, they are declared a rival. If they are considered strong, they are often excluded from conversations, restricting their voice and diminishing their influence from important discussions.

4.3. Discourses in Broader Contexts

In the previous section, school-related discourses that emerged in teachers’ narratives were discussed in general. This section examines how these teachers problematized

discourses within a larger framework, situating them in broader political and socio-cultural contexts. It also explores how they challenged the status quo and taken-for-granted beliefs by critically examining the larger framework at play. It is worth noting that there are no strict boundaries between these two sections; they are interrelated.

4.3.1. Politics and “Education as an Ideological Apparatus”

Teachers’ remarks demonstrate that education in general and ELT specifically operated within a complex political environment that shaped its practices, given the need to make decisions concerning curriculum, teacher training, professional development, and teaching materials, which are all influenced by political ideologies. Pera, for example, expounded on the ideological aspect of education and its impacts on ELT. She argued that over the past ten years, capitalism had diminished the importance of education in general and language teaching in specific. She added, “Since the purpose of education is to produce individuals who can keep up with that order, it ideologically directs us to whatever the dominant ideology wants, and we keep up with it in every way, like the cogs of this wheel.” She stated that despite her attempts to alter it and their classroom discussions of various educational philosophies and philosophers, the current ideology in the world persisted in generating the type of person it desired through education, as well as foreign language teaching. According to her, language education is also viewed as an ideological apparatus.

Derin summarized the impacts of policies on language teaching, including the selection of textbooks and curricula, classroom organization, and the choice of discussion topics. She argued that coursebook materials and curricula were influenced by specific policies, which can restrict their choices in the classroom. Furthermore, she noted that the arrangement of the classes prevented students from using U-shape seating and hindered student interaction, group work, and effective implementation of activities. She also pointed to the teaching materials with limited opportunities for critical thinking activities and cultural sensitivity. While she acknowledged her ability to navigate these challenges and exercise agency, she also admitted that dealing with all these constraints required significant experience.

İpek drew attention to her perception of the hierarchical issues in higher education and stated that decisions, such as the transition from face-to-face to online education, were made top-down without consulting teachers. “Even if it arose out of necessity,” she said, alternative solutions could be found by involving teachers in decision-making. She reported finding it difficult to adjust to the system, considering it a critical incident: “We are experiencing something like this in our school, administratively. Micro to macro. We're going through some top-down decisions. That is also critical for me. I look at school management differently now.”

Teachers also described how political factors restricted their freedom of speech in their classes. İpek, for example, explained how it affected students' lives, the relationship between the instructors, and the expressions of ideas in public, saying, “Frankly, we are uneasy about expressing our ideas openly.” Although the students wanted to discuss politics in class, she claimed that such conversations frightened teachers and caused significant anxiety. She also stated that, despite normally being comfortable with public speaking, the current political environment had an effect on her, as well: “The recent political climate prevents me from speaking freely, too. It imposes limitations. I think of what to say 40 times although there should be spaces where politics can be discussed openly.”

Teachers were also concerned about whether they were under surveillance, especially during online classes, which affected their teaching practices and decisions in their classes. Derin, for example, reported that some of her friends wondered how the control mechanism worked in classes, whether they were being watched in online classes or whether reports were being written about them. Derin reported striving to keep politics out of the classroom as much as possible and highlighted the pervasive sense of fear everyone experienced: “Everyone has this fear. Those who claim otherwise are lying. Unfortunately, this fear is widespread.” Despite this, she was dedicated to fostering critical discussions in her classes and acknowledged the significant effort required, noting:

A university is a place where in-depth discussions take place, but we can't achieve that. The discussions remain very superficial. While I try to do it myself and succeed to some extent, the question is how many teachers can do it? It requires a lot of effort.

Like İpek and Derin, Eylül shared the following perception: “This is the rule in public universities: You don't get into political issues.” She listed topics ethically inappropriate for discussion in state universities, such as economics, politics, culture, religion, and history. She recalled an instance in which a student made the following sentences while Eylül was explaining the word “currency”: “The dollar is increasing day by day in Türkiye” and “The economy is getting worse and worse.” Although Eylül initially acknowledged them as good examples, she quickly realized that discussing such economic and political issues, especially the worsening state of the economy, could be perceived as making political propaganda, so she felt uneasy and immediately changed the subject. She expressed that teachers feel constrained since discussing such topics is considered unethical.

Similar to Mila's account, shifting voices were also apparent in Eylül's account, as well. She recalled her primary school years and claimed that the political context hadn't changed much. She added that they never learned to see things critically from a higher vantage point: “We didn't talk about politics or social sciences in class... There was always such fear.” Mabel also acknowledged how concerned teachers were about surveillance in their classes, but she also asserted that, as a teacher, she wanted to foster a climate in which students would feel more at ease. In a similar vein, Pera noted that the teacher must be brave, citing Paulo Freire, but she acknowledged their own hesitations due to the fear of being misinterpreted. She admitted that she had been cautious in the past and still is in certain respects. She minimized such a mindset in her teaching. In brief, the political factors affected teachers' positionings and pedagogical decisions in their classes. Due to the fear of being under surveillance, teachers felt compelled to exercise caution with the language they used, their stance, and the topics they chose to discuss in their classes in Snowdrop, where political pressures were perceived to be potent.

4.3.2. Proliferation and “Hollowing out of Universities”

Teachers also stressed the shift in Higher Education (HE) by focusing on the priorities, the role, and the quality of education offered. Eylül elaborated on the

multifaceted role of HE, including research, education and training, community service, and cultivation of ethical behavior, adding:

I believe that higher education institution provides the development of a democratic culture in which people work not to achieve perfection but to work towards achieving the good. It is a place that advocates that equal opportunities should be offered to everyone, and this should be done under the guidance of ethical values and principles.

Eylül underscored the criticality of academic freedom, academic integrity, and the protection of fundamental rights, and then noted their absence at universities today. Similarly, Derin drew attention to the essential role of higher education in fostering critical and in-depth discussions but acknowledged that such discussions were not always fully realized. She noted that universities should produce science, conduct research, encourage analytical thinking and problem-solving, and provide guidance. They should stand strong and defend their internal mechanisms against external pressures.

During the interviews, Tuna often stressed “hollowing out of universities”. He argued that a huge number of universities had been established to shield as many students from unemployment as possible. However, according to him, this did not seem to function very well as one in three graduates was unemployed, and under these circumstances, discussing the quality of the programs was of no importance.

Pera also reflected on the role of the university in society and stated that the university “is like the most important place, as if it is indispensable as if you could not get a good place in the society without it.” She did, however, also draw attention to how that perception changed due to a number of factors, such as the rise in the number of universities and unemployed graduates, hollowed-out universities and the decline in the quality of instruction, a loss of autonomy, their vulnerability to outside intervention and presence of people with insufficient qualifications in different positions at universities. Stated differently, several variables, including the expansion of universities, have contributed to the shifts in her perceptions about the value of a university degree.

Pera's observation might explain why Mabel pointed to the rise of different professions. While Mabel believed that being a university graduate conferred prestige, she also acknowledged the emergence of new and prestigious professions like influencers, YouTubers, etc., which required "presentation skills, good use of technology, having intuitions about advertising, following trends" rather than a university degree. She then questioned the future or the viability of these professions: "We do not know whether these skills can be compared directly with those obtained through university education or if a university graduate influencer will have more influence. Maybe so, we need to dig into that issue."

Zeynep stated, "There is a university on every corner", highlighting the increase in the number of universities, and added, "Everyone graduates from a department in one way or another." Like Pera, Zeynep also believes that having a college degree has always been crucial in our society. However, as colleges proliferated, so did the number of hollowed-out universities. Stressing the change, she stated that university education had become a waste of time and money, and no one was satisfied with the quality of instruction in departments. She also said that although foundation university students paid for their education, many had trouble finding jobs once they graduated. She also pointed out that in addition to providing high-quality instruction, universities should be places where "students' tolerance increases, different perspectives develop, and they can talk about everything," and added: "I think they should shed light on society." Then, she reflected on her workplace and thought aloud: "But in our university... I don't know. It will happen. Fingers crossed. I hope it will." In brief, she positioned her own school as a university having a long way to go before it could provide students with such an environment, but she was not pessimistic about what was ahead.

Teachers also noticed shifts in the stance of universities and their expectations for academic staff. Mabel claimed that universities were run more like businesses, but even that was not done properly, and perhaps if it were, they would actually be in a better situation. In other words, attempts have been made to run universities like businesses, but they haven't been fully successful, according to her. In a similar vein, İpek pointed to the university-industry partnerships and discussed the change in the role of the university, particularly after its designation as a research university.

According to Tuna and Derin, university rankings have gained importance as well. “Whatever it takes to get me into the top 500 will be done” was a demand for an increase in university rankings voiced by the university, as Tuna mentioned. In a similar vein, Derin also problematized the demand on universities to raise their indexes and rankings through social responsibility projects, for example. She also emphasized the tendency among teachers to choose their topics after checking the funding priorities when asked to develop a research project. She claimed that rather than pioneering new approaches, universities imitate one another: “We have a centralized system, CoHE. All universities end up repeating the same things. Whether it is standardization or something else, in places where there is so much standardization, groundbreaking ideas and research don’t emerge.” In brief, the shifting priorities undermined the autonomy of researchers and universities according to her. Regarding the projects’ dramatic increase and dissemination in her school, she reported that she rejected conducting projects solely for the sake of meeting criteria and improving rankings.

Focusing on the mission and position of HE, İpek asserted that HE is “very important for the welfare of the society and living in better standards, but it is questionable whether it is currently serving its purpose.” She was not certain whether HE accomplished its goals or not. Although İpek stated that the mission of the university was more akin to the transmission of existing knowledge, Like Zeynep, she was not pessimistic, either. She continued to say that she had no doubt that there are higher education institutions that function very well and guide society, and added, “I believe that it will improve. I believe that industry and university will get better.” As for the mission of HE, Mila stated that it helps students prepare for life and profession and pointed to its contribution to society. She said: “It continues to establish its ties with the society through various projects... charity events at work.” However, later, like Zeynep and İpek, she also expressed her concerns and questioned its effectiveness: “But is it very effective? I don't think it is.”

In brief, teachers argued that universities were traditionally considered places that fostered critical thinking, free inquiry, and tolerance and contributed to the well-being of society. However, over the years, the focus in the current system, they said,

had shifted to adapt to the changing demands in the world, which impacted the quality of instruction and the role of HE. Due to the competition among universities and the pursuit of rankings, the traditional mission of the university was reported to be overshadowed.

Teachers' narratives also indicated that in this evolving landscape of HE, new discourses have also surfaced. For example, a culture of micro-credentials had emerged and gained prominence, as they reported. In accordance with neoliberal policies, people started to pay for and get certificates, which gave rise to the emergence of people who relied solely on their certificates to assert their authority. When teachers reflected on their experiences concerning micro-credentials, Zeynep, Mila, and Mabel stated that they had never participated in these programs, so they had no experience. Zeynep reported that these programs might be helpful for teachers in improving their teaching practice. Mila and Mabel, on the other hand, asserted that they might be useful for novice teachers in their initial years of teaching. Mila said, "If I was at the beginning of my career, maybe I could learn different activities, and so on. I could look at it like that now, but that will not satisfy me anymore."

İpek noted that she, too, had badges and found them useful. She highlighted the importance of learner responsibility and autonomy in such programs, and she stated that while she had taken the certificate program seriously and made a lot of effort, she also admitted that these micro-credentials were open to abuse. She believed that people doing their best and completing these programs would benefit from them a lot, but added, "It seems as if they have shortcuts as well." In brief, she problematized the quality of the content and the evaluation part of micro-credentials. As for Eylül, she stated that she benefitted from these programs from time to time but clarified that she was against the paid ones. She mentioned that there were programs that offered certificates, but they said payment was required to receive one. She then explained her understanding of paying for a certificate and the motive behind it:

I didn't buy it; I didn't prefer it. I think the document here has no important value. It's not a diploma, after all. Of course, it is not a master's or doctoral

diploma, so I am against things that cost money. In fact, this is what the capitalist system imposes on us. There is no need for it. I would not be happy if I got this certificate.

Tuna clarified that he was not against alternative forms of information exchange. However, he problematized the “certificate culture” emerging from micro-credentials by elaborating on the policies that underpin them and the consequences. He stated that these certificates were primarily intended for native speakers travelling to third world countries to teach English after receiving a very short training in how to teach grammar or reading, for example. According to him, people perceived it as something that made money, that was done quickly, and that elevated people’s social status, and “undermined the concept of quality at the university.” He explained how the use of micro-credentials had taken hold of university degrees since using them:

in this way has become something that poisons our field and destroys the quality, standards... Certification culture has emerged, and now the certificate culture has eliminated everything, so you are studying for a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree doctorate, or something, this is called gatekeeping, isn't it, in education?... It has eliminated this.

Following this, he asserted, people started making claims like, “I have a certificate, and I have become a teacher.” Additionally, he said there were “so many shoddy, short-term, a few-day things, certificates that,” people presented themselves with big fancy titles such as “teacher trainers.” When asked whether they had an advanced graduate degree or any publications, he claimed, they said they had nothing to do with them. Once again referring to the importance of the ecosystem, he said,

When that network disappears, when the ecosystem disappears, that's where capitalism comes in. Just as it takes your field, your school... sells you 10, 15 liras, and 20 liras of coffee instead of 2 and a half liras of coffee, takes the quality from you and your student, sells you a certificate, and takes away that field. You look around and see everywhere is full of teacher trainers.

His account illustrated how the collapse of the ecosystem could change the inner workings of a state university, reshape the dynamics of the gatekeeping in education and professional development, and undermine the university. He added, “This is another effect of neoliberal policies, of course. It is something that we can directly

observe.” Thinking that there were so many platforms that misguide people or are shoddy, Pera reported that teachers could update themselves if they chose the correct path. Additionally, she noted, “There are many people who collect certificates and declare themselves to be competent, authority,” confirming Tuna.

Derin was another teacher who reflected critically on the use of micro-credentials, stating that the system itself was a “trap”: “The capitalist system first idealizes something and then says, ‘If you want to achieve it, you need to pay.’” She argued that certain discourses are idealized and promoted as essential for quality and success, causing people to feel inadequate and invest in these programs to access these certificates. In brief, teachers expressed their concerns regarding the legitimacy of micro-credentials and problematized the quality of the programs, as well as the expertise or authority people claimed.

4.3.3. Globalization and English Medium Instruction

Teachers’ remarks provided more insight into their interpretations of ELT-related discourses, including those about the status of English, globalization, and EMI. When discussing the status of English, teachers like Zeynep, Mabel, and İpek highlighted the ongoing demand for learning English. According to İpek, English had transitioned from being just a foreign language to “a language that everyone should know” as a result of globalization, given its status as the global language, the language of science, the international language, and the language of the internet. She then discussed the implications of its high status for English language teaching and teachers. İpek asserted that English is “the most important language in the world right now” and she likened it to “the chicken that lays the golden egg.” She perceived it as a “must” for both teachers and students, stressing that it is a prerequisite for academics who wish to publish in reputable journals, make their voices heard, and participate in conferences. She also emphasized its importance for students, as they no longer view the world through a single window. Given the importance of artificial intelligence and new technologies, Mabel stated that English was also “the key to accessing technology.” Stated differently, knowing English enables people to navigate and utilize technology effectively as well. As for Eylül, language learning

was more than just acquiring a language. Rather, it was a way of life. She added that learning a language is like “having a second richness,” “having a second soul,” or “having a human companion.”

While discussing the importance and the widespread use of English by everyone and everywhere, some teachers were critical of the discourses around globalization. Mila, for example, touched upon the debates around “whose English” and “which and how much of it is valid English,” referring to the dynamic nature of language and stressed the implications for English language teachers and students. She underscored the criticality of context, the target audience, and choices made depending on the context, as well as the importance of exposing students to diversity. Mila argued that fostering literacy, research, and critical thinking skills in HE was essential for students to make decisions, act, and function autonomously. She also pointed to the market around ELT throughout Türkiye.

According to Pera, “English is not like a foreign language; it is like a language that everyone should know. It is no longer a plus on a CV, for students or for us.” While discussing the status of English, she also problematized the discourse around globalization. Pera believed that it was imposed on people for ulterior motives and added, “When we say globalization, what we need to understand is being one with the world, not only with different nations, but with the world in general, with animals, nature, plants, trees, and other nations.” However, today, globalization means “capitalism or imperialism, whatever it is. You have to speak English now. Otherwise, you are not considered a human being.” Under the umbrella of globalization, she claimed that young people with opportunities submitted to the idea that they couldn’t realize their dreams without going abroad. Especially with the rise of online education during the pandemic, the collapse of countries’ economies, and the search for alternatives, Pera said, learning English to leave the country became more visible. She stated that the current conditions in Türkiye forced students to go abroad and learn English, of necessity. In brief, teachers highlighted the significance of English worldwide and the enormous demand for learning it. Pera, however, asserted that under the aegis of globalization, everyone was required to acquire English, and being able to speak English was considered a prerequisite for being

considered human. She reported that everything was in English, including webinars, free online courses, and opportunities to go abroad, so people were constantly exposed to English. In addition, through advertisements, they were also exposed to websites promoting services like Cambly and Grammarly.

Globalization has also affected higher education (HE), promoting the use of a common language, often English. In line with the importance of the widespread use of English, teachers' accounts also revealed their perspectives regarding English-medium instruction (EMI) policy and its implementation at their university. While acknowledging the advantages of EMI, such as access to a full range of international resources, teachers pondered over the reasons why EMI did not work in Türkiye, such as a lack of proper foreign language education in MoNE. They expressed several concerns regarding insufficient infrastructure or their university's readiness for the full implementation of the policy, the language proficiency of students and teachers, and the lack of collaboration between language teachers and faculty teachers.

While reflecting critically on EMI, teachers raised concerns regarding the poor quality of English language teaching in MoNE and students' lack of readiness when they started studying at university. For example, Tuna claimed that in the past, students reached a certain level of proficiency. Then, they could build upon that level at university. However, he stated, "Secondary education took a big blow between 2006 and 2008, in those 2-3 years." Eylül and Zeynep also pointed to what they viewed as poor quality of foreign language education in MoNE. Eylül stated that the English language was regarded "as if it was an elective course." In a similar vein, Zeynep argued that, for her, state schools prioritized subjects, like science, over English classes, making sufficient acquisition of English difficult for students. As a result, students from those schools always struggled with language learning in their schools and they were not ready for EMI in their faculties. According to her, not much progress had been made over the years, and attempts to implement significant reforms or radical changes to the educational system had failed.

While she recognized the advantages EMI offers, such as being able to follow the latest research, communicate effectively with foreign companies and master field-

specific language specific, Mabel also noted the shift in the quality of language instruction in Türkiye. Considering her 25 years of teaching experience, Mabel also remarked that the bar was very high in the past. Students would complete the preparatory school with an upper intermediate level, covering all the tenses and modals. However, she said they could only advance to the intermediate level, pass the exam, and start their departmental courses. Mabel attributed the shift in the quality of language instruction to the Bologna Process, which changed everything related to level descriptors and quality of education. She argued that teachers were not given any voice, and decisions were made without consulting teachers: “The bar has been lowered... Decisions were made through the Bologna process, and these decisions were imposed... We were bringing students to level C, and now you leave them at A2 or B1, so what do you expect?” As can be seen in her account, Mabel expressed frustration regarding lowering educational standards due to the decisions made through the Bologna process.

In addition to a lack of proper language instruction within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), teachers also mentioned the need for more infrastructure and the lack of readiness at their university for the full implementation of the policy. While Tuna stressed the importance of being able to read, listen, speak, write, and produce original content in English, given that most resources are in this language, he also reported that the academics he spoke to were dissatisfied with the ongoing EMI policy because of a lack of infrastructure. He stated that EMI had recently been declared compulsory for engineering departments. His friends in these departments informed Tuna that professors who could not teach in English “are piling their master's and undergraduate courses on” them, causing these people to fall behind in their own research, projects, or articles. In addition, they told Tuna that it was neither possible nor realistic to provide high-quality instruction in so many English classes. Therefore, as Tuna claimed, teachers preferred to teach in Turkish but administered exams in English to preempt any potential complaints. He clarified that while he was not against EMI, proper and effective implementation of it required research, testing and evaluation, collaboration among teachers from different disciplines, and intervention when needed. He reiterated that the university “is a living ecosystem” and added that success cannot be achieved solely through excessive pressure from

above or top-down approaches: “Say that you will teach through English, press it from the top, press it as much as you want. It bursts from somewhere else, and the system doesn’t work.” In other words, he highlighted that top-down decisions concerning EMI cannot function properly without support at the grass roots level.

Similarly, while acknowledging the opportunities that EMI offers, like access to a wide range of international resources, Eylül noted that EMI was not properly implemented at their university based on the information she gathered from her faculty students. She claimed that it diminished after the second year in various faculties, so international students, including Erasmus students, were often the most negatively affected. She suggested that preparatory schools offer both academic English specific to various departments and general English courses. In addition, she stated that students should receive instruction in their native language during their first year in their departments, adding: “Once a solid foundation is established, English-language education can be introduced in the subsequent years.”

Derin also acknowledged the benefits of EMI, including accessing multiple resources, developing language skills, fostering international agreements, and bridging different cultures. However, she noted, “It also takes away the right to education in one’s native language. When you can’t work on concepts or discuss in your native language, depth is lost, and discussion becomes superficial.” She also highlighted that due to a lack of pedagogical training and language proficiency, many teachers, especially those accustomed to “slide teaching” struggle with EMI since teaching in English requires a shift in teaching, answering questions, managing the dialogues, and creating interaction. She recounted her insights from the interviews with those instructors regarding their strategies:

When asked how they proceed, many said, ‘I translate the slides from Turkish to English. That’s all I can do right now because I don’t have time to keep up with all the courses.’ This wasn’t just one person. It’s a widespread issue. It’s all about slide teaching in English, and students are exposed to this without any depth. This is what EMI means to me.

Zeynep was another teacher who expressed concerns regarding the quality of language instruction in their school. She asserted that their school was inadequately

preparing students. Furthermore, she reported that while “faculty teachers’ field-specific knowledge is impeccable, their command of spoken English may not be sufficient.” Therefore, she suggested revising the curriculum in their school and including field-specific vocabulary instruction, which would help students follow their courses more effectively in their faculties. Like İpek, Zeynep advocated for teaching the basics or foundational concepts in Turkish to facilitate their specialization in their fields.

Mila also drew attention to the importance of language proficiency and claimed that EMI could be more detrimental than beneficial without appropriate policies. She asserted that EMI could be a significant obstacle for bright and talented students as the language barrier could prevent them from specializing in their field and interfere with their learning process. She cited examples from several Far Eastern countries that refrained from using EMI and achieved greater scientific success. “If there is a solid infrastructure, yes, the student can continue in English, but with zero English, I think the student is at a disadvantage,” she said, emphasizing the criticality of making well-informed decisions.

Pera also pointed to the infrastructure and reported that while she was in favor of teaching in the mother tongue, “If the preparation is done in accordance with its purpose and then continues for four years,” instruction in English could also be beneficial for internationalization, as “English is a must and there is nothing to do.” She continued by saying that sometimes, even if you disagree with something, you still need to be a part of the process to make progress or move things along. “Sometimes, no matter how much you oppose something, you have to be in that wheel, and even if you rebel alone, you cannot achieve anything,” she said. Therefore, she claimed that if the goal is to benefit students and achieve high standards in a globalizing world, EMI could be an effective approach when it is properly implemented. However, under these circumstances, Pera claimed that preparatory schools were no longer valued as much. She also admitted her disapproval of the current system in preparatory schools and added how EMI was perceived: “Students don't care, and departments don't care. They actually pretend to

do so.” She claimed that even in departments where the medium of instruction was 100% English, EMI did not work properly.

İpek was another teacher who initially provided the following justification for EMI before discussing her perspective on its implementation. She said:

There are things like globalization, the removal of borders, partnership organizations between universities, student exchange programs, staff mobility, etc.... We live in a multicultural world. A common language is necessary for these multicultural cultures to come together.

While recognizing the need for EMI, İpek also shared her reservations and the shortcomings in its implementation. She suggested delivering instruction in both English and Turkish simultaneously so that students would have the flexibility to choose between these languages. In brief, she stated that while EMI should be in place, “there should be add-ons to the current system.” Mabel was another teacher who raised concerns regarding the proper implementation of EMI in faculties and questioned the efficacy of faculty teachers in teaching through English. Just like İpek, she also suggested offering instruction in both English and the students’ native language, Turkish. Considering new technologies and developments, she also conveyed that perhaps the nature of research might change, and people would likely discuss different topics soon instead of EMI.

In brief, the teachers were not against EMI. However, they listed the sine qua nons for quality EMI: Proper language instruction in MoNE and student readiness, solid infrastructure in HE (including planning, testing, and evaluation), adequate language proficiency of both students and teachers, collaborations among teachers from different disciplines, and timely interventions when needed.

4.4. The Space of authoring: Agency

4.4.1. Navigating and Negotiating Positions

As teachers’ stories unfolded, it appears that in addition to the cultural worlds they inhabited (family, school, and workplace), the positions imposed upon them, their

teaching philosophies, and their understanding of success and professionalism significantly influenced how they navigated and negotiated discourses and employed improvisations. This section first outlines teachers' perspectives on the positions imposed upon them. It then delves into the positions they claim, their teaching philosophies, and their negotiations of the discourses pertaining to being successful and professional, which sheds light on their beliefs and values and guides their decisions, stances, and actions.

4.4.1.2. Navigating Positions Imposed

Teachers' stories revealed that, especially after the university's designation as a research university, the positions imposed on them have undergone significant changes, reflecting broader political, social, and economic shifts. In line with their accounts, teachers were expected to align their practices with the competitive ethos that pervaded the current milieu. The administration wanted teachers to pursue post-graduate degrees and voiced this during the staff meetings following the university's transformation into a research university. Teachers were expected to conduct research, enhance the university's reputation and rankings, increase their performance and outputs, and provide tangible evidence. In such a context, teachers reported that teacher quality was often questioned, and they were held responsible for failures.

Regarding the demand for post-graduate studies, Eylül, for example, mentioned that the university and school administration expressed their desire for teachers to pursue MA and PhD degrees, conduct research, and gain visibility within the university. She described this as a form of "marketing," as they were expected to promote their achievements actively. In addition to the academic expectations, Mila also focused on the trend towards measurable success: "Currently, there is a somewhat greater focus on success rather than belonging, like there should be an achievement, at least this much, standard and easier to measure." She also shared the language frequently used by the administration in the school, describing that as "a demand": "There was a demand for a post-graduate degree." Nevertheless, she said, these discourses, "do an MA," "do a PhD," and "do research," encouraged teachers and fostered agency.

Unlike Mila, Zeynep considered that such discourses scared teachers of her generation, believing it would be hard to pursue these programs at this stage in their careers. She noted that that shift towards becoming a research university created a sense of unease among teachers who did not have these degrees. Some feared they would be fired: “Those who don't have that kind of work are afraid, you know, whether they might send them away from this department in the future because it is a research university. I believe people are in complete panic.” Zeynep also said this discourse was everywhere: “Since we are not face-to-face, it is always like that, through word of mouth, on the computer, in meetings, here and there.” Highlighting the teachers striving to excel in their profession and develop themselves without pursuing an MA or PhD, she also believed that it was not so easy for teachers of her age to start such degree programs.

Teachers also problematized the discourses around teacher effectiveness and critically examined how they were positioned by the administration. As their stories illustrated, while prioritizing students' rights, the administration trivialized teachers' roles and questioned their efficacy, which was also perceived as a constraint by teachers, as previously discussed. Zeynep, for example, described her interpretation of how the university administration perceived teachers and their roles. She drew attention to the university administrators' continual display of “dissatisfaction” with teachers and their subtle messages during meetings, which accounted for the uneasiness among staff. When asked to elaborate on the discourses used, she problematized the tendency to scapegoat teachers, to blame them for being inadequate or lacking qualifications, and to question only teachers but not students, the education system, or circumstances in Türkiye:

What do they mean by this? Is it our teaching quality, implying our inability to teach? Are we considered inadequate? Are our teaching methods incorrect? The quality of students here is never questioned. What students bring to classes is never questioned. The circumstances in Türkiye are never questioned. The extent to which the education system has deteriorated is never questioned. The last stop is being questioned. We are the final point of scrutiny.

In brief, Zeynep argued that since teachers represented the final stage in the education system, they were scrutinized for their *inability* to teach students English

effectively and thus blamed for “the low quality” in the school. Although everyone at school was making an effort, as Zeynep claimed, the school did not appreciate it at all. On the contrary, she said, “All the criticism is directed at us. We are the ones who put in all the effort, but there is no appreciation in any way; we appreciate ourselves. We encourage each other. There is a feeling of worthlessness.” Similarly, Mabel also highlighted the university administration’s attitudes towards the teachers in Snowdrop:

They always see us as those who resist change, don't want to work, and are lazy. The administration even mentioned this in the meeting. Our school received zeroes on most of the performance criteria. They claim we can't teach because we are too comfortable at work and work unwillingly.

Mabel also pointed out that teachers were labeled as lazy and scapegoated: “I think there is an image being created that we are not making an effort and that we are lazy; this image is being perpetuated,” she explained, suggesting that it serves to identify teachers as scapegoats for the failures of new practices and policies. In addition, she mentioned that the teachers were criticized for not keeping up with the changes.

When Tuna critically reflected on the notion of “a research university,” he asked, “Do you know what a research university means to us? It comes with university criteria.” He claimed that, without enough infrastructure to support the staff, “the system is purely number-oriented and does not value quality at all, so the burden on teachers increases, making it even more challenging to navigate. Under these circumstances, like Mabel, Tuna also reported that the administration constantly blamed teachers for not producing enough. He echoed an administrator’s repeated remarks: “You don't produce anything. You don't do anything.”

Tuna also emphasized that when teachers requested resources, the administration scolded them or ignored their concerns. Despite the school being a research university and recent emphasis on pursuing MA and PhD degrees, he mentioned that there was also another discourse within the university about the role of a lecturer in Snowdrop: “Lecturer, your job is to teach,” “Go and give your lectures,” “No need for research.” According to him, teachers were positioned as mere grammar teachers

by the university administration. He stated that while he had ideas for various projects, he was unable to implement them due to a lack of support. As a result, he chose to step back and sought to create spaces outside the school.

Focusing on the status of teaching and teachers, Pera claimed that the rise of private schools was likely to be responsible for the profession's declining reputation. To illustrate this, she gave an example of her friend's experience working as a teacher in a private school. For instance, if a student receives a low grade, the principal is notified, and the teacher is asked to fix the grade to avoid any trouble, resulting in a severe loss of reputation, as she claimed. Similarly, Derin emphasized the decline in the teaching profession's status. She stated that while mentioning one's profession as a teacher often elicits trust, "the prevailing view is that if you don't score well enough elsewhere, you become a teacher, and this mindset is deeply ingrained." Eylül conveyed that teachers' salaries should be improved to enhance their status, which, in turn, would elevate the quality of instruction offered. Similarly, Mabel believes that teachers do not have the reputation they used to have.

In brief, teachers' accounts revealed that despite the top-down demand for academic work, they were positioned as grammar teachers by the university administration. According to them, their attempts to go beyond teaching grammar and engage in academic studies were neglected by the university administration. For example, Tuna highlighted his dual role as both a researcher generating knowledge and introducing new perspectives as well as a practitioner. However, he felt that his efforts to pursue academic studies were ignored. Rather than being recognized as researchers or language teachers, teachers felt they were seen solely as grammar teachers. Similarly, Mabel reflected on how teachers were perceived by the university administration: "Here, in general, we are not considered academic staff because we do not conduct academic studies. We did not even have a vote in the election of rectors." She then discussed the status of academics in Türkiye, noting that the media often highlights their salaries, which can lead to an image of them struggling. While she acknowledged the continued importance of language teaching, she expressed uncertainty about whether being a teacher is still valued in society.

In a similar vein, İpek explained how they were seen by the university faculty members: “Neither the lecturers in the department consider us one of them, nor does the national education system. We don’t have any connection to the MoNE anyway. We seem to be caught in the middle, stuck in the air.” She also pointed out that, even as teachers, they did not know exactly where they stood, and various job descriptions could be applied to them. She continued by emphasizing the need for everyone to understand their role and stance. She added, “We are in this period of change, a period of confusion. We are in such a muddy period, but I hope it will transition to a better system in the end. I hope. I won't see it, but I hope so.” Despite the challenges, she remained optimistic about the future, although she acknowledged that change would not come easily.

In line with the framework of Figured Worlds, it can be interpreted that positions imposed on teachers reflect the figured worlds of people within school and university administrations and society at large. These figured worlds are shaped by their values, cultural narratives, and discourses, which influence their perceptions regarding their own roles and the roles they assign to teachers. As teachers asserted, being a research university altered the priorities in the school and required a greater focus on and dedication to research endeavors, regardless of funding availability. However, at the same time, they were also compelled to assume the identity of a teacher who exclusively taught grammar rather than engaging in research. While teachers were expected to pursue post-graduate degrees, they were also branded as lazy grammar teachers who were readily held accountable for the failures of practices. Teachers’ narratives suggest that they needed to navigate the demands of teaching and research amidst these conflicting expectations. In doing so, they also faced criticism and were often scapegoated, making their jobs even more challenging.

4.4.1.3. Positions Claimed and Teaching Philosophies

Teachers’ stories uncovered that they did not accept all the positions offered or imposed upon them. They often referred to their teaching philosophies while positioning themselves and justifying their decisions both inside and outside their classes. They described their understandings of teaching and language teaching, as

well as the role of a teacher in HE, shedding light on their beliefs, values, decisions, and stances in the profession. In addition to their current images, they reflected on their future images, which encompass their aspirations and career plans influenced by their past and current experiences.

Despite being labeled as lazy, teachers like Derin, Eylül, Zeynep, Tuna, and İpek positioned themselves as lifelong learners, and Pera and Mila emphasized how learning makes them content. Derin conveyed that “lifelong learning reflects my character very well” while elaborating on her passion for learning. She acknowledged how her involvement in research and projects fueled her passion and enthusiasm for lifelong learning. Zeynep also stressed her never-ending curiosity and excitement about learning new things. Similarly, prioritizing his enthusiasm for active learning, Tuna identified as an academic, rejecting the idea of being a teacher “in the traditional sense.”

Derin noted that teaching is the world’s most beautiful and sacred profession. Teachers touch the human soul and change the human brain, and she added, “We are architects.” Acknowledging the sanctity and transformative power of teaching, Derin recalled Atatürk’s statement during the Turkish War of Independence about the importance of teachers. He asked to enlist everyone for the war but continued: “Leave the teachers to me; I will need them later when we win this war.” In her reflection, Derin found profound inspiration in Atatürk’s declaration that regarded teachers as essential to the future of the Turkish Republic, highlighting how Atatürk positioned teachers not just as educators but as key architects in reconstructing the nation after the war.

