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# Teachers' Voice: Teacher Participation in the Curriculum Development Process

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## Author Note

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to understand the phenomenon of participation in the curriculum development process through the eyes of teachers. In this research, qualitative instrumental case study design was adopted. The participants of this research consisted of teachers ( $n = 27$ ) working in five public high schools in the province of Niğde, Turkey. The data of the research were collected by using a semi-structured interview form. For the data analysis, content analysis was used to identify the concepts and relations regarding the collected data. In this research, thick descriptions, prolonged engagement, expert examination, and participant confirmation techniques were used to provide evidence for the trustworthiness of the findings. The research identified four sub-categories for each main category, including curriculum development at the central level and curriculum development at the local level.

**Keywords:** Curriculum development, teacher participation, teachers in curriculum development process, case study research.

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

The formation of the Turkish Republic has led to many changes in education (Lewis, 2001). With the acceptance of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law (Law of Unity in Education) in 1924, all educational institutions have been gathered under the rule and supervision of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and crucial developments about curriculum have been sustained so far (Aktan, 2018). Curriculum development studies in Turkey first started at the local level, then were passed to the central organization of the MoNE (Gözütok, 2003). In the 1950s, the MoNE was the only authority on curriculum preparation (Aktan, 2014). Since the beginning of curriculum preparation by the MoNE, the effect of schools at the local level has almost disappeared (Yüksel, 2003). This issue has also caused the curriculum not to meet the needs and interests of the region, the schools, and the students (Aktan, 2018).

For this reason, in 1995, the MoNE authorised the National Education Directorates to carry out curriculum development studies at the local level, and as a result of these studies, commissions were established in which curriculum and assessment specialists as well as teachers were present (Gözütok, 2003). In this way, the commissions formed by specialists and teachers have begun to carry out curriculum development studies (Aktan, 2018). However, the authority given to the National Education Directorates at the local level was transferred to the MoNE again (Yüksel, 2003). With the transfer of this authority to the MoNE, curriculum development commissions were established at the central level (Gözütok, 2003). Therefore, although the curriculum development studies are carried out within the MoNE, not only scholars but also teachers can take part in the commissions formed (Yüksel, 2004). Besides, it was seen that curriculum development studies were carried out at the local level in the 2000s.

The committees established at the local level are intended to make the curriculum suitable for regional and school requirements (Aktan, 2018). Thus, the curriculum should become more applicable in the regional and school boards established within the provinces at the local level. Teachers are working to make the curriculum prepared by the MoNE at the central level more effective in the teaching-learning process. They have the opportunity to participate directly in these plans and make decisions about how the curriculum objectives can be realised. Even though the curriculum development studies within the MoNE work in this way, there is no clear understanding of how teachers are involved in the curriculum development process. For instance we, as researchers who served in the teaching profession for a long period of time, have identified that the MoNE has no clear understanding about the participation process of teachers in curriculum development.

When we examine the regulations of the MoNE regarding the curriculum development process, we notice that teachers' roles and responsibilities are not clear. Although teachers have a place in certain curriculum development committees in the MoNE, the number of these teachers is small. As we reviewed the curriculum when we were working as teachers each year, we mostly agreed that the curriculum did not adequately reflect teachers' views. In these reviews, we identified that the curriculum had many problems regarding its implementation in the classroom. Even though the MoNE asked for teachers' views about the curriculum in an indirect way, we noticed that the curriculum was far beyond the applicability in classroom environment. Besides, we also witnessed many discussions between teachers in terms of the inapplicability of the curriculum, because of their lack of participation in the curriculum development process. In conclusion, we can suggest that teachers' roles and responsibilities in

curriculum development are not clear. We want to clarify this issue by performing such research. In addition, with the help of this research, we aim to reveal the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the curriculum development process. Thus, the purpose of this research was to understand high school teachers' participation in the curriculum development process. The following research questions guided this study:

- What are the teachers' perspectives on their role in curriculum development?
- How do they define their responsibilities in terms of their involvement in curriculum development?

### **Review of Literature**

The curriculum development process is usually carried out by educators in committees working together (Young, 1988). Therefore, in order for the curriculum development to be successful and effective, all groups (i.e., teachers, parents, students, administrators, inspectors, etc.) affected by the current curriculum need to be involved (Hewitt, 2006; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012). While the involvement of school principals, students, inspectors, and the families is very important (Saylor, Alexander, & Lewis, 1981), the involvement of teachers, who constitute one of the main groups of the curriculum development process, has a considerable impact (Oliva, 2008). Experiences and perspectives of teachers should be taken into account in the development of the curriculum (Doll, 1996; McNeil, 2002). Since the curriculum is implemented by teachers, it is reasonable to benefit from their classroom experiences (Marsh & Willis, 2003). In this respect, the effective participation of teachers in the curriculum development process is of crucial importance for the success of educational reform efforts (Fullan, 2001).

The most basic group in the curriculum development process is teachers (Oliva, 2008). That is why teachers should be involved in every step of the curriculum development process (Doll, 1996). Teachers constitute the entirety of curriculum boards or committee memberships (Oliva, 2008). They take on various responsibilities regarding the future of the curriculum by participating in these boards or committees (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2013). Teachers, by taking part at every stage of the curriculum development process, are involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum (Oliva, 2008). According to Oliva (2008), who has a broad perspective on the role of teachers in the curriculum development process, teachers work in curriculum boards to initiate recommendations, collect data, do research, connect with parents and other stakeholders, write and create educational curriculum materials, receive feedback, and evaluate the curriculum (p. 128). According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2012), the teacher sees "the curriculum as a whole and serves as a resource and agent: developing the curriculum in committees, implementing it in classrooms, and evaluating it as part of a technical team" (p. 21).

Some authors have identified a more limited role for teachers' participation in the curriculum development process (e.g., Beane, Toepfer, & Alessi, 1986; Glatthorn, 1987; and Wiles & Bondi, 2007). Although the role of teachers in the curriculum development process is limited, according to some authors, the support for the effective participation of teachers in this process is increasing (e.g., Ben-Peretz, 1990; Carl, 2005; Doll, 1996; Oliva, 2008; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012; Voogt, Pieters, & Handelzalts, 2016; Young, 1990). Oliver (1977), by emphasising the importance of teacher participation in the curriculum development process, asserts that teachers will adapt the curriculum to students' interests and needs and the cooperation amongst teachers will increase. From this point of view, it can be said that it is very important for teachers to participate effectively in the curriculum development process.

Indeed, teachers have valuable experiences within the classroom about learning and instruction (Kelly, 2004).

