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## Pre-school Teachers' Opinions about Professional Development Applications and Teaching Partnership

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### Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to determine pre-school teachers' opinions about the current applications to promote their professional development and level of readiness to Teaching Partnership system to be constructed through the adaptation of My Teaching Partner-MTP implemented in America to Turkey. My Teaching Partner was planned to promote teachers' professional development and to enhance the quality of their instruction. The study group of the current research employing a qualitative research method is comprised of 8 pre-school teachers working in a city of Central Anatolia. The participants were administered a structured interview form developed by the researchers. The data collected through the interview form aiming to elicit the teachers' opinions about the current applications were organized and interpreted within the themes of teacher education, graduated university and evaluation. The data collected to elicit the participants' opinions about teaching partnership were analyzed on the basis of positive and negative perceptions. It was concluded that the teachers experience many problems during the existing professional development applications and cannot obtain the desired benefits from these applications. Three of the participants were found to be both positively viewing teaching partnership and willing to participate in the construction of such a system.

**Key words:** Pre-school education; Pre-school teachers; Professional development; Readiness for change; My Teaching Partner – MTP

### Introduction

In our country, various professional development programs are organized by the Ministry of National Education (MEB), non-governmental organizations, publishing houses etc. for pre-school teachers. These professional development programs include seminars, conferences and workshops held by publishing companies and associations (Ya-pa, 2003; Morpa, 2002; TÖÖBD, 2010-2011; AÇEV, 2009), The Conference of Good Practices in education organized by Sabancı University since 2004 and allowing teachers to share their best practices (İÖK, 2015), applied environmental literacy trainings organized by TEMA Foundation annually in June (TEMA, 2011), nature trainings organized by TÜBİTAK (Güler, 2009; Gündoğdu, 2013; Uzun, 2012) and Pre-school Education Program organized by MEB in cooperation with UNICEF (MEB, 2010).

The Ministry of National Education has long-standing background and institutional culture in relation to professional development applications. In-service training programs for the personal and professional development of teachers have been organized since 1960. These professional development activities initiated in 1960 with 2 courses and 85 participants reached 19,511 activities and 444,692 participants in 2010. Since 1960, a total of 167,563 professional development activities have been organized and 5,927,191 teachers have participated in them. In 2011, totally 21,128 professional development activities were organized and 479,436 teachers participated in them. Moreover, in order to make trainings intended for the development of teachers more widespread, effective and faster, the Directorate of Teacher Training and Development started its distance professional in-service training programs in 2005. In this regard, many projects such as Certificate-based In-service Training Programs (e-certificate), Witpet Project, Intel Teacher Program Trainings, Constructivist Interactive In-service Training Program and Distance English Education programs were organized in cooperation with universities and non-governmental organizations (MEB, 2013). At the beginning of each school year, MEB prepare a program of in-service training seminars on the basis of the opinions of teachers. In this way, teachers find opportunities to take part in seminars suitable for them thus can up-date and improve their knowledge and skills. However, due to reasons such as limited participation in these seminars, their lasting only for one week annually and lack of practice opportunities for the application of theoretical information

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during the seminars, an effective professional development system has not been able to be established (Uçar and İpek, 2006, p.37; Boydak Özkan and Dikici, 2001, p. 237).

MEB Committee of Inspection also supports teachers' professional development. Inspectors of this committee visit teachers in certain periods and offer guidance and evaluate their applications. As in in-service programs planned for teachers to renew and improve the quality of their instruction, some shortcomings are observed in the investigative and evaluative services offered by the inspectors assigned by this committee. According to the data provided by the Ministry of National Education, the total number of inspectors recruited by the Ministry of National Education is 3231 and only 23 of them are graduates of the department of pre-school teacher education and 1 is a graduate of the department of child development and education. A great majority of the inspectors are the graduates of disciplines different from pre-school education and these inspectors evaluate the performance of teachers and offer guidance for them and as a result, they become inadequate in the provision of the support needed by teachers (Haktanır, Dağlıoğlu and Güler, 2010, p.22). It is known that when teachers are involved in a systematic and planned process supporting their professional development and such a system is rendered continuous, permanent and direct positive effects are observed on the quality of education given by these teachers (Dickinson and Caswell, 2007, p.258; Jackson et al., 2006, p.223; Hamre et al., 2010, p.345).