Regarding language teaching, Derin stated that the profession is dynamic, open to exploration, and colorful. According to her, language teachers are optimistic, open-minded people with “more cognitive flexibility, thinking about and viewing things from different angles.” She also stated that a teacher in HE is assigned the role of producing knowledge, serving as a role model for students with her clothing, posture, questions, and words, and cultivating a generation that prioritizes learning and makes democracy, justice, and equality a central part of their lives. She conveyed that her

teaching philosophy was based on promoting happiness and exploration. While making students happy in class is important, it is not the teacher's duty to entertain students: "The teacher's job is not to puppet like that, not to entertain like that." She also stressed the importance of laughing, joking, enjoying, exploring, endeavoring to surmount obstacles, and fostering curiosity. She emphasized that rather than the mere transmission of knowledge, teaching should be considered a mutual learning experience: "Let's throw a ball back and forth. Like playing volleyball, I'll throw it to you, you'll throw it to me. I'll try to catch the ball you drop, but the game will continue. I'll have fun, too." She contended that her role as a language teacher extended well beyond teaching grammar and vocabulary. She was also an educator who could influence a student's stance, positioning herself as "a bit of a change maker." She stated that she started considering who would benefit from a top-down request, highlighting the importance of critical pedagogy.

Derin argued that the guiding principles in her teaching philosophy have stayed the same, and her excitement for teaching has always remained, but she acknowledged the changes in her teaching strategies. For example, Derin told me that in her initial years of teaching, L1 was never allowed in classes, and she was very strict about this rule, too, adding, "Now I think I don't need to be this strict. The world is now talking about translanguaging methods and fluid transitions between languages. My understanding may have changed in that sense." She also noted that back then, she was more conformist and did her best to comply with the school policies because she was trying to position herself within the community and feel a sense of belonging. She reported that she had tried to prove herself to herself for the first seven years and then to the outer world:

To see my work approved by the teacher community. You see that your acceptance rate is increasing and increasing, you reach saturation, and then you say, 'Yes, I am doing this job well.' Okay, but then you say, how can I make it unique? You want to give it an individual touch.

Derin recalled those years and stated that the university had its own traditions and she was trying to understand those rules. For example, she observed senior teachers, including their dressing styles, to see what was expected of her as a teacher and added:

I was more conformist in the initial years of my career, and I accept that. This was a concern then because we were trying to position ourselves. I was naturally worried about complying with the social codes of the environment because I needed to develop a sense of belonging there. Ultimately, I needed to be with them.

In other words, as a novice teacher, she wanted to be integrated into the community she served, which also shaped her teaching philosophy. She then reflected on her current teacher self and admitted that she validated herself in everyone's eyes. Derin regarded herself as a mentor and facilitator guiding group activities, encouraging students to research the given topics, and asking them to search for information online and share their findings. She also stressed that she alternated between different positions or roles to avoid dominating the interaction and to foster a positive learning environment. She considered herself optimistic and patient and expressed the importance of inspiration in teaching and learning. She highlighted that her role went beyond teaching English. It also involved incorporating culture into language teaching and fostering cultural awareness. She positioned herself as a researcher and producer of knowledge, emphasizing her sense of responsibility and desire to contribute to society. Therefore, she added that since she could not find a space in her school, she decided to engage in voluntary activities outside the school. While describing her teaching philosophy, she stressed the significance of personal stories, passion, and emotions in teaching. She recounted a tour experience in which she asked the guide to share personal experiences and stories, not only facts, and noted that the guide made her tour memorable through heartfelt stories. Throughout the interviews, she expressed her deep admiration for Atatürk and described how the ideals of her role model also influenced her perception of a teacher. As for her future image or aspirations, she expressed her desire to have a colorful and dynamic career with new opportunities to make a unique impact every day. After portraying her future image, she admitted that she was not sure how long she could continue teaching in her school:

Strong, inquisitive, able to produce immediate results and solutions immediately, always carrying science with me in every step. However, I'm not sure how well this aligns with the current environment here. I feel sad to say this because it is my home, but I may need to leave the nest. The conditions are challenging. I have untapped potential that other institutions

have recognized and appreciated. Yet, when I return to my institution, I don't know. It's different. I always find myself struggling.

Her account revealed that she was fully aware of the challenges she experienced in her workplace and the constraints that blocked her space of authoring. She did, however, prioritize her aspirations and sense of agency. She clarified that she would not compromise on them and would leave her beloved school if necessary.

While explaining her understanding of the profession, Zeynep said: “You learn to empathize with other cultures,” which fosters tolerance, empathy, and flexibility. Humility and maturity should grow as you gain knowledge, she said. According to her, language teachers are often approached either to ask for assistance with a neighbor’s child’s homework or for advice related to attending English courses. She expressed how much she enjoyed teaching English and stressed her efforts to ensure that she had fun, too. She wanted to make language learning seem simple and noted that it should extend beyond passing the exams. She stressed the importance of establishing rapport with students and caring as central to her teaching philosophy. She conveyed that the essence of her philosophy went beyond language teaching. It involved establishing a genuine emotional connection with students by inquiring about their well-being with a smile and reaching out to them when they had a problem. “Professional ethics always come first,” she said, highlighting the importance of conscience in her role. In addition, she described her interpretation of being a teacher as “being able to change someone's life, to make a difference in someone's life.” She frequently emphasized her role as a mentor. In the last interview, Zeynep, who had previously expressed her love of teaching and fear of retirement because of its symbolic removal of her “cloak,” reported that she was considering taking an unpaid leave to relax during the transition back to face-to-face education with limited resources. As for her future image, Zeynep conveyed that after retirement, she did not intend to work in private schools, as their expectations did not align with her beliefs. She expressed her desire to work with children in kindergartens or nurseries voluntarily after receiving some training in teaching young learners: “I feel like I'm jumping around among such children, kindergarten and

nursery children. I could work in the voluntary state, again in kindergartens. I had never articulated this until you asked. It just came out suddenly, like “poof!”

In contrast to the administration positioning them solely as grammar teachers, İpek emphasized the importance of sparking curiosity and creating a learning environment that integrates all four skills. She emphasized her commitment to providing meaningful learning opportunities through engaging activities and mentoring students in their language learning journeys. She also stressed the importance of incorporating culture into language instruction. Like Derin, İpek also pointed to the change in her teaching philosophy. Initially, she minimized the use L1 in her first classes. However, she later embraced it, acknowledging, “Using your native language is also an advantage, and it is necessary.” Furthermore, in her first years, İpek reported feeling uneasy in class due to a fear of making mistakes. Over time, however, she realized that the most important thing for a student is feeling comfortable with their teacher. If students do not feel at ease, they may hesitate to ask questions, and the teacher might not fully grasp their concerns. Therefore, she prioritized establishing rapport with her students. It is significant to note that she acknowledged the challenges of implementing these ideas in the online teaching context. She highlighted the infrastructural problems and recognized that they impeded the creation of a learning environment where students could fully utilize all four skills, for example. In fact, during the last interview, she noticed a shift in her current interpretation of her experiences, role, and profession. She mentioned how students were resistant to online education and how she felt her space was taken away since no students or only a few showed up but did not speak throughout the classes, making her feel like a “schizophrenic.” She continued, “To be honest, Pınar, after all these years, I am going through the worst period of my life as a teacher.” Like Zeynep, who considered taking unpaid leave, İpek described that period as the worst. Regarding her career goal, İpek expressed her desire to complete her post-graduate degree and offer courses where she could incorporate literature and culture into her teaching practice. In the future, she envisioned working as a hybrid English language teacher, offering both online and in-person instruction. Teachers’ stories revealed that while striving to reconcile their teaching philosophies with the realities of their classes and schools during and following online education, even the

committed teachers felt frustrated. However, they found places on the margins where they could keep their improvisations.

Eylül associated being a teacher with identity and belonging, rather than viewing it solely as a career, and described teaching as a lifestyle. While discussing her teaching philosophy, she emphasized the importance of teaching to the point, being active, treating all her students fairly, taking responsibility, maintaining consistency, and selecting appropriate materials and teaching methods. She noted her commitment to taking individual differences into consideration in her teaching, stressed the significance of setting a positive example for students, and positioned herself as a good guide and mentor in that regard. She reported how much she valued informing students about the advantages of language learning and that doing so is one way to achieve personal fulfilment. She shared her motto, “Honesty sets you free,” and emphasized that considering her power as a teacher, she should not abuse her position.

Eylül acknowledged that, with age, she had developed stronger critical thinking skills and become more open to criticism. As for the change in her teaching philosophy, she stated that while it hadn't changed much, the students or the generation and essential skills had, in response to the major life changes due to the pandemic. Therefore, like İpek, Eylül also found it challenging to implement her teaching philosophy effectively during online education. While teaching online, she acknowledged that the limited time and the necessity to prepare students for exams were challenging. According to her, technical issues she encountered every day further impeded her ability to teach as she wished. As for her aspirations, she planned to complete her post-graduate degree program and further her studies in her field of interest.

Mabel was another teacher whose narratives contradicted the positions imposed upon teachers. She conveyed that language teaching requires critical thinking, as it entails examining your own language and perspectives, as well as the ability to be open-minded and accept things as they are:

You accept some rules from the beginning, such as why the word contains those letters. You don't question it; you take life as it is. Your perspective has to be broad; you try to understand another world. When you teach a language, you review your language, your mentality, all over again because even explaining the difference between two words, or the synonyms, for example, requires you to think and weigh many concepts simultaneously. Learning or teaching a language always require you to analyze the world as a text.

Mabel prioritized a trait in her teaching philosophy that she had gained through experience: flexibility. She noted that she valued adaptability and the use of multiple resources when needed, adding: "I have never believed that a single approach could handle everything." While acknowledging that the curriculum may restrict teachers' freedom, she also stated that she did not feel overly constrained. She conveyed that if there were more flexibility in the curriculum, she would reorder the language points to be covered, such as teaching passive voice earlier. She positioned herself as a successful teacher in terms of fair assessment of students and interpreted her role as a teacher who values making a positive impact on students' lives. While reflecting on her teaching philosophy, she recalled a critical incident in her life or a "life lesson." While writing her thesis at university, she needed a break as she had a very chaotic private life, but her teacher responded: "Your thesis will be on the shelf with my signature underneath. You, the students, are always thinking about yourselves. What about the prestige of the teacher?" Mabel described that moment as enlightening and considered it a principle to adopt in her career, as well.

Just like Mila, who did not expect any incentives, Mabel also pointed to the significance of personal satisfaction in her role beyond any material rewards, adding, "There are things other than money that we care about in this profession. Otherwise, we wouldn't have chosen it." As for her aspirations, she hoped to become more proficient with digital tools and to conduct lessons where they could allocate more time to focus on productive skills.

Pera described the English language teachers in her figured world as people dressing well and reading, watching, listening, and having some knowledge of the films, books, and research in that language. Then, she elaborated on her teaching philosophy. She argued that learning a language should be customized to students'

needs instead of following a standardized curriculum and imposing language education without genuine demand. She noted how much she valued creating an environment where students could discover the reason for their language learning and arousing curiosity about different cultures, adding:

I want to learn another language, like German, because I want to read the original texts. This curiosity might create a need for learning, not by imposing on you how important it is to learn a language starting from primary school, otherwise you can't find a job or go abroad, but by inspiring curiosity about different cultures

Pera reported that without concrete needs, saying that you would take the student from level A1, implement the curriculum, and raise the level to B1 “is entirely the imposition of a capitalist system.” Under these circumstances, she also pointed out that her perspective on life, including teaching and learning, was based on a critical approach and critical pedagogy. She emphasized the significance of questioning everything, contrary to what they had been taught. Like other teachers, including Derin, Zeynep, and Eylül, Pera also pointed to her role going beyond language teaching and her desire to be a role model, both as a human being and a teacher. With some background in administration, she also shared her perspective of her experience. She had observed that some teachers wanted to contribute to the school, but they had been blocked and some others had been given some privileges. She aimed to address these problems and ensure fair distribution of resources but admitted struggling with the challenges. She said, “If there is a privilege, it should be distributed fairly, and if there is a burden, a workload, or a problem, it should be shared. I tried for this alone, but most of the time, I hit the wall.” Despite her sense of failure in her role, she also acknowledged the positive impact of this experience, calling that an evolutionary phase in her teaching philosophy. In this transformative journey, she claimed to have shifted from a rigid role of monitoring teachers to ensure that they started and finished their classes on time and avoided using L1 to a more flexible one. She also expressed her self-confidence and courage while making decisions in class: “I can justify what I am doing scientifically, academically, personally, psychologically, sociologically. As Freire said, I am a brave teacher now.” She envisioned herself as a lively, energetic, and enthusiastic teacher teaching

English through life-related topics and encouraging interaction with the outside world. She expressed that after getting a post-graduate degree, she planned to go abroad and work on some projects there.

Mila considered teaching a very enjoyable and cool job and “satisfying in a spiritual sense.” As for her teaching philosophy, she stressed the importance of making learning fun, fostering critical thinking skills, and serving as a role model in her communication with her students. She conveyed that language teaching should be based on the needs of the students, support skill development for real-life tasks, and promote student responsibility in the learning process. She acknowledged that she had felt more competent as a teacher during the first interview, but as she gained more experience and awareness of her options, she began to realize that her teacher identity would continue to evolve:

The more I learned, the more I realized there were alternatives, leading to a shift in my identity as a teacher. In the next five years, I envision becoming an even more different teacher, providing enhanced critical thinking, conducting more research, and offering more guidance. I feel competent enough to make more changes within the institution.

Moreover, Mila considered that she was more rigid on certain matters in the past and added: “I think I feared that my boundaries would be pushed.” She reported embracing a more flexible mindset. Regarding her aspirations, she planned to further her studies on her thesis topic.

Throughout the interviews, Tuna positioned himself as an academic, and just like Derin and Zeynep, he emphasized her role as a change-maker. He also described how he paved the way for other teachers wishing to pursue academic careers. Regarding his teaching philosophy, Tuna reflected critically on the contextual factors and how they reshaped his perceptions. For example, he expressed concerns regarding the curriculum and stressed various academic standards and assessment issues. Citing the British Council report on Turkish Higher Education, progression from one level to another, such as A1 to A2, required approximately 200 hours of teaching. In this case, he claimed it was not feasible to start at A1 and reach B2. If it

were, students would have no trouble taking TOEFL or IELTS and scoring ninety out of a hundred and twenty, which he argued was impossible. According to him, this implied that they were deceiving themselves. In brief, he highlighted the discrepancy between the field-related reports he read and the curriculum they followed, explaining why many teachers chose to cover new material, make improvisations, and teach beyond the prescribed program and coursebook. He asserted that until research is conducted, and a curriculum is developed based on academic studies, teachers should go beyond the curriculum offerings, saying: “We should not be satisfied with our program. We should not compromise with it.”

Tuna also maintained that he experienced challenges and constraints while critically reflecting on his teaching philosophy and its implementation in school. He noted that academic structures needed to be developed to enable teachers to raise the quality of instruction, conduct research and projects without hindrance, and enhance their school environment. His desire to learn more was growing, and his interpretation of practices and policies in the school had been evolving. For example, he became more aware of the economic considerations influencing coursebook selections. After underlining the criticality of integrity and consistency in academic and personal endeavors, Tuna envisioned a future in which he prioritized integrity over temporary gains. In brief, Tuna conveyed that he would not compromise his integrity in the future and believed that his family background would continue to guide him in upholding ethical standards. This background would also help him distance himself from unethical or unjust practices like nepotism and favoritism.

Teachers’ accounts showed that as they gained more experience and confidence, their philosophies evolved over time while maintaining the foundational values and principles. As their accounts unfolded, it also appeared that teachers reinterpreted the positions and practices imposed through their role beliefs and teaching philosophies shaped by the critical events and cultural values in the figured worlds they had occupied. For example, Tuna posited that he was expected not to question practices and policies in the school but to become compliant. However, the routines in his figured world of family or his critical conversations with his grandfather shaped the way he took stances and problematized discourses that did not align with his beliefs.

Moreover, as a teacher raised in a family that cultivated ethics, he navigated and rejected the unethical practices in the school. Sometimes, teachers reported accepting the top-down demands to foster their sense of belonging to a community and become a part of it. For example, they avoided L1 in the classroom. However, later, their experiences in their classes and readings helped them reinterpret the imposed practice and improvise it.

In line with the framework of Figured Worlds, it can be interpreted that some positions or roles were imposed on teachers through documents and institutional discourses, and they emphasized the priorities of school administrations and policymakers, which were influenced by the quality assurance and accreditation processes in the school, as well as the neoliberal discourses prevalent in the world. However, teachers had their own figured worlds shaped by their own experiences, beliefs and values, which caused them to perceive their roles differently. In other words, some imposed roles or expectations did not align with the roles teachers claimed for themselves. For example, teachers branded as lazy or inadequate by the administration did not see themselves as so. On the contrary, they were bothered by the dearth of opportunities to demonstrate their potential for impact. Negative labels imposed by the administration did not align with teachers' positionings. Derin, for example, positioned herself as a teacher who follows in the footsteps of Atatürk and an architect who reconstructs society. However, it is also worth noting that even teachers who described themselves as eager to contribute to their school were sometimes constrained by the systemic challenges and the misalignments between the imposed roles and the roles teachers claimed for themselves. In other words, these discrepancies created tensions as they navigated and negotiated their positions.

4.4.1.4. Negotiating Discourses: Being Professional and Being Successful

Amidst shifting expectations and priorities, being professional and successful were two critical discourses teachers had to navigate and negotiate. Their perspectives on these discourses revealed their ideas about what constitutes and what qualifies a teacher to be professional. Upon explaining their interpretations of these discourses, influenced by the prevailing expectations and norms within social and cultural

worlds, they positioned themselves or expressed their self-perceptions of professionalism by aligning their identities and practices with particular figured worlds.

For Derin, being professional encompasses discipline, internal discipline, work ethic and principled behavior, morality, respect, and a genuine passion for one's work. It is defined as "teaching very well even when no one is observing" or integrity. She acknowledged feeling professional and remarked that she approached every task with unwavering discipline, thinking it would reflect her identity.

According to İpek, being professional entails being an expert in your field and doing your best. She highlighted the importance of morality, values, self-discipline, and pedagogical knowledge. Like Derin, she also noted the need to manage tasks and perform your job properly without external control. She explained that as a teacher, you have freedom in your classroom as the space is yours, and added, "There are 20 students whose lives you can change. If you are earning money for this, then you need to do your job very well." She concluded that she considers herself to be professional.

When asked to clarify the meaning of being professional, Eylül questioned herself, asking, "Am I professional?" She initially answered, "No, I'm not." She then expounded on it, and as she defined being professional, she also reconstructed her interpretation and positioning: "I try to improve my knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Being able to engage in self-criticism. I am capable of self-criticism...Working on refining teaching methods and techniques." As can be seen, she did not consider herself to be professional at first, but as she reconstructed her experiences and observations, she redefined her interpretation, shifted her stance, and occupied a different space.

Pera began by offering "a classical definition" of professionalism, which entails being an expert in one's field, earning a living from it, and being able to respond to inquiries. As Eylül mentioned, it also encompasses engaging in self-criticism and self-reflection. Recalling her teachers who had influenced her life, she defined

professionalism as “increasing the number of students I communicate with, reach, positively impact, and change their perspectives.” Her understanding of professionalism also includes being open to development. She concluded that she did not yet feel fully professional, as it also depends on the extent of her positive impact on her students.

According to Zeynep, being professional entails self-improvement and being calm and prepared, especially when things go wrong. Like Eylül, Zeynep admitted that she did not feel professional yet, pointing to areas for improvement, such as time management. She stated, “Our emotions are very much at the forefront,” which can divert attention from a professional point of view. Similarly, Mabel also noted that what people refer to as professionalism- such as closing the door and leaving problems outside- is sometimes challenging: “Life has many facets. I can’t become a teacher who completely detaches from these aspects of life.” In other words, she highlighted the complexity of maintaining the balance between personal life and professional responsibilities.

Tuna’s account showed that he perceives being professional as conducting research, learning from other disciplines, collaborating and co-publishing, and teaching. Mila was another teacher who stressed collaboration over individual development in her explanation of professional development. She noted that she was progressing when asked whether she felt professional.

In summary, teachers’ definitions of being professional encompass personal responsibility or accountability regardless of supervision or external observation, upholding integrity, and demonstrating passion for one’s work. Being professional also involves proficiency in one’s area of specialization while seeking to expand expertise and make a positive impact on students. Self-discipline and self-criticism are other hallmarks of professionalism. Additionally, carrying out research, collaborating with others and staying abreast of new developments in the field are crucial components of teacher professionalism.

Being successful was another discourse teachers critically reflected on, citing specific moments when they felt successful in their classes. Derin defined a

successful teacher as one who “ignites students’ passion” for their work and then described a moment when she felt successful due to her impact on a student’s life. She once had a student who did not know English but was highly motivated to improve. When Derin noticed his enthusiasm and effort, she gave him additional tasks and even arranged a scholarship for an English course. She noted with pride that “He is the coordinator of a big company, overseeing not only Türkiye but also the entire Mediterranean region.” She mentioned that they still maintain contact, and she looked genuinely pleased while describing these moments and expressing pride in contributing to his success.

İpek asserted that, in addition to having a strong command of the subject and communicating well with students, a successful teacher should make a positive impact on students’ lives. She also underscored the importance of good character and flexibility. She expressed pleasure in seeing students produce something meaningful. She recalled a student who was initially shy and barely spoke in class. During a coordinator’s observation, she noticed that the student began to speak fluently: “I saw myself in her while she was speaking. I felt very successful at that moment. When I suddenly saw that shy girl relax and speak fluently in English, I felt truly successful.”

Like İpek, Mabel also expressed her happiness at seeing her students talk to each other or produce meaningful work in English. She found the writing and speaking classes more fulfilling, thinking that observing students’ progress was easier in these areas. In reading, she reported feeling content when she noticed students employing the strategies she had taught them, such as using synonyms and paraphrasing. In addition, she noted that teachers feel pleased when they can assist a struggling student or when a silent student attempts to respond and participate in activities. Mabel argued that if students enjoy the course even when they receive low grades, this can be considered a success. She added that teachers can be successful if they foster student autonomy: “Success doesn’t necessarily mean that students have to get good grades or achieve the highest grades... We are successful teachers as long as we can teach children how to learn.”

Pera underscored the importance of being aware of students' weaknesses and guiding students properly, stressing the role of an English language teacher beyond mere teaching. Her portrayal of a successful teacher included the following characteristics: self-criticism, reflection, bravery -citing Freire-, flexibility, foresight, risk-taking, inclusiveness, and perseverance. She recalled a moment when her students resisted a project she had assigned, coming to her office in tears. Thinking that a teacher should be a risk-taker, she did not give up and maintained her stance. At the end of the project, the students thanked her for including them in the project, as it allowed them to collaborate with people in different countries and alleviated their loneliness, especially during the pandemic. She added: "I'm sure it has contributed to their lives. That's enough for me for the rest of my life." As can be seen, she described how making a positive impact on students' lives helped her feel successful. According to Eylül, a successful teacher should have a purpose, inspire others, exhibit positive behaviors, have a sense of humor, possess good communication skills, be sincere, enjoy their job, provide emotional support for students, create a positive learning environment, and never give up on their students. As her account unfolded, it appeared that her portrayal of a successful teacher was shaped by the needs of the little girl she once was and what she felt her teacher lacked. She defined being successful as meeting these needs or compensating for the shortcomings she had experienced in primary school.

For Zeynep, in addition to loving teaching and having a strong command of the subject, a successful teacher should be organized and flexible, plan effectively, and exhibit affection and care. Regarding her own teaching experience, she stated that she enjoyed seeing students engage and have fun while learning English, although she admitted that she was somewhat disorganized. Mila believed that a successful teacher should inspire students, unleash their potential, and perform work with love. She claimed that successful teaching goes beyond mere instruction, adding:

A student can watch the TV series *Friends* and learn English at the same time. There are Kahoots, digital programs, and opportunities to practice with foreigners. I think the difference between being a teacher and a good teacher is about highlighting the human element. Being present there, guiding and helping students to unlock their potential...

Mila clarified that she feels successful when students learn and have fun at the same time. Tuna stressed the importance of contextual factors while elaborating on what makes a teacher successful. He noted that successful teachers should pursue lifelong learning but clarified that effective teaching and continuous professional development require ideal working conditions. For example, he recalled his friend teaching 58 hours a week at a university, in addition to language classes on weekends, and described his frustration of expecting too much of teachers and unrealistic expectations placed on them under such circumstances: “It's such a vicious circle, failing to provide the necessary conditions for the teacher to be successful, letting her fail in those conditions, and then, when she fails, saying: ‘Oh, you failed, you're lying down anyway, you're unambitious anyway.’” Therefore, he suggested that we all gather, consider these issues, carry out research, and publish findings, adding: “Since your thesis is directly related to these discussions, I liked your idea very much, and it will make for a very nice thesis.” As for a moment when he felt successful, he conveyed that based on his professional experience and achievements, he enjoyed setting aside the program and teaching extracurricular activities tailored to students’ level.

In summary, being successful encompasses inspiring students, fostering a positive learning environment and meaningful learning experiences, and making a positive impact on students’ lives. Their definitions also highlight the importance of flexibility, support for students, and ongoing professional development.

Through the lens of Figured Worlds Theory, teachers’ perceptions of successful teachers were shaped by their experiences and relationships with their teachers in their figured worlds of schools. Positive interactions with role models could result in the development of characteristics that define a successful teacher. For example, Derin and Pera, whose career trajectories were highly influenced by their teachers, highlighted the importance of making a positive impact on students’ lives. Moreover, Mila, greatly inspired by her university teacher, characterized a successful teacher as someone who inspires others.

Conversely, teachers who had negative experiences with their teachers in their figured worlds of schools developed their images of successful teachers based on

traits they wanted to avoid. For example, Eylül, who perceived violence in primary school, defined a successful teacher as someone who exhibits positive behavior and strong communication skills, fosters a positive learning environment, and provides emotional support. Likewise, İpek, who experienced aggression from her primary school teacher, emphasized the importance of communicating well with students, making a positive impact on their lives, possessing good character, and being flexible. In brief, teachers voiced the positive traits they admired in their role models while defining a successful teacher. They also stressed the undesirable traits they encountered in their teachers and reconstructed their definitions of a successful teacher based on traits to be avoided.

4.4.2. Making “Liberating” Worlds

Analyses of teachers’ narratives uncovered that teachers engaged in improvisations as they navigated the complexities of their social spaces. They adjusted their pedagogical decisions inside their classes and agentic orientations in the organizational processes of their working context. Additionally, when they felt constrained within the school, they created liberating worlds outside their school to keep breathing.

4.4.2.1. Crafting New Worlds: Agency in Teaching

Teachers’ stories revealed that they adapted the curriculum by adjusting the teaching materials and strategies to better meet the diverse needs of their students, particularly when existing practices and policies did not align with their teaching philosophies. Derin described two prevalent discourses among teachers. In the first one, teachers expressed sentiments like, “Oh, do I have to deal with this?” and “It says so. Let me apply it.” The second remark included, “That’s what I was told. Never mind.” She observed that some teachers felt “always trapped in the curriculum” for fear of falling behind or missing any part. In other words, there was a tendency at school to follow instructions without question. However, others problematized and improvised the practices within the given framework.

Derin, for example, illustrated how she carved out a space in her class in contrast to other teachers constrained by the curriculum. She stated, “There’s no fear I’ll miss something because I’m sure of myself. I know very well what I’m doing.” While she followed the program and taught accordingly, she focused on fewer exercises with greater depth. For example, rather than covering five exercises, she chose to do three, believing that sparking students’ interest would enable them to complete the remaining exercises independently. She reported feeling restricted when expected to stick rigidly to the curriculum. She said, “There was a period when every detail was written in the syllabus: You will teach this, you will not teach this, this is omitted, this is additional, this is extra practice. Do this. Do that.” She argued that teachers were expected to adhere to that framework, irrespective of the diverse backgrounds of their students, and went on: “If there is no flexibility there, the teacher suffers a lot.” She did, however, add: “When there is a frame with a little flexibility... Like Alice in Wonderland, I shape and color it here and there, on side paths.” In other words, her objection was not to the curriculum or framework but rather to the lack of space for teachers to improvise and exercise agency. Therefore, she resisted the given position to her and positioned herself in her class like Alice. The curriculum was a guide or framework for her, but she also felt free to shape and color her own way on side paths and discover and experience new ways:

It is good to have a curriculum; you follow it as a guide, but you also know that when you enter the classroom, the content of that curriculum will be shaped like dough in your hands. No one will ask why you kneaded it like this. I fell in love with the space of freedom it created there.

Similarly, she viewed the coursebook as a guide she could go beyond. To express the sense of freedom she enjoyed in her classes, she used the horse metaphor, likening herself to a horse taken off a predetermined route and let out into nature to discover and learn many things. She said:

Think of a horse, a mare. You put her in the race at the racecourse, okay? The route is determined. She never leaves that path, but she runs very fast. Well, now take that mare and unleash it into the wild, and you will be amazed at how she can run in that nature... So, for me, that horse is a horse that runs through vast expanses, that can discover a lot of things, that can experience nature to the fullest, and nature is my language pleasure. I am experiencing my language pleasure while running. I decide where I am going myself. In

fact, we make decisions together with my students because they are running, too.

Derin also pointed to the concept of “opportunity education,” implying flexible instructional approaches that recognize and accommodate students’ needs and interests. She reported gaining insight into this approach through external projects, which helped her make pedagogical decisions. For example, she would introduce quotes from novels to ignite student interest. She noted that while opportunity education was stressed in kindergarten or primary school, it often faded in the following years. Derin reported valuing spontaneous teaching moments. Conditionals, for example, did not have to be listed as a teaching point in the syllabus for her. When a student tried to use the second conditional naturally, she saw this as a valuable teaching opportunity that arose within the flow of the lesson. Seeing herself as an educator, not just a language educator, Derin expressed how she took advantage of every opportunity. She stated that while making her pedagogical decisions, she went beyond the coursebook by engaging her students with real-life issues, adjusting to their needs, making connections to their lives, incorporating challenging activities, fostering their sense of importance, promoting autonomy, making their learning experience enjoyable, and extending the session and the learning experience beyond the classroom by texting and sending photos related to the topics covered outside the class. For example, during a lesson on environmental pollution and climate change, she saw the students engaged, so she set aside the book and used the European Union’s Green Deal website to enhance the lesson. She regarded the book as a guide containing essential topics that need to be covered. However, she also stressed her aim to create her own space within that framework, as it allowed for greater autonomy in her decision-making process.

Mila and Zeynep also expressed their sense of freedom in their roles as higher education teachers. Zeynep, for example, described how, when she closes the door, the classroom becomes her “playground.” She views her students as being malleable, like play dough in her hands, contributing to her sense of freedom. At the beginning of the pandemic, for example, she conveyed that she used initiative by sending her students a Zoom link and encouraging them to attend online meetings, even though it wasn’t required. She wanted them to turn on the cameras and chat about the virus

and pandemic. After a while, they continued to cover the coursebook and the teaching points to maintain contact with the students and prevent them from forgetting what they had learned in the class during the lockdown.

Teachers' efforts to push their students' boundaries were also evident in their narratives. Mila stated that she liked to challenge her students, so adjusted the curriculum accordingly. Pera reported that she preferred to use authentic materials slightly above their level, acknowledging that while students initially struggle, they eventually understand and feel accomplished. Derin also emphasized that to motivate her students and cultivate self-assurance, she incorporated challenging activities into her lessons and showed what they could accomplish. She stated, for instance, that she purposefully brought challenging but short TOEFL readings, acknowledged their difficulty, and told students that she was curious to see if they could grasp the key points. Upon seeing that they understood 30% to 40% of the text, she said: "Keep it up, guys, I'm really impressed." According to her, this motivational strategy helped students feel more important. She stated that students who felt inspired and self-confident enhanced the classes through voluntary extracurricular activities. For example, when asked to elaborate on his work on space, one of her students sent Derin some "impressive" photos and wished to deliver a 10-minute presentation about space in class, although it was not required.

Similarly, just like Derin, Eylül also claimed that "she was setting the bar high" in her classes and replacing the materials in the syllabus with others when she considered that the assigned material would not serve any purpose. In addition, upon realizing that her students lacked research skills, she described how she guided and assisted them in her class by telling them to, for example, use links ending in .edu rather than .com and obtain data from them. She claimed that the reading curriculum was so hectic that she struggled to keep up with it. Expressing her astonishment, she said, "We say that speaking, especially critical thinking, is very important for us. Yet, we are expected to finish the entire unit in two sessions. I don't understand this. There are hundreds of things in that unit." Therefore, she opted to "break those molds" by omitting or skipping certain parts of the curriculum and addressing elements that were removed, like the pronunciation parts.

Mabel was another teacher who adjusted the curriculum by changing the order of the assigned topics or incorporating extracurricular ones while still addressing exam requirements. She also highlighted her ability to find and incorporate different activities and games into her classes using her creativity. For example, to capture students' attention, she mentioned integrating Latin roots into her vocabulary teaching and using stories with mythological elements to explore word meanings and their origins, even though they were never included in the curriculum. Derin illustrated how she went beyond the prescribed vocabulary program. She reported that she did not confine her students' learning or her own teaching to the limited set of words given, thinking that there was more to explore beyond that. During the brainstorming stage, for example, she reported teaching 20 words, although the prescribed list contained only 12 words, thus adding eight more. Zeynep also stated that while she covered the points outlined in the program, she taught and discussed topics that were not part of her initial plan, which might align with what Derin referred to as opportunity education. Zeynep said that considering the common issue of exam anxiety among students, she strove to adhere to the program as closely as possible. However, she also noted that she discussed additional topics when something triggered a new idea.

Teachers also discussed their interpretations of the impact of exams on their pedagogical decisions. Their stories suggested that while trying to orchestrate the voices and make others' discourses theirs, they faced some discourses far more difficult to make their own. In other words, while trying to align their practices with external expectations and imposed discourses, they found it challenging to reconcile certain discourses and practices with their teaching philosophies. Although these mandated practices conflicted with their teaching philosophies and professional identities, they felt compelled to shape their practices accordingly and prepare students for those tests. For example, as their accounts unfolded, it appeared that they felt the constraining effects of the exams on their pedagogical decisions, particularly in grammar lessons. Derin recounted a negative experience in her grammar class because of a very confusing syllabus, which resulted in her students missing a question on the exam. Feeling devastated, she told the administration she preferred not to teach that grammar course: "I said I'm not going to give this course because I

think we're trying to trap the students.” As can be seen, she problematized the design and questioned the feasibility of the syllabus. She claimed that testing shouldn't be used to “trap” students but rather to assess their understanding. She then explained her experience with an analogy:

You know those test tubes... Such a thin and long test tube... It's like someone threw me into that test tube and expects me to climb out... I can't get out of that tube; it's such a cramped, narrow cylindrical object that I felt overwhelmed, and I said, 'I don't want to teach grammar.'

Zeynep knew that assigned topics were also important for the testing and assessment process. Therefore, she said, “Frankly, I can't be that comfortable.” Her remarks suggest that while she did not allow the testing or the assessment to dominate her instruction, she did not skip any topics at her discretion. Similarly, İpek also pointed to the standardized tests and mentioned their specific teaching points, adding, “I follow the curriculum as much as I can so that students are not at a disadvantage”, just like Mabel. Pera also discussed the role of exams, stating, “The exam system is always an inhibiting factor.” However, in online education, she added, “The exams were a little more flexible,” so she did not hesitate to take risks and improvise the given curriculum by choosing reading texts appropriate for their level and assigning separate tasks with reading and vocabulary questions. They even delivered a presentation on these tasks. She acknowledged granting herself this “right” and was pleased to take that risk, as she found it “worthwhile.” She admitted her experience in the administration and her growing up had allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of the organizational processes at school. This experience gave her greater freedom and confidence to implement her teaching philosophy.

