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TEACHERS OF ACTION: A NARRATIVE STUDY INTO THE IDENTITIES OF  
TURKISH TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

This study has been fully funded by the Turkish Ministry of National Education.

26.11.2020

*ammar tekin*

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Prayers and peace be upon Muhammad (as), his family and his companions.”*

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## Abstract

This narrative study explores the identities of Turkish teachers of English, who engage in volunteering activities in addition to their everyday teaching. These activities include writing local and international development projects for students and communities, spending an entire summer holiday to volunteer in an orphanage in Africa, running an amateur football club for the community, voluntarily tutoring for the economically disadvantaged kids for free, and volunteering in health-related organisations.

Being a Middle Eastern country between Asia and Europe, the Turkish context seems to constrain than to support the teachers to engage in volunteering for others, especially in addition to their everyday teaching duties. In this vein, with accountability and standards they enforce, neoliberal trends affect education negatively. Additionally, it is difficult to define the engagement of these teachers within the current literature, as teacher volunteering does not capture what they do, making it necessary to gaze towards teacher activism. Yet, activism, especially in the Turkish context, has different connotations. Hence, while there are already limited studies on the identities of international teachers of English, this study enriches the existing literature around the topic by bringing a unique perspective, identifying the similarities and differences between teacher volunteering and teacher activism as well as offering an additional discourse to teacher activism.

Through two in-depth interviews each with five Turkish teachers of English that are analysed narratively, participants' discussions around activism and volunteering led to the construction of a 'teacher of action' concept. Teacher of action recognises the participant teachers' authentic ways of engaging in volunteering, taking action for others as well as encompassing teacher activism and volunteering. Some teachers in this study choose to see teaching as a political act. Others deliberately refrain from politics to carry out their agendas, whether they have ideas on politics and activism or not. Their engagements are a combination of their personal and professional identities and values, which affect and, were affected by, their actions.

In this regard, taking action eventually becomes a stance for them, which informs their behaviours and actions in their personal and professional lives. Taking action as a stance, they are not only active in organised projects but also their everyday teaching, through big and small acts. Moreover, they do not limit themselves to the spheres of school and education, as their engagements are not limited to these spaces, while all affect their professional identities. What they have in common is their beliefs in the transformative power of education and urge

to take action to make that transformation more possible, which affects and reconstructs their personal and professional identities.

The study demonstrates that taking action can be possible for all teachers and has various benefits for teachers' identities as well as their motivation in teaching, as it is driven by their beliefs in the transformative power of education, the values they hold about teaching, as well as their care for their students, families, communities and others.

## Lay Summary

'Teachers of Action: A Narrative Study into the Identities of Turkish Teachers of English' is a PhD thesis into the identities of Turkish teachers of English who volunteer in addition to their everyday, full-time teaching. To explore the identities of these teachers, by identifying who they are and who they are not in relation to others, I conducted over sixteen hours of interviews with these five teachers.

I decided on a research design that is called narrative inquiry, which helped me to focus on participants' volunteering experiences. These experiences included writing international projects that students participate, writing development projects for the students and the local community, spending the entire summer holiday to volunteer in an orphanage, running an amateur football club for the community, voluntarily tutoring in the disadvantaged communities, and volunteering for health-related organisations.

According to the study results, participants demonstrated that Turkish educational structure, with its long-lasting problems, is not helpful for them with their voluntary engagements. Instead, it constantly puts institutional barriers against them. Yet, taking action for others help participants overcome these problems and not to be affected negatively. Rather, it supports their emotional well-being and increases their job motivations.

Teachers of action builds on an academic literature around the activism of teachers, by aiming to be an organic response to the institutional constraints upon teachers across the globe, with the advent of neoliberalism in education. With neoliberalism, a good education is evaluated with high-stakes testing, statistics and subsequent accountability expectations from the teachers.

However, as participant teachers engage in voluntary acts within and beyond the spheres of their schools and students while all these engagements affect their professional identities, teacher activism is not enough to encapsulate this complexity, while voluntary teaching has different connotations. In this regard, *teacher of action* offers a middle way to recognise participants' diverse activities. Moreover, through the examples, it demonstrates that engaging in voluntary actions are helpful for teachers, through supporting them professionally and personally; through increasing their job and classroom motivations; and through reconnecting them with the good teaching for a transformation in the society.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>BERA</b>	British Educational Research Association
<b>CAF</b>	Charities Aid Foundation
<b>CoP</b>	Communities of Practice
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ERG</b>	Eğitim Reformu Girişimi – Education Reform Initiative
<b>INSET</b>	Inservice Training
<b>LOSEV</b>	Lösemili Çocuklar Vakfı – Foundation for Children with Leukaemia
<b>MEB</b>	Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı – Ministry of National Education
<b>MoNE</b>	Ministry of National Education
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>TEPAV</b>	Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı – The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey
<b>TUIK</b>	Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu – Turkish Statistical Institute
<b>TUSEV</b>	Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı – Third Sector Foundation of Turkey
<b>UNESCO</b>	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>YÖK</b>	Yükseköğretim Kurulu – Council of Higher Education
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNV</b>	United Nation Volunteers

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 An Overview of the Study

This narrative study explores the identities of Turkish teachers of English, who engage in various volunteering activities in addition to their everyday teaching for their students and others in their schools, communities and elsewhere.

I intend this introduction chapter to function as a prologue, as it conveys my story of how I have chosen this topic, to a large extent. Following a brief overview of the thesis, I highlight what I mean by teachers who volunteer in addition to their everyday teaching and explain the key concepts used in the study, respectively. Subsequently, I present and evaluate possible methods to be chosen for a teacher identity study, which I had considered before deciding on conducting a narrative study. Finally, I discuss the narrative inquiry and how I adapt it for my research, before outlining the chapters of the thesis at the end of this chapter.

Being a Middle Eastern country between Asia and Europe, the Turkish context, which I analyse in terms of its educational and volunteering landscapes in chapter two, is unique. As the chapter demonstrates, the country, with its deep structural influences, which are largely political, is more likely to constrain than to support the teachers to engage in volunteering for others, especially in addition to their everyday teaching duties. I argue that this makes what these teachers accomplish even more valuable.

Five teachers of English from Turkey shared their volunteering stories with me in 2018. The participants comprise of two women and three men, who work as teachers of English in primary schools, high schools and universities. They are all fully qualified teachers, who graduated from English language teaching-related departments within the country. They have varied teaching and volunteering experiences, with their ages ranging from the early twenties to sixties. Some of them started volunteering before they started teaching, while others felt the urge later in their careers. Across these five people, their volunteering experiences are varied and include: volunteering for global charities, writing up and conducting European Union projects, volunteering for a political party's educational activities and running a local football club.

I conducted two in-depth narrative interviews with each of the five participants, which were then analysed via narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) methods. Narrative interviews gave them opportunities to speak in more detail

and in a less structured way while allowing me to focus more on the stories they told. In total, these interviews took more than sixteen hours, from which I developed four findings and discussions chapters. Yet, before delving into the findings, I would like to give a brief account on the topic first.

Having decided to focus on the teachers who volunteer, I initially sought to find any relevant literature regarding teacher volunteering. Yet, it has had a limited contribution, as nowadays, to a large extent, volunteering in the educational field, means teaching for a short term (Zhou & Shang, 2011), or with fewer qualifications (Romero, 2015), as well as teaching extra courses with a mission, which is often religious (Varghese & Johnston, 2007). As indicated above, participants in this study are all fully qualified teachers. They are all either English language teaching graduates or have their majors in English literature with pedagogical formations to teach, as they call it in Turkey. They have permanent teaching positions in primary schools, high schools, and universities.

Therefore, I focused on the previous scholarship around teacher activism (Sachs, 2001). Yet, what is teacher activism and what could count as activism? Does teacher activism differ from activism in general? Is volunteering a kind of activism? Is it a term carrying positive or negative connotations? Is it understood as the same concept throughout the world? I had all these questions before finding my participants and conducting the interviews, which led to numerous discussions with my supervisors and others, including my progression board examiners and colleagues. These discussions were around whether volunteering in addition to everyday teaching could be called activism, and whether activism carries a political element. Eventually, I asked these questions to all five participants. Some of them called themselves activists while others did not. Nevertheless, all of them made remarkable comments on the topic. These answers are not just meaningful in their contexts, but also, provide us all with new insights about the topic across the globe.

Based on the analysis of participants' narratives, I conclude that it could be more inclusive to call them *teachers of action*, to recognise their authentic ways of engaging in volunteering, and taking action for others. I must underline that the concept emerged from the analysis of the data, not from the previous literature and, hence, it became the title of the study, too. Accordingly, *teachers of action*, as a concept, aims to encompass teacher activism and volunteering because of the variety of engagements from the participants. arguably, neither activism nor volunteering is comprehensive enough to capture their experiences in and outside of the school environment. Moreover, some teachers in this study choose to see

teaching as a political act. Others deliberately refrain from politics to carry out their agendas, whether maintaining a certain stance towards politics and activism or not. What they do is primarily intuitive, with the values they attach to teaching and their senses of care for their students. Yet, what they have in common is their collective belief in the transformative power of education and urge to take action to facilitate such transformation, which, in turn, affects and reconstructs their personal and professional identities.

In the following section, I present the key concepts used in the thesis before narrating how I chose the narrative inquiry as my research lens in more detail.

## **1.2 A Reader's Guide into the Key Concepts in the Thesis**

### **1.2.1 Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is the research lens I adopted throughout the study. It informs the focus of my topic, as this is not a quest into objective reality, but rather into the subjective experiences of the participants. The methodological design is also in accordance with narrative inquiry, with life story interviews (Atkinson, 2011) as the data collection method, and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as the data analysis methods. Moreover, it inspires the narrative genre of the thesis, to write in an interpretative style that distances the study from a quantitative and positivist style.

### **1.2.2 Narrative**

Although I use stories and narratives interchangeably on a few occasions, such as the first paragraph of the introduction, I use the term narrative(s) 'to refer specifically to texts that are thematically organized by plots' (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5) and as extended stories on momentous facets of peoples' lives (Chase, 2005). Hence, narratives are stories, but they turn into a scholarly form for this research project.

### **1.2.3 Identity**

Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles (2011, p. 2) argue that identity is used as a 'catch-all label for biological characteristics, psychological dispositions, and/or socio-demographic positions' in contemporary research. Indeed, as Andriot and Owens (2019) demonstrate, there are four fundamental identities, which all refer to different theories in psychology and sociology: personal identity, role identity, social identity and collective identity. All these four identities have value in my research. This is because of my aim of having a holistic understanding of the participants' teacher identities, by exploring their life stories, including their professional roles and volunteering experiences in their contexts. According to Schwartz et al. (2011, p.



8), these identities could be investigated with different foci, on whether they are 'viewed primarily as a personal, relational, or collective phenomenon'; whether they are perceived 'as relatively stable, or as fluid and constantly changing'; and whether they are 'viewed as discovered, personally constructed, or socially constructed'. From my perspective, which aligns with Schwartz et al. (2011), these are not necessarily distinct from each other. For each category, it is 'and', rather than 'or' for me, as the foci overlap and complement each other. Therefore, the research recognises the multiplicity and complexity of identities for a more holistic theoretical ground.

#### 1.2.4 Teacher Identity

My thinking is in line with the general outlook onto teacher identity, which is perceived as dynamic and shifting over time in addition to being subject to external and internal influences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). However, this is not to deny that identities can be more stable or more fluid from time to time (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006). As I argue in the study, from my viewpoint, teacher identity is contextual and temporal process, and an interplay of personal, professional and political elements that are (re)constructed via multiple narratives (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

#### 1.2.5 Volunteering and Activism

Volunteering and activism are different yet overlapping concepts. Although the political drive in activism seems to be the main difference, this difference could only be in the discourse in many cases, as the same activity can be described volunteering and activism (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Nevertheless, I find the use of both concepts necessary, due to their usage by the participants, who define themselves and their engagements differently.

#### 1.2.6 Teacher of Action

*Teacher of action* is a concept that I constructed after the analysis of the interview data and my extensive readings around relevant topics. It aims to be an additional discourse to the teacher activism literature by encompassing volunteering and activism while recognising participants' authentic ways of taking action in various venues inside and outside of their professional environments. Based on their personal and professional values and identities, taking action becomes their stance, affecting their behaviours, dispositions and choices in their personal and professional lives.

After an overview of the topic and the research above, I narrate the process of choosing narrative inquiry as my research lens for the study in the following sections and justify my

choice by reviewing some of the other possibilities I had considered. These sections aim to demonstrate the rigour I undertake while conducting the study in a reflexive way.

### 1.3 The Rigorous Journey of Choosing the Research Lens

When I started my PhD project, I had already submitted a research proposal with a literature review around the concept of teacher identity. Naturally, these were just ideas resulting from a month-long investigation into the subject, which was presented within only a 4000-word piece of writing, namely my research proposal. Therefore, although I had known that I aimed to undertake a PhD project about English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher identity, I still spent my first few months after starting the project looking for ideas, concepts and methodologies, because, it was not just about the research idea, it was also about finding a suitable methodology. Yet, it was not just about finding a suitable methodology; it was also finding my research lenses. Soon, it became more about aligning the choices in a meaningful and coherent way.

This venture, continuing ever since, initially took about eight months while I had hoped for it to be shorter. For eight months, there were only dots hanging in the air resulting from my readings here and there, waiting for me to connect them. It was admittedly painful, too. I had certain ideas. I was interested in people, not in numbers, thus, I wanted to do qualitative research; rather than a quantitative or a mixed method one. I knew I liked talking to people, listening to them and their contemplations, which meant that my wish was to do interviews with other teachers. Additionally, I wanted to do it about my own national and professional context, where I became a teacher and where I plan to return after finishing my studies in the UK. As it turned out, I was not going to be able to recruit multiple participants in near places, which did not make it possible to carry out observations, either. After about three or four months reading on teacher identity as well as examining several qualitative research books for methodologies, I identified a more personal and unexplored topic, which was more exciting for me. I decided to investigate the identities of teachers of English in Turkey who volunteer in addition to their everyday teaching, as I mention above. I had done this both while I was studying and teaching. I wanted to find others like me, conceptualise the topic by exploring teachers' professional identities, as well as hearing and learning from their stories. It was one big dot, connecting several others, which means that the topic was getting a bit clearer for me.

This helped me in the following months to deepen my readings and construct my thoughts. However, I was still unsure about my research lens, to begin with. Where would interviews

fit into qualitative research? Which methodology should I be using? Moreover, the interviews were the last thing in this process. I had to find a methodology first. I looked into grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999) but decided not to use it, as I was already involved with the theory and it was a theory-driven research project until that moment, although it changed to a certain extent after the data collection. Then, I read about hermeneutics and phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), yet I did not think I should be separating myself from the research process, from the experiences of others. The meaning was not out there, it was not waiting for me. It had to be something that I would construct with the help of the interviews, which was also subject to reconstruction along the process. Moreover, I was after people and their accounts in their local and diverse contexts, I was not after the objective reality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Postmodernism and critical discourse analysis took up considerable time and space in my readings within these eight months with its frequent use in identity studies. Nonetheless, in terms of analysing identities, having a 'Critical' research lens with the capital 'C' (Gee, 2011), did not suit my research interests, either. Although I value and have used various ideas of the critical researchers for my research, I decided not to use a critical methodology, such as Critical Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 1993). This decision is, to some extent, both epistemological and methodological. Methodologically, as I discuss above, I had already decided that I was interested in the experiences of people, which would mean to look into what people actually say more than how they express it. However, this also changed after the data analysis, as I incorporated some techniques from the Voice – Centred Relational method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) into the narrative analysis, which is a critical methodology on the discourse level. Therefore, I do not deny the scholarly contributions of critical research, especially into the discussions around identity and teacher activism, as I drew on them for my understanding of the concepts in the thesis and built my stance on a broader array of literature. Epistemologically, what I adopted for in this research has been to take a trans-disciplinary approach and transcend the structure-agency debate around identity (Giddens, 1984), even though I agree that, in modern times, identity 'is never a final or settled matter' (Jenkins, 1996, p. 4). Still, the common controversies in modern identity research are whether there is a core identity or not, and to what extent a human's agentic capacity, namely his/her critical autonomy while taking independent action, could have an effect on the social structures constraining him/her with norms, rules and conventions (Côté & Levine, 2002). In other words, whether '*all that is solid melts into air*', as Karl Marx famously said (Berman, 1983, p.89). This claim could be argued to be the ground for the

structure and agency debate in sociology between the functionalist tradition, which focused on social whole and the structures; and hermeneutic tradition, which focused on the subjective experiences and agency (Giddens, 1984). It might be further asserted that modern and most-cited definitions of teacher identity rely mostly on the hermeneutic tradition with their emphasis on subjectivity and fluidity as well as their overlook on the effects of social structures (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Gee, 2000).

The debate might be argued to be still relevant to their influence on the definitions of identity, and for this study, of teacher identity. To understand the relevant definitions of modern times, a projection is needed towards the postmodernists, who, especially in the final quarter of the twentieth century, claimed that it is never possible to keep a unified self and that identity is always under reconstruction (Hollinger, 1994). Moreover, they assert that there is little, if any, human agency and core identity that could overcome the institutional or societal level attacks on the self from modernity (Côté & Levine, 2002). Yet, humans are not helpless against the radical transformation of social structures, as they have means to resist and adapt, with their agentic capacities (Bauman, 1993; Giddens, 1991). Moreover, contrary to the postmodernist projections, not all structures were destroyed, rather, some transformed and remained, such as social class and gender (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). As Bourdieu (1977) argues, objective structures of cultural institutions such as the family, religious organisations, educational systems and official bodies of governments that produce and reflect the cultural elements of values, ideas and narratives cannot be ignored. This is not to deny that these structural elements are usually at interplay with a subjective sense of agency. Reciprocally, practices are affected by cultural elements while simultaneously affecting them (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002).

Although these might seem outdated debates, they still have value today in the (teacher) identity studies, when the definition of teacher identity is taken into consideration in terms of fluidity and fragmentation, which is briefly touched upon in the [previous section](#), and discussed in more detail [later in the study](#).

To conclude this part and to reiterate my stance, I concur with Giddens (1991), who wrote almost three decades ago, during a rapid transformation in the world, similar to nowadays. The Berlin Wall had already fallen, and the Eastern Block was collapsing; technology was fast-changing, new media was on the rise and becoming widespread and, yet, he called it a late modern world, rather than a postmodern one. From this perspective, postmodernity is not a cultural stage beyond modernity; contemporary culture has elements for both modern

and postmodern identities, and the individual in the late modern times possesses the quality, or agency, to resist and adapt to the deconstruction that modernism brings (Bauman, 1993; Giddens, 1991). Hence, contemporary identities could be better described as a continuous formation of various contextual and temporal factors with existing cultural depositories of persons.

Only after reading these along with various others, had I come across narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I had known about narrative research and how it is used in teacher identity studies but, at this point, which corresponds to my eighth-month after commencing the PhD project, I found that narrative inquiry was beyond that and was what I was looking for.

#### **1.4 Thinking Narratively**

In this research, narrative is a way of thinking, a process of cognition (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995). It is not just a technique to collect rich data. It is a methodology and an epistemological way into reaching and evaluating an experience; that is why, it is called narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Looking through the narrative inquiry lens was the missing link connecting all the dots for me. Therefore, it encompasses all and informs the whole research project. Thinking narratively helped me both theoretically and practically. With a narrative lens, I was able to make more sense of teacher identity and related issues. I was able to construct a coherent methodology, collect my data, analyse and present it, too. It also gave me the freedom to write in a different genre throughout my thesis, rather than the conventional sense, with which I was able to make my presence more visible. Thus, it was also liberating for me.

Focusing on the experiences, storytelling becomes a way of identity construction for people (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, narrative inquiry is a suitable methodology to explore the identities of teachers. I discuss the narrative inquiry and how I applied it for my PhD project in a detailed way in the methodology section. In this section, I aim to present a 'narrative way of thinking', which is the basis of the thesis and affecting my decisions about what literature to include, how to collect the data, analyse and discuss it.

#### **1.5 Chapter Layout and Research Questions**

After the introduction, the thesis continues with a chapter on the Turkish context. This chapter aims to provide a background to the reader about education and civil society landscapes in the country. The next two chapters draw on the literature. While the first

literature chapter focuses on volunteering, activism and teacher activism, the second literature chapter discusses the teacher identity from a narrative perspective, with careful consideration of agency, emotions, values and motivations of teachers. The following chapter on methodology explains the narrative inquiry in detail. Discussing the adopted narrative approach in detail, the chapter then illuminates research process, starting from the ethical considerations, which is followed by research design, data collection, data analysis and ensuring quality in the research process.

The results of the study are discussed in four chapters. Chapter six and chapter eight answer the first research question below, while chapter seven answers the second research question. The first discussion chapter draws on the narratives of volunteering with several snapshots into participants' life stories and demonstrates that their identities are influenced by both structural and agentic factors. These factors include the influences of families and early education contexts, in addition to the volunteering experiences before teaching. However, for some teachers, having no previous experiences in volunteering does not prevent them from taking active roles in their communities. In the second discussion chapter, the participants reveal some of the structural constraints of being a teacher in the Turkish context, which echo the previous studies about the various dimensions of the educational system in the country. In the third discussion chapter, I focus on *teacher of action* as a concept. In this chapter, the participants indicate how these experiences transformed themselves, their classroom experiences and professional relations. They expressed the content and transformation these activities brought for their volunteering roles and everyday classrooms. Chapter nine works as an overall discussion chapter, as it links up chapters six, seven and eight, aiming to evaluate the *teacher of action* concept comprehensively. The thesis concludes with chapter ten, which mainly discusses the possible implications of the study.

As introduced in this chapter, the thesis investigates the identities of full-time teachers of English in Turkey who volunteer, which becomes the first research question. Taking identity as a primarily social construct, the second research question aims to investigate various interrelated factors that may affect these teachers' identity constructions. In this light, here are the research questions:

- *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*

- *How do educational, social, political and cultural factors influence the identity constructions of Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching?*

The next chapter, which now follows on the Turkish educational and civil society contexts, sets the scene before delving further into the literature.

## 2. Setting the Scene

This chapter consists of two sections on Turkish education and Turkish civil society respectively. In the first section, I scrutinise the history of education in Turkey and illustrate the trajectory of language teaching in the country in three parts. After highlighting the transition to the modern Turkish Republic in the early twentieth century, I focus on the language education in the twentieth century, which was not predominantly English until the last two decades of the century. In the final part, I discuss the new perspectives that emerged into language teaching from 1997 until today, with a series of reforms that have taken place in both general education area as well as the foreign language education.

In the second section, I focus on the civil society landscape of Turkey. In this part, I mainly focus on more recent reforms, with the flourishing of the Turkish civil society in the late twentieth century and onwards. Here, the projection centres on the reforms with the country's candidanship to become a European Union member, which has dramatically changed the Turkish civil society. Moreover, the recent big events such as Occupy Gezi protests of 2013 and the coup attempt of 2016 are examined, as having an insight of these events is essential to make meaning of the discussions regarding activism with the participants of the study. The final part of the chapter indicates that there are reasons to be optimistic about the future development of civic space.

I acknowledge this chapter is more informative rather than analytical on various levels. It is both natural and necessary for it to be so. It is natural, given its aim to present an overview for the reader about the context. Also, it is necessary because of the tenuous times that we live in as Turkish nationals. As the massive turmoil of the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt is quite recent, I have chosen to take a cautionary approach while presenting the delicate issues. The reader could take different meanings out of this, yet I must underline that this is not self-censorship. As an insider and an outsider at the same time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), I perceive things as grey and I do not align with much of the prevalent discourse in and out the country about what has happened in recent years.

### 2.1 The Turkish Context: Education

In this section, I aim to elaborate on Turkey's English language education, starting from the earlier days. To understand the context the EFL teachers operate in, it is essential to shed a light on the evolution of teacher education in general, and language education in particular,



within the country. This is particularly important for the reader to make sense of the discussion chapters, with the specialities of the Turkish education context.

Bearing this in mind, I start with exploring the educational reforms after the modern Turkish Republic was founded, then, scrutinise the contemporary English language teaching and the education policies in place today, with a particular focus on the recent decades in which the reforms have gained momentum. The main purpose of this section is to depict how macro institutional effects might have been reflected in the participant teachers' professional identities, in terms of the roots of the centralist character of the Turkish state and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to this day. This centralist character continues to affect and even shape teachers' identities, as evident in the discussion chapters.

Spanning Asia and Europe, Turkey is one of the biggest countries in the Middle East with a population of 82 million in 2018 (Turkiye Istatistik Kurumu - TUIK, 2019). It is also considered an upper-middle-income country (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO, 2017). Currently, compulsory education for the children and the young people in Turkey is twelve years; with four years of primary, four years of elementary and four years of high school education (Milli Egitim Bakanligi - MEB Temel Egitim, 2019). The literacy rate is 99% for men and 95% for women in 2017 (TUIK, 2019). In 2018, the Ministry of National Education's budget ratio to GDP was 2.7% (Egitim Reformu Girisimi - ERG, 2018). For 2017-2018 academic year, net schooling ratios for five-year-olds (pre-school education) was 75.14%, for six to nine-year-olds (primary education), it was 98.35%, for ten to thirteen-year-olds (elementary education) it was 98.62% and for fourteen to seventeen-year-olds (high school education) it was 87.64% (MEB, 2018).

### 2.1.1 Education in Turkey: The Transition to the Turkish Republic

The nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Ottoman Empire is depicted as the sick man of Europe, a discourse echoed within Turkey (Berkes, 2002), with the modernisation of the country claimed to have started only after the foundation of the Republic (Cole, 2014). Yet, it was an ongoing process that actually started at least two centuries earlier<sup>1</sup>. In fact, all

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<sup>1</sup> The first modern schools opened in Turkey were the royal military academies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Ergun, 1990). In alignment with the modernisation of education within the Empire, there had been several attempts to formalise the education of teachers during the nineteenth century. In 1848, the first teacher education institute in the modern sense, *Darulmuallimin-i Rusdi*, was opened to train secondary school teachers. This was followed by *Darulmuallimin-i Sibyan*, the institute for the education of primary school teachers in 1868 and *Darulmuallimat* in 1870, for the education of teachers in secondary schools for girls. The period of education for teacher-students in these schools was three years. These schools were later spread

the leading bureaucrats and the soldiers, who founded the modern Turkish Republic, including the founding President Kemal Ataturk, were educated in these modern institutions of the Ottoman Empire (Berkes, 2002). However, it could still be argued that Ataturk's era (1923-1938) was a critical turn in Turkish education history.

Ataturk, born in 1881, raised and schooled in modern institutions during the troubling times, was an avid modernist (Mango, 2000). In 1924, one year into the Republic of Turkey's foundation under Ataturk's lead, three pivotal laws were passed; one of which, the law of unification in education, dictated the establishment of a central Ministry of National Education and the eradication of madrasahs, the Islamic schools. This centralisation characterises the national education system in Turkey to this day (Akyuz, 2009; Gunduz, 2009) and, despite its negative consequences on various aspects, whose problematic effects are still evident, was deemed of high importance by the new Republic, as Cole (2014) states:

As a result, religious schools were either closed or placed under the control of the state, all instruction was required to be given in Turkish (marginalising languages such as Kurdish), and all educational and religious activities in the Republic were controlled by the state. These actions set up a highly centralised, secular educational system to serve as the backbone of the new nation-state. (p. 512-513)

A few months after the unification of education law in 1924, John Dewey, one of the several Western educational experts invited to the country during Ataturk's reign, paid a visit to Turkey and stayed for the summer period (Turan, 2000). Dewey wrote two reports and five subsequent articles about his visit to Turkey (Cole, 2014). Among several suggestions in his reports, one crucial point seems still to be valid, as he cautioned against the direction the government was taking with its centralist education policies and highlighted the importance of locality (Dewey, 1983, p.281, as cited in Turan, 2000):

While Turkey needs unity in its educational system, it must be remembered that there is a great difference between unity and uniformity, and that a mechanical system of uniformity may be harmful to real unity. The central Ministry should stand for unity, but against uniformity and in favor of diversity. Only by diversification of materials can schools be adapted to local conditions and needs and the interest of different localities be enlisted. Unity is primarily an intellectual matter, rather than an administrative and clerical one. It is to be attained by so equipping and staffing the central Ministry of Public Instruction that it

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through different parts of the Empire (Akyuz, 2009). In 1869, the first legislation to accept teaching as a legally defined profession was decreed. The legislation also issued local directorates to favour teacher education institutes' graduates for teaching positions (Binbasioglu, 1995).

will be the inspiration and leader, rather than dictator of education in Turkey. (p. 551)

It must be noted that, although some of Dewey's other suggestions were implemented, his warnings on uniformity were totally ignored (Turan, 2000). By using education as the main tool and impetus for nation-building, a uniform Turkish-nation idea has since been emphasised, the problematic effects of which are still evident in today's Turkish society (Cole, 2014).

Yet, creating a uniform Turkish nation is a difficult task, in a country comprising people from over forty different ethnic origins, as well as many languages and religions (Andrews, 1989). Hence, this nation-building approach taken by the founders of the Republic, reflected in its education system, has always been subject to criticism. Çayır (2009), underlines this centralist character of the country:

One feature of Turkey's formal education system is that it has always been much centralised, carried out through a single curriculum since the foundation of the Turkish republic in 1923. From the start, education has been seen as the most important means of creating a new nation based on a single national culture, a single ethnic identity and a single religion and language (p. 40).

As noted above, I ponder more upon the centralisation of Turkish education idea later. In the following section, I focus on the language teacher education policies of Turkey during the twentieth century.

### 2.1.2 Foreign Language Teacher Education in Turkey: the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

As a primary note, a Western foreign language course has been a compulsory part of the curriculum in Turkish secondary schools since 1927, which was mostly French first, then German, and then more recently English, with a few other European languages being taught within a selection of schools. However, whether it had been an achievable goal to offer a quality foreign language education in the country, especially during the twentieth century, is highly debatable, and the answer is probably no (Demircan, 1988), which is discussed below.

Since the 1920s, in addition to other problems, a primary issue regarding foreign language education was about the recruitment and training of the language teachers. Isik (2008) states that the foreign language education in Turkey was delivered either by foreign teachers in foreign and minority schools; or by schoolteachers and other people who would know the language in Ottoman and early Republic schools. Foreign language teacher education as a separate department within the teacher education institute was only initiated for French language teaching in 1941; for English language teaching in 1944; and for German

language teaching in 1947. However, the number of foreign language teachers graduating from these schools were never sufficient and other people, with limited pedagogical and linguistic capacities, were often recruited with permanent contracts to address such needs (Demircan, 1988).

A lack of teacher training policies and continuing professional development in the country lie at the heart of various problems. This is particularly an issue for language teaching.

Demircan (1988) underlines that training quality language teachers in adequate numbers had been problematic until the 1980s, due to lack of planning in recruitment, language policies and language teacher education. Demirel (1991) and Isik (2007) explore this problem in additional detail. As Demirel (1991) argues, the main problem until 1991, was the recruitment of non-language education graduates, with limited or no pedagogical knowledge, as language teachers. Other problems included not attracting successful high school students to teaching departments, not offering quality education to language education students as well as not offering enough teaching practicum and continuing professional development. Isik (2007), almost two decades later, highlights the same problems as still present. The following section demonstrates that, although more steps were taken, similar problems continue to persist.

As could be seen, the same problems characterised foreign language education in Turkey throughout the twentieth century. There could be two macro-level effects as the major causes, whose traces are still visible: the political instability of the country and the central character of the Ministry of National Education. Turkey has gone through two military coup d'états in 1960 and 1980, and three military memorandums in 1971, 1997 and 2007 (in addition to a failed coup d'état attempt in 2016), all of which resulted in undemocratic conditions, instability and government reshuffles. In a vicious circle, these interventions reinforced the centralised character of the Ministry of National Education, resulting in short-term, often uncompleted educational policies (Cakiroglu & Cakiroglu, 2003).

Indeed, ministry reports from the 1960s show that these problems, such as the lack of language teachers in enough quantity and recruitment of non-qualified people, were addressed back then (Demircan, 1988). Thus, even though there has been a major military action every decade, resulting in major instabilities, it is still possible to identify a process for better development of the country's foreign language education policies, starting from the 1950s. To this extent, in addition to the opening of foreign language medium universities and high schools in the 1950s and inviting foreign experts to the country in the 1960s to

report on foreign language education, in 1968, cooperation started with European Council on foreign language education policies. In 1972, the Foreign Languages Teaching Development Institute was founded, resulting in a curriculum change in 1974 (Demirel, 2003). Moreover, the number of foreign-language-teaching departments rose from two to fourteen in 1988 (Demirel, 1991).

From the mid-1980s and onwards, English started to become the primary foreign language taught and sought in Turkey. This move was influenced by rapid economic developments and an increasing desire to be more integrated with the neoliberal Western world by the new government after the 1980 coup d'état, which was reflected in the substantial increase in the number of high schools and universities offering English medium education (Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998). However, the 1997 education reform marked the major change and it could arguably be identified as the beginning of today's foreign language education environment in the country (Kirkgoz, 2007).

### 2.1.3 English Language Teacher Education in Turkey: 1997 – Onwards

I have chosen the title, *English Language Teacher Education in Turkey* for this section because, as indicated previously, from the 1980s onwards, English dominates as almost the sole foreign language taught in the country. In 1997, Turkey's primary education phase was increased to eight years from five, and English became a compulsory school subject beginning from primary four (Kirkgoz, 2007). A substantial curriculum change was made with the 1997 reform, which introduced the Communicative Approach to language teaching in the country for the first time, emphasising student-centred learning, with students taking an active role in the classroom and the teacher's role re-defined as a facilitator (Kirkgoz, 2005).

The 1997 reform was synchronised with updated curricula for teacher education departments of faculties of education in the same year. In the updated curriculum for English language teaching departments, the number of methodology courses and teaching practicum hours was increased. Teaching methods were also updated to compete with the rest of the world, with the introduction of student-centred, communication-based applications (Kirkgoz, 2005). However, the sudden introduction of English classes to primary fours and fives throughout the country resulted in a major teacher shortage. Cakiroglu and Cakiroglu (2003) discuss this shortage and the solution found, which caused further problems:

In the 1997–1998 academic year, graduates of any of the four-year university programmes without special preparation to teach were

accepted for teaching jobs throughout the country with a minimal amount of in-service training to close the gap between their knowledge and the required education for being a teacher. (p. 256-257)

After the 1997 reform, English language teaching departments' curriculum was revised three times along with other faculty of education departments' curricula; in 2006, 2009, and 2018. As another indicator of uniformity of education in the country, faculty of education curricula have been determined by the Council of Higher Education (YOK) in Turkey and implemented nationwide. This is viewed as 'problematic', dramatically hampering the flexibility of faculties (ERG, 2018).

Out of 206 universities in Turkey, 91 offer foreign language teaching education (YOK, 2019). Although it is not possible to ascertain the number of students studying in English language teaching departments in the country, as of 2017-2018 academic year, 214.608 students were enrolled in the faculties of education (ERG, 2018). It is possible to see a major increase in the number of departments offering foreign language teaching education, compared the to late 1980s. With the revisions in the teacher education curricula, it is hoped that lacking quality teachers in sufficient numbers should not be a problem anymore. However, recent reports from civil initiatives and the ministry's strategy reports indicate that teaching is not favoured by the most successful students and teachers' rights are required to be upgraded. Moreover, both pre-service and in-service developments of teachers need to be scrutinised and reorganised to keep up with the contemporary teacher education perspectives (ERG, 2018; MoNE, 2017a). In terms of the physical capacity of the schools and the number of teachers around the country, although there is an undeniable development, there are many schools in Turkey, especially in underdeveloped neighbourhoods of the cities and in the most deprived regions of the country, with (English language) teacher shortages, which is covered with, often unqualified, part-time teachers (ERG, 2018).

In line with the ongoing reforms in the Turkish education system, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published a Teacher Strategy Paper<sup>2</sup> for 2017-2023 (MoNE, 2017a), which is followed by the 'Education Vision 2023'<sup>3</sup> (MoNE, 2018). In the Teacher Strategy Paper, the Ministry defined three main objectives (MoNE, 2017a):

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<sup>2</sup>Teacher Strategy Paper could be accessed via the link:  
[https://oygm.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2018\\_05/25170118\\_Teacher\\_Strategy\\_Paper\\_2017-2023.pdf](https://oygm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2018_05/25170118_Teacher_Strategy_Paper_2017-2023.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://2023vizyonu.meb.gov.tr/doc/2023\\_VIZYON\\_ENG.pdf](http://2023vizyonu.meb.gov.tr/doc/2023_VIZYON_ENG.pdf)

- Ensuring the employment of highly-qualified and well-trained teachers, who are most suitable for the teaching profession,
- Ensuring continuous personal and professional development of teachers,
- Ensuring a positive perception towards the teaching profession and strengthening the status of the profession (p. 2).

In addition to the vision documents and new school curricula for students and the faculties of education curricula for student teachers, the Ministry also revised the general competencies for teaching, which is followed by more than two hundred performance indicators (please refer to [Appendix A](#) for the competencies).

All these efforts could be counted as indicators of a prospective positive change in the teaching profession for Turkey. Furthermore, being integrated with reforms in almost all areas of education in the country, these competencies are certainly more likely to be taken forward. Another key point is the emphasis on professional development (MoNE, 2017):

Only sticking to the competencies teachers achieved during their undergraduate studies will prevent them from adapting to transformations in the era of rapid-change. For this reason, continuous professional development of teachers is the key concept in the teacher training system of many countries. (p. 6)

Nonetheless, there are various ongoing problems related to professional development in Turkey, as I discuss in the third discussion chapter, drawing on both the participants' accounts and previous studies. Moreover, one of the two goals to realise the objective of 'ensuring continuous personal and professional development of teachers' is 'putting a periodical performance evaluation system into practice to identify the teachers' professional development needs' (MoNE, 2017, p. 12), bringing several questions to mind about how the performance evaluation system may function in practice. Indeed, although a performance evaluation system started in 2015, where school administrators evaluated the teachers, it was subject to objection and challenged heavily by the teachers and teacher unions, causing the Ministry to scale back the decision. It was revised for a certain period until the new Minister of National Education declared that it was not feasible and abolished for the time being (ERG, 2018).

In addition to the problems around the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers, another significant issue is the high-stakes testing in Turkey, which is linked to the performance and accountability expectations in the country. Although the Teacher Strategy Paper prioritises employing well-qualified and well-trained teachers (MoNE, 2017a), with the current testing environment, this aim may fail to be realised. Turkey is a test-

oriented country at all stages of education, as the nationwide tests start as early as middle school (Ozturk Karatas & Okan, 2019). To become a language teacher, a student must take high-stakes tests at the end of high school and university, which are both found to be disconnected from the curriculum, provided that the curriculum is not sacrificed for test preparation, and detrimental for linguistic competence of the test-takers, given they only consist of multiple-choice questions (Ozmen, 2011; Ozturk Karatas & Okan, 2019; Yildirim, 2010). Under these circumstances, teacher educators at universities face a dilemma, whether to accommodate what they teach for high-stakes tests or to continue what they should be doing (Ozturk Karatas & Okan, 2019).

I discuss the accountability and performance expectations in education globally in the second section of the following chapter, *Neoliberalism and Contemporary Teacher Education*, to which the proposed performance evaluation system in the previous page could be argued to be an example. After outlining the Turkish context regarding the foreign language teaching policies in this section, in the next part, I aim to scrutinise volunteering to the advancement of civil society in the country.

## 2.2 The Turkish Context: Civil Society

In this section, I elaborate on the status of the civil society in Turkey, in particular concerning education, to illustrate the landscape for activism and volunteering in the country. As I have discussed in the previous section, Turkey has endured two military coup d'états in 1960 and 1980, three military memorandums in 1971, 1997 and 2007 as well as a failed coup d'état attempt in 2016, all of which, arguably, had undeniable adverse influences on the development of civil society in Turkey. Still, it is possible to detect a track of positive developments in the country's democratic space, especially during the last couple of decades.

### 2.2.1 Civil Society and Education in Turkey

As I have touched upon in the previous section, the founders of the Turkish Republic, by using education as their main vehicle for nation-building, aimed to create a modern and secular Turkish nation, via top-down reforms. However, it is highly doubtful if it yielded the results they had expected. Keyman and Icduygu (2003) discuss the top-down modernisation agenda of the founders in terms of the citizenship and conclude that what it created was 'the militant citizen' as they call it, a rather unhealthy relationship between the regime and its people, where the citizens, stripped off the means to exercise their agencies, had a dutiful role:



Kemalist Republican ideology has tried to carefully construct the modern concept of citizenship with its own peculiar characteristics, [which resulted in creating the militant citizen who] is only active in terms of his/her duties to the state, but passive with respect to his/her will to carry the language of rights against state power. (p.231)

To reflect on the effects of the military oppression in Turkey, it would be timely to have a retrospection to the 1980s and illustrate how a nation with a rigid state tradition would behave; even six years after the 1980 military coup. At the beginning of her article on the paradoxes of Turkish nationalism, Kadioglu (1996) shares a rather interesting anecdote:

On an ordinary day in 1986, a group of Turkish stage actors dressed in Nazi (SS) uniforms asked randomly the people walking in the streets of Istanbul to show their identity cards. Interestingly, they had employed a mixed language - semi German and semi Turkish - in approaching these people and asked for 'kimlik bitte!'. What was more interesting was that the majority of the people who were approached by these actors in SS uniforms showed their identity cards without questioning any part of the staged act. The whole event was meant to be humorous, yet it also revealed the unquestioned authority of anybody dressed in a uniform in a country with a strong state tradition. (p. 177)

It should be stressed that, although many parts have been amended, Turkey still uses the constitution written in 1982 during the military rule in the wake of the coup d'état in 1980 (Gül & Kiriş, 2015). With this constitution, civil society organisations in the country were either banned or sanctioned; unions and civil society organisations were banned from involvement with politics, over twenty-three thousand organisations were closed down; and, union member workers went down from almost six million in 1980 to over one million in 1985. The constitution also limited civil servants' (including teachers') ability to become civil society organisation members to a large extent, in addition to banning all kinds of political activities for them (United Nation Volunteers – UNV, 2013). Therefore, on top of the long-lasting effects of nation-building attempts in the country, the still-in-effect 1982 constitution 'sets up a unitary state and a centralized political and administrative system in Turkey' (Gül & Kiriş, 2015, p.31).

Turkey's long desire to become a part of the European Union, which started in 1959 yet halted with the military interventions, gained momentum in the 1990s after a renewed formal application in 1987 (Balci, 2015). This has considerably changed the civil society landscape in the country (Keyman & Icduygu, 2003). In this regard, in terms of the relationship between civil society and education, the curriculum reform in the education process that started in 2005, which I mention in the previous section, stands out as a prominent contribution. Çayir (2009, p. 40) illustrates with examples that education is used

for nation-building in Turkey, especially to ‘transmit the official Kemalist version of Turkish history and various topics such as Turkey’s relations with her neighbours, all in a highly nationalist and militarist language’. Although notable efforts have been made in recent years in the curriculum, some of the textbooks were found to continue a similar discriminatory discourse (Usta, 2011). Accordingly, the Turkish education system still needs a more critical examination of its essentialist nature and a shift towards promoting diversity within the country as well as redefining a more pluralist notion of citizenship (Çayir, 2016).