My Teaching Partner-(MTP) is intended to enhance the quality of the instruction given by teachers by supporting their professional development. Within this system, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) originally developed by Pianta, La Paro and Hamre (2008a) is used to determine the quality of teachers' in-class interactions and to monitor their development. In this monitoring tool, there are three main dimensions that are emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. The emotional support dimension is comprised of sub-dimensions that are positive atmosphere, negative atmosphere, teacher sensitivity and regard for students' perspective. The sub-dimensions of the classroom organization dimension are productivity, behavioral management and instructional learning formats. And the sub-dimensions of the instructional support dimension are concept development, quality of feedback and language modelling. MTP is a web-based interaction including the cycles of evaluating the outcomes of monitoring and giving feedback. The teaching partner can be an experienced teacher, a graduate student or an academician who is expert in the related subject-area. The teaching partner conducts his/her evaluation on the basis of the main and sub-dimensions of CLASS. Therefore, a teaching partner must have participated in CLASS monitoring training and obtained a certificate for monitoring. In MTP, there is a secure web-page which can be entered by the teacher and the teaching partner by using a username and password. In this system, a teaching partner can work with more than one teacher. In figure 1, you can see the stages of a MTP cycle that should be completed by the teacher and the teaching partner.

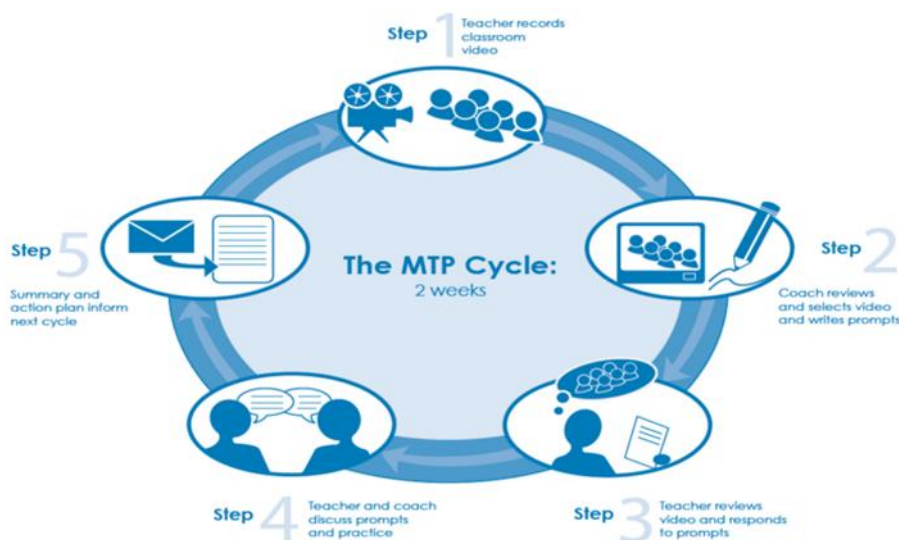


Figure 1. My Teaching Partner (Mtp) Cycle  
Source (<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/mtp>)

When the literature on MTP is examined, it is seen that there are many studies showing the positive effects of the system on the professional development of teachers and on the academic achievement of students (Hamre et al., 2010, p.245; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer and Hamre, 2008b, p.449; Downer et al., 2009, p.340; Mashburn et al., 2010, p.194; Whitaker et al., 2007). Roberts and LoCasale-Crouch (2013), in a similar manner to the present

study, investigated the opinions and expectations of the teachers before starting MTP applications. In the study in which 138 pre-school teachers having mean work experience of 10 years participated, it was determined that most of the participants felt ready for the process of being video-recorded, receiving feedback and cooperation. The participants expressed their expectations from the MTP system as the provision of learning opportunities for them to be better teachers. These authors also found a positive and significant correlation between the teachers' readiness level for the change and their participation and attendance.

The Ministry of National Education organized the National Teacher Strategy Workshop in 2011. In this workshop, it was stated that teaching partnership is a system that should be developed within the context of on-the-job training. Moreover, important decisions were made in terms of why teaching partnership process is needed, what kinds of activities should be conducted during this process and why mid-term effectiveness and applicability of professional development programs should be supported with the teaching partnership system (Yıldırım and Yılmaz, 2013, p.101). In our country, no MTP application has been conducted for pre-school education teachers yet. However, Turkish adaptation of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) used within the MTP system has already been completed (Ertürk, 2013). At the end of this adaptation work, it was revealed that pre-school education teachers need to improve the quality of their instruction. This improvement can only be made permanent with the detailed evaluation of teachers' in-class applications and one-to-one support given to teachers in the areas in which they feel inadequate. With the adaptation of MTP to the conditions of our country, teachers will be able to receive one-to-one support they need.

In our country, pre-school education teachers may not be familiar with a system/cycle including the recording of in-class applications, objective evaluation of the recordings and reflection of the received feedback on their actual practices. At that point, for MTP system adaptation to be realized, it seems to be of great importance to determine teachers who will willingly participate in this cycle because at the end of this application, a self-evaluation will also be performed to elicit professional competencies. Therefore, the teachers who will take part in MTP need to recognize that this application will be conducted for their own professional development and be ready for cooperation. A permanent effect can only be attained with teachers who are open to and ready for the change. Being ready for the change is one of the most-important pre-requisites for change attempts to be fulfilled. Hence, it is quite likely that a change attempt for which the target population is not ready will be resisted and will result in failure (Kondakçı, Zaiym and Çalışkan, 2010, p.159).

