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**TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP**

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**MASTER OF ARTS**

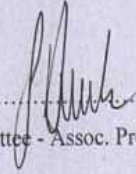
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22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2013

Fatma YUVAYAPAN

## ÖZET

### ÖĞRETMENLERİN MESLEKİ GELİŞİMİ: ELEŞTİREL ARKADAŞ GRUBU METODU

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Ekonomi ve siyasetteki değişimler, Türk Eğitim Sistemi'nde birtakım yenilikleri doğurmuştur. Sınıf ortamında eğitime yönelik yenilikleri gerçekleştirmenin temel unsurlarından biri de, uzun zamandır büyük önem verilen bir konu olan öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimidir. Bu nedenle, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı öğretmenlerin vasıflarını arttırmak amacıyla öğretmen gelişimine yönelik toplantı ve seminerler düzenlemektedir. Ancak Baran ve Çağıltay'ın (2006) çalışması pek çok öğretmenin bu çalışmaların kişisel mesleki gelişimlerine katkıda bulunmayacağını düşündükleri için öğretmen gelişimi çalışmalarına gönülsüzce katıldığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Yumru'nun (2000) ileri sürdüğü üzere, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişiminin temelinde aidiyet duygusu yatmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Eleştirel Arkadaş Grubu'nun, yansıtıcı öğretimi esas alan bir öğretmen gelişimi programı, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimine, onlara meslektaş dayanışması dahilinde tecrübe ve çelişkilerini paylaşabilecekleri bir ortam sunarak, katkıda bulunup bulunamayacağını araştırmak hedeflenmiştir. Araştırmacının Eleştirel Arkadaş Grubu yöneticisi olarak katılımcı gözlemci konumunda bulunduğu 8 hafta süren bu çalışmada, 4 katılımcı yer almıştır. Veriler günlük tutma, araştırmacının saha notları, anketler ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Bulgular, Eleştirel Arkadaş Grubu programlarının, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimine onlara mesleki bilgilerini arttırma ve aynı zamanda destekleyici ve yansıtıcı bir mesleki ortamda öğretmenlik yapma olanağı sunarak katkıda bulunabildiğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğretmen Gelişimi, Eleştirel Arkadaş Grubu, Yansıtıcı Öğretim, İşbirliği.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP**

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**M.A. Thesis, English Language Teaching Department**

**Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU**

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Owing to the changes in economy and politics, the education system in Turkey has been exposed to educational reforms. One of the key elements in implementing the educational reforms into the classroom is the professional development of teachers, which has received a great deal of attention for a long time. Thus, the Ministry of National Education has implemented teacher development meetings and workshops to enhance the qualities of teachers. However, the study of Baran and Çağıltay (2006) reveal that not many teachers have engaged in the teacher development activities willingly since they feel that these activities do not contribute to their professional development. As Yumru (2000) suggests, a sense of ownership rests on the core of professional development of teachers. In this study, it was aimed to explore whether Critical Friends Group (CFG), a kind of teacher development program based on reflective teaching, can contribute to teachers' professional development through creating opportunities for them to share their experiences and dilemmas related to their teaching in collegiality. The researcher acted, as a participant observer, called CFG facilitator and 4 participant teachers were included in this study lasted 8 weeks. The data was collected using diary keeping, the researchers' field notes, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that Critical Friends Group programs could contribute to professional development of teachers by enabling teachers to work in collaboratively to improve their professional knowledge and teaching in a supportive and reflective professional community.

**Key Words:** Teacher Development, Critical Friends Group, Reflective Teaching, Collaboration.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**AR** : Action Research

**CFG** : Critical Friends Group

**ERA** : Experience-reflection-action cycle of reflective practice

**MNE** : The Ministry of National Education

**NSRF** : National School Reform Faculty

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The process of education is a highly complex process including the relationship among the learning process itself, the intentions, and the actions of teachers, their different background and culture, the individual characteristics of the learners and the learning atmosphere. In this respect, a successful educator is someone who has an understanding of the complexities of the teaching and learning process (Williams & Burden, 1997). Similarly, Kyriacou (1998) highlights that being aware of knowing what to do to improve the learning process and achieving it constitute the essence of teaching. In this regard, it is crucially important to develop decision-making skills and action skills in teachers' professional development, which plays a prominent role in teaching.

Johnson (2009) explains the history of teacher education: There has been a paradigm focusing on the notion that teacher development can be achieved by observing more experienced teachers. Since the 1980s, the artificial assumptions underlying teacher development notion has been criticized. It has been claimed that the complexities of the classroom atmosphere cannot be transmitted to depersonalized and decontextualized settings. Therefore, teachers' participation is used as a lens through uncovering the relations between teachers and the teaching process in a social setting. Seen from this stance, observation, interviews, and reflections of teachers on their teaching are required. To put it other words, solving the dilemmas that teachers cope with during their teaching constitutes the core of teacher development.

Almost all teachers have observed a more experienced teacher or participated in an in-service teacher- training program in their professional life. Unfortunately, such programs due to the lack of ownership are not of interest to teachers. Clandinin (1986, cited in Kelley, 2007) claims that teachers are rarely given the chance to improve themselves on their profession. Therefore, in recent decades there has been a shift from traditional methods of professional growth to alternative ways that give teachers the opportunity of becoming a part of their own development. Yet this is not a solely a matter of professional growth. Waterhouse (1983, cited in Kyriacou, 1998) has identified some characteristics of a positive school atmosphere that foster professional growth.

- a sense of common ownership among staff for the educational aims to be achieved
- a constant generation of ideas
- sharing problems
- mutual support
- respect for each other's opinions
- an open and co-operative approach to deal with conflicts and crises
- allowing styles to vary according to situations and needs
- encouraging anyone, not just leaders, to propose improvements
- an organic rather than bureaucratic management style (p. 15).

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that, teaching is a complex process having a variety of demands in itself. In order to meet the demands of teaching, teachers need to be in an ongoing process of professional development that is embedded with their classroom teaching. Therefore, rather than presenting ready-made theoretical knowledge, teacher development programs should provide learning opportunities for teachers pertinent to their personal experiences. Kubanyiova (2012) contends that teachers are in an unending voluntary change as a result of their classroom practices and taking part in professional conversations with colleagues. Thus, teacher development programs require a focus on students' learning needs within the specific context rather than implementing a particular technique.

### **1.1. Background to the study**

In the waves of changes in economy and politics that have swept over education, English language teaching has changed a lot. Thus, the curriculum has been modified so as to create a fruitful learning atmosphere. Since teachers are at the heart of education, professional development has occupied a center stage regarding the changes. That is, teachers are the keys to educational change and school improvement. In a way what learners learn in the classroom reflects how teachers interpret and implement the curriculum in line with their students' level (Ur, 2002).

It is often believed that teachers are born with the ability of teaching. It is relatively true that everybody has the talent of teaching. In recent years, owing to the developments in education teachers need to enrich their experiences of teaching (Wadhwa, 2008). Mc Laughlin and Talbert (2006) state that one of the social

expectations demanded from schools is to train students with complex intellectual skills. However, the improvement of students' learning depends on teachers' capability to establish various classroom experiences relevant to their students, which require teachers' professional development. Whitford and Wood (2010) further add that schools have to cope with changes in "economy and students demographics." Catching up with these changes requires an on going learning for teachers. Overall, to enhance the learning and teaching process, teachers are expected to be well trained, highly motivated, and are able to keep pace with the latest requirements of their profession. Thus, they need to be in an ongoing process of professional development for fruitful teaching experiences.

In this regard, professional development is such an important part of language teaching that deserves to become a top priority. According to Villegas-Reimers (2003), professional development is the development of a person in his or her professional life. It refers to a broad notion more than a career development or staff development. Historically, the latter is perceived as the main aim of professional development. Over the years workshops and short-term courses have been used to provide teachers new knowledge on a specific aspect of the profession. Recently, there has been a significant increase on the implementation of programs aiming to improve the professional skills and knowledge of teachers. The basic tenets of this professional development perspective include several features:

- The constructivist roots of this perspective make teachers more active.
- It is an on-going process since learning occurs over time.
- It is a process that requires a natural context (a school atmosphere) and content (daily activities that takes place in classroom settings).
- It is a process that needs support from the school and curriculum reform.
- It is based on reflective practice.
- It is a process that occurs in a collaborative atmosphere.
- There is not a perfect model of professional development owing to a great variety of dimensions. Hence, the best is the one that meets the needs of a particular situation (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 14).

Semerci and Taşpınar (2003) state as a professional occupation, teaching requires a professional training which has three dimensions; "field knowledge, professional knowledge for teachers, general culture - requires a well-planned and

programmed educational process” (p. 137). Likewise, principles, knowledge, and skills are the main characteristics of a professionally competent teacher. In the absence of the appropriate skills, being knowledgeable and principled is of limited value.

A powerful educator is not only skillful but also knowledgeable. By the same token, skill is limited without field knowledge. Skillful teachers who make use of a wide range of activities in their teaching enhance their effectiveness if they improve an appropriate level of knowledge (Pettis, 2002). These tendencies indicate that professional growth is desirable. As Crandall (1996, cited in Pettis, 2002) suggests taking courses, reading journals, talking to colleagues, conducting classroom research and attending workshops reviewing textbooks can be recognized as some of the effective ways of professional development as long as they allow teachers for a personal growth.

However, Pettis (2002) highlights that every opportunity for professional development needs to stimulate a personal commitment for teachers. Similarly, Richards & Farrell (2005) emphasize that in recent years there has been an increasing focus on ongoing teacher development in language teaching owing to teacher-directed activities such as action research, reflective teaching and team teaching. Opportunities of in-service training are certain to affect the long-term development of teachers. As the knowledge base of teaching constantly changing, the need for the modifications of teaching skills is inevitable.

Likewise, Jelly (2006) claims that teacher development activities need to take “teachers’ autonomy, professional judgment and creativity” into consideration. So as to create professional people in the field of education, “meaningful professional development which provides for stimulation and support, for new learning and validation, for challenge and encouragement” must be enhanced (p. 15).

After the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923, education was given a top priority. With the law of unification of education, the Ministry of Education has been the only institution, which makes the necessary decisions about schools and foundations related to education. Based on the suggestions of John Dewey, village institutes were opened to meet the needs of teacher training. According to law for national education in 1973, teachers were educated at college level or in higher education after high school graduation. That teacher education has been organized by universities can be accepted as the last major adjustment in teacher education (Baran & Çağiltay, 2006).



At present, as stated in General Directorate of Teacher Training Turkish Ministry of National Education (MNE) (2006), the curricula of Turkish education have been developed on the basis of constructivism. Thus, teachers are supposed to; have sufficient subject-specific knowledge, convey this knowledge to their students through a constructivist approach in line with the new program, have skills for collaboration with colleagues and communication with students together with administrative and organizational skills, and efficiently exchange information with all concerned stakeholders, especially with families. As can be seen, teachers have a variety of responsibilities to be proficient in their occupation. The booklet developed by MNE is a necessary tool to be followed to keep up with the latest changes. However, a serious weakness with this booklet is the lack of resources aiming to help teachers for their professional development (Altan, 2006).

In order to enhance the qualities of teachers, MNE has implemented teacher development meetings and workshops on the basis of “generic teacher competencies and subject specific.” Generic teacher competencies include six main competencies “Personal and Professional Values-Professional Development, Knowing the Student, Learning and Teaching Process, Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning and Development, School-Family and Society Relationships, Knowledge of Curriculum and Content” to help teachers set their individual objectives for professional development (General Directorate of Teacher Training Turkish Ministry of National Education, 2006). As may be seen, MNE has put many efforts to establish a basis for an ideal teacher development program in theory. In addition, Department of In-service Training under the MNE has organized a great deal of in-service training activities.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Effective implementation of teacher development programs is limited due to the lack of some factors such as ownership and motivation. As Baran and Çağiltay (2006) claim not many teachers have participated in the activities organized by MNE willingly. A great number of teachers believe they do not contribute to their professional development. The impetus for this belief is twofold: such kinds of activities are obligatory for teachers to attend and they aim to give theoretical information.

Rodrigues (2005) emphasizes that teacher development is mostly considered to be involved in conferences, seminars and workshops that are vehicles to introduce new

skills, methods, or policies. The assumption underlying these programs is they would affect classroom practices of teachers. Nonetheless, such practices fail short to take specific learning environments into consideration. Freeman & Johnson (1998, cited in Tarone & Allwright, 2011) claim that neither teacher's prior knowledge about general teaching and learning nor the social context of schools is taken into account at the level of curriculum design in language teacher education. Therefore, the core of teacher education programs needs to be what is already known about second language teaching and learning so as to support teachers (Tarone & Allwright, 2011).

Hirsch (2011) claims that workshops provide teachers with an opportunity to learn a lot of information in isolation. Namely, workshops do not support the transfer of the newly learned knowledge into teaching. By the same token, Pettis (2002) emphasizes teachers are responsible for their own professional growth. Although professional organization such as conferences, seminars, workshops can contribute to professional development, teachers must make a personal commitment to their professional growth. "Professional development has no fixed route and no real end if it is viewed as life long learning and providing the professional continuities to work in the profession and is keen to be the best professional they can be" (Rodrigues, 2005, p. 4).

At this point, reflective practice such as peer observation, critical friends group, keeping diaries, and teacher portfolios may be of help to make in-service teacher training programs more beneficial. To put it another words, teachers may combine their teaching experiences and theoretical knowledge in a friendly and constructive environment through these sorts of activities. Fleener (2003, cited in Kelley, 2007) states given the opportunity, teachers may find out solutions to any problems in schools. In conclusion, teacher development programs require a more teacher-centered approach that gives teachers the opportunity to collaborate and reflect on their teaching experiences.

### **1.3. Aim of the Study**

This study will seek to find out to what extent Critical Friends Group (CFG) helps teachers be reflective on their own teaching. The ultimate goal of the study is to foster a collaborative professional community through ongoing interactions in a small group. Identifying the strengths and the weaknesses of the CFG program and exploring teachers' attitudes towards CFG programs are also aimed to be explored.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

The following research questions constitute the basis for the study:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards Critical Friends Group (CFG) programs?
2. Does Critical Friends Group contribute teachers' professional development?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group programs?

#### 1.5. Operational Definitions

**Teacher development / Professional development:** Teacher development is a means for teachers to improve themselves and their teaching. Teacher development can be recognized as a variety of activities which teachers participate in to improve their teaching skills. It mostly lays emphasis on teaching experience as well as interaction with other colleagues and reflecting (Miller de Arechaga, 2001). Professional development for teachers may refer to a wide range of procedures seeking to improve critical and reflective reviews of teachers' own practices (Burns and Richards, 2009). In this study, teacher development and professional development are used interchangeably.

**Reflective Teaching:** As Richards and Lockhart (1996) put, "reflective teaching goes hand-in-hand with critical self-examination and reflection as a basis for decision-making, planning, and action" (ix). Jasper (2003) states "reflective practice means that we learn by thinking about things that have happened to us and seeing them in a different way, which enables us to take some kind of action" (p. 2). In the light of these, we assume reflective teaching is enriching teaching experiences through collaboration under an analytical framework. It distinguishes from other perspectives of teacher development methods since it paves the way for making judgments about our teaching and enhancing it by making changes (Jasper, 2003).

**Critical Friends Group (CFG):** "A particular type of school-based professional community aimed at fostering members' capacities to undertake instructional improvement and school wide reform" (Curry, 2008, p.735). Nolan and Hoover (2010) identify CFG as "small groups of teachers who meet voluntarily on a regular basis to examine their own work the resulting student learning with the aid of conversation protocols. Typically CFG are facilitated by a coach who has been trained to use various protocols" (p. 201). It offers an in-depth analysis of our teaching on the basis of synthesizing theory and practice in a collaborative professional community. It also

establishes a connection between students' work and teacher development through voluntary meetings holding regularly.

**Protocols:** In a CFG program, protocols may be defined as the particular types of sessions applied in the program. Nolan and Hoover (2010) describe protocols as “guidelines and prescribed steps that everyone understands and agrees to follow” (p. 201).

**Action Research:** Burns (2010) defines action research (AR) as “taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to explore your own teaching” (p. 2). She further explains that, AR involves four steps in a cycle of research. In the planning step, you identify a problem and make a plan of action so as to solve it. Putting the plan into action is the second step. In the observation step you observe the effect of the action. The last step includes reflection in which you reflect on the previous steps and decide further plans.

**Professional Community:** Although it has a variety definition, a common feature of professional community is the collaborative work, which helps to reflect on teachers' experience and the relationships between these experiences and the student outcomes and finally making the changes to promote teaching (Mc Laughlin & Talbert, 2006).

## 1.6. Limitations of the Study

It seems vague how CFG experiences may affect classroom teaching, which would particularly be a problem. In this sense, the inclusion of action research and peer observation and diary keeping may be of help to find out the reflections of CFG experiences into the teaching of the participants.

Koo (2002) emphasizes that the implementation of action research into CFG is regarded as a tool to maintain reliability. Furthermore, Ellen (2007) suggests peer observation is a means of receiving feedback from others about the adaptation of new knowledge obtained in the CFG meetings into the teaching practice. Diary keeping also provides a genuine way of reflection. As Wallace (1998) puts forward, apart from being personal documents, the method does not necessarily involve particular rules, which makes the writers feel free to write their feelings.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Teacher Development

Teacher development is conceived as a powerful agency, which is instrumental for teachers to create the best learning environment for their students. It also enables teachers to keep up with the changes in their field. As a result, they become more confident teachers. Since teachers shape the learning environment, they play a pivotal role in the process of education. Levin (2008) contends that being an effective teacher is closely related to understanding the content, knowing the students' needs and developing and implementing curriculum. Sanders & Rivers (1996, cited in Smith & Gillespie, 2007) investigated the relationship between the students' achievement and the qualities of teachers. The results showed that effective teachers could improve the scores of low-achieving students. It is clear that teachers have an influence on students' achievements.

Before moving on the definition of teacher development, it would be essential to explain the concept of professionalism. As Wallace (1991) puts forward, profession has some of the following qualities: "a basis of scientific knowledge; a period of vigorous study which is formally assessed; a sense of public service; high standards of professional conduct; and the ability to perform some specific demanding and socially useful tasks in a demonstrably competent manner"(p. 5).

Kamhi-Stein (2009) proposes that being a successful professional requires language proficiency which needs to be improved because the impetus for a teacher's confidence is his or her language proficiency (Murdoch, 1994, cited in Kamhi-Stein, 2009). Professionalism is also concerned with developing a sense of personal identity. Thus, language improvement is regarded as one of the aspects of professional development.

Burns and Richards (2009) also throw some light on the concept of professionalism. It may infer different things in different places. In some cases, it may include attaining qualifications proposed by either local educational authorities or international professional organizations. It may also be concerned with behaving

according to some pre-determined norms. Recently, it may refer to a wide range of procedures seeking to improve critical and reflective reviews of teachers' own practices.

Terhart (1999) defines teacher development as;

“a process in the course of which a teacher establishes and maintains that level of professional competence that is possible for her or him to reach. Teacher development can be facilitated and supported from outside – but it cannot be produced in a technological manner. It is an internal process not all teachers are aware of. The awareness one's own professional development – its going further, its stagnation, its regression- is one of the most important preconditions for further development of professional competence” (p. 27).