Unfortunately, when it comes to English language teaching in the country, I did not locate any studies investigating the English curricula and the textbooks in the country, nor teachers’ perceptions on them, in terms of civil society, volunteering, activism, democracy or human rights<sup>4</sup>. In the few studies I found on the cultural elements, the primary-two curriculum for English was criticised for lacking a cultural focus and having too much reliance on presenting vocabulary items (Iyitoglu & Alci, 2015), while high school textbooks were also criticised as inadequate in terms of raising an intercultural awareness (Ocak & Akar, 2016). In a more recent study, however, secondary school textbooks for English were found to be a good mixture in terms of incorporating national and international values, which aim to raise the intercultural understandings of students as well as their appreciation for cultural diversity (Kirkgoz, 2020). This leads me to assert that more studies are urgently needed in evaluating the curricula and the textbooks, as well as exploring teachers’ and students’ opinions around these concepts.

### 2.2.2 Teacher Unions in Turkey

Teacher unions in Turkey have a similar trajectory to the development of civil society in the country. Although the first professional organisation for teachers in the country date back to 1908, teachers were banned from joining the civil society organisations alongside other state employees after the 1971 military memorandum and only regained a legal status to start unions in 1995 (Buyruk, 2015). Nevertheless, teachers, along with the other state employees, still do not have legal rights to go on a strike; and they can only bargain for a collective labour agreement with the state (Gunes Karaman & Erdogan, 2016). In Turkey, unionisation has considerably expanded in the teaching field since 2002 (Kayikci, 2013). Today, almost one million two hundred thousand teachers and academics employed by the

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<sup>4</sup> I conducted a review on 24.04.2019 via TR Index (<https://trdizin.gov.tr/>), website of the official Turkish Academic Network and Information Centre, as well as via ERIC (<https://eric.ed.gov/>) with various combinations in Turkish and English.

state schools and universities are members of forty-four teacher unions in Turkey, with the four biggest unions comprising the majority of this number (Resmi Gazete, 2019). Taş (2018), in his document analysis study concerning Turkish teacher unions' opinions regarding the updated curricula, found that these major unions' focal point in their commentaries was their ideological standpoints:

[For the new curricula] Eğitim-Bir-Sen has emphasized national and spiritual values more in accordance with its political tendency. Türk Eğitim-Sen brings forward the nationalist demands that focus on the patriotism and indivisibility and the concepts of unity and solidarity. Eğitim-Sen has use social democratic discourses such as labor, equality, diversity, scientificness and pluralism. Eğitim-İş has drawn attention to concepts like Kemalizm, secularism and scientificness (p. 440).

Arguably, this ideological polarisation could be viewed as normal yet dangerous, as the unions' main function was claimed to have primarily become serving promotional expectations of some teachers aiming for higher, more prestigious roles in schools or the Ministry (Kayıkci, 2013). This is especially due to the legislation in the country, which enables the governing political parties to cooperate with their ideological partner unions in their decision makings, rather than inviting all organisations (Eraslan, 2012). Therefore, according to Buyruk (2015), with Egitim-Bir-Sen becoming the leading teacher union with the highest members in recent years, after the rule of the Justice and Development Party that started in 2002, unionisation in Turkey is claimed to have lost its contrarian role and has started a new, cooperative style instead. In this new era in the country, following a similar neoliberal trend across the globe, teacher unions have assumed a reformist unionisation function, marginalising the non-cooperative, resistance unionisation. Hence, unions have lost their conventional roles within society as the mobiliser and director of social movements (Buyruk, 2015). This is echoed in Berkant and Gul's (2017) qualitative study, in which the participant teachers state that teacher unions in Turkey have limited contributions to education, as they are excessively connected to politics, which causes alienation among teachers.

Other problems related to the unions in the country are found as; a lack of cooperation among the unions because of political cooperation, incompetent union leaders who do not deserve their positions, and not having union rights to go on a strike (Berkant & Gul, 2017; Gunes Karaman & Erdogan, 2016; Tasdan, 2013).

In the following sections of this part, I divert the scope from education by focusing on recent key moments in the country, which continue to be essential to understand the participants' engagements better.

### 2.2.3 Recent Key Moments in the Turkish Civil Society Landscape

Turkey's youth after the 1980s is commonly depicted as socially inactive and apolitical, due to the deliberate attempts to deter youth from political action in the 1982 constitution, in addition to prevailing neoliberal and consumerist tendencies among the youth (Gokce-Kizilkaya & Onursal-Besgul, 2017). In terms of volunteering, even though Turkey has generally been thought of a country with low volunteering (Akboga, 2017), studies demonstrate that this is not the case (Çaki, 2014; TUSEV, 2016). Nevertheless, a longitudinal field study by the Third Sector Foundation of Turkey indicates that there is a low level of trust for people as well as organisations, which is also in comparative decline in the recent years (TUSEV, 2016).

Despite the common perception, the Occupy Gezi protests and the failed coup attempt showed the Turkish youth to be indeed involved in political action and quite actively, too. However, they transcend the conventional understandings of civic activism, such as voting, as they engage in unconventional participation through involvement in demonstrations and raising their voices more loudly, not just in the streets but also in the social media (Chrona & Capelos, 2017).

A widely acclaimed example of youth activism, Occupy Gezi protests started in May 2013 when the police brutally forced a small group of activists to be removed from a small park in the heart of Istanbul because of the plans to demolish the park for an urban redevelopment project. This triggered a massive series of protests around Turkey for two months and changed formation, where over two million people, mostly young, demonstrated against government policies. During the demonstrations, six people died due to brutal police intervention<sup>5</sup>, four of whom were fourteen, nineteen, twenty and twenty-two, and thousands were injured (Amnesty International, 2013). An on-site study with 4,411 participants during the protests in various cities shows that half of the protesters were less than thirty years old and almost eight per cent were not members of any political parties, nor any civil society organisations (Konda, 2014).

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<sup>5</sup> The governor of Istanbul and several senior police officers during the Occupy Gezi protests were sentenced and are in prison for their involvement with FETO (the perpetrating terrorist organisation of the failed Coup d'état in July 2016): <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/30/gezide-destan-yazanlar-fetoden-iceride/>; <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/gezide-cadirlari-yaktiran-polis-mudurunun-cezasi-belli-oldu>).

A second, similar nation-wide incident was the failed coup d'état attempt of 15 July 2016. For the first time in modern Turkey's history, people went on the streets to stop the schism in the military from intervention<sup>6</sup>. Within one night, 241 people were dead, including people as young as fifteen and sixteen (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Ninety-four people who died that day were below thirty years of age. Among the places people stood up against the perpetrators were the Parliament and the Presidency buildings, both bombed by the planes and helicopters as well as being targeted with missiles and bullets. Additionally, three weeks after the coup attempt, three major political party leaders came together at a rally in Yenikapi, Istanbul, which attracted millions of people (Berktaş & Kandemir, 2017).

In short, there is an undeniably positive trend towards activism in Turkey's civil space, though often impeded, due to mostly internal reasons. Both the Occupy Gezi protests and the failed coup attempt illustrated that the Turkish people have changed. In particular, the youth in the country, with their unconventional methods, gives reasons for the more hopeful future.

### 2.3 Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter, I analysed the Turkish context in terms of its education and civil society in two sections. In the first section, I aimed to present the historical roots of modern teacher education and foreign language education in the country. To this extent, it is a significant note that the sharp transition to Republic, with its reforms, is one of the primary reasons behind the uniformist and centralist character of the Turkish national education (Cole, 2014; Turan, 2000). Throughout the second part of the twentieth century, the main tension originated from the coup d'états in almost every decade, limiting teachers' civil rights, curricula and textbooks to a great extent, in addition to the problems the uprisings created for the reinforcement of educational infrastructure and planning (Çayır, 2009; 2016). In recent decades, various aspects of Turkish education have been under major reforms. Especially the attempts on pre-service and in-service teacher development might indicate that the educational policymakers at the macro level are not only interested in the physical development of education with statistics and numbers. Yet, even though they look as

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<sup>6</sup> A detailed account of the coup attempt and aftermath could be read through: <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/publications/books/history-and-memory-trt-world-in-the-face-of-july-15-coup>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/turkey-failed-coup-attempt-161217032345594.html>

promising steps in the right direction, whether these reforms will create a transformative teaching environment and more agentic teachers remains to be seen.

In the second section of the chapter, I scrutinised the civil society landscape of Turkey, especially in relation to education. After the centralist and even oppressive decades with the military interventions, especially since the 1990s, because of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU, the country's civil society landscape has considerably grown. In terms of civic activism, recent key moments in Turkish history, such as the widespread Occupy Gezi protests and the failed coup attempt give reasons to be optimistic for the future, especially for the youth with their unconventional engagements. It suffices to say that people from all ages and all social backgrounds actively stood up for democracy and political stability in Turkey. Even so, these traumatic events also seem to cause people to distrust bigger organisations and their fellow nationals (TUSEV, 2016). There are significant steps to be taken if a nationwide change is desired for the better.

In this regard, the Turkish government also fails to take the necessary steps. Although some reforms were made within the laws in recent years (UN, 2018), legislations are still problematic and unclear (TUSEV, 2016). According to the Interior Ministry annual report for 2018 (Icisleri Bakanligi, 2019), although the Ministry aimed to prepare a new law draft within 2018 to make legal and administrative amendments for the improvement of civil society and civil society organisations, it failed with the report acknowledging the failure and indicating it as an area that needs to be improved.

On the positive side, following the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, the Ministry of Youth and Sports announced 2019 as the volunteering year (Gençlik ve Spor Bakanligi, 2019) and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services has been carrying out a project called 'Gönül Elçileri', meeting volunteers and those in need since 2012 (Gönül Elçileri, 2019). Additionally, Erasmus and European Volunteering Service programmes have been carried out in the country since 2004. Between 2004 and 2016, more than 427,000 participants from Turkey and other European countries used these programmes either to come to Turkey or to go abroad (Ulusal Ajans, 2019).

Both the educational and the civil society contexts in the country demonstrate that the participants in the study undertake valuable responsibilities, in a country where structural constraints could become major obstacles for them. As the discussion chapters reveal, they are aware of these constraints, which the participants face in overt and latent ways.

### 3. Theorising the Study: Volunteering and Activism

In the previous chapter, I laid out a contextual overview of the education and civil society in Turkey, to explain the structures that the teachers in the study live and operate in. This chapter begins with a theoretical background for volunteering and activism. It then locates the teacher activism within the contemporary teacher education discourses. Chapter four centres on teacher identity, and includes teacher agency as well as values, emotions and motivations of teachers that are discussed respectively.

In the first section below, I elaborate on the contemporary interpretations of volunteering and activism, before scrutinising teacher activism.

#### 3.1 Volunteering and Activism: A Series of Tangled Concepts

As I touched upon in the introduction, after having decided to research the identities of teachers who volunteer, my initial investigation led me to the teacher activism. In this section, therefore, I focus on the interpretations of volunteering, activism, and teacher activism respectively. In her book, the Politics of Volunteering, Eliasoph (2013) comments on activism and volunteering as two completely separate things in her students' eyes:

Usually, though, when we think of volunteering and political activism, we imagine two very different creatures. When I have asked my students to “free associate,” by writing down words that come to mind when they think of “volunteer,” their words are overwhelmingly warm and friendly: “helpful, caring, fun, selfless, kind-hearted, charity, devote, free, and unity” ... as well as “looks good on a resume.” Words they associated with “activist” are less uniformly positive: “anger, protest, bias, argue, corruption, unhappy, mobs, shouting, hippies, riot,” as well as “transform,” “awareness,” “independence,” “freedom,” and “challenge.” In our shared imagination, the volunteer feels comfortably warm, while the activist either feels too coolly intellectual or too hot-headed. In our collective imagination, the nice, agreeable volunteer reads to pre-schoolers, while the activist pickets and shouts. (pp. 64-65)

This long quote exemplifies the dichotomy underlying volunteering and activism in people's eyes. Reflecting on my earlier thinking, I realised my own confusion over the terms, too. Yet, rather than positioning activism negatively, my confusion was located more widely on civic and political activism as well as teacher activism as a type of professional activism. After reviewing the literature, I should underline that, rather than treating volunteering and activism in addition to civic activism and political activism as each other's opposites, I now perceive them as overlapping concepts with nuances.

Volunteering includes 'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organisation' (Wilson, 2000, p. 215) and activism 'is the process by which special interest groups of people exert pressure on corporations or other institutions to change policies, practices, or conditions that the activists find problematic' (Smith, 2013, p. 6). Both volunteering and activism are considered civil engagements and important for the development of civil society and democracy (Eliasoph, 2013). Moreover, taking action, in all forms, demonstrates an ability to be agentic, as people only engage in volunteering (or activism) when 'they feel in control of their lives and [...] believe their social environment is malleable, [it will be] responsive to their efforts to change it' (Son & Wilson, 2017, p. 832). Although there are differences between volunteering and activism, it is quite difficult to claim there are clear cut boundaries. Musick and Wilson (2008, p. 21) assert that 'the same activity can be interpreted as one or the other, depending on the social context and the motives and interests of the volunteer'. Some researchers consider activism as a type of volunteering in their definitions: 'volunteer work includes not only the unpaid provision of services directly to others in need but also political activism and community representation on boards of various agencies' (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001, p. 116), although empirical studies indicate that people differentiate volunteering and activism (Poppendieck, 1998). The varied use of the term is reflected in volunteering people's identities, too. In her life-course interviews study with twenty-four Finnish young volunteers, Gronlund (2011) identifies five identity categories among the participants: influencer, helper, faith-based, community and success, with different values they hold and attach to volunteering. Among these, the influencer identity stands out as an interesting case with its resemblance to activism, as people with these identities 'presented a central imago of a person who fights against injustices and wants to make the world a better place' (Gronlund, 2011, p. 859).

When it comes to activism, although political and civic activism are often used as a binary, this is also a contested view, according to Jenkins, Andolina, Keeter, and Zukin (2003, p. 1), who claim that 'some of the debate is largely semantic', because civic engagements 'can be highly political, entirely nonpolitical, and anything in between' (Fiorina, 2001, p. 5). Besides, some people might not identify themselves as activists because of the meanings and values attached to the term, although what they do could be examples of activism (Bobel, 2007). This points to a 'disconnection between [...] doing activism and being activist' (Bobel, 2007, p. 148), for which the reason might be how activism is perceived by people as a concept. Even for the people who engage in a civic activity aiming at social change, with activists' portrayals in the media, 'activism can be an alien idea', as 'it's easy to imagine that activists



are 'other' people – weird or dauntingly benevolent' (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010, p. 282).

In terms of defining volunteering, a distinction between volunteering at an organisation and being a member of a voluntary organisation can be helpful, as being a member does not always guarantee the act of volunteering (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Moreover, volunteering 'overlaps in meaning with terms such as 'helping' and 'caring'', according to Musick and Wilson (2008, p. 23), who do not count informal help as volunteering, emphasising that volunteering is an organised activity. Similarly, while defining activism, Martin (2007, p. 21) underlines that the actions 'need to go beyond conventional behaviour' in a particular context and should aim at social change, as 'singing in a choir is not activism, but singing as a protest, for example in a prison or in a church, certainly can be'.

### 3.1.1 New Forms of Activism

In some cases, an activist identity is 'linked to a 'perfect standard' that places the label out of reach for some social movement actors' (Bobel, 2007, p. 156), whereas 'if news stories highlighted the real faces and sources of activism, activists would be much more mundane and familiar' (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010, p. 282). Linking the activist identity to a perfect standard might stem from a tendency to understand 'activism and/or being activist – as an unconditional state: an identity, mindset, standpoint or self-aware commitment', which could be attributed to a deterministic perspective stemming from the major events in the twentieth century and activists' roles in them (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 17).

Yet, especially in geography and feminist studies, there is a growing trend towards recognising the small, everyday activisms of ordinary people that are often done in unconventional yet creative ways (Askins, 2015; Martin, Hanson, & Fontaine, 2007), which are 'mundane, but also exciting, feasible and powerful' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010, p. 14). These type of actions are called implicit activisms that are 'politicised, affirmative and potentially transformative, but which are modest, quotidian, and proceed with little fanfare' (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 21).

in this regard, craftivism offers an unconventional perspective. Although it has been practised for a long time in other names and forms (Youngson, 2019), Greer (2014) drawing on the term from a reply to her blogpost, started a movement called 'craftivism' in the early 2000s. As a form of 'quiet activism', rather than 'loud and in-your-face' activism (Greer, 2014, p. 11), Greer and others started using knitting to give political messages 'through the art of gentle process [...] alone or in a group [to] protest against harmful structures, attract

people to protest, and [...] challenging injustice and harm through the values of love, kindness and humility' (Corbett, 2017, p. 24). Craftivism could be any kinds of creative forms of activism through crafts, such as 'stitching a message on a flag, weaving words onto street signs, knitting messages of hope into clothing, making handmade items for charity' to provide alternative channels for people to get their messages across (Youngson, 2019, p. 383). Nevertheless, similar to the discussion in the previous paragraph, it is important not to consider all crafting as activism, as the difference lies in using craft as a means of social change (Kelly, 2014).

### 3.1.2 Teacher Activism

When it comes to teacher activism, it must first be underlined that, in general, teachers tend to avoid politics (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992), as 'teachers and administrators are socialized to steer clear of overtly political positions that might interfere with their roles as school and community leaders' (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 2). This might stem from school curricula in the West, which assume that education should be neutral (Apple, 2004). Yet, critical pedagogy, which could be attributed to the work of Freire (1970), Giroux (1988) and Shor (1992) among many others, argues that teaching should be revolutionary as well as liberating and it requires dialogue, reflection and activism.

While constructing my stance as a teacher who is the active agent of a transformative change, I rely on critical pedagogy studies. Accordingly, among others, John Dewey's (1933) pioneering work on the reflective and moral teacher, Freire's (1970) influential urge for critical pedagogues who do praxis; educators combining the theory with practice for social and political transformation, and Giroux's (1988) conceptualisation of the teacher as a critical intellectual set the examples of the transformative teacher. Giroux (1988) advocates teachers to be border crossers, who are ready to challenge and redefine the existing borders in front of themselves and their students by having a critical awareness over the society, culture, history, power and epistemologies. It is essential for educators, as critical intellectuals, 'to take up culture as a vital source for developing a politics of identity, community and pedagogy' and become critically aware of the changing and heterogeneous nature of it, with schools becoming a site for the struggle for a social transformation (Giroux, 1992, p. 32). Shor (1992) asserts that education is politics. Through problem-posing, teachers should facilitate a situated and multicultural learning environment and make use of their opportunities to raise critical awareness among their students. Consequently, an empowering pedagogy should be 'participatory, affective, problem-posing, situated,

multicultural, dialogic, desocializing, democratic, researching, interdisciplinary [and] activist' (Shor, 1992, p. 17).

In English language teaching, it is argued that language teacher training ought not to only include the linguistics elements and their teaching or learning, but also the social and cultural position of English across the globe and how this position affects teachers and learners. This should be taught, in addition to the post-colonial status of English that deeply influences the social and cultural aspects of world politics today (Franson & Holliday, 2009).

As Burns and Richards (2009) argue:

[...] language teachers are not simply teaching language as a neutral vehicle for the expression of meanings and ideas, but should be engaged both in reflecting upon the ideological forces that are present in their classrooms, schools and communities and in empowering their learners with the language knowledge and skills they need to be able to function as moral agents in society. (p. 7)

Activist teachers are defined as 'educators who work for social justice both inside and outside of their classrooms' (NYCoRE, 2003, as cited in Picower, 2012, p. 562). In her qualitative study with the activist teachers in the US, Picower (2012) identified three commitments among the participants:

reconciling the vision [of] socially just world [...] with the realities of inequality;

moving toward liberation [through] developing caring relationships and democratic spaces;

standing up to oppression [by engaging] in ongoing and collective action. (p. 564)

Judith Sachs (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2005; 2016) used teacher activism in the professional sense and proposed the activist teacher as a counter-discourse against the enforced teacher professionalism in the Western contexts in modern times. Accordingly, neoliberalism demands an entrepreneurial identity of teachers who, in global societies, are considered to be compliant employees that endeavour to enhance their students' performances<sup>7</sup>. To combat this top-down impact, Sachs (2001, p. 157) urges for 'an activist identity emerging from democratic discourses' that 'has clear emancipatory aims', which would be founded upon 'more democratic conditions, where teacher knowledge and expertise is recognized and rewarded'. For this to happen, Sachs (2001) proposes a communities of practice model

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<sup>7</sup> Neoliberalism and education is discussed extensively in the following section, *Neoliberalism and the Contemporary Teacher Education*.

(Wenger, 1998) for an activist teacher identity network to flourish, where self-narratives will be negotiated as a reflexive identity construction method through mutual respect and communication. Moreover, Sachs (2001, p. 154) characterises the activist teaching profession as ‘an educated and politically astute one [where teachers] need strategies to inform those in positions of power and influence of the importance and necessity of a strong teaching profession’. In the modern era of professionalism shaped by values that prioritise an instrumentalist approach where accountability and assessment of teachers are the norms, an activist teacher identity could work as a practical as well as a political mechanism against the prevailing orthodoxies of the profession (Mockler, 2011).

While envisioning teachers as active agents of change, although Picower (2012, p. 562) underscores that ‘focusing solely on teaching social issues in class alone cannot address the existing power structure’, some others argue that with the traditional norms of teaching and teachers, education could benefit from the silent, implicit acts of activism (Marshall & Anderson, 2009; Zembylas, 2013). As Marshall and Anderson (2009, p. 127) suggest, teachers could ‘use pedagogical opportunities for activism, which is conducted at a micropolitical level more often than as visible acts of political contestation in more macropolitical areas’. This perspective highlights the importance of small steps or implicit activism (Horton & Kraftl, 2009) in education. Through reflection, Zembylas (2013, p. 93) argues for teachers to value implicit activism, as “‘banal’ acts in students’ lives constitute modest but invaluable steps [... which] eventually make a difference in the long run’.

Small steps and implicit activism should not be underestimated because, as Arshad (2008) found in her doctoral study with the Scottish teachers, even though they defined themselves as activists undertaking various roles in educational unions, political parties and elsewhere, the participants were not theoretically well-informed on activism, social justice or related issues. Instead, they mostly operated on ‘an intuitive sense of fairness’ (Arshad, 2008, p. v). Rather than discussing critical matters at a theoretical level, they were articulate at personal and classroom levels, and rather than extraordinary acts, they mostly highlighted the small, everyday acts, which are often devalued or ignored (Arshad, 2008):

This study has learnt from listening to the nine teachers how important it is to be attentive to small actions for change. Too often such small steps are diminished by radical activists who expect more or who only value ‘campaigns’ and ‘causes’. Perhaps if these nine teachers and others like them could share their small steps with others, then change agency might be seen as a more possible and realistic agenda for many classroom teachers. (p. 192)

Small or big, some academics claim teachers need to become active agents of change in today's educational environment (van der Heijden, Geldens, Beijaard, & Popeijus, 2015). Yet, it is difficult to argue that activism is received positively by everyone (Bobel, 2007; Eliasoph, 2013), hence making it difficult for some teachers to embrace the terminology. This resistance could be attributed to meanings attached to activism and how it is portrayed, especially in media and the literature. Yet, at the same time, it is essential not to value and appraise only heroic or radical activism among those who are engaged in or are sympathetic towards activism (Arshad, 2008; Baumgardner & Richards, 2010; Bobel, 2007).

In fact, Sachs addresses these arguments around activism. A few years after introducing the concept, she discusses the negative connotations of the terminology: 'I am aware that the word activism and activist have a checkered history and in some peoples' minds these words evoke images of chaotic demonstrations and rabbleroising' (Sachs, 2003b, p. 3). Although how she discusses it within the professional activism context makes it different from 'a naïve claiming of the turf of dissent' (Sachs, 2003b, p. 3), as she calls it, my discussion chapters reveal that the terminology creates unnecessary barriers even after almost two decades, especially in non-Western contexts.

To conclude, activism and volunteering are considered to be quite tangled concepts, and the entanglement becomes even more complex when they are further deconstructed. However, they have nuances and different connotations, making it necessary to differentiate between them. Moreover, with the values attributed to each concept, these differences could become more important when it comes to how people identify themselves in their contexts. In the following section, I locate the activist teacher within the current teacher education trends and discourses, providing a more general background, which is helpful in terms of understanding how teacher education has evolved over the years and how it can be possible to have more teachers with activist orientations.

### 3.2 Neoliberalism and the Contemporary Teacher Education

In this section, I aim to highlight the broader change in educational research in the late twentieth century and onwards with its tensions, which largely stem from the global neoliberal policies on education. As discussed in the following chapter, *Theorising the Study: Identities of Teachers*, a teacher can have multiple, and seemingly conflicting identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). To add further complexity to the situation, as Ball (2003) highlights, government authorities' visions about education may not always be for the common good. Therefore, in the shade of the mainstream discourses around education

nowadays, I argue that teachers should not aim to offer an effective education that is understood via statistics and rankings, rather they should be striving for a good education recognised for its 'values, purpose and the goodness' (Biesta, 2009, p. 36).

For much of the twentieth century, teacher education was based on the belief that 'knowledge about teaching and learning can be transmitted to teachers by others' through quantifying 'generalizable knowledge about what good teaching is and what good teachers do', where 'teachers have been viewed as objects of study rather than as knowing professionals or agents of change' (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 1). This was also the case for language teachers, who were seen as technicians transmitting procedural language learning techniques along the years (Burns & Richards, 2009; Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Nonetheless, especially since the last quarter of the twentieth century onwards, there has been a sociocultural turn in education that followed a larger paradigmatic shift from positivistic to interpretivist and situated approaches (Johnson, 2006). It could be argued that this turn was concurrent with the emergence of sociocultural and socially situated understandings of knowledge in educational research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), where 'the processes of learning are socially negotiated, constructed through experiences in and with the social practices associate with particular activities, in particular social contexts' (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 2). With this paradigmatic shift towards the end of the century, it is possible to identify emerging ethnographic research in classroom settings, which turned the focus onto the teacher himself/herself (Schön, 1983, 1987; Woods, 1987). Teacher identity research continued to grow after this focus on the teacher, by prioritising teachers' experiences as an integral part of professional development (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002). Using Kumaravadivelu's (2012) analogy, the teacher was no longer to be separated from the teaching profession, just as a dancer cannot be separated from dancing.

However, although education research has been transformed significantly with interpretivist and sociocultural perspectives, the neoliberal economies of modern times continue to pose serious threats to education. Referring to post-Keynesian governments of particularly Reagan's United States and Thatcher's Britain since the last quarter of the twentieth century, neoliberalism has different connotations (Young, 2011):

Optimists stipulate that unfettered market forces will result in global prosperity, freedom, democracy, and peace. For pessimists, neoliberalism has become an ideological construct associated with radical market fundamentalism based on the universal imperatives of competitive deregulation, liberalization, and privatization. This latter

interpretation is often used synonymously with the concept of an exploitative form of neoliberal economic globalization. (p. 1677)

Ball (2003, p. 215), quite appropriately, compares the education reforms taking place globally with neoliberalism to an epidemic, which is 'carried by powerful agents, like the World Bank and OECD'. In this era, the first and foremost agenda became making education more economically efficient. With standardised tests, competition among pupils, teachers, schools, regions and even countries is emphasised. Moreover, centralising education and accountability become norms. Curricula become similar across the countries, similar values are emphasised across the world and localities are compromised (Ball, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000). As English has been an essential tool for (neo)colonialism, and (neo)liberalism with its growing importance in almost all domains for the last few centuries (Canagajarah, 1999), accountability and standards also prevail in English language teaching globally, especially through textbooks and placements tests (Burns & Richards, 2009).

When it comes to the Turkish context, studies highlight that Turkey follows a neoliberal economy (Bakir, 2018; Durmaz, 2016). With its heavy reliance on nationwide curricula and nationwide high-stakes tests (MEB Temel Egitim Genel Mudurlugu, 2019), alongside the recent rapid expansion of private schools (MoNE, 2019b) and the Ministry's plans to increase the monitoring of teachers in the name of setting new standards for teaching by proposing a performance evaluation system (MoNE, 2019a), Turkish education could be argued to be trapped with a neoliberal agenda.

With neoliberalism, 'economic productivity is seen to come not from government investments in education but from transforming education into a product that can be bought and sold like anything else' (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254). As Mockler (2011, p. 525) indicates, 'neo-liberal doctrines tend to work with the notion of 'role' rather than 'identity'', which makes some teachers 'fixated upon technical aspects of their role and 'teaching to the test''. According to Ball (2003, p. 220), the result is conflicting identities for teachers, who are 'terrorised' by the performativity culture.

Under these complexities, as agentic human beings, which is further discussed in the following chapter, some teachers can use filtering mechanisms to negotiate their reactions against the complexities the new times bring. Indeed, research shows that teachers may resist top-down educational reforms if they are against their long-held approaches to their professions (Lasky, 2005). Moreover, this resistance 'may be passive as much as active, and involve actions ranging from ignoring reforms, recasting them, only using certain aspects or refusing to comply' (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005, p. 9). Therefore, although teachers and

teacher educators need to be informed about the threats and harms of neoliberalism on education, there should be a fine balance in order not to be pessimistic. In this regard, I align with Day (2012), who proposes an alternative discourse to discuss the effects of neoliberalism in education:

[Some] researchers tend to write about teachers and schools as victims of policy-driven imperatives as bureaucratic surveillance and new pervasive forms of contractual accountability which (wrongly) assume a direct causal link between good teaching, good learning, and measurable student attainments persist and increase. I see research evidence of this but research evidence, also, of teachers who remain skilful, knowledgeable, committed, and resilient regardless of circumstance. (p. 7)

In the Western contexts, while teachers are expected to reach targets and standards that are externally set, quite contradictorily, policy documents increasingly demand them to become agents of change (Robinson, 2012). This complexity seems to stem from the coexistence of different views and influences that all affect and shape educational perspectives at the same (i.e., the effects of neoliberalism and the sociocultural turn on education). Writing in the Australian context, Sachs (2001) argues that the neoliberal education of modern times brings two competing discourses, which both shape teachers' identities as democratic and managerial professionalism. While democratic professionalism 'is emerging from the profession itself', managerialist professionalism 'is being reinforced by employing authorities through their policies on teacher professional development with their emphasis on accountability and effectiveness' (Sachs, 2001, pp. 149-150).

When it comes to Turkey, in terms of accountability pressures and demands to become agents of change from teachers, there is a complicated situation. As I discussed above in this section, Turkey's neoliberal education policies are likely to increase teachers' accountability pressures, specifically because of nationwide curricula and high-stakes tests (MEB Temel Egitim Genel Mudurlugu, 2019). Yet, it is rather difficult to identify the demand in the policy documents from teachers for them to become active agents of a social transformation. Neither the Teacher Strategy Paper for 2017-2023 (MoNE, 2017a) nor the Education Vision 2023 (MoNE, 2018) underline such an expectation from the teachers. Moreover, a recent quantitative study demonstrated that participant teachers feel accountable to the upper bureaucracy (Erdag & Karadag, 2018), evidencing the top-down, centralist character of the national education in Turkey that is likely to limit teachers' agency.

In this regard, recent field studies from Turkey illustrate contradictory results, especially in regards to accountability pressures felt by teachers, which also conflict with my stance



towards accountability. In the abovementioned study, Erdag and Karadag (2018) do not find the participant Turkish teachers to be under performance constraints from their school management, students, parents, nor inspectors. That is why the teachers do not report any accountability pressures from the school management, students and parents. Similarly, in a mixed-method study, Bakioglu and Salduz (2014) demonstrate that Turkish teachers feel accountable towards their inner conscience and their students, not to managers, parents or inspectors. Interestingly, the participant teachers may share their views, as the teachers in Bakioglu and Salduz's (2014) study indicate their preference for a more accountable educational setting, to make them more motivated in terms of increasing students' academic success and to help their professional development. Although the results are optimistic, I must underline that both Erdag and Karadag (2018) and Bakioglu and Salduz (2014) consider accountability positively, by disregarding the debate around the term in their literature reviews and research designs, even though this is not surprising with new professionalism. Especially newer teachers who have grown up in this neo-liberal educational culture may perceive standards and accountability positively, with a feeling of more control, which requires a different perspective on professionalism (Stone-Johnson, 2014):

Rather than viewing professionalism as a singular phenomenon that everyone experiences in the same way, it is increasingly important to view it as a complex phenomenon that can be experienced in unique ways at the same time by disparate groups of teachers. (p. 86)

New professionalism is the reality of modern education, with the standards, accountability and changes in teacher roles. What is important is not to perceive teachers 'as technicians and implementers of purely technical knowledge', for them to become active agents of change (Sachs, 2016, p. 419). Hence, in addition to the conceptual shift in pre-service teacher education, continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers could be used 'as a strategy to drive change and improve practice' (Sachs, 2016, p. 420). Kennedy (2014) illustrates the CPD models as transmissive, malleable or transformative. This categorisation means an 'increasing capacity for professional autonomy and teacher agency' towards the desired 'collaborative professional inquiry' models, which are transformative (Kennedy, 2014, p. 693). Similarly, Sachs (2016, p. 424) advises educational systems to 'create discursive spaces whereby a more collaborative or research-engaged teaching profession could develop and thrive' while planning teachers' continuing professional development.

Moore (2004), investigating the concept of a good teacher, claims there are three dominant discourses in teaching and teacher education: the competent craftsman, the reflective practitioner and the charismatic subject. The craftsman is emphasised especially in the official documents and defined by competencies and standards, as I discuss throughout the chapter in relation to neoliberalism and education. The reflective practitioner is a counter-discourse that has grown from the field to the craftsman, especially after the works of Schön (1983; 1987), who argued that teachers should make their evaluations regarding their practices through reflection. Yet, Moore (2004, p. 8) asserts that these decades of literature, advocating the teachers to become 'reflective practitioners' started to imply 'mechanistic, technicist tendencies', somewhat similar to the competent teacher. In this regard, Atkinson and Claxton (2000, p. 5) argue that reflective practice took a wrong direction by only focusing on the 'conscious and deliberative reflection on practice', even though Schön (1983, p. 49) highlighted the importance of searching for 'an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict'. While criticising how reflection is understood by some teachers and teacher educators, Moore (2004) makes a distinction between reflection and reflexivity:

[...] whereas some forms of reflection tend to focus on the immediate, to be self-referential, and to feed directly into plans, tactics and strategies (an essentially instrumentalist orientation), reflexivity focuses more on the broader picture of the social contexts of classroom interactions, including the teacher's and their students' biographies and experiences, and hence is part of a 'slower', longer-term route to improved practice through developing self-understandings that may feed into teaching in ways that are often not planned in advance. (p. 151)

In the language teaching field, Akbari (2007), similarly to Moore, argues that reflection has been over-emphasised and not used adequately, hence a reflection is required on the reflection itself:

[...] reflection, as it is promoted by teacher educators in L2 settings, is of a retrospective nature, not paving the way toward creativity, [and] lack the critical dimension. From a practical viewpoint, there is no published evidence to show improved teacher or student performance resulting from reflective techniques; the personality of teachers is a missing variable in almost all discussions of reflection and finally, too much emphasis on reflective practices and teachers' practical knowledge might result in isolation from the language teaching discourse community. (pp. 193-194)

Hence, without disregarding being more competent and more reflective, teachers should remember that good teaching is also about caring and 'making a difference to pupils' lives'

(Moore, 2004, p. 5). This is because, alongside its modern interpretations, teaching is an intuitive practice. It cannot always be 'articulate/rational/explicit', as teaching includes 'inarticulate/intuitive/implicit ways of knowing and learning' (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000, p. 1). Therefore, intuition 'needs to take its place alongside rationalism and the constant need for critical discourse' (Furlong, 2000), as teachers develop tacit knowledge, 'that which we know but cannot explain' (Polanyi, 1967, as cited in Gregory, 2000, p. 182).

### 3.3 Summary of Chapter 3

In the first section of this chapter, I first deconstructed volunteering and activism, illustrating that they are overlapping and often confused concepts with nuances. Specifically, how activism is understood with its connotations from the previous century may cause some people to be unsympathetic towards the concept, in addition to making it something harder to be achieved, even for the sympathetic ones (Bobel, 2007). In this regard, activism may benefit from being more open towards incorporating different viewpoints and personalities as well as unconventional methods of engaging in political action. When it comes to teacher activism, the discussions and developments in the understandings of activism require to be followed. In addition to the vision Judith Sachs sets for teacher activism as a counter-discourse to neoliberalism and the managerial professionalism it brings (Sachs, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2005; 2016), the chapter exhibits that there are different ways of teacher activism through small, everyday acts (Zembylas, 2013).

In the following chapter, I evaluate the narrative perspective into identity, arguing that alongside its technical dimensions, teaching is a moral and an emotional practice (Carr, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998), as teachers are agentic human beings (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015).

## 4. Theorising the Study: Identities of Teachers

Following the discussion on volunteering, activism, and teacher activism, alongside the teacher activism's potential to counter neoliberalism and contemporary teacher education, in this chapter, I first define teacher identity from a narrative stance, which is followed by outlining a narrative perspective into teacher identity. Teacher agency, which is 'reciprocally related to [a teacher's] professional identity' (Buchanan, 2015, p. 704), comes next. In the last two sections, I conclude by focusing on the affective domain by drawing on the literature around teachers' emotions, values and motivations. As stated above, this chapter is particularly relevant to chapter seven, where I analyse the professional identities of teachers within the Turkish context.

As indicated at the beginning of the thesis, teacher identity, from a sociocultural standpoint, is contextual and temporal process, and an interplay of personal, professional and political elements that are (re)constructed via multiple narratives (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). When it comes to exploring teachers' identities, a researcher should first perceive them as whole persons, who are at interplay with the structural and agentic forces in their contexts (Carter & Doyle, 1996). For this aim, Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) suggest taking these four elements into account, which are necessary to understand teacher identities holistically:

- macro structures: broad social/cultural features usually referred to in discussions of social diversity and/or government policy as it is implicated in the order of an education service;
- meso structures: the social/cultural/organisational formations of schools and teacher education;
- micro structures: talked of in terms of colleagues, pupils and parents;
- personal biographies: values, beliefs, ideologies. (p. 611)

Additionally, in their conceptual review of teacher identity research, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlight the various and conflicting terms used in identity research in terms of how identity is characterised. Within the literature, it is possible to see the identity as 'developed', 'constructed', 'shaped', 'formed', 'made', 'built', 'created' or even 'architected' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, p. 178). For consistency, and to ensure alignment with my sociocultural perspective, I argue that identities are constructed and reconstructed (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

## 4.1 Identities of Teachers

In this section, I scrutinise identity and teacher identity in the contemporary world. Although it was possible to discuss identity and teacher identity separately, I found it more useful to combine them.

First of all, whether it is late-modern or just modern times, it is not an easy task to explore the identities of people. In a rapidly-shifting world, ever-advancing technological developments on the one hand and the instability in the workplace because of managerial pressures, economic fluctuations and even the latest global Covid19 pandemic on the other, contemporary people try to adapt to this ongoing change while carrying on with their work. Gergen (1991) argues that people in modern times are 'saturated' in this ever-changing and complicated social world, making it quite difficult for them to achieve coherence in themselves. Therefore, identity studies try to make sense of this complexity, from various perspectives and disciplines. Amid this saturation, Gee (2000) defines identity as below:

The "kind of person" one is recognized as "being," at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable. Being recognized as a certain "kind of person," in a given context, is what I mean here by "identity." In this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their "internal states" but to their performances in society. This is not to deny that each of us has what we might call a "core identity" that holds more uniformly, for ourselves and others, across contexts. (p. 99)

Based on the definition, it is essential to understand the person within and in response to the fluid, changing and multiple contexts, as 'what it means to be a certain kind of person' from four different perspectives: nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity and affinity-identity. This framework makes it possible to understand identities as relational, as they manifest themselves in multiple ways. Moreover, contrary to the common perspective in critical studies, Gee (2000) acknowledges the core or nature identity, which is also stated in his definition above. Indeed, having reviewed the literature, the core identity seems to have been overlooked in critical studies. According to Schwartz et al. (2011, p. 10), the reason might be the employment of identity as a concept by different disciplines, as 'social-psychological and discursive approaches to identity often focus on short-term contextual fluctuations in identity', while developmental psychologists consider it 'relatively stable once it has been formed'. In their review of the critical studies, Rodgers and Scott (2008) underline that contemporary identity discussions share four fundamental assertions. First, identity is conditioned and shaped by numerous social, cultural, political and historical

contexts. Second, relationships form identities and emotions take part. Third, identity comprises of construction and reconstruction of meaning through narratives and stories. The examples of teacher identity studies from international and Turkish settings contexts in the following pages reveal that being a teacher of English in these settings brings out certain features, shaping teachers in various ways. Consequently, identities are indeed contextual, both at macro and micro levels. Finally, identity is shifting, unstable and multiple. However, despite its frequent emphasis in the critical studies on identity, fluidity should not also be taken deterministically.

When it comes to defining teacher identity, in alignment with the sociocultural perspective, Sachs (2005) provides a succinct outline:

Teacher professional identity then stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience. (p. 15)

While Sachs underlines the importance of fluidity and contextual experiences on the construction of teacher identity, based on his longitudinal study with his colleagues, Day (2018, p. 61) defines teacher identity as 'an amalgam of the personal and professional selves' that 'is represented through the dynamic interplay between efficacy, agency, emotions in the context of personal biographies, workplace structures and cultures, and policy influences'.

Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) systematically investigated almost a decade of literature and categorised four overarching features of teacher identity. Accordingly, teacher identity is a dynamic, ongoing process where teachers constantly reflect on not just who they are but also who they want to become; and this is not fixed. Second, it includes both the person and context, which would mean that teachers could develop authentic ways to teach and act in their professional environment. Third, teacher professional identity consists of sub-identities, all of which are present at the same time and may conflict during times of changes. Lastly, teachers may and should exercise agency to make sense of themselves as teachers (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). It is important to underline that these common characteristics of teacher identity in various studies point to an emphasis on the dynamic, changing nature of the concept. Moreover, comparing two literature reviews on teacher identity research by Beijaard et al. (2004) and Izadinia (2013), Cherrington (2017) identifies a conceptual shift from cognitive to sociological approaches towards understanding identity,

which reflects a similar trend in broader educational research that I discuss extensively in the previous chapter. Based on these points above, it should be mentioned that, with a sociological focus, identities of teachers are subject to several personal, contextual and political influences. They comprise influences on the individual such as emotions and motivations (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Zembylas, 2003) as well as contextual experiences (Flores & Day, 2006) and political factors (Mockler, 2011; Sachs, 2001). Within the sociocultural perspective, another commonly emphasised point is that teacher identities consist of multiple narratives (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

In regards to the identities of language teachers, several studies in the contexts where English is spoken as a foreign language (particularly Turkey and similar countries) indicate a move further away from the universal identities towards the local (Atay & Ece, 2009; Clarke, 2008; Liu & Xu, 2011; Tsui, 2007). Paradoxically, being a teacher of English in an international setting is perceived both as an opportunity to integrate with the rest of the world and a threat to local values and culture, with the values attached to English across the globe (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This conflict is narrated extensively in Tsui's (2007) and Liu and Xu's (2011) narrative studies from the Chinese context, which, albeit at a larger scale when compared to Turkey, has been through a transformation for the last couple of decades with rapid growth that is reflected in country's educational reforms. Although these conflicts caused the teachers to struggle for their adaptations to their shifting environments, it enhanced their professional development pursuits as well (Tsui, 2007). It often caused them to be excluded in their workplaces, yet this exclusion also provided 'new opportunities for learning, [making it] difficult to evaluate whether inclusion or exclusion better for teachers' professional development' (Liu & Xu, 2011, p. 596).