Thus, it can be argued that the classroom experiences of teachers in terms of learning and instruction have a significant place in the curriculum development process (Young, 1988). Because no matter how well the current curriculum is prepared, a teacher can better identify the most quality learning experiences for his or her students rather than the curriculum (Doll, 1996). In other words, no matter how well the current curriculum is prepared, teachers with their skills and understanding are able to better identify learning experiences for their students (Ben-Peretz, 1990). Besides, teachers in curriculum development committees can more easily see the shortcomings of the current curriculum and better identify the needs of students (Boyle & Charles, 2016). According to Messick and Reynolds (1991), teachers are the closest individuals to students and can therefore more easily respond to their needs. In other words, teachers, by understanding the psychology of their students, are aware about the most suitable teaching methods, learning environments, and assessment techniques in the classroom (Jadhav & Patankar, 2013).

Therefore, while it is very important that teachers, with their significant experiences in learning and instruction, should participate actively in the curriculum development process (Young, 1988), without the active participation of teachers the curriculum development process may turn out to be ineffective (Ramparsad, 2001). Increasing the participation of teachers in the curriculum development process will both enhance the status of the teaching profession and improve the curriculum to provide a better educational system (Klein, 1991). At the same time, while the active participation of teachers in the curriculum development process has increased their responsibilities (Posner, 2003), it has also positively influenced the successful implementation of the curriculum (Kimpston & Rogers, 1988; Young, 1989). Therefore teachers, who are aware of the faults and the deficiencies in the actualisation of the teaching activities in the classroom, should have a great deal to contribute to the development of the curriculum (Alsubaie, 2016).

As a result, while the field experts had a great deal of influence on the curriculum development process in the past, the role and prominence of the teacher in curriculum development has increased steadily (Oliver, 1977). In this respect, the participation of teachers in the curriculum development process should be regarded as an indispensable part of the process, not as a welcome gesture to them (Bolstad, 2004). If the teaching is a profession, then teachers should take an active role in curriculum development because professionalism is inextricably intertwined with curriculum development process (Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

In summary, teachers have a core role that cannot be ignored during the curriculum development process (Oliva, 2008). Without sufficient participation of teachers in the curriculum development process, the chances of successfully implementing curriculum greatly diminish (Carl, 2005). The success or failure of any curriculum depends on the active participation of teachers in the curriculum development process (Messick & Reynolds, 1991). In this context, it can be argued that it is very important for the teachers to get top-level participation in the curriculum development process both at the central and local levels.

Although the support for the active participation of teachers in the curriculum development process has been increasing (e.g., Ben-Peretz, 1990; Carl, 2005; Doll, 1996; Oliva, 2008; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012; Voogt, Pieters, & Handelzalts, 2016; Young, 1990), the research

literature reports that teachers are not able to participate in the curriculum development process adequately (e.g., Carl, 2005; Obai, 1998, Oloruntegbe et al., 2010). Although the research literature reports that teachers are not able to participate in the curriculum development process, it fails to display a broad picture of why teachers are not able to adequately participate. Therefore, it is very important to examine the participation of teachers in the curriculum development process. It is difficult to say that researchers have sufficient understanding in this regard. Being able to develop more understanding towards the participation of teachers in curriculum development can contribute to the future role of teachers in this process more effectively. Thus, this study intends to shed additional light on the phenomenon of participation in the curriculum development process through the eyes of teachers working in high schools.

### Research Design

In this research, we adopted the qualitative instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995). While case study research is an investigation of a case in a current context or environment in real life (Yin, 2003), the instrumental case study focuses on a topic or a problem in a limited case (Stake, 1995). In this study, we focused on a topic and then selected a limited case to sample this topic. In this regard, the views of teachers in terms of their participation in the curriculum development process set a basis for the interpretation of this research.

### Participants

The participants in this research consisted of teachers ( $n = 27$ ) working in five public high schools in the province of Niğde, Turkey (see Table 1). For the selection of the participants, we adopted maximal variation sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods used in qualitative studies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). While purposive sampling focuses on researchers' "judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on prior knowledge, will provide the data they need" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009, p. 99), maximal variation sampling is "a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait" (Creswell, 2012, pp. 207-208).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of research participants

Participant Code	Gender	Educational Level	Years of Educational Experience
T1	Male	Bachelor's	6
T2	Male	Bachelor's	10
T3	Male	Bachelor's	5
T4	Male	Bachelor's	17
T5	Female	Bachelor's	9
T6	Female	Bachelor's	12
T7	Female	Bachelor's	7
T8	Male	Bachelor's	16
T9	Female	Bachelor's	19
T10	Male	Bachelor's	12
T11	Female	Bachelor's	8
T12	Female	Bachelor's	13
T13	Female	Master's	7
T14	Male	Bachelor's	11

T15	Female	Bachelor's	16
T16	Male	Bachelor's	10
T17	Female	Master's	12
T18	Male	Bachelor's	7
T19	Male	Master's	9
T20	Male	Bachelor's	8
T21	Female	Bachelor's	10
T22	Male	Bachelor's	5
T23	Female	Bachelor's	3
T24	Male	Bachelor's	18
T25	Female	Bachelor's	7
T26	Male	Master's	5
T27	Female	Bachelor's	14

Of the participants, 48.15% ( $n = 13$ ) of the teachers were female and 51.85% ( $n = 14$ ) were male. Also, %14.82 ( $n = 4$ ) of these teachers had a teaching experience between 1 and 5 years, 44.44% ( $n = 12$ ) of them had between 6 and 10 years of experience, and 40.74% ( $n = 11$ ) of them had 11 or more years of teaching experience. Among the participants, 85.18% ( $n = 23$ ) had a bachelor's degree and 14.82% ( $n = 4$ ) of them had a master's degree. The mean of age of the participating teachers in the research was 37.8 ( $SD = 3.42$ ).

### Data Collection

Over a period of two months, we collected data from teachers working in five public high schools. Prior to collecting the data, we received the necessary permission from the National Directorate of Education. After receiving this permission, we prepared some semi-structured interview questions based on a protocol (Creswell, 2013). In preparing the interview questions, we examined the related studies in terms of teacher participation in the curriculum development process in the literature. We also prepared some open-ended questions in the interview protocol with the aim of collecting information for the research problem. Then, we subjected the interview protocol to the evaluation of some experts (Glesne, 2011) studying qualitative research. We asked the experts to evaluate the interview protocol and give feedback about the content and the quality of the interview questions. After taking their feedback about the interview questions, we made some necessary changes (i.e., correcting the language as well as the order of the questions, adding probes, etc.) on the protocol form.

We finalised the interview protocol by directing it to a pilot study (Maxwell, 2013), examining the comprehension and usefulness of the questions prepared. Concerning the pilot study, we asked a group of five high school teachers from among the participating teachers to answer the questions in the interview protocol. After that, we made the last changes in the interview protocol, then decided that the protocol could be well-used in the present research.

Although we planned for the interviews with the teachers to be carried out during lunch times at school, some participating teachers asked to participate by answering the interview questions after school ended because of their working schedules (i.e., limited time, work overload, etc.). Thus, while some teachers participated in the research during lunch times, others were involved after school. We planned to give each teacher 30 minutes to answer the questions, but we noticed that some teachers completed the interview in 20 minutes while others took between 35 and 40 minutes. The reason for this was that some teachers gave brief explanations, while others gave rather long explanations and comments.