Evans (2002) claims the modern literature is relatively unhelpful in defining what the teacher development is. Despite its key role in education, the concept of teacher development has remained unclear. The existing definitions of teacher development fail to explain precisely what teacher development is. She interprets teacher development as follows:

I interpret teacher development as a process, which may be on-going or which may have occurred and is completed. I do not imply that teacher development in its entirety may ever be considered to have been completed in a finite way: rather, that teachers may be considered to have developed in some way, which does not, by any means, preclude their developing repeatedly, in different ways, or resuming their development in a way in which they have already developed. My reference to teacher development being completed therefore implicitly incorporates recognition that the completion may often be transient. I also consider teacher development to be a subjective or an objective process, or both. It may be thought of as an internalization process on the part of teachers, or it may be an externally applied process, directed at teachers, but effected by external agencies. In the latter case, it may not necessarily be successful but, since I interpret it as a process rather than a product, I would nevertheless categorize unsuccessful, or partially successful, efforts as teacher development; but

these would be teacher development processes that failed, or partially failed, to be completed. It may enhance the status of the profession as a whole, exemplified by the evolution of an all-graduate profession, and it may improve teachers' knowledge, skills and practice. I define it as: the process whereby teachers' professionalism and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced (p.130-131).

Teacher development can be recognized as a variety of activities which teachers participate in to improve their teaching skills. It mostly lays emphasis on teaching experience as well as interaction with other colleagues and reflecting (Miller de Arechaga, 2001). Witford and Wood (2010) highlight;

Teachers need to be in collegial communities that encourage sharing expertise and problem solving; building collective knowledge and exploring relevant outside knowledge; providing critique on existing practices; and inventing, enacting, and analyzing needed innovations (p. 1).

Richards and Farrel (2005) suggest two perspectives for teacher development: individual and institutional perspective. They identify six aspects of the individual perspective:

- Subject- matter knowledge: includes improving the knowledge of basic paradigm in TESOL such as English grammar, phonology, etc.
- Pedagogical expertise: is the mastery of catching up new areas of teaching.
- On the other hand, the institutional perspective has 3 aspects:
- Institutional development: is making contributions to the success of the school as a whole.
- Career development: enables teachers to get senior positions in the institution.
- Enhanced level of student learning: is related to increasing the achievement levels of students in the institution (p. 10-11).

Burns and Richards (2009) identify two strands of teacher development, “one focusing on classroom teaching skills and pedagogic issues, and the other focusing on academic underpinnings of classroom skills, namely knowledge about language and language learning” (p. 3). A problematic relationship between the two exists, which can

be clarified by the help of comparing two kinds of different knowledge. *Knowledge about* refers to the curricula of the second language teacher education including language analysis, discourse analysis and methodology; whereas *knowledge how* is concerned with how to teach it focusing on the issues such as pedagogical knowledge and practical knowledge used to facilitate learning (Burns & Richard, 2009).

Likewise, a common assumption underlying most teacher development programs is that it is crucially important to provide teachers with sufficient amount of disciplinary knowledge, which can be applied to any teaching context. However, Ball (2000, cited in Johnson, 2009) states that this is a tricky undertaking and usable content knowledge does not become a part of a teacher development program in many cases. So, teachers mainly learn from their experience of teaching. Freeman and Johnson (1998, cited in Johnson, 2009) offer so as to build a knowledge base for teachers, such programs may include a combination of disciplinary knowledge and content for teaching.

Richards (1997) states that

Teacher education programs typically include a knowledge base drawn from linguistic and language learning theory, and a practical component, based on language teaching methodology and opportunity for practice teaching. In principle, knowledge and information from such disciplines as linguistics and second language acquisition provide the theoretical basis for the practical components of teacher education programs (p. 3).

Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) contend that teachers encounter challenging situations in their teaching on a daily basis. In order to cope with these situations, they not only need to have the knowledge of different aspects of teaching and learning process such as individual differences, cultural influences, students' interests but also know the ways of acquiring the additional information necessary to make good decisions. Namely, teachers supply useful information with their students and improve a wide range of skills regarding the individual differences. To meet such kinds of expectations, well-organized programs going beyond covering the curriculum and considering the necessities of today's schooling are required. Therefore, teacher-training



programs should give them the opportunity to exercise through the expansion of their knowledge base so as to make good decisions in their teaching.

Richards (1998) suggests six domains of content which are at the base of teacher development: “theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge” (p. 1). Needless to say, these domains do not work in isolation. To illustrate, sufficient target language proficiency constitute the core of basic teaching skills. By the same token, mastery of basic teaching skills may lead to acquire a reflective philosophy of teaching. In addition, these domains are the central to the design of teacher development programs and can be exemplified as follows:

- Theories of teaching
  - to develop a critical understanding of major theories of second language teaching and their implications for language teaching practice
  - to develop a personal theory teaching and a reflective approach to one’s own teaching
  - to recognize the assumptions, beliefs, and values underlying one’s own teaching practices
  - to acquire skills needed for classroom-based inquiry
  - to know how to initiate change in ones’ own classroom and monitor the effects of change
- Teaching skills
  - to master basic teaching skills
  - to develop competence in using one or more language teaching methods
  - to be able to adopt teaching skills and approaches to new situations
- Communication skills and language proficiency.
  - to develop effective communication skills as a basis for teaching
  - to acquire advanced level of proficiency in the language to be taught
  - to be able to use the target language effectively as a medium of instruction.
- Subject matter knowledge
  - to understand the nature of language and language use, particular pedagogically based descriptions of the systems of phonology, syntax, and discourse.
  - to understand the nature of second language learning

- to be familiar with the principal approaches to language teaching, curriculum development, testing and evaluation, and materials development
- Pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making
  - to be able to analyze pedagogical problems and develop alternative strategies for teaching
  - to be able relate theories of language, teaching, and learning to language teaching in actual situations
  - to recognize the kinds of decision making employed in teaching and utilize decision making effectively in one's own teaching
- Contextual knowledge
  - to understand the role of context in language teaching
  - to be able to adapt one's teaching style according to contextual factors (Richards, 1998, p. 14-15).

Freeman (2009) maintains that our assumptions during the teaching process constitute the scope of the content. For example, under the framework of communicative method, "use" became the scope of language teaching while during the audio-lingual era language was seen as a set of habits. Mainly, "content, process, and outcome" outline the scope of teacher development.

Burns & Richards (2009) further add that with the changes in education, it has been necessary to redefine the scope of teacher development. Throughout the 1970s, short courses and higher education courses were the focus of teacher development. In the 1980s, as well as procedural aspects of teacher training, the person-centered notion of teacher development came into being (Freeman, cited in Burns & Richards, 2009). In the 1990s, the scope included "what teachers needed to learn and how they would learn it" (p. 13). So, professional development was outlined by actual teaching contexts. In this sense, "substance, engagement, and influence or outcome" have shaped new dimensions of the scope of professional development. "Substance" refers to the content of it whereas "engagement" bothers the questions of the design. "Influence or outcome" is the evaluation of the programs (Burns & Richards, 2009).

Consequently, the discussion on the most effective teaching has been under issue for a long time. Effective teaching is closely bound up to the effectiveness of teachers, which can be improved by professional development. In order to keep themselves up-to-date, teachers inevitably need to participate in seminars, conferences, or workshops.

However, these attempts of professional development have short-term goals aiming to transform pedagogical knowledge or recent improvements about language teaching. On the other hand, since teaching is a longitudinal process, teachers are required to be in an ongoing process of professional development. At this point, collaborating with other colleagues, reflecting on their teaching, observing other teachers is extremely important to establish an un-ending process of professional development.

## **2.2. Teacher Training vs. Teacher Development**

Another point that needs a careful attention is the contradiction between teacher training and teacher development. Richards and Farrell (2005) define training as “activities directly focused on a teacher’s present responsibilities and are typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals” (p. 3). They outline some goals of teacher development from a training perspective:

- learning how to use effective strategies to open a lesson
- adapting the textbook to match the class
- learning how to use group activities in a lesson
- using effective questioning techniques
- using classroom aids and resources
- techniques for giving learners feedback on performance (p. 3).

“Development refers to general growth not focused on a specific job. It serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers” (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p. 4). Some examples of goals of teacher development from a development perspective are:

- understanding how the process of second language development occurs
- understanding how our roles change according to the kind of learners we are teaching
- understanding the kinds of decision making that occur during lessons
- reviewing our own theories and principles of language teaching
- developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- determining learners’ perception of classroom activities (p. 4).

Ur (1997) identifies distinct differences between teacher training and teacher development. She defines teacher training as formal courses leading to professional practice. On the contrary, teacher development usually means professional improvement of teachers through reflective discussions based on classroom experiences.

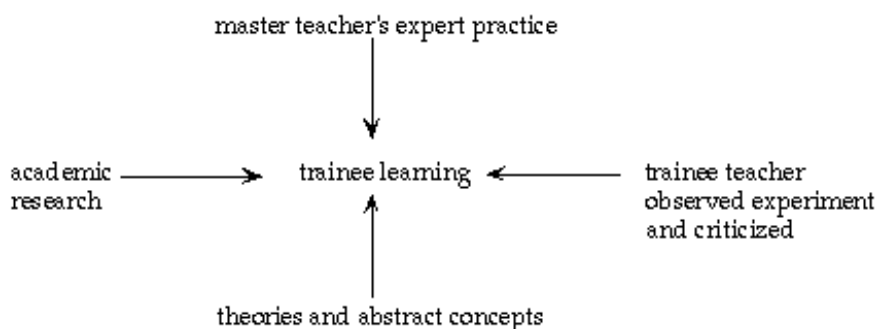


Figure 2.1: Teacher Training (Ur, 1997).

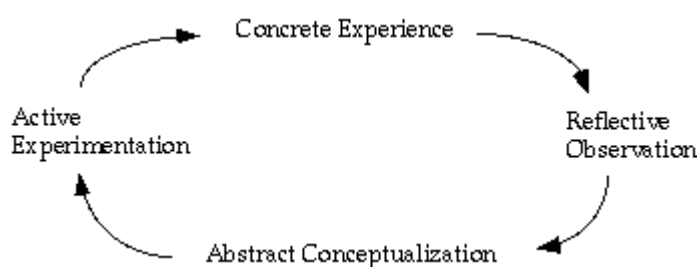


Figure 2.2: Teacher Development (Ur, 1997).

Moller and Pankake (2006, cited in Zepeda, 2008, p. 2) state

Professional learning models are tools be to used, but the real learning happens in the cycle of conversations, evaluation and new actions that is supported through intentional leadership that gently pressures and nurtures teachers. This inquiry process must be organizationally embedded rather than externally imposed to build teachers' knowledge and skills or increase human capital, within the school's social networks.

As it can be concluded, teachers need to attend teacher-training programs in which they receive pedagogical knowledge useful for their teaching. However, as the real teaching and learning occurs in class, teacher development must be integrated into the school atmosphere. Richards and Farrell (2005) point out that teacher training and

teacher development go hand-in-hand. Professional development for teachers refers to individual reflection as well as exploring new trends related to language teaching.

### **2.3. Models of Teacher Development**

Richards (1997) identifies two approaches for teacher development. A *micro approach* is concerned with “what the teacher does in the classroom” (p. 4). He points out that with the content of teachers’ characteristics into teacher development; the evaluation of teachers based on the opinions of experts came to be seen as the medium of professional growth. However, the challenge in this approach lay in whether these characteristics were the proof of being a good teacher. In the 1950s, rather than what the teacher is, what the teacher does in the class came to be recognized. Since then, the discussion about effective teaching has been focused on professional growth. Subsequently, a *macro approach*, also named as the theory of active teaching, deals with making generalizations and assumptions about unobservable parts of teaching by focusing on interrelationships among teachers, students, and the classroom activities. Based on their skills and competencies of effective teachers, inexperienced teachers figure out their own rules for effective teaching.

On the other hand, Wallace (1991) describes three models of teacher development, namely: the Craft Model, the Applied Science Model, and the Reflective Model. The Craft Model relies on the interactions with an experienced professional practitioner and a trainee who learns by modeling the expert. A serious weakness with this model, however, is its dependence on effectiveness that is impossible in a contemporary society. That is, we cannot predict how things will be in the future (Stones & Morris, 1972, cited in Wallace, 1991). Although the craft model allows for inexperienced teachers to learn from the experiences of more experienced ones, it may limit their creativity to implement their own way of teaching (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Roberts (1998) offers that a craft model may be used in case of limited resources or undersupply of teachers.

Wallace (1991) maintains that the Applied Science Model is probably the most applicable model underlying most training programs resides in empirical science. It emerges on the following assumptions:

- practical knowledge can be anything to reach the defined objectives appropriately.

- the application of empirical science can be the solution of teaching problems.
- knowledge can be conveyed to trainee teachers only by experts who are considered to be experts in their fields (p. 8-9).

However, no attempt is made to make the trainee teachers to become involved in problem solving. That is, changes at the practical level the trainee teachers are not taken into account. Theoretical knowledge conveyed by others is also of no help in the classroom.

The Reflective Model has its roots from both experience and scientific basis of the profession. Through reflecting on their teaching, teachers become competent in their profession. Teacher education consists of two kinds of knowledge:

- Received knowledge: It is pertinent to theoretical knowledge about teaching.
- Experiential Knowledge: It is the knowledge gained through experiences during teaching process (p. 14-15).

Similarly, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) contends that the reflective model set opportunities for teachers to develop individual competencies.

As sketched out in figure 2.3., Ur (1997) claims teachers' reflection on their own experience constitutes the core of teacher development. It can also be enriched by a great amount of professional knowledge and expertise conveyed by others, gained by reading the literature or attending conferences. Moreover, teachers need others' critical observations about their own teaching. The role of teachers is to filter out the applicable aspects for them.

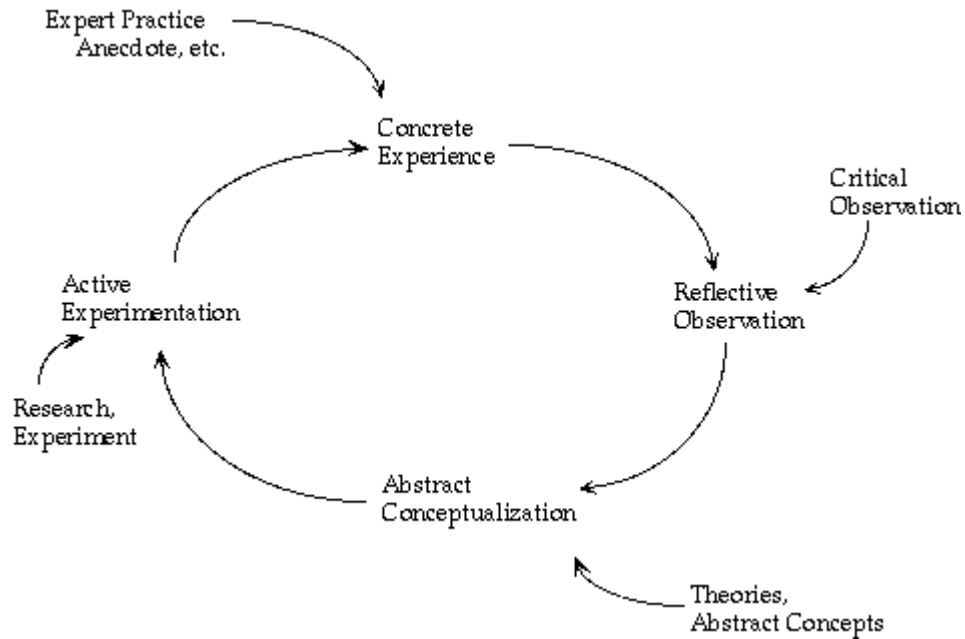


Figure 2.3: Optimal Teacher Learning (Ur, 1997).

## 2.4. Reflective Teaching

Many teachers develop strategies to apply in the class. The more experienced they are, the less they think about what is going on in the class. Simply put, they become so automatic in their teaching that they just focus on following a curriculum. When the lesson goes badly, they either blame the curriculum or their students. However, through reflecting on what is happening in the class, they may reach conclusions about why such things are happening and how they can avoid them.

Central to the entire discipline of teacher development is the concept of reflective teaching based on constructivism. Richards (2011) states

reflection refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action (p. 33).

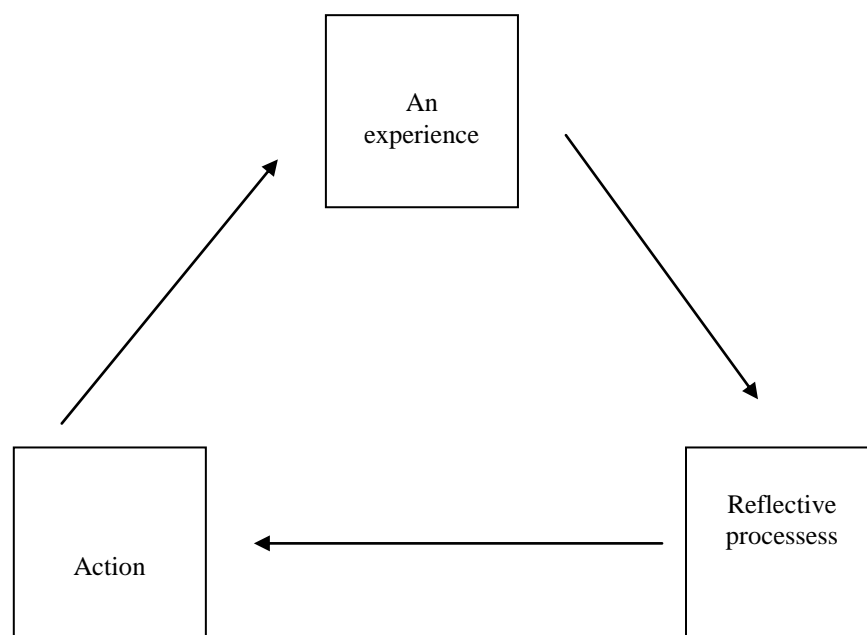
Watson (1996) contends that reflection is not just thinking. It “includes reasoning, the creative production of ideas, problem solving, and the awareness all these mental activities in metacognition” (p. 1). In addition, Richards & Lockhart (1996) define being reflective as “collecting data about teaching, examining attitudes, beliefs,

assumptions and teaching practices and using the information obtained” (p. 1). They also emphasize that anything which happens in the class can be used as a tool by teachers to make sense of their teaching more deeply, which may be sometimes impossible to achieve owing to some disruptors taken place in the class.

Jasper (2003) states “reflective practice means that we learn by thinking about things that have happened to us and seeing them in a different way, which enables us to take some kind of action” (p. 2). She also outlines three elements of reflective practice:

- things that happen to a person.
- the reflective processes that enable the person to learn from those experiences.
- the action that results from the new perspectives that are taken.

These elements can also be summarized as ERA (experience – reflection - action)



*Figure 2.4: The ERA (Experience-reflection-action) Cycle of Reflective Practice (Jasper, 2003).*

Dewey lays the ground for reflection as a learning process in the 1980s. As Pollard (2002) summarizes, Dewey scaffolds thinking and reflective experience. When we face a problem, we begin to think of it based on our prior experiences. However, reflective practice does not arise at all thinking process. Some people arrive at conclusions without considering all aspects of a particular problem. Thus, reflective practice is an activity that appears when a person is willing to search and judge all the



possible solutions of a problem. Additionally, as stated by Killen (2006), the importance of reflective teaching has been recognized by the work of Dewey. Dewey identifies “routine action guided by tradition, customs, authority and institutional expectations” and “reflective action guided by constant self-appraisal and development” (p. 88).

Kolb is also one of the key figures of the notion of reflective teaching. He introduces the experiential learning, which has established the core of many methods of reflective practice. He asserts that learning emerges from recalling the observations about a particular event and reflecting on them, which enables us with a deeper understanding of what has happened. In other words, knowledge is formed through the transformation of experiences (Jasper, 2003).