In a Muslim country (like Turkey), the tension is multifaceted with teaching a Western language and culture, which can also be an advantage. In a study from the United Arab Emirates, Clarke (2008, p. 106) found that being a Muslim woman and a teacher of English in a country with Bedouin traditions and a recent social transformation at the same time means being 'new teachers of the present and future' while preserving the traditional values to a large extent. In this regard, this should be seen as an opportunity rather than a drawback, which is also applicable in the Turkish context. As Atay and Ece (2009) demonstrate in their qualitative study, Turkish student teachers of English distinguish themselves with their multiple identities. Defining themselves as primarily Turkish and Muslim, they do not see being a teacher of English as a conflicting role:

[...] all participants seemed content with the effects of learning English. They were aware that English, as an international language, provided them with more than one specific culture, as well as broadening their worldview. That is, being proficient in English enabled them to interact with more than one culture, to transcend their cultural boundaries, and to access the worldviews and ways of thinking of others (Atay & Ece, 2009, p. 31).

In short, when it comes to teacher identities in the contemporary world, this section demonstrates that there are various existing and relatively new status quos that teachers need to adapt to, in a country like Turkey. If the discussions in the second chapter on the Turkish context are also taken into consideration, changing wealth and social life, tensions between traditions and modernity, tensions of learning and teaching a Western language and culture all exist and need to be addressed. Nevertheless, although they may create tensions, they can also bring multiculturalism, plurality and integration.

#### 4.2 Identities of Teachers: A Narrative Perspective

After presenting an outline into the identities of teachers, this section focuses on the relationship between teacher identity and narrative inquiry. Fundamentally, from my perspective, storytelling is identity construction and narrative inquiry is a legitimate and applicable method to explore teacher identities. Indeed, Riessman (2008, p. 8) argues that 'individuals and groups construct identities through storytelling'. When people tell and share stories about themselves and their experiences, they make sense of their own lives through reflection. Based on his long-term research with pre-service and in-service teachers, Kelchtermans (2018) points out to the connection between telling stories and teacher identity construction:

Teachers are storytellers. When asked to talk about their job experiences and their work life, teachers often spontaneously choose for narrative language. [...] The endlessly ongoing storytelling for example in staffrooms, during lunch breaks, but also in more formal staff meetings constitutes the discursive reality and practice in which teachers take a stance, find their place, seek confirmation or express unease and feeling challenged in who they are as teachers. (p.237)

With a narrative inquiry approach, these narratives are not just mere stories, they are legitimate sources of knowledge. When they narrate their experiences and learn ways to utilise them for further development, teachers can grow personally and professionally, as teachers' insights are 'narratively composed, embodied in them and expressed in practice' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124). As Elbaz (1991) highlights:



Story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way. (p. 3)

As discussed in the [previous chapter](#), along with standardisation, neoliberal educational policies serve to deprofessionalise teachers, limiting them to technician and passive roles (Ball, 2003; Mockler, 2011). Placing teachers' narratives in a central position might be an organic answer to these pressures by providing a practical tool for teachers to invest in their identities.

First, as McAdams and McLean (2013) argue that identity reconstruction through storytelling could be perceived as a way of keeping some unity through the inevitable fluidity of life, making it even more important in the contemporary world. Moreover, narrative inquiry highlights the importance of reflecting on emotions for teachers for their own professional development (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Zembylas (2003, p. 213) underlines, 'the search for understanding teacher identity requires the connection of emotion with self-knowledge', which could become possible by developing awareness as well as creating storytelling opportunities that would enable teachers to transform their teaching selves.

A narrative perspective into identity places significant emphasis on the relationship between teachers' storytelling and emotions in their identity reconstructions, for both novice and experienced teachers (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2018). Yet, the relationship between storytelling, emotions and identity construction was not something I paid particular attention at the beginning, either. Only after conducting and analysing the interviews, did I realise that this intricate relationship requires a broader understanding and an explicit focus. Despite their strong characters and valuable engagements, the participants were not shy from revealing their vulnerability. Moreover, when I asked them about motivational and demotivational factors in their volunteering lives, they placed a greater emphasis on various effects of negativity. It was clear that this negativity affected them, but also made them stronger. This led me to Chris Day's and Geert Kelchtermans' long-term studies on teachers' professional lives. As Day et al. (2006, p. 601) indicate based on their longitudinal study on the identities of teachers, 'teacher identities may be more, or less, stable and more or less fragmented at different times and in different ways according to a number of life, career and situational factors'. Accordingly, there are three dimensions of a stable or unstable identity, namely vulnerability, well-being and a sense of agency. Although

emotions are discussed in more detail in the following pages of the chapter, I still touch upon the interaction between teacher identities and vulnerability, well-being and a sense of agency in the following paragraphs.

Based on his long-term study, Kelchtermans (2011, p. 73) theorised vulnerability as a structural phenomenon with 'political and moral roots'. Teachers may become vulnerable if they 'believe they have no direct control over factors that affect their immediate context, or feel they are being 'forced' to act in ways that are inconsistent with their core beliefs and values', which is especially evident during major reform periods in educational contexts (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). Depending on the level, or lack, of their vulnerabilities, teachers overall well-being may be at stake, which affects all parts of their lives positively or negatively.

Based on his years of fieldwork, Kelchtermans (2011, p. 78) asserts that although vulnerability is 'inherent in the teaching job and as such never completely avoidable, [...] systematic forms of autobiographical reflection and storytelling can effectively contribute to successful coping' with it, which is especially significant in today's neoliberal educational contexts.

At these times, it is highly crucial for teachers to feel a sense of agency, whether they are in control of their lives and whether they could manage the changes that may make them vulnerable, (Day et al., 2007) which is discussed in more detail in the following section. When these three dimensions lack balance, teachers' identities may 'display characteristics of [...] fragmentation at different times during a career', which is why it is important to accept that 'teacher identities are neither intrinsically positively or negatively stable, nor intrinsically fragmented' (Day et al., 2007, p. 122). That is why, it might be helpful to explore the identities of teachers in their wholeness, by acknowledging that seemingly conflicting roles may be present at the same time (Carter & Doyle, 1996; Day, et al., 2006). In her study with five Norwegian female teachers, Soreide (2006) illustrates how teachers discursively construct multiple identities through teachers' narratives and how narratively constructed identities enable opportunities for flexible identity construction that are shaped, reshaped and negotiated in a comprehensive way. Rather than having a fixed, single position, negotiating between multiple identities enables transcending seemingly contradictory self-perceptions and constructing four such identity constructions: 'the caring and kind teacher, the creative and innovative teacher, the professional teacher and the typical teacher', which would mean that 'teacher education, school leaders, teacher unions or curriculum' should no longer 'provide teachers with ready-made and universal identities which they should fit in to' (Soreide, 2006, p. 527).

In this section, I aimed to demonstrate the links between narrative inquiry and teacher identities. Through emphasising the importance of storytelling in identity construction, a narrative inquiry approach aims to understand teachers holistically, which is especially helpful in today's neoliberal educational settings. The remaining sections of the chapter highlight the internal factors potentially affecting the identities of teachers. The first of these focuses on teacher agency.

### 4.3 Teacher Agency

In this section, I aim to take a holistic perspective into teacher agency, locating it on a continuum of life choices in one's social and professional contexts. As Buchanan (2015) underlines, there is a mutual relation between one's professional agency and professional identity:

An individual's professional agency is reciprocally related to his or her professional identity. As teachers construct an understanding of who they are within their school and professional context, they take actions that they believe align with that construction. Those actions (and how the actions are perceived by others) then feedback into the ongoing identity construction process. (p. 704)

Simply defined, agency is the 'socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112). Campbell (2012, p. 183) describes it as 'the state of agency enables individuals (and, to some, collectives) to make free or independent choices to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgement in the interest of others and oneself'. From a sociocultural perspective, Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue for an ecological model of agency and claim that agency is achieved, rather than possessed when individuals actively engage in their contexts-for-action. The ecological model of agency is quite helpful in terms of understanding the relationship between agency and identity, especially with the narrative identities, as telling narratives allows agentic elements in identity-making to be recognised to a larger extent (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). However, it does not mean that individuals are 'free agents nor completely socially determined products' (Ahearn, 2001, p.120) because 'agency is not achieved in a vacuum but always depends on the interplay of agentic orientations, resources, and wider contextual and structural factors' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 145). In their renowned article, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) emphasise the deep connections of these situated contexts with time in their definition of the concept:

[Agency is] a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the

present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (p. 963)

In this regard, an action in the present could only be understood if the experiences of the past and aspirations of the future are taken into account. In addition to the temporal dimension; individuality, contexts and structures cannot be ignored while understanding agency, because 'achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural 'factors' as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137).

Indeed, based on the results of their longitudinal study, Day and Kington (2008, p. 20) found a direct interaction between 'teachers' sense of commitment (manifestation of belief and motivation), agency (ability/resolve to pursue one's own goals), well-being and job satisfaction (sense of fulfilment and achievement), and resilience (the ability of an individual to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions related to self-efficacy)'. It is then highly important for teachers to focus on their own agency to seek a balance in their professional identities. This requires them to navigate through macro, meso and micro structures of schooling as well as attending to their personal biographies, in an attempt to mediate top-down accountability and standardisation expectations (Day et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009).

Overall, it is important not to perceive agency as a behaviour or a product. In their study with Finnish student teachers, Soini, Pietarinen, Toom and Pyhältö (2015, p. 651) found that 'development of professional agency cannot be explained and is hence reduced to a single behavioural attribute', as 'motivation to learn about teaching, efficacy beliefs about learning, and activities for facilitating and managing learning in the classroom' all contribute to the sense of professional agency. In this regard, the interplay between identity and agency becomes more significant, which is demonstrated by Hiver and Whitehead (2018) in their phenomenological study with four Korean teachers of English. They underline how critical classroom incidents affect participant teachers' agentic capacities, which makes them conclude that teacher agency 'came about as a complex continuous negotiation process between these teachers' personal characteristics, their sense of self (identity), and the context in which they work [...] something these teachers did rather than had' (Hiver & Whitehead, 2018, p. 77). Based on this perspective, Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) argue that teacher agency has three dimensions. It is *iterational* in the sense that it is 'formed through teachers' life and professional histories and comprises their professional and personal knowledge and skills, their attitudes, values and beliefs'; it is *projective*

because teachers ‘visualize alternative futures in their practice’ and it is *practical* as it ‘relates to the day to-day navigation of present contexts for action’ (Priestley et al, 2015, pp. 130-131).

Debate on teacher agency has gained more prominence in recent decades, in relation to neoliberalism and accountability, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the Western contexts, teachers are envisioned as agents of change, whose ‘choices and actions variably reflect the implementation, interpretation, adaptation, alteration, substitution, subversion, and/or creation of the curriculum contexts in which they work’ (Campbell, 2012, p. 183). Whereas, as argued in the previous chapters on [the Turkish context](#) and literature on [neoliberalism](#), with Turkish national education’s centralist character, there is not much space for teachers in Turkey to exercise their agency, with the centralist educational structure, nationwide curricula, standardised books and high-stakes testing environment (Akyuz, 2009; Çayir, 2016; ERG, 2018).

It is, thus, quite important to envision teachers as active agents of transformative education or a ‘productive change’ against the discourses of neoliberalism and what it brings in the name of reforms with accountability and performance. To achieve this during teacher education, based on their review of the field studies, Flessner and Payne (2017) offer three steps:

First, [...] teacher educators and teacher education programs must educate teacher candidates about social inequalities, dehumanizing policies and practices, and the roles schools play in reinforcing or challenging these ideas. [...] Secondly, [...] teacher educators and teacher education programs must engage students, families, and other community stakeholders in the programs they offer. [...] Finally, university-based educators must move beyond institutional boundaries to assist in the creation of teacher preparation programs deeply connected to the communities of which they are a part. (p. 296)

In addition to the mutual relationship between the notions of teacher identity and teacher agency, the affective dimension of teaching, which could positively or negatively contribute to the agentic capacities of teachers also needs to be explored. Bearing this in mind, the next part centres on the values and emotions of teachers, which could be helpful for them to channel their agentic capacities for social transformation.

#### 4.4 Emotions and Values of Teachers

While ‘contexts and relationships describe the external aspects of identity formation’, emotions are ‘the internal, meaning-making aspects’ (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 733), which

makes them integral to explore the identities of teachers. The positivistic twentieth-century education, as discussed above, is criticised for limiting the teachers to a technical role and ignoring their personalities. This includes the affective side of the teaching, too, as the central and integral role of emotions in teachers' lives and classroom practices were largely overlooked for a long time, before the 'affective turn' in the 1990s (Hargreaves, 1998; Nias, 1996). After the above section on teacher agency, I carry on analysing the internal, affective factors into teacher identity for this part and the next, in which, the affective factors include values, emotions and motivations of teachers, as separate yet related elements, following Agudo's (2018) thinking on the matter:

While the terms affect and emotion are usually used synonymously in the research literature, what is clear is that the term affect is generally employed as an umbrella term which includes other affective states besides emotions. (p. 2)

This part's focal point is the emotions and values of teachers, while the next one is on the teacher motivation. Against the new culture enforced by neoliberalism on contemporary educational settings, Day (2012, p. 8) underlines that 'teaching at its best is an intellectual and emotional endeavour', and reminds us what education is, or was, actually about (Day, 2004):

[Performativity agenda's] broader bureaucratic, managerialist implementation has exhausted many teachers so they have lost that passion to educate with which they first entered the profession. The space formerly available for spontaneity, creativity and attending to unanticipated learning needs of children and young people has contracted as teachers struggle to attain government targets for achievement and fulfil associated bureaucratic demands. (p. 11)

Indeed, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) empirically demonstrate how emotions positively or negatively influence various teacher traits such as motivation, cognition and problem-solving, in addition to their effects on students' motivation and engagement. Emotions could constantly change positively or negatively and if they are positively constructed with the support of teacher educators and supervisors, they may help teachers to shape their identities in an affirmative way (Darby, 2008). Yet, troubling times or negative emotions could also provide positive identity construction. Because 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957, as cited in Hamilton, 2013), which results from having conflicts across multiple narratives is not just found to be natural, but also helpful for professional identity development. Similarly, Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu (2007, p. 107) assert that instabilities in teachers' identities are not 'necessarily negative, [as] it can stimulate a re-evaluation of current thinking and practices which may no longer be the most effective in

the work situation'. Yet this depends on 'a combination of internal influences (e.g. strength of personal values) and external influences (e.g. school leadership, teacher–pupil relationships, pupil behaviour, colleague support, home circumstances' (Day & Kington, p. 11). I elaborate on this further in the following section, in relation to teacher motivation.

In addition to being defined as vulnerability, this fluctuation is also called as emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979; 2012), which is 'the tensions between the emotional demands of a job [...] and workers' internal feelings' (Benesch, 2020, p. 4). Drawing on earlier work and applying it to English language teaching as a socially constructed concept, Benesch (2017) argues that teachers might feel emotional labour in different circumstances, such as high-stakes testing. This is especially evident when tests or any other tensions that create conflicts and moral dilemmas for the teacher contradict with the teacher's values (Loh & Liew, 2016). The pressure of high-stakes testing and the ambivalence they cause in their identities may cause the teachers to act against their beliefs about teaching to accommodate the students' and other stakeholders' expectations to get satisfactory results (Assaf, 2008). Moreover, high-stakes testing narrows down the curriculum to the particular content included in the test; diverting students to learn only for the tests; and creating 'more lecture-based, teacher-centred pedagogies' (Au, 2007, p. 264). Yet, when the ambivalence of high-stakes testing is accepted as emotional labour, it is not undesirable or unnatural. When power dynamics between the teachers and others in the hierarchy is considered, emotional labour is quite a natural response against challenging circumstances. Therefore, emotions should not be categorised in binary as positive or negative, where positive emotions are praised and negative ones are suppressed. If emotions are recognised and acknowledged as social constructs, emotional labour could be a starting point for teacher agency as well as teacher activism (Benesch, 2017; 2020).

In her qualitative study, Akcan (2016) suggests that novice Turkish teachers of English face problems in their early years of transitions from studying as a pre-service teacher to becoming an in-service teacher. They find in actual classroom settings, it is difficult to implement modern language teaching techniques and communicative methods as much as desired, in crowded classroom settings and limited class hours. Coming to the belief that their undergraduate studies do not equip themselves with the realities of Turkish schools, some participants undergo tensions and alienation from their jobs (Akcan, 2016). Yet, to reiterate, these tensions could also be helpful for personal and professional development as well as the teacher identity constructions (Kelchtermans, 2005; 2009). Based on their longitudinal data, Day et al. (2007, p. 106) define identity as a 'composite consisting of

competing interactions between personal, professional and situational factors' that create tensions between 'agency and structure' due to variations in teachers' professional and personal environments.

That is why, Barbalet (2002, p. 4) identifies emotions as the 'necessary link between social structure and social actor'. However, rather than the emotions, it is also possible to see teacher values as the link between the structure and agency (Campbell, 2003). In this respect, Carr (2003) defines teaching as a moral practice. Teaching as a moral practice could be attributed to Dewey (1922), who asserts that education, in all circumstances, should be value-based and individuals should be moral agents. Yet, as Taylor (1994) indicates, it is not always possible for individuals to act as moral agents since their values are shaped by the cultural norms of their societies. That is why, Johnston (2003) underlines that morality is quite difficult to define, which, being a personal and social matter at the same time, can only be understood within the context:

I use morality to refer to that (whether more or less coherent) set of a person's beliefs which are evaluative in nature, that is, which concern matters of what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. I further take morality to be both individual and social. [...] Although certain beliefs may be absolute, I see most moral issues (dilemmas, conflicts, problems) as being fundamentally dependent on context; that is, because morality exists at the intersection between inner beliefs and social situations, the nature of those situations is of crucial importance. (p. 5-6)

With this definition, morality becomes individual, contextual and relational at the same time. In this fluidity, both Dewey (1922) and Taylor (1994) underline the importance of critical reflection for individuals when they find themselves in circumstances to make moral decisions. Moreover, for teachers, Dewey (1922) makes a useful distinction between moral teaching and morality of teaching and advises teachers to make a conscious effort to focus on the morality of teaching in their profession.

When it comes to the values defining Turkish education, the official reports (please refer to [Appendix B](#) for more information) define the Turkish teacher as someone, who 'observes national, moral and universal values' (MoNE, 2017a, p. 23) and state the aim of Turkish education as (MoNE, 2017a):

to raise generations equipped with the 21st -century skills, namely complex problem solving, critical thinking, innovative production, effective communication, respect for cultural differences, high level cooperation, and international competitiveness, while protecting their national identity and consciousness. (p. 6)



In his qualitative study with final year educational faculty students in Eastern Turkey, Yazar (2012) finds that the student teachers prioritise moral values, which is followed by the economic and religious values, while also pointing out the importance of family in gaining these values.

Hence, it is essential to determine which values define teaching. From a language teacher education perspective, Kubanyiova and Crookes (2016, p. 120) conceptualise the term moral as a basis for 'the dynamism between the teacher's (and the school's and society's) commitment to universalizing values, such as social justice, and his or her 'here-and-now' pedagogical and at the same time deeply personal investment in the moments of educational action'. In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2012) gives examples of the situations, where teachers should act as moral agents:

A teacher's moral agency is revealed in myriad ways: in the selection of textbooks, in the way curricular content knowledge is re-structured and re-presented, in the use of instructional strategies, in the choice of classroom interactional patterns, in the way classroom activities are organized, in the teaching style, in cultivating student relations, in responding to conflicts generated by students and peers, etc. (p. 66)

Yet, there are several dilemmas of envisioning teachers as moral agents. In addition to their willingness to fulfil such a role, teachers are not always free to teach in accordance with their values and, often, do not receive enough support from their administrators, even if they are personally motivated to act as one (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016). Moreover, teachers could find themselves in ethical dilemmas, where they may need to make choices against the rules (Held, 2006). Johnston (2003) gives several examples of moral dilemmas teachers face, in his book, titled 'Values in English Language Teaching'. In his own case, when he finds out about a plagiarising Korean student, instead of punishing her by following the university procedures, he mentors her about the conventions of American academia. In another case, his friend, who teaches English to Jordanian and Palestinian students in Jordan, decides not to fail a Palestinian student from the occupied West Bank, as his failure would mean the student to return and face various adversaries in his future life and career by the Israeli state. As Johnston (2003, p. 7) concludes, 'decisions and actions are motivated ultimately not by reason alone but also by beliefs held by individuals that cannot be based in or justified by reason alone'. That is why, caring cannot be disregarded when teacher values are considered, alongside the technical sides of teaching (Carr, 2003).

After scrutinising the emotions and values of teachers, I move on to discuss teacher motivation, which is the other side of teacher affection.

## 4.5 Teacher Motivation

Although motivation is primarily a cognitive concept, this section aims to demonstrate that there are socio-cultural aspects of it, which is deemed to be helpful to understand the motivations of the participants while undertaking and sustaining their volunteering commitments. Motivation is defined as 'the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained' (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008, p. 4). Contemporary perspectives on motivation share the assumptions below (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008):

- Motivation involves cognitions,
- Motivation is not synonymous with other achievement outcomes (e.g. learning, performance, self-regulation) but is reciprocally related to them,
- Motivation is complex and depends on a host of personal, social, and contextual factors,
- Motivation changes with development,
- Motivation reflects individual, group, and cultural differences. (p. 42)

Similarly, based on their literature review, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 160) underline that teacher motivation is 1) primarily intrinsic; 2) 'closely linked with contextual factors, associated with the institutional demands and constraints of the workplace, and the salient social profile of the profession'; 3) temporal; and finally, 4) 'particularly fragile' with being 'exposed to several powerful negative influences'. Moreover, 'teacher motivation has a direct impact on student motivation and achievement' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 185). Among the factors affecting teacher motivation, negative factors are quite interesting, which are mainly sociocultural factors, as they include: 1) stress; 2) 'the inhibition of teacher autonomy by set curricula, standardised tests, imposed teaching methods, government mandated policies'; 3) 'insufficient self-efficacy'; 4) 'lack of intellectual challenge'; 5) 'inadequate career structures'; and 6) economic constraints with comparatively low pay (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 168). These negative factors imply the relationship between teacher motivation and teacher identity, especially when the contextual constraints are taken into consideration.

When the above perspectives in motivation research are reviewed, it is possible to claim motivation as being influenced by sociocultural factors, although it is still a primarily cognitive concept. On this matter, Norton Pierce, asserts that motivation theories 'do not capture the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning' in her study with immigrant women learning English in Canada (Norton Pierce,

1995, p. 17). Therefore, drawing on the cultural capital concept of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), she introduces 'investment' as a socio-cultural concept and argues for cultural capital to be instrumental in language learning. Even if people are motivated to learn, they may not realise it, if they cannot invest in it enough, due to reasons such as coming from a low socioeconomic background, or not being able to spend enough time on learning the language because of various constraints (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000).

The sociocultural perspective is how I perceive and analyse motivation in this research, too, applying investment as a theory to explore the reasons behind the participants' decisions to engage in extra activities.

When it comes to the motivations of teachers in relation to their identities, Kelchtermans' narrative, longitudinal studies (2005; 2009) are particularly noteworthy. He uses self-understanding as a concept in a quite similar way to professional identity, which is composed of five components: 'self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective' of teachers (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 261). Throughout their careers, he argues, teachers are influenced by different and dynamic factors. This suggests a link between teacher motivation and teacher identity, as motivations and commitments of teachers shift with the changes in their professional roles and identities. That is why Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) identify 'visions' as an essential part of the motivation for teachers and learners and underline the importance of having clear visions for teachers to connect with the values and moral purposes of teaching. In this regard, Kelchtermans (2009, p. 263) asserts that teachers' motivation about their profession shifts from a love for the job, to 'being important to [youngsters] in a broader educational sense'. From my stance, I argue setting initial visions and making changes in perspectives through experience are both important. This is due to the potentially changing nature of our motivations to initiate and to resume our actions, in this case, our voluntary duties (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008).

Indeed, in a longitudinal study in the United Kingdom, Day et al. (2007, 2012) proposed that teachers go through different phases in their careers, during which could sustain or lose their motivation, which could especially be attributed to the amount of support they get (or lack of it) in their professional environments. If teachers could find supportive environments, they could become more resilient through constructing positive professional identities with a sense of well-being (Day, 2012). Yet, there may be various ways to achieve positive identity construction. On this subject, in an attempt to illuminate the links between motivation and teacher identity, Kubanyiova (2009, p. 314) finds that teachers are only motivated if they become aware that there is a conflict between their identities and visions, concluding 'the

dissonance between teachers' actual and desired future selves is a key catalyst for teacher learning process'. This research is particularly striking to demonstrate empirically that teacher education programmes should prioritise exploration of teachers' ideal selves and make explicit attempts to address their identities for them to be motivated (Kubanyiova, 2009; 2012). Accordingly, one of the links between identity and motivation becomes 'cognitive dissonance' (Hamilton, 2013), which was introduced in the previous section.

In short, although motivation is a cognitive concept, with the help of the research design, the investment theory enables me to focus on the socio-cultural aspect of it. It is also essential to understand teacher motivation from a longitudinal perspective, as it shifts along the years with age and experiences. Having these insights are particularly important to explore motivations of the participants in the study when they started volunteering as well as the change in their motivations along the years, especially concerning their full-time jobs and demotivational factors.

#### 4.6 Summary of Chapter 4

From a sociocultural perspective, it is crucial not to take agency as a deterministic phenomenon, as agentic capacities of teachers could change and grow or diminish with their learning and teaching experiences in their life courses. Envisioning teachers as agents of a 'productive change' is essential against the neoliberal agenda for education.

Taking account of teachers' emotions and values is crucial when exploring their identities and how they channel their agentic capacities. They also constitute an integral part of teaching, in today's educational discourses of performativity and accountability, as they could work as the link between social structures and teacher agency. What is key for teachers is to reflect on how to use their emotions for their professional developments as well as possessing an awareness of the values they hold on to for a social transformation.

The affective side of teaching comprises the internal side of teacher identities, which includes the teacher motivation, alongside the teacher emotions and values. As can be seen in the discussion chapters, for this study, teacher motivation is analysed from two different dimensions. These are motivations to engage in extra volunteering activities and changing motivations and emotions in the classroom, due to extra volunteering.

As the final words for chapter three and four, the identities of teachers in modern, neoliberal contexts are becoming increasingly complex. With a greater emphasis on accountability, standards and testing, teachers tend to feel pressurised and overwhelmed to

comply with the demands of the new era. Therefore, professional identities of teachers stand 'at the core of the teaching profession' because they serve as 'a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society' (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). As an organic answer to the dominant discourses in education, an activist teacher identity means to strive for more democratic teaching and learning, where negotiation, collaboration and being socially critical are the norms. Before going on to discuss the research design, I conclude these chapters by suggesting, with their agentic and emotional capacities, teachers could become the catalyst of a social transformation.

The next chapter outlines and justifies the research design for the study. With the narrative lenses, I discuss methodology, data collection and data analysis processes respectively.

## 5. Conducting the Research

To investigate the identities of teachers engaging in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching, I implement the narrative inquiry, which becomes my research lens, catering for me throughout the PhD project. I take the teachers' stories as my data, explore them via the life history methodology, an extensively applied methodology in narrative inquiry and interpret the data with a narrative inquiry lens, which argues that narrative reality is a socially constructed phenomenon. As discussed in the literature review, I claim that the identities of teachers are narratively (re)constructed. Relatedly, narrative inquiry as the research lens aligns with the aim of the study to explore the identities of teachers.

In this section on methodology, I discuss the research design, analysis and interpretation of data as well as the ethical considerations. The first section starts with a discussion on the definition and key features of narrative.

### 5.1 What Does Narrative Mean for Me?

As highlighted at the beginning of the study, I use the term narrative(s) 'to refer specifically to texts that are thematically organized by plots' (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.5) and as extended stories on momentous facets of people's lives (Chase, 2005). As Riessman (2008) indicates, the storytelling aspect of narrative enables individuals to construct identities during a process of remembering, justifying one's thoughts and actions, engaging in a conversation with others to reflect on the past. In this section, my aim is to locate the importance of lived experiences as sources of knowledge for this narrative inquiry study, mainly because of its stance against the positivist epistemology dominated by a White majority in the West. While constructing this stance, a narrative study prioritises storytelling as a counter-narrative method and gives voice to marginalised and peripheral communities (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Firstly, however, it is worth emphasising, as Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2013) underline, although there is an increasing interest in using stories in social sciences, there is not a consensus on the definition of narrative nor on the certain methods and techniques to be used with it. Additionally, a narrative study may not always mean the same thing in different areas of social sciences, due to its use in an array of disciplines (Riessman, 2008).

It is common to come across the term, 'narrative turn' in qualitative studies but it is difficult to claim that there is a general agreement on how it began. Concerning the historical

development of the narrative turn, Hyvärinen (2010) stresses that there are narrative turns in different areas in social sciences, which all started in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Riessman (2008), noting the existence of contested opinions, indicates the narrative turn in social sciences can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the Chicago School of Sociology. However, with a more holistic perspective, it is also possible to claim that it is a process that started in the 1960s, with the gradual epistemological, theoretical and political shifts from realism. Irrespective of where and how they began, narrative studies have been extensively used in various areas of social sciences for decades now (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2008).

Although it is possible to find numerous definitions of narrative, when perceived from a sociocultural point, they share certain features. Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5) defines narrative as ‘the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes’. Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) indicate the main characteristics of narrative:

Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it. (p. xvi)

Narratives are indeed a genuine form of logical reasoning and perception, rather than just emotional utterances according to Bruner (1986), who argues that we perceive the world in two ways that are both legitimate yet fundamentally different. They are a) logical arguments that he conceptualises as ‘*paradigmatic cognition*’ and b) stories that he conceptualises as ‘*narrative cognition*’. They both have their ways of knowing and they produce different ways of experiencing and constructing reality. They ‘differ radically in their procedures for verification’, because ‘a good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds’ and although both are applied to persuade others, ‘arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their likeliness’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 11).

When it comes to narrative inquiry, it is ‘both a process, a narrator or participant telling or narrating, and a product, the story or narrative told’ (Kramp, 2004, p. 104). As discussed in the [introduction](#) and the [previous chapter](#), contrary to positivist paradigms, narrative inquiry is a different way of knowing. It is not necessarily a quest into ‘truth’, probing whether what narrators narrate are true or fiction. Rather, it is an epistemological process into evaluating experiences (Bruner, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Based on the idea of focusing on human experience, narrative inquiry argues that stories lead our lives both on individual and social levels (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006):

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world, and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 479)

Moreover, as Hingangaroa Smith and Tuhiwai Smith (2019) argue based on their decolonial research with Maori people, narrative inquiry is a counter-narrative to Western and White ways of knowing:

The power of the academy lies in its symbolic selfrepresentation of advanced, civilized, and human accomplishment, [which] reinforced through its hegemonic role of (re)producing real"/legitimate knowledge, and in its actual social and cultural relations of dominance embedded in the very systems, structures, and practices of disciplinary-based knowledge cultures and the assembling of these ideas and resources into a unique institutional force. (p. 1079)

In this regard, being conducted in a non-Western context, my research project becomes a contribution to non-native speaker research, within English language teaching terms (Canagajarah, 1999). Hence, it is against 'the globalization of knowledge and Western culture [that] constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge' (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 125), from the 'Oriental' part of the globe (Said, 1978). That is why, as Ladson-Billings (2006, p.xi) asserts it is 'not making up stories', yet 'constructing narratives out of the historical, socio-cultural, and political realities [of marginalised groups]'. That is why narrative inquiry is highly compatible with the aims and the contexts of the research project.

In education, narrative inquiry is deemed to be highly important 'to understand teachers as knowers: knowers of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning' (Clandinin, 2015, p. 184). Narrative inquiry dates back to Dewey, who conceptualises experience as an educational term and defines it as a personal and a social phenomenon that continuously grows with us and with our experiences in our lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This is where narrative inquiry fundamentally differs from other types of qualitative studies as it adopts stories/narratives not just to collect data about



a particular event, person or phenomenon but it also provides a conceptual framework to interpret what is gathered as information.

To this extent, I adopt narrative inquiry as my data collection method for my study, as it fits my theoretical perspective. As I argue throughout the thesis, narratives are primarily an act of identity construction because people narrate who they are and, pertinent to this study, who they are not. In my research on the identity construction of Turkish teachers of English who engage in extra volunteering, my aim is to present these stories, individually and collectively, as narratives. The next section discusses the different approaches to narrative studies.

### 5.1.1 Narrative Approaches: An Eclectic Way is Possible

As commonly discussed, narrative studies could be divided into two major categories: 'the event-centred approach, mainly dominated by the Labovian structurally-led analysis; and the experience-centred approach' (Tamboukou, 2015a, p. 40). Squire (2013) compares these two domains and asserts that, although the experience-based approach is not methodologically as systematic as the structural one; it provides more conceptual opportunities. Riessman (2008) notes that the structural approach focuses on how the narratives are told, and she further distinguishes experience-based narratives into sub-categories as thematic and dialogic approaches, to which she includes the visual turn as a more recent type of narrative. Accordingly, the thematic approach focuses on what is told, and the dialogic one analyses the context and audience in particular. However, as I agree and have implemented throughout the study, Mishler (1999) claims that these boundaries are, in fact, quite difficult to observe. It would be a futile attempt to distinguish all these actions, narrations, their forms, contents as well as contexts. That is why, what is actually done is 'narrative as praxis' (Mishler, 1999, p. 17) or as Tamboukou (2015a, p. 40) puts it, 'narrative as/in discourse'.

According to Tamboukou (2015a), this distinction stems from a structuralist lens on narrative, where story and discourse are evaluated in different layers, with the story being the chronological aspect, whereas the discourse is the form/structure. However, it is possible to have a poststructuralist perspective and view 'narrative discourse and any other form of verbal behaviour' in unity, which is 'embedded in the expression and structure of human temporality' (Tamboukou, 2015a, p. 41). This kind of a perspective makes it possible to perceive narrative as a structured consciousness that includes the past, the present and the future, where it is 'both the process and the consequence of this temporal structuration'

(McQuillan, 2000, p. 324). This brings forward a new understanding of narrative, which is not just a concept where one can focus on either what is being told or how something is told. People construct meaningful realities through this cognitive mechanism as a 'discursive register', where the focus shifts from 'what is man' into 'who is he/she in her repeatable uniqueness?' (Tamboukou, 2015a, pp. 41-42).

Thus, with a poststructuralist perspective, narratives can be treated as 'multiplicities of meanings' that create 'a map of how different stories connect with other stories, discourses and practices in shaping meanings and perceptions and in constituting the real and ultimately the subject him/herself' (Tamboukou, 2015b, p. 68).

### 5.1.2 What Kind of a Narrative Inquiry?

In addition to the poststructuralist lens on how narrative data could be understood, informed by Chase (2005), who categorises narratives as 'life history', 'life story', 'personal narrative', 'oral history' and 'testimonio', I adopted Robert Atkinson's (2001) 'naturalistic' and 'person centred' life story interview methodology for my research. Although it is possible to collect narrative data through 'small', 'everyday' talk or stories, the nature of this study required me to interview the participants in a limited and set time, where I invited them to talk about their 'big' stories. For that reason, I chose to apply the life story methodology through interviewing as the data collection method (Atkinson, 2001; 2011).

The main objective of the life story interview is to let people talk for and about themselves with a principle that each life story is unique, consisting of many commonalities with others' stories as well as some differences. Life story interview is a suitable tool for identity studies as 'it is a way of organizing experience and fashioning or verifying identity' (Atkinson, 2011, p. 11). Hence, it is compatible with my research aims, as the teachers' stories helped me to better grasp the evolution of their teacher selves, through their reflection and meaning-making opportunities (Goodson, 2008). Moreover, it 'is essentially a template that will be applied differently in different situations, circumstances, and settings' (Atkinson, 2001, p. 129). Hence, it enabled a flexible approach for me as the researcher, as I took each interviewee as an individual case (Stake, 2008). Additionally, the course of our narrative interviews with the participants was formed individually, depending on a variety of factors including our relationship, the context and interviewees' experiences. Finally, one of the aspects that this research aims to shed light on is the emotional aspect of teacher identity. Life story approach allowed me to explore the participants as whole persons, whose

identities are influenced by both internal factors, in addition to the external ones (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Carter & Doyle, 1996).

Based on this methodological outlook, I present the research questions one more time, before discussing the research design data collection and data analysis in detail below:

- *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*
- *How do educational, social, political and cultural factors influence the identity constructions of Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching?*

## 5.2 Research Process

My data collection method has been two sessions of narrative interviews with five participants in total, who were recruited with purposive and snowballing sampling methods (Gray, 2014). A basic timeline can be seen in *Figure 1* below. Prior to delving into the details of the research design and data collection, I discuss the ethical considerations, with which my engagements started before collecting the data.



*Figure 1: Research Timeline*

### 5.2.1 Ethics: What Ethics is actually about?

Hallowell, Lawton and Gregory (2005, p. 147) assert that ethical process should not be seen as a process of taking informed consent or completing the necessary procedures. Instead, what is more desirable is to ‘... promote ethics as culture, not ethics as bureaucracy’ (Corrigan & Williams-Jones, 2003, p. 2097). This was my priority before and after getting the ethical approval for the study from the ethical board of the university. Indeed, rather than being a process of completing some paperwork, ethics ought to be a trait that the researcher embraces. Perhaps more importantly, although the ethical procedures are all important and in place for a reason, researchers should accept that, there may be ethical dilemmas and unpredicted situations in which the most important thing for a researcher is to behave responsibly and with integrity. In this context, Bauman (1993) makes an interesting evaluation. He argues that modernity consequently makes people assume that morality is not a virtue of humans; it is rather determined by some synthetic ethical

protocols. That is why, as he concludes, morality is to be seen as an omnipresent quality of human beings and ethical procedures should only be seen as a shifting phenomenon that needs continuous negotiation and renegotiation. If the ethical procedures are a set of protocols that are determined by people, they should also be subject to change within time. As an example, if this research were to be carried out in these days during the Covid19 pandemic, probably, it would not be possible to approach the intended participants. Therefore, in today's world, we can only plan for an ethical procedure yet, as researchers, we should remind ourselves that there might be some dilemmas, which could be both unpredictable and unavoidable. If we put it simply, we may not always find answers to our ethical problems in guidelines available. Our actions, in that case, will be based on our morality as well as our contexts (Hallowell, Lawton, & Gregory, 2005).

Researchers should remember that ethical dilemmas are not mathematical problems waiting to be solved. Still, researchers should be able to reason these dilemmas via moral principles and explain them, whether they are in line with the prominent principles or not (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). There may be times where our ethical decisions may not align with prevalent perceptions. That is the point where our experiences and feelings come into interplay, helping and informing us to make a decision. I have not had a particular case, where I fell into an ethical dilemma during the research, probably because of the nature of the study and the participants. Even so, I found myself in an unsettling situation when one of the participants postponed the second interview on a few occasions within an eight-month-period. I had to re-schedule the interview multiple times, as she did not communicate with me for more than four months, during which I had to wait patiently. When she finally replied to me, I was already in an advanced stage in the project, therefore, I did not have a chance to conduct a second interview with her and had to stick to the first one. During these moments, it is quite important to be flexible enough to show empathy towards the participants, who kindly share their time and experiences, and who may find themselves in problematic situations in their own lives.

### 5.2.2 Ethical Procedure

First, I underline that I was open to conducting the interviews with every participant fitting one main criterion: fully qualified Turkish EFL teachers of English, who devote their time and energy to engage in volunteering activities, in addition to their normal teaching. As long as my participants met the qualifications and were willing to continue to be a part of the

project, I was intended to conduct the two interviews with them. Hence, once recruited, I did not exclude any people.

As mentioned above and stated in [the timeline](#), the study was granted permission from Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee in March 2018. Data collection began only after this permission. One month earlier, I had already attended training from the university on data management. During the whole research process, I followed British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011; 2018) as the ethical framework, which has been the reference point throughout the research process.

In this regard, at the beginning of the first meeting, which was the pre-interview stage, I discussed the general principles of ethics including the overall research aims, ensuring anonymity, using pseudonyms, their withdrawal rights and expected contributions to the interpretation as well as analysis of data with the participants. Briefing in the first meeting was also helpful in terms of a debatable informed consent issue. Informed consent is a process that commences before data collection and continues throughout the process. Participants, who are adult and experienced teachers in my case, were considered willing to contribute to research. However, did they really give their consent in an informed way, when they did not know what my questions and their responses would be and how the conversation was going to take its course (Wells, 2011)? Luckily, there have not been any issues regarding reaching a consensus about the data collection and the data analysis processes.

### 5.2.3 Ethics in the Context

As I expected the participants to take an active part in the interviewing process and I have argued that teacher identities are constructed via these kinds of experiences, I kept in mind that there was a fine balance in terms of expectations from my research and power relations with my participants. In terms of research aims, as a researcher, I was conscious of my participants' feelings and experiences as well as the post-coup attempt political climate in my country. Here, the participants have been prioritised over my data collection (Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006). This is also related to the informed consent argument above. Respecting participants' emotional and, in this case, social wellbeing, come before data gathering purposes, and their informed consents are not considered conclusively. Respecting interviewees as participants, treating them as active collaborators into data gathering and asking if they are content with the analysis has been essential in my research

process when it comes to addressing inherent power issues in interviewing. This certainly requires a fine balance as there were some issues to keep in mind.

Firstly, it was highly important, for both participants and I, to remember that we met for a reason and there was an agenda to follow. This did not mean that interviews were highly structured yet the overall topics were pre-determined. As Lichtman (2013) indicates, researchers should provide a trustworthy environment, but should stay away from setting up scenes, where participants think they are friends with the researcher. I must note my disagreement with this in my context. In addition to being from a Mediterranean country, where it is quite easy to build rapport with people, I had already known some of the participants before the interviews. Therefore, the friendship element was already there in some cases and easy in the others. However, I do agree that both the researcher and participants should not forget that there is an interview going on with a certain agenda, even though they are friends or acquaintances. This was exactly the case during the interviews, where I was able to ask all my questions. Although it was a friendly atmosphere and I am still in contact with the participants after the interviews were completed, both the participants and I were focused during the interviews.

Secondly, if what I discuss above is taken from a different perspective, sharing the power during the interview process may cause anxiety for the researcher, as topics may change with participants' narratives. However, these accounts may also provide unexpected discoveries for research. Flexibility is the key issue for the researcher when he/she is in these kinds of situations (Riessman, 2008), as, I was conscious that there were going to be moments for both the participants and myself to experience these kinds of feelings. In the following chapter, I explain the power dynamics in my interview with my high school teacher, as an interesting case. Nevertheless, I constantly felt that both the participants and I respected and learnt from each other.