Determination of pre-school teachers' state of readiness for the change might help to decide the diversity and intensity of professional development applications to be provided for them. Thus, the best route to be followed for teachers to gain the greatest benefit and to eventually lead to behavioral changes will be determined. Furthermore, determination of the level of readiness for the change is a special importance for policy makers and school directors who are supposed to use the limited financial resources effectively and properly. If the preparedness level of teachers is determined before the application, wasting of resources can be prevented. "Difficult teachers" who are persistent in keeping their traditional viewpoint and not aware of the fact that they should change might get willing to take part in the system after observing the gains of voluntary teachers (Peterson, 2012, p.96; Roberts et al., 2015, p.1046).

The purpose of the current study is to elicit the opinions of the pre-school teachers about the existing applications to support their professional development and to investigate their opinions about the pre-school teacher monitoring and evaluating system to be adapted to the conditions of Turkey on the basis of My Teaching Partner reported to be enhancing the quality of early childhood education in America by many studies (Pianta et al., 2008). For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the pre-school teachers' opinions about the existing applications to support their professional development?
2. What are the pre-school teachers' opinions about My Teaching Partner?

## **Method**

The current study employed the case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. This method was selected as it would allow a deep investigation of the participants' state of readiness for a new system; that is, their openness to the change and identification of the themes related to the elicited states (Creswell, 2013, p.183).

## Study Group

In the current study, 8 pre-school teachers working in a city located in the Central Anatolia were selected through the purposive sampling method. In the selection of the participants, the criteria used were their being graduates of a pre-school teacher training program and continuing their graduate education in the same field. This sampling method was believed to be more effective for finding detailed answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2013, p.189).

Within the undergraduate curriculum of the pre-school teacher education, courses to develop students' subject area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and general culture are offered (YÖK, 2007). Many of these courses are built on theoretical knowledge and practice. For instance, it seems to be possible to plan and implement activities within the framework of the courses such as science education, mathematics education, music education, preparation for reading and writing. Moreover, By means of the courses such as School Practice, Teaching Practicum and Turkish Education System and School Management, pre-service teachers are informed about the operation, inspection and guidance of pre-school education institutions. Thus, it was thought that the participants having certain background information and job experience of at least two years to be able to express opinions about the current applications would be more conducive to the purpose of the current study.

Being engaged in master's studies in the field of pre-school education indicates that the participants are investing voluntary efforts to develop themselves in this field. Moreover, these teachers are believed to be open to novelties and developments and to be ready for the working conditions required by the teaching partnership application. It is also believed that the teachers continuing their master's studies will be more willing to learn about the teaching partnership application to be conducted for the first time in the field and to make some contributions to scientific research. Accordingly, all the participants were selected from among the graduates of pre-school education continuing their master's studies in this field. Professional experience of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Professional Experience of the Participants

Teacher	Professional experience
T1	3 years
T2	5 years
T3	7 years
T4	2 years
T5	2 years
T6	2 years
T7	6 years
T8	7 years

## Data Collection Instrument

A 24-item structured interview form developed by the researchers was administered to the participants. The participants were asked to fill in the interview form. Through this interview form, it was intended to provide freedom for the participants to profoundly express their opinions. While the participants were filling in their interview forms, the researchers were in the same environment with the participants so that they could listen to and observe (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008, p.177). In the form, there are open-ended questions to elicit their opinions about the current applications conducted to support the professional development of pre-school education teachers and to determine how willing and ready they are to adopt the change. In the preparation of the questions, both literature and the experience of the researchers were capitalized on. The questions in the form were reorganized after seeking the opinions of two experts in the field of pre-school education. Piloting was conducted with two pre-school education teachers not included in the study group to evaluate whether the questions are clear and comprehensible.

## Data Collection

The researchers met with the participants at the university where they are continuing their master's studies. Before distributing the interview form to the participants, the researcher made a detailed presentation about MTP. Following this presentation, the questions asked by the participants to clarify ambiguous issues were

answered. The interview form was distributed to the participants, and it nearly took one and half hours for the participants to answer.