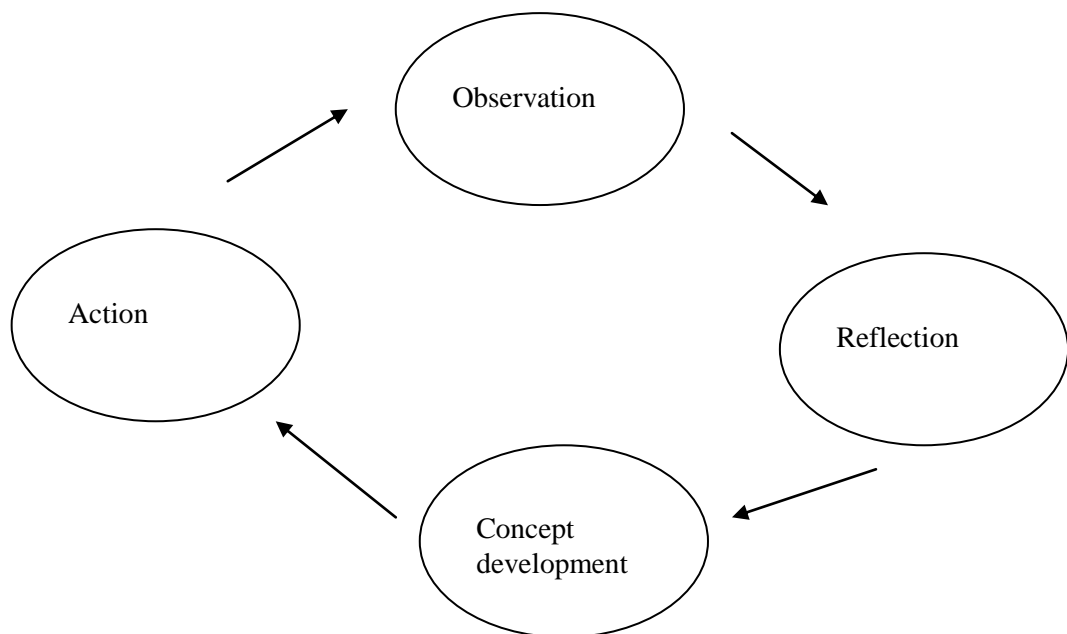
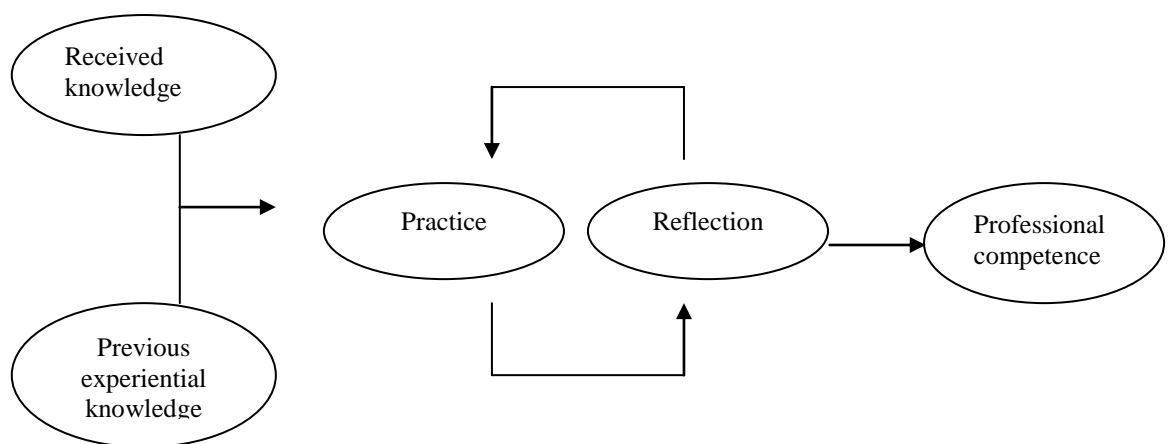


Figure 2.5: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Jasper, 2003).

Understanding the roots of being a reflective practitioner also takes us to the work of Schön, called *the Reflective Practitioner*. Schön (1983) proposes two different aspects of being reflective: “knowing-in-action” and “reflection-in-action”. Knowing-in-action includes all actions which teachers carry out spontaneously during their teaching while reflection-in-action consists of synthesizing a set of knowledge or experiences for a coherent teaching. Ghaye (2011) highlights that Schön focuses on the importance of reframing practice that means to look at the events from different perspectives.

Additionally, Wallace (1991) defines two kinds of knowledge: received knowledge and experiential knowledge. The first includes “facts, data and theories, often related to some kind of research” (p. 12). Hence, language teachers are acquainted with certain concepts from linguistics, theories or research findings. This kind of knowledge provides a framework for teacher education. The latter is derived from two concepts; knowing-in-action and reflection. It is normal for teachers to reflect on their feelings and intentions emerged during their teaching. They need to ask themselves what went well or badly, what things to repeat or to avoid. This process can also take place in the class. As a result, a teacher education course may be consisted of two kinds of knowledge development: received knowledge and experiential knowledge. In the first one teachers become familiar with “the vocabulary of the subject and the matching concepts, research findings, theories and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession” (p.14). In the second one, teachers find the opportunity to reflect on knowing-in-action so as to develop it.



*Figure 2.6: Reflective Model (Wallace, 1991).*

It seems that reflective practice is a challenging process, which has different dimensions. Ghaye (2011) contends that reflective practice is “more than thinking about teaching. It can be thought in terms of asking searching questions about experience and conceptualized as both a state of mind and an on-going type of behavior” (p. 8). He

introduces four kinds of reflective practice, which work differently. During the reflecting practice, we inevitably use more than one kind of reflection alone or with others. When we talk about reflection itself, we refer to reflection-on-action. In the case of teaching and chairing meetings, we have in our minds reflection-in-action. However, we may not be aware of this process. Reflecting-for-practice involves reflecting on what we have done or planned to do while reflection-with-action means doing something.

Kinds of Reflection	Meanings
Reflection-in-action	1. In a particular workplace 2. Thinking on your feet, improvisation.
Reflection-on-action	1. After the event. 2. On something significant
Reflection-for-practice	1. For a reason or particular purpose 2. Planning what you're going to do
Reflection-with –action	1. Conscious future action 2. Action alone or with others

Figure 2.7: Four of the More Common Views of Reflection (Ghaye, 2011).

Jasper (2003) identifies five stages of reflective processes:

- *Selecting a critical incident to reflect on:* Any experience can be used as a tool for reflection since they contribute to professional development.
- *Observing and describing the experience:* Experience need to be clarified as much as possible by using some key questions such as “who, what, where, when, why, how”.
- *Analyzing the experience:* It involves considering our experiences more objectively. It is time to ask why type of questions to explore the underlying reasons.
- *Exploring alternatives:* It includes looking for alternative ways of perceiving our experiences.
- *Framing the action:* It enables us to focus on our future steps about the critical incident we have identified at the first stage (p. 12).

In addition, Bolton (2010) claims that reflective practice enables to explore;

- what you know but do not know you know
- what you do not know but want to know
- what you think, believe, value, understand about you role and boundaries
- how your actions match up with what you believe
- how to value and take into account personal feelings” (p. 4).

As it seems clear, reflective practice is a crucial component of teacher development. Therefore, it shouldn't be limited to technical level such as the evaluation of teaching and learning strategies and classroom resources. Instead, reflective practice should be used a means of finding out the underlying assumptions in our teaching process to develop a personal understanding of learning and teaching (Harrison, 2008).

Pollard (2005) suggests that reflective teaching allows for the professional growth by helping teachers to become more experienced in the teaching process. She lists some features of reflective teaching: To start with, it builds a bridge between aims and results as well as tools and technical efficiency. It is also a cyclical or spiral process which enables teachers to monitor, evaluate and revise their teaching. Another thing is that, reflective teaching includes competence of field knowledge as well as “responsibility, open-mindedness, and whole-heartedness.” Teacher judgment constitutes the basis of reflective teaching. It can be enhanced through collaboration with colleagues (p. 14-15).

Consequently, being reflective can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching. Building a bridge between what they teach and what the students learn, teachers will be able to evaluate their teaching and also their professional growth. In this regard, they need to be reflective in their professional development which takes on special importance. Ghaye (2011) suggests that reflective practice occurs instinctively for most beginning teachers. That is, they think about the problems mentally or forms used for evaluation may help them to identify what went wrong and make the modifications. Starting with technical reflection, this process takes teachers to a more practical level. Finally, the highest level is the critical level. Needless to say, the practical and critical levels do not take place instinctively especially for beginning teachers. In this sense, reflective practice becomes a crucial part of professional development, aiming to reach the critical level in order to build a deeper understanding of learning and teaching.

## **2.4.1. Methods for Reflective Teaching**

### **2.4.1.1. Peer Observation**

It is relatively true that every teacher is in an on-going process of professional growth to facilitate his or her teaching. In exploring the ideal aspects of teaching they make use of several approaches one of which is peer observation. Peer observation is one of the most widely used methods in professional development since it allows for the development of teaching as well as evaluation. Irons (2008) explains that “peer observation is a method where a colleague provides feedback on your teaching with the objective of helping you to improve your teaching” (p. 103). It has the potential of getting valuable insights both for the observed and the observer through observing others, discussing different approaches to enhance student learning.

Roberson (2006) defines a peer as “a colleague who does not have administrative authority above you” (p. 5). Richards and Lockhart (1996) contend that observation refers to two teachers observing each other to identify the different aspects in their teaching. In addition, Wadhwa (2008) states that it has been recognized as an integral part of professional development for many teachers, which aims to achieve effective practice with the help of shared reflection and action research. As the definitions suggests peer observation is not just observing a colleagues’ teaching. It reflects that we can facilitate our teaching by analyzing and reflecting on others’ teaching.

Founded on development in the student learning experience, peer observation has three purposes;

- individual professional development
- performance management
- evidence of quality assurance” (Frankland, 2007, p. 125).

Richards and Lockhart (1996) claim peer observation is mainly carried out for evaluation purposes; so many teachers are reluctant to participate in it. On the contrary, Nunan and Lamb (1996) suggest peer observation is an important tool for professional development, which takes place on the premise of mutual support and trust. Similarly, Frankland (2007) points out that the assumption underlying peer observation is performance appraisal. Nevertheless, the feeling of anxiety and nervousness is

inevitable for most teachers during this process. To reduce these feelings, the process can be considered as “developmental, constructive and collegial” (p. 125).

Basically, there are three models of peer observation methods identified in the literature. Gosling (2002, cited in Al-Sidairi & Region, 2011), suggests that the main focus of the evaluation model is appraisal. The second model aims to develop the performance of teachers while peer review model intends to improve reflection. There is no doubt that these three models have different purposes as well as the roles for the observer.

Wadhwa (2008) suggests that peer observation may be needed at any time of our teaching when there is a requirement of observation especially for new teachers who need a chance to scaffold the theory and the practice. As for the features to be observed, Wadhwa (2008) maintains that observers may observe;

- the appropriateness and achievement of learning objectives/outcomes,
- communication of objectives to learners and links to prior knowledge,
- structure of the session, e.g., introduction, organization into sections and a summary,
- delivery, including pace, audibility, visibility,
- communication with students, including interaction, questioning and activities
- the engagement of students in the learning process” (p. 150).

Nunan and Lamb (1996) identify the steps for this process:

- Pre-observation discussion: The lesson plan is discussed as well as the focus of the observation. (Observation is generally more useful if it is focused, rather than the observer trying to note everything).
- Observation: The observer takes notes on the steps in the lesson, recording such things as departures from the lesson plan. Particular note is made of the aspects of the lesson on which the teacher wants feedback.
- Post-lesson discussion: Both the teacher and the observer report their impressions of the lesson, and discuss any differences of interpretation. The teacher may ask for ideas on improving some aspects of the teaching.
- Follow up: The teacher tries out new ideas or suggestions that arise and reports back the observer” (p. 240).

In addition, the purpose of the post-lesson discussion is to give positive feedback. Rather than the personality, it requires focusing on behavior to be changed.

Factual objective comments may also help us to clarify less effective aspects. Another obvious point is to be constructive with the help of positive suggestions. It might also allow us to use questions to make the observed to reflect on his/her teaching and engage in an action plan. On the other hand, receiving feedback can equally be as important as giving feedback. The first thing that needs to be done is to explain the kind of feedback, which may help you and get ready for receiving constructive feedback. Asking for examples is probably the best way to clarify the less effective parts (Wadhwa, 2008).

As it is clear, peer observation is a nonjudgmental reflective process that provides further professional development through exploring and improving teaching experiences. It creates an opportunity both for the observer and observed to;

- develop their own reflective practice
- share good teaching practices
- gain new ideas and fresh perspectives about teaching
- enhance their own teaching skills
- improve the quality of the learning experiences made available to students (Professional Development for Academics Involved in Teaching).

A number of purposes and benefits of peer observation have been highlighted in the literature. Wadhwa (2008) takes the view that it is beneficial both for the observer and the observed teacher. First of all, it is a great opportunity for the observer to explore what the students are really doing in the class. Secondly, several studies have revealed that effective feedback about teaching and improvement of practice can be managed by peer observation. Another benefit often put forward is that it is a means of gaining confidence and competence through mutual support between colleagues. Namely, it is an opportunity for teachers to be more critical about their teaching.

Irons (2008) also emphasizes that it yields positive feedback for the improvement of teaching. Similarly, it is a tool for getting feedback for the observed, and reflecting to his/ her own practice for the observer (Carolan and Wang, 2012). Cosh (1999) highlights that rather than criticizing the teaching of others, peers observation initiates self-reflection and self-awareness of our teaching. It's purely for our own professional development, which paves the way for a critical approach to our teaching styles in the light of others.

Despite its many potential benefits, peer observation suffers from some serious weaknesses. One major drawback of this method is it overlooks the fact that whether the

peers are qualified to assess each other's teaching, how the process may have an influence on their relationships, and what the effects of negative feedback might be (Carolan & Wang, 2012). Cosh (1999) argues how it may be helpful for teachers to improve their teaching by being told the problems in their performance. Besides, suggestions given by the observer would be questionable since they are subjective.

The results of the study of Horncastle and Sharp (2010) indicate that although teachers value the process of peer observation, their feedback does not offer significant insights to reflect on their teaching. It seems that, the personality and the assumptions of the observer about teaching may hinder the observation process. Moreover, when applied in the same department, it may not work properly, as there is a risk of damaging the relationships among the colleagues (Roberson, 2006).

Another point that needs to be discussed is that peer observation is sometimes used for evaluation purposes. Following a guideline, an administrator observes a teacher's class and evaluates his/ her teaching. In this case receiving feedback may not have a value for the teacher since it lacks of collaboration. Besides, rather than focusing on the effective aspects of one's teaching, it emphasizes the points to be improved. However, a teacher may not find out the solutions of the problems in his/her teaching by working individually (Hirsch, 2011).

No need to say, peer observation of teaching allows teachers to enhance their teaching by sharing their experiences and opening new doors for their teaching in a reflective and collegial cycle. As Malderez puts out (2003, cited in Al-Sidairi & Region, 2011) peer observation helps teachers to obtain a deeper understanding of what's happening in the class and to develop their students' learning. At this point, peer observation may lack solving the less effective aspects of our teaching since it mainly depends on the value of others having different personalities and teaching styles. Therefore, we need critical reflection to trigger a deeper understanding of our teaching, which may be achieved with a method letting us to find ways of reacting to the events happening in the class objectively.



#### **2.4.1.2. Keeping Diaries**

Keeping diaries has begun to make an impact on teacher development methods. This method contributes to professional development by drawing on writing freely about teachers' feelings pertinent to any things occurred in the class. It suggests something more than manuscripting what is going on the class. More importantly, it provides a genuine way of reflection. It captures neither a systematic way nor a lot time to spend on.

Any kind of information about teaching process can be recorded. Although, it is easy to notice even minor points in the class, they can be forgotten easily. That's why; diary keeping is a valuable way for long-term improvements for professional development (Moore, et al. 2007). In addition, Craft (2000) points out that diary keeping can be used as an effective tool for professional development which can be kept for a shorter or longer period. As Wallace (1998) puts forward, apart from being personal documents, the method does not necessarily involve particular rules, which makes the writers feel free to write their feelings. Therefore, they can be considered affective data. Similarly, Richards and Lockhart (1996) maintain that diary keeping can be regarded as a means of not only understanding the private affective variables having an influence of teaching styles but also a way for reflection. It is also beneficial in generating hypotheses and questions as well as being an easy way to record data.

The literature on diary keeping is sprinkled with many successful examples. O' Hanlon (1996) suggests diary keeping does not require a specific method. What exactly aimed is to make a record of what's going on in the class. Owing to the complexity of classroom atmosphere, teachers need to express themselves in a personal way. So, they get a better understanding of their personal values, which lead a path to professionalism.

The results of the study of Jarwis (1992, cited in Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998) indicated that diary keeping provided with the participants to reflect on "solving problems, seeing new teaching ideas, and legitimizing their own practice" (p. 316). Brock, et al. (1992, cited in Wallace, 1998) highlight that from the point of the view of professional development; there are many advantages of diaries:

- They provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners.

- They serve as a means of generating questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning process.
- They enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns.
- They are excellent tool for reflection.
- They are simple to conduct.
- They provide a first-hand account of teaching and learning experiences.
- They are the most natural form of classroom research in that no formal correlations are tested and no outside observer enters the classroom dynamic.
- They provide an on-going record of classroom events and teacher and learner reflections.
- They enable the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging from the diaries.
- They promote the development of reflective teaching (p. 63).

Additionally, Moore et al. (2007) outline three advantages of diary keeping:

- Teaching diaries captures real time reflections that benefit longer-term habits and orientations.
- Teaching diaries can be used to monitor, compare and analyze teaching experiences in ways that support scholarly, reflective approach to teaching.
- Teaching diaries can ultimately save time and energy by capturing key recurring dynamics and patterns in particular classroom settings” (p. 19).

On the other hand, as Wallace (1998) claims, one of the prominent disadvantages of diary keeping is the data gained through the diary may not be shared directly. However, this problem can be dealt with some easy ways. To illustrate, colleagues may read each other’s diaries and discuss the issues arisen from the diary the data or diaries may be kept as original and derived version. So, they can share some parts from the original diary. Likewise, Richards & Lockhart (1996) report that numerous studies have been based on individual diary keeping but the advantages of keeping diaries together or reflecting on them collaboratively have been reported.

Halbach (1999) highlights that so as to use diaries effectively; some points need to be taken into account. Firstly, the data gained from diaries depend on personal interpretation of the researcher. Thus, commenting the data and establishing the connections between them requires a careful analysis. To avoid incorrect analysis, the

researcher may not only make use of more than one tool to support a point but also prevent the results of the study to participants, so they can express their opinions. Besides, the use of different tools makes the conclusions more reliable. In other words, when the results of the data gained by using different tools are contrasted, the reliability certainly increases.

#### **2.4.1.3. Action Research**

Depending on a reflective cycle, action research (AR) is a paradigm that facilitates one's own teaching. Each classroom has its unique atmosphere with its students, values, goals, cultures, etc. Therefore, traditional research methodology may not be helpful in some areas. At this point, action research may be a key to make a solution since the researchers are inside the classroom. In fact, most teachers do some kinds of critical reflection about their teaching in their mind. AR is putting these informal reflections into a more systematic way (Hinchey, 2008).