Thirdly, although it may not always be possible, or even favoured, to keep our reactions and emotions in check during interviews, I was aware that we, as researchers, cannot, and perhaps should not always agree with our interviewees politically and personally (Hallowell et al., 2005). Moreover, I kept in mind that every research encompasses positive and/or negative emotional work, for both the researcher and the participants. It was crucial to keep a balance between my needs and sentiments with those of the participants (Hallowell et al., 2005).

Reflexivity and anonymity are two fundamental points of discussion in qualitative research, as discussed earlier. They have been both essential for my research on Turkish teachers of English. Although I did not expect any harm to my participants, I have been aware that there is a potential hazard, which was especially the case during the data collection with the research topic, following the post-coup attempt climate in the country. Ensuring the anonymity of the participants via using pseudonyms from the early stages of the project, and having asked the participants to share if they have any ideas about transcriptions and themes, I have aimed to ensure that reflexivity and anonymity are valued, through considering the participants in all stages of the project.

#### 5.2.4 Research Design and Data Collection

As discussed in [the introduction chapter](#), after considering several methodologies, I decided to carry out narrative research through interviews. In this regard, I originally planned to carry out two in-depth narrative interviews. Each of these interviews comprised of a two-stage model, which aimed to lead to a narrative reality, in an actively constructed, collaborative and situationally mediated way (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). This two-stage model is compatible with the life story interview methodology, as proposed by Atkinson (2001), who underlines for these interviews to be conducted in a minimum of two or three interview sessions, which would have considerable advantages to single interviews when life stories are considered.

While preparing the interview questions, Atkinson's (2011) more than two hundred example questions guided me to conduct the life story interviews. Still, although some of the questions inspired me, I added new questions, since 'the key to getting the best interview is for the interviewer to be flexible and able to adapt to specific circumstances' (Atkinson, 2011, p. 11). Starting with 'how' questions, I aimed to help interviewees engage more in the discussions. Although I had a certain agenda in terms of the main themes of the conversations, I assumed for each participant to highlight the different aspects during their narrations and these highlights to shape the flow of conversations. This was where flexibility came into play. In addition to sharing the power and emotions during the interview process (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), flexibility in narrative interviews does not mean a lack of focus or a path in the action; it is to refrain from a 'fixed' and 'effective' interview format, thus, 'encouraging participants to speak in their own ways' (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). Therefore, as the researcher, I was open 'to listen in an emotionally attentive and engaging way', because 'the interpretive process begins during conversation' (Riessman, 2008, p. 26). Furthermore, I

kept the principle below in mind during the interviews (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, as cited in Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007):

- (1) Use open-ended questions: 'Tell me about your stories of doing fieldwork.'
- (2) Elicit stories: 'Relate examples of learning in fieldwork that are particularly memorable.'
- (3) Avoid 'why' questions—these tend to encourage intellectualization and can be threatening.
- (4) Follow up using respondents' ordering and phrasing: 'You said working in a different environment was very complicated, can you tell me some more about that?' (p. 462)

Although these questions are offered for field researchers, who try to elicit accounts from everyday conversations or ordinary people, they were still helpful in reminding the useful way to 'let people talk more for themselves'.

As touched upon earlier, I recruited the participants with purposive and snowballing sampling methods (Gray, 2014), and my inclusion criterion was quite straightforward: full-time teachers of English in Turkey, who engage in extra volunteering activities. I excluded university students, who undertake similar responsibilities while studying, in addition to those receiving a financial benefit in return for their engagements. An information sheet regarding all the necessary information is sent to potential participants before the meetings, the points of which were reminded once more before the interviews took place (please refer to [Appendix C](#) for the information sheet). A consent form was signed with the five teachers who agreed to participate, reminding that their anonymity would be ensured with pseudonyms (please refer to [Appendix D](#) for the consent form). I conducted two interviews with four of them and one interview with one of them. These interviews lasted more than sixteen hours in total. As I describe the participants, the interview processes and my reflections about the interviews in more detail in the following chapter, I introduce them only briefly now, in terms of their participation in the research.

When it comes to recruitment of the participants, my first participant, Kemal, was my high school teacher, thus I had known him personally. Still, he replied to my Facebook post, where I asked for participants. Therefore, he wanted to join himself. Being in his early sixties, he has had a long history and experience in volunteering, both in and outside Turkey. Nowadays, he is engaged in conducting European Union projects. I conducted both of the interviews face to face with him. The second participant, Zeynep, reached out to me, as our shared friends referred her to me. A young teacher in her late twenties, in a middle school in



the Northeast of Turkey, she is an experienced volunteer for health-related voluntary organisations, in addition to her active involvement in politics and activism. We only conducted one interview with her, which I discuss in more detail later. As she resides in a distant city, it was an online interview. I contacted the third participant, Ahmet, whose story I had known through our mutual friends. Working in a university in the south of Turkey, Ahmet spent a summer in an orphanage in South Africa, from where he returned with a bag of stories and a personal transformation. With Ahmet, the first interview was face to face while the second one took place online. I found the final two participants, Ali and Cansu, via teacher groups on Facebook, where teachers come together online and exchange ideas, teaching practices and materials. They both replied to my posts in these groups. A young teacher in the Southeast of Turkey, Cansu is a member of a group of volunteer teachers. With these teachers, she wrote and conducted various domestic and international projects for her students and the local community. Finally, a middle school teacher in his late thirties, Ali is an active member of his town's football club, which he founded with his fellow townspeople. I conducted the first interviews online with Ali and Cansu, and the seconds were face to face. That is why I had only known Kemal before and met the others only during the interview process.

During the participant recruitment process, I tried to reach out voluntary organisations in my hometown, where it was common to open extra tutoring courses for children, at least when I used to engage in these during my years in the city. However, I found out that, after the coup attempt in July 2016, most of these organisations stopped offering such courses. Moreover, those who run courses started doing it with the help of public education centres of the state. As teachers who tutor in these courses are paid hourly, they were excluded from the research's scope.

I narrate more about the actual interviews with each participant in the following chapter. At this point, I describe how I designed the two interviews. The first interviews had two stages: an ice-breaker stage and the main stage. The ice-breaker stage, which consisted of two activities, was an orientation session. As the first activity, I had planned to ask my participants to bring or create artefacts (objects or drawings) about their teaching career or occupation with the children, to work as a stimulus for discussion about their teaching careers. The second activity was planned to be based on participants' reflections on the pictures I brought. I printed many pictures for them to go through and planned to ask them to comment if they would like to. I had anticipated the second activity might be particularly helpful, given that not everybody would be willing to join the first activity of artefacts.

I conducted a pilot study (Gray, 2014) with two colleagues, with whom I had thirty-five-minute and forty-minute interviews respectively. Yet, in terms of the design, it did not work perfectly. Although they brought artefacts, and I showed them pictures, both of the activities did not facilitate sufficient discussion. Moreover, the actual step that is detailed below did not connect well with these activities. However, I had known both of these individuals beforehand, which made me think that the activities were not necessarily needed in their cases.

Nevertheless, pilot interviews were quite important because of another reason. When I transcribed them, I realised I was interrupting the participants too much. I had already been informed that the narrative interviewing included general rules of everyday conversation of turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, exchanging ideas, openness to change of subjects, which brings flexibility to prominence during the interviewing process (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, as a narrative researcher, I was open to the shift of the topics, with a willingness to share the control of the conversation. Even so, although a conversational style is advised for narrative interviews where the researcher engages meaningfully, it is essential to let interviewees converse in length and get their points across (Atkinson, 2011). In this regard, pilot interviews were particularly helpful to realise that I should not interrupt the participants too often, with the naïve researcher mentality of engaging in conversations. Hence, I learned during the pilots that active interviewing is indeed a skill to be learned and engaging in a conversation also requires to listen to others emphatically (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). That is why Atkinson (2001; 2011) defines interviewing as an art and a science at the same time.

Both of these first stages did not work efficiently during the actual interviews, too. In addition to my experiences from the pilot interviews, conducting three of the five interviews online did not facilitate the ice-breaker stage, either. Moreover, during the face-to-face interviews, one of the interviewees had limited time and did not want to spend time on these. Yet, a simpler and more conventional method was more than helpful and worked quite efficiently as an ice breaker and as an orientation: engaging in actual conversations before the interviews. Although it limited the duration of the actual interviews on the first occasions, having short chats helped both the participants and me to understand each other better and create a friendly atmosphere.

I planned the second, and the main stage of the first interviews as an in-depth discussion about the participants' teaching identities. As narratives are temporal, these narrative

interviews were going to be on the past, the present and the future (their early life, university education, teaching career, charity work/activist teaching career), for which I prepared nine generic questions (please refer to [Appendix E](#) for the interview questions). Yet, having a flexible approach, I aimed to let the conversations draw their courses. Consequently, some of the interviews focused on today, more recent events and projects, whereas the others had elements from the past, present and the future. I must admit that this was not always controlled. Because, with the next question in mind, it is a difficult job to follow the conversations from time to time. This was something I noticed during the pilots, too, thus I tried to limit it as much as possible. As a result, I probably directed the conversations to different paths. However, I realised this while transcribing, and asked about the missing points in the second interviews. Moreover, while transcribing and coding, it occurred to me that if some of the participants have certain things to tell about themselves and their stories, sooner or later, they tell those. This was particularly the case for one person, who seemed more to be confessing from time to time, with an agenda in his/her mind. It made me think that he/she might have been fatigued, with the negative comments from people around him/her. That is why, he/she seemed to be answering previous questions and negative remarks from other people in his/her mind, alongside the answers to my questions. I should stress that this did not affect the interviews. As Riessman (2008) notes, sharing control during the interviews can create anxiety, yet it can also provide unexpected and genuine discoveries. It is these different answers, which work as genuine discoveries, or serendipities, making the narratives uniquely rich. What was essential for me was to keep the flexible approach and be alert to these during the conversations. I tried to be as flexible as possible and when it was not possible during the interviews, either the second round of interviews or participants' agendas enabled certain messages not to be lost. I explain more about flexibility later in the chapter.

McAdams (2011), with examples from the literature, discusses the differences between different cultures, especially between East Asia and North America in terms of storytelling and engaging in conversations with researchers. Coming from mostly an oral tradition of myths, stories and poems (Cobanoglu, 2002), the participants certainly demonstrated that they are storytellers, by engaging in lengthy conversations, in addition to their willingness to share their stories with me as a stranger. All of the first interviews ranged between one hour and two and a half hours in length. The time difference may seem significant but the second interviews compensated for the short ones. In the end, all of the interviews ranged at similar durations.

Based on the first interviews, my initial aim for the second interviews was to conduct them face-to-face. Accordingly, as I narrate in the following chapter, I travelled to different cities and was able to meet four interviewees in person in total. There is only one person that I have not had any chances to meet so far because of logistic restraints. I planned the second interviews based on the transcriptions and initial analyses of the first ones, which enabled me to ask tailored questions, specific to each interviewee (please refer to [Appendix E](#) for the interview questions). With these questions, I aimed to connect the missing points from the first interviews. As an example, a common missing point across the first interviews was more details about the family and upbringing. Hence, I asked for these details. Additionally, I raised questions about the Turkish education system and English language teaching policies in the country. I intentionally left these questions to the second interviews, thinking that building more rapport would make the participants express themselves more easily and more openly. This was exactly the case.

I did not approach the interviews as a simple stimulus and response model of inquiry, unlike what traditional interviewing 'techniques' prescribe (Gray, 2014). Additionally, I did not consider 'the interview as a medium that transmits information', where 'the informant or respondent is treated as a repository of answers or stories about his or her inner life and social world' and 'the interview is seen as a means of tapping into that repository' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 37). On the contrary, with the narrative interview design, I aimed to create a more balanced power relation as well as a discursive atmosphere (Riessman, 2008).

### 5.2.5 Recording, Transcribing and Translating Data

Within the nature of narrative interviews and life story interview methodology, based on the fact that both the participants and I are Turkish, the interviews were in the Turkish language. Although I was confident to conduct them in both languages, it was ultimately the participants' choice to converse in our mother tongue. Quite interestingly, one of the participants started in English and switched to Turkish after fifteen minutes. This was after he/she was stuck, searching for the meaning of some words. Although he/she was quite fluent in terms of expressing himself/herself in general, as we were both Turkish, he/she chose to carry on in Turkish after those moments. I often find this as the case, when conversing in English with my Turkish friends. As a result, I did not feel that it was a power issue between him/her and me. When we switched to Turkish, he/she conversed openly in length to my questions.

I recorded the interviews with my laptop and phone. It must be noted that recording may have 'some influence on the participants' statements [which] must not be ignored' (Flick, 2002, p. 167). However, I did not feel any moments where recording devices affected the participants. Furthermore, I can claim that recording devices were forgotten within a short time after the interviews started. Although I did not take almost any notes during the conversations and immediately afterwards, I did write my reflections within twenty-four hours about how the interviews went for me and what I felt, which worked as memos to build up the narratives later (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Collected data were transcribed and translated verbatim on my own, aiming to limit the chances of losing meaning. As I did all the work, transcriptions and translations became the first steps into data analysis (Elliott, 2005). However, it must be acknowledged that translations can pose some potential threat to conveying the original message. With the transcription, translation and field notes, a new reality is constructed (Flick, 2002). That is why, I sent both the transcripts and the translations to the participants, for them to check if there was any meaning lost.

Rather than a detailed transcription, which is often used with a discourse analysis or a conversation analysis study, transcriptions are organised as 'clean transcripts' (Elliott, 2005). Accordingly, some repetitions were not transcribed when they did not change the meaning, and intonations or pauses were largely ignored. Additionally, some minor editing was done during the translation process, to get the participants' message across more clearly. Moreover, oftentimes, I used 'emojis', if they expressed an emotion, such as a smile or laugh, while sharing their stories. Although it is not suitable with the conventional academic genre, they are, nonetheless, quite useful for the research and compatible with the narrative writing (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2013).

### 5.2.6 Data Analysis

Focusing on the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods, Dörnyei (2007) distinguishes three features of qualitative research. Firstly, qualitative research is often iterative, due to its lack of a sequenced data collection and analysis periods; researchers often 'move back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation' until reaching a saturation (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). Secondly, it is emergent. Hence, it is up to the researcher to be flexible enough to be open to adapting himself/herself to new insights, changing aims and objectives from the emerging data. Lastly, it should be

remembered that qualitative data is mostly interpretative, which is the result of the hard work of the researcher that is sparked with a touch of creative insights (Dörnyei, 2007).

With the help of NVivo 11 software, for the coding and theme building process, I relied on Saldana's (2016) two-step cyclical codings, which prescribes a more structured approach to the process. Accordingly, the first cycle is the initial coding process, during which, I employed in vivo codes as much as possible, which are direct quotations from the interview data (please refer to [Appendix F](#) to see an example). Applying in vivo codes was quite helpful to build up themes from the codes, as they were already telling me 'stories'. During the second cycle coding, my aim was to identify the links between the current theoretical background and the themes as well as generating new theories or concepts from them (please refer to [Appendix G](#) for the initial themes). As Saldana (2016) underlines, I had a flexible approach while generating the codes and building the themes, which were constantly modified, grouped, separated into sub-themes and moved along the chapters (please refer to [Appendix H](#), where the themes are building up into different chapters, which were also modified after starting to write up the chapters).

Having collected the data on two occasions, data analysis required to 'move back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). With the initial analysis after the first interviews and an overall analysis after the second, reaching a saturation required an identification of the key themes through a careful and repeated examination of audio recordings and transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Polkinghorne (1995), drawing on the work of Bruner, asserts that there are two types of narrative analysis: 'analysis of narrative' and 'narrative analysis'. While analysis of narratives is to move from stories to common elements to understand a concept or abstraction, in narrative analysis, there is a move from the data to the construction of stories. I did not, however, limit myself with only one of these, as Kramp (2004) argues these two methods are not contradictory, but can complement each other and allow for a richer analysis. Accordingly, for the three analysis chapters, I used a variety of analysis methods. For chapter six, I conducted a narrative analysis, while for chapter seven and eight, I conducted a thematic analysis, which can be considered an the analysis of narrative.

As discussed at the beginning of the [chapter](#), narrative inquiry rejects the traditional notions of positivistic research and epistemologically accepts experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In Ladson-Billings' (2013, p. xvii) words, it 'diminishes the primacy of objectivity'. Rather than prioritising 'objectivity', the priority

becomes ‘the authenticity and reality of the teachers’ experiences’ (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 180).

For this research project, I inquired for the experiences of participants and, within hours of interviews, they told me various stories. As the project has many layers such as activism, volunteering and teaching in a specific context, their accounts consist of volunteering stories and perceptions of the Turkish educational system, which are discussed in four chapters, from chapter six through chapter nine.

Chapter six, titled *Narrative Analysis*, consists of individual, volunteering stories for each participant (Plummer, 2001; Squire et al., 2013), which became narratives, as narratives are ‘texts that are thematically organized by plots’ (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). In narrative analysis, through ‘attending to the characteristics of a narrative—plot, setting, characters’, the aim is to ‘construct a story in which you integrate the data rather than separate it’ (Kramp, 2004, P.120). This is a detailed and carefully planned process, in which the data need to be examined over and over again, as the narratives ‘must fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves’ (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16). That is why, although it may seem easy, especially for a novice researcher, it is a messy and painstaking process (Riessman, 2008). In this regard, while analysing the data, I aimed to leave the reader with plausible, coherent stories, throughout the discussion chapters (not just chapter six but also chapters seven and eight), which were analysed carefully and formed into narrative cases. The narratives in chapter six are presented in lengthy quotes, which is a conscious choice that is also compatible with the fundamental aims of narrative inquiry.

This is because, as Riessman (2008, p. 74) indicates, coding and theme building processes in narrative studies are different than other qualitative studies such as the often confused grounded theory, as ‘narrative analysts do strive to preserve sequence and the wealth of detail contained in long sequences’. Consequently, it was a specific coding process, where the story was preserved as intact and unfractured as possible to build long, coherent narratives. This is due to case-centred character of narrative analysis, through rejecting the ‘idea of generic explanations’ and attending to ‘time and place of narration’ in order to reach abovementioned coherence in lengthy quotes (Riessman, 2008, p. 74).

As discussed earlier at the [beginning of the chapter](#), although there are structure and experience centred approaches to narratives (Riessman, 2008), I adopt an eclectic way, since what is done is ‘narrative as praxis’ (Mishler, 1999, p. 17). Based on this perspective,

although I primarily focus on the content, the form (or the structure) is also a part of the analysis. This is because, while conducting the narrative analysis, I incorporated some techniques from the Voice – Centred Relational method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Grounded in feminist research, the method makes possible focus on the discourse and the content at the same time (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2011):

[Voice – Centred Relational Method] comprises a series of sequential listenings, each designed to bring the researcher into a relationship with a person's distinct and multilayered voice by tuning in or listening to distinct aspects of a person's expression of her or his experience within a particular relational context. [It] is called a 'listening' rather than a 'reading', because the process of listening requires the active participation on the part of both the teller and the listener. (p. 255)

Brown and Gilligan (1992, p. 21) prescribe four listenings for the same texts by asking four questions about voice: '(1) Who is speaking? (2) In what body? (3) Telling what story about relationship—from whose perspective or from what vantage point? (4) In what societal and cultural frameworks?' While organising the narratives, I paid closer attention to the first question: who is speaking. In this regard, in an attempt to highlight the voice of the participants, the majority of the sentences in each narrative is the first-person singular form. Accordingly, you will note many sentences starting with 'I', while reading the chapter. Although this might be expected, using this methodology helped me to be more attentive to the form when participants' stories became narratives.

Chapters seven and eight are analyses of narrative data via thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), consisting of their assertions regarding various aspects of Turkish education. However, in alignment with the narrative genre of the thesis, chapters seven and eight, as well as chapter nine, which is an overall discussion, also include various stories related to the themes. These quotes are often long and unedited, with an attempt to preserve the coherence and plausibility of participant stories. Therefore, throughout many layers, the thesis keeps telling participants' stories through presenting their experiences as legitimate data.

After the two-cycle-coding process explained above, I determined several themes, which are discussed in two separate chapters. In chapter seven, the main theme is being a language teacher in Turkey, while it is constructing teachers of action in chapter eight. These themes derived inductively from the data (Patton, 1990). While constructing the themes, the aim was to go beyond the semantic level and be as interpretative as possible to analyse the wider sociocultural context and structures, which is done through 'searching across a data set [...] to find repeated patterns of meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). This is conducted



through emulating Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) six phases of analysis, which are 'familiarizing yourself with your data', 'generating initial codes', 'searching for themes', 'reviewing themes', 'defining and naming themes', and 'producing the report'. Although this was a helpful guide, it was not followed religiously, as Saldana's (2016) two-step cyclical coding process was already taking place. Still, Braun and Clarke's (2006) article has been quite a helpful guide overall, with its detailed description, examples and checklists. Overall, as to be discussed in the following section, it is not an 'anything goes' process, as 'the value of qualitative research lies in its exploratory and explanatory power, prospects that are unachievable without methodological rigour at all stages of the research process – from design, to field work, to analysis' (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 403).

In line with a life story method, I aimed to include the participants in the data analysis process by sending the transcripts and initial themes from both interviews to them if they wanted to add/remove or clarify any points (Atkinson, 2001). This was particularly important given the current political and social climate in the country, as activism may have been considered a sensitive topic during the political upheaval. However, they did not want to change anything.

Having described the data analysis process, in the next section, I discuss how I treated not just it, but the whole research process by prioritising the quality while designing, conducting and analysing the narrative data.

### 5.2.7 Quality in Narrative Research

For this project, my primary concern has been to build a trustworthy and credible research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through focusing on the quality of the study (Flick, 2007a; 2007b). In qualitative research, quality could be assured with 'efforts in planning, conducting and reporting qualitative research' (Flick, 2007a, p. 67). That is why quality encompasses the whole research process.

As underscored several times, with the narrative lenses, I did not seek objective truth in this study. As Polkinghorne (2007) argues:

[In narrative research,] validating knowledge claims is not a mechanical process but, instead, is an argumentative practice. The purpose of the validation process is to convince readers of the likelihood that the support for the claim is strong enough that the claim can serve as a basis for understanding of and action in the human realm. Narrative research issues claims about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes claims about how people understand situations, others, and themselves. (p. 476)

Therefore, I epistemologically reject the traditional notions of objectivity stemming from positivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than pursuing the truth, this narrative study turns to experiences of people (Bruner, 1986). Hence, my research project refuses the assumption that there is a single reality when there are various communities experiencing different realities, who will tell various different stories if a chance is given (Ladson-Billings, 2013). For to the same reason, my approach does not align with the triangulation method (Denzin, 1978), which has been used in qualitative studies since the beginning of the twentieth century (Flick, 2007b). With multiple varieties, including the data triangulation, methodological triangulation and theory triangulation, it is possible to claim that, in triangulation, the primary concern remains as increasing the reliability and validity of the research (Denzin, 1978), hence it is related to objectivity. As Fielding and Fielding (1986) underline:

We should combine theories and methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to our analysis but not for the purpose of pursuing 'objective' truth. (p. 33)

For a quality research process, the issues I pursued were reflexivity and rigour. Firstly, as touched upon earlier, narrative research is a reflexive process from beginning to the end. Reflexivity is 'an awareness of identity, or self, of the researcher within the research process' and it 'means the tendency critically to examine and analytically to reflect upon the nature of research and the role of the researcher in carrying out and writing up empirical work' (Elliott, 2005, p. 153). Cousin (2010) demonstrates that reflexivity starts by asking reflexive questions such as:

What is my power relationship with the people I am researching? How is 'respondent' disclosure problematic? Am I researching with or on people? What is my emotional investment in this question? Am I finding what I am looking for? (p. 11)

As a reflexive researcher, I aimed not to distance myself from the research process and to ensure that my voice is heard in the narrative analysis, as well as being open to sharing the power with the participants during and after the interviews. Moreover, I acknowledge the analysis to be an interpretation I constructed with my cultural resources, rather than detaching myself from it and presenting what I found (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Additionally, while preparing and conducting the interview, I paid the utmost attention to avoid the echo responses. Echo responses often arise when the researcher listens for the responses he/she expects to find in research, in addition to participants' adjustment of their answers to fit the researcher's expectations (Hurst, 2008). Another issue with reflexivity is over-reflexivity. That is why I have been careful not to write more about myself than the research and the

participants. Nevertheless, as I had known some of the participants beforehand, I accept that there is a risk of limiting the scope of narratives that could emerge (Cousin, 2010).

In addition to reflexivity, rigour is essential for the whole research process. I narrate the rigorous process of deciding on the scope of literature and choosing a suitable methodology in the introduction chapter. Apart from the importance of rigour during the planning stage, conducting, analysing and writing up the research all require a rigorous approach (Flick, 2007a). Accordingly, having found an appropriate data collection method, I piloted and conducted the interviews in a consistent, yet flexible manner. Consistency is ensured in having basic, generic questions, which were asked to all of the participants, while flexibility is provided with tailored questions to each participant. Transcribing and translating processes, considered the integral points for rigour (Poland, 1995), were completed by myself.

Although potentially dangerous, with my voice surpassing participants' voices, transcribing and translating myself minimises the possibility of errors and clumsy work. In terms of the rigour during the analysis process, the researcher needs to analyse all the available data systematically. In narrative analysis, this is achieved through a systematic search of occurring themes and repeated reading and coding of the data (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014).

Furthermore, due to the iterative nature of this qualitative analysis, I repeatedly modified the themes, as it requires a rigorous effort, as well as a flexible mentality. Along with planning and conducting the research, its dissemination is a rigorous process, too, which is ensured by transparency, feedback, and member checks, as well as presenting the research (Flick, 2007a). Transparency requires a detailed account of 'how we proceeded and how we arrived at our findings and conclusions' (Flick, 2007a, p. 66). In addition, constant feedback from the supervisors and presenting the preliminary findings on multiple occasions helped me to engage with the wider research community (Flick, 2007b). Moreover, I have remained in contact with the participants throughout the research process (Gray, 2014).

As the last issue for this section, a common point of discussion refers to the generalisability of the qualitative data (Gray, 2014). Generalisability, in narrative research, is a matter of 'establishing a pattern of shared experience' (Barkhuizen, et al., 2014, p. 92). As stated by Polkinghorne (1995, p. 11): 'the cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to the case instead of from case to generalization'. Hence, as a qualitative study, my project does not look to produce generalizable findings, rather I aim to provide a coherent, plausible narrative for readers.

### 5.3 Summary of Chapter 5

With narrative inquiry as my research lenses, life story interviews as my data collection method (Atkinson, 2001; 2011), and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as my data analysis methods, I aim to answer the research questions below:

- *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*
- *How do educational, social, political and cultural factors influence the identity constructions of Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching?*

Narrative inquiry indicates a narrative cognition, rather than a paradigmatic one, as it prioritizes experiences over the scientific truth (Bruner, 1986). In this way, it becomes a useful and compatible tool with my identity research that employs interviews as its data collection method.

During the research process, I first took ethical considerations into account. In this regard, it is important not to take ethics as a mere bureaucratic procedure but a substantial process informing research from the early stages until the very end (Corrigan & Williams-Jones, 2003). For the research design, following the pilot study, I designed and conducted two sets of interviews with four participants and one interview with one participant, each of which ranged from one hour to three hours. After transcribing and translating the data verbatim, I conducted narrative and thematic analyses, using NVivo software. During the whole process, rather than reliability, validity and other considerations of objectivity associated with a positivist approach to research, my focus has been on ensuring and justifying the quality of the whole research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 2007a).

The next three chapters present and discuss the findings of the study, the first of which is the narrative analysis, where I focus on the volunteering stories, as well as the family and education backgrounds of the participants.

## 6. Narrative Analysis

In line with common practice in qualitative studies, I present the findings and discussion in the same section. This section consists of four chapters. Chapter six consists of the stories of the participants and is titled *Narrative Analysis*. Chapter seven is titled *Professional Identities: Being an English Language Teacher in Turkey*, the focus is on the professional identities of the participants and language teacher education in Turkey. In chapter eight, which is titled *Teachers of Action*, I propose and theorise the concept of *teacher of action*. Finally, chapter nine is titled *An Overall Discussion: Making Sense of the Study* and, as the title suggests, it aims to bring the discussions in chapters six, seven and eight together before the concluding chapter.

This chapter focuses on the participants' stories and aims to respond to the first research question:

- *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*

In this narrative analysis chapter, each participant's narrative is presented in three sections, respectively. In the first section, based on my reflections on the interviews, I illustrate participants' contexts, before presenting coherent narratives by drawing on their own words. Focusing on the personal stories of volunteering engagements, I do not add any comments to their narratives. In other words, to maximise the advantages of adopting a narrative approach, I present individual stories to the reader. Following the narratives, there is a 'making sense of' section for each participant respectively, where I explore the structural and agentic factors in the interviewees' narratives and additional data, to explore the links between their narratives and their identities. In these parts, I share more personal information about the participants, beyond the reflections and the narratives. By presenting this after the narratives, I aimed to provide a more holistic perspective to the reader about each interviewee. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss the individual narratives collectively, leading to a narratively constructed, data-informed phenomenon: *teachers of action*, which is analysed in the following chapter.

As I discuss specifically in the following section, for quality throughout the research process, reflexivity has been one of my primary considerations (Cousin, 2010; Elliott, 2005). In this regard, prioritising the participants' presence and remarks, I intentionally made my presence visible in the data chapters, through presenting myself in participants' excerpts and the tales

of my journeys. In other words, I acknowledge I played a major part in this constructed reality, with my role in the interviewing, transcription and translation of the narrative data, which I, then, analysed and wrote as a narrative form (Riessman, 2008), because 'the researcher does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation' (Mishler, 1986, as cited in Neander & Skott, 2006, p. 297). All these interventions aside, the narratives are participants' words, which means that I chose not to re-write their utterances and present them as they are. The basic features of a narrative are present in each text. There is a story with a plot and characters, organised into themes and storylines in sequential order, to awaken emotions in the reader (Plummer, 2001).

Nevertheless, I should underline that the narratives in this chapter are only a small portion of the dataset and I chose them carefully to reflect the individual aspects of their stories. The following chapters demonstrate that the participants' interviews produced many more narratives.

As a reminder, there are five participants in the study. The first narrative is Kemal's, a high school teacher in his early sixties. Being a volunteer in and out of the country in various organisations in his youth, Kemal currently focuses on European Union exchange projects as an experienced teacher and project leader. The second section is Cansu's story. The youngest participant of the study, Cansu recounts the community projects she wrote with her colleagues, as well as the beauties and the problems of being a village teacher in rural Turkey. The third participant, Ahmet is a university instructor of English. Being a competent person in various fields, Ahmet talks about his transformative summer in South Africa, where he volunteered in an orphanage. The fourth participant, Ali is a relatively experienced teacher of English, in his late thirties. Years after becoming a teacher, he decides to join his fellow townspeople, to contribute to the initiatives for their small town, which makes him the chair of the football club they founded. Finally, Zeynep, the fifth participant portrays her volunteering experiences, leading her in to become a teacher, as well as developing an activist stance.

I must note that the order is arbitrary. By no means is it because the first person has the most interesting story and the last person the least. I had meaningful exchanges with all the participants and paid utmost attention to convey their stories as rich and detailed manner as possible. After further explanation into the narrative analysis that is employed in the chapter, individual narratives start with Kemal's story in the following page.

## 6.1 Kemal's Story

Kemal is the only person I had previously known prior to the interviews. He was my high school teacher. He is in his early sixties, and his teaching career started in 1981. I saw him only once after graduating from high school, during the early years of my university education to become a teacher of English. He is quite an active person; he has always been. In addition to teaching, he carries out European Union projects with the school and with his youth group as well as organising weekend trips for his students where he designs activities for them to practice English. After ten years, we met twice for my PhD project within a year. I had published a note on my Facebook page, introducing my project and asking for participants. Kemal replied my post and we met at the high school he worked in, during a school day in May 2018.

He was quite busy as usual; I had to wait for him to respond to his students, asking for storybooks to read, and to his colleagues about a heated discussion carried on from the previous day. There were a couple of more interruptions from his students during our forty-minute conversation. We went to a room he managed to take from the school board for the teachers of English where he formed a library along with some computers. It is not a common practice in Turkish state schools to have designated rooms other than a big teachers' room. We sat next to each other facing a desk with a computer and I opened my laptop where he could see my half a dozen generic interview questions. My laptop was one of my recording devices and it had to be in close proximity to him. I was surprised to see that he started telling his story vibrantly as soon as I turned the recorder on. It was possible to see that he was swinging in the memoirs of his youth while reflecting about some distant past: the 70s and the 80s. I should underline, though, his vivid memory, remembering many names, dates and places.

Our relationship with him as a teacher and a high school student might indicate something about the power dynamics between us. When I first went to school that day and we started catching up about our lives, I felt that I was still a high school boy for him. Additionally, perhaps due to the seating arrangement, we were not face-to-face, and I felt that he was talking to the recording, rather than to me at the beginning. Yet, as he began answering the questions on the screen and I joined the conversation with my remarks, comments, and further questions, he gradually turned towards me. As our interview moved along, I believe his views on me changed and I sensed it from the change in his posture as well as his way of listening to my comments. We spoke in Turkish, which was his preference. On the first

occasion, we had to cut our interview after forty minutes, because it was the end of his break between classes. We came together the following day for the remaining questions I had. I felt that we established a rapport as colleagues, rather than a student and a teacher from the beginning of the second day. It continued that way throughout our conversation.

When I called him to meet for the second part of my research, he told me that he retired from teaching in the state high school. I must admit that it was surprising to hear, yet, when I reflected on our first interview, I felt that it was not an abrupt decision. This time, we met in an open-air café with a view of the Mediterranean Sea in October 2018. He had a stubbly beard. After four decades of daily shaving for his job, he seemed to be enjoying the early days of his retirement. This relaxation was evident in the way he spoke as well. However, he was still busy with projects. We had to cut our meeting after an hour because he was running late for a European project meeting.

These two meetings with Kemal went well for both of us. For me, it has been an opportunity to know him better by hearing his fascinating life story and connect with my high school teacher again. I also felt that it made him happy to remember and talk about his youth, as he said at one point that he was proud of his achievements.

#### 6.1.1 Kemal's Story: A Born Volunteer

*Firstly, I am a scout. I used to do camping all the time when I was in middle and high school. It must be 1976, if I am not mistaken, there was an association called the Voluntary Services Association. I started working with them and camped in various cities of Turkey. There were approximately 20 people in those camps. 18+ of age; 18 to 25. There were two Turkish people among the 20 and the rest were from different countries. And, as these works were done in summer for the villagers, we used to stay in village schools. You see, boys sleep in one classroom, girls in the other. Everyone brings his or her sleeping bags. Villagers do the cooking collectively. Which means that we have the food from the village every day. But, do not compare it with the conditions of today. Because today those villagers are richer if you go there. I am talking about 1976, 1977 until 1984. Ninety per cent of those villages were poor. I remember this clearly, we worked in a village in Northwest Turkey, up high in the mount of Ida. They were so poor; we had cornbread in the morning, something made of corn for lunch and corn soup in the evening. Which means that corn was the only livelihood there. I will never forget. We were both regretful and happy that we had chosen that place. Because the villagers did not have enough means of living for themselves, yet they shared it with us. During these camps, we repaired village schools, village halls and mostly worked in bringing*



*water to villagers with foreigners. I am talking about 1976, 1977 until 1984. That was my completely voluntary work, continued until 1984. I went to Limoges, France in 1978 and 1979. Joined the camps in Germany, Greece and France. I volunteered in camps within and outside of Turkey continuously. Joined as a leader, led in some of them. Raised numerous people, motivated them into camping.*

*From 1984 to 1988, I wandered a lot: in the UK, the US, Mexico, Jamaica, Togo, Trinidad, etc. Been through almost everywhere in Europe. In 1984, I went to London to join the Community Service Volunteer (CSV) project. I went there to work for eight months. Then I went to the US and volunteered in a youth camp. After the camp, I returned and started working for Humana, People to People, a charity aiming to help the third world countries. I started working at one of their stores in central London. They found me, and I worked for them in exchange for accommodation and small pocket money. For example, I am among the developers of donation boxes outside. I mean, they were being used before, too, but we re-designed it and spread it throughout London in 1986. They opened five more stores after me in 1986 and I first became a manager in one of them, then in all five. I was the manager of five stores when I left in 1988.*

*It must be in 1986 if I am not mistaken, I was assigned to Belize. We purchased big lands from the Belize government, planted mango trees for local people, and bought agricultural machinery. When mango was ready to harvest, we founded a cooperative for the villagers and left everything to them. In one year. I left there successfully. I had not even known what mango was before, learnt it there. Next year, I was assigned to Indonesia, for a project to build school, accommodation and social facilities for a thousand children. I could not complete it. I cannot remember exactly but we had problems with the Indonesian government. Then, in 1988, my mother said that she was too sick, dying, asked me to go near her. When I went there, it turned out that she was not sick, just missed her son 😊. I am proud that I helped hundreds of villagers in Belize to develop. I am proud of what I did in Indonesia, in London and other places. Now, they will not remember me, I will not remember them, but it stays there, I did something. What did I gain from all these? I swear, everybody was saying to me that I was a fool. Why? Because I have nothing financially. I mean, I do not have anything financially but in my conscience, I have the utmost motivation, which results in a big smile on my face. I still remember those days vividly.*

### 6.1.2 Kemal's Story: An Experienced Project Leader

*After the volunteering years, I returned to Turkey. It was 1990. A new private high school was opened, and I started there. I did numerous voluntary activities in that school. Organised poetry nights and travelled village by village, town by town around; took it to rural areas. I opened a photography club, did exhibitions. We even joined a film festival.*

*In 2004, the European Union (EU) projects called Erasmus came to Turkey. I did three applications in the high school I worked, and all three of them were accepted. When people, schools and teachers did not know much about what European projects actually were, we applied with three projects and they were all accepted. This is related to living abroad, keeping me updated about some of the events happening there, of course. It was absolutely different than the ones happening now, they required the utmost devotion of teachers working on them. I mean, you had to write pages of project proposals. You need to find a theme for the project, write it, calculate the budget, and not going to receive any financial benefits from the projects that would last three years. You need to organise teachers and students to accommodate them in your country and abroad to have a cultural exchange. When I got involved in the projects first, I voluntarily said that I would not go abroad. I mean, other colleagues who had never been abroad could go. Everyone to expand his or her horizons.*

*After the beginning of the project, we had to gather all teachers and said that this is a voluntary project; it requires devotion, serious devotion. Because teaching, by its nature, already requires devotion. Yet, if you are involved in such an organisation, such an activity or a project; this devotion requires being higher. Not just this devotion being higher is enough; your cultural background should be higher. When we ask the youth now that there is a volunteer activity there, who wants to come; I do not think there would be many. However, if the leader; a teacher or somebody else, has some influence on a group of people, or students, I believe that many could follow this person taking responsibility. These are important things, but that person should be somebody who has already proved himself/herself in the field. If you carry out something, you need to see the result, I would not be involved if there were not going to be any results.*

### 6.1.3 Kemal's Story: Youth Work

*After 2004 projects, I founded a youth group in high school I worked. This youth group works within the standards of the European Union. The EU allows independent youth groups to be founded. This youth group is not entitled to any legal status. I founded this group to make*

*things faster and it is still active. With this group, I started carrying out the EU projects in two fields. The first one is in the school, where the school, teachers and students are involved; which was 3 years in the past but now it is two years, and which used to be called Comenius but now it is called a semi-strategic partnership. I both write and conduct these kinds of projects. I still do not participate in the projects but just writing, controlling, auditing, conducting, and fulfilling the needs. I have conducted and completed five projects so far since 2004.*

*In these projects, students go to schools abroad. They do many activities with the students in their ages within the theme of the project. I can give one example. One of our completed projects was called the Seven Wonders of the World with seven countries. We did not talk about the classical seven wonders in the world, changed it into seven themes. One was acting, for example, the other was art, poetry, sports, etc. Students worked on these seven themes and learned about the Europeans who worked on these in the past. Learned about their works, introduced some to the others. Introduced their cultures to the other parties. Learned about other folklores in their countries. Learned about their cuisines. There were cultural exchanges in various fields.*

*When it comes to the second one, the youth projects, I carry out youth projects in Turkey and other parts of the world with my youth group for the young people between 15 and 25. They are a kind of youth camps in the name of youth projects. Young people from five or six countries come and work under a certain topic. For example, one of the latest projects I did here was the similarities and differences in education in Europe. This was the topic, but it was a long one. Before the partners came, we had asked them to prepare information on their education, prepare presentations and learn something about the education systems in other participant countries. All countries presented what they had prepared. Participants from other countries listened and asked further questions. Debates continued for each country. This was the main topic, the sub-topics were the democracy, racial segregation, gender discrimination, sexual discrimination, justice, and one of the quite recent topics is youth unemployment. The latest project is young entrepreneurs. One of the latest ones is, interestingly, unemployed entrepreneurs. You get the gist; what do young entrepreneurs do in your country, how are they viewed? We introduce them to well-known businesspersons in this field. A half-an-hour conference from them, in English, if they can. We did one here. Yet, of course, you need to work hard on the topics.*

*People think, ah camping, okay. No, it is not. You do all these voluntarily and it takes your days and nights. You do not earn anything when you take the groups abroad; on the contrary, you spend many times. Because the European Union asks for every penny you spend. Yet, it is not a problem. Why it is not a problem, because when you look back, it is ultimately satisfying to see grown-up people like you, coming back. I am sixty years old, as I have seen you and got motivated, I go to my classroom and try to raise other students. This is my basic motivation.*

#### 6.1.4 Making Sense of Kemal's Story

Kemal comes from a middle-class family. His father was a sergeant, and his mother was a homemaker. He says he had a happy childhood. He had a smiling face when he was describing to me how safe it was for them to be a child playing outside in the streets with his friends, knocking any door on the street and ask for something to eat or drink. He also highlighted the effect it had on his self-confidence as a young boy, comparing it with the youth today, who do not have many chances like that anymore. The city he grew up is one of the bigger cities in Turkey. It makes sense to ascertain that he enjoyed the advantages of living there, compared to many other places in the country, especially in the 1970s. This is evident in his early start with the volunteering group, in terms of finding the connections and hearing about the opportunity. In a similar vein, he shares an anecdote about his father:

*Dad left me free, by all means. Yet, although he left me free in everything, it turns out that he would control everything I did. I learnt this quite late, after many years. I would think, 'oh, dad loves me so much. He gives his permission to everything I do, leaves me free for everything'. I wanted to go abroad for the first in 1978 to the youth camp in France. I tell this to mum first, mum softens the mood, then I tell it to dad, and he told me to go. The year is 1978, there is only one salary in the family. Back then, everybody was like that, with one salary. Three siblings, dad is trying to make ends meet, hardly. Yet he does. When I told this, he told me to go and I had not expected this answer. I had thought that I would have been more difficult. I worked in the construction sites, I mean in really difficult winter conditions, to save up some money for the tickets and some pocket money. I went and he saw me off, patting my back. I was astonished.*

This story gives us some clues about his upbringing. His father opened up spaces for him to be autonomous, to exercise his agency. Moreover, his story to work on the construction sites to help his father saving enough money to go abroad shows that his perseverance towards realising his ambitions. Alongside with effects of the city and the neighbourhood he grew up in, the experiences he had at an early age as a scout and then a volunteer as well as the support he had from his family resulted in his engagement with volunteering activities.