Drawing on their own knowledge and expertise, some teachers reported they went beyond what was required by the prescribed curriculum and syllabus. Others completely disregarded the mandated syllabus and materials, incorporating what they valued more into their classes. It was also evident from some teachers' stories that they were more willing to teach reading and writing classes than grammar since adjusting the materials was more feasible in reading and writing classes. Feeling that her space to exercise autonomy was limited in grammar classes, Derin informed the administration that she did not want to engage in practices against her beliefs and

resisted teaching those courses. Instead, she preferred to teach writing and reading courses as she felt more autonomous. Her remarks stressed her uneasiness about the rigid adherence to the curriculum and predetermined frameworks without any flexibility available to the teacher. She reported that structures are necessary for life but should always be flexible, as static things and rigid frameworks were “pushing” her away. However, she also admitted that the current administration’s policies had positively influenced her ability to implement her teaching philosophy. For example, she felt more autonomous even in grammar classes because “the program is not so restrictive; it is more liberalized.” She described her enthusiasm for teaching grammar and exploring topics beyond the curriculum, comparing the experience to “swimming offshore,” which resulted in greater fulfillment in her practice. In brief, she stressed how the administration’s policies influenced her interpretation of teaching grammar.

In a similar vein, Zeynep also appreciated the freedom in reading and writing classes but not in grammar ones, noting that “The boundaries are more specific in grammar.” She stated that she felt freer in reading and writing classes. Similarly, Pera contended that she “did not follow the syllabus in the reading and writing classes.” She stated that she planned her reading classes based on the objectives, and if the theme appealed to her, she said, “I do it by finding up-to-date things through that theme.” In other words, she selected different reading materials based on the given theme in the syllabus. Like the other teachers, she also expressed feeling more autonomous in reading and writing classes. Like Derin and Zeynep, Tuna reported that he did “go above and beyond” what was required in the curriculum, especially in reading and writing classes, and then explained how he improvised the writing curriculum to better meet the needs of his students, as he thought that the instruction lacked essential components regarding how to write a thesis statement, for example:

I don't trust the curriculum most of the time, especially in reading and writing classes. For example, the writing class does not teach the student how to write a thesis statement... The student needs to react to something, read something, form an idea, think critically, and then write the thesis statement.

The instruction, however, expected students to craft almost the same thesis statement based on the given model, but he stated that “not everyone can write or think about

the same thesis statement, the same subject, and the same thesis statement. There is no such world.” Therefore, he adapted the given instruction to enhance it using what he had learned abroad, and he listed the steps he followed: “Brainstorming, grouping, outlining, first draft, peer-reviewed second draft, instructor review, final draft, then another option for the student to change.” Even though neither the coursebook nor the curriculum directed students this way, he claimed to employ these stages in his teaching to align his instruction with his teaching philosophy: “Because when I don't do that, I believe that I am not doing my job properly. I can't fit teaching that thing into my own understanding of teaching, and I still think it's wrong.” Similarly, Eylül also contended that she used the materials provided in the curriculum but also pointed out that she always adjusted them, especially in reading and writing. In fact, she reported that she completely disregarded the writing pack and used entirely different materials. She felt the assigned reading and writing packs were “irrelevant or insufficient.”

In a similar vein, Pera also described feeling lucky to be teaching reading and writing. She reported that teaching grammar sessions “makes the student and the teacher a little more dependent on the book.” In contrast, she felt more comfortable with teaching reading and writing as she could use her own methods and materials. She noted that rather than strictly adhering to the curriculum, she focused on the objectives. However, she admitted that engaging in improvisations did increase her workload, as not every element would appeal to every student in each lesson. She stated that she covered certain sections or interesting topics in the reading book “to activate critical thinking,” for example. She described improvisation as “getting away from the comfort zone” and acknowledged that this required more work and effort than merely following the program as it was without considering students’ needs and interests. Like Pera, Mila noted that she made her pedagogical decisions based on the objectives and covered the teaching points accordingly. Thinking that the syllabus was not heavy or demanding, she reported doing more than what was expected or assigned, adding, “The rest is a little unplugged teaching.”

While reflecting on their pedagogical decisions, teachers also reported including their students in the decision-making process to better address their needs and

interests. For instance, Mila noted that her pedagogical decisions were shaped by student voices and needs. She was teaching engineering students in a 100% English program. Despite having a command of English, they had to study in the preparatory school since they had not taken the proficiency exam. Mila noted that although skipping the exam was their fault, she was left alone to handle the situation with those students. She reported introducing a platform called Canvas to her students, collecting engineering-related resources there with the students, and creating a vocabulary list on platforms like Quizlet. She also mentioned that she uploaded a reading text every week, and they discussed the structures used and the genre. For example, they read about how a washing machine works, took notes, and completed the diagrams, all on a voluntary basis.

Derin and Pera also noted that they included their students in their decision-making process related to the syllabus. Pera said, “I try to do a little bit of what they call negotiated syllabus with the student,” and added that she also tried to choose topics and themes in line with their interests. Similarly, İpek, who described the class as an “interactive stage” where she felt free, also remarked that depending on the students and the class, she went beyond the prescribed curriculum by adding or removing items from the curriculum and illustrated her way of doing it. In advanced classes, for example, even if the teaching point was only the present passive, she preferred to teach all forms of the passive voice after assessing students’ pace and interest. Another teacher who went beyond the coursebook and curriculum in response to the needs of the class was Mabel. She stated that she placed a high value on flexibility and disapproved of rigorous adherence to the curriculum. She believed that flexibility was essential. In brief, teachers opted to include students in shaping their learning experiences to better address their needs and make learning engaging, meaningful and personalized.

İpek reported adapting the existing program and claimed that it was flexible, allowing teachers to incorporate optional units and suggested tasks from the syllabus based on the needs of their class and students. She also believed that her years of experience allowed her to act more independently and effectively utilize her space to exercise autonomy. In addition to İpek, teachers, including Derin, Pera, Mabel,

Eylül, and Zeynep, pointed to the role of experience and expertise while reflecting on how they exercised autonomy in their pedagogical decisions. Derin, for example, recalled that during her first few years of teaching, she had been more conformist and anxious, sticking to every detail specified in the syllabus as she felt the need to fit in. However, as she gained more experience, she got more comfortable and confident raising issues and defending her ideas during the meetings. The following quotation captures her journey from unease to confidence:

You are given a curriculum, and you even read the abbreviations, wondering what they mean. You look at things with an asterisk next to them, trembling. You always look at others when something happens, something related to legal regulations, always wondering what they will say... Well, okay, this is a sense of uneasiness. As I was trying to position myself, I was naturally concerned about fitting into the social codes because I needed to develop a sense of belonging there and be with them. However, when I was convinced that I could do this job... It was not something that happened all of a sudden, but in my fifth year, while I was defending my beliefs in the meetings. 'This is not like this; I think you are doing it wrong.' As I gained more experience there, I spoke more assertively in meetings.

As can be seen in her remarks, she transitioned from accepting everything without question to defending her ideas in public. Similarly, Pera also reported feeling braver and more liberated over the years, and she attributed this to her previous role in the administration and experience in teaching: "I feel a little bit more liberated online, and you know, maybe as I've grown older, I've become a little bit braver after working as an administrator because I've seen the inner workings of the system." She told me she could justify her pedagogical decisions, especially regarding how she used or did not follow the curriculum: "I made my way," she added, "not in line with the criteria given by the preparatory school, but completely in line with the objectives." Citing online education and the session recordings, for example, she said: "If they check the session recordings and say, 'Wait a minute, you have never followed the curriculum. Who do you think you are?' I have an explanation, and I stand by it until the end." Similarly, Mabel also pointed to the change in her teaching philosophy and explained how she became more flexible with the curriculum.

As teachers' stories unfolded, it became evident that as they gained experience, teachers improvised the syllabus and the course materials, considering the objectives,

student needs, and interests as they navigated the complexities of their classes and aligned their practices with their beliefs. While they rejected imposed roles and resisted adhering strictly to the grammar syllabus, they valued creating spaces for improvisation, especially in reading and writing classes. Behind the closed doors of their own classes, some teachers, such as Eylül and Pera, asserted their interpretations of their professional identities through clandestine or secret experiences. Even though they encountered various challenges inside and outside the classes, teachers' stories highlighted their commitment to making improvisations and exercising agency in their classes. The following figure, Figure 7, also illustrates that although their teaching practice was influenced by the Figured World of Snowdrop with its practices, discourses, and broader contexts, teachers reported that they did and would continue to utilize their spaces of authoring in their classes.

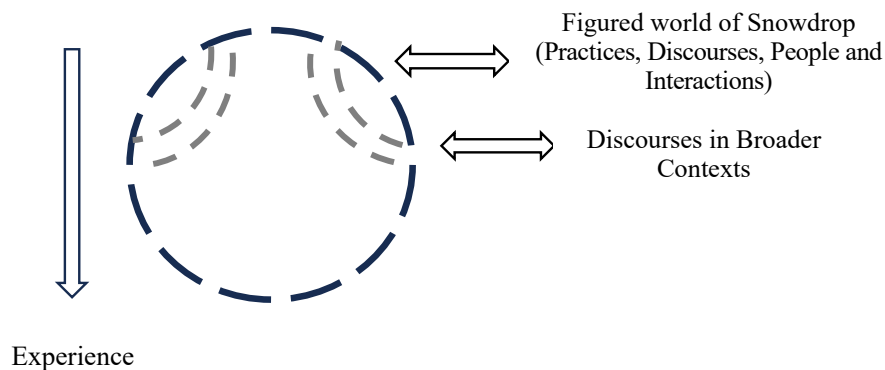


Figure 7. Agency in teaching

4.4.2.2. Crafting New Worlds: Organizational Agency

Teachers' narratives revealed that, in addition to their instructional agency or curriculum-related world-makings or improvisations and efforts to enhance their classes, they also made voluntary contributions to the organizational processes in their school, which, in turn, shaped the school culture. Although all the teachers provided statements about their involvement in the organizational processes, there were some discrepancies in the manner and extent of their involvement (See Figure 8 to see the number of teachers who have worked in the units). In addition to supporting and facilitating the ongoing practices in their school by taking an active role in unit duties, they also contributed to the establishment of norms and discourses and fostering a sense of belonging within the school.

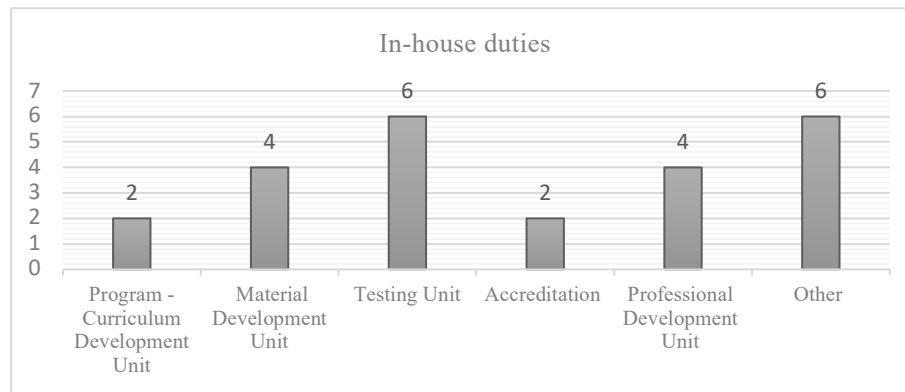


Figure 8. Teachers’ involvement in the organizational processes

Teachers mentioned that they played active roles in various units, including curriculum development, coursebook selection, materials development, testing, professional development, accreditation, student support, project development, etc. Derin reported working in various units actively. Expressing her strong sense of belonging to the school, she said: “Nothing can prevent me from loving this institution, from serving it.” She stressed her willingness to assist with any needs, such as supporting the curriculum development unit when they requested. Recalling her part-time teaching experience, Mila also pointed to her voluntary contributions to the school, such as materials development unit, which provided her with substantial knowledge and experience.

Eylül also noted that she played an active role in the school, working in different units. In addition, she reported that she invited newly recruited teachers to observe her classes, thereby acting as a mentor to them. Like Eylül, Zeynep also stated she mentored novice teachers and worked in the units for a long time. In addition, she stressed her community service work outside the school, too. Citing center-periphery theory, Tuna remarked that there are times when one needs to remain on the periphery and other times when one can move towards the center, adding: “I’m always pushing things little by little.” He referred to his contributions to the organizational practices despite the walls or obstacles, stating, “I think I’ve done more than my share.” He mentioned collaborating with a very experienced teacher on curriculum development and program evaluation. In addition, he reported preparing a program for advanced-level students, utilizing his professional

experience and the programs he had successfully implemented in the past. He expressed how this work significantly fostered his sense of achievement. Tuna also added that he would continue working to enhance the policies and practices in the school despite the constraints and contribute to his professional development: “Overcoming these problems falls within our scope of work. There are many problems, but this is not an excuse to run away and stop producing.” Even though he was well aware of the challenges, he persisted in his steadfast commitment in his endeavors, believing that continued efforts would result in improvements. Then, he expressed how much he enjoyed participating in the current study and his desire to conduct a study together.

Like others, Pera and İpek also reported working actively in different units. Like Eylül and Zeynep, İpek also guided newly recruited teachers as mentors. In a similar vein, Mabel reported playing an active role in different units. She also mentioned her involvement in a committee, noting that although the process was exhausting, it was instructive and valuable. She expressed that “engaging in every stage of it can broaden a teacher's vision and contribute to professional development.”

Teachers’ narratives also uncovered that in addition to the responsibilities they undertook in different units, they also strove to enhance the organizational processes within their school by voicing their concerns and suggestions during the meetings and displaying their resistance regarding the practices that did not comply with their values. Derin, for instance, reported that she always expressed her opinions during the meetings regarding the practices and the accreditation process whenever they misaligned with her beliefs. She added, “For me to feel that I belong to this school, I need to know that I can express myself very comfortably in the decision-making mechanism of that school.” Derin recalled an instance where she found covering the brainstorming activity in the writing coursebook for the entire term to be a waste of time and shared her concerns during the meetings. Her voice was initially neglected, but when she persisted in speaking up, she was told to write a report. Together with three of her colleagues, she diligently wrote a report explaining why the system did not work and should be changed. They signed it and left it on the coordinators’ desk. However, not seeing any change or improvement stressed her out. İpek, Mila, and

Mabel also noted that they usually raised issues during staff meetings. Mila stated that she preferred to frame her suggestions as requests rather than criticism. Mabel also noted that she had no reservations about expressing her views during meetings.

Teachers also reported that they spoke up against injustices in the school. For instance, Eylül reported objecting to unfair assignments. Tuna admitted that he was still bearing the consequences of opposing the injustices or sharing his concerns regarding the policies and practices. Like Tuna, Derin also pointed out that she criticized the practices and policies in the school when they did not align with her beliefs, and because of this, she said, she was at odds with the administration. For example, she would participate in the charity events the school organized to help people in need. However, she did “reject” participating when the motives for these activities shifted from goodwill to accreditation requirements.

Like Tuna, Zeynep also contended that she could not stand the injustices in the school. She reported that she preferred to meet one-on-one with the administration when issues bothered her. In addition to the injustices, Zeynep objected to the school’s decision to follow a skill-based curriculum by replacing the coursebook with a grammar practice book. In her opinion, applying this change to all classes simultaneously without piloting it first and observing its benefits was incorrect. “Out of the blue, a grammar book was introduced,” she said, arguing that teaching grammar without context was “mechanical and boring.” Therefore, she reported resisting the change and expressed frustration when decisions were made top-down.

When the given or assigned duty was against her beliefs, Mila preferred to express her concerns openly and reject the assignment. She recounted her experience when offered a unit duty she did not believe in: “They wanted to assign me to a unit. I strongly resisted. In the end, I had to voice my concerns openly. It seemed that they were trying to impose an approach to language teaching that I did not believe in.” She reported that as soon as she realized that she would only be writing while others made the decision, she refused to participate.

Through the lens of Figured Worlds Framework, Snowdrop is a social environment that is constructed and reconstructed through teachers’ histories, their engagement in

the organizational processes, interaction, values and beliefs. It can be interpreted that teachers perceived themselves as active agents in their organization, persisting in their endeavors to enhance the organizational processes beyond their teaching duties. They played active roles in various units, raised issues in staff meetings, and voiced their objections when practices conflicted with their beliefs. In other words, they used initiative to improve the school and shaped its culture by establishing, reinforcing, resisting, and rejecting cultural norms and practices.

4.4.2.3. Stepping Back to Step Forward: *Principled Withdrawal* and External Agency

As teachers' stories unfolded, it became evident that teachers made significant contributions to the organizational processes to enhance their school, without expecting additional financial rewards, since the beginning of their careers in Snowdrop. However, they also acknowledged a strong desire for recognition and appreciation for their efforts. When they observed that their suggestions and contributions were ignored and they faced increasing neglect, a lack of support and respect, and both financial and moral setbacks, they reached their breaking points. Consequently, they consciously chose to withdraw their active participation. They avoided seeking or accepting unit-related duties and refrained from going beyond what was required. For example, Eylül was incredibly busy reporting, writing documents, and typing while working in a unit. She said: "Honestly, it has placed a heavy burden on us." When asked what she gained in return, she responded that she received nothing tangible, aside from personal growth and experience. The only thing was what she acquired personally. She also worked as a coordinator, describing the role as highly stressful due to the challenges like staying late at school. She noted that the lack of financial reward further contributed to the difficulty of the position. As she reflected on her experiences, she realized that her goodwill was being abused. Mabel also identified the significant issue of teachers not being compensated for their additional work in units beyond their regular teaching duties.

Zeynep highlighted the same issue. She claimed that teachers had no support, and this dampened their enthusiasm for working in units. She noted that there was even a

constant endeavor to find fault in their work: “Not everything has monetary value, but there should be moral value for these duties.” For example, she advocated for a sense of feeling valued, a sense of belonging to the school, and recognition for their efforts. However, she lamented that these were missing, and people were reluctant to express gratitude. She clarified that teachers have a minimum work requirement of 12 hours per week, and if they teach more, they get paid more or receive additional pay. While working in the unit, she reported, “We worked for a minimum of 20 hours, yet we were compensated for 12 hours.” Like Eylül, she also stated that after working under these conditions for so long, she no longer wished to take on such responsibilities. She stated, “If there were a response like ‘You are truly valuable, you did this for us, for all of us’, I would continue. I have no financial expectations.”

As their narratives unfolded, it also appeared that some teachers decided to give up their unit duties and retreat into their own spaces, feeling that there was no point in striving as their voices were neglected and their contributions were not acknowledged. They reported that while they were expected to assume certain roles and responsibilities, they lacked the authority, power, and support to make decisions and implement changes. Their narratives also uncovered that when their efforts to contribute to the organizational processes were ignored, and they felt pushed out of the system, they preferred seclusion and constructed new figured worlds outside the school to “find a space to breathe,” as can be seen in Figure 9.

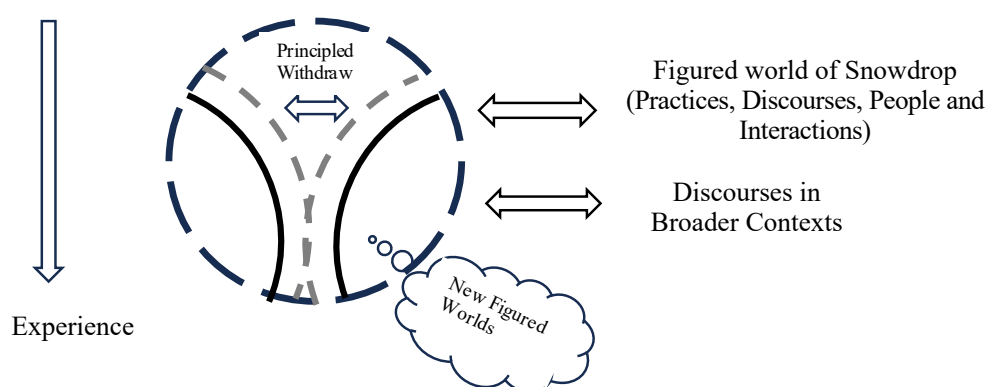


Figure 9. Organizational agency and principled withdrawal

To illustrate, Eylül admitted that she had ceased to share her ideas with others. She reported that while working as a coordinator, she resisted actions or practices that

went against her beliefs but sometimes felt silenced by others who said, “This is how it’s done.” According to her, there was a lack of openness to change, and “when problems arise, they are buried under the rug.” As a result, she reported that she stopped expressing her opinions on any platform. As for Mabel, she also noted that she used to communicate more when she was younger and highlighted the shift in her current stance, saying: “Because I avoid conflict, there are times when I don’t express my views.” In a similar vein, Mila conveyed that she no longer preferred to share the problems with the administration during meetings and explained why: “Responsibility can be assigned, but authority may not be granted. Under such responsibility without authority, you might hesitate to justify decisions and practices or be concerned about power dynamics.” Therefore, as for unit duties to contribute to the organizational processes in the school, she stated she chose to “take a step back.” Similarly, Zeynep expressed her exhaustion after working in the unit for many years and stated that she no longer wanted to take responsibility for the organizational processes. Although she was offered an administration position, she declined it, believing that being an administrator would require her to engage in political maneuvering and place a greater emphasis on quantity over quality. Instead of staying away from the classroom, attending a lot of meetings, and writing many reports, she preferred to remain in the classroom, or her primary source of satisfaction.

Pera’s narrative offers valuable insights into the situation from the perspective of a teacher with previous administrative experience. She noted that she also faced significant obstacles when she attempted to resist and struggled to make her voice heard. She acknowledged having many disagreements and conflicts and described how she felt: “I felt very isolated there, unable to pursue what I wanted to do or express my concerns. I had to conform to everyone else, but I couldn’t, and it was painful. That period was very stressful.” In addition to this, Pera also elaborated on her experiences as a lecturer, noting that her attempts to make a difference were often ignored. During the summer holiday, as she stated, she “was begging the coordinators for” duties, such as “proofreading, editing, computerization, or something else.” However, she felt stressed, as she claimed there was no place or room for her “in that closed system.” In other words, her efforts to contribute to the

organizational processes in the school were repulsed. As a result of these experiences, she decided to step back and refrain from sharing her ideas on any platform, saying: "I keep them inside; they are all mine. My babies. I don't want to share them anymore." While reflecting on her experiences, she also pointed to the lack of collective agency in the school. She noted that many people shared her thoughts and had even better ideas. Therefore, she said, upon a proposal, such as "We have thought of something like this. Would you be with us?" she would be willing to participate as long as she believed in the initiative. However, she said she no longer wanted to take the lead, as she was "fed up." She reported that her attempts to improve things in the school and share her ideas with others were met with disregard, which paved the way for losing her sense of belonging to the school. She noted that once the school had attempted something fresh with the writing instruction, but the teachers noticed its shortcomings. She said, "I wasn't the only one who thought this. The whole school was in a state of rebellion." However, their voices were not heard at all. She reported having expressed her ideas in meetings by citing related literature, but she perceived the following response as a critical moment since it completely changed her sense of belonging to the school: "We don't have to listen to these; they are outdated. We will do it this way. Alright, let's close this topic." Pera described it as a terrible moment, and she said she still felt like crying:

My eyes well up with tears when I remember it... It pushed me so hard that I stopped speaking up at any meetings after that. I never spoke or communicated with anyone from that team. I did whatever I was told. Of course, I made my own additions to the classroom, but that was a critical moment for me, and it completely changed my perception of the institution... That day, I lost my sense of belonging.

Teachers' accounts revealed that their contributions were disregarded, and their voices were silenced, so they stopped using initiative and ceased their contributions to the organizational processes. Instead, they channeled their energy into their own studies. They formed different social and cultural spaces, or new figured worlds, outside the school, where their efforts were acknowledged, and they felt empowered. For instance, İpek discussed her decision to prioritize her academic studies over unit responsibilities. She reported that she experienced burnout while working in the units

because, as unit members, they devoted a significant amount of their time, energy, and resources to these units, saying: “We sacrificed our personal lives at times.” She brought up how the administration expected too much of them while providing insufficient support, which led to considerable stress. As a result of these experiences, she preferred to refrain from unit work and instead concentrate more on her personal life and academic pursuits. She said, “I withdrew a little and turned to my field of interest: literature” and started her post-graduate degree. Eylül was another teacher who felt “stuck” in the school and attempted to find a place where she could express herself: “We feel stuck in the department, so we try to showcase more of our work externally where we can express ourselves.” As for Tuna, he emphasized that the space where he could experiment and exercise agency was taken away from him and then described how he was positioned in the school:

When you speak up, it is immediately followed by things like stigmatization, teasing, in general assemblies... There is no longer an opportunity to attempt anything; you either choose to fight or, we are now opting not to fight... I am not standing against anything in particular, but rather, there is a structure that excludes me.

In other words, when Tuna raised his voice to “defend” his own space, he experienced marginalization, so he stated that he preferred to focus more on his academic studies after facing such marginalization. He emphasized the shift in his stance after being labeled as “incompatible” and “quarrelsome”:

I used to raise my voice more in the past, but now I'm retreating into my own shell. Attempting to defend your field immediately leads to criticism, such as, 'He's incompatible,' 'He's quarrelsome,' 'You can't work with him anyway.' At the moment, I am more withdrawn in my own field.

Tuna also noted that his work received greater recognition and appreciation outside the school, which he thought indicated an issue within the school. He explained how he responded to all these: “I continue my academic life. I continue my research. I continue teaching by using my networks outside the institution, professional networks.” He noted that teachers could conduct projects to prove themselves outside and added: “If you get overwhelmed, you will flee to another institution or country. Those who have any connections have started to escape. I no longer see a space to

breathe and work at the institutional level.” Despite all these challenges, he also pointed out that he would remain optimistic. Despite the challenges and shortcomings in the school, university, and the country, he wrapped up by stressing the importance of optimism and his belief in teachers as agents of change:

It's our job to make the impossible happen. Yes, there are many problems, but this is not an excuse to run away and stop producing. We will see more projects, freer working environments, and more productive work. I believe those times will also come, and I remain optimistic about that.

Derin clearly stated that she would persist in improving the school and contributing to the organizational processes despite experiencing repeated instances of her voice being ignored: “There are many disgruntled people, but I will not be one of them. I love my institution. My sense of belonging is very high. How can I leave it to you? I will continue to observe you.” As can be seen in her remarks, she was adamant about staying involved in the organizational processes. Her high sense of belonging to the school helped her continue to serve the school regardless of the obstacles and challenges. While stressing her strong sense of belonging, Derin also remarked that teachers refrained from contributing to the organizational processes after observing that their opinions or suggestions weren’t leading to any changes or improvements. She asked, “Don’t you stop giving your opinion after a while?”

It is worth noting that Derin’s remarks in the last interview highlighted the significant damage to her sense of belonging, stemming from the increasing instances of being overlooked, criticized, and feeling undervalued. She was quite disappointed and felt that all her efforts had been in vain. When she noticed that her colleagues, who had previously supported her and spoken up, remained silent, she felt isolated and thought: “Perhaps this group isn’t the idealized one I had envisioned.” She recounted feeling “worthless” and experiencing diminished sense of belonging, adding: “I used to think I would never leave the school and that I would retire from this school. Now, if a very appealing offer comes along, I might consider leaving. My sense of belonging is not as strong as it used to be.” The significant change in her perspective, or the erosion of her once-strong sense of belonging, was evident in her narrative.

Teachers' stories revealed that their withdrawal was not just a passive response. It was a *principled withdrawal* with a message or a deliberate stance they took in response to the perceived lack of recognition and trivialization of their expertise. They did not lose hope for the future of the school, but they stressed that certain things needed to be changed and demonstrated their resistance to compromise on things that did not align with their beliefs. As part of their *principled withdrawal*, they decided to channel their energy and time into their professional development. They found ways to create spaces outside or new figured worlds where they felt valued and could express their agency and thrive.

Derin was among the teachers who felt constrained by the lack of support and motivation in their school and thus concentrated on external projects and connections with other professional networks. She noted that they empowered and motivated her, saying, "They feed me in a professional sense and broaden my perspective." Like Derin, Tuna also pointed to his academic and social responsibility projects to support the education of girls, for example. In a similar vein, Zeynep described how she redirected her efforts to new environments and engaged in community service initiatives, including providing books, stationery, boots, and coats for rural schools, and working for women residing in shelters.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to investigate how eight experienced English language teachers in a higher education context in Turkey exercised and perceived their language teacher agency in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. It also explored the influences of political, social, and institutional factors on their agentic orientations and perceptions of their professional roles and agency in their narratives. This chapter first discusses the findings of the study in relation to the related literature on language teacher agency. The discussion will follow the order of the research questions. Then, the chapter presents the major conclusions, implications, and several recommendations for future research.

Before starting the discussion, I would like to clarify that this study is centered on the narratives of the language teachers, aiming to uncover the complexities of language teacher agency. While it provides an in-depth analysis of their experiences, it is important to acknowledge that the voices and perspectives of other stakeholders, such as policymakers and administrators, are not represented in the study. Therefore, the findings and analysis presented in this dissertation reflect only the participant teachers' personal and professional insights, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

5.1. Research Question 1: How do experienced English language teachers in a higher education institution enact agency in their stories in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation?

The first research question aimed to explore how eight experienced English language teachers in a higher education context in Turkey enacted agency in relation to

teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. In other words, it examined teachers' decision-making processes and agentic orientations at micro (individual), meso (class and school), and macro (broader context) levels.

The study was conducted in Snowdrop, a research university context influenced by quality assurance and accreditation processes. Teachers' hesitations, oscillations, problematizations of discourses, frustrations, conflicts, and mood swings while reconstructing their lived experiences all indicated their efforts to navigate and reconcile various voices and perspectives in their own figured worlds. Striving to maintain coherence between their understanding of their roles and imposed roles and expectations on them by external factors, such as policies shaped by quality assurance and accreditation, was not straightforward. However, it was not deemed impossible. Teachers' accounts revealed that through a complex interplay of their history-in-person, future images, teaching philosophies, their figured world of workplace, and broader contexts, they actively navigated and asserted their roles, problematized the discourses and practices in their workplace and broader contexts, and exercised agency in teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. This section will first outline how they exercised agency in teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. Then, it will examine how their memberships in earlier figured worlds, along with their future images and teaching philosophies, influenced and informed their exercise of agency.

Agency in Teaching: Drawing on their own knowledge and expertise, teachers enacted agency over their teaching practices and pedagogical decisions, tailoring their choices to suit the contextual factors and the realities of their classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). They mainly adapted the curriculum by adjusting the teaching materials and strategies to better align their classroom practices with their teaching philosophies, address their students' diverse needs and interests, foster critical thinking and autonomy, and create a positive learning environment.

In line with the Figured Worlds theory framework, curricula and teaching materials can be regarded as artifacts as they mark the norms of a particular community,

influence teachers' decisions and practices, and shape their interpretations of their roles within that community. In short, they encourage the development of a shared reality within that figured world.

The analysis of their stories revealed that they navigated the complexities of their classes by adapting the prescribed curriculum and teaching materials in overt and covert ways for two important reasons. First, the curriculum did not align with their teaching philosophies, as Graves (2016) describes as a misalignment between program content and teacher preparation. This misalignment occurs when the roles assigned to teachers are incompatible with their expertise and beliefs. More specifically, teachers noted several problems: The removal of listening and speaking skills, an increased emphasis on grammar, an overwhelming number of language points assigned each week, a syllabus that was not user-friendly for teachers and students, and a significant obligation to strictly adhere to it to ensure students' academic performance on exams. These were all problematized by the teachers. The second reason pertained to the perceived problems with the teaching materials, as highlighted by Eylül, Derin, Zeynep, Pera, and Tuna. The materials were considered limited, outdated, oversimplified, inefficient, and overly market-oriented. For instance, Eylül pointed out that the materials were outdated and highlighted the need to address contemporary topics, such as metaverse and pandemics. Using the prescribed guidelines as a foundation, teachers adjusted the curriculum by rearranging the topics, changing pacing, adding supplementary teaching points, and removing certain points in order to better engage students, foster autonomy, and stay aligned with their teaching philosophy.

To begin with, all the teachers noted that they went above and beyond the prescribed curriculum and stressed how they utilized their spaces of authoring in their classes to exercise agency through improvisations. Thinking that materials were inadequate, teachers crafted new spaces inside their classes to fulfill their roles effectively and maintain coherence. They stressed their sense of autonomy in the classroom and expressed opposition to the rigid adherence to the curriculum that disregarded students' needs and contextual factors, such as available resources, facilities, and teaching materials. As Graves (2016) pointed out, this exemplifies the misalignment

between the goals and the context when the curriculum ignores contextual factors, such as available resources and materials. For example, Derin strove to engage her students with real-life issues, making connections to their lives and extending their learning experiences beyond the classes. She valued utilizing every opportunity in class as a teaching moment, calling this approach “opportunity education.” Zeynep described her class as her “playground” with her students likened to “malleable” play dough. Mabel reordered the topics and incorporated extracurricular content, such as Latin roots and mythological elements, into her vocabulary teaching. Their stories also highlighted how they included their students in their curriculum-related decision-making processes, which was referred to as a “negotiated syllabus” by Pera. These examples illustrate how teachers actively used their spaces of authoring to adjust the curriculum by improvising instructional materials and adapting teaching methods, thereby creating a personalized, differentiated, and effective learning environment. Their dissatisfaction with oversimplified, outdated, limited, and ineffective materials accounted for their efforts to bring new content. Eylül, for example, emphasized the need to address contemporary topics, which is consistent with Canagarajah’s (2006) claim that teachers should engage with human issues, like immigration, and global health issues like pandemics to create critical and inclusive representations of them. Teachers also strove to challenge students by pushing their boundaries, thereby fostering self-assurance. For example, Pera used authentic materials slightly above students’ levels, while Derin introduced TOEFL readings to her classes.

Their stories also uncovered that they did not take the practices at face value. Instead, they approached them with a critical perspective. For example, Eylül expressed her concerns regarding the online resources, which are accessible only to students with original coursebooks. Due to financial constraints, many of her students couldn’t afford the original books and had to buy copies, depriving them of access to digital materials. Derin was another teacher who critically examined the use of a language learning platform and viewed the requirement for students to earn scores through exercises on a website and submit their certificates to their teachers as a manipulation of the capitalist system. She recalled one of her graduate program

courses and stated that she was “totally against” the idea of using that “mechanism of the capitalist order to be used by students at a state university.”

In summary, teachers critically examined the curriculum and teaching materials and used the margins to mitigate the potential dissonance between their beliefs and philosophies, the realities of the classes, and the prescribed curriculum. They felt they had the flexibility to implement what they valued instead of blindly adhering to the prescribed curriculum, which allowed them to shield themselves from imposed rules and regulations. Despite the lack of a close fit between their identities and school culture, the teachers were able to create a space to act within and carve out agency. According to them, strict adherence to the curriculum would have consumed considerable time, prevented teachers from integrating the practices they valued, and hindered their agency. This aligns with the findings of Mutlu (2017), who identified the restrictive impact of a centralized curriculum on teachers’ agency. Additionally, the teachers in Snowdrop were willing and determined to reauthor themselves through these improvisations, refusing to let any obstacles hinder their use of space in class. In other words, they resembled the postmethod teachers described by Kumaravadivelu (2001):

Teacher autonomy in this context, entails a reasonable degree of competence and confidence on the part of teachers to want to build, and implement their own theory of practice that is responsive to the particularities of their educational, contexts and receptive to the possibilities of their sociopolitical conditions. Such competence and confidence can evolve only if teachers have the desire and the determination to acquire and assert a fair degree of autonomy in pedagogic decision making. (p. 548)

One area where reauthoring themselves proved challenging, if not impossible, was in grammar classes. Almost all the teachers reported feeling more autonomous in reading and writing classes, finding it more feasible to go beyond the curriculum, make improvisations, and exercise agency. Mabel, Mila, and İpek did not mention this during the interviews, but it would be incorrect to assume they disagreed. Others chose to go beyond the prescribed curriculum in reading and writing or to disregard the mandated one to incorporate practices they valued more, drawing on their expertise. For example, Tuna disapproved of providing students with a model thesis

statement and expecting them to replicate it. Instead, he preferred to introduce the steps for crafting a thesis statement.