Tomal (2010) defines AR as “a systematic process of solving educational problems and making improvements” (p. 10). Similarly, McNiff and Whitehead (2011) consider it as “a form of enquiry that enables practitioners in every job and walk of life to investigate and evaluate their work (p. 7). Craig (2009) summarizes the key points in defining AR. First of all, focused on improving practice, it can be conducted by a teacher or a practitioner. It may relatively lead to possible changes in teaching. It is also a participatory process that creates a community of learners in practice. AR is a structured and systematic inquiry.

Burns (2010) states AR requires a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to gain a deeper understanding our teaching. As well as taking place in it, a teacher may also be the researcher of his/her teaching. Being critical infers to look at the aspects of our teaching that need to be improved. Hence, it has the potential of resulting in improvements in teaching collected through a systematic research.

Hinchey (2008) identifies four characteristics of AR:

- It is conducted by an insider.
- It is regarded as an opportunity to get a deeper understanding in some areas which are significant for the researcher.
- It's an inquiry that involves collecting information, analysis and reflection systematically.

- It is an ongoing process leading to new cycles action plan (p. 4).

As Roberts (1998) puts forward, Lewin defines the elements of AR;

- a problem of real meaning to all participants
- their commitment to its resolutions
- involvement of participants at each stage as a prerequisite for change
- participants taking responsibility for change and for the monitoring of the change
- an emphasis on group processes and group decision-making at each stage in order to clarify problems and commit participants to action
- a role for a scientist trained as a group facilitator and as a theorist, working in a dialogue with participants (p. 41).

Taking these into account, it can be concluded that the purpose of AR for teachers is to establish the connection between a particular problem related to the teaching and learning process and its solutions systematically and reflectively. Koshy (2010) states “action research supports practitioners to seek ways in which they can provide good quality education by transforming the quality teaching-related activities, thereby enhancing students’ learning” (p. 1).

Tomal (2010) summarizes the history of action research. John Dewey, who highlighted that, teachers should not only be critical about their teaching but also engage in the process of reflection and improvement, undertook preliminary work on action research. Founding the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts, Lewin also made valuable contributions to the development theories and models of action research. He conducted action researches in behavioral science so as to find solutions to “negotiations, conflict resolutions, third-part peace-making, visioning, socio-technological systems, statistical process controls, strategic planning, and a host of other creative schemes” (p. 16). Understanding these interventions let teachers to make classroom improvements.

There are basically three reasons to be engaged in AR. It is a valuable way to improve our teaching by addressing and solving the problems in the class. With its specific, targeted goals, it has the possibility for teachers to experience success. Furthermore, in a particular learning situation, it initiates a community working collaboratively (Craig, 2009). By the same token, McNiff and Whitehead (2011) list

three reasons to take part in AR: to improve the understanding of what we are doing, develop our learning, and influence other's learning.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, cited in Burns, 2010) suggest four steps in AR cycle:

- Planning: It includes identifying the problem and think about the action leading to improvement.
- Action: This stage involves a carefully planned analysis of the action, making assumptions and find alternative ways.
- Observation: It is consisted of observing the outcomes of the action systematically and documenting the data.
- Reflection: The final stage includes reflecting on, clarifying the effects the action so as to understand the whole cycle clearly (p. 8).

Alternatively, McNiff and Whitehead (2011) explain the phases of AR as to;

- gather information about what is going on
- identify a particular concern
- find a possible way
- try it out
- documenting the data about the issue
- set the criteria to make judgments about the criteria
- test the validity of the judgments
- make modifications depending on the evaluation (p. 8-9).

AR serves as a tool for teachers to self-reflect on their teaching critically. Rather than being told by another person what to do or not to do in the class, it provides teachers with the real opportunity to hold a mirror to their teaching. Since each class is unique with its students, teacher and methods, each teachers need to work on their own problems to be proficient in their jobs. While doing this, one of the best methods to make use of is AR, which is a systematic process.

#### **2.4.1.3.1. Models of Action Research**

The existing literature reveals that there are many models of AR. McKernan (1996) outlines three models: the scientific–technical model, practical-deliberative model, critical emancipatory model.

McKernan (1996) emphasizes Lewin and his group of researchers laid the ground of the scientific–technical model. It was clear that behaviorist researchers conducted action researches to solve the problems of curriculum. This model of action research consists of four phases;

- planning
- fact and finding
- execution
- analysis (p. 17).

This model is a process of “a series of spiraling decisions, taken on the basis of repeated cycles of analysis, reconnaissance, problem reconceptualization, planning, implementation of social action, and evaluation regarding the effectiveness of action (p. 17). The scientific study of the effects changes in the process is the core of this model. For Lewin, AR is a process taking place in a group and evaluation is an ongoing process to improve the effectiveness of the action.

Joseph Schwab and Lawrence Stenhouse are among the pioneers of Practical-deliberative model, which is based on the notion that practitioners need to able use their personal experience for self-reflection. AR serves a means of uncovering the spiraling of reflections leading another cycle of reflection in a flexible control. In a practical-deliberative model, by identifying the potential problems and theoretical aspects of teaching, the researcher may develop a self-critical understanding of the conditions (McKernan, 1996). Elliot (1978, cited in McKernan, 1996) claims that teaching involves theoretical aspects in nature. Thus, practitioners reflect on their everyday practice for self-improvement.

Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that the founder of Critical Emancipatory model is Zuber-Skerritt. Critical-emancipatory model includes a “cyclical process of

- strategic planning
- implementing the plan
- observation, evaluation, and self-evaluation
- critical and self-critical reflection on the results” (p. 305).

It takes the view that to get the better understanding of the conditions for improvement is the key element of this model. Thus, rather than the rigid phased, “symmetrical communication” in an equal community is preferred. Being an autonomous professional that requires the interpretations of the practitioners can be achieved through professional development.

#### **2.4.1.4. Critical Friends Group**

Recently, group facilitation is involved in teacher development methods as teachers’ roles require mutual collaboration and as professional development of teachers enhances student outcomes. However, when teachers are lack of skills to improve professional conversations, attempts for professional development through collaboration fail (Cohen, 2008). Ellen (2007) outlines the factors facilitating group development. First of all, group members need to establish some criteria to evaluate the functioning of relationships and task achievement in the group dynamics. Secondly, the most important areas that are considered to be changed and the factors limiting these changes must be identified. Finally, groups must make a personal commitment to achieve the goals and plans for change no matter there exists a facilitator outside the group or not.

A number of approaches have been advocated to enhance group facilitation one of which is Critical Friends Group (CFG). CFG is a professional community aiming to promote student learning through collaboration. Members focus on factors affecting students’ achievement such as examining curriculum, and students’ work (School Reform Initiative, 2012). CFG was designed in 1994 at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform so as to enhance student learning. It has been a part of the program of National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) at the Harmony Education Center in Bloomington, Indiana since 2000 (National School Reform Faculty). Cohen (2008) points out that recently, CFG rests on twenty-eight centers of activity and has given training to more than 10,000 coaches so as to work with teachers in local regions.

Zepeda (2008) emphasizes that CFG is a satisfying professional development method since,

- it is continual
- it is focused on teachers’ own teaching and their own students’ learning
- it takes place in a small group of supportive and trusted colleagues within their own school (p. 226).

Nolan and Hoover (2010) identify CFG as “small groups of teachers who meet voluntarily on a regular basis to examine their own work and student learning with the aid of conversation protocols. Typically, CFGs are facilitated by a coach who has been trained to use various protocols” (p. 201). In this sense, critical friends are not the same as the group of teachers meeting regularly to discuss the teaching and learning process.

Costa and Kallick (1993, cited in Swaffield, 2002) define the concept of critical friend as:

... a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work (p. 50).

Likewise, Whitead (1996, cited in Koo, 2002) explains that:

critical friends (also termed 'critical colleague' or 'critical companion') who may be one or more of the people you are working with. These critical friends should be willing to discuss your work sympathetically. You and your critical friend(s) choose each other, so you need to negotiate the ground rules of your relationship. This person can be your best ally, and you must never take him or her for granted. As well as expecting support from your friend(s), you must also be prepared to support in return. This means being available, even in unsocial hours, being able to offer as well as receive advice, even if it is painful or unwelcome, and always aiming to praise and offer support (p. 30).

On the other hand, Swaffield (2002) questions the contradiction of the words: critical and friends in the definition of CFG. How can the balance between “a total friend” and “a total critic” be established? One possible answer to this question is to understand that the role of a person as “being a critic” who criticizes the actions rather than the people. Namely, the main idea underlying this definition is a critical friend is someone helping others to reflect on aspects of teaching clearly and exploring the hidden ones.



A CFG includes 4-10 members meeting approximately one hour per week (Andreu et al., 2003, cited in Vo & Nguyen, 2010). “Protocols are a structured process or a set of guidelines to promote meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning. Protocols give time for active listening and reflection so all voices in the group are heard and honored” (National School Reform Faculty).

As it is clear from the definitions, protocols serve as the core of CFG. Johnson (2009) focuses on the common elements of the protocols: “sharing the question or dilemma, inviting questions from the participants, giving and receiving feedback, and promoting reflection” (p. 101). Bambino (2002) explains that CFG protocols encourage teachers to collaborate so as to improve students’ outputs and teachers’ work. She also emphasizes the essence of CFG protocols is building trust essential for honest and productive conversations with colleagues about teaching. Cohen (2008) also stresses the importance of trust in a CFG program.

In addition, Nolan and Hoover (2010) emphasize the benefits of protocols:

- They allow time for different activities and chance for participants to share their ideas.
- They create opportunities for in-depth conversations, which cannot be maintained in routine conversations in schools.
- They can also be regarded as a tool to set the scene for collaborative work.
- They support teachers to ask challenging questions to each other in an environment where each member feels safe to listen and speak.
- Since members of the group do not feel to respond one another simultaneously, protocols initiates reflective listening.
- They are helpful to use the limited time in a more fruitful way (p. 201).

The basis of CFG is to identify the students’ learning goals, reflect on practices aimed to achieve the goals in a collaborative teachers’ community (Cohen, 2008). Additionally, Zepeda (2008) draws our attention to the importance of goals in this method. CFG is characterized by goals, which are clearly stated and related to the purpose of the group. They may be changed as the group members learn from each other, so short-term goals permit long-term goals. Thus, identifying goals in the middle of the program yields teachers to get a better understanding of what is being learned. Lunenberg (1995, cited in Zepeda, 2008) explains six characteristics of the goals;

- Specific: Goals are specific when they are clearly stated.

- Measurable: Measurable goals are precise and can be measured over time.
- Achievable: Goals are achievable if they are realistic. The effort needed to reach a goal can inspire great effort; unrealistic goals are self-defeating.
- Relevant: Goals are relevant if they are viewed as important to the individual and to the team. Superficial goals are forgotten because they lack meaning.
- Trackable: Goals need to be trackable to check progress. Goals should not be so numerous or complex that they confuse rather than direct teams.
- Ongoing: Not all goals will be completed by the end of a specific period. Some goals are achieved over a longer time; others can be reached more quickly” (p. 227).

Ellen (2007) explains that according to theory of action suggested by Bill Nave, a NSRF researcher, a professional community is the essence of the change in teacher development. A commitment to meet together, identifying the goals for students, and setting goals for teaching process shape the professional community through collegiality. In this regard, regular meetings let CFG participants to form new knowledge about their students and teaching through internal and external sources. The former consists of examining students’ work and teachers’ practices whereas the latter includes discussing articles pertinent to certain topics. Nave (2003, cited in Ellen, 2007) also summarizes the action theory in the form of some steps;

1. Teacher joins CFG
2. Teacher engages in conversations about teaching and learning
3. Teacher begins to think differently about her teaching
4. Teacher decides to try a different way to teach
5. Teacher tries a new way to teach
6. Teacher invites CFG colleague to observe her new way of teaching
7. Colleague offers candid but friendly feedback on what she observed
8. Teacher realized she wasn’t doing what she thought she was
9. Teacher tries again with colleague observing
10. Colleague gives candid but friendly feedback on what she observed
11. [Numerous iterations of steps 2-10]

12. Teacher's pedagogy becomes more student-centered

13. Teacher's students begin achieving better (p. 10).

Cury (2008) explains the intention behind the CFG meetings is to foster student learning and success with the help of supportive conversations about teaching and learning. Therefore, it is not surprising that the core of educational change is the classroom. CFG membership relies on collaboration in a variety of ways, reflection on classroom practice, and protocols leading to structured conversation guides.

CFG aims to;

- create a professional learning community
- make teaching practice explicit and public by "talking about teaching"
- help people involved in schools to work collaboratively in democratic, reflective communities
- establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry
- provide a context to understand our work with students, our relationships with peers, and our thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching and learning
- help educators help each other turn theories into practice and standards into actual student learning
- improve teaching and learning (National School Reform Faculty).

And the improvement of a professional community depends on;

- openness to improvement
- trust and respect
- a foundation in the knowledge and skills of teaching
- supportive leadership
- socialization or school structures that encourage the sharing of the school's vision and mission (National School Reform Faculty).

Defining the factors affecting to become a learning community could be seen as the start of establishing a safe community for CFG. The group members may think about the areas, which they believe is essential for their community. It is also important to set the norms in advance in order to deal with problems (Sweeney, 2003).

In the literature, CFG is relatively considered as an effective model of professional development since it fosters collaborative professional communities in a friendly

atmosphere. As suggested by the findings of Vo & Niguyen (2010), CFG provides teachers with the opportunity to share their ideas with their colleagues, and help each other to improve professionally. It also stimulates a more motivating teaching atmosphere for teachers since it allows them to feel as a member of professional community based on mutual interaction. Besides, Bambino (2002) attributes “CFG have been the catalyst for changes in the teaching, learning, culture, and climate of learning communities in a variety of schools” (p. 25).

Swaffield (2002) investigated the relationships between head teachers and local authority in a CFG program. There is a positive relationship between head teachers and local authority, which is based on trust, respect and openness during the CFG program. Rather than critical, the contributions of critical friends are considered to be supportive. Johnson (2009) also claims that CFG creates collegial bounds among teachers with the aid of “close reflection on individual practice and students thinking and learning” (p.101). Dunne and Honts (1998, cited in Johnson, 2009) states that it also creates stimulus for teachers to express their goals both for themselves and their students and to reflect on the curriculum, students’ works and other factors influencing learning in the school environment while enhancing their professional development.

In his case study, Fahey (2011) examines the influence of CFG on leadership education. The results suggest that by using CFG model, school leaders may stimulate “learning-focused, reflective professional communities.” One of the protocols used in the research provided school leaders with an understanding of elements of school-wide communities. Another protocol also encouraged participant to collaborate on their practice under the framework of shared-norms.

Key (2006) summarizes four claims about the impacts of CFG on professional development. Firstly, CFG creates a professional community through collaboration. Teachers come together to talk about their work and share their teaching experiences, which bring about a collegial community. Secondly, CFG fosters an understanding of professionalism since it provides teachers with self-development. It improves a teacher identity based on professional practice. CFG has an impact on changing teachers’ thinking and practice. CFG supports self-reflection on teaching practice so teachers come to an understanding of the areas that need to be developed in their teaching. Finally, CFG affects student learning since it has the potential of changing the teaching practice as well as students’ learning.

On the other hand, one criticism of much of the literature on CFG is that how the practices in this group may lead to changes in classroom teaching. Few publications and researches do not provide an in-depth implementation of CFG. Additionally, the complex dynamics of teacher communities is under the risk of being oversimplified (Curry, 2008). Another drawback of this approach is the ambiguity of the concept of critical friendship. While a friend does not have to be critical, a person does not need to be a friend to be critical (Koo, 2002). In general, therefore, it seems that there is a definite need for methodological knowledge about CFG approach.

Consequently, looking at a broader sense, a CFG program seems to facilitate the professional development of teachers through collaboration in a professional community. Besides, focused works in the protocols bring about meaningful reflection that affects their teaching. It may also lead to changes in the classroom which enhances student learning.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological aspects and the research procedure of the study. After giving information about the participant teachers, the overall design of the study, the data collection, and data analysis procedures are reported.

#### 3.1. Research Questions

The following research questions framed the study:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards Critical Friends Group programs?
2. Does Critical Friends Group contribute teachers' professional development?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group programs?

#### 3.2. Research Design

The ultimate goal of the study was to foster a collaborative professional community through ongoing interactions in a small group called Critical Friends Group (National School Reform Faculty). The underlying framework of the study was to build on reflective teaching emphasizing the critical reflection as a means of teacher development.

After carefully considering the literature, we determined that the most appropriate type of research for this study would be action research (AR). The aim of action research is defined as:

- to develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening
- to act to implement the plan
- to observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs
- to reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and on, through a succession of cycles (Kemmis, 1982, cited in, Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 5).

Professional development begins with professional communication among teachers. However, there is not enough volume of published studies on the concept of teacher development in Turkey. Up to now, what we know about teacher development in Turkey is largely based on teacher training programs (Seferoğlu, 1996). Thus, we

tried to find an alternative teacher development program which brings about reflective practice, so we focused on a new method called Critical Friends Group which creates an opportunity for teachers to develop themselves through reflecting on their experiences and sharing ideas in a professional community. And AR would permit the cyclical evaluation of this CFG program to develop a professional community based on collegiality.

Action Research is collaborative and creates a chance for the researchers for a cyclical revision of research questions. It also paves the way for the researcher to be involved in the study (Herr & Anderson, 2005). In the present study, the insights gained from each week provided the researcher with a reliable cycle for the research questions. The researcher also participated in the program as a CFG facilitator as suggested by Herr and Anderson (2005).

The goal for the CFG program was to happen on a continuous basis. The program started on 2<sup>nd</sup> November and was planned to be completed on 21<sup>st</sup> December. However, we were not able to meet for two weeks because the participant teachers had other meetings at their school. Therefore, we had to change the day of the meetings from Friday to Thursday and the program finished on 4<sup>th</sup> January.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) state AR requires intervention into real situations and action researchers put the theory into practice by observing the cause- effect relations within the intervention. In line with the research questions, a diary including an eight-week CFG program was designed (see Appendix 1). Each week in the diary consisted of a variety of guidelines, questionnaires, and open-ended questions relevant to each protocol used in the CFG program. Each protocol was directly relevant to participant teachers' experiences during their teaching. Hence, the design and implementation of the study enabled the researcher to observe the cause-effect relations within each week during the program.

One of the considerations in the study was to encourage the participant teachers to discuss the real-life situations happening in their classes. Hence, it was most probable that they would find effective solutions to their dilemmas taking place during their teaching. Another consideration was that, being involved in the study, the researcher would be able to find out solutions to the components of the protocols that did not work in the study. Finally, having good relationships with the participant teachers was

believed to be helpful to create a collegial and non-threatening atmosphere for the protocols.

### 3.3. Participants of the Study

The participant teachers of the study were four English language teachers working in a private school of Kahramanmaraş. They were selected by using purposive sampling since it was aimed to include English language teachers who were willing to take part in a teacher development program (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2006).

It is argued that in a powerful teacher development program, teachers;

- develop a sense of ownership through their own development,
- address their concerns and needs, and
- volunteer for the program (Bell and Gilbert, 1996, p. 36).

The names of the participant teachers used in this study are pseudo names as Esra, Elif, Filiz and Aslı. Table 3.1. displays the characteristics of the participant teachers. The participant teachers were not homogenous in respect to age and teaching experience. Esra is 27 and has been teaching English for 3 years. Elif is 32 and has been an English Language teacher for 7 years. Filiz is 28 and has been working as an English Language teacher for 4 years. Finally, Aslı is 24 and has been an English Language teacher for a year. They all worked in private institutions. Elif and Esra were teaching 5 - 8 graders and Filiz and Aslı were teaching 1 - 4 graders.