### **Data Analysis**

In the analysis of the data, the stages of content analysis were followed (Creswell, 2013, p.194). First, a framework for the analysis of the data was constructed on the basis of the research questions. All the interview forms were read and impressions about the general opinions of the participants were gained. At the second stage, the interview forms were read according to the framework constructed in advance and codes were formed to be subsumed under certain themes. The repetition frequencies of the characteristics of the themes were derived from the responses of the participants. Creswell (2013) stresses that exploration of the themes and codes by different researchers in qualitative research are of great importance for increasing the credibility of the research to be conducted. In order to establish reliability and internal validity, the responses of the participants were independently coded by two experts working in the field of pre-school education. The inter-coder reliability was calculated to be .90. As this value calculated by using Miles and Huberman (1994) reliability formula is higher than .70, the inter-rater reliability has been established. Direct quotations are frequently included in qualitative research to better reflect participants' opinions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005, p.257). Therefore, by supporting the opinions of the participants in the current study with their own statements, the validity has been reinforced. While showing these quotations, the participants are coded as T1, T2 etc.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Findings regarding the Teachers' Opinions about and Suggestions for the Current Applications to Support their Professional Development**

In relation to the data derived from the pre-school teachers' opinions about the current applications various themes and codes were constructed (Table 2).

Table 2. Codes and themes related to the current applications to support teachers' professional development

Themes	Codes
In-service teacher training	In-service training Required Method Plan Active participation Voluntary Quality of training Organization Individual effort Peer collaboration/aid Internet Printed resources
Graduated university	Educational seminars Alumni Contact with academicians Sharing of the problems experienced
Evaluation	Inspector Guidance Inefficiency

The teachers' opinions about the existing applications to support their professional development were analyzed by grouping them under three themes being in-service teacher education, graduated university and evaluation.

*In-service Teacher Training*

Seven of the teachers in the study group stated that they have participated in at least one in-service training course during their professional career. One teacher; on the other hand, has not participated in any in-service training courses before. The teachers having participated in one or more in-service training courses made various evaluations about the course/courses they participated in (Table 3).

Table 3. The teachers' evaluations about the in-service training courses they participated in

Evaluations about in-service training courses	f
I participated in as it was required, it was completely inefficient	2
I participated in voluntarily but it was completely inefficient	4
I think that the training was efficient but there was a problem of timing	1
I have not participated in any in-service trainings yet	1

Majority of the teachers think that the in-service training courses they participated in were inefficient and they encountered some problems. Stating that he/she participated in the in-service training as it was required, T4 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

T4: As it was compulsory, I did not participate in the in-service training willingly. I think that it was inefficient. The other participants have similar opinions about the course. The instructor teaches something by means of a PowerPoint presentation for 3 hours. I feel sleepy. There is no application. We do not talk about the deficiencies in the system.

Stating that though he/she participated in the course willingly, T7 also thinks that the course was inefficient.

T7: In general, it was boring and inefficient. The presentation styles of the instructors were monotonous, the main method of presentation was lecturing, there were no practice-oriented activities and as a result it was quite boring.

T6; on the other hand, stated that the course was efficient but the timing of it was problematic.

T6: It was an in-service training planned to inform the participants about the renewed program. I had already learned something about the program on my own and done my lesson plans according to my own inquiry. During this training, I realized that I had some misunderstandings about the renewed program. It was informative for me as it made me realize some misunderstandings particularly those related to evaluation in the new program. The training lasted for two days; we made lesson plans in groups; it was very useful. But, in my opinion, the training was given in December and it was too late; instead, it could have been organized in the holiday period or at the beginning of September.

Özaydın and Çolak (2011) reported that the pre-school teachers found the in-service training they had participated in dissatisfactory. They found, at the end of the study, that the teachers would like in-service training programs to be organized in such a way as to address their practical problems. In another study, it was found that the pre-school teachers would like in-service trainings to be given in towns not only in cities, to be primarily directed towards the development of special-area competencies and the number of participants to be kept below 30 (Erdem and Şimşek, 2013, p.105).

When any in-service training course is completed, the Ministry of National Education (MEB) requires both the participating teachers and instructors of the course to evaluate it online. If these evaluations are taken into consideration, then the problems related to in-service training programs could be minimized and objectives of such courses could be achieved to a greater extent. However, findings reported in the literature (Özaydın and Çolak, 2011, p.219; Erdem and Şimşek, 2013, p.105) show that in general in-service trainings are not organized considering the needs of teachers and these trainings are not qualified enough. It was determined that teachers find in-service training inefficient in general and thus, they turn to other resources to promote their professional development (Table 4). It is seen that the teachers make most use of internet sites and printed resources to promote their professional development. They are followed by training seminars/conferences and colleagues/relatives. Two of the teachers pointed out the cooperation between institutions. In this regard, the opinions of T3 are as follows:

T3: From time to time, we come together with my colleagues and learn from each other. My elder sister is a pre-school teacher and when I need help, she is always available. When I think that I do not have enough materials, I try to find new materials from Internet sites.