Behind the closed doors of their own classes, teachers also asserted their professional identities through clandestine or secret experiences. For example, Eylül disregarded the writing pack, which she deemed inadequate, and instead used alternative materials. Pera also utilized different reading and writing materials she had prepared based on the objectives. This sense of autonomy also explained why Derin explicitly informed the administration of her unwillingness to teach grammar classes and why Zeynep expressed a similar preference against teaching them.

While navigating the challenging discourses and the constraints imposed by the curriculum and teaching materials, teachers also acknowledged the impact of standardized tests on their pedagogical decisions. The constraints experienced by teachers in grammar classes were partly attributed to the emphasis on standardized tests and their students' academic performance, which restricted teachers' agency in teaching. Although the prescribed grammar curriculum did not align with their teaching philosophies and professional identities, teachers felt compelled to adapt and shape their practices. For example, Derin mentioned that failing to adhere to a confusing and poorly designed grammar syllabus strictly could result in students missing exam questions. Moreover, Pera described the exam system as inherently inhibiting and described grammar teachers as more dependent on the coursebook. Their stories illustrated how standardized testing influenced the degree of autonomy teachers felt in their pedagogical decisions. They felt obliged to prioritize certain areas, which impacted their sense of agency and illustrated the notion of “backwash” or the effect of testing on teaching and learning (Hughes, 1989). The restricted space of authoring in grammar classes and the dissonance between beliefs and the prescribed curriculum resulted in their reluctance and resistance to teaching grammar classes under these circumstances. However, despite feeling constrained, they endeavored to reconcile their practices with their beliefs, consistent with the findings of Ali and Hamid (2023), who found that while examinations had a significant impact on teaching practices, they did not have complete control over them, as

teachers exercised agency through the interplay of their professional, ethical, emotional, and moral values.

Teachers defined being successful in various ways, including inspiring students, establishing a positive learning environment, creating meaningful learning experiences, making a positive impact on students' lives, and engaging in continuous professional development. They also associated success with flexibility, which contributed to their reluctance to teach grammar classes, as the inability to implement these aspects disrupted the coherence of their professional identity.

The teachers acknowledged the guiding role and importance of the curriculum and coursebook, but they conveyed that there should also be some flexibility so that teachers could make autonomous decisions drawing on their professional judgments, needs, and interests of their students. Derin, for example, reported following the curriculum as a guide and described it as “dough” in her hands. The findings aligned with Kelchtermans (2018) in showing that even though the context influences determine their interpretation of themselves to some extent, teachers are not completely constrained by it and still have “space and leeway for their individual choices, motives, and preferences” (p.233). They were similar to adaptive experts (Hammerness et al., 2005), who strive to expand their expertise throughout their lifetimes and can adapt to new challenges and complexities that are not routine while making sound and informed decisions in their teaching contexts. They can navigate the challenges and carve out a space to act within, “make active use their professional space” (Oolbakkink-Marchand et al., 2017, p. 37), and still exercise agency (Feryok, 2012). Graves (2023) notes that textbooks should be viewed as “malleable, not fixed.” The curriculum should be seen as a map and the teacher as the navigator, adding: “There needed to be a balance between a good curriculum and teacher know-how and agency in using it” (p.197). Teachers' stories also highlighted the importance of “a ground-up construction” of curriculum change, incorporating “indigenous resources and knowledge” and emphasizing the need for collaboration between local and external experts to create a relevant and effective curriculum (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 27).

Agency in Professional Learning: The analysis of teachers' narratives revealed that they actively engaged in various practices and invested in their professional development to ensure lifelong learning, stay updated, and improve their teaching practices. These actions included collaborating with colleagues, participating in in-service training, engaging in self-directed learning, joining other professional networks, engaging in reflection, and pursuing post-graduate degrees. As Kramsch (2013) suggests, investment highlights the role of human agency in engaging with and persevering through the task or endeavor at hand. The findings indicated that their "investment" (Norton, 2000) and commitment as language learners continued in various forms and communities as they transitioned into language teachers.

Teachers reported gaining valuable insight through their collaboration and discussions with their colleagues, which helped them share expertise and resources, thereby improving their practice, especially in their early years of teaching. They reported observing experienced teachers' classes and getting feedback and guidance. While İpek requested to observe her colleagues' classes, Mila was invited to observe their classes, and they both appreciated the support and guidance back then. Teachers also appreciated the collegial support in the form of exchanges of resources and teaching strategies, as Pera mentioned. Through "peer coaching" (Ackland, 1991), they were able to foster collaborative teacher development (CTD) in the past, which reflects Sockett's (1993) aspect of working relationships beyond the classroom or teachers' collaboration with colleagues.

As for the in-service training, almost all teachers reported attending the activities. They exhibited two predominant tendencies: attending sessions regardless of their previous knowledge and being selective about which sessions to attend. Derin and Zeynep fell into the first group. They highlighted their commitment to life-long learning and regular attendance in these sessions, although their primary motivations included social interactions and community engagement. In contrast, İpek and Mila pointed out that they preferred to join the sessions that piqued their interest and aligned with their needs and goals. Mila said that there was nothing wrong with this approach, highlighting self-directed learning and valuing the autonomy to choose sessions, thinking it was "her own journey." Teachers valued identifying their

learning needs and using initiative and responsibility for their professional development. Their efforts included reflecting on their classes, pursuing MA and PhD degrees, completing teacher development courses, attending and presenting at conferences, and participating in other professional networks, which corresponded to Sockett's (1993) concept of commitment to change and continuous improvement.

Engaging in self-evaluation or reflection was a strategy teachers used to examine their teaching practices, evaluate their effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and improve their teaching practice, thereby fostering professional development. Teachers like Tuna, Mila, Pera, and İpek highlighted the importance of obtaining students' feedback and reflecting on it as part of their learning process. Pera called evaluating her performance based on lesson recordings and reflecting on them "self-evaluation." Reflection fosters self-awareness and contributes to the professional development of teachers and individuals from different fields. As the fifth-century Greek philosopher Socrates once said: "An unreflected life is not worth living." Palmer (2007) also explores the notion of reflection and argues that teaching is an expression of a teacher's inner life, and it is important for teachers to be courageous enough to look into their selves so that they can improve their teaching and foster learning:

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge—and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (pp.2-3)

Additionally, teachers also pursued graduate degrees, with the exception of Zeynep, who does not hold a post-graduate degree. Teachers also reported seeking out professional development courses and workshops outside the school. As a graduate of a language and literature-related field without an alternative certification, İpek acknowledged the difference between being a literature graduate and an ELT graduate. To compensate for this gap, she completed teacher development courses.

Similarly, although Zeynep did not perceive her literature background as a drawback, she acknowledged the need to enhance her pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, she reported attending online or face-to-face workshops, followed live broadcasts on Instagram, and subscribed to YouTube channels to stay updated. Teachers like Tuna, Derin, Eylül, and İpek mentioned that institutional support for professional development varied depending on the administration in office. Therefore, attending conferences and presenting research became part of their self-directed learning efforts. Derin, for example, reported receiving no financial support for attending conferences and delivering presentations except for one event. Findings corroborated Tao and Gao (2017), showing that despite this limited resources and lack of institutional support, teachers engaged in self-directed learning and exercised agency by using initiative and taking responsibility for their professional development. This also aligns with the description of agency in Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016).

Agency in Organizational Processes: Through the lens of Figured Worlds Framework, Snowdrop is a figured world shaped and reshaped by teachers' personal histories, values, beliefs, and investments in the organizational processes. It also acts as a socio-cultural context influenced by broader contexts, with its own discourses, norms, and values. Therefore, as a structure that both influences and is influenced, it plays a vital role in providing a space for teachers to construct and reconstruct their identities and meanings through shared activities and interactions.

The analysis of teachers' narratives revealed that they exercised agency to contribute to the organizational processes in their school by taking active roles in various unit duties, participating in decision-making processes, speaking up against injustices, and raising the issues and their concerns during staff meetings. Their initiatives illustrated that they perceived themselves as members and active agents of their community, striving to enhance the organizational processes beyond their teaching duties.

Teachers mentioned their voluntary contributions to the organizational processes by working in different units, including curriculum development, coursebook selection, testing, materials development, professional development, accreditation, student

support, and project development. This work was voluntary because, despite the time and effort, these teachers did not receive additional payment for their contributions and overwork in these units. Furthermore, they were not allowed to teach more than the standard number of classes. Therefore, they were neither compensated for their extra work in these units nor allowed to increase their teaching load for additional pay. In other words, by devoting considerable time to these units at the expense of overworking without receiving any compensation, they used initiative to enhance their school and gained a chance to have a voice in decision-making processes.

In addition to their unit duties, teachers were actively engaged in school meetings, voicing their concerns and suggestions whenever policies and practices conflicted with their beliefs. In other words, they were not compliant. On the contrary, they were active agents, thinking critically and raising the issues during staff meetings without hesitation. For example, Derin wrote a report to justify her stance against covering the brainstorming activity for the entire term. Teachers like Eylül, Tuna, Derin, and Zeynep indicated that they had no reservations about speaking up against the injustices in school, such as unfair assignments.

Agency in Social Participation: In addition to their improvisations and initiative for their classes, professional learning, and organizational processes, teachers' stories indicated teachers' agentic orientations in social participation. This refers to teachers' voluntary efforts in shaping the community, including participation in social and professional networks and contributions to their practices. In other words, teachers exercised agency not only at the micro and meso levels but also at the macro level, thereby influencing broader social and educational contexts.

The analysis of teachers' narratives revealed two primary driving forces behind their pursuit of external agency. In addition to their motivations and desire to enhance the school, broader educational contexts, and society, seeking external agency also emerged as a response to the systemic challenges in their school that rendered them invisible and impeded their agency.

After years of contributions to the organizational processes under difficult circumstances marked by heavy workload without any support, appreciation, or

compensation, which will be discussed in the following section in detail, teachers decided to channel their effort and energy to voluntary projects and initiatives outside their school, in addition to seeking professional development opportunities and pursuing advanced graduate degrees. When Tuna noticed his efforts were more recognized, valued, and respected outside the school, he chose to use his professional networks outside and persist in his activities. Derin also mentioned her involvement in projects and courses as she found it “suffocating” to be constrained by the lack of agency in the school. In addition to educational projects, teachers also pointed to their community service initiatives. Tuna, for example, pointed to his academic and social responsibility projects aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups. Similarly, Zeynep reported her engagement in community service. Teachers’ endeavors also highlighted their perceptions of their roles extending beyond the class, reflecting their commitment to social change, responsibility, and civic activities (Giroux, 2003; 2015). This also suggests that in addition to their duties within the school, teachers sought opportunities outside the school to counteract feelings of being disregarded, ignored, undermined, and rendered invisible. To actively engage in external contexts to maintain a sense of fulfillment indicated a *principled withdrawal* from the organizational processes. Teachers such as Eylül, Mabel, Mila, and Pera reported ceasing to voice their suggestions to avoid conflict. Zeynep and İpek expressed exhaustion and reported stepping back from the organizational processes. Pera mentioned how her efforts to contribute to the organization were rebuffed, which resulted in her diminished sense of belonging. As a result of these and similar examples, teachers chose to form and engage in different social and cultural spaces outside the school. By participating in professional development activities, courses, and conferences, as well as conducting and presenting research, they enhanced their agency and social participation, using these opportunities to expand their professional networks beyond their school.

History-in-person, Future Images, and Teaching Philosophies: Given that our understanding of the world is deeply influenced by communities we belong to and rooted in our personal histories (Holland et al., 1998), as teachers’ stories unfolded, it became evident that they carried their unique histories and cultural backgrounds into the figured worlds they were already part of or seeking to join. In other words, their

decisions and agency in relation to teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation were shaped and informed by their previous memberships in earlier figured worlds, such as their family, prior schooling, teacher education, and alternative certification programs, as well as by their aspirations and teaching philosophies.

Family Since people initially encounter values, norms, and expectations within the family, it serves as a foundational setting upon which they build. It also plays a significant role in shaping people's decision-making processes. Teachers' stories marked the impact of the critical events in their families on their agentic orientations in their classes. As a teacher who, due to financial hardship in her family, was saved from having to withdraw from school at the last moment by her own efforts, Derin reflected critically on the use of market-oriented teaching materials in their school and problematized the implementation of the "mechanism of the capitalist order" at a state university. Similarly, Eylül, another teacher, underscored the importance of her family's socioeconomic status and the resources they provided. When her students told Eylül they couldn't afford the original coursebook, she advised them to buy a secondhand one. However, she also acknowledged that this did not grant them access to the accompanying digital materials, and she felt discomfort at being unable to provide her students with those online resources. It can be interpreted that their experiences in childhood increased their sensitivity to issues related to access to resources.

Schooling Experiences Teachers' narratives also demonstrated the importance of their "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), referring to their learning experiences from their teachers as former learners and teacher trainees and the way these experiences shaped their conceptions of teaching and informed their current pedagogical decisions. Their role models had a profound influence on their personal and professional lives with their personalities, physical appearance, demeanor, reactions in specific situations, instructional strategies, relationships with their students, and classroom management techniques. The practices and attitudes of their anti-role models served as cautionary examples, too. Teachers' narratives illustrated how teachers brought their figured worlds inhabited by their role models and anti-

role models with their practices, discourses, and relationships to their classes. For example, İpek reported imitating her role model's emphasis on pronunciation and balanced approach to skills. Likewise, Pera recalled her literature teacher's focus on fostering critical thinking and a nuanced view of the world by encouraging students to view the world from multiple perspectives. She then reported integrating activities that promote critical thinking into her classes. Similar to the candidates in Varghese and Snyder (2018), who either emulated or differentiated themselves from their mentors, the teachers navigated multiple figured worlds, and they adopted effective teaching strategies from their role models or distinguished themselves from anti-role models.

Teachers' accounts revealed that critical events and traumatic experiences in their childhood had a significant impact on the development of their beliefs, decisions, and agency. For example, Derin's financial problems, Pera's difficult boarding school experiences, and Zeynep's parents' divorce influenced their interpretations of themselves and decisions inside and outside the classes and shaped the way they showed resilience. Derin, for example, did her best and managed to continue her education, although her parents could not afford to send her to school. She crafted her own responses to challenges and manipulated the given spaces. As a lonely and unhappy boarding school student, Pera found inspiration and solace in the compassionate guidance of her teachers, which stoked her desire to make a similar impact on her students, too. Her interpretation of her role highlighted her deep empathy and understanding for students going through challenging situations. Her trauma became a spark or catalyst for commitment or dedication to establishing a nurturing environment with love and care for her students that she had yearned for during her time in boarding school. Their interpretations of themselves were deeply ingrained in their personal experiences. They strove to create a space where they could experience the complete opposite of situations they had encountered and loathed as students. In other words, their histories continued to serve as a catalyst for creating a healthy teaching and learning environment at present, which is in line with Varghese and Snyder (2018), which indicated how marginalization in a candidate's past could inspire a commitment to advocacy.

Their backgrounds and experiences shaped their beliefs, along with their approaches to language teaching, like the four candidates in Varghese and Snyder (2018). Consistent with Sisson's (2016) findings, critical incidents were found to be important for shaping identity and agency. Like CeCe, the teachers in the study were also influenced by their lived experiences in their figured worlds of home and school, and they acted accordingly. They also felt empowered by employing clandestine forms of agency in their classes. In brief, critical events served as turning points in teachers' understanding of their roles and their sense of agency (Tripp, 2012; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The analysis of teachers' accounts also demonstrated that they portrayed themselves as successful, curious, enthusiastic, and autonomous language learners who took charge of their learning. Their sense of autonomy and "investment" (Norton, 2000) as learners also shaped their understanding of their role as a teacher, agency, and teaching practices. As teachers, they now encourage and expect their own students to take charge of their own learning process and become independent learners. Furthermore, their love of English during their schooling was a common thread among the stories. For example, Mila created her own dictionary and kept an English diary. Pera integrated language learning into her daily life by creating scripts and writing plays, while İpek made individual efforts to read English books, including bestsellers. Furthermore, Mabel, İpek, and Eylül described themselves as very good language learners. The reconstructions of their school years, prioritizing success, autonomy, engagement, and curiosity, and their pedagogical decisions in their current classes suggested their decisions were also motivated by a desire to create similar learning environments for their students. They wanted to foster active involvement in language learning and encourage students to question, produce, share, and enjoy their journeys.

Teacher Education Additionally, teachers' learning experiences in teacher education and alternative certification programs also influenced their agentic orientations. Only Zeynep's decision to become a teacher was deliberate and well-considered among the teachers. While her family viewed teaching as a prestigious and stable career for women, they pressured her to pursue other professions. Other teachers, including

Derin, Pera, İpek, Mabel, and Tuna, were initially hesitant due to their figured world of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and systemic issues in the education system. However, the collision of their pre-existing figured worlds with those shaped by their teachers or significant others in their schooling years, and further constructed at university or in the workplace, led them to reevaluate their career decisions and become more receptive to teaching. Despite their initial reservations, they embraced the teaching profession.

Pera and Mila, who studied ELT, found the teacher education program effective in developing pedagogical knowledge, establishing a solid foundation in the English language, and providing practicum opportunities. Another cohort of teachers, Eylül, Zeynep, Tuna, Mabel, and Derin, pursued an alternative certification route to become English language teachers. Collectively, they found that the training was overly theoretical and outdated, which did not adequately prepare them for the complexities of their classes. These experiences shaped how they invested in their professional development. For example, not having a degree in ELT or an alternative certification, İpek decided to attend teacher development courses and reported reading articles to consolidate her knowledge. Similarly, while Zeynep did not perceive being a graduate of a language and literature-related field as a disadvantage, just like İpek, she invested a lot in her professional development.

Teachers drew on discourses and practices from their earlier figured worlds as cautionary examples in their current figured world of Snowdrop. For example, Derin initially had a negative perception of teaching in MoNE, in which teachers were passive transmitters of knowledge, going through the material with minimal engagement and interaction with students. However, her dedicated teachers helped reconstruct this perception, and Derin ultimately embraced the profession. In her current classes, she constantly highlighted a teacher's active and creative role in communicating with students.

Future Images Their current actions were rooted not only in their past experiences but also in their future images or aspirations (Bütün Ikwuegbu & Harris, 2024; Day et al., 2006; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Kelchtermans, 2009; Priestley et al., 2015a;

2015b; Varghese & Snyder, 2018). Reflecting on their personal histories and envisioning their future shaped how they navigated the complexities of their current figured worlds, interpreted their practices, positioned themselves, and made decisions. For example, Zeynep expressed a desire to work in kindergartens or nurseries voluntarily, highlighting the importance of caring and establishing a genuine connection with her students. Consistent with her future image and current role, she described her community service work aimed at helping disadvantaged groups. Similarly, Tuna envisioned a future marked by integrity, which aligned with his stance against injustices in the school, in line with Fernando in Varghese and Snyder' study (2018), who connected his personal experiences to his aspirations for change. Like Zeynep, Tuna also highlighted his social responsibility projects. As for İpek, she envisioned offering courses incorporating literature and culture into her teaching, aligning with her current teaching practice. The findings corroborated Bütün Ikwuegbu and Harris (2024), who found that teachers driven by their aspirations or those with a future-oriented agency were able to step back from constraints, engage in critical reflection, and exercise agency.

Teaching Philosophies A teaching philosophy reflects teachers' beliefs, values, and principles about their teaching. It encompasses their approach to education, understanding of teaching and learning, and their role as teachers. In other words, a teaching philosophy can shed light on the motives behind teachers' decisions and actions inside and outside their classes. Coppola (2002) notes: "Your teaching philosophy will reveal you as a person, your values, your style, and your experience. Are you sincere? Do you have integrity? Are you dogmatic and opinionated? Are you thoughtful and fair? A well-crafted statement will reveal your character" (p.450). In short, it reflects who you are, providing insight into how you view your personal and professional identity and guiding your actions and decisions in your context.

Analysis of teachers' teaching philosophies revealed that their influence was evident in their agency trajectories in these four dimensions: Teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. They admitted that the core principles in their teaching philosophies remained largely unchanged, but as they gained experience, they "improved" their strategies. For example, Derin reported

being conformist and strict about avoiding L1 in class in her initial years of teaching due to the mandated policy. She admitted that she complied with the policy as she was trying to position herself within the community, attain a membership, and develop a sense of belonging. She also stressed the importance of personal stories, passion, and emotions in teaching. Similarly, İpek also pointed to the change in her teaching philosophy. Initially, she minimized the use of L1 in her first classes. However, she later embraced it, admitting, “Using your native language is also an advantage. Using it occasionally is necessary.” Furthermore, in her first years, İpek reported feeling uneasy in class due to a fear of making mistakes, but over time, she recognized that the most important thing for students is to feel comfortable with their teacher. In brief, teachers admitted that while core points remained unchanged, their teaching philosophies became more established as they gained experience.

Teachers’ descriptions of their teaching principles revealed that these core values significantly guided their decisions inside and outside their classrooms. For example, the principles Zeynep highlighted, such as caring, upholding professional ethics, acting with conscience, and making a difference in students’ lives, aligned with her voluntary social responsibility work and initiatives for underprivileged students, marking her agency in social participation. Furthermore, given her experience with limited resources in her schooling years and her efforts to carve out a space to practice English following her parents’ divorce, she initiated voluntary Zoom sessions at the beginning of the pandemic, aiming to check her students’ well-being, followed by a revision of key teaching points and extra practice.

Treating all her students fairly, considering individual differences, maintaining consistency, taking responsibility, and selecting appropriate materials and teaching methods were central to Eylül’s teaching philosophy. Considering the traumatic experience she reported in primary school, violence, it can be interpreted that her preference for addressing students using “you” (plural/formal) and keeping a more distant stance towards them was influenced by her desire not to intrude too much into her students’ personal space. Although she could not prevent her primary school teacher’s intrusion, she now wants to maintain some distance, maybe as a way of helping the primary school student she once was. In other words, her classroom

practices were motivated by a desire to give a hand to that child. Furthermore, as a teacher who valued responsibility and the selection of appropriate materials, she questioned the suitability of teaching resources a lot. She reported using a different material instead of the mandated writing pack.

In addition to going beyond the curriculum until essential improvements were made, Tuna stressed integrity as a core principle. He attributed his emphasis on integrity to his family background and their guidance about upholding ethical standards. He stressed the values fostered in his family and stated that they tied him to the school and helped him maintain his optimism despite systemic issues. His commitments, such as “Being a good citizen and a continuous learner,” and “Being beneficial to the institution I work for and not causing any harm,” for example, aligned with his agency inside and outside the class, as he also pointed out that his sense of belonging extends beyond the university to society at large, which can account for his voluntary projects aimed at providing support for disadvantaged groups outside the school.

In line with the complex and dynamic nature of teachers’ work, teachers were required to innovate, adjust to a variety of demands, make their own decisions, and strike a balance between their own preferences and the overall objectives of the school (Toom et al., 2015) These and similar examples suggest that teachers’ philosophies served as a driving force in their decision-making processes. Furthermore, as stated by Canagarajah (2004), since the self is shaped by various discourses and consists of different subjectivities with varying degrees of status and power, negotiating these identities is crucial for achieving coherence. Teachers’ stories illustrated the alignment between their actions and decisions with their teaching philosophies, which, in turn, contributed to their professional identity and maintained balance. In line with Hiver and Whitehead (2018), reconstructing their stories of how they managed challenging situations through autobiographical reasoning and the construction of a sense of meaning and purpose for their role also contributed to their professional identity.

Expecting students to craft thesis statements solely based on the given model in writing classes conflicted with Tuna’s teaching philosophy. He described his efforts

to align his instruction with his philosophy as essential for that balance, saying: “When I don't do that, I believe that I am not doing my job properly... I can't fit teaching that thing into my own understanding of teaching, and I still think it's wrong.” Similar to the findings of Hiver and Whitehead (2018), the intricate and continuous negotiation between identity, personal traits, and work environment led to the emergence of teacher agency. Teachers made pedagogical decisions and took actions in their teaching practice to reflect and align with their goals, beliefs, and values on purpose.

Given that identity reflects the way teachers perceive who they are and how they perform their roles in various contexts, stressing the interplay between identity and agency (Burns & Richards, 2009), the findings demonstrated that professional identity is not stable, but rather it is constructed and reconstructed through the interplay of personal history, professional experiences, and broader contexts (Mockler, 2011; Olsen, 2008b; Palmer, 1997; Priestley et al., 2015a; Sachs, 2005; Varghese & Snyder, 2018). Consistent with Buchanan (2015) and Biesta and Tedder (2007), the study underscores the role of past experiences and reflexivity in shaping agency and identity. Buchanan (2015) claims that as active agents, teachers do not approach new discourses and policies as *tabulae rasae* but draw on their pre-existing identities to understand, learn from, evaluate, and adapt them to their school context. The findings also highlighted that learning from past experiences influences agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Teachers' actions and decisions were informed by their previous experiences, underscoring the criticality of reflexivity and life stories and explaining the variations in agency over time.

5.2. Research Question 2: How do participant teachers perceive their professional roles and agency?

The second research question aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of their professional roles and agency, focusing on the context where they experienced these aspects. The teachers work in a preparatory school at a research university that is part of the Research Universities Support Program (CoHE, 2022). This program aims to enhance international competitiveness and improve rankings, and the allocation of

resources to the university is contingent upon its performance. Given its status and this context, certain discourses, particularly those surrounding accreditation and quality processes, have gained prominence as new priorities. This section will first outline the teachers' perceived professional roles, and then discuss the factors influencing their role beliefs in their school, and finally address their perceptions of agency.

The analysis of their stories revealed a discrepancy between the roles assigned to teachers and how teachers perceived or claimed their own roles. Teachers felt that they were positioned as lazy, reluctant to work, and resistant to change. In contrast, they viewed themselves as lifelong learners, academics, researchers, change-makers, role models, mentors, facilitators, and mediators of culture, with a strong emphasis on professional ethics, integrity, moral responsibility, and critical pedagogy in their practice. According to Mabel, administrations' portrayal of teachers seemed to facilitate scapegoating teachers for the failures of new practices.

Collectively, teachers identified themselves as lifelong learners driven by passion, excitement, curiosity, and enthusiasm for active learning. Tuna and Derin perceived themselves as academics and researchers. In fact, Tuna replaced "teacher" with "academic" in each interview, which highlighted his unwavering and persistent stance regarding his perceived role. Teachers also highlighted that their roles extend well beyond teaching and the class. Derin, Zeynep, Tuna, and Mabel, for example, perceived themselves as change-makers. Derin viewed teachers as "architects" of society (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017) and focused on the transformative power of teaching. Eylül described teaching as an essential part of her identity, more a lifestyle than merely a profession, highlighting her commitment, sense of belonging, and her role beyond the class and professional responsibilities. Zeynep and Mabel viewed teaching as making a difference in students' lives.

Through their narratives, teachers, including Zeynep, Eylül, Pera, İpek, and Tuna stressed the importance of professional ethics. Zeynep, Tuna, and Eylül also added integrity. Tuna, for example, mentioned how the university administration demanded figures and reduced everything to numbers. He argued that doing everything just for

the sake of quantity did not align with his beliefs and accepting this would mean renouncing his professionalism and require him to leave the university. In other words, he did not agree to compromise his professionalism and principles. As Palmer (2007) argues, “Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). Similarly, Forest (2007) claims that teaching requires integrity and honesty above everything else. Recalling a critical incident, Mabel also highlighted the importance of responsibility and integrity as a principle she adopted in her teaching career. Similarly, Derin emphasized her sense of responsibility and desire to contribute to society and her role in cultivating a generation seeking to learn and make democracy, justice, and equality a central part of their lives. “Professional ethics always come first,” Zeynep said, implying their effect on her actions and decisions in her professional role. Derin, İpek, and Zeynep mentioned the importance of conscience and moral responsibility to guide their journeys. They also highlighted moral responsibility in their re-interpretations of teacher accountability. İpek, for example, reported valuing moral responsibility and professional ethics more than traditional understanding of teacher accountability. In their study, Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2021) found that 41 EFL teachers working at public school considered personality traits and virtues to be more essential than subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and professional development as prerequisites for becoming a teacher, as revealed through semi-structure interviews. These findings aligned with Sockett’s (1993) emphasis on the role of the teacher while acknowledging the challenges:

With different individual perceptions of morality, with the deep-rooted conflict between results and standards as the core of judgment, with a pluralist society that may be losing its moral vocabulary, the task nonetheless remains the promotion of a comprehensive vision of the profession of teaching, where the individual professional teacher *is* [author's emphasis] a reflective moral agent. (as cited in Campbell, 1996, p. 76)

The teacher is considered a reflective moral agent capable of navigating the challenges. Similarly, in their accounts, teachers such as Derin, Eylül, Pera, Mila, Tuna, and Mabel highlighted critical thinking as an important aspect of their roles. While Derin and Pera emphasized the significance of critical pedagogy, Mila pointed to fostering critical thinking skills in students as one of her responsibilities.

Teachers, like Eylül, Derin, Pera, and Mila, also drew attention to the importance of serving as role models for students. Derin specifically focused on being a role model with her clothing, posture, questions she asks, and words she uses and producing knowledge. Pera emphasized her desire to be a role model both as a human being and a teacher, which pointed to her role beyond teaching. The analysis of their stories also revealed that teachers like Derin, Zeynep, İpek, and Eylül perceived themselves as mentors offering guidance and support to students regarding their personal and academic goals and problems. Derin, İpek, Pera, and Mila viewed themselves as facilitators. Derin, for example, reported creating a positive learning environment in which students are actively involved in activities. Similarly, İpek highlighted the importance of creating meaningful learning opportunities through engaging activities and mentoring students in their language learning journeys.

The role of a teacher as a mediator of culture or promoter of cultural awareness was also apparent in the accounts of teachers, such as Derin, Eylül Zeynep, Tuna, İpek, and Pera. Zeynep noted that being a language teacher requires “empathizing with other cultures,” which fosters tolerance, empathy, and flexibility. They can be regarded as components of intercultural competence, “i.e. the ability to put yourself into others’ shoes, see the world the way they see it, and give it the meaning they give it based on shared human experience” (Kramsch & Hua, 2016, p. 42). Similarly, Pera emphasized the importance of arousing curiosity about different cultures and creating an environment where students can explore why they are learning a language, highlighting the link between language and culture. Their approach aligned with Nault’s (2006) recommendation to incorporate world cultures into curricula and instructional materials to promote intercultural understanding between teachers and students, as well as to foster genuine cultural and linguistic awareness. They acknowledged their stance as teachers, standing between the familiar and unfamiliar, helping their students adapt to a new environment, both in terms of language and culture. Overall, teachers described their roles not just as teachers of English but as changemakers, role models, mentors and facilitators who pursue lifelong learning, engage in research, uphold professional ethics, emphasize critical thinking and cultural awareness in classes, and foster intercultural competence.

Their perceived roles resonated with those of transformative intellectuals (Giroux 1988), public intellectuals (Giroux, 2015), and adaptive experts (Hammerness et al., 2005). Giroux (1988) claims that:

The role that teachers and administrators might play as transformative intellectuals who develop counterhegemonic pedagogies that not only empower students by giving them the knowledge and social skills they will need to be able to function in the larger society as critical agents, but also educate them for transformative action (as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, p. 14).

Notably, their perceived roles largely aligned with their definitions of being professional, which were marked by personal accountability, integrity, expertise in the subject area, a commitment to expanding your knowledge, making a positive impact on students, self-discipline and self-criticism, conducting research, collaborating with others, and staying abreast of new developments in the field. Their understanding of being professional also aligned with four of Sockett's (1993) aspects of teacher professionalism: Character, commitment to change and continuous improvement, subject knowledge and obligations and working relationships beyond the classroom. As for pedagogical knowledge, it was mentioned in their definitions of being successful. This might be the reason why it was not included in their definitions of being professional.

Given that an administration operates within its own figured world with its own discourses and values, it can be interpreted that the positions and expectations imposed on teachers mirror the priorities of that figured world. The following section will address teachers' experiences in their school, Snowdrop, focusing on how they navigated different priorities and expectations. The common thread among their stories is that university and school culture have significantly changed, and new priorities have gained momentum upon the university's designation as a research university. Among the priorities are quality assurance, accreditation, university-industry partnerships, market orientation, student-centered approaches, and teacher accountability, which all have implications for teachers and teaching. While navigating these priorities, teachers strove to cope with deskilling, othering, and other constraints that influenced their perceived agency.

New Priorities: Teachers' stories indicated how the proliferation of universities has shifted the priorities and policies of universities. Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) noted that the massification of HE led to an increased focus on quality assurance. As universities proliferated and student enrollments increased, universities were expected to "adopt, customize, and apply a system to prove their quality of education" (Şivil, 2019, p. 76). To address this, countries all over the world developed mechanisms to ensure the quality of their universities and degree programs (Grossman et al., 2010), and universities' endeavors to uphold academic standards led to the emergence of quality assurance (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004).

In teachers' accounts, quality was highlighted as a shared discourse prevalent at the university and school and reported to shape the ongoing policies and practices significantly. According to Derin, the word "quality" was hollowed out and turned into a method of control through accreditation, "packaged with buzzwords such as democracy, quality." There was too much control over teachers' work and documentation. She problematized these mechanisms during the meetings a lot. She asserted they were created by capitalism, making you feel inadequate first and then offering you a way out provided that you pay the money. Tuna also stressed the control mechanisms over teachers in HE as well as in MoNE through different policies and mechanisms. Quantity orientation emerged as a byproduct of quality assurance and accreditation, as Derin, Mabel, Tuna, and İpek stated. Teachers noted that the university demanded figures or reduced everything to numbers (Ball, 2015). This trend illustrates neoliberalism's requirement for proof that you are doing things in the "correct" way, thereby fostering the regulation mechanisms (Apple, 2007, p.7). For example, Mabel observed that "quantity is in the foreground, and quality is in the background." İpek mentioned the rise in social responsibility projects and claimed that they were profit-oriented and aligned with a "more capitalist approach" rather than to society's benefit. Derin stated that these projects were shared on social media for dissemination regularly. Similarly, Tuna also remarked that accreditation certificates were advertised on different platforms, and he explained the purpose by describing the mutual interest relationship between accreditation bodies and schools. In this system, the students were referred to as "customers," and the university was

considered business. Language and discourse emerged as key elements of the neoliberalism (Holborow, 2012), and terms often associated with the market “colonized” the institutional discourses (Gray et al., 2018, pp. 473-474). Tuna stated that the accreditation process was primarily motivated by commercial interests rather than academic considerations. Resistance to accreditation was also evident in teachers’ stories. Teachers like Derin, İpek, Tuna, and Pera reported that it was imposed from above and teachers were not involved in the decision-making process. Pera argued that she was also excluded during the process. She acknowledged that teacher resistance was, in fact, a determined form of self-expression.