During the interviews, we took short notes regarding the explanations the participating teachers gave, and then we typed these explanations after we completed the interviews with the teachers. Although the interviews between the teachers and the researchers were in Turkish, all the data obtained from the participating teachers in terms of the research phenomenon were translated from Turkish into English by one of the researchers. The typing of all the research data gathered from the teachers took 7 days and resulted in a 42-page document.

**Data Analysis**

Several cycles of coding were employed for data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Patton, 2002) in order to identify the concepts and relations regarding the collected research data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Concerning the data analysis, we reviewed the raw data three times and identified initial codes to conceptualise the data in order to establish the main categories of our findings. Then, we generated the data analysis process of the research systematically to develop subcategories. Lastly, we tried to interpret the findings, grouped under the main and the subcategories of the research (Silverman, 2010). An example of the data analysis conducted both in the main and the subcategories that emerged during this process is provided in Table 2. Furthermore, we used some code names for the teachers. The views of the teachers obtained from the interviews were given in blocks of sentences, adding code names for the teachers in parentheses (i.e., T for teacher; M for male, F for female; BA for bachelor’s degree, MA for master’s degree).

**Table 2.** Example of data analysis in main and subcategories

Participant (Page)	Excerpt	Subcategory	Main Category
T16 – (p. 6)	As far as I can remember, I wrote my comments on the curriculum from a web page of the ministry that was opened last year	Participation Opportunity in Curriculum Development	Curriculum Development at Central Level
T6 – (p. 14)	My role in this process was just to put forward my views on the curriculum. As a teacher, I am not sure if my views are taken into consideration. So, this shows that I had no responsibility in the process.	Roles and Responsibilities in Curriculum Development	Curriculum Development at Central Level
T18 – (p. 33)	I think that teachers have an important impact in the decisions about the curriculum development activities at school. Because without teachers, these decisions cannot be taken.	Impact on Curriculum Decision-Making Process	Curriculum Development at Local Level
T27 – (p. 42)	Participating in workshops regarding the curriculum studies at school allows me to get more satisfaction from my work.	Outcomes of Participation in Curriculum Development	Curriculum Development at Local Level

Through frequent discussions, we identified relevant main and subcategories of the findings as follows; curriculum development at the central level and curriculum development at the local level. Under the main category of curriculum development at the central level, we

grouped the following subcategories: (a) participation opportunity in curriculum development, (b) roles and responsibilities in curriculum development, (c) impact on curriculum decision making process, and (d) outcomes of the participation in curriculum development. Under the main category of curriculum development at the local level, we grouped the same subcategories (a) participation opportunity in curriculum development, (b) roles and responsibilities in curriculum development, (c) impact on curriculum decision making process, and (d) outcomes of the participation in curriculum development.

### **Validation Criteria: Trustworthiness and Credibility**

In this research, we used thick descriptions, prolonged engagement, expert examination, and participant confirmation techniques to provide evidence for the trustworthiness of the findings (Berg & Lune, 2011). Firstly, the findings of the research were given with thick descriptions to describe the views of the participants, without making any comment on them. We also spent a prolonged period of time in schools to understand the role of teachers in the curriculum development process and develop trust with the stakeholders. We directed the main categories and the subcategories of the research to expert examination, to validate whether the findings were conceptualised under the right categories. Lastly, in order to provide evidence for the trustworthiness for the findings, we searched for participant confirmation for the excerpts, after the interviews were typed.

As for the reliability of the findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest credibility examination in qualitative research. In line with this suggestion, we asked an expert to examine the steps (i.e., data collection, codification of the findings, etc.) followed in the research and make a comparison between the findings and the categories created. We also tried to make codifications for the findings independently. So, we sustained an inter-rater agreement, using the formula ( $\text{Reliability} = \text{consensus} / \text{consensus} + \text{dissidence} \times 100$ ) suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013). At the end of this comparison, we reached an agreement rate of 98%. The related literature suggests that at least 70% of consensus between coders is accepted to be sufficient (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013), so the necessary credibility of the findings was considered to be sustained in the research.

### **Role of the Researchers**

Spending time in the research setting during qualitative studies is crucially important to understanding the phenomenon better (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, we conducted the interviews with the participating teachers and spent considerable time in the selected high schools. We visited the high schools and fixed the suitable dates and times with the teachers for the interviews. Since one of the researchers worked in these schools when he was a teacher in the past, we faced with no problem in making interactions and interviews with the teachers. The teachers participated in the research answered the interview questions frankly.

We also spent time after conducting interviews with the teachers to understand the research phenomenon of participation in the curriculum development process. We were also involved in some teacher meetings at the beginning of the second term of the education year to better understand teachers' role in the curriculum development process. After completing the interviews with the teachers, we visited the schools again to get participant confirmation from the teachers. In these visits, we showed the data obtained from the interviews to the teachers to confirm the views put forward. By including participant confirmation, we allowed the teachers to add new views or delete the ones they put forward previously.

## Findings

Our data analysis resulted in the identification of the two main categories, *Curriculum Development at the Central Level* and *Curriculum Development at the Local Level*, as well as several subcategories. What follows are the descriptions and analyses of these categories.

### Curriculum Development at the Central Level

We identified that the teachers involved stated views on curriculum development at the central level from various perspectives, namely in terms of participation opportunity in curriculum development, roles and responsibilities in curriculum development, impact on curriculum decision making process, outcomes of the participation in curriculum development.

**Participation opportunity in curriculum development.** Almost all of the teachers in the research agreed that they had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the central level.

Previously, I participated in curriculum development process at central level. The ministry, along with other stakeholders, requested to provide feedback online on the new curriculum (T6, F, BA).

As far as I can remember, I wrote my comments on the curriculum from a web page of the ministry that was opened last year [2017] (T16).

When we examined the above extracts, we concluded that some teachers had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process online, while some others had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process through the forms submitted to them.

At my school, each teacher was distributed some forms sent by the ministry and asked to answer the questions written on these forms about the curriculum (T2).

From time to time, some forms are sent to us asking questions about the curriculum itself. When we are asked to comment via these forms, we participate in curriculum development process (T13).

We also saw in the research that some teachers had different participation experiences regarding the curriculum development process.

I participated in curriculum development processes both in 2006 and 2017. Last year [2017], I stated my views online after the ministry made a call to the public. In 2006, I wrote my opinions via the forms sent to schools by the ministry (T27).

Schools are sometimes asked to take part in written surveys on the website of the ministry. In some of these surveys, we answer open-ended questions about the curriculum and the courses. In this way, I can say that we have the experience of participating in curriculum development process (T25).