These volunteering engagements shaped his whole teaching career. He gives examples, starting from his first teaching years, of efforts he put to raise the wellbeing of his students in a small town. He continued his efforts until the last year of his teaching career, taking students with him in his European projects, as well as opening sports courses in the school and taking them to trips around the city at the weekends.

## 6.2 Cansu's Story

Cansu replied to my post on a Facebook group for teachers of English in Turkey, where I asked if there were any people interested in participating in my research. We had not met before, and, in fact, not even until the second interview, because we conducted the first interview online through a Facebook Messenger call in May 2018. One might think that it would not be easy to converse online with a person that you did not know before. However, this was not the case for us, as I found a young, vibrant teacher on the other side of the screen as well as on the other side of Turkey, who was full of energy and who was so eager to share her plenty of stories she collected within a short period. This first online interview took more than two hours.

Cansu is in her early twenties, she was born and studied in the Western part of Turkey, in fairly modern and developed cities. She says she was quite active when she was a university student as well, going to disadvantaged schools in her city and volunteering there for the children. Following the completion of the university, she fulfilled her dream and went to teach in a village school in the Southeast, in one of the most deprived areas of the country. It was her first full-time teaching experience, and it started in 2017. I had never been to this region and although I know that it is a disadvantaged one, it was still shocking to hear about the conditions she and the people there have to endure every day.

I went to meet her and her students in person for our second interview in October 2018. We went on a twelve-hour road trip, a little more than a thousand kilometres, with my wife and my eleven-month-old son. We started from my hometown, a city in the South-West, where the pine trees on the Western Taurus Mountains meet with the sea. We drove a long, horizontal line towards the East and passed through the East Taurus Mountains. It was the last time we saw the pine trees. That is how we made it to the Southeast of Turkey, where there are no mountains nor seas but flat and dry land, lying thousands of kilometres towards the East and the South and continuing into Syria, and where the only geographical marker between the two countries is nothing but wire fences. Everything is different there, the land, the trees and plants they grow, as well the people, the food they eat and the languages they speak. The region is dominantly of Arab and Kurdish descent, whose first languages are still Arabic and Kurdish. They only learn Turkish when they go to school. After the Syrian civil war, there are many Syrian refugees in the region, too. It was remarkable to see how Cansu blended in there, in a quite different context in such a short time.

She underwent a recent professional transition, as well, before I went there. Owing to their efforts in writing and conducting projects in a short period, she and her friends caught the attention of the district governor, resulting in her transfer to the governmental project department. She was only teaching six hours per week in a different school from the previous year. We met in the town centre, where lie the remains of an ancient higher education institution complex next to the hundreds-of-years old observatory. Like many places in Turkey, this town was another example of contrasts. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the conditions people lived on these lands, which were the cradle of numerous civilisations throughout history. As Cansu explained, there are so many things to do for those lands and everything you do will count.

We, then, sat in a café on the edge of this small town, after which there were endless cotton fields. She was the same person on our video chat when she started talking enthusiastically about the new projects they were conducting for the town. I could say that I felt as if we knew each other for a long time. I felt it with everybody I met for my research project.

We also went to her old school that she worked in last year. When we entered the schoolyard, students were on a recess and tens of them surrounded her immediately. They were little primary school students, with torn clothes but smiling faces. She gave them big hugs. We took many photos altogether, with a fancy camera many of them saw for the first time in their lives. When we went into the school to meet her older colleagues. I was amazed by the things they all accomplished there, in a school in the middle of nowhere, which was painted, decorated and kept clean due to the teachers' efforts, who are all from different parts of Turkey. I could see that Cansu was happy to be there and missed her students as well as her colleagues. She asked various questions to the principal about the school matters and exchanged project ideas about the school with her new position as a project coordinator.

We conducted the interview later, which lasted another two hours. In both interviews, I felt that I learned many things from her.

### 6.2.1 Cansu's Story: Becoming Part of a Community

*I work as a teacher of English in a village. I graduated in 2016 and started working as a teacher for the government. This is my first year for the state. I was collecting donations for my students in the first months. I mean, I had students coming to school with slippers in wintertime. I was telling a colleague about this. I was also collecting books; we were going to open a library in our school. He is experienced in project writing and conducting and formed*

*a team. He asked me if I wanted to join this team. That is how I started but it was quite suddenly, as it had only been one month since my arrival. We are volunteer teachers. It was a tiring year for us as a team. Yet, it was very rewarding for me. I did not know anything about writing a project bid, for example.*

### **6.2.2 Cansu's Story: 'We' Wrote Projects as a Team**

*We first started in November. We first thought of bringing an open-air cinema to the town. Because the children cannot go to the cinema here. They do not know what the cinema is. It is only what they see on TV. We did a trial first, tried the Little Prince but it did not yield the results we wanted. Only kids were involved. We wanted families to be involved, to learn something. Then, we decided on 'Dangal'. The first screening turned out to be in my school. It was relevant to our context as girls are despised over boys in the movie, too. There were about four hundred people; it was amazing. I had never seen our school like that. The next day, we got some good feedback from the kids. However, I was still thinking about their parents. There is a successful girl in our school. I want her to continue her education so, so much. I talked to her parent. He said, "Thank you for the movie, I was not thinking that way. You can also raise your daughters like that, as it turns out". We had a productive chat. I was very happy. One parent is a gain for me. One student is a gain. Then, we screened that movie in twelve schools. We went to all of the villages, near or far. There is a village, sixty kilometres away, somewhere off the beaten path; even the cell phones do not have signals. We went there, too.*

*Poetry night was our second project. We thought of doing something that would attract teachers, families and local people. There is an old castle here; it has the remains of a historical university; the first one in Turkey with an observatory in it. We decided to do it there, to have a historical atmosphere. It was a beautiful night. Poems were recited. There were poets from all around the country and there were Syrian poets, too. There were also our students.*

*We had a project writing training from the government development agency as four teachers. After the training, we saw that the government agency allocated funding to increase the schooling rate for kindergartens. There are few kindergartens here. In two out of five schools, maybe. We started writing it after we heard about the funding. It took us two months, day and night efforts to write a project of sixty pages. I have never been so tired in my life before. The project passed in August and we have started to work on it.*



### 6.2.3 Cansu's Story: Everything I do is for Kids

*I am trying to reach as many children as I can, and it is not possible to have an impact on all. Yet, it is best to touch as many as their lives, save as many children as possible. This is my mentality; it has been a year. They told me that I would change, and I have not, hope it will continue this way 😊. These kids are hungry; they are hungry for knowledge. For example, when you take a simple thing, as simple as a sky lantern, I saw them biting it, to see if it is edible. They were throwing it away, after seeing that it is not edible. I mean different worlds... They are deprived of so many things here. It will be a benefit for the country, a benefit for the region if we can shape them in different ways because girls are not educated here. Parents take them after the eighth grade, and they are forced to marry. I have done so many home visits since the beginning of the term. I have helped eighty per cent of them to come back to school, but twenty per cent did not. What will happen to them? Unfortunately, they will be forced to marry when they become fifteen or sixteen by their parents. This is what makes me sad. There is this one occasion. When I first came, in my first month, children's conditions were really miserable. I was thinking, 'oh dear God, this is not how it should be'. You see, they come to school with slippers, same t-shirts; they do not have any coats or anything. I was thinking that something should be done because it was getting colder. I was searching for what I can do. I was writing everywhere I could, seeking for help. I saw a big truck trailer in front of the school one day. They were looking for me in school. I did not understand and was thinking of what the truck could do with me. They came, said hello and told me that they were coming from the project, 'helping the village schools'. Ah, I wrote to them, too, I said, I remembered. They told that they have some stuff in the truck, and if I could help them distribute it. I thought we were going to distribute it to the students in my school and it would be finished. It took us three days and we went to several villages to distribute everything in the truck. This was before I joined the project team. This is how it started. I always tell. When you want something, when you want to accomplish something, when you look for it, you always get a return; you are not the only one. A big bookseller, for example, I did not write them, I do not know how I missed it. One day, a parcel of books in the school, a big parcel. I was thinking, oh god, I did not even write them. I mean, when you are onto something, somebody sends you what you need, even if you do not ask.*

### 6.2.4 Cansu's Story: Kids who are Hungry for Love

*I would like everyone to come here and see. Not too long, two weeks would be enough. At least they could have a different perspective on education. Because children lack so many*

things. In every area, I mean. I was quite surprised to see when I realised that what they understand from the ice cream is only icy-poles 😊. One day, I had promised them that I would buy them ice cream, so they were asking for it. I said, 'okay, I will give you the money, go and grab it from the village'. They came back with ice-poles in their hands. I asked what they were doing, I mean, is this ice cream? The next day, I bought cornets for them. Their eyes were rolling, told me that they had never had anything like that.

Moreover, students here are hungry for love. There is a hugging ceremony every day for sure. I have been infested with lice so many times 😊. I got used to it now, when I come home on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, I wash my hair with the lice shampoo 😊. When I come in the morning, they run and hug me. Then, they want to carry my bag. Because even carrying the bag of a teacher makes them so happy. I normally do not want it, but they beg me to do it. Some of them wear the bag and take a tour in the yard, checking if it suits them well 😊. This is a big thing for them. Everything is. Touching a teacher, touching a teacher's hair or holding a teacher's hands. 'Teacher, how soft your hands are'. 'How beautiful you are, teacher'. It, however, is not about beauty; they want to see something different. I am the only one who is different. They are so hungry for everything, including affection. Because their heads are not caressed at home. They are not held in the hand and taken for a stroll.

#### 6.2.5 Cansu's Story: The Seasonal Workers

Here, they learn literacy, but they do not understand what they read, as they do not know Turkish. This does not have any significance that way, because they learn Turkish at school. There are many students, who study fifth grade and are illiterate. The reason is, yes, the child learns how to read and write but the summer holiday comes. I forgot to mention, these children are seasonal agricultural workers. First two weeks of May was the planting season for cotton. Which means that the children did not come to school and it was the exam period. They did not come to school for two weeks and they still do not come. They all work in cotton fields in summer. It takes up to November for harvest. These children lose four months anyway: September, October, November and May. You try to teach them something in the remaining five months, even if it is literacy. There is this long pause, they forget because they do not read a book when they go home. You let them pass the class when they learn literacy, but they forget when they come back, you teach them again, they pass, and they forget again. This is how they come until the fifth grade. This is not just one or two students; there are some like that, even in the sixth grades. This is how the vicious circle continues. Go and talk, as the teacher, to their parents; this child has to be in school. Go and bring him/her with

*your car. It is not a burden. You just made an extra mile, took the kid, and brought him/her to school. I did this at the beginning of the semester; they did not send their children. You go there once, twice, three times. Then the parent does nothing but sends his/her child. Why do you put yourself in a bad situation when you can stop it like this? That child will come again next year and will forget literacy again. You will start over; make yourself more tired. What will happen if you go a few kilometres? There are so many things that teachers tend to ignore here.*

#### **6.2.6 Cansu's Story: The Eldest Brother**

*It was at the beginning, a boy comes. He wants to study in high school but cannot due to family problems. Because his father does not take care of them. As he is the eldest, what I mean by the eldest is only 14 by the way, he must take care of the family and he works. He works as a seasonal agricultural worker, going to other cities to work. He tells us that his father does not take care of them. When I ask him why, he tells us that he gets married to somebody else and he changes his surname, too. Which means that he does not even want to use the same surname with his children. Then, we find out that his father rapes a young Syrian woman, and then they complain. Therefore, he pays the dowry, gets married to the Syrian. He has five children from his first wife, does not take care of them. His son, fourteen years old, must work in the fields instead of going to school with his younger brothers. He came again last week to tell me they were leaving. When I asked them where they were going, they told me that they were going to another city. He has younger brothers, a second-grader and a fourth-grader. He takes them, too. When I asked why he told me that they needed to work because they needed money for winter. He is only 14 years old, telling me all these. He told me that he wanted to enrol for the open high school and asked for my help. I helped him, and he was enrolled. Hopefully, he will continue that way next year if he can. I mean, if circumstances allow. Besides, during the term, he wanted to stay for my after-school club but his village is five kilometres away, he could not. He told me that he got so tired after school, could not walk, also the dogs were chasing after him. He said that he had a bike but could not use it anymore because it was broken. I made a surprise and bought him a new bike. Yet, not for him to stay for my club, for him to have fun, wander around with his bike. He did not accept it. He did not accept it for a week. I forced him to accept. Next week, he brought olives. They have olive trees, made olives in brine. Tells me: 'Teacher, you love olives so much, have some'. Brings whatever he has at home, spices, for example, homemade. I cannot say that I am numb, but I have the despair of not being able to help. I mean, I do not want this to be an acceptance and I do not want to be perceived like that. Yet, I am hopeless*

*in this situation, what you can do... I can find alternatives for everything, but not to this.*

*There is none.*

### 6.2.7 Making Sense of Cansu's Story

Cansu is from the same city as Kemal but she comes from a different background. Her father is a retired factory worker and her mother is a homemaker. They both grew up in a village, looking after animals and working in the fields. At an early age of thirteen, his father decided to go to the city, started working in the industrial zone, brought his family with him and took care of them, too. With Cansu's grandparents, her father started building up an illegal slum-house for themselves, which grew in the years from one room into multiple rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

When I asked about her upbringing, Cansu compares her neighbourhood to Harlem. She says she has seen many drug addicts, killed people, violent crimes as well as bullying from her friends, whom she would play with every day. However, it was her family who made the main difference for her in this neighbourhood. She speaks highly of her father and explains that he is an open-minded, self-educated person who likes to read and travel, and who support herself all the time, like when she wanted to go to Poland to study as an exchange student. In another example, when her aunts advised Cansu to find a rich husband and get married, instead of beating herself up with going to high school or university; his father stood up against them, insisting that his daughter would study and be an independent woman. She says she managed to break the stereotypes her mother had from an early age like it should be just the girl's duty, not the boys, to help her mother with the chores at home. She reflects on her recent experiences as a teacher, who comes from a lower social status and holds a rather different and higher one right now; highlighting that she was still feeling nervous when she was talking to people in higher positions, having difficulties in expressing herself. She says she is getting over it gradually.

When she talks about her school life and teachers, she talks highly of them, stating that it was her middle school teacher of English who inspired her love for the language and the reason behind her career choice, by setting an example as a teacher. With the influence of her teachers and her active character, she volunteers in disadvantageous schools in the city while studying at the university. Although many university students volunteer through organisations, it is not common to tutor voluntarily in public schools directly.

In short, although from the same city, unlike Kemal, Cansu grew up in different conditions. However, there are other effects on her, some of which are similar to Kemal's, resulting in a

similar desire to be a person of action. Her school, her family and her teachers seem to have positive effects on her becoming the person she is now. Although it was a disadvantaged neighbourhood to grow up, she takes it from the positive side and underlines that it made it easy to talk to everyone and to empathise with others. She states that it may have not been possible for her to engage in voluntary activities had it not been for what she encountered growing up, especially when she remembers her friends who have chosen stray paths just because there was not anybody for them. According to her, this is the reason she strives to take action for others.

### 6.3 Ahmet's Story

Ahmet and I went to the same university, but he was two years younger. We had never had the chance to meet back then. However, I knew him because he was singing with his band at university events. I contacted him after finding out from our mutual friends that he went to South Africa to volunteer and he happened to be in my hometown at the time for a holiday. My hometown is also the city in which our common point is located, the university in which we completed our undergraduate educations. Like other participants of the study, he is quite a character. He has been an instructor of English at a private university in the south of Turkey for almost a decade and recently became the head of his department, a singer with singles on YouTube and ongoing weekly performances on venues, a poet and a translator with published books, a black-belt karate player and, last but not least, a master's graduate in psychology.

We arranged a meeting on a Friday in May 2018 at the university campus, a venue holding various memories for both of us. However, campus had changed, as we had grown older. The university built a new building for our school and some new cafés, different from the ones we used to attend. Yet, it was still quite easy to build rapport with him, when we started talking about our mutual friends and favourite spots on the campus.

After sitting in one of the new cafés and enjoying the Turkish tea during the interview, which took an hour, I felt that I met a young person in his late twenties, undertaking many responsibilities at the same time. He is the only participant in this study that we spoke deeply into his/her personality. This happened when we did our second interview online in October 2018, lasting about two and a half hours. His search into his own personality is evident in his volunteering story, as well. It is not difficult to observe that he is quite a sensitive person, with his artistic abilities and ideas about life.

Even with the links between his search into himself and his volunteering story, his journey is a bold decision, by all means. In one night, all of a sudden, he decides to go to a far country in the South Hemisphere, to volunteer in an orphanage. However, it is a long-awaited decision for him as well, a result of various experiences in his life. I should also note that I met an intellectual, contemplating many things in life. Therefore, his decision to take the South Africa journey is a well-thought-out one, too. That is why his volunteering experience has become a transformative one for him, changing many things in his life.

What his story demonstrates that there are volunteering opportunities for everyone, even for those with a reserved, introverted character. It is a valuable story for me as a researcher as well, to learn and show that volunteering can be quite a personal journey.

### 6.3.1 Ahmet's Story: An Epiphany

*When I did Erasmus, there were some Scandinavian friends. Two or three of them went to Africa; I was following them on Facebook. They stayed there between 2012 and 2013. I mean, they did not just wander around, they were with the kids, I would see them. I just said, okay, fine and that was it. I was newly graduated, had to think about my life, I was making music. Then, I found a job, bought a new guitar, blah blah... I was helping some kids financially for their education. They were our neighbours. When their financial situation got better, I invested in a house, and a car, too. However, I realised that I did everything I had not wanted, and became somebody I had not wanted. Told to myself: 'I thought you were not going to be like that, you were not going to accumulate, you were going to share, you were going to wander around, you were going to create connections'. After five minutes telling this to myself, I wrote to my friend, one of the Scandinavians. We talked after years and I told her: 'I want to do something like this, please help me'. 'I want to go to where you went, to Africa'. She told me that they worked in an orphanage in South Africa. I mean they are even atheists; as atheists, they went to a fundamental Christian institution. That girl does not recognise a god, and they founded a place like that. What do I do? Sitting here paying the car loan. I said, 'I will not be a man who pays and own some stuff; there are problems in the world. I will touch upon them'. The director of the orphanage my Scandinavian friend went to in South Africa, is a woman that Mandela himself praised. She has various works for AIDS, orphan kids and poor local people. Before I went there, she asked for international references. Motivational letters, too. It would be easier to start a PhD ☺. In the meantime, she flies under the radar; asking me: 'you are a Muslim, do you eat pork? Children pray, is it okay for you? etc'. I said I grew up in a multicultural and multi-faith city in Turkey. My desk-mate was a Christian; I know their traditions as much as they do. I wrote an open letter, a long one. Then, we made things clear for each other. They normally accept volunteers for at least a year, but they accepted me for a month. Why did she give this? Because I was the first one, as a Turkish person, going there from a Muslim country. Many nice things happened when I was there. They think Muslims hate Christians; we want to kill them all. It was informative for all of us.*

### 6.3.2 Ahmet's Story: Sacrifices

*I decided to go but when I looked at the tickets, oh my god, return tickets were like my monthly salary. It is the far end of the world. When I was in high school, there was an electric guitar that I bought from an antique shop, handmade; made in the 1970s in Japan. I was not very knowledgeable on the guitars and neither was the guy in the shop. I asked how much it was and he said 250 Turkish liras. I told him that I had 125 Liras. That was all I got, all the money I saved. He told me to give him the 125 and bring 50 more next week. I bought it. It was not playable, too. I came to the university with my guitar and a guy from Istanbul told me that it is a precious one. He took it, serviced it, and brought it back polished. We plugged it in and it worked. He told me, 'let's send this to Istanbul. There is a place that I know there, they can value this'. I sent it and found out that it worth ten thousand dollars. He told me, 'never sell this. I will send it back to you. Do not sell it'. I took the guitar and put it to a nice corner in the flat. I would not play it and would take care of it like a baby for years. At that moment, while I was thinking about the expenses, my eyes caught the guitar. We looked at each other and it was the time to say goodbye. I had an acquaintance here, who is rich. I told him that I am selling the guitar and I need money; told him 'I shall send you the guitar and you send me money'. I sent him the guitar and did not tell him its value. Maybe, it was even more valuable alongside the years. My aim was to buy the return tickets. He told me that he could give me a thousand dollars and wired me the money. I checked online and saw that it covers my ticket fares. They were about 600 dollars in total and the rest was going to be my pocket money. I was going to add a month's salary, too. Thankfully, a close friend of mine told me, 'I will cover your mortgage for this month, now that you are into such a nice thing'.*

### 6.3.3 Ahmet's Story: 'They' Transformed Me

*In the first day, there were so many questions, fears in my head. I went there, to a completely foreign country. On my journey back, when I was on the plane, I thought; 'I came as if I was coming to a very unfamiliar country, I am leaving as if I am leaving my own country'. I felt that way. I was returning to Turkey, where I lived for thirty years, yet I was nervous. Africa is such a place that it unbalanced me totally. My whole life has been upside down. I learned so many things culturally, learned more from them than I taught them. As if, they were the volunteers and teaching me something. When I was there, I did what I have been doing here. Yet, I assure you that I was happier with those kids than I am happier teaching here. This is beyond volunteering. Them listening to you respectfully, their attention, their desire to learn. They look right into your eyes. Whatever you tell them, they thank you. After every lesson,*



*they thank you. I have never seen that here, although I am highly favoured by my students in the classroom evaluations. I mean, I was favoured but have never seen it like there. They thank for everything. I have never seen it: 'Thank you for teaching me this subtraction, I could not do it until you showed it to me; thank you for having us watch that film', and hugging you. If you ask me what the biggest gain is, it has been to see the result of what you do with the appreciation. That was it. I liked it very much. This is much better than a top-down appreciation from your supervisors. I do not want that. I want this. I want this kind of appreciation. It was really enjoyable. I would not say these if I had not had that experience. Because I was already going through a period where I was on the edge in terms of believing. Moreover, I used to think why a non-believer should thank. I now understand it. When I saw those children, I felt better about why I should be thankful. We should be thankful for everything. Besides, I am calmer now, more peaceful, after seeing the modesty there. My decision before going was not to live just for myself and I do not live it just for me now. For example, I have written a book about my journey and my deal with the publisher is to transfer all the revenue from the book to the orphanage. Therefore, I noted it down as the last word to the rear cover of the book. I would like people to see people this as a long-term project, rather than a storybook to read. It is not just I stayed there for a month, did something and it was completed. I did not want it to be like that. I started giving more value to what I say after returning from there. I started not doing or saying something I would do or say just for the sake of it. Since I came back, I published two books, recorded a song and another one is coming soon. I print fanzines and distribute here, make speeches in literary societies, support people in those places. I started doing it until the end, what I could do. I had had all these skills. However, I used to do one stage a week, now I do three. I am trying to connect them all. I can say that.*

#### **6.3.4 Making Sense of Ahmet's Story**

Ahmet's father is a factory worker, and his mother is a homemaker, just like Cansu's parents. Similarly, he talks highly of them, in terms of witnessing the sacrifices his dad did for Ahmet and his siblings while they were growing up, like working in two jobs, day and night, to save money for his children's school expenses. In addition to that, he managed to arrange extra tutoring classes for his children, investing to make sure that they had proper education and were not left behind from their peers. His father is one of the main reasons Ahmet decided to become a teacher of English, when the dad invested in the Ozmo series from the BBC Learning English for Kids, for his, then six-year-old son. Ahmet says he used the series until he memorised everything in the books and the videos. When it comes to the

neighbourhood, he portrays quite similar things to Kemal, even with three decades and a thousand of kilometres between their cities; a safe neighbourhood where they can knock on everyone's door and play outside until it gets really dark. He is originally from a multicultural city in Turkey near the Syrian border, still an important pilgrimage location for Christians. Many Catholic and Orthodox Christians live there, as well as Alawi and Sunni Turks with Arab descent. He gives many anecdotes from his childhood about his encounters with the Christians, like his father's friend whom he calls uncle and whom even attends their family funerals and prays like Muslims, or his first love as well as his friend from his neighbourhood, who taught him how to play the guitar. He says that is how he learned not to divide people according to their religions, or ethnicity, from an early age. That may be one of the reasons why he chose to work in a missionary orphanage in South Africa. Moreover, it was an epiphany (Denzin, 1984), which led Ahmet to take this bold decision. Nevertheless, from what he discusses regarding the events in the world, it is possible to say that this epiphany is the result of years of thoughts.

Ahmet also talks about being a 'foreign language' teacher in Turkey, which seems to be important in terms of his identity. He says he was always different than the majority, dating back to his high school years when his interest in music and literature started. In his own words: *'When you decide to something different, people around you try to change you, too. I was very disconnected from people'*, which continued after he became a teacher of English. As he learned and has been teaching English and its culture, he embraced some of the elements, which are not common to see in Turkey and puts barriers between some people and him:

Some time ago, I would always wear suspenders. I do not wear them for the last two years but before that, I wore them every day for three years. I had many, matching all of my clothes. I would also wear a fedora. That was how I wander around, with suspenders and fedoras and they do not want this. It is because I studied English language teaching, I am sure I would not be a person like this if I studied maths teaching. *People perceive teachers of English different and distant from them and think teachers of English look down on people. They think teachers of English are like this because they despise the joys and the culture here. That is why they are distant to them as they teach another culture. Yet, it is not the whole picture. Teachers of English simply have the ability to express themselves better visually and intellectually, with the advantage of knowing another language. Why I do not have a friend here who is a primary school teacher? Because I do not fancy their lives stuck between two local TV channels. However, with a teacher of English, I can sit and refer to a Seinfeld episode, without feeling the need to ask if he/she watched it. I refer to a show that ended ten years ago and we burst into*

*laughter. That is what I like about us; this is another perspective, another world. Therefore, they think we are arrogant and distinguish ourselves. No, we have the chance to look at other sources to understand ourselves, to make sense of life. Yet, people think we are arrogant and, to be honest, they do not like us.*

It is possible to claim that Ahmet is an 'outside the box' thinker. This account makes it more possible to comprehend Ahmet's decision and why he finds it as transformational. His story is another example in demonstrating the interplay of agentic and structural factors on one's journey to become the person he has become right now.

## 6.4 Ali's Story

Ali, like Cansu, contacted me through Facebook after my posts on several Facebook groups for teachers of English in Turkey. Our video chat through the Facebook messenger in May 2018, lasting an hour, was my first online interviewing experience. Like all others, it was a good one with a reciprocal exchange of ideas, after which I felt I met another inspiring person.

Ali, in his late thirties, has been teaching for fifteen years. He lives in a central Anatolian city and he was born in one of the smaller towns of this province. The city is the old capital for a relatively small Turkish state before the Ottomans and a trading post for centuries, with its position on the crossroads. Alongside plenty of historical remains in the centre, you could see that the people from this city are aware of their heritage. They are known for their business skills, which they still practice in various old bazaars in the city, alongside the modern ones, to go along their thick accents and traditional food. These 'stereotypical' traits could say something about people from this city in general. Additionally, how hard it would be for a stranger to blend into this established culture, which is Ali's story in a nutshell. A teacher, an experienced one, returning to his city after many years working in different places, yet, facing many non-physical barriers, all of which reminds him of his roots as a town boy in a big city. It is an obstacle he faces for the second time, because he came to this city as a primary schoolboy from his rural hometown, after living and going to school there during the first decade of his life. For him and his friends in the community, volunteering has become a tool to prove themselves and their town against an established culture, albeit in a different way by founding and running an amateur football club.

After hearing his story in our first online interview, I was eager to conduct the second interview in person, to visit him, the town, and the football club. After attending a conference in another city, I got on a coach, which took me there in eight hours. I had been to this city before and was pleased about the location Ali suggested. We met in the renovated old part of the town, in a café, where we sat in a gazebo that gave us the chance to overlook the city on a beautiful autumn day in October 2018. This neighbourhood is a familiar one for Ali, as he showed me his high school down the hill, which he joined following the primary school and studied for seven years. Our conversation took about four hours. When I repeatedly thanked him for his time, he said a nice thing to hear, which is probably the reason I had hours of conversations with all my participants, not just him. He told me

that he has time to share, as long as somebody comes to listen to him. Yet, he added; somebody that does not just listen but also exchanges his/her ideas.

The following day was Sunday and we met again with Ali and went to the town, in order to attend a home game of the football club. After an hour's drive, which Ali would be doing almost every week, we made it to one of the smallest towns you could find in the country. You could indeed understand what Ali meant when he said that the club is the only social activity for these people. At the beginning of the season, the club was promoted to a higher division. However, they had no points after six games. We hoped to turn the club's fortunes around, and we did. Although a draw, it was the first point of the season. It was a rainy morning, and it only stopped after the game started. Therefore, there was only a small crowd. Nonetheless, among the ones present, there were people of all ages. Children were running around the stadium, bringing back the balls flying away. Adults were excitedly watching the game as well as chatting with their friends and relatives coming from the city to watch the game. There were some grannies as well, in their local clothes, watching the game from a small hill behind a goalie, where they would feel the most comfortable, by sitting on soil ground rather than standing up the whole game in the stands. When I asked Ali if there were many women attending games, he proudly showed me some photos from newspapers in which women chant alongside men. He stressed that they are the only football club in the city with women supporters in the stands.

Ali's story is an example that it is never late too to start volunteering. Although he was not a volunteer in his earlier days, his efforts in a different area than teaching, like running a football club, have offered many transformative possibilities for him to become a different person and a different teacher.

#### 6.4.1 Ali's Story: A Friend made us 'We'

*It was not, let us come together and found a sports club. It started with a friend. He thought, 'we are all from this town, I wonder who are there more from this town living in the city centre, especially university graduates'. He started looking for phone numbers, relatives, as it is a small town with five thousand population. In this group, there were people whom we had never had any contact before. He gathered all these people one day in the city centre, with the identity of being from our town. We had dinner and that was the only common thing, being from the same town. There, people liked it and they said we should continue this; we should gather periodically and keep in touch. Indeed, we did. We came together on numerous occasions. It was quite crowded with fifty, sixty people coming together. Then, we*

*founded a platform in the town after these gatherings. We thought as we were educated people from the town, we should identify the problems in our town. Education was the first thing, we founded an education platform; had appointments from the governor, director of education, etc. We were coming from the city centre, organising these appointments with the people from the town and going there to meet them. We also had health and agriculture platforms. For three years, it continued like this. Then, we realised that, as we were just civil servants, there was not much to do than gathering people. After three years, we were like, 'yes we come together, sit and drink and also community expects to see some results, accomplishments, asking what we are doing'.*

*We thought about what we could do, what was missing in our town, what we could bring into the town. We decided that we would start a football club. It was missing. Every town had one, ours did not. Apart from one person, there was no one among us with any kind of experience whatsoever. It was November 2014. We wrote our bylaw, chose our club's colours and did everything step by step. It was such a democratic environment. I always say, when we started, we did not even have a ball. I mean, you are founding a football club but there is not even a ball 😊. However, after one year, the town had an investment of 950 thousand Turkish Liras, including a stadium, thanks to the club. When we started, our aim was, to advertise our town, to make it known. When I think about our beginning and look like an outsider, the most important factor was to have a place in the city, make our town more recognised. There is an established mentality, difficult to break here in the city and they always tell us, 'you are new', wherever we go. We believe that we have accomplished our aims, in terms of promoting our town.*

*We had a motto for ourselves, 'we shall be professionals with an amateur soul'. When I was the club's chair, the mayor of the town wanted to make it a team of the municipality. We did not want to be like that or to be something political and wanted it to stay as the way it is, as a youth club. We said to him, if necessary, we would make it a ping-pong club but still an independent youth club.*

#### **6.4.2 Ali's Story: Touching Many Lives**

*We recently had plaques done for our sponsors and I specifically wanted this to be written on it: 'for your contributions in the amateur sports and the publicity of our town'. We believe that we have accomplished our aims, in terms of promoting our town. In terms of disadvantaged groups, our town is a far one, far from the city centre (centre of the province). Our captain is around twenty-six years old now, he started playing for a club with us for the*

*first time. In the world of football, it is a very late age. As you know, there are scouts, watching amateur games, too. There was one scout, he was watching our game and he asked me about him, thinking he could be of some value, but he took a step back when he heard about his age. This person did not have an official licence until that age. He has his first licence at this very old age yet still makes the team champions. I mean, this has been a chance to the people who are at far, who are forgotten. We also built a youth team and put the young in charge. Why? For them to gain experience, managerial experience, technical experience. We did not look for sportive success as a must. It was not our concern.*

*When we first founded the team, our whole squad was from the town. Therefore, we had high school students from the town, we had so many of them. We still have high school students in the squad. The best part is, however, for example, we have a friend on the board who is a teacher, and he plays for the team. There is a bus driver in the team, an imam; a physical education teacher, a security guard, there are students as well. I mean people with various occupations. I thought to myself, what else could bring all these people, who are all different and direct for the same purpose. They would not be sitting together in a café; they are from different worlds. Nevertheless, they cling together with the wins and sit sorry with the losses.*

*Two years ago, a player from the team was going to do his military service. He is from another city. This is my city, for example, I have many relatives and friends here. I would not think of calling and inviting the footballers when I have a social occasion, like a wedding or a funeral. My entourage is big enough to fill the space. This lad invited me to his party before his service. When I went there, I realised that his entourage is just us, the club, as he does not have any family or relatives here in this city. He had some troubles during his service, came back without completing it and needed some rehabilitation. Had some psychological treatment because of this, gained a lot of weight and stuff. Anyway, we kept him playing for the team. His father told us, 'his mind is busy when he goes to the club and the games'. He kept playing until being transferred to another team, but I saw that we helped him. We helped this boy to overcome his troubles.*

*This is important for people who have some talent in a sport and have not had any chances to show it. We serve these kinds of fellas with what we do. Helping these fellas to have their licences, equipping them with uniforms, bag, shoes and everything, from top to the bottom, enabling their transportation to the games, giving their lunches or dinners after the games and making sure that these young fellas reach their homes safe and sound. I mean, we do*

*not only see it as students but rather youth, yet, still, many of the young players in our squads are high school students. Additionally, I do not know if you have been in a rural setting but socialising in the countryside is different. When a fella from the village comes to the city, he is like a fish out of water. We take these fellas to different towns every week, help them do sports, have lunch, chat with them on the way and come back. We have university students as well, in our team. What happens is that high school students are together with university students, they become friends. Therefore, university students become role models for high school students. So, they learn about their lives and this may become a motivation to pursue a university degree. For example, one of our footballers who graduated from the town's high school is now preparing for the school physical education and sports. You cannot say that it is only his decision and he prepares himself, no. He sees university students, establishes himself a place in the community, sees the sport and convinces himself that he can make a living out of the sport as a profession. I believe these are the benefits on the players.*

#### 6.4.3 Making Sense of Ali's Story

Ali is the only one among the five interviewees to grow up in a village. Although his father was a teacher and they were not in a financially disadvantaged condition, he still remembers his first days in the primary five, when he first came to the city as a village and then a town boy, admitting that the way he spoke and dressed up was in a peasant style. Growing up in a central Anatolian city, known to be more conservative, he remembers going to the university in another city as his first encounter with different people different to himself and the people in his city, like progressive leftists, or rock music lovers. However, he reflects on his father's favourite saying: you know children, you know better, as well as his conscious choice to keep his children away from politics, although the dad became a mayor for his hometown. Ali's decision to take action is quite late, in his thirties. When I asked him about it, he describes it as a need to fulfil himself, as a desire for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943):

*When I think about it, I can say that there is a motivation in terms of being a teacher, maybe not related to my field but about teaching. After some certain age, I am thirty-six years old, you know the highest part in the hierarchy of needs, self-actualisation, people feel that need. But you also realise that it may not always be about your occupation or your field. I mean, was my self-actualisation about ELT? I do not know. I must tell this, I have done so many for my field, but I did not feel that satisfaction, to be honest. I mean, I have worked in every level of education, including university, I went to abroad, taught in Germany, etc. Yet, I guess you sometimes look for something different, or I am not sure if I have chosen the wrong field. Maybe, I could have been more successful in other areas,*



*where I would be more social, interacting with people more. I mean, think about it, where is running a football club and where is being a teacher of English? They are different things. Therefore, it was, at one point, a desire for self-actualisation. Here, maybe because of teaching instincts, me and my friends, we do not do anything just for self-interest or self-benefit. What we are doing should be helpful to society. This is what teaching actually is, too. Whatever good you do in teaching may help you, too, but it is eventually for the society. I think that was the motivation, the starting point was the desire for self-actualisation.*

His attempts to keep the team independent, away from the politics reveal his agency. This is especially evident in his father's deliberate preference to distance him and his siblings from politics. Ali is not an apolitical person and he openly talks about his stance during our interview. However, there is the preference of being from the same town over holding the same political views, as he highlights that there are people from all political views among the team, as long as they are ready to commit themselves for the club, rather than using it as a ladder to accrue more power. When I asked him if he sees the club as an opportunity to gain an advantage for himself, he said the club wears out him, both financially and socially, as he spends his money and his time for the club while trying to keep it alive and independent as well as away from the politics. I asked this question after he said that he said that he sees more respect as an NGO member than as a teacher. It is possible to see his agency in action in this example, as he does not only reflect on the transformation in himself but also on his commitments and aims for the club.

## 6.5 Zeynep's Story

I found Zeynep through mutual friends. When she contacted me, I was struggling to find participants for my study. At the time, my efforts had not been fruitful, except for my high school teacher Kemal. Thus, finding out people such as Zeynep gave me the hope I needed at that point of my research, especially when I heard about the things she has achieved in her volunteering life.

Unfortunately, I could only conduct one interview with Zeynep, which was through a video call in early June 2018, taking two and a half hours. It was on a Sunday and we were both in our current residences, away from our family homes. Zeynep, in her mid-twenties, started teaching in 2016. She works as a teacher in a state school in a small town in the East of Turkey, near the Armenian border. I had a good conversation with Zeynep, who gave me praiseworthy insights, especially around activism. It is possible to see her ideas around it and that she is indeed active, in her only second year as a state teacher, in such a remote region.

In autumn 2018, I contacted her a few times for a second interview but, although we agreed on a certain date two times, it did not become possible due to her personal reasons. Then, we did not have a correspondence until she contacted me again in late February 2019, stating that she had been through a mentally difficult period. I told that I respected her taking that time off, asking if she wanted to withdraw from the study. She did not withdraw, yet it did not become possible to conduct another interview, as this conversation took place after I completed my analysis process and already started writing up. Additionally, our relatively long interview for our only occasion provided me with various insights into her volunteering journey.

Her story is another good example of the transformative power of volunteering with changes in her career plans from engineering to teaching through involvement in political action.

### 6.5.1 Zeynep's Story: Becoming a Teacher Thanks to Volunteering

*When I was in university, I was in the main opposition party's youth branch. We built up teams for each district in the city centre; mayors from our party provided us with the facilities. Thereby, we opened up courses for economically disadvantaged children as university students. Everyone had a branch and I was assigned to English because I was at English prep class of my English-medium university, where I was studying engineering ☺.*

*It was difficult for me at the beginning. It was a slum neighbourhood, migrant families from neighbouring cities seeking work. I still remember one kid clearly. His mother had a tumour in her brain. Even though she had surgery, she would go to wash cleaning houses or apartment stairs to bring money home during the day. The father was a security guard, working at a factory at nights. They were two siblings, two brothers. Their grandmother was also staying with them. It was a one-bedroom slum. You should see the kid, so silent yet raises his hands and answers before anyone else, whenever I ask a question. English, maths, or sciences; does not matter. Then we bought books for him, extra sources to study. Because he liked examining the computer programs, we requested the political party to buy a laptop for him with an internet connection. Now that kid is in the final year at high school. He went to one of the most prestigious state high schools in the capital, thanks to the extra tuition he had from us. I mean, we helped many kids to quit smoking, for example, even though they were fifth graders. We helped many kids to stay away from drugs. It was a lot of hard work. Therefore, when I decided to change my department from engineering to teaching, I thought that I could work as an English language teacher because I can teach it! That is how my teaching of English career started.*

#### **6.5.2 Zeynep's Story: Volunteering for Peace of Mind**

*When it comes to volunteering, in 2008 when I first started my university education, I saw the stands at the library; LOSEV, UNICEF, other NGOs. I volunteered for UNICEF and LOSEV (Foundation for Kids with Leukaemia). Why I focused more on LOSEV? Because I have many cancer incidents in the family. In LOSEV, we now also deal with adults, but the real focus is children. I mean, a child getting cancer is not the same with an adult getting it. While wanting to play, a child literally falls apart. That was how I started with LOSEV in 2008. First events were selling staff at stands. We would make publications at the university, posters and everything. We would help packing the gifts before the New Year. Then, when I quit engineering and returned my hometown to study English language teaching, I kept volunteering for LOSEV. Because knowing that you are doing something for the kids is such a peace of mind. I mean, when you think about it, you make a child happy and I believe that the world becomes a better place when the children are happy. During those years, I gave away presents in the Children's Day (23 April in Turkey) and the new year for LOSEV. First-year, for the Children's Day, LOSEV's truck came and I organised a party for children. I organised a team from my friends studying in Fine Arts. Arranging a playlist, aiming to play children songs, none of them knows the songs; all of them are rockers 😊! We improvised and decided to bring all the children onto the stage. They came, and we sang all together. These*

were children whose treatments continue, who had their masks on, or who were in a wheelchair. There was also a theatre company, with which I was in touch, they came, and acted children's plays. The activity was on the coast, so many people came, and we had numerous new volunteers. People realised that they do not need to give money to become volunteers. The following years, we did the same activities at the hospital, on Children's Day.

### 6.5.3 Zeynep's Story: Ekin

*In the hospital on Children's Day the following year, there was a little girl named Ekin. She was three and a half years old back then. She was in another ward due to her lack of immunology. She came, with her hands on her back, called me, 'hey sis, look at me, are they, the ones in oncology are sick and we aren't'? 'They are children and we are children, too. Why all people coming buy presents for them, huh'? There I learned about all the children patients, took their numbers: boys and girls. The same day, I went and bought presents for them, colouring books, puzzles, dolls, racing cars, etc. When we were upstairs, distributing the gifts, Ekin came to me running. That day was both the best and the most challenging day of my life because Ekin literally attached to me, never left my hands. Her immune system was not working, causing her tiredness; she was on my chest all day. Her parents were alive yet left her to an orphanage. She was on top of me, hugging, playing with my hair. She said to me, 'You know what sis, wish you were my mother'. The first thing I did when I started working was searching for the procedures to adopt Ekin. However, I could not make it; she passed away last year in April. After Ekin, I have not done any volunteer activities. I just could not. There is this negative side of the volunteer works. You need to put an emotional boundary. Actually, I managed boundary well for eight years. That day, Ekin, destroyed all the boundaries with her one gesture.*

### 6.5.4 Making Sense of Zeynep's Story

As both of her parents are teachers, Zeynep comes from a relatively different social background, compared to the other participants. When reflecting on her childhood, she remembers a young teacher of English as well, who newly started her career and would come to their houses very often. She taught Zeynep many things in English at an early age, instilling in her love for the language. Following the footsteps of her parents, Zeynep chose to go to a teacher high school, a privileged state school with extra lessons on pedagogy, accepting students based on a nationwide, high-stakes test. Following high school, even though initially choosing to study engineering, she soon rediscovered her passion for teaching. It was not a hard decision to take for her, given her high school education and her

parents' professions. Yet, she only made it happen following her transformation based on her tutoring experiences.