Market orientation at the university was another priority in teachers’ stories. As highlighted by Tuna and Pera, due to limited resources, their university was also gravitating towards university-industry partnerships, technical fields, and visible profits, aiming to train qualified staff for the market, which had implications for humanities and social sciences. Tuna stated that they “have been under attack” as they did not directly generate profit. Similarly, İpek mentioned STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) attracting significant investments and social sciences being undervalued. This finding aligned with Besley (2019), who indicates that in this neoliberal environment, in higher education, “unpopular courses or those deemed not “useful” or practical, or profitable or having direct economic benefit or “value” for getting a job or profitable for the university are being deleted, such that the humanities and social sciences are currently under serious threat especially in the West” (p.190).

Teachers like Derin, Tuna, Eylül, Pera, and Mabel expressed concerns about their school’s market orientation and profit-driven practices. In other words, the educational practices and priorities were also aligned with market demands. Overall, the market around ELT coursebooks, the interest-based relationship between publishing companies and the school, the commodification of education, and privatization were all evident in teachers’ stories. As suggested by Giroux (2003), these teachers critically questioned these common senses or prevailing norms. Tuna, Eylül, and Pera observed that coursebooks were no longer selected based on their quality or educational value. Instead, the primary consideration had become cost-

effectiveness, according to Eylül. Mabel stated that the privatization and the expensive coffee shops on campus influenced the socialization among the staff negatively. Derin added that reduced spaces on the campus also hindered students' interaction and socialization, which, in turn, impacted the language instruction in the classroom.

In line with the literature, education has been particularly important in neoliberalism (Gray et al., 2018; Olssen & Peters, 2005) because economic productivity is driven by the transformation of education into a commodity that can be sold and purchased (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Consequently, universities are viewed as mostly commercial organizations (Süngü & Bayrakçı 2010) or “business-oriented enterprises” rather than institutions serving public good (Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014, p. 5). In neoliberal spaces, amidst the commodification of education and profit orientation, teachers' narratives also pointed to the connection between English, globalization, and the industry or market around teaching and learning English (Jordão, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003b; 2016; Prior, 2018; Siqueira, 2017; Starfield, 2013).

The discourses of research university, quality assurance, and accreditation also stimulated another priority: Being student-centered. While acknowledging the significance of giving students a voice and involving them in decision-making processes, teachers like Derin, Mabel, and Eylül indicated that the discourse was misinterpreted in the school. The policy prioritized students' rights but at the same time trivialized and sidelined the teachers' initiative and agency. This led to the emergence of flawed pedagogical approaches and prevented the implementation of effective student-centered strategies. According to Eylül, being overly focused on student rights caused the school to compromise its disciplinary policies, turning that discourse into “The student is always right,” as stated by Mabel.

The analysis of the findings revealed that deskilling emerged as a recurring theme in teachers' stories as a discourse teachers had to navigate. The excessive control over their work, with prescribed curricula and materials, positioned teachers as robots. This finding confirmed Apple (2017), who asserted that too much control over their

work leads to first deskilling and then reskilling, and with everything pre-planned and prepared regarding curriculum teaching, and evaluation, the “teacher becomes something of a manager” (p. 256). He also asserts that technical control and deskilling coexist. As Besley (2019) noted, as a result of neoliberal systems, the space where teachers exercise agency is destroyed, so they are “a direct attack on professionalism” and a step towards standardized control (p. 191). Therefore, some fear that standards risk turning schools into “teacher-proof” spaces, where teachers are seen as “compliant technicians” rather than autonomous, decision-making professionals (Falk, 2000, as cited in Katz & Snow, 2009, p.74). Additionally, teachers found top-down requests and trivialization of their expertise constraining, leaving little room for agency. On one hand, they were expected to succeed in their academic endeavors and enhance the university’s reputation and rankings. On the other hand, they weren’t considered academic staff. As Zeynep remarked, they were positioned as inferior to the professors in the faculties, leading them to feel that neither they nor their work was taken seriously. From a broader perspective, Pera and Derin pointed to the decline in teaching status, noting that it was not limited to their university but a national issue. Individually, teachers like Derin, Mila, Tuna, İpek, Zeynep, and Pera offered unique insights and highlighted their perceptions regarding their status. They were required to assume multiple roles, such as the roles of a robot, a hostess, a secretary, a transmitter of grammar, and a translator of documents, and experienced fragmentation of work. This finding was consistent with Lutovac et al.’s (2024) findings that teachers were required to take on various roles and manage duties, some of which fell outside their areas of expertise.

Collectively, teachers’ narratives revealed that while the space for teachers to exercise agency and professional judgment was constrained, the expectation of teacher accountability persisted and remained high. This finding aligned with Reeves (2018), who claimed that “Teachers’ professional judgment, principled beliefs, and philosophies of teaching become secondary or even irrelevant to the primacy of performance and compliance with the accountability regime” (p. 99). Like the teachers in Mooney Simmie et al. (2016), some teachers also mentioned the low ethical trust in Snowdrop, such as teachers’ being observed and monitored by people who posed as students as part of the teacher accountability process. Besley (2019)

also highlights the significant shift in the notion of responsibility, reflecting the move from liberalism, which is based on individual and professional autonomy and moral agency, to neoliberalism, which is based on market accountability, and explains how this change impacted teachers and their agency:

Increasingly this shift has resulted in the collapse of moral and legal responsibility and the promotion of a form of accountability oriented regulation that so often results in de-professionalising teachers who become form-filling, compliant docile bodies regularly proving that are acting in compliance with accountability requirements, seldom questioning the use and purpose of such data that is gathered. (p. 186).

However, this shift did not prevent teachers in the study from questioning the notion of accountability. A recurring theme in their reinterpretation of teacher accountability was the emphasis on moral responsibility, professional ethics, and conscience. Besley (2019) notes that being responsible involves having agency and being accountable for one's deeds. Teachers also stressed the importance of justifying their decisions in their classes. However, their stories revealed a shared perspective that this justification shouldn't be subjected to authority or control mechanisms since they could create tension, fear, and resistance. Additionally, teachers found it unfair to hold them accountable for outcomes without adequate consideration of the available resources and support.

Given the priorities imposed and the misalignment between teachers' beliefs and mandated practices, teachers problematized the established practices. They raised the issues on different platforms, including the staff meetings or school WhatsApp groups. However, as their stories unfolded, those who did not adopt these practices and conform to norms encountered exclusion and marginalization. Furthermore, gaining academic prominence resulted in tension since these teachers were perceived as rivals, as Derin mentioned. Tuna noted that the school developed the discourse of "Everybody is equal" to eliminate the rivals and obstruct their advancement.

While navigating these discourses and priorities and trying to align their practices with external expectations in Snowdrop, they struggled to reconcile some of them with their teaching philosophies. As their stories revealed, they felt a strong sense of

agency in teaching, utilizing their spaces of authoring through the interplay of their personal histories and teaching philosophies. Drawing on their expertise, teachers reported problematizing the practices and discourses, using the margins, and making improvisations in their pedagogical decisions, sometimes through clandestine or secret ways. The challenges or constraints did not significantly hinder teachers from making improvisations and exercising agency in their classes. As they gained experience, they could align practices with their beliefs and utilize more space to act within. The findings aligned with existing literature in that teachers can resist the neoliberal practices and surveillance of their profession and reclaim their agency through pedagogical *fabrications* (Ball, 2003) or techniques aimed at reclaiming their practice from the oppressive influence of neoliberal monitoring (Webb et al., 2009). At the same time, the findings did not completely support Sachs (2016). While regulation made the teachers “risk averse,” it wouldn’t be accurate to say that they fully adopted a “teach to the test” philosophy or that it resulted in teachers becoming “timid in their judgments” in the long run (Sachs, 2016, p. 417). Their improvisations, clandestine pedagogical decisions in their classes, resistance to the teach-to-test approach in grammar courses, and unwavering efforts to go above and beyond the curriculum illustrated that they did not compromise their principles. Instead, they strove to “reclaim teachers’ practice from the coercive effects of neoliberal surveillance” (Webb et al., 2009, p. 10) and “speak back against” limiting definitions of “good” or successful teacher (Reeves, 2018, p.105). The secret elements of their teaching practice illustrate how the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968) operates.

One of the things that stood out most was that their unwavering commitment was not valid for their agentic orientations in organizational processes. After describing their contributions to the organizational processes through working in units and raising the issues in meetings to improve education, teachers admitted that they opted to withdraw due to being overlooked, rendered invisible, silenced, and marginalized, which, in turn, impacted their sense of belonging to school and agentic orientations. However, it is significant to note that their withdrawal was principled. In other words, their resistance to working in units and contributing to the organizational processes was not a passive response. It was a message to the school and university

administration that things needed to be changed and that they wouldn't compromise on practices that did not align with their beliefs. Upon their principled withdrawal, they opted to channel their time and energy into their professional development. Despite the lack of support and incentives, teachers chose to invest in their professional learning to stay updated and ensure life-long learning in line with their beliefs. They were guided by their own needs and interests and reported a high sense of agency. As they felt "suffocated" inside the school, they created liberating spaces or new figured worlds where they felt valued, authored their roles, and thrived through their professional development endeavors and social responsibility initiatives. The findings corroborated Buchanan (2015), who indicated that the shifting contexts shaped how teachers situated themselves. When they experienced a mismatch between their identity and the demands of the school, the teachers chose to push back. However, Buchanan (2015) notes that their push-back was unconscious or automatic rather than strategic as they weren't critically reflecting on how they were shaped by the larger political forces, along with the local ones on their identity. The teachers in this study critically reflected on the discourses and practices in their school, relating them to the discourses in a broader context. This is why their resistance was called *principled withdrawal*.

Similar to Natalie in Loh and Hu's (2014) study, the teachers strove to resist the neoliberal culture by raising their concerns. Natalie chose to adopt neoliberal practices upon seeing that resistance was futile. The teachers in this study decided not to voice their concerns and suggestions upon seeing that they were rendered invisible. Yet, they continued to improvise, align their practices with their beliefs, and problematize neoliberal discourses, all while not actively participating in organizational processes. The findings underline the critical role of reflexivity (Archer, 2017), through which teachers actively engaged with, analyzed, problematized, and challenged the discourses, practices, and beliefs, allowing them to take purposeful actions and make informed decisions.

In short, while exercising agency to navigate the challenging discourses and meet diverse demands was not straightforward (Feryok, 2012), teachers felt empowered to adapt and improvise while making pedagogical decisions. The analysis of the

findings and their own words highlighted that they also expressed a high sense of agency in professional learning and social participation, which helped them continue to thrive despite the school's suffocating discourses, practices, and constraints. In terms of their agency in organizational processes, however, they preferred to engage in *principled withdrawal*. This shouldn't be interpreted as a lack of agency in organizational processes. Rather, their resistance was rooted in a commitment to their beliefs and expertise, not arbitrary. After years of service and contributions to various units and processes, they resisted being silenced, trivialized, ignored, disregarded, rendered invisible, marginalized, sidelined, and othered as they problematized established practices, raised issues, spoke up against the injustices, and gained academic prominence. This finding aligned with Kelchtermans (2018), who perceived resistance as a natural response of people who are committed to their profession. Teachers observed the situations and decided what actions to take and how to respond, and "deliberating, judging, and choosing how to act" marked their agency, as stated in Kelchtermans (2018) (p. 232). Highlighting the potential for resistance, Reeves (2018) asserts that in an era where policies and discourses de-professionalize the teaching profession, teachers' identity work can serve as a space for exercising professional and ethical agency.

Theoretically, teachers exercised agency in terms of crafting a response to the world, but power issues and structure at school constrained their responses and silenced them. In other words, the school attempted to overrule their sense of agency. On the surface, they agreed to follow the changes to avoid conflicts but maintained their own interpretations of them. In other words, accepting these changes did not prevent these teachers from critically questioning the reasons behind the school's and the university's top-down policies, highlighting the dynamic and complex nature of agency. The findings corroborated Tran (2019), demonstrating that teacher agency was more nuanced than simply resisting or adjusting to the changes. Similar to the findings of Tao and Gao (2017), teachers' stories revealed strong agency in teaching engagement and learning investment, while their agency in research practices varied, which was also valid for the teachers in this study. They also found agency in these three dimensions was mediated by identity commitments.

5.3. Research Question 3: What political, social, and institutional factors influence their perceived agency?

The third research question aimed to explore the political, social, and institutional factors influencing their perceived agency. Within the confines of teachers' narratives, after outlining the discourses and practices within a larger framework or broader political and sociocultural contexts, situated practices and constraints of their school will be discussed. Before answering the question, it is important to note that drawing clear and strict boundaries between political, social, and institutional factors is challenging since they are intertwined and influence one another in complex ways, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Political Factors: Teachers' narratives illustrated that a complex political environment shapes higher education in general and ELT in particular. The decisions concerning curriculum, teacher training, professional development, and teaching materials are all influenced by political ideologies. As teachers' accounts unraveled, it became evident that, in addition to the neoliberal discourses such as quality assurance, accreditation, and market orientation- which align with the neoliberal ideals outlined in key documents, including alignment with market demands, human capital development, an entrepreneurial mindset, market-driven education, and global competitiveness- political factors and policies significantly impacted education, universities, and classes.

As teachers' accounts unraveled, it became evident that political factors and policies significantly impacted education, university, and classes in addition to the neoliberal discourses such as quality assurance, accreditation, and market orientation.

For example, Pera expounded that language education is also viewed as an ideological apparatus in the world. Mabel, for example, claimed that "from the decision-making mechanisms to the priorities," the university is governed in the same manner as the country. Interference in their internal processes, a loss of autonomy, and vulnerability to outside intervention were also highlighted as systemic issues at universities. Derin elaborated on the impact of policies on

language teaching, such as the selection of textbooks and curricula, classroom organization, and the choice of discussion topics. Even small classes and the classroom layout that did not allow for moving the desks were policies that affected education, according to Derin.

Teachers also expressed views such as a strong sense of hierarchy and top-down decisions at universities, perceived lack of permission for polyphony or multiple voices, suppression of critical thinking, restrictions on freedom of speech, and a feeling of being under surveillance, which affected the teachers' decisions inside and outside the classes. Restrictive hierarchy was a common thread in teachers' stories, consistent with Mooney Simmie et al.'s (2016) findings. Teachers' stories also illustrated what Sporn (2007) highlighted: As institutions shift toward more entrepreneurial, market-oriented approaches, governance is likely to become increasingly centralized in the hands of top leadership. Since teachers found the political pressures potent in the school, they felt obliged to be cautious with their language, stance and discussion topics in their classes. Discussing economics, politics, culture, religion, and history was considered inappropriate, and teachers were uneasy about expressing their opinions. Even during the interview, Mila felt uncomfortable as she problematized the practices in the school and felt relieved at being anonymous. Teachers were also concerned about being under surveillance, especially during online education, considering the records of their lessons. Due to the fear prevalent among teachers, they reported thinking of what to say 40 times or feeling uncomfortable when a student made a sentence about the worsening state of the Turkish economy. According to Tuna, the university's weak ecosystem made it more susceptible to external interference, impacting its internal dynamics. While acknowledging teachers' challenges, citing Freire, Pera noted that teachers must be brave.

A recurring thread in teachers' stories was about the evolving landscape of HE and the shifts in the priorities, the role, and the quality of education in HE. Teachers expounded on the traditional role of universities, such as fostering critical thinking, free inquiry, and tolerance and contributing to the well-being of society. After highlighting the importance of academic freedom, academic integrity, and the

protection of fundamental rights in HE, Eylül expressed her doubts whether these principles were fully realized at universities. Tuna, Derin, İpek, Zeynep, and Mila also had reservations about whether HE currently serves its purpose.

At a time when policymakers use university rankings as the primary indicator of success and universities compete for students (Forest, 2007), the use of rankings as proof of a university's quality has gained momentum (Gray et al., 2018; Ordorika & Lloyd, 2014). Teachers' stories also revealed the expectations from teachers to succeed in their academic endeavors and enhance the university's rankings. The priorities in HE have changed to accommodate the shifting needs in the world, and its traditional role has been eclipsed by competition among universities and the chase of rankings. This change has led to a move from traditional professional culture towards an institutional emphasis on measured outputs, such as quality assurance and accreditation (Olssen & Peters, 2005). The increasing importance of raising university rankings also caused researchers to choose topics based on the funding priorities when asked to conduct research, undermining the autonomy of researchers and the university.

According to the teachers, as universities proliferated, so did the number of hollowed-out universities, which led to a decline in the quality of instruction and the value of a university degree. At a time when the university degree had lost much of its importance, new discourses emerged, and the discourse of micro-credentials was one of them. Tuna attributed them to neoliberal policies. Calling it a trap, Derin claimed that in the capitalist system, certain discourses are idealized and promoted as essential for quality and success, which causes people to feel inadequate. The literature suggests that neoliberal strategies hold people accountable for their actions, so the burden of responsibility shifts to the individual (Besley, 2019). Within this climate, when schools and students fail, the quality of teachers is questioned, and teachers are held responsible (Sachs, 2016). The given message is "become a better version of yourself" however successful you are, and working on self is highlighted (Türken et al., 2015, p. 34). As a result, neoliberal subjects constantly strive to invest in their personal and professional lives (Ball, 2015). Like Derin already mentioned, the sense of inadequacy drives people to invest in these programs. The discourse of

micro-credentials was problematized by teachers like İpek, Eylül, Tuna, Pera, and Derin. Micro-credentials, while providing specific skills and knowledge in a condensed format, were questioned as they lacked the depth of traditional courses because convenience and speed are prioritized over the rigor of those longer courses. In addition to the legitimacy of micro-credentials and the quality of the content, teachers had reservations about the emergence of a “certificate culture,” undermining the quality and the university degrees. It also led to an increase in certificate collectors, who declare themselves teacher trainers. The popularity of micro-credentials was also attributed to the capitalist system. Tuna for example, described how micro-credentials undermined the university and reshaped the gatekeeping in education and professional development. Comparing the university to an ecosystem, he claimed that capitalism takes over when this ecosystem collapses, leading to diminished quality and the commodification of education through the sales of certificates. Wheelahan and Moodie (2021) also emphasize that the main goal of micro-credentials is to prepare people for the labour market:

Micro-credentials build on graduate attributes, employability skills and 21st century skills, and take these to their logical conclusion, which is that learning is about work, that the purpose of learning is to prepare individuals for the labour market, and that this can be achieved in small bite-sized chunks (p. 215)

While in the field of teacher education, it is generally acknowledged that certification serves as an entry into the profession rather than a marker of full membership (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009), given that education is like a commodity, micro-credentials have developed into a new market and are considered important in the neoliberal learning economy as highlighted in teachers’ accounts (Ralston, 2021; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021).

Globalization was another important ELT-related discourse teachers problematized. The unifying idea among the narratives was the high status that English holds globally and its crucial role for those striving to realize their dreams, considering the benefits it offers its speakers (Jordão, 2009; Kırkgöz, 2019; Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2011; Prior, 2018; Shin, 2006; Siqueira, 2017; Starfield, 2013). Individually, each teacher provided unique insights into their understanding of

English and its impact on both personal and professional opportunities. Considering its status as the global language, the language of science, the international language, and the language of the internet, it has transitioned from being a foreign language to “a language everyone should know,” “the most important language in the world,” “the chicken that lays the golden egg,” “a must” for both students and academics to publish in reputable journals and make their voices heard, and “the key to accessing technology.” According to them, knowing English was more than just acquiring a language. Rather, it was like “having a second soul” or “having a human companion.” While highlighting the role of English, Mila and Pera critically reflected on globalization. Mila brought up the debates around “whose English” and “how much of it is valid,” discussing the implications for English language teachers and students, such as the criticality of context, understanding the target audience, exposing students to diversity, fostering literacy, research, and critical thinking skills. As for Pera, she interpreted globalization as “capitalism or imperialism,” arguing that it is imposed on people for ulterior motives, and under the aegis of globalization, being able to speak English is promoted and considered a prerequisite for being considered human. In other words, she highlighted how English is viewed as a commodity (Pennycook, 1998) and as a project promoted like globalization (Phillipson, 1992; Phillipson, 2008b).

As teachers’ accounts unraveled, EMI (English Medium Instruction) emerged as a significant impact of globalization on higher education, promoting a common language, often English. The literature suggests that the belief in English as the key indicator of competitiveness in the market drives universities to pursue EMI (Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). For universities in many non-English-speaking Middle Eastern countries, like Türkiye, internationalization means using EMI or producing knowledge through English (Phan & Barnawi, 2015 as cited in Kırkgöz, 2019). While teachers like Derin, Pera, and İpek acknowledged the use of EMI by universities to achieve internationalization (Dearden, 2018), they also shared their reservations. Collectively, they pointed to the advantages of EMI, such as having access to a wide range of international resources, staying updated with the latest research, communicating effectively with foreign companies, mastering field-specific language, developing language skills, fostering international agreements,

and bridging different cultures, but they also shared their concerns about the implementation of EMI in HE. These included insufficient infrastructure, students' lack of readiness, poor language proficiency of both students and teachers, poor quality of instruction, and lack of depth in field-related knowledge and discussions. The essential requirements for quality EMI were listed as proper language instruction in MoNE, student readiness, solid infrastructure in HE (in planning, testing, and evaluation), adequate language proficiency of students and teachers, collaboration among teachers from multiple disciplines, and timely interventions when necessary.

The common trend among the narratives was that teachers were not against the EMI. However, without appropriate policies and infrastructure, they stressed that it could be detrimental more than beneficial. Success couldn't be achieved solely through top-down approaches without support at the grass roots level. Due to the issues with the language policy in MoNE and the implementation of EMI in faculties, Pera asserted that she did not believe in the efficiency of education in schools of foreign languages and that they were no longer valued as much. Teaching materials were also reported to have limited opportunities to foster critical thinking. In short, teachers' actions and decisions inside and outside the classes were also influenced by politics and policies.

Social factors: Teachers' accounts indicated that social factors, including teaching status, social networks, interaction among staff, and school culture also influenced their perceived agency. One of the factors teachers had to navigate was the status assigned to teachers. The common thread across the narratives was the loss of reputation. Derin discussed the deeply ingrained mindset about the teaching profession: "If you don't perform well enough elsewhere, you become a teacher." The implication is that it is perceived as a profession people can do only if they do not succeed in other fields, which undermines the profession. Mabel also stated that teachers did not have the reputation they used to have. Given that recognition and appreciation empower people, a lack of respect and trust can influence teachers' perceptions and agentic orientations. For example, in Mooney Simmie et al.'s study (2016), the findings revealed how low ethical trust and public distrust could undermine teacher professionalism and hinder autonomy. This underscores how

discourses in socially and culturally constructed worlds can impact the teaching profession and agency.

Teachers make sense of their roles and agency through interactions, which help them form and negotiate their roles in schools. The analysis of the findings demonstrated that school culture and interactions also shaped their agency. The school culture was marked by complacency, a lack of supervision, poor motivation among the staff for collaboration, and reluctance to assume additional responsibility, all of which were attributed to the deeply ingrained school culture. Additionally, this culture was heavily influenced by teachers who were vocal about their complaints but focused more on pointing out problems rather than being part of the solution. In addition to the entrenched school culture, its being a state university and the prevalent discourse of “We are a family” resulted in excessive comfort and poor habits among the staff. A lack of professional ethics was another issue highlighted in teachers’ accounts. As teachers’ accounts unfolded, the school culture appeared to have influenced the way teachers interpreted their roles and agency. For example, Mila and Mabel asserted that the discourse of “We are a family” had a detrimental effect on their affiliation and undermined their sense of belonging. Mabel even contemplated retirement. In line with the findings of Nazari et al. (2023), teachers’ experiences with power were complex since they viewed institutional power as both positive and negative, highlighting how they disapproved of the grave lack of supervision and how it also impeded their agency.

Teachers’ relationships with students and colleagues also influenced how teachers exercised and perceived agency inside and outside the classes, as well as their affiliation with the school. In their classes, teachers did not present themselves as the sole authority. Rather, they appreciated students’ opinions, contributions, and suggestions. They cared deeply for and felt connected to their students, emphasizing the close relationship they had with them compared to faculty teachers, which is consistent with the findings of Borg (2006), who found that language teachers had closer and more relaxed relationships with their students compared to those in other subjects. Teachers demonstrated a genuine interest in the welfare and academic performance of their students, using initiative and adjusting their instruction to suit

students' needs and interests. The common thread among the narratives was that while collaboration and close relationships with colleagues served as a form of "psychology therapy," the recent shift in the school culture towards individualism has been marked by teacher isolation, a dearth of interaction and socialization opportunities, the emergence of cliques, and a lack of solidarity and collective agency. In the past, the school culture was characterized by collaboration, collegial support, and mutual encouragement, which functioned as "peer coaching" (Ackland, 1991) and fostered collaborative teacher development (CTD), which is rooted in the belief that effective teaching requires teamwork and cooperation, and that teacher learning is inherently a social process (Johnston, 2009). The findings aligned with the observations of Apple (2017) and Giroux (FreireProject, 2007), who noted the increasing isolation among teachers and the lack of collaboration and teacher interaction as everything is pre-determined, which diminishes the need for interaction. Lortie (1975) claims that teaching is still perceived by many as an "egg-crate" profession (as cited in Burns, 2022), where teachers perform their work in isolation, and interaction is minimal. This is especially prevalent in the current era of accountability and managerialism (Burns, 2022). As teachers in Snowdrop reported, the shift to online education during the pandemic further exacerbated their sense of isolation, which supported the findings of Lutovac et al. (2024).

Highlighting the role of tea in Turkish culture, Eylül, for example, lamented that even a simple cup of tea could bring teachers together, but the school never offered it. Tuna viewed the shifts in the school culture as a reflection of the political environments in broader contexts and neoliberal trends affecting their school. He illustrated the tendency among the staff for self-interest and competition by citing the famous words of Plautus, "homo homini lupus," meaning "a man is a wolf to another man." He noted that this had a detrimental effect on community building. Pera attributed the shifts to the "social collapse" caused by the financial crisis following the pandemic, which led to a lack of stability. Emphasizing the importance of physical space, like a teachers' room, for fostering teachers' sense of institutional belonging, Derin described the current culture as "the Dubaization Effect," characterized by dividing people, cutting off their communication, and turning them into robots. In contrast to the shared rituals and gatherings in the past, which fostered

collaboration and exchanges of expertise and experience among teachers, a heightened focus on individual success and isolation dominated the current school culture. All these influenced how teachers used initiative, particularly in organizational processes, and exercised agency inside and outside their classes.

Institutional factors: As teachers' narratives unfolded, it became evident that situated practices in the school impacted the way teachers exercised agency. The common thread among the teachers' stories was teachers' reservations about the systemic issues, including their concerns related to the language teaching policies, the effectiveness of the mandated curriculum and student assessment, and the lack of resources and support provided. The demand for continuous availability, especially during online education, was also problematized by teachers, which was consistent with the findings of Lutovac et al. (2024). Their accounts also revealed that reductionist policies regarding language teaching and student assessment in their school, particularly during and after the pandemic, and using inefficient teaching materials assigned did not align with the teachers' teaching philosophies. This misalignment influenced their pedagogical decisions, as they sought to reconcile the prescribed curriculum and materials with their beliefs as much as possible.

The analysis of the findings showed that school norms also served as the invisible cultural thread that steered teachers' behaviors inside and outside the classes. These explicitly stated or unwritten codes were deep-rooted expectations about what was considered acceptable. These involved ensuring transparency, adhering strictly to rules, avoiding potential issues, starting and finishing the classes on time, maximizing English in class, refraining from voicing the issues, and being ready for last-minute changes. Those who raised the issues during meetings were marginalized and had a poor reputation. Teachers' stories revealed a misalignment between the priorities of teachers and those of the school, and they thought some rules could be adjusted to accommodate the conditions. They also experienced critical incidents in which they confronted the administration for not complying with the norms or problematizing the issues, which, in turn, affected their sense of belonging to the school.

Perceptions of top-down decision-making were also visible in participants' spaces of authoring. In line with the political factors, lack of autonomy on the part of the university and school administration influenced the way teachers exercised agency inside and outside the classes. Teachers believed that the school experienced frequent turnovers of the administration, accompanied by fundamental changes, especially in the curriculum and teaching materials. In other words, the challenges teachers navigated related to the language teaching policies and materials were due to the frequent changes in the administration and the lack of a consistent policy. Moreover, the stance of the administration in office affected the way teachers exercised agency, either fostering or hindering it. Their stories also indicated that there was also too much interference in their practices and decisions, which hindered the school administration from making their own decisions. In short, affected by the political environments, the university affected the school, and the school, in turn, affected the teachers' space of authoring or agency, illustrating the hierarchical nature of their relationships, which corresponded to Apple's (2017) bureaucratic control.

The recurring theme from their stories was that they felt that they were not truly engaged in the decision-making processes due to the hierarchical issues which hindered their agency. Tuna stated that teachers attend the classes and know what works and what does not, so they should be part of the decision-making process. However, the system excluded teachers and rendered them invisible. Derin described the "fake" attempts to include teachers in the processes as "designed democracy," "constructed democracy," and "fictionalized democratic environment." This finding aligned with Mooney et al. (2016), who found that participants described the school interactions as democratic in theory but "a rather tokenistic and contrived democratic process" (p. 65). Teachers in the current study felt they were not genuinely involved in these processes, and the aim was to regulate teachers. They reiterated a need for a bottom-up approach. Referring to his ecology analogy, Tuna maintained that top-down decisions without the backing of teachers were likely to fail.

In addition to the shift in school culture towards individualism, marked by a lack of solidarity, collaboration, and mutual support among the staff, the factors that most discouraged teachers' agency in organizational processes were the perceived lack of

incentives, appreciation, and support, along with the trivialization of their qualifications. The analysis of their stories revealed that after years of investing and contributing to the organizational processes without receiving any financial or moral support, appreciation, or incentives, instead facing constant criticism, they withdrew into their own shells and refrained from unit-related duties. Facility-related difficulties also affected teachers' pedagogical decisions. Disparities in physical conditions and access to resources in classrooms affected ELT negatively. Teachers focused on the dearth of resources and facilities, especially during ERT, and the sudden shift to online education unveiled the inequality of opportunity or the unequal allocation of educational resources among students. Tuna described this period as a "social crisis." Zeynep found it so challenging that she considered taking an unpaid leave, and İpek described that period as the worst in her career. In brief, online education intensified the challenges teachers encountered in their daily practice (Ashton, 2022; Bao, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020). As literature on teaching during the pandemic also indicates, equity and social justice concerns influenced teaching and learning (Fu & Clarke, 2021; STAR Scholars Network, 2020). These concerns highlighted the "opportunity for a change in direction in public policy in education" and stressed the importance of "affordances for a more expansive societal view" (Mooney Simmie, 2021, p.22).

Participants' narratives also highlighted perceptions related to trivialization of teachers' qualifications and attempts to render them invisible, which constrained their agency, particularly in organizational processes. The frequent turnover of the administrative staff led to changing expectations from teachers and shifts in everything from the curriculum to materials. Teachers reported that in the past, supportive administrations with more inclusive, bottom-up decisions empowered them to use initiative and enact agency to enhance the school. However, that was no longer the case with the current administration, which lacked collaboration, continuously expressed dissatisfaction with the staff, trivialized their roles, and questioned their effectiveness. Zeynep and Mabel, for example, highlighted the tendency to question and hold teachers responsible for the failures of new practices (Sachs, 2016). In brief, while navigating the changes and challenges, they experienced pressure from school administrations, which restricted their agency,

consistent with the findings of Mutlu (2017). Tuna said that the trivialization of their expertise was also being promoted through the following discourse, “Everyone is equal.” The implication was that all instructors were considered the same regardless of their academic titles and it served as a “glass ceiling” or an invisible barrier that obstructed the advancement of MA and PhD holders. Their narratives also indicated that those pursuing their Mas and PhDs were not recognized and valued as much as they deserved. Decisions were made disregarding and undermining their expertise.

In sum, as they navigated the demands of the profession and institutional constraints, they were involved in a continuous and rigorous process of decision-making and acting (Prior, 2018). Situated practices, policies, norms, top-down decisions, hierarchical issues, and the constraints teachers navigated in their school- a lack of incentives, resources, and facilities, as well as the trivialization of their qualifications- impacted their perceived agency, limiting their ability to utilize their spaces of authoring as they wished. It is significant to note that the institutional factors most restricted their agency in organizational processes, which resulted in their *principled withdrawal*.

The findings highlighted the importance of teachers’ efforts and capacity, along with the contextual factors or conditions that either encouraged or hindered their agency (Day, 2018; Priestley et al., 2015a). They achieved agency through the interplay of these factors (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestly et al., 2015a). The findings aligned with Mooney Simmie et al. (2016), who found that while trying to align their teaching practices with a prescribed curriculum and materials, teachers were constrained from fully utilizing their space to implement desired changes as autonomous agents of change since their practice was evaluated solely through measurable criteria. Still, teachers found niches in the system where they could create alternative spaces to author their roles and reclaim their agency.

This process can be compared to *snowdrops* pushing through the snow and blooming amidst the chill and harshness of winter. *Snowdrops* symbolize resilience, perseverance, and optimism. This metaphor reflects why I chose a pseudonym for the

school that embodies these qualities. In other words, the pseudonym was a deliberate choice.

In the light of the findings of this study and the related literature, the following multidimensional and multilayered framework is suggested to understand language teacher agency and the overall interaction among the themes in the study (See Figure 10). History-in-person includes teachers' experiences in family and school, as well as critical moments related to their job decisions and teacher learning experiences, all influenced by historical and cultural contexts that emphasize specific values and norms. Future images encompass teachers' aspirations influenced by their past and current experiences. Teachers' current experiences and perspectives are shaped by their past lives and future images, as well as the shifting educational landscapes and figured worlds they entered or they did not belong to. The interplay between teachers' histories, current experiences, and future aspirations, or the way they negotiated past, present and future by looking back on their past and envisioning the future, shaped teachers' interpretations of practices and interactions, their navigation of the challenging discourses and constraints, and their positioning within the figured world of Snowdrop, which in turn impacts the broader educational landscape.

Teachers' accounts revealed that the university's designation as a research university altered the practices, discourses, people, and interactions, imposing different challenges and constraints teachers had to navigate. The interaction between their histories and future images influenced their problematizations of the shifting discourses and agentic orientations accordingly. For example, they adjusted the syllabus rather than strictly adhering to it. They carved out spaces in class, especially when the prescribed materials and program did not align with their beliefs and teaching philosophies. Even if they experienced multiple challenges inside and outside the school, they reported that they would keep making improvisations in class and using their spaces of authoring. In other words, the constraints and challenging discourses did not significantly hinder teachers from utilizing their spaces of authoring in their classes. This is why there is more space utilized in the space of authoring in teaching. This did not apply to agency in organizational processes, though. They all elaborated on their contributions to the organizational

processes so far by working in units and raising issues in meetings to improve education at school. They admitted, however, that they had chosen to withdraw into their own shells for the following reasons: a) no compensation for their efforts and the lack of support and appreciation b) being overlooked, rendered invisible, silenced, and marginalized.

As can be seen in the figure, the space utilized to enact agency in organizational processes is shrinking, which accounts for why they sometimes felt “suffocated.” When teachers found themselves on the periphery and felt their contributions were overlooked, they preferred to make liberating worlds outside the school where they could keep “breathing” and author their roles through their professional development endeavors and social responsibility initiatives, which explains the expansion of the space of authoring in the figure. When they felt restricted and stifled, as their expertise and efforts were trivialized or undermined, they consciously chose to withdraw from the organizational processes without losing optimism and belief in the organization or school’s development. In other words, they engaged in *principled withdrawal*.