Table 4. Methods resorted by teachers to promote their professional development

Promotion of professional development	f
Internet sites	6
Printed resources	6
Training seminars/conferences	4
My colleagues/relatives	4
Cooperation between institutions	2

Determination and addressing of the training needs of teachers require the adoption of a holistic approach. Consulting a colleague after experiencing a problem can provide short-term solutions. By determining the training needs of teachers and what kind of support they need and then by addressing these needs through an approach built on process evaluation, the quality of classroom practices could be increased. MTP, due to its structure and functioning, is believed to serve this purpose as the teacher can take active roles throughout the process. Moreover, teachers are provided with an opportunity to work together with a teaching partner who is an expert in the field of pre-school education, systematically monitors their classroom applications, gives feedback and helps them to minimize their shortcomings. This cooperation will not last only for two or three weeks as in in-service training courses but for a whole school year.

#### *Graduated University*

It was determined that the teachers in the study group keep in touch with their universities (Table 5). Majority of the teachers stated that they consult their former university instructors when they experience any problem. In this regard, the opinions of T1 are as follows:

T1: I consult to my former instructors to find solutions to my problems. We have a pre-school group here. We are in contact with our colleagues and instructors in social networking sites. We share activities. We actively use our group.

Table 5. The teachers' state of keeping in touch with their universities

The state of keeping in touch with the graduated university	f
I do not have any contact	3
I still keep in touch with it	5

Though the teachers are in contact with their universities they graduated from, they think that this can not meet their professional development needs thoroughly. It was determined that the teachers have some expectations from their universities (Table 6).

Table 6. The teachers' expectations from their graduated universities in terms of their professional development

The teachers' expectations from their graduated universities	f
Academicians should come and organize training seminars	4
I do not have any expectations from my former university	2
Alumni groups should be used more effectively	1

It is seen that the teachers would like the academicians working in their graduated universities to organize training seminars. While two teachers stated that they do not have any expectations, one teacher pointed out that alumni groups should be used more efficiently. In this regard, T6 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

We have an alumni group, but we do not use it effectively. Everybody tries to sort out their problems on their own. If we helped each other and our university instructors got involved when needed, it would be more useful and better. A nice anecdote from our class, a picture of an activity conducted together with children and a problem to be solved etc.

Though alumni tracking have been a subject of many studies (Ankara Üniversitesi, 1995; Özen, Akman, Güler and Metin, 2010; Coşkun, 2007; Kırıkçı, 2009; Ertürk, Özen, Veziroğlu and Erkan, 2011), it is seen that it is not effectively used by teachers. In a study conducted to determine the effect of pre-school teachers' university



experiences on their professional lives, it was revealed that the resources utilized by teachers when they encounter a problem can be presented in rank order as follows: printed materials, internet and colleagues. There was no teacher pointing out the graduated university as a source of solutions to problems encountered. The authors stated that this might be because universities do not efficiently conduct their alumni tracking activities (Ertürk et al., 2011, p.905). Özen et al. (2010) researched the pre-school teachers' job-seeking and inauguration processes after graduation. Within the content of this study, they also looked at the extent to which the teachers think the graduated university helps them to meet their expectations. The teachers stated that the graduated university may help them to meet their expectations at theoretical level but not at practical level. They finally stated that if alumni tracking system can be developed, then feedback about the undergraduate program can be taken and thus contribution can be made to the professional development of teachers.

### *Evaluation*

All of the teachers in the study group stated that all of their instructional applications are evaluated by inspectors but nothing can be gained from this inspection process. In this regard, T4 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

The inspectors coming are not from our branch; hence, they cannot provide good and satisfactory guidance. For instance, the inspector wants the class activities to be more striking but cannot perceive the individual needs of students during the activities.

It is known that the working area of elementary school inspectors is quite extensive (every type of course, guidance and counseling centers, public education centers, in-service training centers, youth and scouting training centers, health training centers, dormitories etc.). Though it requires special expertise, pre-school institutions are inspected by elementary school inspectors. As a result, the inspectors mostly conduct their inspections in relation to physical conditions of the class/the school and the materials that should be prepared and they mostly ignore the evaluation of the content and quality of instruction. As elementary school inspectors are not very accustomed to the field of pre-school education, they cannot offer required and expected guidance and supervision. This results in inspection institutions' loss of credibility and efficiency in the eye of teachers (Aydın, 2013, p.116). Uğurlu (2012) conducted a study to elicit the pre-school teachers' opinions about the tasks and duties that should be performed by inspectors during their inspection and found that the teachers are in the opinion that such inspections mainly focus on physical conditions and interaction. It was also emphasized that these inspections overlook some important issues such as planning the inspection together with the teacher, sharing of the results with the teacher and appreciation of the teacher due to his/her efforts.

### **Findings related to the Teachers' Opinions about My Teaching Partner as a New Monitoring and Evaluation System**

The teachers' opinions about MTP were analyzed and interpreted under two headings as positive and negative viewpoints (Table 7). While three of the teachers stated that having a teaching partner is desirable, four of them stated that they are undecided and one of them has a completely negative perception of having a teaching partner. One of the teachers having a positive viewpoint expressed his/her opinions as follows:

T2: It might be good. If my teaching partner can establish good communication and if I really believe that he/she will contribute to my development, it will be perfect.