When reflecting on the reason to volunteer for LOSEV, she talks about many close relatives in her family who underwent cancer treatment. As she states, the Black Sea region, where she grew up, is notoriously known for a higher ratio of cancer incidents. Therefore, she has witnessed it many times in her family and around her. However, it was not only the cancer patients in her family that affected her decision to volunteer. Perhaps more importantly, she emphasises the importance of studying university in the capital, where there are older and more established universities and many active organisations in those universities. She makes a comparison with the university she went to her hometown, indicating the scarcity of opportunities to volunteer. When I ask her if her parents are as active as she is, she says they are not. She smiles when she remembers her dad, envisioning his daughter to be holding the banners of the volunteering organisations upfront, when they saw them recruiting on the campus on her first day of university life. She speaks of her high school teachers as well, underscoring them as one of the principal reasons for her becoming the person she is now. Therefore, her career choices have had different effects on her desire to take action for others. Starting to study in the country's capital, in more established universities, enabled her to join the multiple existing communities.

When starting her volunteering story in a party's youth branch, Zeynep hesitates for a second whether to share it to be the leftist main opposition party. Then, she smiles, stating *"it does not matter because I am what I am"*, adding that she already shared her political engagements with the Ministry officials when she was interviewed to become a public-school teacher. Notably, this is within the first few minutes of our interview. Moreover, her active role in a small town in one of the unions, which is also known to be on the opposition makes her identity quite clear. She is a proud activist, who openly embraces and reinforces it with the books and columns she writes. Such various engagements and roles indicate several factors to have contributed to her current position as an experienced volunteer. When discussing these, similar to her decision to start volunteering, she emphasises the importance of her teachers, in addition to studying at the bigger and older universities in the capital, due to the existence of more organisations and people there.

## 6.6 Summary of Chapter 6

While compiling the stories for narrative analysis in the chapter, in addition to the volunteering stories, my focus has been to find the quotes that are relevant to the personal domain of their identities. In this regard, in relation to participants' identity constructions, I investigated the interplay of objective structures, such as family and educational systems, with the subjective sense of agency (Bourdieu, 1977; Webb et al., 2002). Yet, it is not possible to present all the dataset, here or elsewhere in the thesis. That is why some relevant accounts of the participants are only discussed in making sense of sections of each person as well as here in the summary.

Throughout this chapter, participants' various stories of taking action for others demonstrate these decisions to be quite personal and conscious. Moreover, across various anecdotes, the interviewees share stories about their teachers and their families, who started shaping their identities from earlier years. Therefore, in terms of agency and structure debate (Giddens, 1984), participants' accounts demonstrate their identities to have been shaped from an early age, with their families and teachers (such as Zeynep's). They illustrate that even the epiphanies (such as Ahmet's) could have a longstanding background. In this regard, it is essential to understand the participants as whole persons in a continuum, as both agency and the structures are at interplay in their identity constructions (Carter & Doyle, 1996; Day et al., 2006).

Based on the definition used in the study thus far, teacher identity, from a sociocultural standpoint, is contextual and temporal, and an interplay of personal, professional and political elements, (re)constructed via multiple narratives (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). It is not difficult to identify that all these factors affect participants' identities, which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The importance of contextual factors can be seen in Ali's story (Flores & Day, 2006), for whom coming from a small town has a huge influence in his decision to engage in volunteering later in his life, shaping his identity. Moreover, he openly discusses the identity transformation in himself, after becoming a club chair. As he underscores, it has become easier for him, now, to request sponsorships, in cash or in-kind, from people. This is something that he could not have imagined before. What is more, he reflects on the respect he gets as the club chair and being welcomed by the city's high-ranking officials. He compares it with his professional role as a teacher, realising that he does not have that kind of respect. Therefore, being involved in volunteering has a clear impact on his professional

identity, as he discusses his [transformation](#), not just in his teaching but also in himself after his role and involvement in the club. Cansu reflects on her transition from living in the slums to becoming a village teacher, who allocate her time to conduct development projects for the community. She points to her circumstances as the reason why she spends so much effort. Thanks to her earlier neighbourhood, it is easier for Cansu to empathise with the children in her new context. Yet, when it comes to Ahmet, contextual factors seem to trouble him, [as he demonstrates](#) experiencing problems in terms of fitting into society's standards, with his identity as a teacher of English in Turkey. Hence, his status contradicts with Atay and Ece's (2009) study in the Turkish context, who illustrated their participants as having not found it problematic to adjust themselves to society. Yet, from another perspective, Ahmet is an example of a border-crosser teacher (Giroux, 1992) transcending his 'cultural boundaries' (Atay & Ece, 2009, p. 31). Besides, similar to the teachers in Liu and Xu's (2011) study in China, Ahmet's troubles seem to be among the primary reasons why he took his transformative journey, hence helping his own professional and personal development. Whereas Ali seems to have made a conscious transition between his multiple identities as a young man from a traditional and conservative small town and a teacher and then a club chair in the city, who kept his connection with his roots (Clarke, 2008).

Temporal factors are effective in participants' identity constructions, too (Day et al., 2006). In Kemal's story, Kemal's volunteering experiences changed over the years. When he was younger, he was more interested in taking part in local and international projects, helping him improve his language skills, meet people from all around the world and travel to many places abroad. However, after becoming a teacher, he was more focused on conducting exchanges for his school and his students, even though they caused him problems personally and professionally. As he points out, along the years, he has become a team leader, helping others to engage in project writing and management. Therefore, temporal factors, alongside the contextual ones become the reasons for him to share his experiences with the younger generations and take the team leader identity.

When it comes to the effects of personal, professional and political elements in their identity constructions, for all of the participants, it is quite a personal decision to engage in volunteering, which they express throughout this chapter. This is particularly evident in Zeynep's story of volunteering in health-related organisations after her aunt's cancer treatment, or in case of Ahmet, deciding to volunteer in South Africa one evening.

Professional elements are also in play here (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), such as Cansu's case, who became more actively involved in volunteering, after finding herself as a teacher in a small village. Although she personally initiated small acts immediately upon arrival there, such as distributing clothes, it is after joining the group of teachers that she has begun writing and conducting various development projects, and thinking about the whole community, beyond her students and school. Consequently, her professional status became the catalyst for her shift to a project conductor, then, progressing to another position in the district governor's office with added responsibilities. In Ali's story, his professional status made it possible for him to join the community of townspeople, leading to various changes in his identity along the years.

In Zeynep's story, political elements took a rather unexpected turn in her decision to become a teacher of English, rather than an engineer. Moreover, her political stance still has a clear effect on her approach to teaching, to her students, colleagues and parents, owing to her activist teacher identity (Mockler, 2011; Sachs, 2001). However, the following chapters demonstrate that the relationship between identity and politics is complicated. Due to a combination of contextual, personal and professional reasons, some other participants like Cansu and Kemal refuse to be affiliated with politics and activism.

While reaching these results, my analysis is based on careful multiple listening and reading of participants' interviews. Because of my rapport with all of the five participants, it can be thought that these relationships may have influenced narrative analysis, in terms of presenting stories, focusing on certain, mainly positive aspects of these stories, etc. As a reflexive researcher, I aimed to overcome this potential issue by employing different techniques for analysis (i.e. the Voice – Centred Relational method), asking multiple times to the participants if there are any issues with interview transcripts and themes, and creating discussion opportunities with my supervisors as well as my colleagues about findings. Nevertheless, with the amount of the collected data, even with a repeated examination of each interview, there is still a potential to miss out or exclude certain parts of participants' accounts. Moreover, due to the focus of the interviews, which is the volunteering stories, participants may have chosen to tell plausible sides of their experiences. Yet, the following discussion chapters illustrate that participants' narratives are not only made of positive stories of success.

To summarise, this chapter aimed to illustrate the personal aspects of participants' identities. They highlighted the importance of their families, teachers, temporal factors and



contexts in shaping their sense of agency, while both the structures and their sense of agency shaped their identity constructions (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984). In the following chapter, after briefly explaining the methodological considerations, the focus is then on the professional identities of the participants, as it is highly important to explore the relationship between the context and the identities of participant teachers.

## 7. Professional Identities: Being an English Language Teacher in Turkey

After conducting a narrative analysis in the previous chapter, this chapter and the following chapter are analyses and discussions of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). In chapters seven and eight, I built the themes via a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which helps look for connections and patterns among the narrations that participants bring forward concerning their identity constructions. As I mentioned earlier under the methodology section, there are examples on how I reached the themes through coding ([Appendix F](#)), theme building ([Appendix G](#)) and deciding on the sub-themes for the discussion chapters ([Appendix H](#)) in the appendices. As can be seen, with the help of NVivo software, a two-cycle coding process was implemented (Saldana, 2016). In the initial first cycle coding, I noted over fifty inductive ‘nodes’ (codes). After the second cycle coding, the nodes were narrowed down to three main themes, each of which had several sub-themes. While determining the themes and the sub-themes, I used the in-vivo coding technique, with direct quotes from the participants. For this chapter and the next, the themes are laid out separately, with long quotes from the participants that are often intact stories, followed by a general discussion at the end of the chapter. Long quotes are particularly relevant, as I argue earlier ‘narrative analysts do strive to preserve sequence and the wealth of detail contained in long sequences’ (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). Alongside the in-vivo codes, long quotes are in harmony with the narrative genre of the thesis.

As a further note, I introduce some new literature while discussing the themes, as a few (such as the second section of this chapter on administration) emerged directly from the data without my prior consideration, so I chose not to add those retrospectively to the literature sections to maintain coherence, demonstrating that research is not linear but a responsive process.

### 7.1 Introduction

After exploring the stories of the participants individually in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the reasons behind a key finding of the study. That is, most of the time, participants’ professional teaching environments are not helpful for positive identity constructions and, for various reasons, constrain them instead. The participants take action under these circumstances, meaning all of the inspiring stories in the previous chapter are

either performed against the odds that would normally hinder taking action or work as a coping mechanism against the adversaries in the workplace. In some cases, both of these are true. According to Day et al. (2007), as I touched upon [earlier](#), this is because of the imbalances the professional environments create in the participants' identities, putting them in vulnerable positions. Yet, these negative influences, oftentimes, do not hinder them from taking action. On the contrary, taking action becomes their shelter against the negativities they experience in their workplaces, in their attempts to find balance in their identities again (Day et al., 2007).

Therefore, the findings, to some extent, contradict the general outlook of existing teacher identity studies. As discussed in the literature, identities can be stable and unstable from time to time (Carter & Doyle, 1996). Nevertheless, some of the well-known teacher identity studies generally highlight the unstable and fluid elements or phases (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004), as the majority of the studies focus on short periods in teachers' lives, rather than the stable 'core identity' (Gee, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2011). With the narrative perspective, an essential premise for this study is that, although this temporal fluidity is perceived to affect identities negatively, it may also provoke 'cognitive dissonance' that would lead to critical changes as well as positive identity construction (Hamilton, 2013; Liu & Xu, 2011).

Ali summarised this complexity concisely, when he said, 'I like my profession but I do not like my institution', which is the first sub-theme of the chapter. The following three sections analyse the reasons behind this intricacy:

- The detrimental roles of education unions in Turkey;
- The contextual constraints; and
- The need for more and meaningful continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities.

This chapter aims to answer the second research question:

- *How do educational, social, political and cultural factors influence the identity constructions of Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching?*

## 7.2 I like my Profession, but I do not like my Institution

All of the participants undertake various extra responsibilities while striving to perform well in their jobs. However, as the themes throughout the chapter reveal, educational constraints at micro, meso and macro levels (Day et al., 2006), which are institutional problems to a large extent, seem to distance, and even alienate, the participants from the educational bodies. As discussed in the Turkish context chapter, in a neoliberal educational context, teachers in Turkey are not autonomous due to the nationwide curricula, high-stakes testing and a centralised educational structure (Akyuz, 2009; Çayır, 2016; ERG, 2018). Consequently, standardisation and accountability expectations affect teachers, who were found to be feeling responsible to the upper bureaucracy (Erdag & Karadag, 2018).

In this excerpt, Ali discusses his feelings about the profession and educational structure:

*I have never had this mentality, I have never thought of getting my salary and enjoying my life, the less I work the better. I tell this to my wife all the time as well and she is a teacher, too. Never been like that. Yet, I have come to this conclusion. When somebody asks me if I like my profession, I say, 'I like my profession, but I do not like my institution'. I like my job. When I enter the classroom, I like being with my students. However, it is my institution not giving me the necessary time or the materials to do my job well. Or, forbidding me to buy extra materials, to photocopy them. Everything is related to each other. When a person loves to take care of students, it is the essence, I mean. When I look at myself as an outsider, if I did not like my job, I take care of young people in the football club, too. Why would I take it outside? School and club at the weekends. Why would I bother? (Ali)*

As the quotes in this and the following sections demonstrate, what Ali refers to with the 'institution' includes not only his school but also the provincial directorate and even the central Ministry of National Education. Hence, in a centralised educational system like Turkey's, the 'institution' represents the meso and the macro structures of education for Ali.

With its centralist character, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey oversees all steps of education, which includes forbidding teachers to recommend the purchase of extra materials or photocopying them to be used in the classroom. Yet, as Ali further explains to me, he has to ensure his students to be well prepared for the nationwide high-stakes tests at the end of high school, although he disapproves the testing system, given its contradiction of his ideals in teaching. What is more, a few years earlier, Ali was formally reprimanded by the visiting inspector because of using extra materials. Hence, such kinds of top-down impositions, even well-intended ones to stop students spending extra money for additional lesson materials to be used in the classroom, limit autonomy of teachers, ignoring their local

contexts as well as students' and parents' expectations. Therefore, it might be argued that Ali finds himself engaging in emotional labour (Benesch, 2017; 2020), in addition to exemplifying an implicit teacher activism (Marshall & Anderson, 2009; Zembylas, 2013). Ali has to carry on doing these kinds of activities, even though they are forbidden, or this is not his ideal teaching environment. These performance expectations and limited autonomy seem to disconnect Ali from educational bodies (i.e. macro-level institutions, such as the Ministry of National Education and City Directorate of Education as well as these institutions' directors). According to Ali, his institution should be providing him with the necessary tools and time to teach the syllabus. He feels that the institution enforces the current high-stakes testing system, pressures him with accountability and performance expectations, and limits his autonomy in the classroom as a teacher. Consequently, Ali falls into a dilemma: 'liking the job but not the institution'. This might be argued to be one of the reasons why he took up volunteering, which he describes as a need for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943), as well as his determination to carry on volunteering duties. In his [words](#), he finds the value he seeks as a teacher in his new role in the football club. Essentially, he desires to be recognised and shown respect. When he does not find respect, and, on top of it, when he feels his autonomy is restricted by the authorities, he feels disconnected.

Such disconnection is possible to be identified in the case of Ahmet, too. Although he works in a university setting, he identifies his weariness in the workplace and his poor relationships with his colleagues as the primary reasons for him to volunteer in South Africa.

Kemal discusses it as well, pointing out his disconnection as the reason to retire:

*After working full time for 37 years, I want to clear my head. I mean, I did my occupation with joy for 37 years, except for the last couple of years. Especially, except for the last two years. Because, in addition to the deterioration of the student potential, it was the education system that has corrupted completely. Parallel to that, teacher community corrupted unbelievably. What I mean by that is...What I mean by teachers corrupted is that teachers do not do a stroke of work. Teachers just enter their classes, grading is not an issue anymore anyway. You complete the grade of a student who is around 70s to 85; his/her parents object: 'Sir, why my child took 85, not 100!' You explain to them, tell them the reason, sometimes, some of them tell you this: 'why don't you send the exam papers to our homes, we would like to see it as well!' This was said to me. In fact, we could only show this with legal permission but we, all teachers, with good intentions, show the exam papers to students. We distribute them to students, locate the mistakes, and dwell on the papers one more time. Yet, even if we dwell on them three times, four times; those mistakes continue. Because the students got used to this or they were gotten used to it. They want to be spoon-fed or they think, 'how can I do*

*this later, not now. Now, I should live it up'. In the schools, this is unbelievably manifested. The lessons start at 8.10 am, I am there at 8.10. Yet, when I enter my class at 8.10, my colleagues enjoy their teas and coffees on the ground floor, and I become a bad teacher. Students ask me, 'why don't you drink your tea like the other teachers?' I mean, the lesson is only 40 minutes anyway. You spend at least 10 minutes of it off the topic, you have to. Because the students cannot comprehend what you say for 40 minutes. You try to do this but cannot get enough support from colleagues. Administration... There is nothing left as administration in the last couple of years anyway, in my opinion. Because they only try to implement what is being told from the top. Usually, school administrators are like, 'do not bring me trouble; I don't care much about what you do inside'. Yet, if you like to do something, there are definitely going to be some problems. I mean, when you do something, there are some halting points. And, the teacher not bringing any problems is the teacher doing nothing. As I understood that I cannot be that teacher, I decided to withdraw. Otherwise, it is not because I am tired or anything. Compared to many teachers, I still feel vigorous. In my opinion, the biggest handicap in education right now is the deformation in teachers, educators. That is how I see it. Students are always students. They are always inclined to spoil. They are always inclined to take the easy option. Nevertheless, we, teachers, need to be forcing, educating, planning, discipline. However, there is not a teacher community like that anymore. (Kemal)*

It could be alleged for both Kemal's and Ali's disconnect to be towards the educational bodies. Even though Kemal discusses several additional things compared to Ali, such as his colleagues, it is obvious to locate his focal point among the deterioration he felt in recent years, which is actually a global phenomenon (Day et al., 2007). Kemal insists that he loves teaching, like Ali. Even so, there were certain things in Kemal's teaching environment that he felt that he could not control any longer, thus leading him to retire. After working in state schools for so many years, Kemal's decision to retire is quite understandable and even natural (Day et al., 2007). Yet, it might also be argued that retiring is also an agentic act (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005) and a way of resisting the 'institution', namely the educational bodies and their policies.

In addition to Kemal's form of resistance, Cansu's story below shows that a teacher could resist the 'institution' actively with her sense of agency. Here, Cansu narrates on a project turning out to be quite negative for herself and her students. Yet, in the end, she uses it as an opportunity:

*Recently, there was the project carried with the patronage of our First Lady, "We are Anatolia". Fifty thousand students in total around Turkey will move. Students from Istanbul would come here, students here would go to some other cities. My school was also included. They asked me to go with the children; there were nine students from my school and nine more from others. We went to Istanbul, but the trip was a total disaster.*

*When I was trying to tell about the severity of the situation, the hosting principal, and we argued about an hour, there were many other problems, too; he told me that and I quote: "The world is small, Turkey is even smaller. We are both educators, we shall meet somewhere again". First of all, how dare you tell me that! In the end, we are all educators, and I am telling the problems into your face. You need to understand this well and you accept it. Nevertheless, you threaten me, even though you know that I am right. This is not nice. And, as I am a new teacher, they think I swallow that. When we returned, we were talking about it with my colleagues here in the city, they accused me first as if I was the problematic one. Then, when they realised, they told me not to leave it this way. I was calling everybody in the meantime, this should not be swallowed. That school should not accept any students anymore. Yes, we suffered but no one should after us. At that time, my kids were: 'what are we going to do teacher? We need to do something. This is not how they promised to us'. I said, uhuh 😊, okay, you shall write a petition immediately. They wrote it and okay, it tells the truth, but you should see the sentences 😊. I said, 'kids, these petitions will go to the directorate in the town, then in the city, and then it will go to Home Office'. Because they were the project coordinators. I said, okay, you wrote it, you talked about the truth, but this project should not be axed. For it to be continued throughout the country, you mention that the school shall not take it. They rearranged their petitions with constructive sentences. I collected their petitions and delivered it. They started asking about the result, I told them to be patient. Still, it was so nice for them to speak up when they suffered there. I have thirty students, not all of them maybe, but at least fifteen of them are like that. They can do whatever they need right now. I sometimes stand and think, these are my ideas, no one else interferes them, because they just enter the class and do their lessons. I am thinking if I do wrong from time to time. Then, when I look behind, I feel like I am doing the right thing. (Cansu)*

Cansu's story has many layers. One could perceive it as a single case, from which drawing a generalisation would be wrong. Yet, the story includes several things about being a young teacher (to which being a young female teacher could also be added although she does not mention it) who stands up against a superior officer in a country with centralist bureaucracy. Rather than accepting the institutional norms as they are, she challenges and takes action against them (Shor, 1992). Thus, although narrated under current theme, it connects with several other themes of the study, too, encapsulating the essence of Cansu's identity. With her care for the students, Cansu does not refrain from claiming their rights. Instead, with her agentic capacity, she uses it as a transformative learning experience (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). Besides, in the end, she reflects on herself and her actions, as, in her own words, she often does, thus, demonstrating her reflexivity, too (Schön, 1983; 1987). I discuss reflexivity more comprehensively at the end of the following chapter.

The effects of the educational context on the teachers are somewhat similar to the Chinese teachers in Liu and Xu's (2011) study, experiencing struggles in their profession during a time of rapid social transformation. It might be argued that the rapid educational reforms in Turkey and the test-oriented environment show resemblance to China. As Liu and Xu (2011) assert, to their surprise, the participants benefitted from the turbulences in the workplace with their administrators and colleagues in terms of their professional development. In the study, different stories and discussions highlight the disconnection between the educational bodies and managers at the school level, provincial level and beyond. This disconnection, which might be attributed to the ongoing reform periods during which teachers began to feel that their autonomy is restricted, seems to have engaged them with emotional labour while distancing them from the 'institution' (Benesch, 2017). Nevertheless, it does not stop them from taking action in multiple ways as well as taking control of their professional development, which is evaluated in the concluding section of this chapter.

The following section on the educational unions in Turkey might, quite interestingly, help to explain why the participants feel disconnected from the educational bodies, as well as revealing why some of the participants refrain from conventional politics and activism, which is one of the fundamental discussions in the following chapter.

### 7.3 Unions in Turkey: Ideological Labels

As a young teacher, Cansu discusses the educational unions in Turkey, and why she is not involved in union activities, even though she is an active, agentic teacher:

*I am not a union member. I do not know really. I do not know how they operate, as well, to be frank. I always perceive it this way: they only work on determining the salary raises at the end of the term. I mean that is what I see on the news. Unionism I have witnessed here, to be honest, is about string-pulling. I mean determining the principals, coming into more powerful positions, we can solve your problems if you are from our union. To be honest, I do not have any ideas, whether teacher unions serve teachers' rights or not. I have never had any interest in this matter and the reason is what I have seen and witnessed. Unions do not interest me. I work solo. Just last week, a union representative came and asked me if I would join theirs. I said to him that I could work individually. I mean we just met; do not we need to have a chat first? Instead of talking about education, how we could change it for better, you just invite me to your union. He replies, 'come and join our union so we can solve those'. I mean, are you kidding with me? Therefore, I do not have any interests and I do not have any desires to join one. It is like, you go to one side, and they say they have a cause 😊, this is what they say. You go to another one, they say they are the biggest; they could pull all the strings they want. Yet, neither sides appeal to me. I do not think they serve a useful*



*purpose, a real cause. The reason is favouritism. They favour their associates. If he/she is one of us, let us favour him/her. If he/she is not one of us, let us not favour him/her. This is not nice. You just marginalise each other. Therefore, I am against it actually. If it were about claiming rights or changing certain things for the better, I would not perceive them as they are today. You do not need it if you have an ideal and want to defend it; you do not need it behind you. I am okay if you are rightminded and aim to change and develop things. Otherwise, if you are looking for favours for yourself in the workplace, if that is why you choose to be involved in unions, that is really silly. People I see are like that. I do not approve it myself. (Cansu)*

Cansu stays away from unions, because of their political side. As the next chapter is to reveal, she takes a similar stance against activism stressing her refrainment from the local politics. Yet, in addition to the political dimension, she touches upon the problems with the current unionism that are discussed in the literature, such as determining the principals and categorising people politically. For the military interventions in 1971 and 1980, the military's excuse was the political sectarianism in the country (Gül & Kiriş, 2015). When recent Occupy Gezi protests and coup attempt are taken into account, it could be argued that ongoing and increasing polarisation at the country is reflected in politics and union membership, which are not welcomed by some teachers. Hence, when teacher activism is discussed, in addition to the personal level, the political institutions in the country should also be taken into consideration while examining participation and non-participation of teachers.

Ali discusses it further, about being a union member and being labelled:

*Ali: For the first four years of my teaching, I did not have any union membership. Then, some colleagues asked me to join their union as they were competing to be the authorised union in the city. [...] A union should be contrarian, dissident, in my opinion. When my colleagues tell me if my union were in charge, things would be different, I tell them, 'when my union becomes closer to the governing authorities, I will change my union'. Because a union is contrarian by its nature, it should be. The first and foremost problem of unions in Turkey is that our union cuts are covered by the state. This needs to be voluntary. Why does the government compensate my union cuts? This is ridiculous. It should be voluntary, so the activist dimension could come into prominence.*

**Ammar: So that it could be more independent.**

*Ali: Of course, so that it could be more independent, it could be dissident. By dissident, I mean, err...I mean, if we had this conversation five years ago [before the coup attempt], it would be different. It will probably be different in five years. Maybe this is how it is in a developing country 😊. I am a delegate in the city by the way.*

**Ammar: So, you are active in the union?**

*Ali: I am not actually. I found out that I was my union's representative in my workplace, only because I was the only member 😊. That is why I am a delegate. However, I do not actively work within the union.*

**Ammar: Is it because you think differently, or?**

*Ali: Well, it is that and I do not have any time, as well. The reason I was not a union member for the first five years was that I did not want my label to go before me when I go to a new school. Ah, he is a member of this union; he supports this party, this and that. It is so difficult to overcome the prejudices. Your principal and others will immediately see your union from the system, and you will bother to overcome his/her bias. Why bother? I still think this way actually. Yet, there are some benefits, too. I pay less at the contracted private hospital. Or, when I stayed at their guesthouse in Ankara. There are some small benefits. What else? Union allocates a lawyer when you have legal disputes with the Ministry. Otherwise, to be honest, I do not expect that they will defend my rights like an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. (Ali)*

When teacher unions are polarised at this level and mainly used for string-pulling, the good leadership, already an issue in terms of professional development of teachers, becomes even more questionable, standing out as a prominent concern. With participants' common problem that they do not receive enough support from the managers is considered, it is not difficult to see all of these structured issues as tied to each other.

As discussed in [chapter two](#), there are four big teacher unions in Turkey, all ideologically positioned and polarised (Tas, 2018). Moreover, becoming a member of the union aligned with the current governing party is argued to increase the chances of being promoted to administrative roles in schools, directorates, and the Ministry (Kayikci, 2013). Rather than the conventional unionism that is contrarian and resistant; this new cooperative, reformist union role is detected to be in line with the neoliberal trend across the globe (Buyruk, 2015). Thus, they are perceived excessively connected to politics by teachers in Turkey, who feel alienated from union movements (Berkant & Gul, 2017).

The current situation of the unions exemplifies why the majority of the participants, despite being quite active and politically conscious, refrain from conventional activism or labels of conventional politics. In other words, the current political climate in Turkey, which has both recent and long-lasting structural constraints, seems to deter some of the participants from conventional activism, to which teacher unions are examples. Under these circumstances, it is easier to comprehend why only Zeynep identifies herself with activism, being also the representative of her teacher union, and why other participants do not embrace an activist teacher identity openly. This is elaborated on in the following chapter in more detail.

In the next theme of the section, I highlight the contextual problems, especially relevant to the easternmost parts of the country. They are also connected to the other themes of the chapter, also linking to pre-service and in-service teacher education in the country.

#### 7.4 Contextual Constraints: We are Not Equipped to Teach Here

The quotes in this section are from Cansu and Zeynep, two female participants who work in village schools in the southeast and northeast of the country. In Turkey, there is a major gap between urban and rural areas, especially in the eastern parts of the country, in terms of socio-economic development and infrastructure (Ogdul, 2010). Although teachers generally find it satisfying and peaceful to teach in rural areas, there are various educational problems in these areas that are mostly infrastructural as well, including 'insufficient teaching materials, poor physical conditions, transportation problems, the low value attached to education by families and communities, or lack of pre-service or in-service teacher training in relation to rural teaching' (Ciftci & Cin, 2018, pp. 687-688). When rural education is concerned, it should not just be discussed around numbers, economic sustainability or human capital (Cuervo, 2012). Especially centralised educational systems are criticised for ignoring the local contexts and their particularities across the globe (Aikman, 2011), which could be one of the primary sources of the problems plaguing rural teaching. Ciftci and Cin's (2018, p. 686) qualitative study with teachers and local community members from sixteen different villages in central Turkey determines the current problems as: 'scarcity of resources; insufficient understanding of social, cultural and economic contexts that constrain educational attempts; lack of collaboration between teacher and communities; and irrelevant education'. Both Zeynep and Cansu's discussions are in line with the outcomes of the study.

Cansu discusses the issues she faces as a rural teacher and evaluates her undergraduate education:

*I can say that university education does not match with reality. We had a course called Approaches and Techniques in ELT. Well, you think I should apply desuggestopedia, add the silent way, and avoid grammar-translation. Then, you come here, wow, the child cannot even count. Literacy is a big problem in primary schools, they cannot. Besides, English is not read as it is written, you need to teach that first. You cover them all. They showed me in the university, use this method, and use these techniques. You come here, and it is eclectic. Yes, you use eclectic, but it is as if it does not mean that ☺. I mean, you organise everything, you must; otherwise, it is impossible. You cannot create an educational understanding of your methods. That is why it goes with the conditions here. I think university students should be informed about these. (Cansu)*

Not only pre-service education, but in-service education should also focus on these issues, to be discussed in the following section. Zeynep discusses her problems in rural northeast as a novice teacher, which seem to cause a temporal fragmentation in her teacher identity. Her account reveals that she has been not supported in her undergraduate education or after she started teaching:

*I had a serious period of depression here last year. Crying all the time, there is not a decent place to stay, no transportation to the city centre. I was like, 'where am I!' As if they had taken us to a village, instead of the city centre. The children in the school that I did my practicum had decent background knowledge. Here, there are children who cannot speak Turkish. I taught Turkish to some of them. Nobody taught me about it when I was studying. No one prepared me for this. No one told me that I was going to work in a school where the children are forced to marry. No one told me that I should teach these kids to be a human, English is a secondary problem. (Zeynep)*

If it were not for Zeynep's previous volunteering experiences and her activist stance, it is clear that it would have been more difficult for her to teach there. Her intuitive perspective into teaching helps her focus on children's immediate needs, rather than learning English. Although, in her own words, her mental wellbeing has been disturbed, she is still agentic enough to take action against the problems:

*I did a concert activity with the children last week. And the reason was that they were afraid of English. They would think that they could never learn it. They have Arabic lesson, too, in school and I always tell them, I can speak several languages and when you ask me, I think Arabic is harder than them. Because even its alphabet is different. If you can learn Arabic, man, you can do great in English. Seeing them singing in English after that helped them gain self-confidence. (Zeynep)*

The primary problem to be addressed seems to be teachers' wellbeing, as aside from the need for more professional support as novice teachers, they need personal support, too. These imbalances in their wellbeing could affect their identities (Day et al., 2007), although taking action seems to help.

In the following quotes, Zeynep and Cansu discuss a crucial issue, especially in eastern Turkey, which is girls' education:

*I had so many quarrels with the parents here and even got death threats. Because I keep telling children, especially the girls, 'you will continue your education, I do not want to come to your weddings; I want to come to your high school graduations'. Therefore, some parents reacted, saying 'this girl is stupid anyway, we will marry her, why do you put studying into her head'. Because there are so many girls forced to marry after finishing middle school. Last year, when I was on duty at school's dormitory, I would want the eighth graders to call me sister, rather than*

*the teacher. Because I was not teaching them. One night, one of them comes in the middle of the night and knocks my door. I am surprised because it was sleeping time. I open the door, a girl, crying her heart out. I ask what is wrong, invite her in. She comes in, closes the door and asks me if I could lock it. I say okay, she comes, hugs me crying. I have never seen anyone cry like that. I ask her what has happened, and she tells me, 'they will come to ask for my hand for my marriage'. She is thirteen, only thirteen. I say to her, do not you worry, you will study. You need to study, this is a sign for you; you will carry on your studies. She gives a promise and by the way she is in high school for health sciences right now. I talked to her father as well. He told me that he was angry with his wife that she told this to her daughter, because he kicked them away anyway, did not let them in. He said he wanted her daughter to continue her school. But this affected her psychology. Normally, she would get full on her mock tests, but this was only one week before the high-stakes test and with the stress, she was not that successful. When you think why the students fail here a lot, why they are not successful enough, you realise that many of them have so much pressure on them. If they cannot make it, they either become shepherds on the mountain, if they are boys, or are given to somebody to be forced to marry, if they are girls. It is so different, I do not know. They tell me, 'never mind, let it go, are you going to solve it'. If we all think that way, how can society change? (Zeynep)*

*Girls are not educated here. Parents take them after the eighth grade and they are forced to marry. I have done so many home visits since the beginning of the term. I have helped eighty per cent of them to come back to school, but twenty per cent did not. What will happen to them? Unfortunately, they will be forced to marry when they become fifteen or sixteen by their parents. This is inevitable here. I am specifically interested in the girls here. I go and talk to parents one by one. They always tell me, we send our daughters because there are female teachers in the school 😊. I tell them, okay, we have female teachers, but our male teachers do not do anything to your kids. If my father sends me here, thousands of kilometres away from my home, and is okay with it; if I come here to your doors, you should also do something. Do you not want your kids to study, become a doctor or a teacher one day? If some girls go to school and return here as doctors or teachers, things will change here. Then the families will start sending their children to school. Because there is tribalism here. Only the majors have a word, not even fathers. Only what majors tell happens. If they say that children should not go to school, they cannot, it is the end of their lives. I do not know how long it will take for them to change, to adapt to the west of the country. I mean, the conditions are harsh. Not on my side, I am trying hard to settle things, but I honestly think that these children do not deserve this life. This is what makes me sad. I mean, I get used to seeing children wearing a t-shirt for a month for example. My family came in April to see the Children Day celebrations on 23 April. They all returned crying. It was very saddening to see the children. They had planned to leave after coming back from the celebrations, but they wanted to stay for some more with me. They thought that I would be better if they stay a few more days. This is my normality. I think I am more mature now, after coming here. I am not as energetic as I used to be. That is why they were a bit sad, I guess. Yet, this*

*is not a change, we all grow up and fit in the conditions. I am 24 now, this is a bit too much for me; I am not going to say too heavy. Many people are not aware of here, in fact, they should be for people to try more for here. This has been a different experience, but I am happy about it. After seeing this part of life, I will go back to my old life anyway. Nevertheless, I believe it will be a huge accomplishment for myself to return after seeing this part. (Cansu)*

To this part, Zeynep's story in chapter six on [child brides](#) could be added. Moreover, it is not just girls' education that is problematic in these rural regions. Cansu's stories about [the seasonal workers](#) and [the eldest brother](#) reveal all of the boys and the girls facing such challenges. In Zeynep's words:

*They either become shepherds on the mountain if they are boys or are given to somebody to be forced to marry if they are girls. (Zeynep)*

I preferred to keep Cansu's quote above at this length, as it is another example epitomising her identity. It may be too much for a twenty-four-year-old teacher, in her first teaching year. Cansu accepts being affected, which was also noticed by her family. Nevertheless, both of the participants perceive these experiences as a catalyst and keep striving to make positive changes, all of which, in Cansu's words, counts.

As the participants demonstrate, mainly because of the centralised educational system and the application of the same curriculum across the country, teacher education in Turkey is far from preparing pre-service and in-service teachers for teaching in rural areas (Ciftci & Cin, 2018; Kizilaslan, 2012). Yet, as Capuk and Unsal (2017) find in their qualitative study with rural primary school teachers in Southeast Turkey, having similar problems also encouraged their participants to bond and exchange ideas about teaching, which the authors identify as helpful for their professional development. In this regard, Cansu's involvement in the project team is an example where collaboration feeds into professional development informally (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007; Sachs, 2016).

Moreover, both Zeynep and Cansu's moral values and care for their students (Carr, 2003) seem to be the main reason to overcome their difficulties and their need to take action, which is discussed more in the next chapter. With the values they hold about teaching (Johnston, 2003), Cansu and Zeynep strive to make efforts for their students, even though they lack the professional support. Their individual and collaborative engagements stemming from their care are certainly helpful for them to overcome the novice teacher problems, too (Akcan, 2016). In this regard, their engagements become a helpful tool for them to channel their emotional labour (Benesch, 2017) into productive change (Johnson & Golombek, 2011), not just for their students and communities but also for themselves.

The next section scrutinises the professional development of the participant teachers. As it demonstrates, their formal CPD opportunities are quite limited and far from meeting their needs. Yet, they benefit from the informal opportunities created by themselves.

### 7.5 When Participants are not Supported Formally, They Take Control of Their Own Professional Development

O'Brien and Jones (2014, p. 683) indicate that after the second half of the 2000s, the term in-service training (INSET) has been replaced with continuing professional development (CPD), 'although it is still in common usage today by teachers, schools and, occasionally, government or inspection bodies in some countries'. While asking questions on the topic, I preferred INSET, as it still commonly used in the Turkish language and it was one of the several questions investigating their overall professional development. Hence, the responses I received from the participants were mainly around their in-service training experiences. Yet, what Kemal discusses as an experienced teacher at the end demonstrates that he would prefer a comprehensive, well-planned CPD strategy.

The quotes in this section reflect the cumulative CPD experiences of participants in different parts of the country. In this story, Kemal discusses his in-service training experiences:

*Many of the teachers do not want the in-service training. Majority of the ones wanting it would like it in another city, by the seaside, in a nice place where he/she can enjoy a pastime. Okay, it is the right of the teacher; I am okay with all these. Yet, in addition to these, I mean, they should not be the priority. I mean, in the in-service training for three, four days or a week; I should learn what other teachers do well in my field, I should take what is good going on around the world, I should listen to the people giving us this training first. There is not a teacher community open to this. I know from my colleagues. Teacher community is not open to it; they are more interested in the pastime activities. Of course, there are but their numbers are not enough. I mean, it would not be more than 10 out of 100. I went to four-five INSETs but to be honest, after the second day, I let it go as well. Because you look at the instructor, he/she says, 'we kick off at 9 am tomorrow'. The next day, it is 9.30 am and the instructor comes and tries to gather the group. You start at 9.30 and after one hour, people start moaning; we are hungry, we need to go to the toilet, etc. and the session ends at 11 when it is supposed to end at 12. As a matter of fact, you look at the group and see that they are not here to learn something new. There are only a few people pushing like you. The afternoon session is supposed to start at 1.30 pm and it starts after 2 pm. After only 1 hour and a half or so, the group starts, 'where are we going tonight?' In this case, there is no possibility to set off and progress with a group that you cannot share certain things in common. You cannot go further. (Kemal)*

Kemal's story refers to the INSETs taking place in one of the ten in-service training institutes in different parts of the country (MEB, Hizmetiçi Eğitim Enstitüleri, 2019). After applying to open positions, teachers across the country, if their applications are successful, attend these more structured pieces of training in the institutes for a certain period. Although Kemal's remarks concerning the majority of the participants are quite noteworthy and I discuss it below, the contents of these INSETs also need to be addressed. Qualitative studies conducted in Turkey reveal teachers to perceive them as unhelpful, top-down designed, delivered by unqualified instructors with old-fashioned and receptive methods, thus, failing to reach the targeted aims (Atay, 2008; Odabasi Cimer, Cakir, & Cimer, 2010). Besides, Gokmenoglu, Clark and Kiraz (2016), to their surprise, found the primary school teachers in Turkey, regardless of their gender, teaching experience or teaching subject, to have lost their beliefs in the short-term INSETs, even though the study followed a major reform that brought a curriculum change<sup>8</sup>. Teachers in the study reported the need to improve themselves in the areas they identified as not covered during their undergraduate studies. Nevertheless, they were disinterested in the INSETs offered by the Ministry of National Education (Gokmenoglu et al., 2016). A recent large scale mixed-method study reaches similar outcomes with teachers of English in the country. Accordingly, although the participant teachers found the INSETs helpful for their professional development and cooperation with their colleagues, they list the problems as 'the limited number of programmes on offer, the lack of qualified trainers, insufficient practical focus, poor lecturing, inconvenient time and place, and the perfunctory nature of the INSET offered' (Uztosun, 2018, p. 566). As a consequence, Kemal's observation about other teachers might also stem from the quality of the content offered in the training and exasperation about their ongoing INSET experiences.

In our dialogue below, Ali talks about his applications to the INSETs in these institutes, which becomes more interesting when Kemal's experience about the participants in the training is also taken into account:

***Ammar: I attended a congress recently, there was a statistic as an example from an academic. Our Ministry of Education offers in-service training for about thirty thousand teachers annually. We have a million***

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<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of National Education in Turkey reformed the primary and secondary education of the country in 2012, which is known as the 4+4+4 system. With four years of primary, secondary, and high school education respectively, 4+4+4 replaced the previous 5+3+3. How the new system affected English language education of the country can be found in Gursoy, Çelik Korkmaz and Atak Damar's (2013) study from the language teachers' perspectives.



**teachers. I mean, some teachers want it but are not included. I wonder if there are the ones who are included yet do not want it.**

*Ali: Well, if you know somebody from the Ministry, it is like, I write your name so you could have a nice trip. This is how it works usually.*

**Ammar: Such a shame. Also, I am curious about the quality of the content. I wonder if it is something that will be helpful. That is another point.**

*Ali: Educational matters like assessment and evaluation, etc. Besides, in my opinion, if I claim to receive such training, it should be enough for the Ministry. There is somebody claiming, why would not give it to him/her. This year, I decided to do apply, for the first time, several INSETs. To different cities in all parts of Turkey. Just to stop them saying that I do not want to be better, I do not want to develop myself and I am only interested in the football club. Now, I receive the rejections one by one from the Ministry. In the last rejection, their excuse was to give priority to teachers who are also postgraduate students. Well, okay, but they are already ahead of me, I could not do a master's or a PhD, I need it more 😊.  
(Ali)*

Ali's claims might be argued to be subjective<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, I must underline that, far from each other, both Ali and Kemal discuss similar things about the profiles of teachers receiving INSETs. Moreover, Ali makes quite an essential point when he says that claiming should be enough to secure a place for INSETs. If what he speculates is true about which teachers could use the facilities and for which aims, it certainly requires a more careful implementation from the Ministry to optimise the country's already limited resources. Interestingly, out of the 436 central and online INSET activities planned by the Ministry across the country, 152 were cancelled afterwards mostly due to 'austerity measures' in 2018 (MEB, Hizmetiçi Eğitim Enstitüleri, 2019), which raises numerous questions about the possible outcomes of ongoing projects. In addition to the central and online INSETs, there are local ones as well, which are held before the start of each semester, usually at schools (MEB, Hizmetiçi Eğitim Enstitüleri, 2019). Yet, especially Cansu and Zeynep's cases in the previous section give reasons to question the quality of these INSETs.