Table 3.1: *Characteristics of the Participant Teachers*

Participants	Age	Years of Experience	Institutions worked before
Esra	27	3	Private school
Elif	32	7	Private school
Filiz	28	4	Private school
Aslı	24	1	Private course



### **3.4. Procedures**

The program entitled “A Critical Friends Group Program” began one month after the 2012-2013 academic year started. The underlying reason for this delay was to give an opportunity to the participant teachers to get familiar with their students and find out what was going on in their classes. In this CFG program, we met the head of English department of Kipaş Schools in Kahramanmaraş and explained the details of the study. The head of the department held a meeting with 8 English teachers in the school and later told us that 4 teachers were willing to take part in this study. Meeting the participant teachers, we explained the aims and the procedures of the study and we decided to meet after a month because they were very busy since it was the beginning of the term.

The Critical Friends Group program mainly consisting of action research, peer observation and diary keeping lasted 8 weeks. The participant teachers and the researcher hold a meeting on a weekly basis. Each meeting took at least half an hour. They kept a diary including an entry for each week of the program. They were expected to write the diary entries at the end of each protocol to keep their comments fresh. Finally, the changes in the participant teachers owing to their participation in the CFG program were investigated through a course evaluation questionnaire provided as the last entry in the diary and a semi-structured interview with the participant teachers. The design and the implementation of the CFG program could be summarized as in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: *The Design and the Implementation of the CFG Program*

Week	
<b>Week 1</b>	<p><b>Establishing Common Grounds with the Participant Teachers</b></p> <p>The researcher;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gives information about the CFG program.</li> <li>asks the participant teachers to answer a pre-training survey.</li> <li>asks the participant teachers keep a diary including their reflections about this program.</li> <li>asks the participant teachers to think about a problem they face in the class.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<p><b>Problem-solving Protocol:</b></p> <p>The participant teachers take turns and talk about the specific problems that they can't cope with in the class.</p>
<b>Week 3</b>	<p><b>Peer observation 1 Protocol:</b></p> <p>The participant teachers put themselves into pairs and establish the criteria for peer observation (The researcher provides sample observation checklist for the participant teachers).</p>
<b>Week 4</b>	<p><b>Peer observation 1 Protocol ( Debriefing):</b></p> <p>They observe their peers with a special focus on a certain problem by using the checklist prepared by them.</p>
<b>Week 5</b>	<p><b>Action Research:</b></p> <p>The researcher gives information about how to write an action plan and asks the participant teachers to write an action research for the problem which their pairs observe during the peer observation.</p>
<b>Week 6</b>	<p><b>Action Research:</b></p> <p>They discuss their problems while writing an action research and decide the dates of the second peer observation.</p>
<b>Week 7</b>	<p><b>Peer observation 2:</b></p> <p>They observe their partner's class with the focus on the action research plan prepared by the observant.</p>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p><b>The Evaluation of the CFG program:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher interviews with the participant teachers about their CFG experience.</li> <li>The participant teachers answer a course-evaluation questionnaire.</li> </ul>

### **3.5. Protocols**

Basically, 3 protocols were used during this study. The purpose of the first protocol, problem-solving protocol, was to create an opportunity for the participant teachers to find out some solutions about certain dilemmas taking place in their classes in collegiality. The purpose of the second protocol, peer observation, was to allow participant teachers to identify the strengths and points that need to be improved in their teaching by the help of their colleagues. The purpose of the final protocol, action research, was to help participant teachers to devise an action plan which seeks probable solutions to the points that need further improvements about their teaching.

#### **3.5.1. Protocol 1: Establishing Common Grounds with the Participant Teachers**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, the first protocol was held in the meeting room of the private school that the study took place. The aim of the first meeting could be summarized as in the following:

- A handout explaining the important points related to CFG was handed out (Appendix 2). The researcher explained the aims and the content of the program to the participant teachers. The aim of this CFG program was to create a professional community reflecting on their teaching through collaboration in a constructive and supportive atmosphere. “Relationships within a group often become unsatisfactory when a clear purpose and reasonable goals for the whole group are not articulated” (Carr et al., 2005).
- A diary including the details of the whole program was handed out to the participant teachers and explained what was included in the diary. The participant teachers were encouraged to write their diary entries in English. However, Turkish was used during the protocols as the participant teachers expressed themselves more effectively in their mother tongue.
- A suitable time for all participant teachers was decided to hold weekly meetings.
- The participant teachers answered a questionnaire in their diary as a first entry. They also answered a question about their first impressions about the CFG program.

### **3.5.2. Protocol 2: Problem-solving Protocol**

Problem-solving protocol creates an opportunity to solve an issue prominent to the group (Carr et al., 2005). On this ground, the participant teachers worked together and focused on specific questions about their students' learning by making use of their experience.

- The researcher provided the steps of problem-solving protocol (Appendix 3). The participant teachers read the steps and started to talk about their dilemmas in their teaching by following the particular steps.
- The presenter offered an overview of his/her dilemma and asked a question that focused on finding ways of improving the situation (The facilitator guided the group through a series of questions starting with very specific, clarifying questions, if necessary).
- The presenter remained silent and took notes while the other participant teachers were discussing the dilemma.
- The presenter reflected on the suggestions having been discussed.
- The facilitator asked the participant teachers to reflect on the suggestions made throughout the protocol.
- The facilitator asked the participant teachers to write about their reflections about the problem-solving protocol (National School Reform Faculty).

### **3.5.3. Protocol 3: Peer Observation Protocol**

Peer observation process adheres to a few key points. Firstly, in a peer observation scheme, the observed and the observer come to an agreement improved in a partnership. Thus, the criteria are not imposed on the participant teachers. The observation is also specific to the partners since it is based on the grounds of particular points that the observed wants feedback (Frankland, 2007). Taking these points into account, the peer observation protocol in this program had the following stages:

- The researcher explained the guidelines for peer observation in the diary.
- The researcher provided two forms for this protocol. One of them was used to establish the details such time, criteria for the observation process (Appendix 4), the other was used during the observation process (Appendix 5).
- The participant teachers chose their partners and in pairs framed the issue or questions to be observed in the class.

- They answered the questions about peer observation in their diaries.
- The following week, the observant made observations in the class and took notes related to the issues identified in the previous meeting.
- After the observation, the pairs came together to give feedback to each other.

As can be understood from the procedures, peer observation is a process in which the participant teachers are actively involved. It also plays a key role for evaluating their teaching critically and seeing it in the eyes of others.

#### **3.5.4. Protocol 4: Peer Observation Protocol (Debriefing)**

A particular time is set for feedback based on constructive criticism in a peer observation scheme (Frankland, 2007). Additionally, the feedback is built on the “accurate and supportive input” rather than “accusations” (Roberson, 2006, p. 11). Drawing on the above argument, the participant teachers in the study went through the following cycles:

- All the participant teachers shared their observations by asking questions and making constructive suggestions. The observed spoke first and gave a brief account of how she/he felt during the observation and invited the others’ feedback on specific issues or questions. Then, the participant teachers made their own comments and the observed took notes reflect on the comments with the help of his/her notes.
- The participant teachers answered two questions about the peer observation protocol in their diary entries.

#### **3.5.5. Protocol 5: Action Research Protocol**

Basically, action research has 4 stages;

- plan
- act
- observe
- reflect ( Costello, 2003, p. 7).

Following Costello (2010) the participant teachers of the study maintained their action research process as in the following:

- A sample action research plan was given to the participant teachers (Appendix 6).

- After the first peer observation protocol, each participant teacher began their action research about the challenges stated by their peers during peer-observation. The steps that need to be followed in this process were provided in the diary given to the participant teachers at the beginning of the program.

### **3.5.6. Protocol 6: Action Research Protocol (Debriefing)**

Mc Niff and Whitehead (2011) point out that when an action research does not include self-reflection, it may be in danger of being an abstract process. Thus, this protocol aimed to discuss the problems that the participant teachers faced with while conducting their action research.

- The participant teachers discussed their problems while writing an action research.
- They answered three questions about AR in their diaries.
- They decided the dates of the second peer observation. The researcher provided the same forms, which were used in the first peer observation process, again (Appendix 4-5).
- They wrote their reflections about the process of AR in their diaries.

### **3.5.7. Protocol 7: Peer Observation Protocol 2**

Richards and Thomas (2005) suggest peer observation is a means of “developing self-awareness of one’s own teaching” (p. 86). Benefiting action research to solve their dilemmas, the participant teachers were involved in the second peer observation protocol to see how their action research plans prepared to solve their dilemmas in their teaching work.

- They observed their partner’s class with the focus on the action research plan prepared by the observant. The observer had been given the action research plan beforehand.
- The same procedures followed in the first pre-observation process were applied.
- They discussed their opinions.
- They wrote their diary entries about the second peer observation protocol.
- They were also asked to answer a post observation questionnaire.

### **3.5.8. Protocol 8: The Evaluation of the Critical Friends Group program**

In order to evaluate the quality of the program, a protocol was designed. This protocol was beneficial to get overall feedback from the participant teachers.

- The participant teachers answered a course-evaluation questionnaire.
- The researcher interviewed with the participant teachers about their CFG experience.

### **3.6. Data Collection**

The study employed both quantitative, using a course evaluation questionnaire with five-point likert-type scale, and qualitative research methods, using pre-training survey, teachers' diary about participant teachers experience during CFG program, field notes and semi-structured interviews with the participant teachers.

In order to establish a sense of reliability, several methods were included in the study. Firstly, keeping a diary was of utmost importance in this study since it is an effective means of reflecting on our own teaching. Besides, all the data collected in this study was stored in the diary of the participant teachers except the researchers' field notes. The same diary was used to write the researchers' observations and reflections about each protocol of the study. Secondly, three questionnaires were also developed about the participant teachers attitudes towards teacher development programs, peer observation and this CFG program as a whole included in the diary. So as to identify the outcomes of the study, pre and post-evaluation questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Finally, the researcher's field notes also provided us with a summary of the whole program.

#### **3.6.1. Collaborative Diary Keeping**

Lee (2007) reveals that diary keeping open new doors for teachers to reflect on their teaching with reference to "their own values and experiences, as well as the broader context within which teaching and learning take place" (p. 326). Additionally, Şeker (2006) highlights that diary keeping enriches a study by yielding reliable and reflexive data.

Hence, throughout the program, participant teachers kept a diary about their CFG experience in order to facilitate their reflection about their teaching and the CFG program. Each participant teacher was given a diary prepared by the researcher to

record his/her feelings and thoughts about the meetings on a weekly basis (Appendix 1). The researcher provided information guidelines about each meeting of CFG in the diaries. All the questionnaires used in the present study included in the participant teachers' diary. Participant teachers were asked to comment on the meetings immediately after each protocol so that the ideas could remain fresh.

### **3.6.2. Pre-training Survey**

The participant teachers were given a pre-training survey consisting of two parts in the first meeting in order to find out their attitudes towards teacher development programs. While the first part consisted of two open-ended questions about their previous teacher-training experience and their expectations about the CFG program, the second part included personal information, which kept confidential to this study.

### **3.6.3. Post Observation Questionnaire**

Post Observation questionnaire was employed in order to find out whether their attitudes towards peer observation changed after doing action research. The questionnaire was composed of 7 questions. In questions 1, 3, 5 and 7, the participant teachers were provided some options as an answer. If they choose "other" option in these questions, they were expected to identify their choices in questions 2, 4 and 6.

### **3.6.4. Program Evaluation Questionnaire**

In the last protocol of the program, the participant teachers were asked to answer a five-point Likert-type questionnaire ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" regarding the CFG program and their future expectations. The main aim of the questionnaire was to get an overall feedback about the content of the program and to find out if they would like to participate in another CFG program in the future.

### **3.6.5. The Researcher's Field Notes**

Major benefits of naturalistic observation are summarized as in the following;

- a richer understanding of the context in which people interact.
- less need to rely on assumptions or prior conceptualizations of the setting.
- personal knowledge of the setting rather than a complete reliance on the perceptions of others.



- the opportunity to see those things which may escape the awareness of the participants because they are such a part of normal routine.
- the opportunity to learn things interviewees might be unwilling to talk about (Patton 2002, cited in Ellen, 2007, p. 59).

Field notes were kept within each meeting throughout the 8 week-CFG program so as to reflect on each protocols of CFG. Therefore, we took notes about noticeable events, and the difficulties that the participant teachers faced with to avoid recurrent mistakes in the future meetings, which allowed us to understand the overall interactions of the participants. We also had the opportunity to compare the reflections gained from field notes and the participant teachers' thoughts and comments about the protocols by means of the diary entries.

### **3.6.6. Semi-structured Interview**

The researcher interviewed all the participants in order to get a deeper understanding of about their reflections about CFG experience on the last week of the program. The interview was designed as a semi-structured interview to provide a framework for it. Mitchell and Jolley (2013) emphasize that in a semi structured interview, the participant teachers are asked a list of standard questions which may be expanded to explore a given response in-depth.

The following questions constituted the framework of the semi-structured interview:

1. How do you feel about CFG program?
2. Do you think it has helped you to reflect on your teaching?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of CFG program?
4. Which protocols of CFG program were the most useful for professional development?
5. How would this program be conducted in a more effective way?

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

Weber (1990) states “content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data” (p. 5). He explains that in a content analysis, ideas are put into categories including one or many words, which are presumed to have similar meanings. The data gained through pre-training survey, teachers’ diaries, researcher’s field notes and semi-structured interviews were exposed to content analysis.

The data gained through course evaluation questionnaire and post-observation questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Simply put, descriptive statistics allow researchers to summarize the data rather than making conclusions (The Princeton Review, 2004). The percentiles of the participant teachers’ responses were calculated and presented in tables. “Percentiles express the standing of one score relative to all other scores in a set of data” (The Princeton Review, 2004, p. 5).

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the analyses of the data gained from the teachers' diary, semi- structured interviews, questionnaires and the researcher's field notes. The data gathered from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics while the data obtained from the teachers' diary, semi- structured interviews and the researcher's field notes was analyzed utilizing content analysis. The findings of the data are presented in five sections for each participant teacher. After describing the participant teachers' attitude towards Critical Friends Group (CFG) at the beginning of the study, the next section explores the contribution of CFG program to the participant teachers' professional development. The third section examines the strengths and weaknesses of the CFG program. The fourth section discusses the participant teachers' attitude towards CFG at the end of the study. Finally, the summary of the findings concerning each research question is presented.

#### 4.1. Asli

Aslı, who is 24 years old, is an English Language teacher who has been working for Kipaş Private Schools for 5 months. She has worked for a private English Language course before.

##### 4.1.1. Asli's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the Beginning of the Study

Aslı did not attend any teacher development programs before and her feelings about the CFG program was explained in her diary entry as in the following:

I think that it will be useful for my professional development and it will contribute to get new points of views for my career.

As indicated in the above statements, Aslı tended to learn from the experiences of her colleagues. It can be interpreted that being in co-operation with other teachers might enable us to reach new points of ideas about the teaching process. Bell and

Gilbert (1996) acknowledge that one of the central features of teacher development is social development concerned with understanding the ways of working in collegiality and the essence of being a teacher.

#### **4.1.2. The Contribution of the Critical Friends Group to Asli's Professional Development**

To understand the contribution of the CFG to teachers' professional development, it might be beneficial to analyze each protocol in the program. The term protocols in a CFG program tend to be used to refer to "guidelines and prescribed steps that everyone understands and agrees to follow" (Nolan and Hoover, 2010, p. 201). Protocols also have a variety of benefits:

- They allow for collaborative work.
- They create a safe environment for the participants to ask and answer about challenging questions equally.
- They allot time for teachers to participate in "reflective listening" as well as getting feedback from others without responding (National School Reform Faculty).

Asli answered the first question concerning the first protocol as stated below:

I'm glad to be a part of this program. At the first meeting, we had a sincere chat and got information about the each week.

Yumru (2000) highlights establishing a sense of ownership is the core of an effective teacher development program. Our field notes revealed that Asli was ready and prepared for the program. She tried to find solutions to her dilemmas in the class by receiving suggestions from more experienced teachers.

The second protocol was problem-solving protocol. Asli was the first speaker in the protocol. She explained her dilemmas about the classroom management. For instance, she had a student creating some problems to take her attention during her teaching. The other participant teachers suggested that she could suppose that the student was not in the class or give the student some rewards to help him to get the magazine of the month. Another student was so anxious about everything that she kept on asking questions during the whole class. One suggestion for this problem was that

she could paint her fingers for each question she asked, so she might limit her questions. Asli seemed to be satisfied with these recommendations and stated that she would use them in her classes.

In her diary entry, Asli stated that this protocol was useful owing to the fact that she believed the solutions to her dilemmas recommended by the other participant teachers would work in the class. In her semi-structured interview, she explained the problem-solving protocol was the most effective protocol since she saw the benefits of it during her teaching. In addition, she felt that it was the most direct way to reach the solutions to her dilemmas in the class.

As we observed, Asli had some dilemmas about her teaching. After she explained the problems in detail, more experienced teachers having had the same problems before recommended some solutions to her. At the end of the protocol, she seemed to feel more confident about her dilemmas related to her teaching.

For the first peer observation process, she stated:

I wonder what my partner will think about my teaching methods. I am sure I will benefit from peer observation because I will be able to learn weak sides of my teaching.

Not surprisingly, Asli was willing to engage in this process. She believed that peer observation would give her a chance to hear the ideas of different teachers, though feeling a little worried about the process. Filiz, who was teaching the same grades as her, observed her. The following week, in the debriefing process, she seemed relaxed which might be the result of constructive feedback, which she received from her partner. Filiz stated that the class she observed was 1<sup>st</sup> grade and it was a painting activity. According to Filiz, Asli was quite good at classroom management. Asli commented in her diary that she rethought her teaching methods after being observed. She added that peer observation was an opportunity to learn from each other since they had different points of views.

As for the action research (AR) protocol lasting two weeks, she stated that AR was consistent with her teaching style because it would help her to reflect on her teaching. Her AR plan was to paint the fingers of the student who always asked questions to limit her questions. As mentioned before, one of her students was so

anxious about everything that she kept on asking questions during the whole class. Elif suggested that she could paint her fingers for each question she asked, so she might limit her questions. She did not have any problems while writing the AR plan, which was about classroom management since she made use of the recommendations she received from the problem-solving protocol. This can be interpreted that each protocol in the program were directly relevant to each other.

In the second peer observation process, Filiz observed her. She gave her AR plan to Filiz before the observation process. So Filiz knew what her AR plan was and observed her class with respect to this plan. She commented in the debriefing process her AR plan would work well. She added that AR did not change her attitudes towards peer observation. This might be explained by the fact that she had already established positive attitudes about being observed by others. Another point was that, she utilized some solutions about classroom management recommended by her colleagues while writing her AR plan. So it would not be challenging to her. Interestingly, she unintentionally did action research plans throughout the program.

Apparently, Asli was very enthusiastic from the beginning of this CFG program. In her semi-structured interview, she commented that this program helped her to learn new ideas about teaching, which she could bring back to her classes. Ghaye (2011) contends that reflective practice occurs instinctively for most beginning teachers. Namely, it gave her the chance to reflect on her teaching through working in collaboration. The results of the course evaluation questionnaire, indicated in Table 4.1., revealed that this program contributed to her teaching.