T6 expressed why he/she is undecided as follows:

Though I can easily criticize myself, I think I am not very open to the criticisms leveled by other people. In my former school, I argued with my colleagues as they wanted to intervene in my class. On the other hand, it can be good as I am not a type of person who can motivate himself/herself.

The opinions of T5 having a negative perception of the issue are as follows:

I feel discomfort when observed within the class environment. I cannot behave naturally. This will negatively affect the quality of my instruction; thus, won't serve the purpose.

Table 7. The themes and codes derived from the opinions stated by the teachers about MTP

Theme	Code
Positive viewpoint	Motivating
	Establishing effective interaction
	Advantageous
	Open to cooperation
	Teaching partner's being expert in ECE
	Teaching partner's spending time in the class
	Self-monitoring
	Self-evaluation
	Important
	Necessary
	Negative viewpoint
Not open to criticism	
Disadvantageous	
Felling uncomfortable	
Not being able to behave naturally	
Finding video-recording difficult	
Issue of authority	
Teaching partner's expectations	
Teaching partner's attitude	
Being undecided	

In MTP, each teacher has a teaching partner. The teachers' opinions about possessing a teaching partner are given in Table 8.

Table 8. The teachers' opinions about possessing a teaching partner

Opinions about possessing a teaching partner	f
I want to have a teaching partner	3
I am undecided about having a teaching partner	4
I do not want to have a teaching partner	1

It was expected by the researchers to hear some teachers saying that they are undecided about having a teaching partner because the teachers did not have any experience like this. This application will be a new experience for them. Before participating in the application process, it was natural for them to have some questions in their minds and to feel undecided. It was expected that these undecided teachers would change their minds after seeing the success of the application. It is pleasing to see that there are three teachers wanting to have a teaching partner. Only T5 has a negative viewpoint in this regard. The reason for this teacher's negative viewpoint can be explained by his/her opinions about who the teaching partner should be.

Table 9. The teachers' opinions about who the teaching partner should be

Teaching partner	f
Should be an academician	4
Should be an academician, a post-graduate student and a teacher	1
Should not be an academician	1
Should be a teacher having the same problem	1
No matter who he/she will be, he/she won't help me	1

T5 expressed his/her negative viewpoint as follows:

The teaching partner can be someone knowledgeable and experienced. In any case, it is not attractive for me. No matter who he/she will be, I won't be able behave naturally; thus, even if I participate in such an application, it won't help me.

This shows the reason for the negative viewpoint of T5; he/she thinks that he/she cannot behave naturally. Many of the teachers stated that the teaching partner should be an academician. While one of the teachers stated that a post-graduate student or a teacher can be the teaching partner, one of them stated that he/she should not be an academician because they are not aware of what is happening in practice.

T3 and T7 expressed their opinions in this regard as follows:

T3: The person who will be my teaching partner and evaluate my applications should be someone more qualified than me. A very experienced teacher knows the current system; thus, he/she cannot help me and post-graduate education is not enough for such an evaluation; only an expert academician can do it.

T7: In my opinion, he/she can be an academician, a post-graduate student or a teacher having taught at state schools for a while, knowing the education system and students from each socio-economic level, aware of the shortcomings in the class and needs of teachers and having developed himself/herself.

Some teachers' focusing on the issue of authority and intervention in the class rather than the knowledge and qualifications to be possessed by a teaching partner might be because of their previous negative experiences (competition between teachers, negative attitudes of the school director or the inspector etc.). In this regard, the participants' expectations about the teaching partner's attitudes and behaviors were investigated (Table 10).

Table 10. The teachers' expectations from the teaching partner

Expectations	f
The teaching partner should be understanding	8
The main goal of the teaching partner should be to help me	8
The teaching partner must certainly spend some time in my class	2

All of the teachers want the teaching partner to be understanding and to have adopted the main goal of helping the teacher; only two teachers want the teaching partner to spend some time in their classes. T2 and T1 expressed their opinions in this regard as follows:

T2: He/she must be understanding. He/she must be persuasive. He/she must be informed about pre-school education program, procedures at school and the profile of parents. By taking the existing conditions into consideration, he/she must help the teacher.

T1: I want him/her to be in the same environment with the students at least for one week. Thus, he/she can better know the classroom environment, students and the teacher.