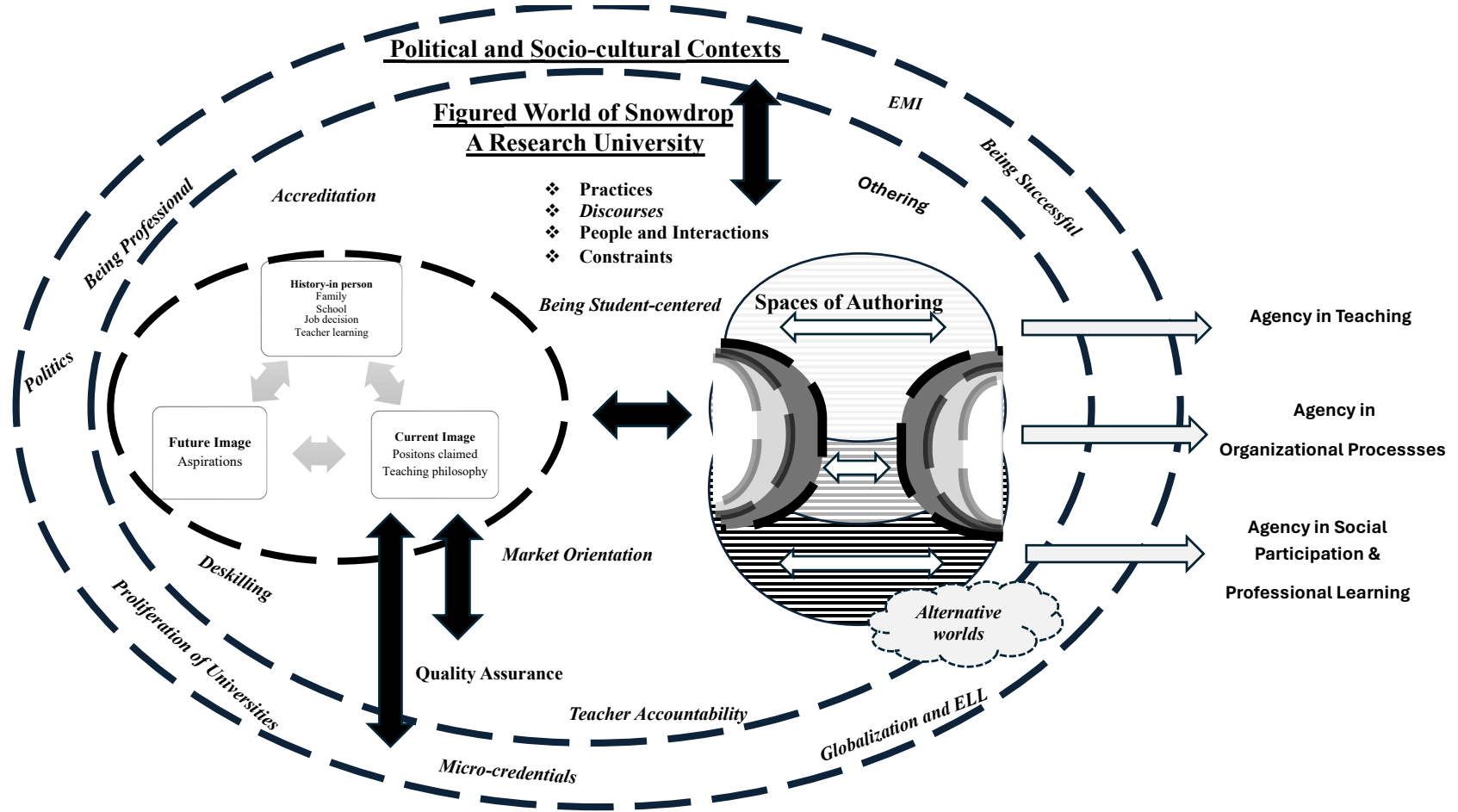


Figure 10. A multidimensional framework for teachers' evolving agency trajectories

5.4. Conclusion

This study explored how eight English language teachers in a higher education context exercised agency in teaching, professional learning, organizational processes, and social participation. It also explicated teachers' understandings of their professional roles and agency and investigated the political, social, and institutional factors influencing their perceived agency. In other words, this dissertation investigated English language teacher agency in micro (individual level), meso (institutional level), and macro (broader) contexts, together with the factors influencing their perceived agency at each of these levels. The teachers work at a research university where quality assurance and accreditation are priorities. Their stories revealed that its designation as a research university influenced the policies, practices, instruction, discourses, interactions, and school culture, shaping and reshaping teachers' agentic orientations.

The findings revealed that teachers exercised agency in teaching by tailoring their decisions over the curriculum. Using the guidelines, they reported going above and beyond the curriculum by rearranging the topics, altering the pacing, incorporating supplementary teaching points, and removing some to enhance student engagement, foster autonomy, and align it with their teaching philosophy. They adjusted teaching materials and strategies, both overtly and covertly, for two main reasons. First, the curriculum did not align with their teaching philosophies due to its reductionist nature. Second, teachers found the materials limited, outdated, oversimplified, inefficient, and overly market-oriented. The teachers critically scrutinized the curriculum and teaching materials and utilized the margins available to mitigate the dissonance between their beliefs, the realities of the classes, and the prescribed curriculum. This alignment contributed to their professional identity development and helped maintain coherence as they performed their job properly. In grammar classes, however, teachers felt unable to mitigate that dissonance and shield themselves from the effects of the prescribed curriculum and the washback effect. This led to their resistance to teaching grammar classes under those circumstances. Teachers defined being successful in various ways, including inspiring students, establishing a positive learning environment, creating meaningful learning

experiences, making a positive impact on students' lives, and engaging in continuous professional development. However, they also linked being successful to flexibility, which accounted for their reluctance to teach grammar classes, as these classes disrupted the coherence of their professional identity.

Aligned with their perceptions of their roles as life-long learners, they invested in their professional development to enhance their teaching practice and stay updated. Among their activities were collaborating with colleagues, participating in in-service training, pursuing self-directed learning, joining professional networks, reflecting on their practices, and pursuing post-graduate degrees. Teachers recounted the nurturing school culture in the past and expressed appreciation for the collegial support and guidance they once received. Despite the lack of support and resources, they used initiative in their professional development, thereby exercising agency.

Teachers' narratives also revealed that they exercised agency in social participation. Believing their role extends well beyond teaching, they actively engaged in voluntary activities, including participation in social and professional networks and contributions to their practices. For example, they initiated social responsibility projects to support disadvantaged groups and underprivileged students, especially during the pandemic. In other words, teachers acted at the micro, meso and macro levels, thereby impacting larger social and educational contexts. In addition to their motivation and desire to improve the school, broader educational contexts, and society, their pursuit of external agency emerged as a response to systemic issues that rendered them invisible and hindered their agency.

Their stories also demonstrated that they actively participated in various unit duties and decision-making processes, spoke up against injustices they observed in the school, and voiced their concerns during meetings, thereby exercising agency in organizational processes. Even though they worked voluntarily without receiving compensation or additional pay for extra classes in the past, which financially disadvantaged them, they used initiative and strove to enhance their school. However, after working voluntarily for years in these units and contributing to organizational processes, they chose to withdraw into their shells and expressed their

reluctance to take any roles beyond teaching. In other words, they showed *principled withdrawal*. There were two main driving forces behind their withdrawal: a) no compensation for their efforts and the lack of support and appreciation b) being overlooked, rendered invisible, silenced, and marginalized.

As their stories unfolded, it became evident that teachers' decisions and actions were shaped and guided by their previous figured worlds, including their family (as the first figured world with its people, norms, values, and discourses), prior schooling (with their apprenticeship of observations, role, and anti-role models), teacher education and alternative certification programs (with their affordances and constraints), future images, and teaching philosophies. However, the factors influencing their agency were not limited to those previously mentioned. The university's designation as the research university shifted the priorities towards quality assurance, accreditation, university-industry partnership, market orientation, and teacher accountability. Amidst these neoliberal discourses, teachers also had to navigate deskilling as there was too much control over their work.

As teachers' stories unfolded, it became evident that, in addition to these priorities, some institutional factors restricted, if not eliminated, their perceived agency. These factors included situated practices, school norms, top-down decisions, relationships with the administration, lack of teacher involvement in decision-making processes, insufficient resources, inadequate incentives and support, and the trivialization of teachers' qualifications.

Teachers' agency was also influenced by social factors, such as diminished reputation and status assigned to teachers, the school culture marked by complacency, poor motivation among the staff for collaboration and reluctance to assume additional responsibility, and the recent shift in the school culture to individualism marked by teacher isolation, a dearth of interaction and opportunities to socialize, cliques, and lack of solidarity and collective agency in contrast to the school culture in the past, which was marked by collaboration, collegial support, and mutual encouragement.

Teachers' perceived agency was also impacted by the political factors and discourses in broader contexts, such as higher education policies, top-down decisions, lack of

permission for polyphony, suppression of critical thinking, restricted freedom of speech, perceived surveillance, the proliferation of universities, the evolving landscape of HE and the shifts in the priorities, increasing importance of raising university rankings, globalization, and EMI.

In line with the university's priorities, teachers were expected to fully align with the competitive ethos that dominated the current milieu, leading to the emergence of roles imposed and expectations from teachers. The emphasis was on measurable success and tangible evidence for their contributions so that teachers could enhance the university's reputation and rankings. The tendency was to perceive teachers as inadequate, scrutinize for their *inability* to teach students English effectively and blame them for the failure of policies and practices, according to teachers. The diminished reputation and status assigned to teaching profession in society was another thread in teachers' stories.

While acknowledging the impact of the imposed roles and discourses on their interpretations of themselves and agentic orientations, the roles teachers defined and claimed for themselves were not fully aligned with them. Teachers portrayed themselves as lifelong learners, academics, researchers, change-makers, role models, mentors, facilitators, and mediators of culture, with an emphasis on critical thinking, critical pedagogy, professional ethics, integrity, and moral responsibility in their perceived roles. Notably, their perceived roles largely overlapped with their definitions of being professional, which were marked by personal accountability, integrity, competence in the area of expertise, a commitment to expanding your knowledge, making a positive impact on students, self-discipline, and self-criticism, conducting research, collaborating with others, and staying abreast of new developments in the field. Their perceived roles were largely consistent with their perceptions regarding being a professional.

While teachers expressed a high sense of agency in teaching, they were reluctant to contribute to the organizational processes due to the lack of support, compensation, and appreciation, and being overlooked, rendered invisible, silenced, and marginalized. After many years of service in units and contributions to the school,

their withdrawal served as a response and message to the school and university administration that they wouldn't compromise on practices that did not align with their beliefs. These teachers withdrew into their shells and chose to channel their energy to their professional learning and social participation.

Given its multifaceted, multilayered, and fluid nature, reducing teacher agency to merely tangible actions would be simplistic and reductionist, as there is no single way to demonstrate agency. In other words, thinking of agency as something teachers do does not imply that one can define agency solely based on teachers' actions (Costley, 2014; Toom et al., 2015). Agency also encompasses how they make choices and influence their positioning and how they are positioned by others (Costley, 2014), and it is about how they feel (Day, 2018; Kayi- Aydar, 2019).

Teachers had worked actively for years without support, compensation, or appreciation. However, when this situation was exacerbated by being overlooked, rendered invisible, silenced, and marginalized- especially as they problematized practices that did not align with their beliefs, values, and teaching philosophies, raised issues, spoke up against the injustices, and gained academic prominence. Consequently, they withdrew from contributing to the organizational processes. Their withdrawal was motivated by a commitment to their professional roles and a sensitivity to professional ethics and integrity. This is why their withdrawal was principled, not arbitrary.

In brief, amidst neoliberal discourses, as they critically reflected on and challenged the injustices in their school, emphasized the importance of ethics, moral responsibility, integrity, critical pedagogy, democracy, justice, and equality as essential aspects of their role (going above and beyond teaching), resisted the unequal distribution of opportunities, and problematized neoliberal discourses, such as the promotion of market-oriented materials, the commodification of education, and privatization, etc., their stories can be considered counter-narratives that deserve to be revealed (Apple, 2007; 2017; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021; Giroux, 2003; 2015; Karaman & Edling, 2021; Teacher Development Webinars, 2021; Kincheloe, 2004).

5.5. Implications

Given that the present study explored English language teacher agency in a HE context and the way political, social, and institutional factors influenced their perceived agency, the current study has implications for education policymakers, teacher education, schools and administrators, teachers, in-service professional development, and researchers. The study has implications for policymakers. Since the data collection process continued during the pandemic, the study and teachers' narratives helped us gain more insights into the criticality and need for especially equal access to resources. Mooney Simmie (2021), for example, asks the following question:

How will all policy actors in a post-Covid-19 world, including teachers, work together for education as a public good, for a new politics of principled resistance in the direction of social justice for a just global world and a sustainable future for the planet? (p. 20)

Especially if we have learned from our experiences, we should work towards creating a more expansive and inclusive society. Quality assurance aims to enhance the overall quality of an institution, but it cannot function effectively without the grass roots support. The word "assurance" in "quality assurance" might imply a top-down approach and external bodies that monitor and decide based on the standards and criteria. We could replace the word "assurance" with "culture." Teachers should be informed and actively involved in these processes to gain a better understanding of quality assurance and to become active participants or partners in the program rather than passive recipients. Otherwise, the program could be interpreted merely as chasing compliance.

Every context has its own organizational culture. If an external evaluation system is to be implemented, the criteria should be adapted to the specific characteristics of each school, such as the teacher and student profiles, resources and facilities, rather than employing a one-size-fits-all approach. Quality should not be compromised for quantity, and neither teacher nor school success should be defined solely by quantity-based metrics. In the light of teachers' experiences and the impact of standards on

their practice, it is essential to rethink our understanding and use of standards, shifting the focus from outcomes to the process (Katz & Snow, 2009).

As teachers' stories demonstrated, part-time work exacerbates job insecurity and income inequality, underscoring the need for a more nuanced approach to ensure job security and the well-being of teachers. As Gao highlighted in *Teacher Development Webinars* (2021), forming teacher communities can significantly improve the contextual conditions to create safe spaces for teachers to exercise agency. This approach can mitigate the negative effect of top-down policies on their practice and encourage the formation of supportive bottom-up communities for teachers. In spaces where teachers feel safe, trusted, and open with one another, they can address concerns, exchange advice, pose questions, and seek solutions to challenges.

Lortie's (1975) concept of the apprenticeship of observation highlights how teachers' own experiences as learners shape their practices and beliefs, which has important implications for teacher education. Understanding this concept can help both in-service and pre-service teachers become aware of, recognize, and, if necessary, move beyond deeply ingrained beliefs and practices inherited from their own schooling. By reflecting on their apprenticeship of observation, they can identify effective practices they observed in their former classes and integrate these into their own teaching. They can also avoid ineffective methods and practices. In other words, reflecting on these experiences will enable these teachers to become more conscious of how their past experiences and figured worlds influence their current teaching and decisions.

The teachers in the study described the interviews as healing sessions or therapy, noting that recounting and reconstructing their lived experiences provided relief and sometimes led to the realization of hidden insights and connections. Teacher educators should recognize, value, and embrace teacher trainees' unique histories. They should encourage prospective teachers to reflect on their narratives to foster their self-awareness and enhance their understanding of the connection between their personal lives and professional practice. Pre-service teachers should be given opportunities to come together, reflect on, share, and discuss their current, previous,

and future figured worlds, considering their potential to constrict or develop the way they perceive themselves as teachers.

Teacher educators should provide space for reflection, allowing both teachers and teacher trainees opportunities to author themselves as professionals and language teachers, helping them make sense of their roles in the cultural world of ELT. They should also have space for dialogue with other teacher trainees, teacher educators, and colleagues. Reflective discussions offer pre-service and in-service teachers a chance to critically question the discourses that address them and reflect on their interpretations of themselves within the figured world of ELT.

Olsen (2008a) suggests that teacher education programs create opportunities for their students to engage in explicit discussions about the contradictions present in the current educational environment. A formal component should be included in teacher education programs to teach how to recognize and effectively navigate these contradictions. Teacher education, including pre-service and in-service, should be designed to foster teachers' or teacher trainees' adaptive expertise (Hammerness et al., 2005) so that they can adapt to the challenges and unpredictable nature of their classes to make sound decisions.

As for the implications for schools and administration, curriculum designers should allow some room for teachers to make adjustments and encourage their participation in curriculum development to capitalize on their experience and expertise. When teachers perceive teacher evaluations as tools for control rather than professional development, fear of punitive consequences can lead to tension and resistance. This underscores the need for supportive systems in school and professional development units to promote a constructive and positive environment.

Schools and universities should recognize the emotional toll that workplace injustices can have on teachers. For the teachers in this study, such experiences led to a decreased sense of belonging to school and diminished motivation. Over time, these experiences caused even the most committed teachers to withdraw from making "any more effort" (Mila) or engaging in voluntary work in their school,

prompting them to seek fulfillment elsewhere to continue breathing. This highlights the importance of addressing these issues to create a safe and healthy culture where teachers can shine in their schools.

Additionally, teachers' narratives underscored the critical role of administration, whose decisions and stance can foster or hinder teacher agency. They should create safe and supportive places for teachers to voice their concerns and suggestions, and exercise agency. Rather than utilizing a top-down approach and trivializing their expertise, they should welcome teachers in decision-making processes without rendering them invisible. Considering the support, resources, and facilities provided for teachers, they should have realistic expectations from them. It would not be fair to hold merely teachers accountable for the failures of new policies and practices.

In a safe and non-evaluative learning environment, teachers can engage in peer coaching (Ackland, 1991), allowing them to take charge of their own learning through focused dialogic mediation with a trusted colleague. Appreciating someone's contributions or success is not bad and does not spoil them. On the contrary, it empowers and motivates them, which is actually the healthier approach – especially when these individuals are teachers to whom Atatürk entrusted the new generation.

The study has implications for teachers. Children are keen observers and can develop various figured worlds in their childhood. They may experience critical events that either consolidate or reshape their figured worlds. It is crucial especially for primary school teachers to act thoughtfully to avoid creating negative figured worlds in children's minds, as these can have lasting effects on their whole lives, particularly if they are not fortunate enough to encounter dedicated teachers who help reshape their worlds. Schools and universities should be recognized as spaces where people with multiple figured worlds intersect. Therefore, they should be mindful of these diverse cultural worlds and encourage students to acknowledge them through extracurricular activities.

Conflicts may arise between teachers' figured worlds and the realities of their contexts. Policymakers, administrators, and teachers should view these moments as

catalysts for growth through reflection and dialogue. Teacher resistance should not be viewed negatively. Rather, it should be regarded as a chance to delve deeper into systemic challenges for necessary policy adjustments.

Additionally, the study has implications for in-service professional development. It should emphasize how teachers can balance prescribed curricula with contextually responsive practices to maintain teacher agency amidst rigid standards. Professional development programs should include sessions that encourage teachers to critically reflect on neoliberal discourses and their impacts on various contexts at micro, meso, and macro-levels and on teachers' decision-making processes. These activities should foster collaborative learning environments where teachers can share strategies for navigating restrictive discourses and practices while aligning their decisions with their teaching philosophies.

The study has implications for researchers as well. Teachers noted the interviews functioned as therapeutic sessions, highlighting the importance of storytelling in our lives. We constantly interpret the stories we hear and tell and interpret our new experiences in the light of our previous experiences, which suggests that our future is shaped by both past and present experiences. Since stories emerge through the dialogue of the storyteller and the listener, storytelling is also “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). As the stories in narrative inquiry enrich the lives of both storytellers and listeners (Creswell, 2012), conducting more narrative inquiries could amplify teachers' voices and offer valuable insights for researchers.

5.6. Limitations of the Study

As with any research, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. One limitation of this study is the absence of a cross-case analysis between school or university administrators and teachers in the exploration of teacher agency. This narrative inquiry focused solely on teachers' viewpoints. Incorporating the perspectives and stories of other stakeholders, such as administrators, could have offered a more comprehensive understanding of the broader school dynamics and their impact on teacher agency.

My dual roles as both a friend and a researcher could be a potential limitation in the study. However, it is important to note that, I was not affiliated with any units or engaged in any administrative roles during the research process. Additionally, I employed strategies to mitigate potential power issues and ensure an unbiased stance.

Challenges in scheduling interviews with Derin led to multiple cancellations and an extended timeline for completing her interviews. This could be a limitation of the study, as these delays could have affected the consistency of the data collection and potentially influenced the findings. However, the extended timeline also allowed for a more in-depth exploration of important aspects of her experience. It is worth noting that while the process leading to *principled withdrawal* was observed over a year with other teachers, Derin, who had a very high sense of belonging, only revealed this aspect after a much longer period. Without the prolonged final interview, we might have never discovered this. In other words, her final interview was crucial in uncovering changes in her agency trajectory within organizational processes, which might not have been evident in a shorter timeframe.

Teachers' educational background can influence their agency trajectories and interpretations of their experiences. However, this study did not specifically explore the direct impact of their educational backgrounds on agency. Instead, this factor was addressed only when it emerged naturally within broader discussions.

Additionally, since narrative inquiry relies on participants' recollections of events, it may be subject to selective recall or memory distortion, which could potentially affect the accuracy of the narratives. To mitigate these potential issues, I employed some strategies, such as asking follow-up questions in the subsequent interviews to reduce the likelihood of incomplete accounts, encouraging teachers to provide detailed descriptions of events to capture more nuanced stories and minimize selective recall, and maintaining a reflexive journal to remain aware of these factors. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, interviews were conducted online in accordance with the participants' preferences and health advisories at the time of the meetings. While this ensured continuity in data collection, it may have introduced certain limitations. The absence of face-to-face interaction could have hindered the interpretation of

non-verbal clues. Although technical issues like connectivity problems did not occur, they could have potentially affected the quality of the interviews. Notwithstanding these challenges, the online format was essential in maintaining the smooth progress of the interviews during the pandemic.

5.7. Suggestions for Further Research

The current study aims to explore how experienced English language teachers exercised agency in a HE context. To this end, the current study was designed as a narrative inquiry within the qualitative research framework to capture the detailed stories, the complexity of teachers' experiences, and their agentic orientations. Semi-structured online interviews with experienced teachers served as the primary sources of data. Critical incidents, documents, observation and field notes were used to triangulate the data. However, incorporating classroom observations and staff meetings could have added further depth to the study.

A longitudinal study could be conducted to track the changes in teacher agency over an extended period of time by collecting data at multiple time points. The current study revealed some changes in teachers' agency trajectories, as the data collection spanned 31 months. However, a more in-depth investigation into the development of these teachers' agency, especially in organizational processes, and tracking the evolution of their principled withdrawal would offer a more nuanced understanding of language teacher agency. Additionally, it would shed light on the evolution of language teacher agency in response to quality assurance and accreditation processes.

A longitudinal study could examine the agency trajectories of novice teachers to gain more insights into language teachers' evolving agency during their early years of teaching. Future research could also incorporate the voices of multiple stakeholders, including the administrators and auditors, to add more depth and offer different perspectives. Moreover, future studies could explore teacher agency by utilizing the suggested multidimensional framework for teachers' agency trajectories.

I conducted this study in a preparatory school. Future research could also explore language teacher agency in modern languages programs, which offer must and elective English courses for undergraduate students. Given that the study was conducted in a single higher education context, examining the lived experiences of teachers in a different setting undergoing the quality assurance process and exploring the common threads in their stories could provide additional insights into agency trajectories in a different figured world with its unique cultural values.

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APPENDICES

A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (IN TURKISH AND ENGLISH)

A.1. BİRİNCİ GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

Bu görüşmede erken yaşam ve okul deneyimleriniz, öğretmen eğitiminiz, öğretmenlik deneyiminiz, öğretim felsefeniz ve öğretmen rolleri üzerine olan görüşleriniz hakkında konuşmak istiyorum. Öncelikle biraz kendinizden bahsedermisiniz?

1. Çocukluğunuzu düşünün. Büyüyünce ne olmak isterdiniz? Kararınızı ne tür deneyimler şekillendirdi?
2. Okul yıllarınızı düşünün. Kendinizi bir dil öğrencisi olarak nasıl tanımlarsınız? Buna hangi deneyimler katkıda bulundu?
3. (Dil) öğretmeni olma kararınızı en çok ne etkiledi?
 - Hep öğretmen mi olmak istemiştiniz? Gelecekte kendinizi nasıl bir öğretmen olarak görüyordunuz/ hayal ediyordunuz? Şu anda geçmişte hayal ettiğiniz öğretmen imajına ne kadar yakınsınız?
4. Dil öğretmeni olma kararınızı etkileyebilecek rol modelleriniz oldu mu? Sizi nasıl etkilediler?
5. Dil öğretmeni olmaya nasıl hazırlandınız?
 - Öğretmen yetiştirme programınızı/eğitiminizi nasıl tanımlarsınız/ tarif edersiniz? Öğretmen olma sürecindeki eğitiminiz (mesleğe başlaman önce) şu anki öğretim şeklinize nasıl katkıda bulundu?
6. Öğretmen eğitimi programınızda/eğitiminizde hangi öğretmen rolleri teşvik edildi?
7. Okul yıllarınızı düşünün. Yaşadığınız kritik olaylardan birini paylaşır mısınız?
8. Ne kadar süredir öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz? Ne zamandır bu okulda çalışıyorsunuz?
9. Tipik-sıradan bir iş gününüzü tarif edebilir misiniz?
 - Dersiniz olan bir günü uyandırdığınız andan uykuya daldığınız ana kadar yeniden oluşturun- anlatın.
10. Dil öğrenme felsefenizi en geniş anlamda nasıl tarif edersiniz/ açıklarsınız?
11. Dil öğretim felsefenizi nasıl tarif edersiniz/ açıklarsınız?
 - Bir dil nasıl öğretilmelidir?
 - Bir profesyonel olarak öğretim felsefenizi öğretmenlik yaptığınız bağlamda/yerde ne ölçüde gerçekleştirebiliyorsunuz?

- Öğretmenlik deneyiminizin ilk yıllarından bu yana öğretmenlik felsefenizin değiştiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Evet ise, nasıl?
12. Sizin için başarılı bir öğretmen nasıldır?
 - Başarılı bir öğretmen olmak ne demektir?
 - Sınıfta ne zaman başarılı hissediyorsunuz? Bu bağlamda deneyimlerinizi düşündüğünüzde öne çıkan belirli bir olayı-anı paylaşabilir misiniz?
 13. Profesyonel olmak ne demektir? Bir profesyonel gibi hissediyor musunuz? Neden?
 14. Mesleğinizi nasıl tanıtırınız?
 - Türkiye’de İngilizce öğretmeni olmanın toplumdaki imajı nedir? (İngilizce öğretmene bakış açısı nasıldır?)
 - Dünyada, Türkiye’de ve okulunuzda öğretmenlik mesleğinin durumunu nasıl tanımlarsınız? Kendinizi bu bağlamda nasıl konumlandırırsınız?
 15. İngilizce öğretmeni olmadan önceki hayatınız hakkında söylediklerinize ve şimdi işiniz hakkında söylediklerinize göre, hayatınızda öğretmenliği nasıl anlamlandırıyorsunuz?
 - Öğretmen olmak nasıl bir duygu? İngilizce öğretmeni olmak nasıl bir duygu?
 - Kişisel ve eğitim geçmişinizle ilgili, şu anki öğretme ve duruş sergileme şekliniz üzerinde derin bir etkisi olan- ilk akla gelen/ öne çıkan (dönüm noktası sayılabilecek) bir anınız olsaydı, ne (neler) olurdu?

A.2. FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In this interview I’d like to ask you about your early life and schooling experiences, teacher education, teaching experience, your teaching philosophy and your perspectives on teacher roles.

1. Think about your childhood. What did you want to be when you grew up? What kind of experiences shaped your decision?
2. Think about your school years. How would you describe yourself as a language learner? What experiences contributed to this?
3. What most influenced your decision to become a (language) teacher?
 - Have you always wanted to be a teacher? How was your future image of yourself as a teacher? How do you relate to him or her?
4. Did you have any role models that could have influenced your decision to be a language teacher? How did they influence you?
5. How did you prepare for being a language teacher?
 - How would you describe your teacher education program/training? How did it contribute to the way you teach?
6. What teacher roles were fostered in your teacher education program/training?
7. Think back to your school years. Can you please share one of the critical events you experienced?
8. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been working in this school?
9. Can you describe a typical working day?

- Reconstruct a day in your teaching from the moment you woke up to the time you fell asleep.
10. How would you describe your philosophy of language learning in the broadest terms?
 11. How would you describe your language teaching philosophy?
 - How should a language be taught?
 - To what extent are you able to realize your teaching philosophy as a professional in your teaching context?
 - Do you think your teaching philosophy has changed since the initial years of your teaching experience? If yes, How?
 12. What is a successful teacher like for you?
 - What does it mean to be a successful teacher?
 - When do you feel successful in class? Could you please tell me more about a particular time that stands out in your experience?
 13. What does it mean to be a professional? Do you feel like a professional? Why/Why not?
 14. How would you introduce your profession?
 - What is the public image of being an English language teacher in Turkey?
 - How would you describe the status of teaching profession in the world, in Turkey and in your school? How do you relate to it? How are you similar to or different from that kind of a teacher?
 15. Given what you have said about your life before you became an English language teacher and given what you have said about your work now, how do you understand teaching in your life?
 - How does it feel to be a teacher? What is it like to be an English language teacher?
 - If there was one main memory of your personal and educational background which has had a profound impact on the way you teach and take stances now, what would it be?

A.3. İKİNCİ GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

Bu görüşmede öğretim ve organizasyonel süreçler üzerine olan görüşleriniz hakkında konuşmak istiyorum.

Öğretim

1. Pedagojik kararları nasıl veriyorsunuz?
 - Öğretme şeklinize nasıl karar veriyorsunuz?
 - Öngörülen müfredat- eğitim programına ne kadar uyuyorsunuz?
2. Ders hazırlama, öğretim materyallerinin seçimi, ders anlatımı ve öğrencilerin değerlendirilmesi üzerinde ne kadar kontrolünüz var? –Bu sizi nasıl etkiliyor?
3. Sınıfınızda değişiklik yaratmak için kullanabileceğiniz profesyonel alanınızı nasıl algılıyorsunuz- alanınızla ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?

- Harekete geçmenize ne yardımcı oluyor? Sınıflarınızda öğretmen etkinliği sergilemek için ne gibi fırsatlar buluyorsunuz? Diğer öğretmenlerden ve yönetimden ne tür bir destek alıyorsunuz?
 - Harekete geçmenize ne engel oluyor? Sınıflarınızda öğretmen etkinliği sergilerken ne gibi engeller yaşıyorsunuz? Bunlarla nasıl başa çıkıyorsunuz?
4. Öğretmenliğinizin ilk yıllarına ait bir anınızı düşünün. Kritik bir anı. Bana bundan bahseder misiniz? Bunun sizi ve uygulamalarınızı nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz? Sizce neden kritikti?

Organizasyonel süreçler

5. Snowdrop okulunda müfredat- öğretim programı kararları nasıl alınır?
- Karar alma sürecine katılımınız için fırsatlar nelerdir?
 - Bu konuda ne hissediyorsunuz?
6. Snowdrop okulunda organizasyonel- örgütsel süreçlere katkınızı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
- Snowdrop okulunda şimdiye kadar hangi rolleri üstlendiniz?
 - İş çevrenizde ve okul organizasyonunuzda nasıl bir etkiniz olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Snowdrop okulunda öğretmenlerin organizasyonel -örgütsel süreçlere katkısını teşvik eden öğeler nelerdir?
 - Snowdrop okulunda öğretmenlerin organizasyonel -örgütsel süreçlere katkı sunmaktan caydıran öğeler nelerdir?
 - Bu bağlamda kendi deneyimlerinizi nasıl yorumlarsınız-konumlandırırsınız?
7. Öğretmenlerin deneyimlediği hesap verebilirlik ve kontrol mekanizmaları üzerine yorumlarınız nelerdir? Bunları kendi bağlamınızda/ çevrenizde nasıl algılıyorsunuz?
- Bir öğretmen olarak kendinizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
 - Başkalarının sizi bir öğretmen olarak nasıl değerlendirdiğini düşünüyorsunuz?
8. Okulunuzda ne tür okul dışından gelen talep ve düzenlemeler gözlemliyorsunuz?
- Bunlara nasıl tepki veriyorsunuz/ karşılık veriyorsunuz?
 - Okulunuzdaki akreditasyon süreçleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Bu talepler, öğretim değerleriniz ve ilkelerinizle ne ölçüde örtüşüyor?
 - Okul dışından gelen talepler ile öğretim ilkelerinizi ve değerlerinizi nasıl uzlaştırıyorsunuz?

A.4. SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In this interview I'd like to ask you about your teaching experiences and your perspectives on organizational processes.

Teaching

1. How do you make pedagogical decisions?

- How do you decide the way you teach?
 - How much do you comply with the prescribed curriculum?
2. How much control do you have over
 - lesson planning
 - the selection of instructional materials
 - delivery of lessons
 - assessment of students?
 3. How do you perceive your professional space for bringing about change in your classroom?
 - What helps you take action? What opportunities do you experience for exercising agency in your classes? What kind of support do you receive from other staff and administration?
 - What prevents you from taking action? What barriers do you experience while exercising agency in your classes? How do you deal with them?
 4. Think of one memory you have of your initial years of teaching. A critical one. Tell me about it. How do you think it has influenced you and your practices? Why was it critical? What role did others play in this event?

Organizational processes

5. How are curricular decisions made in Snowdrop?
 - What are the opportunities for your participation in decision making?
 - How do you feel about that?
6. How would you describe your contribution to organizational processes in Snowdrop?
 - What roles have you taken on in Snowdrop so far?
 - How can you have influence in your work community and school organization?
 - What encourages and discourages teachers' contribution to organizational processes in Snowdrop? How do you relate to them?
7. How would you comment on the accountability and control mechanisms teachers' experience? How do you perceive them in your own context?
 - How do you evaluate yourself as a teacher?
 - How do you think others evaluate you as a teacher?
8. What external demands and regulations do you observe in your school?
 - How do you respond to them?
 - What is your opinion of the accreditation processes in your school?
 - To what extent do these demands overlap with your values and principles of teaching?
 - How do you reconcile the external demands and your principles and values of teaching?

A.5. ÜÇÜNCÜ GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

Okul kültürü ve ilişkiler

1. Snowdrop okulunda İngilizce öğretmeni olmak nasıl bir şey?
 - Bu okulda çalışmayı tercih etme nedenleriniz nelerdir?
 - Öğrencileriniz, meslektaşlarınız, yöneticileriniz ve diğer profesyonel ağlarla olan ilişkilerinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Okuluza aidiyet duygunuzla ilgili neler söyleyebilirsiniz?
2. Çalıştığımız yerin okul kültürünü nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Farklı deneyim ve kıdeme sahip öğretmenler okulda birlikte nasıl çalışıyor?
 - Okulda iş birliğine dayalı çalışmayı destekleyen faktörler nelerdir? İş birliği içerisinde çalışmayı engelleyen faktörler nelerdir?
 - Bunlar sizi bir öğretmen olarak nasıl etkiliyor?
3. Snowdrop okulunda sizi memnun eden şeyleri-uygulamaları anlatır mısınız? Snowdrop okulunda sizi rahatsız eden şeyleri-uygulamaları anlatır mısınız?
 - Toplantılarınızda bu sorunları (varsa) ne ölçüde gündeme getiriyorsunuz? Neden?
4. Hangi profesyonel söylemler, okulunuzda öğretmenlerin profesyonel etkinliğini teşvik ediyor ve engelliyor?
 - Snowdrop okulunda öğretmen etkinliğine imkan veren veya bunu kısıtlayan durumları nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Bunlara nasıl tepki-karşılık veriyorsunuz?
5. Okulunuzdaki kurumsal normları veya standartları nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Okulunuzda hangi belirli eylemlere- hareketlere önem atfediliyor- veriliyor?
 - Okulunuzda en çok değer verilen şeyler nelerdir?
 - Bunlarla nasıl bir ilişkiniz var- nasıl bir bağlantı kuruyorsunuz?
6. Snowdrop okulu bağlamında özellikle stresli bir dönemi hatırlıyor musunuz? Bana bundan bahsedebilir misiniz? Başkaları bu olayda-durumda nasıl bir rol oynadı? Bu dönemin sizi ve uygulamalarınızı nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?
7. Okul ortamınızda değişiklik yapabileseydiniz ne yapardınız?
 - Sorumlu olduğunuzu ve programı & okul kültürünü daha iyi hale getirecek bir değişiklik yapabileceğinizi varsayalım. Ne yapardınız?
8. Bir öğretmenin hangi öğretmen rollerini üstlenmesi gerektiğini düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Bir öğretmenin öğretmenlik dışında ne gibi sorumlulukları olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Bunlarla nasıl bir ilişkiniz var/ nasıl bağlantı kuruyorsunuz?
 - Daha geniş çaplı meseleler-konuları ele alma açısından öğretmen rolünü nasıl algılıyorsunuz? Bununla nasıl bir ilişkiniz var?