As a younger teacher, Cansu talks about her recent INSET experiences:

*I have had many INSETs, fourteen, fifteen of them. However, when it comes to your question, except for one, they have never served the purpose. I mean, I was ready to take it, if only they had given. For example, that day we were going to take a seminar on the multiculturalism of Anatolia. We went to the seminar, in-service training, and the person talks on laws about student transportation. I mean, I did*

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<sup>9</sup> I must note, however, in a narrative study like this, which is after the experiences rather than the truth, it is not significant whether an argument is subjective (Polkinghorne, 1995).

*not come there to hear about these, tell me about the region, and tell me what I do not know about here. I have come to this region, inform me about its history. I mean, take me to the old city, present the structures there to me, teach me, and tell me this and that. I met a history professor at the university, he told me about the structures in the old town. Turns out I knew many things wrong. I mean tell me about these. I can make some progress with my efforts but if you already have a seminar on it, do not tell me about irrelevant laws. There was only one training which served its purpose and which was helpful. A two-week in-service training about inclusive education. I went to that and I was really pleased with it. To be honest, I had not thought it was going to be that good, but I wanted to give it a go. I went and it was extremely pleasing. Various activities, various pieces of training every day. A trainer even played blind man's bluff with us. It was quite entertaining. Apart from this one, all the other INSETs did not serve their purposes. Many things are just on paper. (Cansu)*

In this excerpt, Cansu makes a comparison between the local INSETs before the start of the semesters, which are also called 'seminars' in Turkey, and the more structured, two-week in-service training at one of the ten in-service institutes.

Cansu's experiences at local and national levels portray the formal continuing professional development opportunities in Turkey as transmissive, and quite unlikely to bring transformative change with their instrumental mentalities to remedy or develop technical skills (Kennedy, 2014). Even so, her experience at the in-service institute shows they could be helpful for teachers when delivered better. This applies to the local seminars at each school, too, where the problem seems to reside more in their implementation, rather than the design. Indeed, there are lesson plans for 111 seminars and 960 courses on various topics in the Ministry's website (MEB, Hizmetiçi Eğitim Enstitüleri, 2019). Additionally, including topics like 'multiculturalism in Anatolia' could be helpful for the overall professional development of teachers, if they serve the purpose. However, as Cansu points out, which concurs with the findings I discuss at the beginning of the section (Atay, 2008; Odabasi Cimer, Cakir, & Cimer, 2010), there is a mismatch between the planning and the implementation.

What Kemal discusses in our conversation below touches upon various points around CPD, especially around good leadership:

*Kemal: The administrator should do it. The higher executive will tell, 'dear teacher, I am opening you all the channels, just inform me about all your steps'. In this country, there is not much difference in terms of finding a job between a university graduate and a post-graduate. I mean, if you are going to be a teacher at a state school or a private one, the conditions they offer will be the same whether you are a master graduate or an undergrad.*

**Ammar: Unless you work for a university, there are not many alternatives.**

*Kemal: Yes, only there you can go higher. Yet, this should not be like that. People having these degrees should have the means to use them. I do not know, as I said, it is not my expertise, but I think there should be many things to do. For example, if you work at a high school and you have a master degree, the administrator will tell you, 'Mr/Ms x, please give us an in-service training on this matter, please share your ideas and direct us on these matters'. However, it is not done. On the contrary, school principals expect silly things from them.*

**Ammar: I always say that we should have school principals with master and PhD degrees. Unfortunately, there are not many qualified administrators.**

*Kemal: No, there are not, they only do what they are told from the top. Okay, do what is told from the top but you are there as a principal. Everybody can do it if it is just implementing the orders. However, the school principal should take initiatives, should be able to use his/her resources to increase the quality. No one uses it. In this case, in secondary education, there is no point in doing post-graduate studies.*

**Ammar: Then, there is not much need for a teacher to improve himself/herself.**

*Kemal: The teacher will want to improve himself/herself. This is how it is in this country.*

Kemal discussed all these after I asked him about the INSET opportunities for teachers. In addition to in-service training, as an experienced teacher, Kemal makes significant points about teacher autonomy for teachers to become agents of change, a teacher's overall career development and the links between good leadership and educational transformation (van der Heijden et al., 2015). Consequently, Kemal gives a subtle example of the differences between the comprehensive and career-long continuing professional development, and short-term and instrumental in-service training (Kennedy, 2014; O'Brien & Jones, 2014). In the current situation, as Ali points out, teachers are under performance expectations because of the nationwide high-stakes tests while their autonomy is highly restricted by the authorities. Accordingly, it is quite difficult for teachers in Turkey to invest in their own identities. Under these circumstances, participants' volunteering engagements become highly valuable, as they provide various benefits for their personal and professional identity constructions. Yet, as the previous section and the following chapter demonstrate, it is difficult to claim that they perform their engagements in collaboration with their administrators and colleagues. In an environment with standards and performance expectations, where teachers are not expected to be neither autonomous nor agentic, and where, in general, school principals do not encourage collaboration or personal

development, it is highly unrealistic to expect a transformative CPD mentality to flourish (Sachs, 2016).

Nevertheless, participant teachers' volunteering activities are perfect examples of informal CPD, which are more likely to create transformative learning opportunities (Fraser, et al., 2007). All participants discuss the positive effects of taking action in their everyday teaching, examples of which could be found in the upcoming chapter, in addition to their individual stories in the previous one. Moreover, their experiences affect their professional identities, by helping them to overcome the imbalances between their vulnerability, wellbeing and sense of agency (Day et al., 2007). On top of all these, their engagements are noteworthy examples of teachers exercising their agency, thus becoming active agents of change. Consequently, even though it is highly difficult to argue for the educational structures to contribute well to the professional development needs of the participants, in particular at the provincial and school levels, they take the control themselves and find ways to transform themselves and others, including their students and local communities.

In this regard, as an example, I chose to present Ali's career story in [Appendix J](#) in his own words, which touches upon various points discussed in this section at length. In terms of investing in their own identities, what Ali narrates on his career development is conducive to reveal his pre-service and in-service professional development trajectory and the reasons, which led him to take up and embrace volunteering.

## 7.6 Summary of Chapter 7

The following chapter lays out various examples of identity construction taking place through engaging in action. To conclude, this chapter demonstrated the participants as not just made out of success stories. The professional issues they bring into the interviews as follows but, surely, there are other problems that Turkish teachers face every day:

- the disconnection between the participant teachers and the educational authorities;
- neoliberal teacher unionism;
- contextual problems, related to rural teaching and girls' education; and
- problematic nature of already limited continuing professional development opportunities.

Just like the other teachers in their country and almost all over the world, the participants are under major constraints to carry on their everyday teaching duties. As the chapter demonstrates, they are constrained by the managerial professionalism (Sachs, 2001), which

causes them to distance themselves from the educational authorities. It is possible to link the disconnection between the participants and the macro and meso educational structures to neoliberalism and its recent effects on Turkish education. Exam centred teaching environment and subsequent accountability expectations from the teachers seem to be the major sources of the disconnection. Neoliberalism seems to have shown its effects on education unions in Turkey, too. Even though they demonstrate their teaching mentality as broadly progressive and activist, the participants tend to stay away from unions, with some of them revealing teacher unions' utilisation for string-pulling in Turkey. In the professional landscape, another major issue affecting participants' identities is the contextual problems, especially around rural teaching and girls' limited education opportunities. The two female participants of the study, who are young and at the beginning of their careers seem to be under immense pressures because of their teaching contexts. This pressure certainly threatens their well-being and mental health, yet they are resilient enough to challenge the status quo. All these problems are connected to another major issue, which is the continuing professional development of these teachers. Turkey's both pre-service and in-service formal professional development strategies need structural reforms, which is discussed in the final chapter, with several proposals. However, participants' volunteering experiences develop themselves professionally in an informal way. Accordingly, they are agentic against institutional drawbacks.

As a final word for the chapter, it is evident for the problems, affecting the professional identities of the participants, to be mostly structural. Dewey's attention to the difference between unity and uniformity in early twentieth century, as well as his emphasis for diversity and locality for the Turkish educational system (Turan, 2000), indicate that these problems prevail for a long time and overcoming them will require a lot more efforts with the current, highly centralised structure of the Ministry of National Education. However, as the next chapter underlines, it is not just big steps, but also the small steps count, which can both challenge the overall structure and bring transformative change.

## 8. Teachers of Action

The previous chapter demonstrated that participants take action in a rather unsupportive environment. All the same, they are reflexive about the challenges they encounter in their educational settings, such as inadequate pre-service and in-service education, contextual constraints as well as lack of support from the educational bodies, as taking action seems to be one of the ways they deal with these issues.

In this chapter, I argue for the construction of the concept of *teacher of action*, starting with a discussion of the need for this conceptualisation. As I explain at the very [beginning](#) of the thesis, I had questions about volunteering, activism and teacher activism before collecting the data, regarding where volunteering in addition to teaching would fit in across the terminologies. Following a rather painstaking data analysis process, all these stories, the experiences and the discourses led me to the *teacher of action* concept.

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I mainly argue that there are various ways of taking action, and the current literature does not provide a way of capturing participants' engagements within a single concept.

As stressed in the introduction, one of the priorities of my analysis was to encapsulate the multifaceted yet intact engagements of the participants. After conducting the interviews, I came to the conclusion that their engagements are beyond volunteering, demonstrating transformative agendas (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Shor, 1992). If I called them volunteers, in addition to risking to capture the complexity of their authentic ways of taking action, they would be confused with other types of volunteer teachers. Because, if one thought of a volunteer teacher or a teacher who volunteers, it is more likely that he/she would consider a teacher who teaches for a short term (Zhou & Shang, 2011) or with fewer qualifications (Romero, 2015) as well as a teacher who voluntarily teaches or tutors extra courses with a mission, which is often religious (Varghese & Johnston, 2007).

Additionally, when I asked them if they were volunteers or activists, based on the blurred and overlapping definitions of volunteering and activism (Fiorina, 2001; Musick & Wilson, 2008), some participants deliberately did not align themselves with activism and politics. Despite the broader meaning attached to teacher activism as a particular concept by Sachs (2001), the participants demonstrated that activism may not be appealing to everyone in

some contexts, for which the reasons might be semantics, local politics or personal preferences. Furthermore, Sachs (2001) proposes teacher activism as a certain type of teacher professionalism, as opposed to the managerial professionalism, typically associated with neoliberalism. Teachers in this study do not only engage in professional activities within the boundaries of schools or related to education. Rather, they exemplify that, in addition to an activist professional's activities, a teacher could take action in myriad ways, within and beyond school or teaching. Nevertheless, all these seemingly irrelevant or distant engagements such as running a football club or volunteering in an orphanage relate to education and transform teachers' professional as well as personal identities. This identity construction through narratives, with my extensive readings on the topic, resulted in *teacher of action* concept to be constructed.

In this chapter, I build up the concept of *teacher of action* via six sub-themes:

- In the first section, *We are Different from Other Teachers*, I highlight participants' emphasis to differentiate them from 'other' teachers, who do not go beyond their teaching responsibilities.
- Then, in section two, *Values and Emotions of Teachers of Action*, and section three, *Motivations of Teachers of Action*, I scrutinise the values and motivations of the teachers respectively, to understand the motives leading them to action.
- The fourth section, *Teacher of Action in Practice*, is the essence of this chapter, with examples of *teacher of action* in practice, including their 'big and small' stories.
- In the final two sections, *How Activism is Perceived*, and, *Individual Activism: Activism for Introverts*, I focus on how activism is understood by the participants, with discussions around different ways of engaging in activism as well as around the discourses of activism.

Like the initial discussion chapter, this chapter aims to answer the first research question:

- *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*

## 8.2 We are Different from Other Teachers

The first and foremost commonality among the participants, which led the concept to emerge, is a clear emphasis that they believe they are different from the majority of teachers around them. Initially, I chose to call this majority as the 'sedentary teachers', after calling the participant teachers as 'teachers of action', to highlight the boundaries between

them. However, sedentary teaching may imply that this majority is not fully qualified to teach or they do not even perform their basic duties as a teacher. Although this might be somewhat true for some teachers, as the participants point out from time to time, the majority is contractually bound teachers who only do what they are supposed to do. Therefore, as the participants seem to be comparing themselves with the extreme other end, sedentary teachers may be far from depicting the majority.

In this quote, Cansu narrates her story to join the project team soon after she went to Southeast Turkey to teach:

*When I was about to join the team, people near me were all like, 'are you going to save this place? You make the projects a requirement and bring trouble on us', and these are teachers. I thought for a week and said to myself that I am here anyway, there is nothing else I can do. You are a teacher, there is just one café that you can go, and you may guess what it is like, I think. Shall we go there and criticise some people? Okay, I am okay to criticise but how much change after the criticism? How much can you change? Can you do any better in your own situation? [...] Because there is absolutely nothing to do here. I remember not having electricity for a week; this is a town centre. Not having water for three, four days. I mean, we all suffer in some ways, but can you make it any better, what are your contributions? This is what is important, I always tell them. Now, I have become a bit cheeky. I tell them: 'Yours is the easiest, just do your lesson, slam the door and it is finished'. They got used to it, not to tell me anything anymore. This is how it goes 😊. (Cansu)*

Cansu told me this at the beginning of our first interview, attempting to describe how she joined the project team. I heard similar things from all of the other participants. Ahmet, for example, discussed at length people's negative and, even absurd, reactions when they heard that he was going to South Africa. Ali and Kemal substantiated this negativity, as well. Ali's focus was people who allege that they were benefiting from the football club. For Kemal, it was the projects. Both of them stressed that, instead of receiving help, they had to face constant criticism and negativity, especially from their colleagues. Zeynep summarised these reactions so: *"There is this negative side; my colleagues assume that I do these for self-promotion 😊."*

Before exploring this further, it must be noted that the reactions from these 'other' teachers affect the participants. When defining and explaining what they do, they also define who they are and, perhaps more importantly, who they are not. This is the basic definition of identity. Identity is who they are and who they are not, in relation to others (Jenkins, 1996). Relatedly, all participants felt the need to differentiate themselves from a certain group of teachers, while explaining what they do and who they are. Their categorisation echoes Gronlund's (2011, p. 869) study on the identities of volunteers from Finland, for whom 'their common enemy [... is] the selfish person who only cares for his or herself'.



After the first interviews, while contemplating the reasons behind their problems with colleagues and managers in their workplaces, I came to a tentative conclusion that they are rather rebels, who think outside the box. Cansu, in our second interview, discussed this upon my question:

*I am in dispute with many of my colleagues now ☹️. I do not talk to any teachers in the school that I teach this year. In the school I teach now, none of the teachers talk to me or communicate with me. We had numerous discussions with the principal, I do not discuss with him anymore. I reply to his message 'ok' ☹️. This is how we communicate. If you ask whether I am unhappy, I am not unhappy at all. A person determines his/her value himself/herself. This is how I think. I mean I tried to communicate with them, but they blocked all the channels, there is nothing else to do. I am not being loved; it is not that I do not love. I attempt to love, but when I do not get any positive feedback, there is this stigma surrounding me. However, it is the same for these teachers, they do not work hard enough. I can say that three out of four of them do not give enough efforts. They just take their salaries. I mean, teaching only what is written in the books. This region needs education but needs to use education as a means to teach them to be individuals. This is how I think. I mean, especially for this region of my country. (Cansu)*

There might be various other reasons for their frustrations, yet, what drives them into taking action seems to affect themselves and their relations with some others. Therefore, such negativity has a direct influence on their personal and professional identities. Nevertheless, my original view that the primary reason they differentiate themselves is their rebel characters has slightly changed. The reason they differentiate themselves from their colleagues and experience problems with them might firstly stem from their beliefs about the profession. Teachers' beliefs are found to develop in the early years before they start teaching, often resistant to change as well as affecting teacher behaviour (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are also closely connected and influential on the construction of identities (Borg, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). As they construct an intuitive perspective about how teaching and teachers should be, based on their values as teachers (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000; Carr, 2003; Johnston, 2006), the participants distance themselves from some other teachers not fitting into their criteria.

The next section continues to scrutinise the reasons behind their engagements and manifests their values, partly developed prior to taking up volunteering or, in other words, beginning to engage in action.

### 8.3 Values and Emotions of Teachers of Action

Values and emotions are the essences of a *teacher of action* identity across the participants. It would be appropriate to claim their emotions and values drive them to action:

*I am fond of kids. Everything I do is for kids. I mean, I have not raised in this kind of an environment, I have not grown up like this. However, I think I have always had the conscience and compassion. When I came here, I said that these kids do not deserve this. What can I do for them? Everything is for the children; how can I make their lives more beautiful? Because I believe that if a child is not happy with his/her life, it is only them that can change it. I cannot change the families, they are at a certain age, and they have their mentalities. But kids... If I can interfere in children's lives positively, they will have their breakthrough points.*  
(Cansu)

Zeynep points out to similar values like Cansu when it comes to describing the reason behind her care for students, for which she identifies her volunteering experiences as the source:

***Ammar: How does your volunteer activities play a role in you being so determined, so persevering at school? What did you learn and apply it here, do you think?***

*Zeynep: Well, it has a great part. Because I learned to encourage children in my teaching when I was volunteering at the slums in Ankara. If I managed those children to quit smoking and drugs, I can make all the children in the world do everything. I mean, as long as that child sees that you love him/her. If you keep showing your love to that child, no matter what he/she does, he/she eventually shows the potential of doing anything. Or I could only teach Ataturk and his principles as an extra. I could not teach these kids to be a person, to be a human. And, I could have not taught them to do good deeds without waiting for something in return. Because in their age, they copy whatever they see. It might be to shape a high school student, but primary and middle school students do whatever the adults do. And, I would have not taught any of these if I had not participated in voluntary activities. I believe I raise strong activists 😊. They can even stand up and tell me that I am doing wrong from time to time now. They still cannot tell it to other teachers, though 😊. They are in a position to tell me what they think clearly. And, I do not care whether they speak perfect English. If I have turned silent, shy kids into these, they can learn English, even if they become thirty years old.*

In Cansu's story, her focal point resides in her attachment to children and young people. As a result, her values and emotions, which are her feelings of care for the children (Carr, 2003), become the motivational source in taking up various engagements alongside her teaching. With quotes illustrating, they do not only focus on the technical aspects of teaching English. Intuitively (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000), they care about their students' overall development and wellbeing. Additionally, as Zeynep exhibits, it is possible that her teachers constructed this care before she started teaching (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, Zeynep and other participants already had ideas about how teaching works and how teachers (not only them but their colleagues) should be, which may be one of the reasons behind their firm emphasis to distance themselves from 'other' teachers (Pajares, 1992).

I cannot claim for the participants or the ones taking action to be the only teachers who care about their students. Nevertheless, Zeynep and Cansu's quotes in this section illustrate that their intuitive care, making them stand out as teachers, is directly nourished by their volunteering experiences within and beyond teaching. What is more, how they describe and enact their care seems to be contextual, demonstrating that a teacher's care is shaped by his/her culture and experiences.

For both Zeynep and Cansu, as well as the other participants (such as Kemal working in a village in early days of his career), their emotions and values link the structures they operate in and their agency (Barbalet, 2002; Campbell, 2003). As agentic teachers, they channel their emotions and values, previously nurtured in their structures, into action. In this regard, they find the balance between their vulnerability, well-being and sense of agency (Day et al., 2007). Their values and the emotional labour they undergo as teachers in vulnerable contexts induce them to action when they find themselves in moral dilemmas (Dewey, 1922; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Taylor, 1994). Working as teachers in the deprived communities, they choose ethics of care to answer the immediate needs of their students and the communities (Held, 2006). However, these emotions and the instabilities they bring, albeit difficult, are transformed into positives with cognitive dissonance (Day et al., 2007; Hamilton, 2013). Hence, both emotions and values, positive and negative, become valuable sources of engaging in action for the participants.

At this point, there remains another important matter to underline. Not only does their agentic capacity cause them to engage in action, but their engagements also induce them to make agentic decisions. In other words, there is not a unilateral, closed-circuit system where an 'innate' agency predicts their actions. Rather, agency and taking action mutually feed off each other with their identity transformations through taking action, which aligns with Biesta and Tedder's (2007) ecological view of agency.

#### 8.4 Motivations of Teachers of Action

When I inquired the participants about the source of their motivations to take up volunteering in the first place, I got answers I had not expected. How Zeynep discusses the topic is a noteworthy example, as she considers her aunt's and her uncle's illnesses yet takes a broader perspective into her volunteering:

*Well, my auntie had cancer, and we lost my uncle from lungs cancer. I have focused on cancer-related issues after that. Because they need morale and motivation as patients. And, you make them happy, maybe in the final days of their lives. This is a motivation, but I think my high school*

*teachers had a great effect on me. I had a history teacher, whose retirement had already passed. She would gather us around her, telling that we could learn the things in the books ourselves, narrate stories about Ataturk and Inonu, her experiences with the children in the villages. She would tell us all the time. We had a teacher of Turkish and he was like that, too. I think they, subconsciously, influenced me. The teacher is not just who teaches the lesson. That is how I learned in teacher high school. I mean, teaching is not just conveying the book, you need to teach extra things; that is how I learned. And, I saw my teachers more than my parents in high school. The school was full-time, from 8 am to 4 pm. Teachers were always around us. They eventually gave us this: we give you the theoretical knowledge, teaching is not just it. Therefore, they would talk about social issues. I even remember talking about politics with my high school teachers. That is why my high school education has a crucial effect on me. What they taught us was beyond the profession. (Zeynep)*

Ahmet reflects on his motivations and it is clear that even the major decisions are the outcomes of various experiences in life, all of them affecting their identities along the years:

*Maybe, this was a manifestation. I was not even a teenager, did not know about what life or death is, they made us watch the bombings falling into Iraq. I was looking to the sky in the evenings, worrying if they would fall here as well one day and how would we hide if they did. They made us out of our minds with fear. Our generation lost it. Maybe we did not see any coups but saw the bombings in Iraq, beheadings in Syria and we lost it, too. I was nine or ten years old when Iraq was invaded. I was a kid. So, I saw this and that, some other things like the earthquake in Indonesia or the divided island in Dominique where people burn each other to death. You see all these, and it accumulates in you. I do not know either, what the main source of the motivation was. I am sure that what you are looking for. However, whether George gave me this cassette, or I saw the bombings in Iraq and the children's corpses there on TV, or hearing Africa all the time since my childhood, or that vulture waiting for the child to die in that photo. They say the photo shooter committed suicide because of his grief. I do not know if all these grieves stayed on me, I cannot say for sure. I woke up one day and I thought I should do something. (Ahmet)*

Before asking the question on the origins of their motivations, I was expecting to find 'big' stories, or epiphanies (Denzin, 1984). On contrary, the participants talked about the cumulative effects of many factors, including their families and teachers, or the need for self-actualisation in their lives with their social status and age (like Ali). In this regard, motivation as a cognitive trait was not enough to explain their engagements, leading me to the investment theory (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Accordingly, as I elaborated on in the [literature chapter](#) around teacher identity and motivation, people's accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) could eventually make them motivated to take action, which is articulated by Zeynep with her emphasis on her high school teachers. In

Ahmet's story, although there was an epiphany, all these experiences seemed to have affected his decision, even indirectly through watching and reading about the events in the region or other parts of the world. Both Zeynep and Ahmet indicate the importance of various factors along the life course in their agentic decisions (Biesta and Tedder, 2007).

It is not difficult to realise that the participants demonstrate their transformative agendas with the sources of their motivations. Emphasising various factors connected with local, regional and global politics, their motivations are 'closely linked with contextual factors' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 160). Furthermore, these motivations connect their emotions to their identity constructions. As Zembylas (2003, p. 213) asserts, 'the search for understanding teacher identity requires the connection of emotion with self-knowledge'. Being reflexive about the sources of their motivation, they illustrate their focus to be 'more on the broader picture of the social contexts of classroom interactions', which helps them to explore and exhibit their selves more (Moore, 2004, p. 151), with their critical awareness of society, culture, history, politics and power (Giroux, 1992).

After identifying the connections between participants' agency, values, emotions and motivations, the following section connects these factors together through their accounts and discussions.

### 8.5 *Teacher of Action in Practice*

In this section, I do not go over the individual volunteering stories told in chapter six. However, all those stories could conceivably be included here, as examples of *teacher of action* in practice. Additionally, it is not just the big stories, which would awake emotions when heard or read, but also small, everyday acts could be included as examples. Small or big, it is evident these teachers to be taking action constantly and taking action is or has eventually become, not just a part of their identities, but also a stance for them. This stance incorporates, affects and, often transforms their professional identities and values<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> I borrowed taking action as a stance from Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999; 2009), who argue in their research on teacher practitioner inquiry that teachers could make teacher inquiry a stance of themselves. When teachers make inquiry a stance, it suggests 'both orientational and positional ideas, to carry allusions to the physical placing of the body as well as to intellectual activities and perspectives over time' and captures 'the ways [they] stand, the ways [they] see and the lenses [they] see through' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999,

There are two immediate examples, on top of all the stories in the previous chapter, highlighting the role of their identities in their teaching. In this story below, in addition to the projects she has conducted so far, Cansu discusses her teaching style, which manifests her pedagogy with a transformative agenda:

*What is important here is to be a teacher without being engaged in any institutions. This is what we are for as a team. My aim is to raise kids who could do research, who could think; really think. Moreover, my priority is to teach how to be an individual first. I have accomplished it since I got here. Because it is not just about memorising the arithmetic or words in English or just learning Turkish. It is more about knowing humanity, individuality. Also, maybe most of these kids will not continue their education but they should be able to find their ways when they go somewhere, they should be able to operate without needing anybody else. I am trying to reach as many children as I can, and it is not possible to have an impact on all, but it is the best to touch as many as their lives, save as many as children. [...] I never meddle; I am a libertarian. Since the beginning of the term, I want them to express themselves clearly, even if it is positive or negative. It is always like that. About me or the lesson. If they make a criticism, telling me if the lesson was unnecessary or if I could not deliver it well, I never get angry with them. Because this is them expressing themselves. These kids are already silenced at home, where will they raise their voices? We were in the after-school club, chatting, we started talking about TV shows. I also deliver their Turkish lesson, there are not enough teachers, and I have taken five lessons in total including English. It was their Turkish lesson. One of them told that a show broke the rating records the other night. Another one asked if it was her personal opinion or if she got it from a primary source. I was signing the register at that moment and I cannot tell how fast I turned to him. Moving into tears, I thought about kissing him on the forehead. It means so much for me that he forms this sentence, I have been trying to teach this to them; telling that they also have ideas, opinions. The first replied that she checked this information from the website. The second accused her of imposing her own ideas. Imposing! He can use this word in a sentence now. I gave them applause, I said, okay, you are good now 😊*  
(Cansu)

Similarly, Kemal describes his teaching stance, which he emphasises in a few other occasions during both of our meetings:

*My job is to tell my kids to stop and look under every stone they see on the road. Look at them; be critical. Look what is under it. Leave that stone out of your way. If you do not look at that stone now, bigger ones will come on to your way eventually. You cannot just kick it. I always tell; you*

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p. 288). In other words, even if they do not engage in research all the time, it has become a habit or a part of themselves that influence their perspectives and actions.

*all have some talents. We have to put new talents on them. To do that, we should nudge you; open your horizons. You cannot gain new talents just by sitting. I have archery classes here, swimming classes, folk dances classes, European projects, etc. Do I know them all? No. Do I have to know? No, there are experts on them. I call them, come here, I have opened folk dances classes, you are in charge. People I trust. (Kemal)*

Their volunteering stories in the previous part, as well as their remarks in this section, indicate the participants as having transformative agendas and their actions are conscious. All these volunteering stories reveal their common motive, which is to make changes in others' lives. Such actions stem from their backgrounds, families, education and worldviews, with clear projections for the time ahead of themselves. With their engagements, which make them different from the majority of teachers around them, they act as border-crossers (Giroux, 1992), with their utmost desires to make a productive change (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) for their students and society. Moreover, their identities are visible here, as they are able to reflect on their motives and actions. These remarks could be counted as examples of teacher activism in Sachs' sense (2001) and aligns well with the visions of Dewey (1938), Freire (1970), Giroux (1988), Shor (1992) and other critical pedagogues.

In addition to activism and volunteering, requiring added planning and duration, *teacher of action* is different from other teachers, especially from the 'sedentary' teachers on a daily basis. Besides, they are not only active in school settings or activities within the spheres of school and education. They engage in action whenever and wherever possible.

During my second interview with Ali, he reflected on the first one and talked about the importance of small acts *teachers of action* undertake every day, which goes unnoticed:

*There are European Union projects and if you are a teacher of English, you are automatically assumed as the one to write it. That is how they approach it and people are forced to do something. Okay, fine I mean, writing projects and stuff. However, this person already does many things. Why they are not accepted? This year, for example, we have clubs for students in schools, as you know. Last year, I was at the sports club. Physical education teacher was in charge and I was his deputy. There was a citywide competition to be held in our school. The principal asked if we could arrange some presents for competing students. I said, 'I can arrange it yet with the presents I want'. He asked me how and I offered kits from our city's football club. As you know, the club is in Turkish premier league and I thought students would like it. He liked the idea and I arranged the gifts by talking to the club's chair. Their worth was around two thousand Turkish liras. The gifts were presented, and it happened to be a nice organisation. We even used some remaining stuff in our sporting competitions within the school. (Ali)*

I must reiterate Ali not to be a volunteer until recent years. Owing to his volunteering experiences, his values and the changes in his identity with them, engaging in small acts daily became his stance. As the examples below demonstrate, the other participants have similar experiences:

*When I first started teaching, I used to go to my hometown for the weekends; it was close. I used to buy 20 tubes of toothpaste and 20 toothbrushes. I was doing silly competitions with the kids; when they knew, I would give them a toothpaste, or a toothbrush. There is something I did there, which I did not remember until an old student of mine told me about it. I would give boots in the winter. In my hometown, I would find sponsors; I would buy five boots and they would add five themselves. A student from that time found me on Facebook about five, six years ago. A sergeant in the military, he told me crying. He said that he does not forget what I did. He said, and I quote: 'I did not have a pair of boots to wear in that tiny town. You used to make a sloppy quiz that we did not understand quite well back then. You gave me a pair of boots; boots that my parents could not afford to buy. It was, however, a silly competition'. These were the things making me happy. When I was happy, I was motivated in teaching. (Kemal)*

*I published a book on drug addiction. One of our students writes a project about it. It is great seeing my efforts are paying off. Additionally, the students in the music society that I mentor were on stage yesterday. This is why I go onto the stage. I help these students to go onto the stage. They had a massive conference hall filled up with crowds, were applauded by them, became happy. They will be more successful in their academic lives. Just because they did this. All academics know them now; everyone likes them. Their entourage will get bigger. Their private lives will be in order, maybe. It will have a beneficial effect on many things. This is why I am doing music. Is it for money? No. This is why. I saw it yesterday and I am happy today. That is it. Not everything needs to have a personal meaning. (Ahmet)*

*Kids... If I can interfere in children's lives positively, they will have their breakthrough points. How you can make it: by presenting them with different perspectives. This is how I do, as I focus on the kids. I thought about how to show them that there are different lives. It is not by watching TV. It is embedded in their minds: TV. I thought about doing a pen-friendship. I arranged two schools in the city centre; I cannot go further, just in nearby places. When I told them about it and telling that the letters will be English, they were all like, 'we cannot do it!' Because their mother tongues are Arabic, they learn Turkish in school. That is why there may be some problems with communication here. They would tell, 'we only learn Turkish quite recently, how are we going to do it in English'! I told them to write sentences about the things they learned in the units that we did that week or the previous weeks and that I was ready to help when they had problems in building up the sentences. They did pen-friendship for seven months. Yet, the kids in the centre were on fire. They do skate, rollerblading, going to cinemas... So many different activities... Now, okay, the child finds the Turkish translation in the*



*dictionary. However, asking me what it is, does not know it. I was showing them videos. Then, I bought a skateboard for them to see how skating is done. They were hilarious. Never been on it before, one kid was sitting on it, not standing 😊. Then, I bought a rollerblade, too, thought that it should not only be the board. Then we tried it the next day. I told them, 'you go home and watch TV, but this is what your friends are doing'. This is how interest to search, to investigate has sparked in them. When they were reading a book and writing about it, my children were searching for the name of the book on the internet. Asking me if we have that book in our library, for him/her to read. When you see these kinds of feedbacks, you realise that it works. When it is like this, your motivation increases all the time. [...] By the way, I did the pen-friending mixed. I told them that the boys can send it to girls, or vice versa does not matter. However, I enjoined them not to tell that they are corresponding to their families. Because it may end some children's school life. I had about sixty or seventy students who were sending letters, thankfully none of them told their families. So, we did some secret stuff, too 😊. (Cansu)*

What is common across these stories is the relationship between taking action daily and being motivated to teach. As Kelchtermans (2009) stresses, even though teachers are motivated with a love of the profession at the beginning, along the years, the source their motivation becomes the feeling of being instrumental in their students' broader educational needs and wellbeing. Although they are at different career phases, it could be argued that taking action is helpful to find and sustain motivation as well as constructing positive identities for all participants, regardless of their teaching experience (Day et al., 2007). Moreover, their stances as *teachers of action* illustrate that their motivation 'has a direct impact on student motivation and achievement' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 185), which help them to connect their visions with the values and moral purposes in teaching (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). In this regard, the importance of good leadership and supportive colleagues while sustaining teacher commitment manifests itself in participants' accounts. As they often lack this support, they seek other ways, such as taking action, to balance their identities (Day et al., 2007).

Musick and Wilson (2008) argue volunteering to be different from care, with need to be done in an organised way. Even so, the participants are not just active in big, formally organised projects; they are active daily, within and beyond their professional environments, and it has become a stance for them. All these examples above reinforce the crucial importance of these everyday small acts for the participants. Embracing the small acts, not limiting them to the boundaries of their schools and making it a part of their identities have a direct influence on the participants' professional motivation. Furthermore, in Cansu's and Ahmet's stories, where they talk about their early days in the profession, taking action

becomes a source of motivation for them from the beginning. Therefore, holding and maintaining care for the students, based on their teaching values and going beyond the technician and competency-based teaching (Moore, 2004) become highly crucial to avoid the possible stress and detachment from the job, in early years for Zeynep and Cansu or in more advanced careers for Ahmet and Ali as well as at the end of the career for Kemal (Day et al., 2007).

This section discussed the basis of *teachers of action*, who are active not just in big projects but in everyday small acts, not just in the spheres of school and education but also in different venues, with their transformative agendas. Yet, the next section reveals that, although the participants work towards a 'socially just world' through 'developing caring relationships and democratic spaces' (Picower, 2012, p. 564), which is an essential trait of an activist teacher, some teachers might not want to be identified with teacher activism.

## 8.6 How Activism is Perceived?

As I draw on in the literature section, Sachs urges teaching profession to embrace 'an activist identity emerging from democratic discourses' that 'has clear emancipatory aims', to be founded upon 'more democratic conditions, where teacher knowledge and expertise is recognized and rewarded' (Sachs, 2001, p.157, 159). Nevertheless, despite the broader meaning Sachs (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2005; 2016) attaches to teacher activism, activism is not necessarily perceived as a positive term by everyone. As discussed [earlier](#), some might argue that teacher activism and activism are not the same, with their nuances, as professional activism and political activism are different phenomena (Jenkins et al., 2003; Sachs, 2001). Yet, the examples below from the Turkish context, likely to be found across the globe, suggest activism to have different connotations. I must underline that not to be a problem for the participants, as they do not feel the need to define what they do, and having defined it as volunteering upon my enquiry. However, this is a conceptual problem to be raised for the scholars in the field. I discuss this further, in the conclusion chapter. At this point, I examine the reasons why I found it necessary to come up with a new concept.

In this regard, during the interviews, I asked my participants what they think of activism. There were mixed feelings. Kemal underlined he is a volunteer, not an activist and gave examples of what he understands as activism:

*I am not an activist. I take it a bit harder when I think of activism. I mean, I was an activist when I was younger; I was a person of action. Activism seems a bit extreme to me. It is not political, yet more extreme, harder actions. More like actions that would make some noise. I am not doing all*

*these to make some noise. I mean, what does an activist do? An activist is against something or wants something to come front. Therefore, he/she wants his/her noise to be heard as much as possible. This is what I recall when I think of activism. Activists try to gather larger crowds to influence. However, I do not think I am an activist. I am not like that. I do not have any agendas to make myself heard. It has never been. (Kemal)*

Zeynep, on the other hand, and who is actively involved in political and union action in the left-wing, stated that she is an activist:

*I think activism is to be active intellectually, physically or spiritually. Being active with body and soul. And, am I an activist? Absolutely. Even the fiction book I authored brings women into the forefront. I plan to send it, especially to the women associations. The reason is that we should not live depending on men as women, or other women. Women should be standing up by themselves, confronting the difficulties when needed. Women should be leading society. (Zeynep)*

When I decided to ask my participants questions on activism and whether they consider themselves activists, I was a bit worried. First, as I demonstrate in the Turkish context chapter, I knew that it might have negative connotations in some people's eyes.

Additionally, as I discuss in the [ethical considerations](#), I thought it might cause them stress to talk about it especially in the post-coup attempt environment. I actually experienced it, when I told a Turkish professor that my study incorporates activism. When she heard it, she suddenly got serious and warned me to stay off the topic. However, although an unexpected question for all of them, I did not experience any hostile reactions from the interviewees.

In this excerpt, Ali gave his insight into how it is perceived in Turkey and why:

***Ammar: When I read the literature about volunteering, I came across the term, activist teacher. What do you think about activism?***

*Ali: Activism is to be active.*

***Ammar: Does activism ring positive or negative bells?***

*Ali: The word activist does not ring negative bells for me, but I know that society takes it negatively. For me, it is positive. To instantiate, an activist Muslim or an activist conservative does not fit, they do not go well together in society's mind, but activist brings radical left into mind, or Greenpeace. Environmentalist but what are they doing under that cover... 😊*

***Ammar: That is how it is perceived by society.***

*Ali: Yes, how it is perceived. By the way, 'activist' is a recent term in our lives in Turkey. It did not mean much some five years ago.*

***Ammar: It might be after Occupy Gezi protests.***

*Ali: Might be. It is quite recent. In the past, the term was anarchist 😊. Activist is the softened version. I am not saying they are. This is how people perceive it.*

What Ali discusses here is quite striking to demonstrate the common perception about the term in the country. His emphasis on the recent popularity of activism is particularly noteworthy. When Turkey's long-lasting democratisation process and military interventions are considered, the context makes it more difficult for the terminology to be accepted, especially if 'anarchy' comes to people's minds. This could be seen in our dialogue with Cansu, who was the most surprised one when I asked whether she is an activist and what she thinks of activism. You can see how puzzled she is with the question, probably reflecting the most common answer you would receive to such a question in Turkey:

***Ammar: In the literature, when I researched this topic, I came across activist. What is activism for you?***

*Cansu: Well, can you tell me how activism is defined first?*

***Ammar: Before that, I am curious about what comes to your mind first.***

*Cansu: Well, as we succumb to politics, rather than education, I first think of its political dimension. If I think of education, I am thinking now, as I have not had such a question before.*

***Ammar: Yes, that is why I ask it directly 😊. Do you think it is negative or positive that you think about the political dimension of it?***

*Cansu: The first impression is negative. I mean, it is negative when you look from one point and positive when you look from another. In this kind of situation, as the opposing side is more dominant, people think that it is a negative thing. Therefore, next generations think, 'hmm, activism, negative, because that happened in some time earlier'. As I said, it is what has been imposed on us. I do not want to talk about politics, to be honest; I keep myself as reserved as possible on this. This was what has been imposed on us: demonstration, stay away. Do not make a noise. Make noise, but be partisan and make noise, otherwise do not. You see people being apprehended, and they are activists 😊. I mean, when you see activists being apprehended, beaten or sent to jail. As you associate the word with those, this is what activism is, we shall not be an activist, let us stay away from it. That is why, as I said, politics is more important than education in our country, this word is also overwhelmed with politics.*

In a country like Turkey, in the aftermath of the failed coup d'état attempt of July 2016, beyond activism, Cansu did not want to talk about politics at all as a young teacher. It was quite understandable for me and I did not ask any further questions to her during the interview. When we met in person, after several months of this video conversation, she reminded me of this question. She admitted, smiling, for it to have been a surprising one, coming out of nowhere. Cansu also added that she still avoided party politics in a small town

like hers, as it was the best way for her to achieve her aims of helping the children and the community. Her stance reinforces Hargreaves and Fullan's (1992) assertion that teachers avoid politics in general. Nevertheless, it seems that she avoids politics mainly because of being a young, novice teacher in a new, foreign environment. It was also evident that she identified activism with politics, which she deems as something to be avoided. In the previous chapter, she has a similar stance about [teacher unions](#). With the political climate and tight control on the civil servants in the country, her cautionary approach is quite understandable. As a young teacher, she is like the majority of pre-service teachers in Doganay, Cuhadar and Sari's (2007) and Tarhan's (2016) studies in Turkey, who withhold from conventional politics and engage in limited political participation. Interestingly, as an experienced teacher, Kemal has a similar stance to Cansu, although both of them believe in the transformational power of education.

With their perspectives on volunteering and activism, Kemal and Cansu exemplify Eliasoph's (2013, p. 64-65) [students](#), for whom 'the volunteer feels comfortably warm, while the activist either feels too coolly intellectual or too hot-headed [...]; the nice, agreeable volunteer reads to pre-schoolers, while the activist pickets and shouts'. As Baumgardner and Richards (2010, p. 282) underline, 'activism can be an alien idea [as] it's easy to imagine that activists are 'other' people – weird or dauntingly benevolent'. Yet, 'doing activism and being activist' is not the same (Bobel, 2007, p. 148). Both Cansu and Kemal's engagements could be identified as examples of 'pedagogical opportunities for activism, which is conducted at a micropolitical level more often than as visible acts of political contestation in more macropolitical areas' for teachers (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 127). Moreover, even the "banal' acts in students' lives constitute modest but invaluable steps', defined as implicit activism for teachers (Zembylas, 2013, p. 93). Conversely, another young teacher, Zeynep openly embraces an activist teacher identity. I should underline that Kemal, Cansu and Zeynep are all secular people. Hence, even among the people with similar worldviews, activism could become a label that needs to be avoided, especially in a context with serious issues around democracy and civic activism, as well as tight control on all civil servants, including the teachers, on any kinds of political engagement.

Hence, on activism, the difference between Kemal or Cansu and Zeynep seems to be their ideas on political involvement. In their interviews, Cansu and Kemal underlined that they avoid politics and do not have any political engagements, both emphasising the Turkish context as their reason. Accordingly, in their cases, being against politics seems to be being away from the domestic political discussions and the political parties in the context. While

Zeynep narrates similar anecdotes and calls herself as an activist, Kemal and Cansu avoid being called an activist, although what they do in practice could be defined as teacher activism. Thus, participants' comments reveal that they differentiate volunteering and activism (Poppendieck, 1998) and, unlike Thoits and Hewitt's (2001) claim, they do not perceive activism as a voluntary activity.