Of the teachers' expectations about the teaching partner, some characteristics such as broad knowledge base to be possessed by the teaching partner, being acquainted with the application area, being understanding and using a constructive language are among the duties and responsibilities of the teaching partner specified in MTP. The main purpose in MTP is not to provide support for the teacher within the context of super-ordinate/subordinate relationship but to enable the teacher to conduct an objective self-evaluation with the cooperation of the teaching partner. The teaching partner monitors the applications throughout the process and shares his/her impressions with the teacher by using a constructive language and while doing this, points out the competencies of the teacher to increase his/her self-confidence. Willing to work in cooperation is of great importance due to the structure and functioning of MTP. In this connection, the teachers' opinions are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. The teachers' opinions about working in cooperation

Opinions about working in cooperation	f
I am open to working in cooperation	5
I am undecided	2
I am not open to working in cooperation	1

Having positive perception of working in cooperation, T2 and T7 expressed their opinions as follows:

T2: I can do it because I am at the beginning of my professional career. The more I develop myself, the better it will be for children.

T7: "I think that I am open to personal development. I can work anyone who will contribute to my development. I like being informed about how to do this.

T5 expressed his/her negative viewpoint as follows:

I do not find working in cooperation attractive.

T6 and T4 stated that they are undecided as follows:

T6: In fact I am not very open to working in cooperation but it might be.

T4: I can not foresee how it will be without actually being engaged in the procedure. But, if it can motivate me, and contribute to my professional development, why not?

Though the teachers have some questions marks in their minds in relation to who the teaching partner should be, majority of them seem to be eager to work in cooperation and this is a promising finding. Thus, it can be argued that the teachers who are undecided are not completely closed to professional and personal development and they need to see the concrete positive outcomes of this new system to be more certain and to change their minds. Because of its structure and functioning, MTP actively involves the teacher in the process. In this system, besides the responsibilities and duties of the teaching partner, the teacher has some responsibilities and duties. As far as these responsibilities and duties are concerned, while half of the teachers (4/8) tend to focus on fulfilling the requests of the teaching partner, the other half (4/8) think that they should be open to criticism. In this regard, T2 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

I think that I need to follow the suggestions of the teaching partner and to be open to criticism. It is like teamwork.

For the success of MTP, it is of great importance for teachers to be active and to maintain their active participation. On the basis of the teachers' opinions, it can be argued that the teachers are aware of their responsibilities and duties in relation to the functioning of the application. Within the framework of MTP, teachers need to video-record themselves during classroom applications and watch it. The teachers' opinions in this respect (Table 12) seem to have a potential to affect the proper functioning of the process.

Table 12. The teachers' opinions about video-recording themselves

Opinions about video-recording	f
I think that video-recording myself and watching it are useful	5
Video-recording is hard and difficult for me	2
I find video-recording unethical	1

It is seen that majority of the teachers think that video-recording themselves during the classroom applications and watching it are useful. Three teachers; on the other hand, have a negative viewpoint about video-recording. One of these three teachers having a negative viewpoint expressed his/her opinions as follows:

T3: It seems to be a bit arduous process. You need to both conduct activities and video-record. I also feel worried about this recording being watched by some other people.

Having a positive viewpoint, T1 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

T1: We usually do not have any opportunity to observe ourselves. To tell the truth, I have never done it before. This can be a good idea. At first, I might find it strange to criticize myself while watching my own performance. But over time, I can get used to it.

When the teachers' statements are examined, it is understood that they have never video-recorded themselves to evaluate their own performances. One of the preparations to be performed with the teachers who will take part in the pilot study of MTP before starting application cycles should be to inform them about video-recording. After the presentation of technical information, the teachers should undergo a trial process so that they could be more relaxed and natural during the actual application. When the teacher says that he/she is comfortable enough to conduct his/her instructional activities as if there were no camera, the application cycles can be commenced. In this regard, trial period is believed to be very useful for teachers regarding the process as difficult and arduous. As all the legal requirements will be met before starting the application of MTP, no unethical situation will emerge. Furthermore, the video-recordings will only be used for the evaluation of the teacher and will not be available to the people external to the system.

As explained above, some certain stages need to be completed for the successful completion of MTP process. Through this current study, all the components of MTP (the teaching partner, working in cooperation, duties and responsibilities, vide-recording etc.) were subjected to the evaluation of the teachers to see the potential of the

system to meet the needs. In this regard, the teachers' opinions about whether MTP is in general important and necessary (Table 13) are of great importance.

Table 13. The teachers' opinions about MTP

Opinions	f
I think that it is important and necessary	5
I am undecided	2
I do not find it important and necessary	1

It is seen that majority of the teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of MTP as a new tool of monitoring and evaluation. In this respect, T1, T2 and T7 expressed their opinions as follows:

T1: I think that it is important. The teacher's watching his/her won performance and recognizing his/her weaknesses and exchanging information with another person will be useful for the teacher and accordingly for students.

T2: Yes, it is important and necessary because it would be good to be warned about my weaknesses that I cannot see on my own by another person. My job satisfaction might increase.

T7: Yes, it is important and necessary because we have many shortcomings in the field of education. We need to minimize these shortcomings to prepare our children for scientific advancement and future.

T6 and T3 explained why they are undecided as follows:

T6: I am undecided because it might have some advantages and some disadvantages.