When we examined the above excerpts, we generally determined that teachers had the opportunity to participate in that curriculum development process, but that this participation

was more indirect. Only one of the teachers who participated in the research stated that he had the opportunity to directly participate in the curriculum development process; he said he did this by taking part in a commission at the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).

I took a position in curriculum development commission at the Ministry of National Education while I was working in Ankara. I worked in a commission related to my branch and contributed to the development of the curriculum (T24).

A small number of teachers claimed that they have not had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process so far.

As a teacher, I have never participated in a curriculum development activity before. Therefore, I can say that the ministry does not give us such an opportunity. I personally have not seen that the ministry is in favour of teachers' participation in such an event (T11).

In fact, the ministry publicly announced last year, for example, that opinions could be posted on the web page, but this was not a request for teachers directly. I did not participate in such an activity, because I did not believe that my opinion would be considered (T17).

It became obvious, for instance, that most teachers had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process indirectly. We also found that only one teacher in the research had direct access to the curriculum development process, while a small number of teachers came to the conclusion that they were not allowed participating in this process.

**Roles and responsibilities in curriculum development.** Although most of the teachers expressed that they had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process indirectly, they pointed out that the roles and responsibilities assigned to them were uncertain.

In fact, I don't know exactly what role I played by participating in curriculum development process. Besides, I can say that we did not have any responsibility in this process. Because it was up to us to give an opinion in curriculum development process; we were not given any responsibility (T26).

My role in this process was just to put forward my views on the curriculum. As a teacher, I am not sure if my views are taken into consideration. So, this shows that I had no responsibility in the process (T6).

Taking these views into consideration, we understood that the roles and responsibilities of the teachers in the curriculum development process were unclear. In other words, the teachers participating in the research claimed that they did not have a role or responsibility in the curriculum development process. Also, some teachers argued that they had no responsibility in this process.

Actually, I can say that I did not have any responsibility in curriculum development process. That is, the ministry said that teachers, like anybody living in the country, could report views on the curriculum. This issue points out that there is no special emphasis on teachers' opinions, but it also removes the responsibility of the teachers in curriculum development process (T17).

Even though some teachers had little or no role or responsibility directly attributed to them in the curriculum development process, they were seen to fulfill the roles and responsibilities assigned to them by the society by participating in the process as much as possible.

Although there is no role and responsibility directly given to teachers in this process, there are roles and responsibilities that society expects from teachers. For this reason, teachers need to take an active role in curriculum development process on behalf of the society (T9).

As a result, we understood that the roles and responsibilities of the teachers in the curriculum development process were generally uncertain. While many teachers acknowledged that they had no role or responsibility in this process, a small number of teachers stated that the expectation of the society itself was sufficient for their participation in this process, even though there was no role or responsibility directly assigned to them.

**Impact on curriculum decision making process.** Almost all of the teachers stated that they had no impact on the decisions taken during the curriculum development process. The participants of the research stated that teachers, one of the essential elements of the curriculum development process, should have a significant impact on the decisions taken, but that this is not the case in the current practice.

As a teacher, I think that I must have an important impact on the curriculum that I apply in the classroom. However, when I look at the practices, I see that teachers have no say regarding the decisions about the curriculum itself (T2).

Obviously, I do not think teachers have any influence on the decisions taken during the curriculum development process. The curriculum is being prepared by the ministry and sent to schools for the implementation. However, while the curriculum is being prepared in the ministry, the teachers should have a say and decide about the future of the curriculum itself (T17).

The essential element of the curriculum is teachers. The practitioner of the curriculum is also the teachers. If it is desired that the curriculum be implemented effectively in the classroom, teachers must participate in the decisions on the curriculum at the top. However, I don't think that teachers have a significant impact on the decisions taken related to the curriculum (T23).

We saw that the teachers thought that they had no impact on the decisions taken about the curriculum. The teachers who participated in the research stated that the ministry prepares the curriculum as intended, and they claim that they have no impact on the decisions made about the curriculum.

Teachers have no influence on the decisions taken about the curriculum. I mean, I can say that teachers do not have a say in the curriculum. The Ministry tells the experts who work in the commissions; they prepare the curriculum as desired (T1).

The only decision-maker about the future of the curriculum is the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. I mean, it is not possible to prepare the curriculum

outside the ministry's will. All decisions are taken by the authorities in the ministry. There is no sign of others (T7).

Except for the ministry, I do not think anybody or any institution has an impact on the decisions about the curriculum. The curriculum, out of sight and knowledge of the Ministry of National Education, has no chance to be implemented in Turkey (T3).

Almost all of the teachers who participated in the research argued that it was not difficult to influence the decisions taken about the curriculum, and that the only authority influencing the curriculum was the MoNE. Contrary to these views, only one teacher defended that teachers had the power to influence the decisions taken about the curriculum and put forward the following view:

Teachers, of course, have the power to influence the decisions about the curriculum. For example, there are many teachers working in the curriculum commissions in the ministry. Therefore, this shows that teachers have a say in decisions taken about the curriculum itself (T24).

Teachers who participated in the research claimed in general that they had no power to influence the decisions concerning the curriculum and argued that the only decision-maker for the curriculum was the MoNE. In this sense, the teachers indicated that no person or institution's decision outside the ministry has any significant influence on the curriculum.

**Outcomes of participation in curriculum development.** Most of the teachers stated that they were satisfied with the participation in the curriculum development process, even though they were involved in this process indirectly, but that they were dissatisfied because they thought that their views were not taken into consideration.

While I cannot directly participate in curriculum development process, I am delighted to share my views. However, I'm not sure if my views are accepted by the ministry. Because of this, such an idea makes me unhappy (T26).

Even if it is insufficient for teachers to participate in curriculum development, I think it is appropriate to give them an opportunity in the process. But, as I said, it breaks my hopes to see that my views are not reflected on the curriculum (T2).

It is nice to report my views on the curriculum, but it would be even better to see them reflected in practice. It is really regrettable that many of the things we complain about as teachers are not removed from the curriculum or that the things we want are not added to it (T19).

The teachers often expressed their discontent and sadness to see that their views were not reflected in the curriculum, even though they participated in the curriculum development process in a limited manner. The teachers also implied that not considering their views on the curriculum created a number of negative thoughts on them and made their efforts for classroom teaching activities invaluable.

Teachers don't have a say in the curriculum. A teacher who has no influence on the curriculum cannot be expected to implement the curriculum effectively in the classroom (T11).

In our education system, the teacher is seen only as a practitioner. Ministry officials think that teachers are not responsible for preparing the curriculum. However, if the teachers' opinions had an impact on the curriculum, the teacher would implement the curriculum more willingly and effectively (T9).

On one hand, the ministry is trying to get the views of the teachers towards the curriculum and on the other hand it does not take these views of teachers into consideration. I mean, this is frankly a disappointing situation for a teacher (T3).