Table 4.1: *Asli's Responses to the Contribution of the CFG to her Professional Development*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation			√

	protocol.			
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√

#### 4.1.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group for Asli

On the issue of the strengths of the program, Asli commented in her semi-structured interview that problem-solving protocol was an effective option to get the solutions quickly. She explained that this protocol was focused on solutions. Therefore, it responded all her dilemmas.

The results of post observation questionnaire, shown in Table 4.2., also proved that she appreciated the value of peer observation for the teachers' professional development. Two themes pertinent to peer observation emerged from her responses. This process;

- improved teaching experience
- facilitated her professional development.

Table 4.2: *Asli's Responses to the Post-observation Questionnaire*

<p><b>1. How has your involvement in peer observation helped you develop professionally?</b></p> <p>It has improved my classroom management.</p> <p>It has helped me develop activities in my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me with group work management.</p> <p>It has helped me with checking learning during my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me develop my feedback technique.</p> <p>It has helped me to introduce some form of 'stretch &amp; challenge' in my teaching.</p> <p>It has helped me with equality and diversity in the classroom.</p>
<p><b>2. How would you describe the feedback that you received after peer observation?</b></p> <p>Developmental</p>
<p><b>3. How would you rate your overall experience of the peer observation process an observee?</b></p> <p>Positive</p>
<p><b>4. Please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: 'As it presently operates, the peer observation process at the CFG program is a useful tool for developing me as a teacher'.</b></p> <p>Strongly agree</p>

As indicated in section 4.1.2., the results of the course evaluation questionnaire indicated that Aslı was aware of the benefits of action research to her daily practices. She also stated that diary keeping helped her to gain insight into her teaching experiences. On the other hand, she commented, in her interview, the questions in the diary entries would be expanded on the effects of protocols in her teaching. To illustrate, questions related to students' reactions to her solutions she received from the protocols would be included in the diary entries. She exemplified that when she painted her students' fingers to limit her questions, the student felt frustrated and Aslı explained the reason behind it and she got relaxed.

#### **4.1.4. Aslı's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the End of the Study**

As indicated in Table 4.3., Aslı answered all the questions in the course evaluation questionnaire as "agree". Questions 1, 2, and 3 aimed to discover whether the researcher carry out the program well or not. As for Aslı, the researcher performed well enough to carry out the CFG program. In questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the overall quality of the program was aimed to discover. Aslı stated that the content of the program was beneficial and arranged in a logical order. Time given for each protocol was also sufficient. In addition, the program helped her to feel more confident about her teaching as well as getting new perspectives about the unexpected events in their teaching by the help of other teachers. On the issue of whether the protocols used in the program were beneficial or not, questions 9, 10, and 11 might help us. Aslı thought that both action research and diary keeping yielded her to reflect on her teaching. She also felt comfortable during the peer observation process. The participant teachers' attitudes towards future CFG programs were asked in questions 12 and 13. It was apparent from her answers that she would be willing to participate in such a program in the future. She would also recommend it to other colleagues.



Table 4.3: *Aslı's Responses to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.			√
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.			√
3.	The researcher was accessible for questions.			√
4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.			√
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.			√
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.			√
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√
12.	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.			√
13.	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.			√

In response to this question “How do you feel about the CFG program?” asked in the semi-structured interview, Aslı also expressed that

I find the program useful. I always like exchanging ideas with other colleagues. This program has permanent benefits for me. I learned different teaching methods and applied it in my classes, which worked well.

Overall, Asli had positive attitudes both at the beginning and at the end of the study. Her responses suggested that it was worthwhile to participate in teacher development programs to reflect on her teaching. She felt that the program was most highly functioning in working in collaboration.

#### **4.2. Filiz**

Filiz is 28 years old and has been working for this school for 4 years. She worked for a private school before.

##### **4.2.1. Filiz's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the Beginning of the Study**

Like Asli, Filiz has never joined a teacher development program. In her diary entry, she wrote about her feelings related to this program:

Observing a peer help me to get different ideas about classroom management and teaching process. Different people – different ideas.

In this quote, she was referring to the value of learning from other colleagues. Hence, she might respond favorably to the peer observation process rather than self-study protocols such as action research.

##### **4.2.2. The Contribution of the Critical Friends Group to Filiz's Professional Development.**

Her response related to the first CFG protocol in her diary entry "How do you feel about the first CFG meeting?" showed that she was informed about the aims of the program. She emphasized the collaborative atmosphere of the first meeting.

Taking part in the problem-solving protocol, I see that we have the same problems (classroom management) during our teaching. For the same problems

we offer different solutions and this gives us a chance to listen to different ideas for the same problems. I start to look at the problems from a different perspective. From this protocol, I can get some ideas about how to solve about classroom management during the class.

This quote showed that she was aware of the value of working collaboratively to find out solutions to her teaching dilemmas. The problem-solving protocol seemed to give her a chance to reflect on her own teaching particularly on classroom management. However, she did not talk about any problems related to classroom management. She would rather give some recommendations than talk about her teaching. In response to peer observation protocol, she commented that:

Peer observation can be useful to see different points from different eyes. Sometimes, you, as a teacher, may not get some points in your teaching. So, my friend, as an observer, may catch these points and share them with me. In this sense, I think, it will be beneficial for my teaching.

It seems that Filiz had no negative attitudes towards peer observation. On the contrary, she stressed the usefulness of this process in helping her to see her teaching in the eyes of others. In this regard, she felt comfortable with being criticized by her colleagues. The most striking observation about Filiz was she wanted to receive feedback about some points about her teaching that need to be further developed. In the debriefing process, she wrote:

I also observed myself. I criticized my techniques. I had a chance to look at some problems from different perspectives and to learn some new techniques to use in the class.

In fact, in the debriefing process, Filiz mostly received positive feedback from her partner. Asli appreciated her giving responsibility to her students. While checking the answers of the questions in the software of a coursebook, she let her students to push the button and check their answers, which took their attraction. In her semi-structured interview, she stressed that the most useful protocol was peer observation. She seemed

to be satisfied with seeing her recommendations about some problems in the class would work in others' class.

Her diary entry revealed that she believed action research improved her teaching. Her problem was there was too much noise in the class. She tried to solve this problem by not allowing students to speak Turkish in the class. When the students spoke Turkish, they got a minus and at the end of the week, the one who got most minus would bring some cookies for her classmates. Like Aslı, she received the solution from Esra in the problem-solving protocol. This can be interpreted in two ways:

- She had no difficulty in writing her action research plan by the help of her colleagues.
- We could see the benefits of protocols into participants' teaching.

In the second peer observation process, Aslı observed her again. She thanked Esra for her recommendation. She felt happy that it worked out well. She expressed the belief that she had no negative attitudes towards peer observation but she would not think it would be so beneficial for her teaching. According to her, collaborative work helped them to solve the problems.

Our field notes revealed that Filiz seemed to be confident about her teaching in general. However, she was open to new ideas to experience in her teaching. She also appreciated the opportunity to hear the points that need to be improved in her teaching. In her semi-structured interview, she mentioned that this program was more satisfying than she expected in the beginning. It was effective in the three aspects:

- It was so practical that the solutions suggested during the protocols were applicable.
- Throughout the program, they shared a great deal of ideas than expected.
- The protocols contributed her to reflect on her teaching. She especially paid more attention to the points that she recommended.

As indicated in Table 4.4., the protocols in the program were truly valued by Filiz. She thought she was competent in her teaching after the program. Working with a group of teachers stood as a crucial element for her to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective. Therefore, she felt comfortable during the peer observation protocols. She came to realize that action research and diary keeping was a tool to reflect on what was happening in the class.

Table 4.4: *Filiz's Responses to the Contribution the CFG to her Professional Development.*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.			√
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√

#### 4.2.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group for Filiz

The program provided insights into how to reflect on my own teaching. I mean, I tried to use the methods that I suggested to my colleagues more frequently. For example, after I suggested one of my colleagues to write the objectives on the board, I paid more attention to write the objectives in my classes.

We really shared a lot of things during the protocols. I utilized the suggestions in my classes. Everyone has different experiences. I may face such kinds of problems in my future teaching experiences.

Above are the quotes from the semi-structured interview of Filiz respectively about the strengths of the program. As it is clear from these quotes, Filiz viewed the whole program as a means of reflection on her teaching. The ideas that she shared with her colleagues were also noteworthy.

She found the peer observation protocols quite beneficial. She explained in her semi-structured interview that it was nice to see the solutions that she recommended worked well in others' teaching. The results of post observation questionnaire, indicated in Table 4.5., also revealed that it had contributed to her development a lot. She had a

wider perspective about the teaching process, the classroom management, giving feedback. She felt that peer observation was a positive professional experience for her. She defined the feedback she got from her partner in peer observation as informative. Informative feedback has three aspects:

- It informs someone about the right and wrong sides of the performance.
- It explains the reasons behind it.
- It suggests the parts to be changed to correct the performance (Boyle & Scalon, 2010, p. 20).

Table 4.5: *Filiz's Responses to the Post-observation Questionnaire*

<p><b>1. How has your involvement in peer observation helped you develop professionally?</b></p> <p>It has improved my classroom management.</p> <p>It has helped me develop activities in my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me develop my feedback technique.</p>
<p><b>2. How would you describe the feedback that you received after peer observation?</b></p> <p>Informative</p>
<p><b>3. How would you rate your overall experience of the peer observation process an observee?</b></p> <p>Positive</p>
<p><b>4. Please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: 'As it presently operates, the peer observation process at the CFG program is a useful tool for developing me as a teacher'.</b></p> <p>Strongly agree</p>

When asked the weakness of the CFG program, she commented that in general, it was quite useful for their professional development. However, it would be better to apply peer observation process more than twice. This CFG program lasted 8 weeks, the participant teachers engaged in peer observation process on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> week of the program. The following weeks were planned as the debriefing protocols for peer observation process. Therefore, due to the time constraints, it would not be appropriate for this program. Additionally, she stressed that really liked to get input about her teaching at the end of the peer observation. On the other hand, she confessed that peer observation might be a difficult process for other groups participating in such kinds of a program. She defined her colleagues as collaborative, supportive, and constructive. Therefore, they did not feel any doubt to express their dilemmas and give suggestions

for each other's problems. Since they knew the profile of their students, these suggestions were practical to apply in the class.

#### 4.2.4. Filiz's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the End of the Study

As stated in section 4.2.2., Filiz specifically mentioned that the CFG program was more useful than she thought at the beginning of this program. Besides learning new techniques about the teaching process, the collaborative environment of the CFG program made her reflect on her teaching.

Table 4.6. displays the responses of Filiz to the course evaluation questionnaire. She answered all the questions in the course evaluation questionnaire as "agree". For the questions 1, 2, and 3 aiming to find out whether the researcher carry out the program well or not, Filiz thought the researcher performed well enough to carry out the CFG program. In questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the overall quality of the program was aimed to discover. Filiz stated that the content of the program was satisfying and arranged in a logical order. Time given for each protocol was also sufficient. Additionally, the program helped her to feel more confident about her teaching as well as getting new perspectives about the unexpected events in their teaching by the help of other teachers.

On the issue of whether the protocols used in the program were beneficial or not, questions 9, 10, and 11 were used. Filiz thought that both action research and diary keeping made her to reflect on her teaching. She did not have any problems during the peer observation protocols. The participant teachers' attitudes towards future CFG programs were asked in questions 12 and 13. It was possible to speculate from her answers that participating in such a program in the future might be demanding. She would also recommend it to other colleagues.

Table 4.6: *Filiz's Responses to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.			√
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.			√
3.	The researcher was accessible for questions.			√

4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.			√
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.			√
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.			√
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√
12.	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.			√
13.	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.			√

It seems that, Filiz established positive attitudes throughout the CFG program. She came to realize that it is through reflecting and collaboration that professional development can be facilitated. She could also see the benefits of gaining new insights about her teaching from other colleagues.

### 4.3. Esra

Esra, who is 27 years old, has been working for Kipaş Schools for 3 years. She has not worked at any other institutions before.

#### 4.3.1. Esra's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the Beginning of the Study

Esra has never attended a teacher development program before. The responses she gave to the pre-training survey indicated that she acknowledged the prominence of



development for her teaching. Thus, she had positive attitudes towards teacher development programs whether she got positive input or not. She was also in favor of peer observation to improve her teaching as stated in her diary entry:

It will be good for my development because we always need to learn new methods, new things for our development. Observing other teachers will also contribute to it. Actually, it can be negative or positive but you learn one thing at least.

#### **4.3.2. The Contribution of the Critical Friends Group to Esra's Professional Development**

Her response concerning the first CFG protocol in the diary entry "How do you feel about the first CFG meeting?" was as follows:

It is very nice and there is a positive atmosphere. I feel relax and I am happy. I hope, we will share lots of things.

It appears that for Esra, working in collegiality would be helpful for her professional development. As Guskey (2000) states professional development activities that are carried out in a supportive and friendly environment are more useful than the ones planned administratively.

My field notes revealed that Esra participated in the problem-solving protocol and she especially gave some recommendations to Asli about disruptive students. However, she did not take any notes on her diary entry related to problem-solving protocol.

As she puts it:

Actually, in the first years of my job, I felt nervous when somebody observed me. But this is my fourth year and I am very relaxed when somebody observes me because of my experiences. Observation is really essential for professional development. You may feel nervous but observer's ideas can teach you lots of things. You can get some clues about teaching process, classroom management...

It's possible to speculate from her quote that as she gained competence in her teaching, she relied upon her teaching experiences and her attitudes towards observation had changed. She viewed peer observation process as an opportunity to reflect on her teaching. As Wadhwa (2008) emphasizes "for both inexperienced and experienced staff, observation is a process that prompts them to question what they do and apply an analytical approach to the development of their own teaching practice" (p. 148). In my field notes, I noted that she seemed to rely on her teaching too much, so she might not feel the need to reflect on her teaching at the end of the peer observation process. As Yumru (2000) emphasizes, teachers gain new insights on practice rather than imposed techniques provided that they are open to change.

In the debriefing protocol, Elif suggested Esra that it would be better for her to slow down the pace in her teaching because students seemed to have some problems in understanding the reading text. She might give more feedback to her students. For the debriefing protocol, she wrote in her diary that peer observation did not help her to rethink the things on her class too much but she still considered it as an opportunity to see the weak and strong points in her teaching.

In order to solve her problem in the reading classes, she decided to jumble the reading text as a pre-reading activity and spend more time on new words. She and her students summarized the text both in English and in Turkish. For this action research plan, she got the idea from her partner, Elif. Therefore, she noted in her diary that she did not have any particular problems in writing her AR plan. She thought that it would contribute to her teaching but this procedure might take a bit long.

She reported for the second peer observation process that it did not change her attitudes towards peer observation. She was relaxed in this process. She commented on her action research plan as follows:

When I gave the reading text in parts, the students did better. Actually, if we have more time, I can teach the passages in detail. But, in my action research plan, students had short paragraphs and they found the unknown words and in the end, they summarized their paragraphs. There was a positive atmosphere in the class. It was a bit long but it worked well.

As she stated, her AR plan worked out well. What's more interesting was, like the other two participant teachers, she wrote her AR plan based on suggestions she had received from the protocols of the CFG program.

In her semi- structured interview, Esra stated that this program was a fruitful process in that they learned a lot from each other. Everyone had different ways of teaching. In this program there might be more experienced teachers, so they could make use of their experiences. More experience teachers might offer more practical solutions. Especially, peer observation had facilitated her way of thinking. She stated that she always remembered her partner's suggestions and applied them in class. So, it would not be wrong to say that the program helped her to become more reflective on her teaching.

As displayed in Table 4.7., the protocols in the program made contributions to her teaching. She thought she was confident in her teaching after the program. Working with a group of teachers paved the way for her to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective. She felt comfortable during the peer observation protocols since she felt relaxed. She came to realize that she was able to reflect on what was happening in the class with the help of action research and diary keeping.

Table 4.7: *Esra's Responses to the Contribution of the CFG to her Professional Development.*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.			√
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√

### 4.2.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group for Esra.

With the peer observation protocol, I had the chance to compare my teaching with other colleagues. Particularly, I came to an understanding of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students' attitudes differences to English between my class and my partner's class. I realized my strong points in my teaching.

Above is the quote Esra stated in her semi-structured interview regarding the strengths of the CFG program. As it is clear from this quote, she mostly benefited from peer observation. As can be understood from the results of post observation questionnaire, shown in Table 4.8., she appreciated the value of peer observation for the teachers' professional development. From her answers, it can be concluded that peer observation had enhanced the planning, the teaching of skill, classroom management and evaluation of her teaching. She thought she received developmental feedback from her partner. "Developmental feedback confirms behavior that should be retained and identifies behavior that should be changed" (Morton & Salus, 1994). As mentioned in section 4.2.2., Elif explained that Esra should have some dilemmas while teaching a reading text and she tried give some suggestions to Esra to solve them.

Table 4.8: *Esra's Responses to the Post-observation Questionnaire*

<p><b>1. How has your involvement in peer observation helped you develop professionally?</b></p> <p>It has improved my lesson planning.</p> <p>It has improved my teaching of skills that students need for their exams.</p> <p>It has helped me develop activities in my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me with group work management.</p> <p>It has helped me with checking learning during my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me to introduce some form of "stretch &amp; challenge" in my teaching.</p> <p>It has helped me with quality and diversity in the classroom.</p>
<p><b>2. How would you describe the feedback that you received after peer observation?</b></p> <p>Developmental</p>
<p><b>3. How would you rate your overall experience of the peer observation process an observee?</b></p> <p>Positive</p>

**4. Please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: ‘As it presently operates, the peer observation process at the CFG program is a useful tool for developing me as a teacher’.**

Agree

She stated that problem-solving protocol was meaningful to her. Even if they did not reflect her dilemmas in the classes, she would make use of them in the future. Problem-solving protocol especially enabled them to brainstorm various solutions to the problems concerning their teaching.

On the issue of the weakness of the CFG program, she commented that in general, it was quite satisfying for their professional development. However, it would be better to apply peer observation process more than twice. She stated that she observed a reading class but she also wanted to observe a grammar lesson of her partner.

#### **4.2.4. Esra’s Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the End of the Study**

Generally, Esra, like the other two participant teachers, possessed positive attitudes towards teacher development programs at the beginning of the study. She felt that the program created a sense of collaborative community in which they shared different points of view about their teaching. The CFG program served as an effective professional development tool for her. She particularly focused on the benefits of peer observation for her.

Table 4.9. indicates the responses of Esra to the course evaluation questionnaire. She answered all the questions in the course evaluation questionnaire as “agree”. Questions 1, 2, and 3 were devoted to find out whether the researcher carried out the program well or not, Esra thought the researcher was competent enough to conduct the program. In questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the overall quality of the program was included. Esra stated that the content of the program was satisfying and arranged in a logical order. Time given for each protocol was also sufficient. Additionally, the program helped her to feel more confident about her teaching as well as getting new perspectives about the unexpected events in their teaching by the help of other teachers. In terms of whether the protocols used in the program were beneficial or not, questions 9, 10, and 11 might help us. Esra thought that both action research and diary keeping made her to reflect on her teaching. She did not have any problems during the peer observation protocols. Questions 12 and 13 tried to explore the participant teachers’ attitudes

towards future CFG programs. It was possible to speculate from her answers that participating in such a program in the future might be a fruitful experience for her. She would also recommend it to other colleagues.

Table 4.9: *Esra's Responses to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.			√
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.			√
3.	The researcher was accessible for questions.			√
4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.			√
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.			√
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.			√
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√
12.	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.			√
13.	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.			√

#### **4.4. Elif**

Elif, who is 32 years old, has been working as an English Language Teacher for 7 years. She has worked in 2 private schools before.