T3: I find it important because I see many weaknesses even in the teachers working at schools. Therefore, it might be useful for some teachers. On the other hand, if the system cannot be set up well, then it might be harmful. It might be used for different purposes.

Having a negative viewpoint, T5 expressed his/her opinions as follows:

No, because I do not believe that anybody can video-record themselves in their natural states. Thus, the system cannot serve its purpose. First, teachers who are willing, fair, honest and natural should be selected and the number of such teachers is quite small.

The teacher's being volunteer is of great importance for the successful application of MTP. Thus, teachers are expected to take part in the process after understanding the importance and necessity of the application.

Table 14. The teachers' opinions about participation in MTP on a volunteer basis

Opinions	f
I want to take part in as a volunteer	3
I am not very willing to be a volunteer	4
I do not want to take part in as a volunteer	1

Though many of the teachers find MTP important and necessary for promoting their professional development, when they are asked whether they want to be a volunteer for such a system, only three of them want to be a volunteer. These teachers explained their opinions as follows:

T2: I want. I really need help to learn what can be done more to teach better in a small classroom. If I am given this help, I can develop myself in the application of my theoretical knowledge.

T7: I want to take part in because I would like to develop myself and become more useful for children.

T1: I want to take part in such a system. I think that I will be able to be a more qualified teacher

Reasons similar to the ones proposed by the teachers in the current study for their being willing to participate as a volunteer in MTP were found by Roberts and LoCasale-Crouch (2013) in their study reporting that the teachers want to participate in to be a better teacher and due to learning opportunities provided in the program. While some of the teachers in the study group think that this application is important and necessary, they are

undecided about participating in as a volunteer and this might be because any change involves a difficult process and the belief in the successful completion of the process might be low. Moreover, negative experiences lived within the current supervision and evaluation system and inadequate conditions within which the teachers have to work might have resulted in the teachers' feeling the burn-out syndrome. The research conducted in our country with pre-school teachers revealed many factors affecting the burn-out level of teachers (Akman, Taşkın, Özden and Çörtü, 2010; Teltik, 2009; Öztürk et al., 2008; Deniz Kan, 2008; Gürbüz, 2008; Demircan, 2008; Tuğrul and Çelik, 2002). One of these factors is long working hours and these long working hours result in affective burn-out and insensitivity on the part of the teachers (Akman et al., 2010, p.814). Another factor negatively affecting teachers' burn-out levels is their being obliged to teach more students than they can handle (Cited by Sucuoğlu and Kuloğlu, 1996, p.45 by Farber, 1984). With the negative feelings created by working in small and crowded classes, the teacher might feel suspicious about the efficiency of a new system.

## Conclusion

*In light of the findings obtained in relation to the current applications to promote the professional development of the pre-school teachers;* it can be argued that the participants of the current study take part in in-service trainings as they have to. As a reason for the reluctance of the teachers, problems concerning the functioning of in-service training programs were emphasized. In this regard, problems such as instructors' not nurturing active teacher participation, participants' viewing these educational seminars as holidays rather than educational activities, bad organization of the seminar program and high number of participants were detected to be the main problems.

Majority of the teachers stated that they could not establish an effective and systematic communication with their universities they graduated from to support their professional development. As a result, they try to develop through their own personal efforts and to do so, they generally draw on Internet sites. They usually seek help from their colleagues or their relatives to deal with their problems and weaknesses.

The teachers found the current supervision and evaluation system inadequate due to reasons such as lack of acquaintance with the field of pre-school education on the part of inspectors, inspectors' mostly focusing on documents and physical conditions and their not providing enough guidance.

*In light of the findings derived from the teachers' opinions about a new monitoring and evaluation system (My Teaching Partner):* it was determined that three of the teachers (T1, T2 and T7) have positive perceptions of MTP without any reservation. These teachers see the system as an opportunity to develop themselves and are eager to work with a teaching partner. Four teachers (T3,T4,T6,T8); on the other hand, while viewing MTP as important and necessary to promote professional development, are reluctant to be a volunteer to take part in the system. Moreover, these teachers stated that they have some concerns about the attitude of the teaching partner. Only one teacher (T5) stated that such a system is not important and necessary. All of the teachers are in the opinion that the teaching partner should be more qualified than them.

Change is a challenging process. Thus, lack of willingness on the part of the teachers to take part in the system should be seen as natural. During the interviews, it was found that even the personality characteristics of the teachers (being open to change, criticism, thinking that behaving naturally is not possible) affected the perception of the system. For these teachers to be comfortably involved in the system, their witnessing the successful completion of the application is believed to be enough and this will motivate them to participate in the system. Researchers think that determination of teachers' readiness for change and willingness to work within the system is of great importance for gaining optimum benefit from the system and for the effective utilization of resources. Working with voluntary teachers ensures the sustainability of the system.

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