The Ministry of National Education is asking teachers' views in one way or another in every curriculum development process. However, in practice, we see that these views do not make any sense. Obviously, it really does spoil the teachers' morale. So, if the ministry would not take the teachers' views into account in curriculum development process, why did they go on to get their views? (T17).

When the views given above were examined, though the teachers were involved in the curriculum development process indirectly, the fact that the views were not taken into consideration caused negative thoughts and feelings in the teachers.

### **Curriculum Development at the Local Level**

We identified that the teachers stated views on curriculum development at the local level from various perspectives, namely in terms of opportunities for participation in curriculum development, roles and responsibilities in curriculum development, impact on curriculum decision making process, outcomes of the participation in curriculum development. The findings in relation to curriculum development at the local level were held in subcategories, presenting the views of the participating teachers.

**Opportunities for participation in curriculum development.** We understood that all the teachers participated in the curriculum development process at the local level. In the research, it was concluded that the teachers had the opportunity to participate directly in the curriculum development process at the local level.

I can say that we participate directly in curriculum development activity within our school. Because, there are various meetings held in schools to develop the curriculum. Teachers can participate in the development of the curriculum through these meetings (T20).

Teachers can participate directly in curriculum development process either through community meetings at the provincial level or through community meetings at school (T15).

Throughout the year, various meetings are held with the participation of all teachers at school. Through these meetings, teachers are making various decisions in order to implement the curriculum in the classroom more effectively (T18).

It appears that the teachers had the opportunity to participate directly in the curriculum development process at the local level. The teachers expressed that they took part in decisions regarding the curriculum through meetings held at school, and that they actively participated in the curriculum development process through these meetings. However, even though the teachers had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level, they claimed that the curriculum development studies carried out through these meetings were far from serving the purpose.

Even though we carry out curriculum development activities at school, I think that these activities that we do through the meetings do not serve to purpose (T13).

I can participate directly in curriculum development process at school, but the meetings do not go beyond the formalities. At these meetings, very limited decisions regarding the curriculum are taken (T4).

In the research, the teachers thought that the curriculum development studies at the local level were far from serving the purpose.

Of course, there are studies about the curriculum development process in schools. However, I don't think that schools have a significant contribution in terms of the preparation of the curriculum, due to the fact that the curriculum is prepared by the ministry in the Turkish Education System (T2).

Obviously, the preparation of the curriculum by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey limits teachers' contributions in regard of the curriculum (T6).

Personally, I think that the curriculum development studies in schools are rather far from serving the purpose. Because, I do not think that the principal has the enough knowledge to carry out such studies at school (T17).

Schools offer teachers the opportunity to work towards developing the curriculum in various ways. For example, teachers' meetings and seminars at the beginning and end of the year are important opportunities for curriculum development. However, since there is not enough information in teachers and school principals to develop the curriculum, the curriculum studies at school cannot reach the desired purposes (T5).

I cannot say that schools, I mean teachers and school administrators, have sufficient knowledge to develop the curriculum. I do not have this kind of knowledge, too. In fact, the curriculum needs to be developed by schools; that is, schools need to organise the curriculum according to circumstances. But, as I said, schools do not have enough intellectual equipment in this regard (T16).

Although the teachers claimed that they have an opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level, they argued that they do not have enough contribution in terms of the curriculum development process because of the preparation of the curriculum by the MoNE in Turkey. At the same time, the teachers also argued that the curriculum studies at the local level do not serve the purpose enough, because teachers and school principals do not have sufficient technical and information skills to develop the curriculum. It

was understood that the underlying reasons for the inability of curriculum studies were the problems of schools.

Curriculum development studies at local level are very limited. While the meetings of teachers should focus mainly on the curriculum itself, the problems of schools put the weight on the agenda (T24).

The curriculum has very little place in the agenda of teachers at school meetings. The whole meeting focuses merely on school problems. It is not right for the curriculum to come up without solving these problems (T12).

When we examined the views given above, we determined that the teachers have the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level. However, we understood that insufficient knowledge of teachers and school principals for curriculum development, the direct influence of the MoNE on the curriculum, and the high level of problems of schools resulted in unsatisfying curriculum development studies at the local level.

**Roles and responsibilities in curriculum development.** The teachers stated that they had some opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level and that they had some roles in this process.

Despite the curriculum development studies at school, as I said, do not serve the purpose enough, there are some roles of teachers in these studies. For example, each teacher makes meetings with colleagues in terms of the course he / she is responsible for, and puts forward opinions on the effective implementation of the curriculum through these meetings (T4).

Each teacher makes a meeting with other teachers about the course he / she is responsible for and makes decisions in order to be able to achieve the objectives of the curriculum effectively (T13).

Although the same curriculum is implemented in all schools of our country, it cannot be applied as they are in every school. For this reason, all teachers need to make the curriculum compatible with school conditions with a common understanding (T21).

When we examined the views given above, we found that the teachers were not responsible for this process, although we understood that the teachers had some roles in the curriculum development process.

In fact, we do not have any responsibility for participation in curriculum development process. Our only duty is to adjust the curriculum to the level of our students. However, this cannot be regarded as a responsibility. Indeed, the curriculum is being prepared by the ministry; the teachers can apply the curriculum directly without making any change on it or they can change it partially in practice (T8).

The teacher doesn't have a direct responsibility for developing the curriculum that is sent to him / her. That is, there is no direct responsibility assigned for the teacher to develop the curriculum (T9).

No ministry official can assume responsibility for teachers in curriculum development process. The teacher takes the curriculum ready and applies it. That's all (T14).

While the teachers maintained that they did not have a responsibility for the curriculum development process, they admitted that they had a responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum.

I think developing the curriculum is not the business of the teacher. The curriculum is already prepared by the ministry and then sent to teachers. So, the teacher's sole responsibility in this process is to implement the curriculum (T22).

At the beginning of the teacher's most basic responsibilities comes the implementation of the curriculum. So, I can say that teachers are responsible for the implementation of the curriculum. They should be able to achieve the objectives of the curriculum when they arrive at the end of the education year (T20).

When we examined the views given above, we understood that the teachers did not have a responsibility for the curriculum development process, although they seemed to have accepted some roles in this process. While it appeared that the teachers had no responsibility for the curriculum development process, we understood that they had agreed to have a responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum.

**Impact on curriculum decision-making process.** All of the teachers who participated in the research claimed that they had an impact on the decisions made during the curriculum development process at the local level.

I think that teachers have an important impact in the decisions about the curriculum development activities at school. Because without teachers, these decisions cannot be taken (T18).

I can say that teachers are autonomous to develop the curriculum at local level. If a decision is taken at school for the curriculum, then these decisions must have the signature of the teachers (T27).

Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum. For this reason, the teachers are at the forefront in the decisions related to the curriculum at school. As a matter of fact, it is not possible to implement the curriculum by ignoring the teachers in the decisions taken (T24).