##### **4.4.1. Elif's Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the Beginning of the Study**

Elif did not attend any teacher development programs before. When asked whether the CFG program would contribute to her professional development in the pre-training survey, she replied that she did not have a particular idea about its contribution to her professional development.

##### **4.4.2. The Contribution of the Critical Friends Group to Elif's Professional Development**

Although feeling neutral about the CFG program, Elif wrote in her diary for the first protocol that she felt excited. She hoped to learn new things about her job, which made us assume that she did not have prejudices about this program.

Being one of the most experienced teachers among the participant teachers, Elif gave various suggestions to her colleagues in the problem-solving protocol. For instance, she recommended Aslı to paint the fingers of the student who kept on asking questions throughout the class to limit her questions. However, she did not speak about any particular problems about her teaching. In her diary entry, she noted that many solutions were discussed and she learnt new things. In her semi-structured interview, she expressed that she started to write the objectives on the right part of the board at the beginning of her lessons, which worked well. As stated before, this was the solution for classroom management suggested to Aslı by Filiz in the problem solving protocol. Therefore, we might think that a particular solution recommended to a member of the CFG would also be helpful for the teaching of other members. It may also prove that the participant teachers established a sincere professional community.

Teacher can have some difficulties during their teaching. But “sharing ideas” is really important. Sometimes you can not find solutions to some of your problems in the classes. At this point, “sharing and working together” is important.

As it is clear from her quote, Elif accepted the value of working in collegiality for their professional development. Zahorik (1987, cited in Shah, 2011) claims that teachers who work in collegiality can find out the solutions of complex educational problems more easily. For teachers, working alone can be a waste of energy leading to disappointment.

Esra observed her in the first peer observation process. She wanted to be observed about classroom management and students' participation. Esra commented that students chat a lot during the class. She suggested that not allowing students speak Turkish in the class might be of help to reduce the noise in the class. Students in Elif's class ask her too many unknown words so Esra recommended her to make them use their dictionaries.

For the first peer observation process, she commented that

It sounds a bit stressful. Whenever somebody observes my class, I always feel stressful even if I know it before.

I think, I will benefit from peer observation concerning my teaching. Different points of view are always useful.

These quotes indicate that she viewed peer observation as a stressful process. For the debriefing protocol, she emphasized in her diary that she needed to use different methods. The same methods made the lessons boring and ordinary. Hence, peer observation made her to reflect on her teaching. She believed that since every teacher had got different teaching experiences, peer observation was an opportunity to learn from others.

My field notes revealed that Elif was the most prepared participant teachers for the action research protocol. Her AR plan was to give question cards to students talking a lot. Yellow cards included less difficult questions than the red cards. When I asked her where she got the idea, she explained that in her previous school all teachers hold meetings to share their experiences and added she took the idea for her AR plan from a science teacher. In her diary entry, she wrote about AR process:

I feel much better and relaxed. There is no difficulty in writing an AR plan. I have already had a plan and other plans, too. Because, using one method



may not be enough for a long time. Teacher must use different methods. I think, AR will contribute my teaching.

In the debriefing process, she and her partner, Esra stated that the AR plan was implemented successfully. Students got a bit surprised but it made them chat less in the class. They focused on the questions so it was a kind of revision for them. In her diary entry, Elif wrote that she felt good after the second peer observation process. This can be explained by the fact that AR would contribute her teaching.

According to her responses concerned with the contribution of CFG to her professional development, shown in Table 4.10., she believed that the program made her feel more competent with her teaching. She gained new perspectives by working in collegiality. Diary keeping and action research gave her the opportunity to reflect on her teaching while she did not feel comfortable with the peer observation process.

Table 4.10: *Elif's Responses to the Contribution of the CFG to her Professional Development.*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.	√		
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√

The overall analysis of her responses showed that the CFG program helped the professional development of Elif by promoting reflection on her teaching and sharing experiences in a collaborative professional community.

#### 4.4.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group for Elif

On the issue of strengths of the CFG program, she explained that in general, the content of the program was beneficial as it paves the way for sharing experiences in a friendly and constructive environment. They improved their weak sides in their teaching by giving critical insights to each other. She also remembered her previous experiences leading to keep away from the routines in her teaching. She utilized from the suggestions of her colleagues. To illustrate, she started to write the objectives on the board at the beginning of the lesson, which was suggested by Filiz.

Although not feeling relaxed during the peer observation, she found it quite helpful. She expressed in her semi-structured interview:

Peer observation helped me to leave the routines in my teaching. I rethought my previous knowledge of the field. The views of my partner in the peer observation process were very efficient for me. I learned new experiences of teaching.

From her answers to post-observation questionnaire, displayed in Table 4.11., we can conclude that she has benefited from peer observation to deal with many aspects of teaching such as classroom management, lesson planning, giving feedback, group work management. She felt that the feedback she received from her partner in the debriefing protocol was developmental. Although she was neutral about her peer observation experience, she believed the importance of it for her professional development.

Table 4.11: *Elif' Responses to the Post-observation Questionnaire*

<p><b>1. How has your involvement in peer observation helped you develop professionally?</b></p> <p>It has improved my classroom management.</p> <p>It has improved lesson planning</p> <p>It has helped me with group work management.</p> <p>It has helped me with checking learning during my lessons.</p> <p>It has helped me develop my feedback technique.</p>
<p><b>2. How would you describe the feedback that you received after peer observation?</b></p> <p>Developmental</p>

<p><b>3. How would you rate your overall experience of the peer observation process an observee?</b></p> <p>Neutral</p>
<p><b>4. Please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: ‘As it presently operates, the peer observation process at the CFG program is a useful tool for developing me as a teacher’.</b></p> <p>Agree</p>

She thought that it would be better if they had the opportunity to observe each other more than twice in different classes. They might be observed regarding more than one theme because sometimes teachers may not want to choose some particular criteria in order not to express weak sides of their teaching. Additionally, she felt that the participant teachers of teacher development programs might be chosen among teachers who have the same background, such as years of experience, graduating from the same departments.

#### **4.1.4. Elif’s Attitudes towards Critical Friends Group at the End of the Study**

Overall, Elif did not specifically have an idea about teacher development programs but she was eager to attend such kind of a program at the beginning of the study. Her diary entries, her responses to questionnaires and semi-structured interview indicated that she appreciated the usefulness of this program. Though she did not feel comfortable about peer observation process, she was aware of its benefits for her professional development. She did not hesitate to stress the positive influence of the CFG program. She had a wider perspective about her teaching owing to the insights that she gained from the protocols.

As indicated in Table 4.12., Elif answered most of the questions in the course evaluation questionnaire as “agree”. Questions 1, 2, and 3 aimed to discover whether the researcher carry out the program well or not. Elif felt that the researcher performed well enough to carry out the CFG program. In questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the overall quality of the program was explored. Elif contended that the content of the program was beneficial and arranged in a logical order. However, she felt neutral about the time given for each protocol. The program helped her to feel more confident about her teaching as well as getting new perspectives about the unexpected events in their teaching by the help of other teachers. On the issue of whether the protocols used in the program were beneficial or not, questions 9, 10, and 11 might help us. Elif thought that

both action research and diary keeping yielded her to reflect on her teaching. On the other hand, she also did not feel comfortable during the peer observation process. The participant teachers' attitudes towards future CFG programs were aimed to discover in questions 12 and 13. It was apparent from her answers that she would be willing to participate in such a program in the future. She would also recommend it to other colleagues.

Table 4.12: *Elif's Responses to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire*

Item No	Items	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.			√
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.			√
3.	The researcher was accessible for questions.			√
4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.		√	
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.			√
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			√
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			√
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.			√
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.	√		
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			√
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			√
12.	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.			√

13.	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.			√
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#### 4.5. Summary of the Findings

##### 4.5.1. The Attitudes of the Participant Teachers towards Critical Friends Group at the Beginning of the Study

From the overall results of the pre-training survey, it is clear that none of the participant teachers had attended a teacher development program before. Three of the participant teachers perceived that participating in such kind of a program would be valuable for their professional development. They specifically focused on the same aspect of professional development. Through observing other colleagues, different ideas about different aspects of teaching such classroom management, new methods could be learned.

One participant teachers did not have a particular idea about this program but she still volunteered for it. In the first CFG protocol she stated her excitement for learning new things about her profession. This can be interpreted that she thought it might be useful for her teaching.

Consequently, all of the participant teachers responded favorably to the CFG program. They all developed a sense of professional community from the beginning of the program. As they stated in their diary entries and semi-structured interviews, the positive and friendly atmosphere might lead to the establishment of this professional community. In this CFG program, the participant teachers were already familiar with each other and the environment, which might be of help to generate such a friendly and sincere atmosphere. As mentioned before, the meetings were held in the meeting room of Kipaş Schools.

A professional community covers four aspects of sociality: “trust, reciprocity, information flows, and emerging norm.” Thus, social relationships play a key role for professional development by “providing new ideas and feedback on the technical tasks of teaching and by generating and supporting norms consistent with the new practices” (Gamoran et al., 2005, p. 113).

#### **4.5.2. The Contribution of the Critical Friends Group to the Professional Development of the Participant Teachers**

One of the ultimate aims of CFG is to create a professional learning community where teachers work collaboratively to look at their practices reflectively (National School Reform Faculty). McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) claim much of the literature proves that school-based teacher learning communities contribute teachers' professional growth since they effectively scaffold teachers' work and student learning. Professional communities operate at different stages of teaching and learning process:

- Professional learning communities serve as reinforcement for teachers' work.
- Teachers share different experiences which bring about creating "knowledge of practice."
- They are a means for "reflection and problem solving" that help them to acquire knowledge related to their work about students' outcomes and implications of their progress.
- They allow teachers to rethink their teaching and construct knowledge by sharing ideas gained from different sources.
- They provide opportunities to learn from "others' strengths."
- They are a tool for the evaluation of the "curriculum and pedagogy" (p. 6-7).

The findings revealed an increased sense of being a part of professional community. Both in their semi-structured interviews and the diary entries, the participant teachers seemed to embrace the collaborative nature of the CFG program. Feeling a member of this collaborative community, they undoubtedly shared their experiences, which improved their teaching quality.

During the CFG program, participant teachers mainly engaged in three types of protocols; problem solving, action research and peer observation. The content analysis of the participant teachers' diaries and semi-structured interviews revealed many themes regarding this CFG program. They stated that by the help of these protocols, they reflect on their teaching, understand the points that need to be improved, make the necessary modifications and evaluate their progress.

Aslı commented that she learned different methods from the discussions in the protocols and used them in her teaching and saw the permanent benefits of them in her teaching. She specifically achieved a lot in classroom management. Due to the methods

she applied in her classes, the awareness of her students related to classroom routines and rules enhanced.

Elif stated that before this program she knew that there were some problems in her teaching which made her unhappy. However, on the ground of the sharing derived from the protocols, she remembered her prior knowledge and used them in her classes. She also started to use different methods in her teaching which she learned from her colleagues. Owing to these changes, her students' motivation to the lesson increased.

Filiz reflected on her CFG experience as follows:

The program contributed to my professional development more than I expected. On the whole, the program was very beneficial and created opportunities for us to share our experiences. The solutions recommended during the protocols worked a lot in my teaching. I also paid more attention to use the techniques that I suggested to my colleagues more frequently.

As it is clear from this quote, the CFG program helped Filiz to improve her professional development through sharing their experiences and reflecting on her teaching.

Esra reflected similarly like the other participant teachers. She was able to maintain a new perspective about her teaching in the lights of working collaboratively. She stated that they had different views about teaching so they shared a lot from each other during the protocols. She claimed that she discovered her strengths owing to peer observation protocols. She also emphasized that she remembered to use the techniques that her partner suggested her in the debriefing protocol of peer observation.

#### **4.5.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group**

Johnson (2009) summarizes the strengths of CFG:

- It establishes an environment where teachers talk about their dilemmas and work in collegiality to find possible solutions for these dilemmas.
- It makes it more likely that teachers express their goals both for their students and themselves, to evaluate the curriculum and anything affecting their teaching, which leads to their professional development.

In this CFG program, three participant teachers specifically stated that peer observation protocols provided valuable insights for them to reflect on their practices in the class. For Filiz, it was nice to see the impacts of her solutions in others' teaching. She also attempted to implement alternative practices into her teaching as a result of this process. Esra commented that peer observation helped her to compare her teaching with other teachers'. Besides, engaging in this process, she developed different ways of teaching particular skills. According to Elif, the most fruitful thing about this CFG program was peer observation protocols since it created opportunities to get helpful feedback from her partner and to remember her prior experiences. One of the most efficient protocols in this program for Aslı was problem solving. She started to establish better ways to manage disruptive students in her classes.

It can be concluded that, the present CFG program was viewed by all of the participant teachers as an opportunity to reflect on their teaching by sharing their experiences in a friendly and constructive environment. It created the conditions to synthesize their teaching and the practical feedback they received from each other during the protocols. In this regard, it would not be wrong to speculate that this program contributed to their professional development. "CFGs help practitioners learn to collaborate, be reflective, give and receive useful feedback by using the structures that intentionally ask them to collaborate, reflect and share practice" (Fahey, 2011, p. 6-7).

Overall, all of the participant teachers expressed their satisfaction with the CFG program. When asked about the points that need to be improved in this program, three of the participant teachers commented that peer observation protocol could be implemented more than twice. Esra thought that it would be better to observe her partner during her teaching of different skills. Filiz stated that the insights she gained from the peer observation was quite satisfying for her. So, she would favorably engage in more observation protocols. As for Elif, she would rather be observed about all aspects of her teaching. However, As Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize in an ideal peer observation process, it is necessary for the observant to "identify the focus for the observation" and the observer's role is to gather the necessary information that the observant could not be aware of alone (p. 93).

Aslı recommended that the entries of the participant teachers' diary could have some questions concerning the student reactions to the newly implemented methods by their teachers. As these methods were not the routines of their classes, her students



sometimes got confused about them. Kruse et al. (1995, cited in Roberts & Pruitt, 2003) highlight that a professional learning community requires “a focus on student learning.” The improvement of student outcomes is the crucial goal of the practices in a professional community.

#### **4.5.4. The Attitudes of the Participant Teachers towards Critical Friends Group at the End of the Study**

Table 4.13. displays the percentages of the participant teachers’ responses to the course evaluation questionnaire. For the questions 1, 2, and 3 aiming to find out whether the researcher carry out the program well or not, all of the participant teachers agreed that the researcher performed well enough to carry out the CFG program. In questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the overall quality of the program was aimed to discover. 100% of the participant teachers stated that the content of the program was satisfying and arranged in a logical order. Additionally, the program helped them to feel more confident about their teaching as well as getting new perspectives about the unexpected events in their teaching by the help of other teachers. With regards to time allotted for each meeting, 75% of them agreed with the statement while 25% remained neutral. On the issue of whether the protocols used in the program were beneficial or not, questions 9, 10, and 11 might help us. All of the participant teachers believed that both action research and diary keeping made them to reflect on their teaching. 75% of them did not have any problems during the peer observation protocols whereas 25 % of them disagreed with the statement. The participant teachers’ attitudes towards future CFG programs were asked in questions 12 and 13. Predominantly, 100 % of the participant teachers stated that engaging in such a program in the future might be demanding. They further added that they would recommend it to other colleagues.

Table 4.13: *The Percentages of the Participant Teachers’ Responses to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire*

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.			100 %
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.			100 %

3.	The researcher was accessible for questions.			100 %
4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.		25 %	75 %
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.			100 %
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.			100 %
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.			100 %
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.			100 %
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.	25 %		75 %
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.			100 %
11.	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.			100 %
12.	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.			100 %
13.	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.			100 %

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter deals with the conclusion of the present study derived from the data findings. First of all, the starting point for the study and the summary of the findings with respect to each research question are provided. Secondly, the implications gained from the study are presented with the recommendations for further study. The last section presents the limitations of the study.

#### 5.1. Summary of the Study

The main purpose of the present study was to explore the contribution of the CFG programs to teachers' professional development. Specifically, the study aimed to find out the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards Critical Friends Group (CFG) programs?
2. Does Critical Friends Group contribute teachers' professional development?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Critical Friends Group programs?

The teacher development program suggested in this study is called Critical Friends Group. This program is based on reflective teaching based on reflection which allows for "a constructive spiral of professional development and capability" (Pollard, 2005, p.5). Richards (2011) defines reflection as

an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action (p. 33).

As can be concluded from the definition, for teachers reflection is making judgments about their classroom experiences and taking precautions to make them better. Looking critically to their teaching, teachers can gain new insights about

teaching and learning process and promote their professional development (Pollard, 2005). Various methods have been designed to facilitate reflective teaching, one of which is Critical Friends Group (CFG).

As stated in Literature Review, CFG is a professional community aiming to promote student learning through collaboration. Members focus on factors affecting students' achievement such as examining curriculum, and students' work (School Reform Initiative, 2012). A CFG includes 4-10 members meeting approximately one hour per week (Andreu et al., 2003, cited in Vo & Nguyen, 2010). The rationale behind CFG is to promote students' learning with the aid of supportive conversations about teaching and learning during the CFG meeting called protocols (Cury, 2008).

Similar to the basic tenets of CFG model, in our study, participant teachers and the researcher (acting as a facilitator) established a professional learning community who held meetings on a weekly basis for 8 weeks. Each meeting called protocols rested on different purposes. The purpose of the first protocol, problem-solving protocol, was to bring participant teachers together to find out some solutions about certain dilemmas taking place in their classes in collegiality. The purpose of the second protocol, peer observation, was to allow participant teachers to identify the strengths and points that need to be improved in their teaching by the help of their colleagues. The purpose of the final protocol, action research (AR), was to help participant teachers to devise an action plan which seeks probable solutions to the points that need further improvements about their teaching. Sullivan and Glanz (2009) claim that AR is an effective model for teachers to engage in reflective practices about their work and to find out solutions for specific problems concerning their work.

During this CFG program, the participant teachers kept a diary consisting of specific entries related to each week. In other words, each entry in the diary includes open-ended questions concerning their feelings towards each protocol, some questionnaires such as pre-training survey, course evaluation questionnaire and post-observation questionnaire and some guidelines about how to conduct the protocols. Diaries have the potential to provide reliable data by covering events and thoughts which help to understand outcomes of events. It made it possible for this study that diary keeping supported reliable data for the analysis of research questions. The researcher's field notes and semi-structured interviews also provided valuable insights for this study. The researchers' field notes paved the way for understanding the points

that the participant teachers might not want to emphasize as stated by Patton (2002, cited in Ellen, 2007).

One of the main purposes of this study was to find out the participant teachers attitudes towards CFG programs. It would be appropriate to state that none of the participant teachers attended a teacher development program. The results of pre-training survey indicated that all the participant teachers expressed their willingness towards CFG programs, though they did not participate in such kinds of programs before. They especially focused on the value of peer observation for their professional development. So, it would not be wrong to state that from the beginning of this study, the participant teachers established an ownership for this program.

Being familiar with each other and the environment, they already established a sense of professional community rested on sharing, openness, and trust. When the researcher explained the goal of this CFG program, which are reflection, and development of professional growth in collegiality, they gave importance to being involved in this study. Zepeda (2008) emphasizes that “goals must be clearly established and linked to the group’s purposes and members must understand them” (p. 226-227).