Mesleki gelişim ve öğrenme

9. Mesleki gelişiminiz için neler yapıyorsunuz?
 - Okul içinde ve dışında ne tür mesleki gelişim faaliyetlerine katılıyorsunuz? Bir öğretmen olarak bunlar sizi nasıl etkiliyor?

10. Mesleki gelişiminizle ilgili olarak okulunuzda başkalarından aldığımız desteği nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
11. Yetki sahibi olduğunuzu düşünelim ve mesleki gelişim birimini ve faaliyetlerini daha iyi hale getirecek bir değişiklik yapabileceğinizi varsayalım. Ne-neler yapardınız?
12. Gelecekte kendinizi bir dil öğretmeni olarak düşündüğünüzde nasıl bir imaj ortaya çıkıyor? Lütfen açıklayınız.
 - Kariyer hedefleriniz nelerdir?

A.6. THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

School culture and relationships

1. What is it like to be an English language teacher in Snowdrop?
 - What are your reasons for choosing to work in this school?
 - How would you describe your relationships with your students, colleagues, administrators and other professional networks?
 - What can you say about your sense of belonging to your school?
2. How would you describe the culture of this school?
 - How do teachers with different levels of experience and seniority work together in school?
 - What factors support collaborative work in school? What are the main barriers to enhanced collaboration?
 - How do they influence you as a teacher?
3. Could you please describe the things- practices that make you pleased in Snowdrop?? Could you please describe the things- practices that disturb you in Snowdrop?
 - To what extent do you raise these issues (if any) during staff meetings? Why/ why not?
4. What professional discourses foster and hinder teachers' professional agency in your school?
 - How would you describe conditions that enable or constrain teacher agency in Snowdrop?
 - How do you respond to them?
5. How would you describe the institutional norms or standards in your school?
 - To what certain acts is significance assigned to in your school?
 - What things are most valued in your school?
 - How do you relate to them?
6. Within the context of Snowdrop, do you remember a particularly stressful period? Tell me about it. What role did others play in this event? How do you think this period has influenced you and your practices?
7. If you could make changes to your school environment, what would you do?

- Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the Program & the school culture better. What would you do?
8. What teacher roles do you think a teacher should assume?
- What responsibilities other than teaching do you think does a teacher have? How do you relate to them?
 - How do you perceive teacher role in terms of addressing wider issues? How do you relate to it?

Professional development – learning

9. What do you do for your professional development?
- What kind of professional development activities do you participate in inside and outside the school? How do they influence you as a teacher?
10. How do you evaluate the support you receive from others in your school regarding your professional development?
11. Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the professional development unit and activities better. What would you do?
12. How would you describe your future image of yourself as a language teacher?
- What are your career aspirations and goals?

A.7. DÖRDÜNCÜ GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

Önceki görüşme notlarına atıfta bulunarak,

1. Sınıf, okul ve üniversite bağlamınızı ya da ortamınızı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
- Bunlar, genel olarak ve Türkiye özelinde, dil öğretiminde daha geniş politik, ekonomik, sosyal ve eğitimsel bağlamlardan ne ölçüde etkileniyorlar?

Alandaki Politikalar ve İlgili konular

2. Aşağıdaki noktalar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz ve bunlar bir dil öğretmeni olarak sizi ve uygulamalarınızı nasıl etkiliyor?
- İngilizcenin Dünyadaki statüsü- durumu
 - Dil kullanıcıları ve öğretmeni olarak sizin statünüz-durumunuz
 - İngilizce Aracılığıyla Öğretim
 - Acil Uzaktan Öğretim
 - İngilizce Dili Öğretiminde mikro yetkinlikler Mikro-yetkinlikler
3. Genelde ve Türkiye özelindeki eğitim reformlarını ve politika değişikliklerini nasıl yorumlarsınız? (trendler)
- İnançlarınız, okulunuzdaki ve daha geniş sosyal çevredeki mevcut eğitim politikalarıyla nasıl kesişiyor- benzerlikler gösteriyor?
4. Başarılı İngilizce Dili Öğretimi esaslarını- temellerini nasıl tanımlarsınız?
- Bu konuda gerekli koşulları yaratmak için profesyonel alanınızı ne ölçüde kullanabilirsiniz?
 - Gerekli koşulları yaratmanızı zorlaştıran veya engelleyen nedir?
5. Öğretmen değerlendirmesine ilişkin politika söylemi ve daha geniş sosyal çevre hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Sizce öğretmenler nasıl değerlendirilmeli?

Türkiye Yükseköğretim Sisteminde Fark Yaratmak

6. Yükseköğretimin toplumdaki rolü nedir?
7. Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Sisteminde değişiklik yapma şansınız olsaydı ne yapardınız?
 - Ülkenizde eğitimi daha iyi hale getirmek için nasıl öğretmen etkinliği sergilemek- ortaya koymak isterdiniz?

A.8. FOURTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Referring to the previous interview notes

1. How would you describe your classroom, school and university contexts?
 - To what extent are they influenced by the broader political, economic, social and educational dimensions of language teaching in general, and Turkey in particular?

Policies and Related issues in the field

2. What do you think about the following points and how do they influence you and your practices as a language teacher?
 - the status of English in the world
 - your status as a language user and a teacher
 - EMI (English Medium Instruction)
 - ERT (Emergency remote teaching)
 - micro-credentials in ELT
3. How would you comment on educational reforms and policy changes in general and Turkey in particular? (trends)
 - How do your beliefs intersect with current education policies in your school and wider social space?
4. How would you describe the essentials for successful ELT?
 - To what extent can you utilize your professional space for creating conditions needed for successful ELT?
 - What makes it difficult or prevents you from creating conditions needed for successful ELT?
5. What do you think about policy discourse and the wider social space on teacher evaluation?
 - How do you think teachers should be evaluated?

Making a difference in HE in Turkey

6. What is the role of higher education in society?
7. If you could make changes to the Higher Education System in Turkey, what would you do?
 - How would you like to enact agency to make education better in your country?

B. THE CODES AND INITIAL THEMES UNDER THE FINAL THEMES

History-in-person as Sedimentary Layers

Family	Schooling experiences	Job decision	Teacher learning experiences
Family support Resources Socioeconomic status Critical events in childhood -Traumatic experiences	Characteristics as students Early interest in language/language learning Learning passion Sense of achievement & self-confidence-aptitude for English Positive experiences Agency -changing the path Approval from role-models Negative experiences MoNE (systemic problems and perceived violence) Not quality education Poor school performance	Figured world of ELT-teachers Negative (Teachers and teaching in MoNE) Positive (status of English and teaching) Teaching as an informed decision Future profession other than teaching (Second career teachers) Family- teacher impact Critical incidents	Learning experiences as former learners Apprenticeship observation (Role Model Teachers, Anti Role Model Teachers) Language learning experiences Language learning philosophy Perceived autonomy Learning experiences as teacher trainees Teacher education courses Encouraged roles Alternative certification Method Optional Paying for the certificate Content Superficial- Not sufficient No alternative certification Learning experiences as teachers Initial years of teaching Autonomy Support provided Lack of support In-service professional development activities Teacher development courses Conferences Micro credentials Pursuing post-graduate studies (MA - PhD) Agency for PL despite the constraints Self-directed

Figured World of Snowdrop

Practices	Discourses	People-Interactions	Constraints
<p>Decrease in the quality of instruction</p> <p>Exams</p> <p>Teaching materials</p> <p>limited-outdated exams</p> <p>lack of facilities</p> <p>Norms</p> <p>Rituals</p> <p>Shift from shared rituals to solitude</p>	<p><u>Quality Assurance</u></p> <p>Research University</p> <p>Audit-Control</p> <p>Rankings</p> <p>Accreditation</p> <p>Top-down</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Quantity orientation</p> <p>Teacher Resistance</p> <p><u>Market orientation</u></p> <p>Quantity orientation</p> <p>Social sciences</p> <p>Neglected</p> <p>Profit driven practices</p> <p>Market around coursebooks</p> <p>Privatization -reduced social spaces – implications for ELT</p> <p><u>Being student-centered</u></p> <p>“Customer is always right”</p> <p><u>Deskilling</u></p> <p>Too much control over their work</p> <p>Tasks irrelevant to teaching</p> <p>Status of teaching-Decline</p> <p><u>Teacher accountability</u></p> <p>Teacher evaluations and observations</p> <p>Moral responsibility</p> <p>Holding teachers responsible for failures</p> <p><u>Othering</u></p> <p>Why voicing problems standing out for success</p>	<p>People with <u>greater recognition</u></p> <p>Compliant</p> <p>Active participants in PDU events</p> <p>Unit members</p> <p>Close to admin.</p> <p>Cold- calculating</p> <p>Good at marketing themselves</p> <p><u>School culture</u></p> <p>Complacency</p> <p>Lack of work ethics</p> <p>Resistance to new practices</p> <p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Strong</p> <p>Weak</p> <p><u>Relationships</u></p> <p>With students</p> <p>Caring</p> <p>Teacher role</p> <p>With colleagues</p> <p>Individualism</p> <p>Cliques</p> <p>Lack of socialization</p> <p>With administration</p> <p>Not stable</p>	<p><u>Workplace injustices</u></p> <p>Working part-time</p> <p>Favoritism</p> <p><u>Top-down decisions and Limited Autonomy</u></p> <p>frequent turnover of the administrative staff</p> <p>lack of teacher involvement</p> <p><u>Lack of incentives and resources</u></p> <p>Lack of appreciation-moral support</p> <p>Lack of financial support</p> <p>Lack of resources – facilities</p> <p>Inequality of opportunity among ss</p> <p><u>Trivialization of teachers’ qualifications</u></p> <p>Rendering teachers invisible</p> <p>strategies social science-neglected</p>

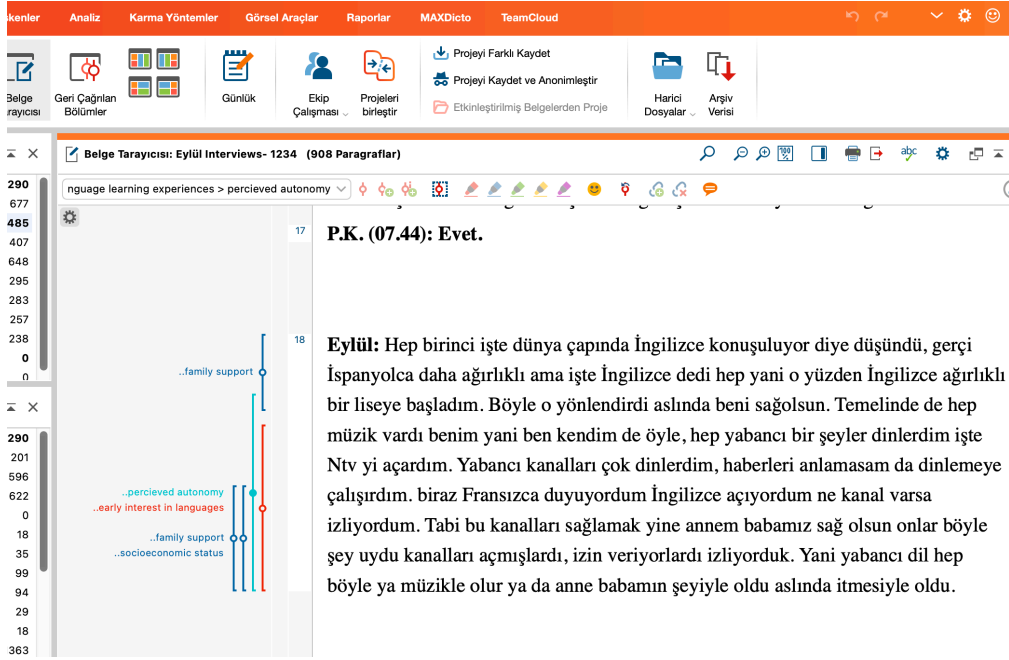
Discourses in Broader Contexts

<p><u>Politics</u> On the campus In classes Restricted freedom of speech</p>	<p><u>Proliferation of universities</u> Role of higher education Increase in the number Shift in the quality</p> <p>Micro-credentials Critical of Legitimacy Capitalist orientation</p>	<p><u>Globalization, English Language Learning and EMI</u></p> <p>Status of English Critical of Globalization</p> <p>EMI a lack of infrastructure the sine qua non for a quality EMI</p>
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The Space of Authoring: Agency

<p><u>Navigating and Negotiating Positions</u></p> <p>Navigating Positions Imposed External Demands Enhance the rankings “Pursue MA-PhD” “Conduct Research” Negative positions assigned (Inadequate- Resistant to change- lazy- hostility against teachers) Not academic staff Grammar Teachers</p> <p>Positions Claimed and Teaching Philosophies Self as a teacher Core values in teaching philosophies Application</p> <p>Negotiating Discourses: Being Professional Understanding of Being Professional personal responsibility or accountability Moral integrity Passion for the work proficiency in your area of specialization making a positive impact on students Self-discipline and self-criticism</p> <p>Self-perfection of professionalism</p> <p>Negotiating Discourses: Being Successful Understanding of Being Successful inspiring students fostering a positive learning environment making a positive impact on students’ lives flexibility ongoing professional development Self-perfection of being successful</p>	<p><u>Making “Liberating” Worlds</u></p> <p>Crafting New Worlds: Agency in teaching improvising the curriculum adjusting their teaching strategies</p> <p>Crafting New Worlds: Organizational Agency voluntary contributions to the organizational processes voicing their concerns and suggestions took initiatives to improve the school</p> <p>Stepping Back to Step Forward: Principled Withdrawal and External Agency Reasons for principled withdrawal channel their energy and time into their professional development to create spaces outside or new figured worlds In professional development In social participation</p>
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C. A SAMPLE OF THE CODING PROCESS



The screenshot displays the MAXQDA software interface. The top menu bar includes 'Analiz', 'Karma Yöntemler', 'Görsel Araçlar', 'Raporlar', 'MAXDicto', and 'TeamCloud'. The toolbar below the menu contains icons for document management, analysis, and reporting. The main workspace is divided into a left sidebar with a list of documents and a central text area. The text area shows a paragraph of text with a code 'P.K. (07.44): Evet.' and a paragraph of text starting with 'Eylül: Hep birinci işte dünya çapında İngilizce konuşuluyor diye düşündü, gerçi İspanyolca daha ağırlıklı ama işte İngilizce dedi hep yani o yüzden İngilizce ağırlıklı bir liseye başladım. Böyle o yönlendirdi aslında beni sağolsun. Temelinde de hep müzik vardı benim yani ben kendim de öyle, hep yabancı bir şeyler dinlerdim işte Ntv yi açardım. Yabancı kanalları çok dinlerdim, haberleri anlamasam da dinlemeye çalışırdım. biraz Fransızca duyuyordum İngilizce açıyordum ne kanal varsa izliyordum. Tabi bu kanalları sağlamak yine annem babamız sağ olsun onlar böyle şey uydu kanalları açmışlardı, izin veriyorlardı izliyorduk. Yani yabancı dil hep böyle ya müzikle olur ya da anne babamın şeyiyle oldu aslında itmesiyle oldu.'

A sample of the coding process using MAXQDA

D. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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01 ARALIK 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. A. Cendel KARAMAN

Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Pınar Karataş'ın "İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ETKİNLİĞİ: BİR ANLATI ARAŞTIRMASI" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **485-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
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Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

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Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MİSİRLİSOY
İAEK Başkan

E. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name : Karataş, Pınar
Nationality :
Date and Place of Birth :
Email :

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
PhD	Middle East Technical University, <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2024
MA	Middle East Technical University, NCC <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2015
BA	Middle East Technical University, <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2006
High School	İzmir Anatolian Teacher Training, High School	2001

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Institution	Job Title
2015- Present	Ege University School of Foreign Languages	Lecturer
2007-2013	Middle East Technical University NCC School of Foreign Languages	Lecturer
2006- 2007	METU Development Foundation Schools, Manisa	English Language Teacher

RESEARCH INTERESTS

English language teacher education, language teacher agency, professional identity, critical pedagogy, qualitative inquiry, in-service professional development, English language teaching

PUBLICATIONS

Karatas, P. (2015). *Challenges, professional development, and professional identity: A case study on novice language teachers*. [Unpublished master's dissertation]. Middle East Technical University.

Karataş, P. & Karaman, A. C. (2013). Challenges faced by novice language teachers: support, identity, and pedagogy in the initial years of teaching. *The International Journal of Research in Teacher Education*, 4(3), 10-23.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Karataş, P., & Karaman, A. C. (2019, May 2-4). *Part-time work experience in higher education: A case study on adjunct language instructors* [Paper presentation]. 1st International Science, Education, Art & Technology Symposium. Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, Türkiye

Karataş, P., & Karaman, A. C. (2015, October 22-24). *Professional identity and development among novice teachers at higher education institutions: A case study* [Paper presentation]. The Third International Congress on Curriculum and Instruction: Curriculum Studies in Higher Education, Çukurova University, Adana, Türkiye.

Karataş, P., & Karaman, A. C. (2013, June 6-9). *Challenges faced by novice language teachers: Support, identity, and pedagogy in the initial years of teaching* [Paper presentation]. V. International Congress of Educational Research "Peace, Memory & Education Research," Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Çanakkale, Türkiye.

Karataş, P. (2013). *Perceived efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced prep-school beginner group instructors at METU NCC* [Paper presentation]. OXFORD ELT Conference, New Challenges in ELT, Cyprus.

Karataş, P. (2008). *Dealing with test anxiety. An action research project* [Paper presentation]. Middle East Technical University NCC, School of Foreign Languages Workshop Festival, Cyprus.

F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENİ ETKİNLİĞİ: BİR YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURUMUNDA ANLATI ÇALIŞMASI

Giriş

Öğretmenlik, yalnızca teorik bilgi edinmenin ötesinde, entelektüel, sosyal, duygusal ve etik boyutları da barındıran (Beattie, 1995) karmaşık ve çok yönlü bir uğraştır. Bu meslek, gelişen eğitim reformları ve toplumsal değişikliklere uyum sağlarken, esneklik, iş birliği ve bağımsız karar verme becerilerini de gerektirir. Örneğin, COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında uzaktan eğitime hızlı geçiş, öğretmenler için büyük zorluklar yaratmıştır (Bao, 2020; MacIntyre vd., 2020) çünkü birçok öğretmen bu ani geçişe hazırlıksız yakalanmıştır. Pandemi süreci, eğitimde var olan eşitsizlikleri arttırmış ve daha adil ve kapsayıcı öğretim stratejilerine duyulan acil ihtiyacı gözler önüne sermiştir.

Öğretmenler değişim ve zorlukların üstesinden gelmeye çalışırken, eğitim otoriteleri, okul yönetimleri ve velilerden gelen çok sayıda baskıyla karşılaşmakta ve özerkliklerine yönelik artan kısıtlamalarla yüzleşmektedir (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Başka bir deyişle, öğretmenler nasıl davranmaları ve nasıl hareket etmeleri gerektiğine dair çok sayıda söyleme maruz kalmaktadırlar. Eğitime, okullara ve öğretmenlere nüfuz eden bu yeni söylemlerden biri de neoliberal söylemlerdir. Neoliberal politikalar eğitimi önemli ölçüde şekillendirmiş, öğretmen etkinliğini kısıtlayarak piyasa merkezli politikaları ön plana çıkarmıştır. Bu politikalar öğretmenlerin üzerindeki baskıyı arttırırken onların bağımsız karar alma yetilerini sınırlandırmıştır.

Bu bağlamda, öğretmen etkinliği, küresel eşitsizliklerin ele alınması, sosyal adaletin savunulması, sivil katılımın teşvik edilmesi ve daha demokratik bir eğitim sisteminin geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunulması açısından kritik öneme sahiptir. Öğretmenlerin

bu neoliberal çağda zorlukların üstesinden nasıl geldiklerini ve eğitimi daha iyi hale getirmek için nasıl harekete geçtiklerini daha iyi anlamak için başarı hikayelerini ve öğretmen sesini keşfetmeye ihtiyaç vardır. Öğretmen etkinliğinin önemi açıkça görülse ve özellikle neoliberal söylemler bağlamında incelenmesi gerektiği giderek daha fazla kabul edilse de, bu konu yabancı dil öğretmeni eğitimi araştırmalarında hala yeterince keşfedilmemiş bir alan olarak kalmaktadır (örn. Erdem, 2020; Kayı-Aydar, 2019; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Oolbekkink-Marchand vd., 2017; Priestley vd., 2015b). Öğretmen etkinliği üzerine yapılan çalışmaların çoğu, genellikle hizmet öncesi öğretmenlere (örn. Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016) veya yükseköğretim dışındaki öğretmenlere odaklanmaktadır (örn. Buchanan, 2015; Hiver & Whitehead, 2018; Oolbekkink-Marchand vd., 2017; Pappa vd., 2019; Sisson, 2016). Bu konu öğretmen adayları ve öğretmenliğin ilk yıllarında olanlar ilkökul, ortaokul ve liselerde yaygın olarak çalışılsa da yükseköğretimde İngilizce öğretmeni etkinliği üzerine çok az çalışma vardır (örn. Tao ve Gao, 2017; Tran, 2019). Deneyimli veya kıdemli öğretmenler de çok daha az ilgi görürken, öğretmenlerin yaşamları üzerine yapılan araştırmalar çoğunlukla öğretmenliğin ilk yıllarına odaklanmıştır (Day & Gu, 2009). Dünyada öğretmen etkinliğine yönelik artan ilgiye rağmen, araştırmacının bildiği kadarıyla, Türkiye'de yapılan çalışmalar yurt dışında yapılanlara kıyasla sınırlıdır (Bütün Ikwuegbu ve Harris, 2024; Gülmez, 2019; Mutlu, 2017). Erdem'in (2020) de belirttiği gibi, "Aslında, kavramın Türkçe karşılığı üzerinde bile bir fikir birliği yoktur" (s. 32). Ataş Akdemir ve Akdemir (2019) de çalışmalarında, öğretmen etkinliği üzerine yaptıkları literatür taramasına dayanarak, öğretmen etkinliğinin Türkiye'de farklı bağlamlarda araştırılması gerektiğini öne sürmektedir.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de bir yükseköğretim kurumu bağlamında deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım ile ilgili öğretmen etkinliğini nasıl sergilediğini ve bu kavrama nasıl bir anlam yüklediğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca politik, sosyal ve kurumsal çevrelerin öğretmenlerin etkinlik yönelimlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını ele almaktadır:

1. Bir yükseköğretim kurumunda görev yapan deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenleri, öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılımı ile ilgili

hikayelerinde deęişimi saęlamak adına nasıl öęretmen etkinlięi sergilemektedirler?

2. Katılımcı öęretmenler mesleki rollerini ve etkinliklerini nasıl anlamlandırırır?
3. Öęretmenlerin etkinlik algılarını hangi politik, sosyal ve kurumsal faktörler etkilemektedir?

Alanyazın Taraması

Yükseköęretimin Neoliberalleşmesi, Kalite ve İngilizce Öęretimi

Türken ve dięerlerine göre (2015, s. 33) “ideoloji, ekonomik-politik güç, söylem, tarihsel rasyonalite ve/veya yönetim” olarak tanımlanan ve incelenen neoliberalizm, yaşamın farklı alanlarında o kadar yaygın hale gelmiştir ki, “neoliberalizm çağımızın damgası haline geldięi için, bu parametrelerin dışında düşünmek neredeyse düşünülemez olmuştur” (Holborow, 2012, s. 14). Neoliberalizm aynı zamanda “insanların ve eylemlerinin piyasa deęerleri ve katılımları açısından deęerlendirildięi, yoğun rekabetin gerekli görüldüğü ve erdemin girişimcilikle ilişkilendirildięi piyasa merkezli bir yaşam felsefesi” ile de karakterize edilir (Fenwick, 2003, ss. 335-336). Bu felsefe, bir şeyin önemli sayılabilmesi için ölçülebilir olması gerektięi fikrini ön plana çıkarır. Neoliberalizmde ekonomik verimlilik, hükümetin eğitime yatırım yapmasından ziyade, “eğitimin başka herhangi bir şey gibi alınıp satılabilecek bir ürüne dönüştürülmesi” yoluyla saęlandığı için (Davies & Bansel, 2007, s. 254), eğitim neoliberalizm için özellikle önemli olmuştur (Gray vd., 2018; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Eğitim ve ekonomik büyümenin önemi doğrultusunda, özellikle yükseköęretimde, piyasa odaklı söylemler ve kâr amaçlı girişimler öne çıkmaya başlamıştır.

Kurumların başarısı, artık dünya genelindeki eğitim politika yapıcıları tarafından uluslararası üniversite sıralamalarıyla ölçülmektedir. Yükseköęretimde, tek bir üniversite modeli kültürel bağlamından koparılmış ve bu spesifik model takip edilmesi gereken ideal bir örnek olarak yansıtılmıştır. Üniversitelerden öęrencileri piyasanın ihtiyaçlarına uygun bir şekilde hazırlamaları beklenmektedir. Üniversiteler üzerinde öęrenci ve kaynaklar için rekabet etme baskısının arttığı düşünöldüğünde

(Forest, 2007), yöneticiler genellikle küresel sıralamaları, kurumlarının daha yüksek kalitesinin "kanıtı" olarak kullanmakta ve bu sıralamalar, yükseköğretim için yeni bir tür eşik bekçiliği olarak görülmektedir.

Üniversiteler kamu kurumları olarak değil, ticari organizasyonlar olarak görülmeye başlandıkça, yükseköğretimin hızlı ve kontrolsüz bir şekilde ticarileşmesine yol açmış ve bu durum kalite, akreditasyon ve akademik tanınma sorunlarını beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu gelişmeler, Avrupa Birliği tarafından başlatılan "Bologna Süreci"nin uygulanmasına zemin hazırlamıştır (YÖK, 2007).

Bu neoliberal ortamda, bu söylemlerin İngilizce Öğretimi'ne (ELT) nasıl yansıdığı ve bireylerin, özellikleri İngilizce öğretmenlerinin, bu görünmeyen güç ilişkilerini nasıl ele aldıkları ve müzakere ettiklerini anlamak önemlidir. Küreselleşme, yüksek öğretimde eğitim ve ELT arasındaki etkileşim kaçınılmazdır. Dillerin toplumdaki güç dinamikleriyle yakından ilişkili olduğu göz önüne alındığında, İngilizce'nin, konuşucularını sosyoekonomik ve eğitimsel avantajlar aracılığıyla ayrıcalıklı kılacak bir dilsel ve kültürel sermaye olarak görüldüğü belirtilmiştir (Jordão, 2009; Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2011; Prior, 2018; Shin, 2006; Siqueira, 2017; Starfield, 2013). İngilizce öğrenme talebinin artması ve İngilizce'nin uluslararasılaşması ile küresel yayılması, ulusal sınırların ortadan kalkmasına yol açarak İngilizce öğretimi ve dil öğretmenliği eğitimi üzerinde çeşitli etkiler yaratmaktadır (Saraceni, 2009; Siqueira, 2017).

İngilizcenin piyasadaki rekabetçiliğin ana göstergelerinden biri olduğu inancı, üniversiteleri İngilizce aracılığıyla öğretim (EMI) uygulamalarına yönlendirmektedir (Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). Hesap verebilirlik, ölçme ve düzenleme odak noktası haline geldiğinde, "farklı profesyonellik söylemleri dolaşıma girecek, meşruiyet kazanacak ve profesyonelliğin nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığı ve uygulandığı üzerinde etkili olacaktır" (Sachs, 2016, s. 414). Bu durum, öğretmenlerin nasıl konumlandırıldığını da şekillendirmektedir. Örneğin, okullar ve öğrenciler başarısız olduğunda, genellikle sorgulanan öğretmen kalitesidir. Öğretmenler yeni politikaların veya uygulamaların başarısızlığından sorumlu tutulur. Önceden hazırlanmış materyaller ve sistemler aracılığıyla sürekli denetim, okulda iş birliğini

ve öğretmen etkileşimini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Müfredat konuları ve diğer meseleler için öğretmen etkileşimi en aza indirilmiş, öğretmenler izole olmuştur.

Neoliberal alanlarda, denetim, ölçülebilir çıktılar ve rekabetin ortasında zorlukların üstesinden gelmek kolay olmayabilir, ancak imkansız da değildir. Çeşitli paydaşlardan gelen kısıtlamalarla karşı karşıya kalsalar bile, öğretmenler, meslekleriyle ilgili çeşitli bağlam ve koşulları yorumlayıp yeniden anlamlandırabilir, müzakere yoluyla kendilerine içinde hareket edebilecekleri bir alan yaratabilir, “profesyonel alanlarını etkin bir şekilde kullanabilir” (Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017, s. 37) ve zorluklara rağmen yine de öğretmen etkinliğini harekete geçirebilirler (Feryok, 2012).

Kimlik ve Etkinlik

Öğretmenleri anlamak, onların iddia ettikleri ya da kendilerine atfedilen bireysel, mesleki ve kültürel kimlikler de dahil olmak üzere kim olduklarını daha derinlemesine anlamayı gerektirir (Varghese vd., 2005). İnsanların kendilerini öğretmen olarak görme ve anlama biçimlerine ek olarak, kimlik aynı zamanda “dahil oldukları alanlar ve bu alanların içinde ve dışında başkalarıyla kurdukları ilişkiler yoluyla kim olduklarını nasıl ‘şekillendirdikleri’ ile de ilgilidir” (Urrieta, 2007, s. 107). Öğretmenlerin mesleki kimlikleri çeşitli bağlamsal etkilere yanıt olarak gelişir. Örneğin Palmer (1997), kimliği tanımlarken kişinin kişisel deneyimlerinin, ailesinin, önemli diğer kişilerin ve sosyokültürel bağlamların önemini vurgular. Kişisel deneyimler, mesleki bağlam ve dış faktörlerin tümü öğretmen kimliğinin şekillenmesinde rol oynar (Mockler, 2011). Bağlamın kimlik üzerindeki etkisine ek olarak, kimlik ve etkinlik arasındaki ilişki de tartışılmaktadır (Banegas ve Gerlach, 2021; Beauchamp ve Thomas, 2009; Beijaard vd., 2000; Burns ve Richards, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Sachs, 2005). Örneğin Burns ve Richards'a (2009) göre kimlik, “bireylerin kendilerini nasıl gördüklerini ve farklı ortamlardaki rollerini nasıl canlandırdıklarını yansıtır” (s. 5). Kimlikleri ve değerleri üzerine düşünen öğretmenler daha güçlü bir etkinlik duygusu kazanır ve bu da sınıflarında ve toplumlarında değişimi etkileme kapasitelerini artırır.

Etkinlik kavramı çok yönlüdür ve etkinliği tek bir şekilde tanımlamak zordur.

Etkinliğin çeşitli tanımları şu ortak temaları içerir:

- Harekete geçme ve karar verme yeteneği veya kapasitesi
- Kişinin eylemleri üzerinde bir dereceye kadar kontrol sahibi olması
- Etkinliğin kişinin kimliği ve değerleri ile uyumlu olması
- Kişisel ve toplumsal dönüşümü sağlama potansiyeli
- Dış faktörlerin etkisi ve etkinliğin sosyal olarak nasıl dolaymlandığı
- Bağlamsal kuralları aşma veya yönetme becerisi

Emirbayer ve Mische (1998) etkinliği üç temel unsurla açıklamışlardır. Bu yaklaşıma göre, etkinlik, bireylerin geçmiş deneyimlerinden faydalanarak gelecekteki olasılıkları hayal ettiği ve mevcut eylemlerini bunlara göre düzenlediği karmaşık ve zamansal olarak iç içe geçmiş bir süreçtir. Pristley ve diğerleri (2015) Emirbayer ve Mische'nin (1998) etkinlik tanımını temel alarak ekolojik bir yaklaşım önermektedir. Bu yaklaşımda, öğretmen etkinliği üç boyuttan etkilenir: geçmiş deneyimler, gelecek hedefleri ve mevcut karar verme süreçleri. Öğretmen etkinliğinin mevcut kültürel, maddi ve yapısal kaynaklara bağlı olduğu, etkinliğinin gelişiminin, bireysel çabalar, mevcut kaynaklar ve çevresel faktörlerle şekillenen dinamik bir süreç olduğunu vurgulamaktadırlar.

Kavramsal Çerçeve

Bourdieu, Bakhtin ve Vygotsky'den yararlanan Holland ve diğerleri (1998) “figured worlds” kavramını, “belirli karakterlerin ve aktörlerin tanıdığı, belirli eylemlere önem atfedildiği ve belirli sonuçların diğerlerine göre daha değerli kabul edildiği, sosyal ve kültürel olarak inşa edilmiş bir yorumlama alanı” olarak tanımlamaktadır (s. 52). İnsanlar bu alanlarda belirli sonuçlara diğerlerinden daha fazla değer vermeyi öğrenir. Bu alan “görevlerini yerine getiren ve aynı zamanda içinde etkileşim tarzları, ona yönelik ayırt edilebilir bakış açıları ve yönelimleri olan figürler, karakterler ve tipler tarafından canlandırılır” (Holland vd., 1998, s.51).

Urrieta'da (2007) vurgulandığı gibi, bu kavramı kullanmak, faaliyete odaklandığı ve güç ilişkilerini vurguladığı için eğitimde kimlik ve etkinlik incelerken çok yardımcı

olabilir. Bu çerçevede etkinlik, güç ve konumsallık açıkça merkeze alınmaktadır. Benzer şekilde, Bennett ve diğerlerine (2017) göre etkinliği daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olabileceğini düşündükleri bu kavram, “mevcut topluluk değerleri ve uygulamaları içinde 'olma' yollarının çeşitliliğini vurgular. Bunu yaparken, bireyin dünyayı nasıl anlamlandıracağını seçme konusundaki etkinliğini vurgularken, bu tür seçimlerin yapıldığı sosyal yapıları ve güç alanlarını da tanır” (p. 255).

Birden fazla “olma” yolu vardır ve bu kavram, insanların içinde yaşadıkları dünyayı kendi yapıları ve güç dinamikleriyle nasıl yorumladıklarını, nasıl kararlar aldıklarını ve duruş sergilediklerini daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir. Bu çerçeve, kimlik, etkinlik ve güce gösterdiği özel ilgiyle, günümüzde İngilizce öğretmenliğini ve öğretmenleri etkileyen ve yönlendiren daha geniş yapıları keşfedebileceğimiz bir mercek sağlar. Ayrıca, katılımcıların bu mevcut yapılar içinde kendi yeni değişim alanlarını yaratabilme yeteneğini vurgular.