When we examined the views, we understood that the teachers had an important impact on the decisions made for the curriculum at school. We also saw that it was not possible to implement the curriculum effectively by ignoring the decisions of the teachers. Although all the teachers participating in the research argued that they had the power to influence the

decisions made in regard of the curriculum development process at the local level, they suggested that this impact was rather limited.

As a teacher, it is not possible to influence all the decisions taken in terms of each aspect of the curriculum. In fact, no stakeholder in school has the power to influence these decisions. Indeed, the curriculum is being prepared by the ministry. For this reason, it is not possible for us to take a decision on the objectives and content of the curriculum (T7).

Teachers can only influence the decisions taken about teaching-learning process and measurement and evaluation aspects of the curriculum. Because the ministry does determine the objectives and content of the curriculum, so actually we cannot change them. Indeed, teachers only have a say on teaching-learning process and measurement and evaluation aspects of the curriculum (T3).

Schools cannot take decisions about the first two aspects [objectives and content] of the curriculum. Because these aspects of the curriculum are determined by the Ministry of National Education. It is not possible for us to change these aspects or to ignore them. Since students are responsible for the objectives and content of the curriculum in the central system examinations, we cannot go through a change in these aspects (T9).

Although the teachers were seen to have an impact on the decisions taken in terms of the curriculum development process at the local level, we understood that this impact was rather limited. In the research, we found that the teachers had no power to influence the decisions made in terms of the objectives and content aspects; they were understood to have an impact on the decisions made about teaching-learning process and measurement and evaluation aspects of the curriculum. Since the objectives and content aspects of the curriculum are prepared by the MoNE in Turkey, the teachers stated that it was not possible to make decisions regarding these aspects of the curriculum. On the contrary, the teachers claimed that they could change the teaching-learning process and measurement and evaluation aspects of the curriculum in practice. The teachers also indicated that they would not be able to influence the decisions made about the curriculum without having the power to influence the whole curriculum.

As a teacher, we must be able to influence the whole curriculum. I mean, we must have the power of influence all over the decisions taken against it. I cannot state that I participate effectively in curriculum development process at school without specifying the objectives and content (T11).

In our educational system, except providing the autonomy towards the implementation of the curriculum, autonomy is not provided for the decisions regarding the objectives and content of the curriculum to teachers. This makes it difficult for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively (T6).

When we examined the views given above, we understood that the teachers did not have the power to influence the decisions made against the whole of the curriculum. While the teachers participating in the research maintained that they should have the power to influence the decisions made for the whole of the curriculum, they supported this view with the following statements:

Some objectives in the curriculum never meet the conditions of our students. So, it is very difficult to implement them in our schools. That is why we ignore many objectives in practice (T4).

There are many unnecessary objectives and topics in the curriculum. I personally find it unnecessary to implement these objectives and topics in the class. While some of these objectives and topics are unnecessary for our students, some of them are unlikely to be implemented. You know, you don't have any material, your classroom environment is poor, etc. (T21).

Some topics are very boring for our students. Also, some are very incomprehensible for them. So, it seems hard to implement them in the classroom (T18).

While the teachers expressed the problems in terms of their inability to influence the decisions made about the whole of the curriculum, they argued that some objectives and contents in the curriculum were inapplicable. The teachers also argued that some objectives and contents were not appropriate for the conditions of their students and schools, claiming that they have no power to influence the decisions made against the curriculum.

**Outcomes of participation in curriculum development.** The teachers expressed satisfaction with having the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level. At the same time, the teachers implied that their participation in curriculum development effectively contributed to the process of implementing the curriculum, making them more satisfied with their work.

Participating in workshops regarding the curriculum studies at school allows me to get more satisfaction from my work (T27).

Personally, I am glad to be involved in curriculum development process at school. I think participation in curriculum development process is important, although teachers are not able to change much about the curriculum (T3).

I mean, I'm happy with doing my job at once. It is gratifying to see the decisions regarding the curriculum to be implemented in the classroom (T24).

I am pleased to see my views reflected on the decisions regarding the curriculum. At the same time, I enjoy doing my job more (T20).

Of course, our participation in curriculum development process is rather limited. We do not have a chance to change a lot about the curriculum. However, it is gratifying to put forward views regarding the curriculum and to see these views taken into account. I am so happy. Seeing that an individual's views are accepted increases his or her respect for the work they are doing. At the same time, this allows the individual to further own the work he or she is doing (T6).

When we examined the views given above, we saw that the teachers' participation in the curriculum development process was satisfactory, and that it increased their job satisfaction and the ownership of the work they were doing. However, we understood that a few teachers

argued that their participation in the curriculum development process did not give them any positive feelings and thoughts.

Obviously, involving in curriculum development process at school does not make any sense to me. In fact, it's like a chore (T7).

There is no impact of teachers on the overall curriculum. Because of this, studies at school seem far from serving the purpose, and the decisions taken are not likely to be applied in the classroom (T10).

When we examined the given views, we understood that some teachers argued that their participation in the curriculum development process at school did not give them positive feelings and thoughts. These teachers also suggested that their studies regarding the curriculum at the local level cannot go beyond being a chore, claiming that they had no impact on the overall curriculum. As a result, while the participation in the curriculum development process at the local level seemed to encourage positive emotions and thoughts in most of the teachers, this process resulted in some negative emotions and thoughts for a few teachers.

### **Discussion**

The research findings of this study underscore the fact that almost all teachers had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the central level. However, the teachers stated that this was done in very indirect ways (i.e., via online surveys, published forms). In this respect, our findings suggest that the teachers did not have the opportunity to directly participate in the curriculum development process. From this finding, it can be argued that the opportunity for teachers to participate in the curriculum development process is rather limited. Even though there is a growing support in the research literature for teachers to participate more in the curriculum development process (e.g., Ben-Peretz, 1990; Carl, 2005; Doll, 1996; Oliva, 2008; Oliver, 1977; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012; Voogt, Pieters, & Handelzalts, 2016; Young, 1990), it is reported that teachers are not able to participate in this process adequately (e.g., Carl, 2005; Obai, 1998; Oloruntegbe et al., 2010). However, teachers, as the implementers of curriculum in the classroom, should be actively involved in the curriculum development process (Elliott, 1994; Handler, 2010; Oliva, 2008; Oliver, 1977; Young, 1988). As the closest people to the students, teachers are very familiar with their interests and needs (Messick & Reynolds, 1991). In this respect, it is necessary to reflect the experiences of teachers gained in the classroom on curriculum development process effectively (Ben-Peretz, 1990; Kirk & MacDonald, 2001).