In their semi-structured interviews done at the end of the study, all the participant teachers responded favorably towards this CFG program. Aslı stated that during this CFG program, she experienced satisfying practices for her teaching. The suggestions she received during the protocols enhanced her teaching. Elif commented that with the help of this program, she was able to identify the problems in her teaching and find solutions to them by remembering her prior experiences and utilizing her colleagues’ suggestions. She also appreciated the value of constructive criticism for their professional development. Filiz perceived this program was more satisfying than she thought. She evaluated her teaching in the lights of the insights she gained from the sharing in the protocols. Esra was in favor of learning from other colleagues through constructive criticism. This program eventually led her becoming more aware of her strengths and improving her teaching as a result of the suggestions of her colleagues in this program.

The results of the course evaluation questionnaire suggested that the participant teachers predominantly agree that the content of the CFG program was satisfying and the qualifications of the researcher were sufficient to conduct such kinds of a program.

The protocols gave them the opportunity to reflect on their teaching, which resulted in their confidence about their teaching. They emphasized that they would participate in a CFG program in the future and recommend it to other colleagues as a form of professional development. As the findings revealed, all the participant teachers had positive attitudes towards CFG programs at the beginning of the study. Additionally, they felt that they learned from each other in this collaborative environment, which allowed an increased sense of openness towards CFG programs.

The second research question aimed to explore whether the CFG programs contribute to the participant teachers' professional development. The findings indicated that the participant teachers benefited from this CFG program in various ways: First of all, CFG appeared to foster a sense professional community working in collaboration. One of the ultimate aims of CFG is to create a professional learning community where teachers work collaboratively to look at their practices reflectively (National School Reform Faculty). From the beginning of the study, each participant teacher emphasized the sincere, friendly and collaborative atmosphere. Esra felt that working in collegiality facilitated her professional development. Filiz believed that collaborative environment made her to reflect on her teaching. For Aslı and Elif, working in collaboration improved their teaching.

Taking these into account, it can be concluded that the collaborative environment also resulted in improvement in their teaching. Aslı especially had some dilemmas about classroom management. She commented that she learned different methods from the discussions in the protocols and used them in her teaching and saw the permanent benefits of them in her teaching. With respect to the sharing derived from the protocols, Elif remembered her prior knowledge and used them in her classes. She also started to use different methods in her teaching, which she learned from her colleagues. Owing to these changes, her students' motivation to the lesson increased. Filiz started to evaluate her teaching and use the recommendations she picked up from her colleagues, which improved her teaching. Esra seemed to be satisfied with her teaching as a result of implementing different methods into her teaching.

The third research question aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses of Critical Friends Group. Bambino (2002) claims that CFG facilitate teachers' instruction and student learning by creating conditions efficient and supportive feedback. Additionally, Zepeda (2008) emphasizes that the most common features of the protocols

in a CFG program is to help teachers “to communicate in an organized manner so the focus is on the issue at hand” (p. 234). In this study, the researcher provided guidelines for each protocols as well as samples of some plans such as action research plans. Uncertainty was removed from the protocols, so the conditions for effective sharing were established. Asli reported that she most benefited from problem-solving protocol as she received valuable suggestions in this protocol. She adapted these suggestions into her teaching, which worked well. The other three participant teachers specifically stated that peer observation protocols provided valuable insights for them to reflect on their practices in the class. For Filiz, she was proud of seeing the reflections of her solutions in others’ teaching. She also attempted to implement alternative practices into her teaching as a result of this process. Esra believed that peer observation allowed her to compare her teaching with other teachers’. Besides, engaging in this process, she developed different ways of teaching particular skills. According to Elif, the most fruitful thing about this CFG program was peer observation protocols since it paved the way to get helpful feedback from her partner and to remember her prior experiences. It is worth to mention that though she did not feel comfortable during the peer observation, she believed the benefits of this process for her teaching.

Comments from the suggestions of the participant teachers indicated that this CFG program might include a number of peer observation protocols. In this study, which lasted 8 weeks, there were mainly 2 peer observation protocols and 2 debriefing protocols for the peer observation process. In their semi-structured interviews 3 of the participant teachers recommended that it would have been more beneficial if this CFG program had had more peer observation protocols. They perceived peer observation as highly functioning to learn from each other. It appeared that peer observation protocols could facilitate a CFG program by making it possible for the members to improve their teaching performance by sharing their experiences in collaboration. On the contrary, Roberson (2006) claims that peer observation may not work properly, as there is a risk of damaging the relationships among the colleagues, when applied in the same department.

Another weakness of this CFG program stated by Asli was that students’ reactions to the implementation of new methods gathered from the CFG protocols might be included in this program. The open-ended questions in the participant’s diary consisted of questions related to the participant teachers’ feelings about the protocols

and the insights they gained from the protocols. Key (2006) claims that CFG promotes students' learning. Therefore, some questions in the participant teachers' diary or in the questionnaires could have addressed how CFG protocols contributed to their students' learning.

As suggested by the findings of Vo & Niguyen (2010), CFG provides teachers with the opportunity to share their ideas with their colleagues, and help each other to improve professionally. It also stimulates a more motivating teaching atmosphere for teachers since it allows them to feel as a member of professional community based on mutual interaction. Similarly, in his study of CFG training, Kelly (2006) reported that the CFG program allowed the participant teachers to reflect on their teaching through building new knowledge derived from the discussions in protocols, leading to the improvement of teaching and learning. Curry (2008) found that the collaborative relationships among teachers and their awareness of the need to improve their teaching enhanced their professional development.

In conclusion, this study clearly showed that CFG programs contributed to the professional development of teachers. It enabled the participant teachers: to develop a sense of professional community working collaboratively, to learn from each other in a constructive and sharing environment, to improve their teaching based on their experiences of CFG protocols, to become more reflective in their teaching, to discover their strengths and weaknesses and finally to establish positive attitudes towards professional development which is a prerequisite in creating effective teaching and learning environment.

## **5.2. Implications and Recommendations for Further Study**

The findings of this study show that CFG programs have merit as tools for professional development of teachers. CFG programs can encourage teachers working in collaboration and reflect on their teaching, which makes it possible for them to facilitate their teaching practices. Thus, teachers need to support their own professional development by taking the responsibility of it. For instance, they can hold regular meetings weekly or monthly to discuss and share their problems related to their teaching practices or their students. If they do not arrange a particular time for these meetings, they may use formal school meetings to share their experiences.



Roberts and Pruitt (2003) claim that learning communities promote “school improvement and general consensus about high quality learning activities as essential factors in the improvement of teaching and learning” (p. 1). Senge (1990, cited in Roberts & Pruitt, 2003) outlines five elements of a learning community;

- personal mastery
- mental models
- team learning
- building shared vision
- systems thinking

Adopting these elements into a learning community create an opportunity for people to learn from each other. Hence, school authorities need to push forward professional learning communities, which seek to improve teachers’ professional development and student learning through creating opportunities for teachers to evaluate their work reflectively and collaboratively. In order to achieve this, teachers’ teaching load may be decreased to create time for them to hold weekly or monthly meetings. The school administrator even can engage in these meetings as a critical friend rather than a head. The same can also be applied to the teachers working in different schools. The school authorities of different schools may arrange monthly meetings for teachers to share their experiences. However, these meetings must be arranged in small groups of teachers. Otherwise, they may be turned out to be a kind of seminars which teachers do not feel ownership. As Yumru (2000) suggests, a sense of ownership for the program rested on self-initiation and self-direction is at the heart of a teacher development program. Jelly (2006, p. 15) claims “meaningful professional development which provides for stimulation and support, for new learning and validation, for challenge and encouragement” must be achieved in teacher development programs.

We admit that achieving such kind of meetings would not be an easy task. However, owing to the fruitful results gained from this study, we strongly believe that teachers’ professional development lies in the essence of effective teaching and learning process and teachers need to be in an ongoing process of professional development in which they can work in collegiality in a sincere, reflective and constructive environment. Only by this way, teachers can make a personal commitment to their

development. As Pettis (2002) emphasizes, every opportunity for professional development needs to stimulate a personal commitment for teachers.

We recommended that further studies should be conducted during a term or a year to get more reliable data. Secondly, a variety of protocols suggested in the website of National School Reform Faculty might be used if there is enough time. Finally, further studies could look at how CFG programs consisting of different protocols might support other groups of teachers' professional development.

### **5.3. Limitations of the Study**

The study mainly aimed to explore the contribution CFG programs to teachers' professional development could be conducted in a longer time such as a term or a year. So, as the participant teachers suggested, much time may be dedicated for other protocols suggested in the website of National School Reform Faculty. As the findings revealed, the participant teachers mostly benefited from peer observation protocol since they gained more insights from the experiences and recommendations of their colleagues. Thus, the peer observation protocol might be applied more frequently in a CFG program.

It would have been possible to gain more data about the effects of CFG protocols to student learning, if a data collection tool had been implemented in this study. To put differently, this study should have covered the effects of protocols in student learning.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1. Appendix 1: The Participant Teachers' Diary

# CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP PROGRAM





## **WEEK 1**

### **PRE-TRAINING SURVEY**

**A- The questions in this survey are concerned with the way you feel about teacher development programs. Please read the questions and answer them. The research findings will be limited to this study and personal information will be kept confidential.**

1. Have you ever joined a teacher development program? If yes, how did it affect your teaching methods?

2- How do you feel about this CFG program? Do you think it will contribute to your professional development?

### **B- Personal Information**

Name:

Age:

Years of experience as an English Language Teacher:

Schools worked before:

*Thank you for participating in this survey.*

## **WEEK 1**

- How do you feel about the first CFG meeting?

## **WEEK 2**

### **PROBLEM SOLVING PROTOCOL**

- How do you feel about the problem solving protocol?

**WEEK 2**

- How could you bring this experience into your own teaching?



### **WEEK 3**

#### **PEER OBSERVATION PROTOCOL 1**

##### **Guidelines for the Peer Observation**

- Choose a person with whom you want to work. Agree to take turns being the observer and the observed.
- Establish ground rules for giving and receiving feedback.
- The person asking for feedback specifies the areas in which she/he wants feedback. (classroom management, pacing, teaching skills....)
- The observer makes observations in the class and takes notes related to the issue identified in the previous meeting.

(National School Reform Faculty, Peer Coaching).

- The observer should arrive at least 5 minutes before class.
- The observer can be briefly introduced to the students with a brief explanation of why the observer is present.
- The observer should not ask questions or participate in the activities during class. Such behaviors can invalidate the observations.

(University of Minnesota, Peer Observation Guidelines and Recommendations).

- An effective feedback;
  - enhances reflection
  - is specific rather than general
  - descriptive rather than judgmental
  - clearly communicated.
  - is well-timed: shared within 3-7 days of the observation.
  - an opportunity to learn.

(Adapted from Peer Observation and Feedback Guidelines)



## WEEK 4

### **PEER OBSERVATION PROTOCOL 1 (DEBRIEFING)**

- Do you think peer observation help you rethink the things going on your class during your teaching?

- Do you think peer observation is an opportunity to learn from each other?

## WEEK 5

### **ACTION RESEARCH**

#### **1. Reflect**

Think about the problem that your partner has observed during the peer observation protocol and state your problem.

I would like to improve -----.

I want to learn more about -----.

#### **2. Explore**

Reflect on your problem and think about where you can find information to help your plan. It may be of help to make use of the discussion taken place on the 5th meeting of CFG program or to consult the published materials and internet for information.

#### **3. Plan**

Draw up an action plan by answering the questions given above:

- a- how are you going to carry out the research?
- b- how long will it take?
- c- what tools and methods will you use in your research?

#### **4. Research**

Carry out your research by using peer observation (It may be helpful for your partner to have a copy of your plan while he/she is observing you).

#### **5. Analyze**

This stage helps you to understand the data. Write the answers of these questions on your diary.

- a- What have you found out?



b- What insights have you gained from the research?

c- What does your research show you?

## **6. Act**

Reflect on your results. Look at your teaching practice - what changes will you make?

Take action based on what you found out from your research.

## **7. Review**

Implementing changes, it may be useful to review:

a- How successful were the changes?

b- Do you need to take any follow-up action?

(Adapted from British Council, Action Research)



## **WEEK 7**

### **PEER OBSERVATION PROTOCOL 2**

- Did your attitudes towards peer observation change after action research?

**WEEK 7**

**POST OBSERVATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

**1. How has your involvement in peer observation helped you develop professionally as a teacher? (Select as many options that apply)**

It has improved my classroom management	
It has improved lesson planning	
It has improved my teaching of the skills that students need for their exams	
It has helped me develop activities in my lessons	
It has helped me with group work management	
It has helped me with checking learning during my lessons	
It has helped me develop my feedback technique	
It has helped me to introduce some form of 'stretch & challenge' in my teaching	
It has helped me with equality & diversity in the classroom	
It has not helped me develop professionally as a teacher	
Not applicable	
Other	

**2. If you answered 'Other' in the previous question please specify here.**

--

**3. How would you describe the feedback that you received after your peer observation? (select one option only)**

Informative	
Developmental	
Judgmental	
Don't know	
Not applicable	
Other	

**4. If you answered 'Other' in the previous question please specify here.**

--

**5. How would you rate your overall experience of the peer observation process as an observee? (Select one box only)**

Positive	
Neutral	
Negative	
Other	

**6. If you answered 'Other' in the previous question please specify here.**

--

**7. Please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: ‘As it presently operates, the peer observation process at the CFG program is a useful tool for developing me as a teacher’. (Select one box only)**

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Undecided	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Not applicable	

*Thank you for the time you have taken to complete this questionnaire.*

(Adapted from: Horncastle, and Sharp, 2010)

## WEEK 8

### PROGRAM EVALUATION

#### Critical Friends Group Program Course Evaluation Questionnaire

The statements in this survey are concerned with the way you feel about CFG program. It is important that you indicate how you really feel about the statements given below. Please read each of the statements carefully. After you read each statement, decide if you agree or disagree with the statement.

Following each statement is a scale from 1 to 5:

Circle 1 if you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement.

Circle 2 if you **DISAGREE** with the statement.

Circle 3 if you are **UNCERTAIN** how you feel about the statement.

Circle 4 if you **AGREE** with the statement.

Circle 5 if you **STRONGLY AGREE** with the statement.

Item No	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The researcher was knowledgeable of the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The researcher provided effective frameworks for the protocols.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The researcher was accessible for questions	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Time allotted to each meeting and protocol was sufficient.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The content of the protocols were helpful for my professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The program made me more confident about my teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Working with a group of teachers helped me to look at the unexpected events in the classroom from a different perspective.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The content of the program was arranged in a clear and logical manner.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I felt comfortable during peer observation protocol.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Action research made me interpret what was happening in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>11.</b>	Diary keeping provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>12.</b>	I would like to participate in a CFG program again.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>13.</b>	I would suggest this CFG program to my colleagues.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

*Thank you for participating in this survey.*



## 7.2. Appendix 2: What is Critical Friends Group?

### TEACHER DEVELOPMENT CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP (CFG)

- CFG is a **professional community** aiming to promote student learning through collaboration. Members focus on factors affecting students' achievement such as examining curriculum, and students' work.
- A CFG includes **4-10 members** meeting approximately one hour per week. Typically CFG are facilitated by a coach who has been trained to use various protocols. In this sense, critical friends are not the same as the group of teachers meeting regularly to discuss the teaching and learning process (Andreu et al., 2003, cited in Vo & Nguyen, 2010).
- **Protocols** are a structured process or a set of guidelines to promote meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning. Protocols give time for active listening and reflection so all voices in the group are heard and honored (National School Reform Faculty).
- **CFG aims to;**
  1. create a professional learning community
  2. make teaching practice explicit and public by "talking about teaching"
  3. help people involved in schools to work collaboratively in democratic, reflective communities (Bambino)
  4. establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry (Silva)
  5. provide a context to understand our work with students, our relationships with peers, and our thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching and learning
  6. help educators help each other turn theories into practice and standards into actual student learning
  7. improve teaching and learning" (National School Reform Faculty).

- And the **improvement of a professional community** depends on;
  1. openness to improvement
  2. trust and respect
  3. a foundation in the knowledge and skills of teaching
  4. supportive leadership
  5. socialization or school structures that encourage the sharing of the school's vision and mission (National School Reform Faculty).

### **7.3. Appendix 3: The Steps of Problem-Solving Protocol**

- The participants work together and focus on specific questions about their students' learning by making use of their experience.
- The presenter offers an overview of his/her dilemma and asks a question about how to solve it. (The facilitator guides the group through a series of questions starting with very specific, clarifying questions, if necessary)
- The presenter remains silent and takes notes while the other participants discuss the dilemma.
- The presenter reflects on the suggestions having been discussed.
- The researcher leads discussion critiquing the process.
- The facilitator asks the participants to reflect on the suggestions made throughout the protocol.
- The facilitator asks the participants to write about their reflections about the problem-solving protocol.

Adapted from National School Reform Faculty. Protocols.

#### 7.4. Appendix 4: Peer Observation Form 1

##### PEER OBSERVATION FORM 1

Date, time and place:	
Kind of teaching/learning context (e.g. lecture, tutorial, seminar, demonstration, practical, online learning, etc):	
Topic:	
Approximate number of students:	
Where this element fits into overall picture for students:	
What the students should get out of the session (e.g. in terms of learning outcomes, skills to be gained, etc):	
What I'd particularly appreciate feedback on:	
Anything else? Any other requests?	
My name:	Observer's name:
Date, time and place:	

Adapted from (Leeds Metropolitan University, Using Peer observation to Enhance Teaching)

## 7.5. Appendix 5: Peer Observation Form 2

### PEER OBSERVATION FORM 2

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE OBSERVER AT THE SESSION		
Please comment on the strengths and areas for development in relation to the learning objectives/intended learning outcomes. The prompts are provided for guidance and other areas may be added or substituted by negotiation to suit specialist sessions.		
Prompts	Strengths	Areas for development
Clarity of objectives/intended learning outcomes		
Planning and organisation		
Methods/approach		
Delivery and pace		
Content (currency, accuracy, relevance, use		
of examples, level, match to student needs)		
Student participation		
Classroom management		

Adapted from: Leeds Metropolitan University. Using Peer observation to Enhance Teaching

## 7.6. Appendix 6: Sample Action Research

### Action Research

Isabella Bruschi is a teacher of English language and literature in an upper secondary school in Turin, Italy. Isabella's starting point for AR was her negative feelings about oral tests she used in class. She had a whole cluster of questions and doubts about this aspect of her teaching and she was concerned to find out how she could improve things herself and her students

*What makes me feel so uncomfortable when I assess students' oral English? Do I know what happens during an oral test? Am I aware of the nature of the questions I ask and of their different weight? How do I react when students give me the wrong answers? When I intend to help students do I in fact help them? What do my students think of my way of conducting an oral test? What are their preferences?*

As a result of the information she collected through diary keeping and giving students a questionnaire, she set up three strategies to improve her teaching:

- Giving students the questions for the oral tests five minutes before answering so that they could have time to think and organize their ideas.
- Restricting her interventions to a minimum.
- When interviewing, paraphrasing what students say to help them keep the thread of their thoughts, search their memory or trigger off new ideas.

Her students' comments after the test show that these changes made a big difference:

*What I liked in the oral test was the fact that you didn't interrupt me while I was speaking. (Mara)*

*I felt helped when the teacher repeated what I had said. (Francesca)*

Retrieved from: Burns, A. (2010).

## 8. CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information

*Name:* Fatma Yuvayapan

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### Educational Background

Date	University	Field
1998-2003	Hacettepe University	English Language Teaching

### Job Experience

Date	Institution
2004 – present	School of Foreign Languages, KSU
2003- 2004	Mükrimin Halil High School, Kahramanmaraş