Bu kavram aynı zamanda belirli toplulukların ve katılımcılarının “sınırlılığını” vurgular. Üniversiteler ve sınıflar gibi alanların hepsinin benzersiz ve belirli şekillerde sınırlandırılmış olduğunu kabul eder. Bu alanlarda öğretmenler, değişimlere ve dış taleplere yanıt olarak yorumlama alanlarında sürekli etkileşim halinde olan ve bu alanları inşa eden aktörler olarak görülmektedir.

Yöntem

Sosyal yapılandırmacı araştırma paradigması doğrultusunda, bu çalışma, insanların dünyayla etkileşimde bulunurken çoklu ve öznel gerçeklikler inşa ettiklerini ve bu yorumların insanlar arasındaki etkileşimler ve bu insanların içinde buldukları belirli bağlamlar tarafından şekillendirildiğini kabul etmektedir (Creswell, 2014). Mevcut çalışma, öğretmenlerin detaylı hikayelerini, deneyimlerinin karmaşıklığını ve etkinlik yönelimlerini anlamak için nitel araştırma çerçevesinde bir anlatı araştırması olarak tasarlanmıştır. İnsanlar eylemlerini anlatılar yoluyla açıklar ve gerekçelendirir. Bu nedenle anlatı çalışması, insanların neden farklı eylemlerde bulunduğunu daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olur çünkü anlatılar bizi yansıtır. Moreira ve diğerleri (2021), Freire'ye (1975) atıfta bulunarak, öğretmenlerin

profesyonel yaşamlarına ilişkin hikayeler anlatırken “farklılık, dayanışma ve özgürleştirici pratiklere ilişkin anlayışlarını engelleyen mevcut uygulamaları ve öğretmenlerin çalışma vizyonlarını sorgulayarak eğitim önceliklerini ortaya koyduklarını ve statükoyu sorguladıklarını” belirtmektedir (s. 58). Bu nedenle, anlatı çalışması, öğretmenlerin alternatif uygulamaları dile getirmeleri için de bir alan yaratır ve bazen hem anlatıcılarına hem de okuyuculara ilham verebilen karşıt anlatılar olarak işlev görebilir.

Örnekleme, Katılımcılar ve Bağlam

Nitel bir çalışmada, katılımcıların seçimine ilişkin bilinçli kararlar almak ve örnekleme parametrelerini tanımlamak için bir örnekleme planının olması önemlidir (Dörnyei, 2007). Bir anlatı araştırması olarak tasarlanan bu çalışmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Çalışmanın katılımcıları, Türkiye'de Kurumsal Akreditasyon Programı'na tabi bir yükseköğretim kurumunun hazırlık okulunda 15 yıldan fazla öğretmenlik deneyimine sahip sekiz kıdemli dil öğretmeninden oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin en eski devlet üniversitelerinden biri olan Kardelen (takma ad) hazırlık okulunda yürütülmüştür. Okul, yeni kayıt yaptıran öğrencilere fakülte eğitimlerine devam edebilmeleri için yoğun İngilizce dersleri vermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Üniversitenin *2023 Stratejik Planı* öğretmenler için üç temel rolü vurgulamaktadır: araştırma, eğitim ve toplum hizmeti. Üniversite, dünya çapında önde gelen bir araştırma statüsüne ulaşmayı, ulusal ve uluslararası ortaklarla güçlü ağlar kurmayı ve sağlam bir mali yapıya sahip, öğrenci merkezli, erişilebilir bir küresel üniversite olmayı hedeflemektedir. *Üniversite Kalite Politikası* belgesine göre, öğretmenlerden küresel ortaklıkları geliştirmeleri, araştırma ve eğitim kalitesini artırmaları, uluslararası dergilerde yayın yapmaları ve uluslararası tanınırlık kazanmaları beklenmektedir. *Kardelen Stratejik Planı, 2023*, dil öğretiminde uzmanlık ihtiyacını vurgulamakta, sınıflarda bir öğrenme ve sorgulama kültürü geliştirme ve eleştirel düşüncüyü teşvik etme gerekliliğine vurgu yapmaktadır. Plan ayrıca, kaynakların etkin kullanımı, etik ilkelere bağlılık, evrensel ve insani değerlere saygı, akademik liyakate vurgu ve eğitimde kalitenin güvence altına alınması gibi bazı temel ilkelerin altını çizmektedir.

Veri Toplama ve Analizi

Bu anlatı çalışmasında, Türkiye'deki bir yükseköğretim kurumu bağlamında deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenleriyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış çevrimiçi görüşmeler birincil veri kaynağı olarak kullanılmıştır. Görüşmelerin yanında, nitel araştırmanın özelliklerine uygun olarak verilerin çeşitlendirilmesi amacıyla etnografik gözlemler ve belgeler de değerlendirilmiştir. Veri toplama süreci Aralık 2021'de başlamış ve Temmuz 2024'te tamamlanmıştır. Görüşme soruları araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanmış ve görüşmeler öğretmenlerin tercihlerine göre Türkçe olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Toplamda sekiz öğretmen ile 32 görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmelerin toplam süresi 47 saat 32 dakikadır.

Nitel veri analizi için çeşitli çerçeveler bulunmaktadır (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Riessman, 1993; Saldana, 2015). Creswell (2013) tarafından önerilen yaklaşım izlenerek, veri analizi süreci verinin hazırlanması ve düzenlenmesi ile başlamıştır. Tüm görüşmeler kelimesi kelimesine yazıya dökülmüştür. Veri analizi, veri toplama süreciyle eş zamanlı olarak araştırmacı tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler, öğretmenlerin kişisel hikayelerini yansıtmak ve kendi deneyimlerini nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını göstermek için içerik analizi (Patton, 2015), kategorik içerik analizi (Liebliech vd., 1998) veya tematik analiz (Barkhuizen vd., 2014) yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu süreç, verilerin birçok kez okunmasını, kodlanmasını ve kategorilere ayrılmasını ve tematik başlıklar kullanılarak yeniden düzenlenmesini gerektirmiştir (Barkhuizen vd., 2014). Birinci döngü kodlamasının ardından, ortaya çıkan kategoriler ve temalar için ikinci döngü kodlaması yapılmış, sonuçlar çıkarılmış, bulgular yorumlanıp literatürle ilişkilendirilmiştir.

Bulgular ve Tartışma

Bu tez, Türkiye'de bir yükseköğretim kurumu bağlamında sekiz deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenin öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım ile ilgili olarak öğretmen etkinliğini nasıl sergilediğini ve bu kavrama nasıl bir anlam yüklediğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, politik, sosyal ve kurumsal çevrelerin öğretmenlerin etkinlik yönelimlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir.

Araştırma Sorusu 1: Bir yükseköğretim kurumunda görev yapan deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenleri, öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım ile ilgili hikayelerinde değişimi sağlamak adına nasıl bir öğretmen etkinliği sergilemektedirler?

İlk araştırma sorusu, Türkiye'de bir yükseköğretim kurumunda görev yapan sekiz deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenin öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım ile ilgili olarak eylemliliği nasıl hayata geçirdiklerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamıştır. Başka bir deyişle, öğretmenlerin karar verme süreçleri ve etkinlik yönelimleri mikro (bireysel), mezo (sınıf ve okul) ve makro (daha geniş bağlam) düzeylerde incelenmiştir.

Öğretmenlerin anlatıları, kişisel geçmişleri, geleceğe hedefleri, öğretim felsefeleri, işyeri ve daha geniş bağlamların karmaşık bir etkileşimi yoluyla, rollerini aktif bir şekilde yönettikleri, işyerlerindeki ve daha geniş bağlamlardaki söylem ve uygulamaları sorunsallaştırdıkları ve öğretim, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım alanlarında etkinlik sergilediklerini ortaya koymuştur.

Öğretimde Etkinlik: Öğretmenler kendi bilgi ve uzmanlıklarına dayanarak öğretim uygulamaları ve pedagojik kararları ile ilgili seçimlerini bağlamsal faktörlere ve sınıflarının gerçeklerine uygun hale getirerek öğretmen etkinliği göstermişlerdir (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). Sınıf uygulamalarını kendi öğretim felsefeleriyle daha uyumlu hale getirmek, öğrencilerinin farklı ihtiyaç ve ilgi alanlarına hitap etmenin yanında eleştirel düşünmeyi ve özerkliği teşvik etmek amacıyla müfredatı uyarlamışlardır. Öğretmenler, öngörülen yönergeleri temel alarak, öğrencilerin ilgisini çekmek ve öğretim felsefeleriyle uyumlu kalmak için konuları yeniden düzenleyip, tempoyu ayarlamış, bazı noktaları çıkarıp ek içeriklerle müfredatı zenginleştirmişlerdir. Ayrıca müfredatı aktif bir şekilde yeniden şekillendirmek için kendini ifade ve inşa etme alanlarını aktif olarak kullanıp, öğretim materyallerini doğaçlama yapmış, öğretim yöntemlerini adapte ederek kişiselleştirilmiş, farklılaştırılmış ve etkili bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturmuşlardır. Mevcut materyallerin güncel olmamasından, basitleştirilmiş, sınırlı ve etkisiz olmasından duydukları memnuniyetsizlik, yeni içerikler geliştirme çabalarının temel nedeni olmuştur.

Öğretmenler müfredatı ve öğretim materyallerini eleştirel bir gözle incelemiş ve kendi inanç ve felsefeleri, sınıfların gerçekleri ve öngörülen müfredat arasındaki potansiyel uyumsuzluğu azaltmak için sınırlı alanları kullanarak değişiklik yapmaya çalışmışlardır. Ancak, bunun- imkansız olmasa da -zor olduğu alanlardan biri dilbilgisi dersleridir. Öğretmenlerin neredeyse tamamı okuma ve yazma derslerinde kendilerini daha özerk hissettiklerini, müfredatın ötesine geçmeyi, doğaçlama yapmayı ve etkinlik göstermeyi daha mümkün bulduklarını belirtmiştir. Öğretmenlerin anlattıkları, müfredat değişikliğinin “yerel kaynak ve bilgileri” içerecek şekilde “temelden inşasının” önemini vurgulamış ve ilgili ve etkili bir müfredat oluşturmak için yerel ve dış uzmanlar arasında iş birliğine duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamıştır (Canagarajah, 2006, s. 27).

Mesleki Öğrenimde Etkinlik: Öğretmenlerin anlatılarının analizi, yaşam boyu öğrenme ve öğretim uygulamalarını geliştirme için çeşitli uygulamalara aktif olarak katıldıklarını ve mesleki gelişimlerine yatırım yaptıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu eylemler arasında meslektaşlarla iş birliği yapma, hizmet içi eğitime katılma, kendi kendine öğrenme, diğer mesleki ağlara katılma, öz-değerlendirme ve lisans üstü çalışma yapma yer almaktadır. Hizmet içi eğitim ile ilgili, neredeyse tüm öğretmenler bu etkinliklere katıldıklarını bildirmiş ve iki baskın eğilim sergilemişlerdir: Önceki bilgilerine bakılmaksızın oturumlara katılmak ve hangi oturumlara katılacakları konusunda seçici olmak. Öğretmenler, öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını belirlemeye ve mesleki gelişimleri için inisiyatif ve sorumluluk almaya büyük önem vermişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin çabaları arasında lisans üstü eğitim yapmak, öğretmen geliştirme kurslarını tamamlamak, konferanslara katılmak, sunum yapmak ve diğer mesleki ağlara katılmak yer almaktadır ki bu da Sockett'in (1993) değişime ve sürekli gelişime bağlılık kavramıyla örtüşmektedir.

Örgütsel Süreçlerde Etkinlik: Kardelen, öğretmenlerin kişisel geçmişleri, değerleri, inançları ve kurumsal süreçlere yaptıkları yatırımlar tarafından şekillendirilen ve yeniden şekillendirilen bir alandır. Aynı zamanda kendine özgü söylemleri, normları ve değerleriyle daha geniş bağlamlardan etkilenen sosyo-kültürel bir bağlam olarak işlev görür. Dolayısıyla hem etki eden hem de etkilenen bir yapı olarak,

öğretmenlerin ortak faaliyetler ve etkileşimler aracılığıyla kendilerini ifade etmeleri ve kimliklerini inşa etmeleri için bir alan sağlamada hayati bir rol oynar.

Öğretmenlerin anlatılarının analizi, çeşitli birim görevlerinde aktif roller üstlenerek, karar alma süreçlerine katılarak, haksızlıklara karşı seslerini yükselterek ve toplantılarda sorunları ve endişelerini dile getirerek okullarındaki örgütsel süreçlere katkıda bulduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu girişimler, öğretmenlerin kendilerini topluluklarının bir üyesi ve aktif temsilcisi olarak gördüklerini ve öğretim görevlerinin ötesinde örgütsel süreçleri iyileştirmek için çabaladıklarını göstermektedir. Öğretmenler, birim görevlerinin yanı sıra okul toplantılarına da aktif olarak katılmış, politika ve uygulamalar inançlarıyla çeliştiğinde endişelerini ve önerilerini açıkça dile getirmişleridir.

Sosyal Katılımda Etkinlik: Öğretmenlerin hikayeleri, sınıfları, mesleki öğrenimleri ve örgütsel süreçleri için doğaçlama ve inisiyatif alma süreçlerinin yanı sıra, sosyal katılımdaki etkinlik yönelimlerine de işaret etmektedir. Bu, öğretmenlerin sosyal ve mesleki ağlara katılımı da dahil olmak üzere toplumu şekillendirmeye yönelik gönüllü çabalarını ifade etmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, öğretmenlerin anlatıları göstermiştir ki, öğretmenler yalnızca mikro ve mezo düzeylerde değil, makro düzeyde de etkinlik göstermiş ve böylece daha geniş sosyal ve eğitimsel bağlamları etkileyen bir rol oynamışlardır.

Öğretmenlerin hikayeleri ortaya çıktıkça, benzersiz geçmişlerini halihazırda parçası oldukları veya katılmak istedikleri alanlara taşıdıkları açıkça görülmüştür. Başka bir deyişle, öğretmenlerin öğretme, mesleki öğrenme, örgütsel süreçler ve sosyal katılım konusundaki kararları ve etkinlikleri, aile, okul, öğretmen eğitimi gibi daha önceki bağlamlardaki deneyimlerinin yanı sıra hedefleri ve öğretim felsefeleriyle de şekillendirilmiştir.

Araştırma Sorusu 2: Katılımcı öğretmenler mesleki rollerini ve etkinliklerini nasıl anlamlandırıyorlar?

Genel olarak öğretmenler kendilerini tutku, heyecan, merak ve aktif öğrenme hevesiyle hareket eden yaşam boyu öğrenenler olarak tanımlamıştır. Öğretmenler

rollerini sadece İngilizce öğretmeni olarak değil, yaşam boyu öğrenmeyi sürdüren, araştırma yapan, mesleki etiği gözeten, derslerde eleştirel düşünmeyi ve kültürel farkındalığı vurgulayan ve kültürlerarası yetkinliği teşvik eden değişim yaratanlar, rol modeller, mentorlar ve kolaylaştırıcılar olarak tanımlamıştır.

Bu roller, kişisel sorumluluk, dürüstlük, alanında uzmanlık, bilgi birikimini genişletme taahhüdü, öğrenciler üzerinde olumlu bir etki yaratma, öz disiplin ve özleştirme, araştırma yapma, başkalarıyla iş birliği yapma ve alandaki yeni gelişmeleri takip etme gibi unsurlarla tanımladıkları profesyonellik anlayışlarıyla büyük ölçüde örtüşmektedir.

Anlattıkları hikayeler arasındaki ortak nokta, üniversite ve okul kültürünün önemli ölçüde değişmiş olması ve üniversitenin bir araştırma üniversitesi olarak belirlenmesiyle birlikte yeni önceliklerin ivme kazanmış olmasıdır. Bu öncelikler arasında kalite güvencesi, akreditasyon, üniversite-sanayi ortaklıkları, piyasa odaklılık, öğrenci merkezli yaklaşımlar ve öğretmenlerin hesap verebilirliği bulunmaktadır ve bunların hepsinin öğretmenler ve öğretim uygulamaları üzerinde etkileri vardır. Öğretmenler, bu öncelikler arasında gezinirken beceri kaybı, ötekileştirme ve algılanan etkinliklerini etkileyen diğer kısıtlamalarla başa çıkmaya çalışmışlardır.

Zorlu söylemlerle başa çıkmak ve farklı talepleri karşılamak için etkinlik sergilemek basit bir iş olmasa da (Feryok, 2012), öğretmenler pedagojik kararlar alırken, uyarılma ve doğaçlama yapma konusunda kendilerini yetkin hissetmişlerdir. Bulgular ve öğretmenlerin kendi ifadeleri, okuldaki boğucu söylemler, uygulamalar ve kısıtlamalara rağmen, mesleki öğrenme ve sosyal katılımında yüksek bir öğretmen etkinliği sergilediklerini vurgulamıştır. Ancak, örgütsel süreçlerde etkinlik gösterme konusunda, *ilkeli bir çekilme* eğilimini tercih etmişlerdir. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin inançlarına ve uzmanlıklarına bağlılıklarından kaynaklandığı için keyfi değildir ve örgütsel süreçlerde etkinlik eksikliği olarak yorumlanmamalıdır. Bu hareket, öğretmenlerin, okul ve üniversite yönetimine değişiklikler yapılması gerektiği ve inançlarıyla uyumsuz uygulamalardan ödün vermeyecekleri mesajıdır.

Araştırma Sorusu 3: Öğretmenlerin etkinlik algularını hangi politik, sosyal ve kurumsal faktörler etkilemektedir?

Politik Faktörler: Öğretmenlerin anlatıları, karmaşık bir politik ortamın genel olarak yüksek öğretimi ve özel olarak da İngilizce öğretimini şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Öğretmenlere göre, müfredat, öğretmen eğitimi, mesleki gelişim ve öğretim materyalleri ile ilgili kararların tümü politik ideolojilerden etkilenmektedir. Anlatıları çözüldükçe, kalite güvencesi, akreditasyon ve piyasa odaklılık gibi söylemlere ek olarak, politikaların, eğitimi, üniversiteyi ve sınıfları önemli ölçüde etkilediği ortaya çıkmıştır.

Öğretmenler, rektörlerin seçimle değil atamalarla göreve getirilmelerine, tepeden inme karar alma anlayışına, eleştirel düşüncenin bastırılmasına ve ifade özgürlüğünün kısıtlanmasına dikkat çekmiş, bu durumların öğretmenlerin ders içi ve dışı kararlarını etkilediğini belirtmişlerdir. Bunlara ek olarak, kısıtlayıcı hiyerarşi, merkezi yönetim, üniversite sıralamalarının başarının birincil göstergesi olarak görülmesi, üniversiteler arasında öğrenci rekabeti ve başarısızlıklardan öğretmenlerin sorumlu tutulması gibi konular da öğretmenler tarafından vurgulanmıştır. Hikayelerinde, mikro-kredilerin yeni bir pazar haline geldiği ve neoliberal öğrenme ekonomisinde önemli bir yer edindiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmenlere göre, üniversitelerin sayısının artmasıyla birlikte içi boşaltılmış, bu da eğitim kalitesinde ve üniversite diplomasının değerinde düşüşe yol açmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak, öğretmenler küreselleşme ve İngilizce aracılığıyla öğretim konuları üzerine eleştirel bir değerlendirme yapmışlardır.

Sosyal faktörler: Öğretmenlerin anlatıları, öğretmen etkinliğinin, öğretmenlik statüsü, sosyal ağlar, öğretmenler arasındaki etkileşim ve okul kültürü gibi sosyal faktörlerden de etkilendiğini göstermektedir. Anlatılarında, üstesinden gelmeleri gereken zorluklardan biri olarak öğretmenlere atfedilen statü ve itibar kaybı öne çıkmıştır. Geçmişte Kardelen okulunda, öğretmenler arasında iş birliğini, uzmanlık ve deneyim paylaşımını teşvik eden ortak ritüeller ve toplantılar bulunurken, mevcut okul kültüründe bireysel başarıya ve izolasyona daha fazla odaklanıldığı gözlemlenmiş ve paylaşılmıştır. Tüm bunlar, öğretmenlerin özellikle örgütsel

süreçlerde inisiyatif alma ve sınıf içinde ve dışında etkinlik sergileme biçimlerini etkilemiştir.

Kurumsal faktörler: Öğretmenlerin anlatıları ortaya çıktıkça, okuldaki yerleşik uygulamaların katılımcıların öğretmen etkinliği sergileme biçimlerini etkilediği ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmenlerin hikayeleri arasındaki ortak nokta, dil öğretimi politikaları, zorunlu müfredat ve öğrenci değerlendirme sistemlerinin etkililiği, ve sağlanan kaynaklar ve destek eksikliği ile ilgili endişeleri de dahil olmak üzere, öğretmenlerin sistemik sorunlara yönelik çekinceleridir. Öğretmenlerin anlatıları ayrıca, özellikle pandemi sırasında ve sonrasında okullarında dil öğretimi ve öğrenci değerlendirmesine ilişkin politikaların ve verimsiz öğretim materyallerinin öğretmenlerin öğretim felsefeleriyle uyuşmadığını ortaya koymuştur.

Özetle, mesleğin talepleri ve kurumsal kısıtlamalarla başa çıkmaya çalışırken, öğretmenler sürekli ve titiz bir karar verme ve hareket etme sürecinin içinde bulunmuşlardır (Prior, 2018). Yerleşik uygulamalar, politikalar, normlar, tepeden inme kararlar, hiyerarşik meseleler ve öğretmenlerin okullarında karşılaştıkları kısıtlamalar– teşvik, kaynak ve olanak eksiklikleri ile niteliklerinin değersizleştirilmesi– öğretmen etkinliği algılarını etkilemiş ve kendilerini inşa ettikleri alanlarını diledikleri gibi kullanma becerilerini sınırlamıştır. Hikayelerinde, kurumsal faktörlerin, öğretmenlerin özellikle örgütsel süreçlerdeki etkinliklerini en çok kısıtlayan faktörler olduğu ve bunun sonucunda da öğretmenlerin *ilkeli bir çekilme* yaşadıkları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Sonuç

Bu tez, Türkiye'de bir yükseköğretim kurumu bağlamında sekiz deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenin öğretimde, mesleki öğrenmede, örgütsel süreçlerde ve sosyal katılımında öğretmen etkinliğini nasıl sergilediklerini araştırmıştır. Öğretmenlerin mesleki rolleri ve öğretmen etkinliğine ilişkin algılarının yanı sıra, politik, sosyal ve kurumsal çevrelerin öğretmenlerin etkinlik yönelimlerini nasıl etkilediğini araştırmıştır.

Çok yönlü, çok katmanlı ve akışkan doğası göz önüne alındığında, öğretmen etkinliğini yalnızca somut eylemlerle sınırlamak, basit ve indirgemeci olur, çünkü

etkinlik göstermenin tek bir yolu yoktur. Başka bir deyişle, etkinliği öğretmenlerin yaptığı bir şey olarak düşünmek, bunu yalnızca öğretmenlerin eylemlerine dayanarak tanımlayabileceğimiz anlamına gelmez (Costley, 2014; Toom vd., 2015). Etkinlik aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin nasıl seçim yaptıklarını, kendilerini nasıl konumlandığını ve başkaları tarafından nasıl konumlandırıldıklarını kapsar (Costley, 2014) ,ve ayrıca nasıl hissettikleriyle de ilgilidir (Day, 2018; Kayı- Aydar, 2019).

Neoliberal söylemlerin ortasında, öğretmenler okuldaki haksızlıklar üzerine eleştirel bir şekilde düşündükleri, rollerinin vazgeçilmez unsurları olarak etik, ahlaki sorumluluk, dürüstlük, eleştirel pedagoji, demokrasi, adalet ve eşitliğin önemini vurguladıkları (öğretmenliğin ötesine geçerek), piyasa odaklı materyallerin teşviki, eğitimin metalaştırılması ve özelleştirme gibi neoliberal söylemleri sorunsallaştırdıkları için katılımcı öğretmenlerin hikayeleri, ortaya çıkarılmayı hak eden güçlü karşıt anlatılar olarak değerlendirilebilir (Apple, 2007; 2017; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021; Giroux, 2003; 2015; Karaman & Edling, 2021; Kincheloe, 2004; Teacher Development Webinars, 2021).

Bu çalışmanın, eğitim politika yapıcıları, öğretmen eğitimi, okullar ve yöneticiler, öğretmenler, hizmet içi mesleki gelişim ve araştırmacılar için çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Veri toplama süreci pandemi süresince devam ettiğinden, öğretmenlerin anlatıları, özellikle kaynaklara eşit erişimin kritikliği ve gerekliliği konusunda daha fazla bilgi edinmemize yardımcı olmuştur. Öğretmenlerin anlattıkları, daha geniş ve kapsayıcı bir toplum yaratmak için çalışmanın kritik önemini de vurgulamıştır.

Kalite güvence sistemi, bir kurumun genel kalitesini arttırmayı amaçlar, ancak öğretmenlerin hikayelerinin de gösterdiği gibi, bu süreç taban desteği olmadan etkili bir şekilde işleyemez. “Kalite güvencesi” ifadesindeki ‘güvence’ kelimesi bile yukarıdan aşağıya bir yaklaşımı ve standart ve kriterlere göre izleme yapıp karar veren dış organları ima etmektedir. “Güvence” kelimesinin ‘kültür’ ile değiştirilmesi düşünülebilir. Öğretmenler bu süreçler hakkında yeterince bilgilendirilmeli ve bu süreçlere aktif olarak dahil edilmelidir. Yalnızca denetime odaklanmak yerine, kalite

güvencesinin birincil hedefi kaliteyi geliřtirmek ve sürdürmek olmalıdır. Her bağlamın kendine özgü bir kültürü vardır ve eęer bir dış deęerlendirme sistemi uygulanacaksa, kriterler öğretmen ve öğrenci profilleri, kaynaklar ve imkanlar gibi her okulun kendine has özelliklerine göre uyarlanmalıdır. Nicelik uğruna nitelikten ödün verilmemeli ve ne öğretmen ne de okul başarısı yalnızca nicelięe dayalı ölçütlerle tanımlanmamalıdır.

Çalışmadaki öğretmenler, görüşmeleri iyileřtirici seanslar ya da terapi olarak tanımlamış, yaşadıkları deneyimleri yeniden anlatmanın ve yapılandırmanın rahatlatma sağladığını ve bazen gizli içgörülerin ve bağlantıların fark edilmesine yol açtığını belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmen eğitimcileri, öğretmen adaylarının kendilerine özgü geçmişlerini tanımalı, bunlara deęer vermeli ve öğretmen adaylarını, öz farkındalıklarını geliřtirmek ve kişisel yaşamları ile mesleki uygulamaları arasındaki bağlantıyı daha iyi anlamalarını sağlamak için kendi anlatıları üzerinde düşünmeye teşvik etmelidir.

Olsen (2008a), öğretmen yetiřtirme programlarının, öğrencilerine mevcut eğitim ortamında var olan çeliřkiler hakkında açık tartışmalara girmeleri için fırsatlar yaratmasını önermektedir. Öğretmen eğitimi programlarına, bu çeliřkileri tanıma ve etkili bir şekilde nasıl yönlendirileceğini öğretmek için resmi bir bileşen dahil edilmelidir. Hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi de dahil olmak üzere öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmenlerin ya da öğretmen adaylarının adaptif uzmanlıklarını geliřtirecek şekilde tasarlanmalıdır (Hammerness vd., 2005), böylece öğretmenler sınıflarının zorluklarına ve öngörülemeyen doğasına uyum sağlayarak sağlıklı kararlar alabilirler.

Bu çalışmanın okullar ve yönetim için sunduęu çıkarımlara gelince, müfredat çalışmalarında öğretmenlere bazı düzenlemeler yapmaları için biraz alan tanınmalı ve öğretmenlerin deneyim ve uzmanlıklarından faydalanmak için müfredat geliřtirme sürecine katılımlarını teşvik edilmelidir. Öğretmenler, öğretmen deęerlendirmelerini mesleki gelişimden ziyade kontrol aracı olarak algıladıklarında, cezalandırıcı sonuçlardan duyulan korku gerginliğe ve dirence yol açabilir. Bu durum, yapıcı ve olumlu bir ortamı teşvik etmek için okullarda ve mesleki gelişim birimlerinde destekleyici sistemlere duyulan ihtiyacın altını çizmektedir.

Okullar ve üniversiteler, eşit olmayan fırsatların ve diğer işyeri adaletsizliklerinin öğretmenler üzerinde yaratabileceği duygusal yükün farkında olmalıdır. Bu çalışmadaki öğretmenler için bu tür deneyimler onların okula aidiyet duygusunun azalmasına ve motivasyonun düşmesine yol açmıştır. Zamanla bu deneyimler, en bağlı öğretmenlerin bile okullarında gönüllü çalışmalar yapmamaya karar vermelerine- *ilkeli bir çekilme*- neden olmuş, onları nefes alabilecekleri, okul dışındaki alanlara yöneltmiştir. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin okullarında parlayabilecekleri güvenli ve sağlıklı bir kültür yaratmak için bu konunun ele alınmasının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Buna ek olarak, öğretmenlerin anlatıları, kararları ve duruşları öğretmen etkinliğini teşvik edebilecek ya da engelleyebilecek olan yönetimin kritik rolünün altını çizmektedir. Yöneticiler, öğretmenlerin endişe ve önerilerini dile getirmeleri ve etkinlik sergileyebilmeleri için güvenli ve destekleyici ortamlar yaratmalıdır. Yukarıdan aşağıya bir yaklaşım benimsemek ve öğretmenlerin uzmanlıklarını önemsizleştirmek yerine, öğretmenleri görünmez kılmadan karar alma süreçlerine dahil etmelidirler. Öğretmenlere sağlanan destek, kaynaklar ve olanaklar göz önünde bulundurularak, yönetimin öğretmenlerden gerçekçi beklentiler içinde olması gerekir. Yeni politika ve uygulamaların başarısızlığından sadece öğretmenleri sorumlu tutmak adil değildir. Öğretmenlerin katkılarını ya da başarısını takdir etmek onları güçlendirir ve motive eder. Bu, özellikle Atatürk'ün yeni nesli emanet ettiği öğretmenler için büyük önem taşır.

Bu çalışmanın öğretmenler için sunduğu çıkarımları da vardır. Çocuklar keskin gözlemcilerdir ve çocukluklarında çeşitli alanlara girip çıkmışlardır. Bu alanlardaki deneyimlerini pekiştiren ya da yeniden şekillendiren kritik olaylar yaşayabilirler. Özellikle ilkokul öğretmenlerinin, çocukların zihinlerinde olumsuz bir alan yaratmaktan kaçınmak için düşünceli bir şekilde hareket etmeleri çok önemlidir çünkü bunların tüm yaşamları üzerinde kalıcı etkileri olabilir, özellikle de kafalarında yarattıkları alanları yeniden şekillendirmeye yardımcı olan adanmış öğretmenlerle karşılaşacak kadar şanslı değillerse. Neyse ki bugün artık öğretmen etkinliği sergileyen, doğaçlama yapan, kendilerini ve öğrencilerini geliştirmek için çabalayan bu adanmış ve ilham verici öğretmenlere sahibiz. Okullar ve üniversiteler,

farklı dünyalara sahip insanların kesiştiği alanlar olarak kabul edilmelidir. Bu nedenle, öğretmenler, bu çeşitliliğin ve farklı kültürel dünyaların farkında olmalı ve öğrencileri müfredat dışı faaliyetler yoluyla bu kültürel dünyaları tanımaya teşvik etmelidirler.

Ayrıca, bu çalışma hizmet içi mesleki gelişim için de önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin, katı standartlar arasında öğretmen etkinliğini koruyarak öngörülen müfredatı, bağlamsal olarak duyarlı yaklaşımlarla nasıl dengeleyebileceklerine dikkat çekilmelidir. Mesleki gelişim programları, öğretmenleri neoliberal söylemleri ve bu söylemlerin mikro, mezo ve makro düzeylerdeki çeşitli etkileri ile öğretmenlerin karar alma süreçleri üzerindeki etkilerini eleştirel bir gözle değerlendirmeye teşvik eden oturumlar içermelidir. Bu tür etkinlikler, öğretmenlerin kararlarını kendi öğretim felsefeleriyle uyumlu hale getirirken kısıtlayıcı söylem ve uygulamalarla başa çıkma stratejilerini paylaşabilecekleri iş birliğine dayalı öğrenme ortamlarını teşvik etmelidir.

Çalışmanın araştırmacılar için de çıkarımları vardır. Öğretmenler, görüşmelerin terapötik seans işlevi gördüğünü belirterek, hikaye anlatımının hayatımızdaki önemini vurgulamışlardır. Duyduğumuz ve anlattığımız hikayeleri sürekli olarak yorumlarız ve yeni deneyimlerimizi önceki deneyimlerimizin ışığında değerlendiririz. Bu da geleceğimizin hem geçmiş hem de mevcut deneyimlerimiz tarafından şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Hikayeler, hikaye anlatıcı ve dinleyici arasındaki diyalog yoluyla ortaya çıktığı için, hikaye anlatımı aynı zamanda “araştırma ilerledikçe karşılıklı hikaye anlatımı ve yeniden hikayeleştirmeyi içeren bir işbirliği sürecidir” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, s. 4). Anlatı çalışmalarındaki hikayeler hem anlatıcının hem de dinleyicinin hayatını zenginleştirdiğinden (Creswell, 2012), daha fazla anlatı çalışması yapmak hem öğretmenlerin seslerini duyurabilir hem de araştırmacılar için değerli içgörüler sunabilir.

Gelecekteki çalışmalar, farklı bakış açıları sunmak ve çalışmaya daha fazla derinlik katmak adına yöneticiler, denetçiler gibi birçok paydaşın sesini de çalışmaya dahil edebilir. Bu çalışma, deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenleriyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış çevrimiçi görüşmeler birincil veri kaynağı olarak kullanılmıştır. Bununla birlikte,

sınıf gözlemlerinin dahil edilmesi çalışmaya daha fazla derinlik katabilirdi. Ayrıca, öğretmen etkinliğindeki değişimleri daha uzun bir süre boyunca izlemek için uzunlamasına bir çalışma da yapılabilir.

Mevcut çalışma, veri toplama süreci 31 ayı kapsadığı için öğretmenlerin etkinlik eğilimlerinde bazı değişiklikler olduğunu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ancak, bu öğretmenlerin özellikle örgütsel süreçlerdeki etkinliklerinin gelişiminin daha derinlemesine araştırılması ve *ilkeli bir çekilme* yöneliminin izlenmesi, dil öğretmenlerinin etkinliğine ilişkin daha incelikli bir anlayış sunacaktır. Ayrıca, kalite güvencesi ve akreditasyon süreçlerine yanıt olarak dil öğretmeni etkinliğinin değişimine de ışık tutacaktır.

Başka bir uzunlamasına çalışma, dil öğretmenlerinin erken meslek yıllarında gelişen etkinlikleri hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek ve nasıl geliştiğini anlamak için aday öğretmenleri inceleyebilir. Ayrıca gelecekteki çalışmalar öğretmen etkinliğini, bu çalışmada önerilen çok boyutlu çerçeveyi kullanarak da araştırabilir.

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