Also, the level of teacher participation in the curriculum development process leads to effective achievement of educational reform (Fullan, 2001). So, it can be suggested that the sustainability of educational reform initiatives relies on teachers' active participation in the curriculum development process (Kubitskey & Fishman, 2006). In this sense, teachers should be regarded as an integral part of the curriculum development process and not merely as translating the intentions and ideologies of others into practice (Connely & Clandinin, 1986). Of course, there may be some reasons why teachers are not encouraged to actively participate in the curriculum development process at the central level (Maleybe, 1999). In particular, it may not be seen as suitable for teachers to participate directly in the curriculum development process at the central level, because of their inadequacy in curriculum development (e.g., Baş,

2016; Elliott, 1994; Yüksel, 1998). For this reason, teachers should be adequately trained regarding the curriculum development process (Alsubai, 2016; Elliott, 1994).

Besides, we found that the roles and responsibilities of teachers, who did not have enough opportunities for participation, were not clear in the research. In other words, while the teachers expressed that they were not able to participate directly in the curriculum development process, they stated that the contribution they made regarding this process was unclear. The teachers also implied that the roles and responsibilities in the curriculum development process were unclear and that they did not have a role or responsibility directly assigned to them in this process. The teachers who participated in the research argued that, although the MoNE sometimes asked for their views about the curriculum indirectly, special attention was not given to them in this process. However, while many teachers acknowledged that they have no role and responsibility in the curriculum development process, a small number of teachers stated that the expectation of the society itself was sufficient for their participation in this process, even though there was no role or responsibility directly assigned to them.

The research literature also reports that teachers have no role in developing the curriculum outside the classroom, drawing attention to the ambiguity of the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the curriculum development process (e.g., Carl, 2005; Saban, 1995). In this respect, it seems difficult for teachers to prepare the curriculum with high applicability without having defined roles and responsibilities in the curriculum development process (Carl, 2009). Besides, it can be said that it is not possible for teachers to adopt and effectively implement the curriculum unless they see a role and responsibility specifically attributed to them in curriculum development. Also, educational reform initiatives cannot be successfully attained when teachers' roles in the curriculum development process are unclear (Mokua, 2010). In this vein, the role of teachers in the curriculum development process must be clearly defined and they must be able to actively participate in this process.

On the other hand, the teachers in our research declared that they did not have the power to influence the decisions taken at the central level regarding the curriculum development process. In fact, this finding in our research supports the first two findings reported previously. The fact that teachers are not given enough opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process may have created the impression that they have no power to influence the decisions taken in relation to this process. At the same time, teachers' unclear roles and responsibilities in curriculum development may have caused them to think that they have no power to influence the decisions made. Obviously, the fact that teachers are not given enough opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process and that they are not able to identify their roles and responsibilities in this process can give the impression that their views are not taken into consideration. Teachers, however, are the closest individuals to the circumstances of the decisions made (Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Thus, the role of teachers as implementers gives them a significant influence on curriculum decisions (Oliva, 2008). The role of teachers in practice is in fact an important part of developing the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012). Therefore, involving teachers in the curriculum decision-making process influences them positively to implement the curriculum in the classroom (Maleybe, 1999). In this sense, it is very important that teachers have the power to influence these decisions by participating in the curriculum development process (Lawton, 2012). Indeed, the fact that teachers have the power to influence the decisions during the curriculum development process can also provide a balance in the political decisions regarding the curriculum (Henderson, 2001). Otherwise, the decisions made about the curriculum may be a

reflection of a certain tendency or an ideology (Apple, 2004). For this reason, teachers need to have the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process actively (Oliva, 2008), as well as have the power to influence the decisions about the future of the curriculum (Doll, 1996).

Although we also found that the majority of the teachers seemed satisfied with their participation in the curriculum development process, we understood they were dissatisfied because they thought that their views were not taken into consideration. In other words, teachers are dissatisfied with their insufficient participation in the curriculum development process and with their inability to influence the decisions taken in this process. At the same time, we understood the teachers had negative feelings and thoughts because their views in terms of the curriculum were not taken into consideration, which in turn made their efforts towards teaching activities in the classroom invaluable. In this regard, it can be said that it is important that teachers contribute more to the curriculum development process. Teachers' direct contribution to the curriculum development studies at the central level and their influence on the decisions made in this process can not only contribute to their social integration (e.g., Shriner, Schlee, & Libler, 2010), but also increase their job satisfaction level (e.g., Chi-Keung, 2008; Rice, 1993). In addition, the effective participation of teachers in the curriculum development process can also increase their confidence and morale (e.g., Evans, 1997; Ho, 2010). Furthermore, more the effective assignment of teachers to the curriculum development process can also improve them professionally (e.g., Young, 1988, 1990). As a result, it is very important for teachers to participate actively in the curriculum development process at the central level. In countries such as Turkey where curriculum development practices are carried out at the central level (see Aktan, 2018; Gözütok, 2003), teachers, as the implementers, should actively participate in the curriculum development process. Active participation of teachers in curriculum development will allow them to become more involved in the decisions and will also increase their beliefs and courage to implement the decisions made about the curriculum itself.

With regard to the second main category identified in the research, along with its subcategories—such as opportunities for participation in curriculum development, roles and responsibilities in curriculum development, impact on curriculum decision making process, and outcomes of the participation in curriculum development—we can conclude that teachers had the opportunity to participate directly in the curriculum development process at the local level. The participants in the research expressed that teachers make decisions about the curriculum through meetings held at schools, and that they actively participate in the curriculum development process through these meetings. From this point of view, it can be said that teachers have an opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level, which is considered positive. However, even though the teachers participating in the research had this opportunity, they claimed that curriculum development studies carried out through the meetings were far from serving the purpose. Although the teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level, they claimed that they lacked sufficient contribution to the development of curriculum because of its preparation by the MoNE in Turkey. While the state determines what will take place in the curriculum in local level administration systems, the controlling authority over how these are carried out belongs to school (Bolstad, 2004). In countries where there are centralised administration systems such as Turkey (see Aktan, 2018), the curriculum is prepared by the MoNE and then sent to schools to be implemented by teachers (Yüksel, 2003). In this respect, it can be said that teachers do not have the authority to go too far on the curriculum. Teachers, however, should take more roles in the process of preparing and developing the curriculum

(Candoli, 1991). Further participation of teachers in the development of the curriculum can serve to bring about a curriculum closer to implementation (Vollansky & Bar-Elli, 1995).

Besides, giving teachers more roles and responsibilities in the curriculum development process may also increase the productivity in the context of quality of instruction (Goodlad, 1994). At the same time, the participants of the research argued that the curriculum is not serving the purpose enough because teachers and school administrators do not have sufficient knowledge in developing the curriculum. Actually, it is essential that teachers and school administrators have adequate knowledge and skills in curriculum development (Oliva, 2008), since the success of the curriculum depends on the knowledge and equipment that these stakeholders have in school (Fullan, 2001). While the research literature suggests that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and skills regarding curriculum development (e.g., Baş, 2016; Yüksel, 1998), this indicates that developing the curriculum at the local level is far from serving the purpose. It is also known that school administrators do not make sufficient contributions to the professional development of teachers in curriculum development (Young, 1988).

The research literature also reports that teachers receive little encouragement and support to grow professionally in curriculum development (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). In this sense, the professional development of teachers should be sustained in order to make them develop curriculum at the local level (Elliott, 1994). For this reason, school administrators need to be more supportive and encouraging to incorporate teachers into the curriculum development process (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Watkins, 2005). From this point of view, it can be said that school administrators must have sufficient knowledge and skills regarding the curriculum development (Wiles, 2008). On the other hand, while the teachers in the research acknowledged that they had the opportunity to participate in curriculum development at the local level, they expressed that they had some roles in this process. Nevertheless, we found that even though teachers have some roles regarding the curriculum development process, they were not found to be responsible for this process. In this study, the teachers stated that they have responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum rather than for the development of it. Hence, we understood that the teachers claimed that they did not have responsibility for the curriculum development process. This finding showed that the teachers have a great deal of responsibility at the point of implementing the curriculum, rather than developing it. More active participation of teachers in the curriculum development process increases their ownership of and commitment to the decisions made about the curriculum itself (Chapman, 1990). It seems unlikely that a teacher who does not feel responsible for the development of the curriculum to show commitment to the implementation of the curriculum (Carl, 2009). For this reason, teachers need more authority (Murphy, 1991) and roles in curriculum development at the local level (Candoli, 1991). Teachers can make more contributions to the future of the curriculum by having more opportunities to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level (Oswald, 1997).

The teachers who participated in this study argued that they have an impact on the decisions made during the curriculum development process at the local level. However, they indicated that this impact was rather limited. In the research, while we saw that the teachers had no power to influence the decisions regarding the objectives and content aspects of the curriculum, we concluded that they have the power to influence the decisions about teaching-learning process and measurement and assessment aspects. The teachers stated that it was not possible to take decisions regarding the objectives and content because of the preparation of these aspects by the MoNE. On the contrary, the teachers suggested that they can make

changes in the teaching-learning process and measurement and assessment activities in practice. The teachers indicated that they would not be able to influence the decisions made without having the power to influence the whole of the curriculum. It is thought that the centralised administration structure of the Turkish Educational System is effective for the finding obtained in the research (see Yüksel, 2003). This is because the curriculum in the Turkish Educational System is prepared by the MoNE and sent to schools for the implementation by teachers (see Aktan, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that the curriculum is the product of a certain philosophical orientation or an ideology (Apple, 2004). In other words, it can be argued that the MoNE, a political body, dominates a certain ideology on the curriculum (İnal, 2008; Kaplan, 1999). For this reason, the objectives and content of the curriculum are under the supervision of the MoNE and the schools are not authorised to change them (Yüksel, 2004). However, in school-based administration systems, schools are given the authority to shape and develop the curriculum (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995), and teachers have more roles in determining the objectives (Candoli, 1991) and the content of the curriculum (Vollansky & Bar-Elli, 1995). A detailed control of the curriculum is carried out by teachers and administrators at the local level (Bolstad, 2004). In this respect, schools should have the freedom to shape their own curriculum as long as they conform to the general framework established by the state (Yüksel, 1998). This is because teachers' participation in the decisions made during the curriculum development process increases their commitment to the implementation of the curriculum itself (Chapman, 1990).

Finally, the teachers in the research expressed satisfaction with having the opportunity to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level. At the same time, the teachers implied that their participation in curriculum development effectively contributed to the process of implementing the curriculum, making them more satisfied with their work. In this study, some teachers claimed that curriculum studies at the local level could not go beyond being a chore, as they had no impact on the whole of the curriculum. As a result, their participation in the curriculum development process at the local level seemed to stimulate positive feelings and thoughts in most of the teachers. The research regarding the employee involvement in the decision-making processes showed that participation results in high levels of job satisfaction, job performance, and organisational commitment (e.g., Chi-Keung, 2008; Rice, 1993; Zembylas, & Papanastasiou, 2005). In addition, active participation of teachers in the curriculum development process can also increase their confidence and morale (e.g., Evans, 1997; Ho, 2010). On the other hand, their participation in the curriculum development process at the local level proved to be positive for most of the teachers, and this process resulted in the emergence of some negative emotions and thoughts for a few of the teachers. Despite the fact that teachers are pleased to take part in the curriculum development process (Young, 1990), some factors may not encourage them to participate in this process. In particular, the fact that teachers are not charged for taking part in the curriculum development process can cause them to view this process as a chore (Young, 1988). Furthermore, the lack of consideration of teachers' views in the decisions made about the curriculum may lead them to have a negative view of the process (Carl, 2005; Oloruntegbe et al., 2010).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

An essential finding of this study is that the teachers have more opportunities to participate in the curriculum development process at the local level, rather than at the central level, and that they were more likely to participate in the decision-making process and to be more satisfied at the end of this process. As we were working as teachers in the MoNE, we experienced having more opportunities to participate in curriculum development at the local level, compared to

the central one. At the local level, there are teacher discussions regarding the implementation of the curriculum, thus increasing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Although the curriculum is prepared by the MoNE in Turkey (see Aktan, 2018), teachers are free to make necessary changes in the teaching-learning process, adapting it to the conditions of their students and schools. This, in turn, makes teachers more satisfied with the participation in decision-making process of curriculum development. However, teachers in Turkey are hardly able to participate in curriculum development, because of the negative approach adopted by the MoNE. Even though the MoNE makes teachers participate in commissions in curriculum development at the central level, their opportunities for participation are very limited. Also, the MoNE sometimes asks teachers' views about the curriculum but excludes these views in the decision-making process. Teachers are reluctant to implement a curriculum that does not reflect their views adequately. So, taking teacher participation into account in the curriculum development process is critical, confirming the findings of this research. In addition, the teachers expressed the inadequacy of their participation in the curriculum development process at the central level, and that they were not involved in the decision-making process. In the period we worked as teachers, we found that the MoNE did not care about teachers' views in curriculum development. Whereas, compared with the curriculum development process at the central level, it was clear that the teachers have the opportunity to participate more in curriculum development and have an impact on the decision-making process at the local level. When we were working as teachers, we witnessed that teachers have more to say in curriculum development at the local level. They have an opportunity to make decisions about how to implement the curriculum in teaching and learning, supporting the findings obtained in the research.

To sum up, teacher participation in the curriculum development process is a very important issue (Oliva 2008; Young, 1988). Teachers who are practitioners of the curriculum should be more involved in the curriculum development process, thus helping the curriculum to be implemented more effectively in the classroom. So, it seems impossible for teachers who are not able to adequately participate in the curriculum development process and influence the decisions made in this process to implement the curriculum effectively. Teachers should have a say in the curriculum development process, making the curriculum more effective in practice. Since teachers know the conditions of their students and schools, they should be more involved in curriculum development to make contributions to better practise the curriculum in the classroom. By reducing the voice of teachers, curriculum development could be detached from the factual classroom environment, causing problems for the curriculum in practice.

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