In this regard, political engagement is also the most, and perhaps the only significant difference between the majority of the teachers in this study, except for Zeynep and partly Ali and activist teachers in Arshad's (2008) and Picower's (2012) studies in Scotland and the US respectively. Engaging in 'ongoing and collective action' (Picower, 2012, p. 564) through '(1) working collectively in groups and (2) getting teachers' voices into the policy arena' (Picower, 2012, p. 569) might be the missing element in Cansu, Kemal (and also Ahmet), in terms of being categorised as an activist teacher.

All in all, it could be argued that, even though none of them refrains from professional politics or the political dimension of education, the 'checkered history' of 'the word activism' (Sachs, 2003b, p. 3) is still relevant in participants' contexts. Accordingly, *teacher of action* could be an additional discourse to activism and an umbrella term for all of them, which they might themselves also favour, including Ahmet, who calls himself an individual activist, as you can see below.

## 8.7 Individual Activism: Activism for Introverts

When I asked the same question to Ahmet, he touched upon a different aspect of activism:

*I would rather not call this activism if what I do will be lumped together with, for example, Greenpeace collecting money, saying that they will protect the glaciers. I am not going to be able to define it as in a dictionary, to begin with. What I understand from activism is to take action to overcome a problem. This is activism. However, activists determine a cause and gather as a group for it. I am against the idea that NGOs working together focused for a cause like this. These kinds of things have to be personal and individuals must be supported, not groups. Okay, they are doing a great thing but if you leave the protection of all glaciers, protection of nature to Greenpeace volunteers, they will not be protected. That is why what I do is not in the same category. Instead of collecting money for themselves, they should enable everyone to contribute to this somehow. That is why; this mentality of collecting donation should also change. Instead of collecting it at a monopoly like it, it should be distributed. This is what I believe. Therefore, what I do individually is, of course, activism, as I take action for a cause. However, I do not operate with how others define it. I am not a member of an organisation. I have never been a member of a political party or a community; I like doing completely individual works. This has disadvantages, for example,*

*financially. If I had an organisation right now, I would do much more. Nevertheless, what do I do now? Individually, I am trying to reach different people and different places. For example, it is the reason that I publish that book. To have more incomes for the orphanage and more people to read. I am not saying everybody to go to the orphanage. I am trying to ignite what is inside everybody; whatever they prefer. Therefore, of course, it is activism, but I cannot define it as a community work but rather an individual action. (Ahmet)*

What Ahmet discusses here is quite interesting. One might think that ‘individual’ and ‘activism’ are distant words from each other, and individual activism is a rather odd concept. I had mixed feelings on this and was not sure how to define Ahmet’s position until coming across a TED talk from Sarah Corbett<sup>11</sup>. In her talk, Corbett shares her and her friends’ unconventional ways of activism. Their common point is being introverted and choosing their actions accordingly, which means that to get their message across, they used handicrafts instead of picketing or demonstrating. After watching this talk, I asked Ahmet if he is an introvert:

*Two days ago, I met someone. We are just friends now; want to see how it goes. Anyway, we went out to drink coffee. We were chatting; you know I am involved in so many things: books, music, society, etc. As this stage is where we want to know each other better, I told that I am a self-enclosed person when I was talking about myself. She burst into laughter when she heard me saying that. She said she has never seen anyone as social as me. I am not an extrovert person at all. I keep all my joys, sorrows, feelings inside me. She thought I was making an irony and laughed, hence, I did not insist. She thought I was just trying to be modest. However, I was not trying to be modest. As an answer to your question, I see myself as an introvert. I do not see myself like that; I am like that. Being an extrovert, being comfortable in social settings is not something that I can do well. As my joy, sorrow and pain are all in me, I reflect it differently. I want to give an example. When the Iraq war broke out, I would not have gone outside and made protests, even if I were older. I cannot go out in the streets and shout; I cannot do it. I also would not want to march side by side with the system. I endure in silence when I see the war, after ten years, I glorify it and transform it into a poem. My revolt, my protest becomes that poem. (Ahmet)*

In this story, Ahmet unveils his introversion and exemplifies craftivism (Greer, 2014). In addition to the structural issues embedded in a country like Turkey or somewhere else in the world regarding activism, another reason for people to embrace, or not to embrace might be quite personal, like introversion. As seen, Ahmet does not refrain from politics, nor political

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<sup>11</sup>To watch Sarah Corbett’s TED talk called ‘Activism Needs Introverts’ that she delivered at TEDxYouth@Bath in November 2016:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah\\_corbett\\_activism\\_needs\\_introverts?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_corbett_activism_needs_introverts?language=en)

action. Being a prolific writer, poet and translator among other things, he describes what he does as individual activism. From a political standpoint, he does not believe in collective action through demonstrating or other tools of conventional political activism, even as basic as voting. Moreover, he does not embed himself to voluntary organisations and underlines the importance of being a solo volunteer, in addition to carrying out other solo forms of political struggle. Thus, it is not possible to perceive Ahmet as not active, even though he does not march with the protests, or join unions. Still, he refrains from the ‘loud and in-your-face’ activism (Greer, 2014, p. 11). What he does, with his insights into his introversion, is to engage in political action through unconventional methods. To get his message across, instead of the conventional tools like demonstrating with the crowds, he utilises unorthodox ways (Youngson, 2019), such as writing a poem. As he still aims to challenge the status quo and bring social transformation, Ahmet’s unconventional ways of activism deserve to be recognised (Kelly, 2014).

Furthermore, Ahmet’s engagements are not far from teachers’ implicit and silent activism, which is more common and ‘doable’ for teachers (Zembylas, 2013). In this regard, Ahmet’s actions are ‘politicised, affirmative and potentially transformative, but [...] modest, quotidian, and proceed with little fanfare’ (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 21). Additionally, Ahmet demonstrates the activist identity as not being ‘linked to a ‘perfect standard’ that places the label out of reach for some social movement actors’ (Bobel, 2007, p. 156) and there are various ways to engage in transformative action.

## 8.8 Summary of Chapter 8

In this chapter, I presented the emergence of a new concept: the *teacher of action*, demonstrating both how it arose from the data and why it is a necessary addition to the existing discourse. Accordingly, there is one clear reason to conceptualise *teacher of action* as an additional discourse to teacher activism (Sachs, 2001; 2003; 2003b; 2005; 2016):

- Participants in the study do not only engage in school-related professional activism within the boundaries of their schools and neither volunteering nor teacher activism is adequate to encapsulate the complexity of their engagements.

The main points of this chapter have been:

- Participants’ deliberate distancing from their colleagues and the possible reasons behind it, as well as the reasons why they engage in action while other teachers do not.



- Making *teacher of action* a stance that incorporates the values and identities of participant teachers, which reveal itself in not just big projects but small everyday acts.
- Diverse understanding of activism as a political act by the participants and the need to conceptualise this diversity within a single concept, as participants' actions cannot be explained through conventional lenses of volunteering or activism.

Throughout the chapter, participants underlined that they are different from the majority of their colleagues and they distance themselves from many others. Such distancing, which even becomes isolation in some participants, may indicate a sense of pride in participants, as they are more active and take initiative for their students and communities, while many other teachers do not. Although I do not have one clear answer regarding the basis of this distancing, I have multiple suggestions. Firstly, they are rebel characters. They do not sit down and accept the structures as they are. Rather, they take action to overcome the problems around themselves, even though the Turkish educational structure overall is not supportive for them to be agentic, as the previous chapter demonstrates. Yet, with their rebel characters, they differ from the contractually bound teachers around themselves and use the adversaries as the urge to take action. Their teaching beliefs, values and emotions, which have a long-lasting background with the influences of their families, teachers and early schooling experiences are also other reasons for their actions, in addition to their rebel characters. With the combination of all these factors, taking action becomes a stance for the participants. Their identities and values are present in their stance as *teachers of action*. In this sense, they are in a *teacher of action* mindset. In addition to, or more than, being active in big projects, their stance affects their everyday decisions in their personal and professional lives. For example, Cansu discusses how she chooses her friends now and how she distances herself from some others or Kemal gives examples of his teaching mentality, which is based on his experiences as a scout, volunteer and project manager. The chapter concludes with participants' identification and non-identification with activism, the primary reason for the need to come up with the *teacher of action* concept. With their diverse responses, participant teachers mainly exemplify taking action as eclipsing the conventional understandings of volunteering and activism, as well as local politics or different personalities. Moreover, they do not confine themselves, whether be it their school environments or their community engagements, which, nevertheless, affect their professional identities.

The following chapter presents an overall discussion before the final concluding chapter.

## 9. An Overall Discussion: Making Sense of the Study

When I began this study, I aimed to explore the identities of people who tutor for free in addition to their teaching. In the beginning, I was expecting to find participants engaging in extra activities related to education, although I could not find any participants tutoring for free in addition to teaching. This was surprising but not unusual, given the aftermath of the coup attempt. Yet, I was able to connect with teachers who engage in various forms of volunteering for their students and communities. Drawing on a narrative inquiry research design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Elliott, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Riessman, 2008; Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2013) and life story interviews (Atkinson, 2001; 2011), I was able to focus on the diverse experiences of the participants, which I analysed via narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To understand the identities of teachers holistically, in their longitudinal study, Day et al. (2006, p. 611) categorise [four intertwined layers](#), 'macro structures, meso structures, micro structures and personal biographies'. As I argue throughout the thesis, I aim to consider all four of these layers. In chapter six, *Narrative Analysis* and chapter eight, *Teachers of Action*, the focus is primarily on the personal biographies with values, beliefs and ideologies, while the analysis in chapter seven, *Professional Identities, Being an English Language Teacher in Turkey* benefits from categorising the structures into three layers, which are macro, meso and micro.

As Figure 2 demonstrates below, the need for *teacher of action* to emerge as a concept stems from the complexity of participants' experiences, as they go beyond the dichotomies of the current literature and offer a different perspective, encompassing volunteering and activism. The participants illustrated that they could overcome their local structural as well as contextual restraints and carry out their transformative agendas. In terms of their engagements, they exemplify that a teacher could participate in different forms of volunteering within their professional sites and beyond. These various participations affect and transform their personal and professional identities. In addition to becoming more involved in their students' wellbeing and learning new ways to improve it, through taking action, they discover themselves and their students better as well as becoming more motivated to and in teaching.

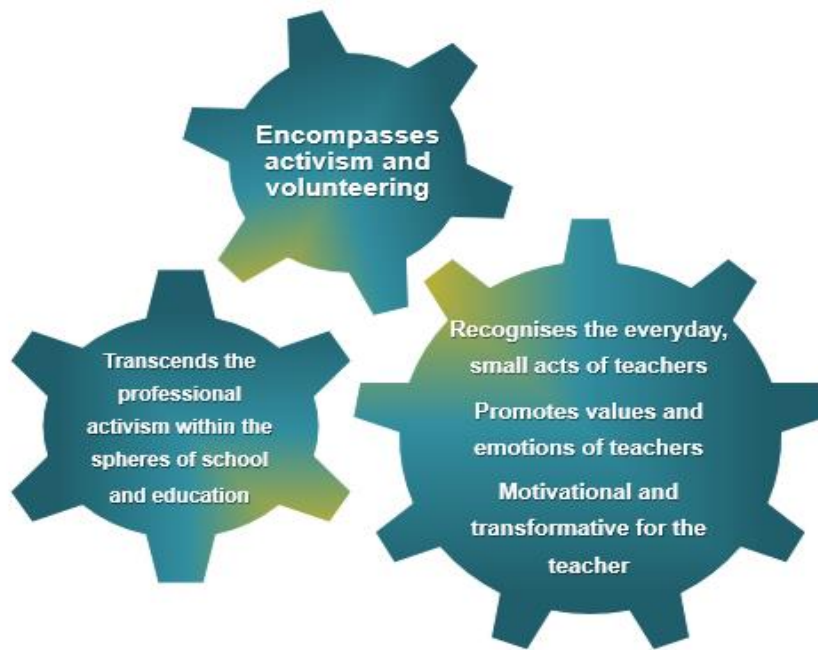


Figure 2: Teacher of Action: A data-driven concept

In this light, these are the main findings of the study:

- Structural and agentic factors are both influential in participants' identity constructions as well as their decisions to take action. In their teaching, participants rely on the values they have constructed before and during teaching, based on these factors. These value and identity constructions are dynamic and subject to constant transformation as a result of their engagements.
- Participants take action in various forms and these are not limited to educational activities, nor the sphere of the school. All of their voluntary engagements affect and transform participants' identities: whether big or small; whether taken up early in their lives or later in their careers; and whether performed within the boundaries of school or beyond.
- In an environment where their professional development is not well supported, participants demonstrate that they take control of their professional learning in informal ways, which bring authentic and long-lasting benefits.
- Neither volunteering nor teacher activism is adequate to encapsulate the complexity of participants' engagements, leading to the conceptualisation of *teacher of action*.

As Figure 3 illustrates, a *teacher of action* is someone for whom taking action is not just a part of his/her personal and professional identities. Together with his/her values as a teacher, it has also become his/her stance. In this regard, a *teacher of action* could be described as someone who engages not just in big projects but also, is active every day, in

the school environment and school-related engagements and beyond, while all of these engagements are helpful for a positive teacher identity construction. Moreover, *teacher of action*, as a concept, transcends the current dichotomies by providing an alternative discourse to having political agendas or not as well as being extroverted or introverted, and recognises the myriad ways teachers put effort to transform their students' and communities' lives.



Figure 3: The Sphere of Teacher of Action as a Concept (image credit: gliffy.com)

Driven by their values and emotions, their actions encapsulate teacher activism and teacher volunteering. Inducing them to become active in big projects and small acts of everyday, their stance has not only been affected by their values and identities but also, has reconstructed and transformed them. They embody taking action in their behaviours, discourses and thinking. For them, taking action becomes the way of perceiving and experiencing the world, managing their relations and professional collaborations, and determining their priorities in life. All of the stories in the previous chapters illustrate their embodiment. To give examples, Zeynep decides to teach because of her volunteering experiences, and these experiences shape her teaching stance. Kemal discusses how his volunteering around the world helps him to focus on the students' overall development, which is the reason he engages in various exchanges and activities for them.

Furthermore, discussion chapters reveal the structural and agentic factors behind their identities and values leading them to *teacher of action* as a stance. Chapter six provides lengthy individual stories from the participants, which uncover the uniqueness and the authenticity of each participant's biography. While sharing their stories, participants underlined various elements influential in the construction of their *teacher of action* identities (Day et al., 2006). These included: family (for all); middle school teachers (for Cansu); high school teachers (for Zeynep); early volunteering experiences (for Kemal and Zeynep); early tutoring experiences (for Zeynep and Cansu); growing up in a multicultural city (for Ahmet); growing up in a small town (for Ali); growing up in a working-class family and a rough neighbourhood (for Cansu); a need for self-actualisation (for Ali); and having a reserved, introverted personality (for Ahmet). All these influences are noteworthy, in terms of demonstrating the effects of structural and agentic elements in participants' identity constructions (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984), which mould and are reciprocally moulded by their engagements over time.

Still, as chapter seven illustrates, the participants are affected by major constraints, which increase their emotional labour (Benesch, 2017; 2020), by leaving them vulnerable professionally (Day et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2005; 2009). As I discuss in the literature review, there is a relation between teacher vulnerability, teacher motivation and identities of teachers (Day et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2005; 2009). Macro, meso and micro-level problems in chapter seven, including not enough support from the educational authorities; inadequate CPD opportunities and not having a transformative CPD strategy; neoliberal unionism; and contextual constraints, are major issues that are connected.

When the roots of their emotional labour and subsequent distance from educational bodies are examined, it is possible to identify the lack of sense of agency (Benesch, 2017; 2020; Loh & Liew, 2016). They do not feel being in control anymore. The lack of sense of agency seems to put them in a vulnerable position (Kelchtermans, 2009). As discussed in the literature, teachers may feel particularly vulnerable during the times of major reforms (Lasky, 2005). To reiterate, Turkey goes through major [educational reforms](#) that follow [a neoliberal agenda](#). Additionally, the post-coup attempt environment created major turbulences in the society and the government. As Kelchtermans (1996) emphasises, political conditions may cause teachers to feel vulnerable and affect their identities. Moreover, the test-oriented environment puts them under constant performance pressures and emotional labour (Au, 2007).

Day et al. (2007), based on their longitudinal study, claim vulnerability to be one of the three fundamental dimensions in balancing their identities for teachers. When there is an imbalance because of being in a vulnerable position, teachers might find their identities temporarily fragmented. This might be the reason why Ali sought shelter in the football club, where he says that he has been through an [identity transformation](#), with the value he got from such position. Similarly, the temporal fragmentation might have caused Ahmet to go to South Africa, where he also went through an identity transformation, according to [himself](#). Upon his return, he changed his priorities about life and his teaching style. As one of the trivets of balancing identities for teachers is the wellbeing, with vulnerability and sense of agency being the other two, it might be appropriate to claim that the participants were making 'additional effort[s]' (Day et al., 2007, p. 108) to overcome their vulnerabilities and maintain their wellbeing, which would make it possible for them to feel the sense of agency in their lives. Thus, their emotional labour and vulnerability was not necessarily negative and caused them to take up action for others and became helpful for others and themselves. Through taking action, they are able to persevere and benefit from a cognitive dissonance (Hamilton, 2013) for more action. The cognitive dissonance indicates the negativity to have yielded positive results for the participants because of their perseverance.

As a consequence, it suffices to claim they are risk-takers, whether it means going to South Africa by selling an original guitar for almost free in Ahmet's case or deciding to adopt a three-year-old terminally ill child like Zeynep. The participants discuss these risks from various angles, including professional and financial aspects. Yet, the risks are also emotional to a great extent. In this vein, Parker Palmer's (1998) book title can capture what these teachers have: 'The Courage to Teach'. In their cases, they take one step ahead and the courage becomes taking action in addition to teaching, although it involves some risks. Conversely, the risks encompass reciprocity, with their personal and professional gains. Reciprocally, it is taking action that makes them motivated daily, helping to keep them to overcome their alienation and vulnerability (Day et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009). In other words, it is not just their perseverance as a predisposition enabling them to accomplish all these. It is the reciprocity the emotional involvement brings that helps them find the energy to continue.

Nevertheless, the participants cannot avoid being competent craftspeople (Moore, 2004) to a certain degree, as they teach within the boundaries of a nationwide curriculum and nationwide tests. Yet, when it comes to embracing a competent craftspeople identity, the current situation seems to be quite complicated. When I asked them about the nationwide

tests in the country, some of the participants argued for a nationwide test for English. For example, as a high school teacher, Kemal said that *“this is the only way for students to take English seriously”*. Moreover, as Ali, who is also a high school teacher, discusses in the following section, he feels the responsibility to prepare his students for the tests through extra materials. Consequently, rather than ignoring the realities of the context, which is heavily test-oriented through a nationwide curriculum, it would be more appropriate to realise that with the emotional labour they endure, participants reconstruct their identities within the context (Assaf, 2008). With their agentic capacities in this environment (Lasky, 2005), some comply with and internalise certain aspects of competency-based professionalism, while ignoring others, or at least, point out to their discontent with it (Stone-Johnson, 2014). Cansu, for example, when I asked her about the tests, she said she would prefer a process-driven and portfolio-based system, as *“kids only learn for the tests right now”*. Therefore, having varied teaching experiences and teaching at different levels as well as contexts, Kemal and Cansu exhibit their different opinions on the matter. All in all, it is clear that being competent craftspeople is not their whole identities and although managerial professionalism is enforced within the Turkish educational system, participants are still resistant in both active and passive forms (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005).

Yet, high-stakes testing is just one of the various structural issues. Participants' accounts demonstrate the need for a far-reaching action plan to overcome the ongoing problems in the current Turkish educational ecosystem. Performance pressures due to the nationwide, high-stakes tests limit the participant teachers' autonomy, while the educational bodies do not provide opportunities for them to become active agents of transformative change (Ball, 2003; Mockler, 2011). Besides, their pre-service education seems to be inadequate to prepare them for the actual teaching environments (Akcan, 2016) and almost of the formal professional development experiences reported by the participants are negative and transmissive (Kennedy, 2014). Thus, albeit in major change as discussed in the following chapter, it is quite difficult to argue the current educational environment as reinforcing positive identity constructions for the participant teachers. To instantiate, in most cases, it deters them from putting any kinds of efforts for their professional learning, whether that would be participating INSETs, pursuing a post-doctoral degree or creating discursive spaces for collaboration and transformation (Kennedy, 2014; Sachs, 2016). When the contextual problems are considered, both in-service education and pre-service teacher education need to be more strategically planned.

From a holistic perspective, Cansu and Zeynep's accounts reinforce the need for this kind of plan as well as being in line with the studies identifying a mismatch between pre-teacher education and in-service teaching in Turkey in terms of theory and practice (Akcan, 2016; Yayli, 2017), especially evident when it comes to rural teaching (Ciftci & Cin, 2018; Kizilaslan, 2012). [Cansu's remark](#) that it is the tribal leaders having the word, not the fathers in the region is quite striking, implying some of these problems to be structural. Hence it can take a long time and much effort to overcome these inherent problems. Notwithstanding, teachers like them manifest that all efforts are valuable and helpful. Even though there are macro-level efforts, such as a government project called 'Haydi Kizlar Okula – Come on Girls, Let's Go to School', yielding a major leap in the enrolment rates (Yazan, 2014), and enrolment ratios of boys and girls in primary and secondary education increased to over 95% in the last two decades (MEB, 2018), there is a long way to go. In this regard, taking action could be argued to be helpful for them to feel that they are agentic and could control their lives to a certain degree, keeping their identities more balanced. With their engagements, it is possible to identify their professional identities as transformed, and, through taking action, they take control of their professional development informally (Fraser et al., 2007).

Chapter eight reveals participants taking action despite the burden of these problems. They sometimes take action to overcome them, too. Positive identity construction through action is accomplished in various circumstances that would normally be regarded as negative or harmful in terms of their effects on teachers. Rather than suffering from their vulnerability, they use their emotional labour as a catalyst for action (Day et al., 2007; Hamilton, 2013), in response to the institutional power, affecting them in numerous ways (Benesch, 2017; 2020). To instantiate, they distance themselves from the authorities, who limit their autonomy and enforce an exam-focused pedagogy, while the contextual constraints unsettle them in their work settings and the top-down professional development activities are not supportive. Under these conditions, rather than detaching themselves from the profession or losing their commitment, with their agentic capacities, they hold onto their engagements within and beyond the school environment (Day, et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009).

Accordingly, taking action motivates them against the 'institutional demands and constraints of the workplace' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 160) and connects them with one of the cores of teaching, which is making a difference in others' lives by striving for a good education that stands out for its values (Biesta, 2009). More than competencies to be met or systematic perspectives into how teaching should be (which the participants do indeed have), they are driven by the values they attribute to teaching and teachers for a better



society and their care for the pupils. Hence, rather than being defined by standards and competencies, their identities as teachers stand out by their authenticity (Biesta, 2009; Moore, 2004). All of the participants, despite being separated from each other and taking action in different forms, harmonise with their teaching mentalities. This makes them special while still making it possible to find similarities and to conceptualise *teacher of action* as a concept. Moreover, engaging in action for others motivates them within their classrooms, which could be defined as an extra benefit of taking action. As, only through taking action, they experience the serendipities it brings to their everyday teaching.

The participants were reflexive about their positions which were reflected in their actions, although they did not theoretically know what reflection was when I asked them, nor did they engage in systematic reflection. Nevertheless, they were able to reflect on their practices, the reasons why they teach and take action in particular ways and what they want to achieve with those efforts. Additionally, they all emphasised the need for critical colleagues as they constantly ask themselves if they do right or wrong. In Kemal's words:

*I want this; somebody should nudge me. Tell me if I am doing wrong. No one tells that. In this case, I am on the right path. Of course, there are wrongs I do. However, I want this; I mean there should be more people like me. So that we can warn each other to tell if we are doing right or wrong. I cannot see it now at this age. People do not tell others when they are doing wrong, they try to kick others when they are already down, or they backbite, or they look for opportunities in others for their favour. I do not have time for all these. There should be more people thinking like me, we should create communities where people come together for more peace, prosperity and common goals. This should happen. (Kemal)*

Hence, it is impossible to claim that they are not reflective practitioners. Indeed, it is an example of the dialogic reflection (Mann & Walsh, 2017). As I argue earlier, rather than a mechanistic process, they engage in an authentic reflection, being reflexive and critical about themselves, their practices as well as their contexts and taking action to tackle the issues they identified (Akbari, 2007; Atkinson & Claxton, 2000; Dewey, 1933; Moore, 2004; Schön, 1983; 1987).

Another point to underline when discussing *teacher of action* is the political dimension. The participants are not politically naïve, they all have certain perspectives and their stances are quite clear. Yet, the term activism does not appeal to some of them because of the term's political connotations. For some of them, teaching and teachers should abstain from politics. In addition to this personal preference, the reasons could be, to reiterate, the legal regulations preventing teachers in Turkey to engage in any kinds of political action and the

post-coup attempt climate of the country when the interviews were conducted. No matter what the reason is, except for Zeynep, they do not want to be identified within the discourses of current politics in Turkey and beyond. Therefore, a series of intertwined reasons seem to come together, including personality, contextual as well as legal restraints. Hargreaves and Fullan's (1998) assertion that teachers, in general, avoid politics and perceive the political area as a place to refrain from might be helpful to understand why especially Cansu and Kemal do not want to identify themselves with politics and activism. This is echoed by studies conducted in the Turkish context with pre-service teachers, the majority of whom are found to have quite limited political participation and view politics as a difficult and disliked area (Doganay et al., 2007; Tarhan, 2016). Yet, as Zeynep illustrates, being involved in political action seems to make a difference in terms of identification. Even though they share a similar secular lifestyle, only Zeynep, who engaged in politics before, embraces an activist identity explicitly. Although Ali is also a union representative, it is again only Zeynep who is active in a teacher union. Consequently, the reason behind their choices to be identified as activists or not maybe the personal preference, more than a predisposition, stemming from having different experiences and engagements within the life course. Moreover, Ahmet portrays that there are ways to engage in action for everyone and it could be achieved through silent and implicit ways (Horton & Kraftl, 2009; Zembylas, 2013) using art and poetry (Greer, 2014). All in all, participants still carry out their transformative agendas within their professional environments and in other areas as well as other countries, which is political (Giroux, 1992) but beyond local politics. With their authentic volunteering experiences that are not based on a specific ideological background but still transformative, they exemplify broader engagements than professional activism performed within the spheres of the school. However, while taking action, they do not only engage in conventional ways of teacher activism. Their actions are also often small and implicit everyday acts, which could take a longer time to yield results (Horton & Kraftl, 2009; Zembylas, 2013).

Taking an unconventional stance could describe all of the participants' conscious choices to refrain from politics, except for Zeynep, while being quite political with their transformative perspectives about education. All of the participants, in their unique and authentic ways, take action for others. More than the educational competencies and standards enforced by the global and local educational authorities and the contemporary teacher education, which prescribes teachers to be reflective practitioners, they are driven by:

- Their intuitive beliefs in the transformative power of education (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000);
- The values they hold about teaching (Biesta, 2009; Johnston, 2003); and
- Their care for their students, families, communities and others (Carr, 2003; Day, 2004; Moore, 2004).

Taking action as a stance influences their decisions while engaging in taking action, too. In the previous chapter, while [discussing his introversion](#), Ahmet gives examples of big NGOs, such as Greenpeace and highlights the importance of taking action when he thinks that he can make an impact personally for him. This is also evident in Kemal's quote below:

*Let us collect the plastic bags at the beach. This is not just it. I think it is wiser to teach people it. If they ask if I get involved in a voluntary project, I would not say yes immediately. I would ask first; what the event is. Yes, I have a vast amount of knowledge on these, but I would see if I could contribute to this project as a volunteer. Otherwise, volunteering? This is not a project of cleaning the streets or cleaning the plastic bags on the beach. These are the things can easily be done by anybody; I think that the voluntary project I am talking about requires a contribution from people who have background knowledge on the field. (Kemal)*

Kemal argues to volunteer only if he believes that he will directly make a difference, which is not different for the other participants. In this regard, volunteering, or taking action, becomes identity work, as individuals care about making a difference personally with their presence. As Son and Wilson (2017) argue, 'perceived control' is the reason why people engage in volunteering, which is to believe that they are in control of their own lives and they can make a difference when they put an effort by taking action. Perceived control could also be called the agency of the participants (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Being agentic human beings, the participants prefer to engage in certain volunteering activities, where they believe they can make an impact as themselves.

To help them reflect on the effects of taking action on themselves, I asked whether their engagements have had an impact on their teaching motivation:

*I assure you that I was happier with those kids in the orphanage than I am happier teaching here. This is beyond volunteering. That was it. This is much better than a top-down appreciation from your supervisors. This is what motivates you; both in teaching and in volunteering. (Ahmet)*

*In terms of positives, as we always say that our job is with people, I believe that we will do our job better, as we get to know more people. First of all, football teaches you a lot when it comes to patience. Waiting for the ninety minutes to pass, whims of footballers, etc. I do not know, you cannot learn this at school in the pedagogical classes. It teaches you patience, a will to teach, to stand up at*

*the point that you have fallen. We should give this motivation to our students, too. I mean, no matter what. Because, in the end, there are people who suffer in their private lives, not just academically. There are broken families and everything. I wonder if we can give this motivation to the students. The motivation that life goes on no matter what. I should get this mentality first and I can get it through the experience. (Ali)*

All these experiences have direct influences on their motivations in teaching, through a connection with their personal and professional identity constructions (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). It might be argued for their engagements to have helped them gain new visions, which is found to be critical in gaining motivation as well as to be instrumental in connecting the participants with the values and moral purposes of teaching (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014).

This brings a question to mind, often asked to me, as well. Does it imply that the participants benefit from their engagements, especially if they choose certain activities over others? Do they benefit from their *teacher of action* identities or is it a self-less, altruistic act? Alternatively, what might be their benefits or expectations? The philosophical side of this question, whether the participants are selfless in their action or have egotistic benefits, might be impossible to be resolved (Lafollette, 2000). Nevertheless, social psychology studies have found the motivation behind an altruistic act mainly stemming from empathy, which 'might simply be (or cause) an unpleasant experience, and that people are motivated to help because they believe that helping is the best way to stop the unpleasant experience that is caused by someone else's distress' (Stich, Doris, & Roedder, 2012, p. 373). Through neuroimaging, Preston and de Waal (2011) found that:

[...] there is increasing evidence that the brain is hard-wired for social connection, and that individuals often have an emotional stake in the emotions of others. The brain may have evolved to maximize personal fitness, but did so by running a genuine reach-out program that is at least as old as the mammals. (p. 578)

In this sense, their rebel characters could add to the explanation of why they feel the need to engage in action. Accordingly, they are not only empathetic towards others, but they might also be urging the feel to stop 'an unpleasant experience' for themselves because of somebody else's problems. Furthermore, the main benefit for themselves is quite clear, as they all discuss the positive identity construction, which takes place through taking action.

However, as Arshad (2008) also finds in her research, such practices are mostly single, isolated cases. It is not possible to claim that they are prevalent, as the teachers are not in frequent contact with a wider teacher community, despite their contributions to society. There are many examples of participants' isolation in [section 8.2](#), titled '*We are Different*

*from Other Teachers'*. As chapter seven exhibits, in the current Turkish educational ecosystem, it is extremely difficult for these kinds of teachers to flourish through finding discursive spaces to share their emotions, values and experiences as good examples (Sachs, 2016; Zembylas, 2003). Yet, these kinds of environments may also be the reason why other teachers are unwilling to collaborate with the participant teachers. In other words, in addition to participants' rebel characters as well as their beliefs and values regarding teaching, which is discussed in the previous chapter, the educational context may be one of the principal reasons behind the isolation of these cases. Thus, in the Turkish context, instead of relying mostly on transmissive professional development methods, with a transformative CPD approach, the authorities should create more opportunities that will enhance collaborative professional inquiry models (Kennedy, 2014).

In addition, quite naturally, macro-political incidents affecting the whole country influence the educational climate. To ensure teachers' mutual trust and cooperation, these major influences should also be in transformation. In the current situation, Turkish teachers are not allowed to participate in any kinds of political activity (UNV, 2013) and they are not allowed to go on a strike, while only having recently been granted permission to bargain for a collective labour agreement with the government (Gunes Karaman & Erdogan, 2016). Additionally, the macro-political landscape is in perpetual turmoil with coup d'états and coup attempts almost every ten years, the last of which was only a few years ago.

To summarise, in addition to their uniqueness, the stories in this study seem to be mostly isolated cases, because:

- in the Turkish educational context, it is quite difficult for teachers to engage in extracurricular activities with:
  - the high-stakes testing environment;
  - accountability expectations from teachers;
  - a transmissive professional development approach; and
  - limited autonomy of teachers.
- The macro-political influences and major turbulences in recent history inhibit teachers' political and professional rights, making it difficult for them to be more active in civil areas.

All told, it suffices to claim that, when it comes to teacher activism, similar to teacher identity, the participation and non-participation of teachers cannot be analysed without

taking personal biographies as well as micro, meso and macro structural influences into consideration.

In the final chapter, I attempt to conclude this thesis by exploring the relationship between the *teacher of action* concept, teacher activism, and teacher education policies within the Turkish context and beyond.

## 10. Conclusions and Implications

After an overall discussion in the previous chapter, in this final chapter, I first review the extent to which I addressed the research questions before considering possible alternatives and future research. This is followed by an examination of the implications of the study for the educational policies in Turkey; for the teaching profession; and for a pedagogy of hope, respectively. I conclude the thesis with my personal reflection as the final word.

### 10.1 Answering the Research Questions

**RQ1:** *How do Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching construct their personal and professional identities?*

Chapters six and eight aimed to answer the first research question. Through participants' stories, chapter six presented extensive biographies, contributing to the analysis of the structural and agentic factors behind their engagements, while chapter eight focused on the need to conceptualise *teacher of action*, based on participants' identities, values, motivations as well as their own experiences and assertions. Although it may not have been possible to fully identify participants' personal and professional identities via a number of interviews, narrative inquiry enabled construction of a rich dataset as well as detailed representations of participants within the study.

As a brief answer to the question, participant Turkish teachers of English construct *teacher of action* identities while volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching. Accordingly, their engagements encompass volunteering and activism, with authentic ways of taking action in and outside the boundaries of schools. Taking action becomes a stance for them, as they engage not only in big projects but also small everyday acts for their students and communities. In this regard, *teacher of action* becomes an additional discourse alongside teacher activism, by incorporating unconventional ways of taking action in various forms and venues.

**RQ2:** *How do educational, social, political and cultural factors influence the identity constructions of Turkish teachers of English who engage in volunteering in addition to their everyday teaching?*

Chapter seven is deemed to have answered the second research question, by scrutinising several structural issues, restraining participants' professional identities. All of these factors are influential in participants' engagements. They affect their participation and non-

participation in a myriad of ways. While they often constrain and limit the participants' engagements, they also shape their values and identities, hence influencing the reasons and the ways of taking action. Therefore, there are both positive and negative influences, which makes it possible to claim that their engagements are relational and contextual.

Nevertheless, due to the excessive amount of possible educational, social, political, and cultural influences on participants' identity constructions, I may not have answered this research question fully. Indeed, answering solely this question can easily become another PhD project. Additionally, I must accept that I sought answers to this question through my research lens and political stance, in addition to being an insider of the context. In short, I acknowledge that this question would produce more than four themes under different circumstances. Still, as some of the themes emerged from the data without any prior anticipation, I believe they bring a fresh perspective into various issues regarding the professional identities of Turkish teachers as well as enriching the analysis in the thesis.

After evaluating the research questions, in the following section, I consider the alternative options for several choices while conducting the study.

## 10.2 Possible Alternatives as an Alternative to Limitations

I should first acknowledge this to be small-scale research, conducted with a small number of participants, through interviews, which provides an opportunity to capture a snapshot of participants' experiences. Participants' accounts cannot be validated, although this is not the concern of a narrative study, as discussed in the [methodology chapter](#) (Polkinghorne, 1995). Being an international student in Scotland who collected data in another country, I chose to conduct two interviews with each participant within six months. These teachers live in different cities of Turkey, hundreds of kilometres away from each other, if not thousands. Under different circumstances, I may have opted for an ethnography or a multiple case study research, in which I would have observed the participants in their own contexts, possibly via a variety of data collection methods, including on-site observations (Gray, 2014; Yin, 2009). Although I paid attention to understanding participants' contexts, I did this within the course of a few days.

Even though my analysis drew on the Voice – Centred Relational method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), helping me to focus on the language as an element of analysis, the study is not a discourse or a critical discourse analysis study (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 1993). With a focus on discourse, it might have been possible to further scrutinise the impact of power and the place of gender in participants' accounts and institutional structures. These elements



could have yielded a significant analysis, based on their current traces in the study. Power is at play, suggested by the participants' grassroots reactions towards institutional constraints via their engagements, while gender might be playing a role in the nature of these actions.

While analysing participants' identities, Bourdieu's theories (1977; 1990) could have been applied. In particular, his concepts of habitus, field and capital could have been used to explore and interpret the phenomenon of taking action. Accordingly, as taking action becomes a stance for the participants informed by their identities and values, it would not be a far-fetched claim to argue that taking action has become an aspect of their habitus, while the field concept could explain their personal and educational settings comprehensively to analyse participants' participation and non-participation in action, and the capital theory would offer ways to probe the structural elements influential in their identity constructions (Bourdieu 1977; 1990). Yet, even though it was plausible, I chose not to apply Bourdieu into the analysis and conducted narrative and thematic analyses of the narrative interviews, which influenced various decisions about the thesis, including the aspects of epistemology, genre as well as the length of stories and quotes (Riessman, 2008).

Another influential theory considered was the Communities of Practice (CoP) model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). I could have included CoP into the analysis as a framework, as it is often suggested as a model for collaboration and a shared repertoire, to which Sachs (2001; 2016) is an example, citing CoP as one of her reference points while illustrating the need and the ways for a bottom-up and transformative professional learning. Nevertheless, without denying the usefulness of concepts such as imagination, alignment and engagement, it was going to be difficult to claim that the participants are members of a community of practice, as conceptualised by Lave and Wenger (1991). Moreover, the study was not mainly about analysing participants' membership in teaching or volunteering practices. Hence, volunteering in addition to teaching would be a difficult conceptualisation as an apprenticeship within their CoP.

Based on my experiences, I had expected religious motivation to be significant in people's decisions to take up action. However, the participants did not comment on any religious motivations. I did not deliberately ask any questions about religion and its effects and they did not discuss it. Yet, especially at the personal level, religion's effects on people's altruistic behaviours cannot be ignored, whether it is volunteering or activism (Arshad, 2008; Gronlund, 2011).

Furthermore, although I did not ask a direct question about being an international speaker of English, the participants did not bring it up as an issue, either. Therefore, it neither validates nor contradicts various studies from across the globe (Canagajarah, 1999; Cook, 2016; Pennycook, 1998; Philipson, 1992), and in Turkey (Altan, 2012; Ozturk & Atay, 2010) regarding native speakerism, which demonstrate that being a non-native speaker of English can affect international teachers' identities, especially with concerns regarding their language use, such as pronunciation. They may have overcome the issue, as they have varying degrees of abroad experiences, which specifically means that being a non-native speaker does not affect their confidence in the classroom.

To conclude, even though there could have been other ways to explore and evaluate *teacher of action* as a phenomenon, I made some decisions guided by my epistemological and stylistic positioning. The biggest drawback of choosing to conduct a narrative study could be the issue of reliability of participants' accounts and building a study on them. Therefore, I should again underscore this study does not pursue or guarantee the truth, especially when it comes to participants' utterances. Rather than pursuing the paradigmatic cognition where arguments pursue the truth, it relies on experiences of participants with the likeliness of their stories (Bruner, 1986). Instead of traditional conceptualisations of quantitative research of validity, such as triangulation, the study seeks quality in research via seeking a reflexive and rigorous research process (Flick, 2007a; 2007b). As discussed [earlier](#), based on these experiences, with the extensive narratives, it has been possible to focus on the identity constructions of the participants, as a narrative inquiry provided a conceptual focus in these experiences' interpretations. Moreover, with a flexible 'multiplicities of meanings' approach, both the individual aspects and the common elements across the stories could be tracked and mapped (Tamboukou, 2015b, p. 68).

### 10.3 Future Directions for Research

As mentioned repeatedly, future research could focus at discourse level via a discourse study or a critical discourse study. There may be two main foci of this kind of study. Firstly, it would be interesting to analyse the language used when participants discussed the educational structure and policies, especially in relation to their effects on them. How they position themselves against other stakeholders could be explored, in order to see if their agency and empowerment through *teacher of action* as a stance makes a significant difference. The second focus could be the discourse they employ when they discuss or narrate their stories. Although this is touched upon in the analysis through the subject use, it

would also be stimulating to examine the language teachers of action use when they discuss the engagements that they are proud of and excited to express.

Another possible direction could be elite interviewing with policymakers and faculty at the universities. As discussed in this chapter, there are ongoing macro attempts to reform the formal first-tier and second-tier education from all aspects, including the curricula, textbooks, teachers' professional development, the infrastructure, etc. and to reform the university education curricula for education faculties. There are also attempts to increase the awareness and participation of volunteering through other ministries of the government. In this regard, it could be fruitful to scrutinise the intentions and the directions of the upper bureaucracy, especially in relation to the intersection of volunteering and teaching as well as teachers' empowerment and agency. Faculty members of the universities can be probed for their evaluations as well as for their stance regarding the reforms taking place in all tiers of education, and the professional development needs of pre-service and in-service needs of teachers in Turkey.

As there are currently no studies on activist teachers or teachers who volunteer in Turkey, I do not know whether there are many others who hold similar beliefs or engage in action similar to that of the study participants. Hence, it is impossible to predict the extent to which the findings from the study are generalisable to the wider teacher community in the country. However, although it seems likely other teachers will undertake many extra responsibilities, and some will even make sacrifices, how many of them take action inside and outside their school contexts on a regular basis is unanswerable from the data gathered, which could usefully be investigated in a further study.

As the study is conducted with the Turkish teachers of English, a future study would certainly benefit from a wider, international teacher community. If such a study were to be conducted, it would be intriguing to find out the similarities and differences across different countries in terms of teachers' behaviours, experiences and assertions of volunteering and activism. If neoliberalism is accepted as a global phenomenon, how teachers react against the standards and accountability it brings in education in different parts of the world could be of scholarly interest.

Finally, a longitudinal study could be carried out with pre-service teachers, engaged in voluntary work while studying. The effects of the voluntary engagements on pre-service teachers' identity constructions, before and after they start teaching would be relevant to

illustrate the possible benefits and the ratio of the continuum to volunteering after having a full-time job.

Following a discussion of the research questions, possible alternatives, and future directions for research in the first part of the chapter, the final sections explore possible implications of the study.

#### 10.4 Implications for Educational Policies in Turkey: Triggering a Change in the Dynamics?

In the last few decades, Turkey has gone through a series of educational reforms (ERG, 2018; Kirkgoz, 2007). Yet, the structural constraints continue, alongside the accountability and performance expectations towards teachers, with a centralised educational structure, nationwide curricula and high-stakes testing (ERG, 2018; MEB Temel Egitim Genel Mudurlugu, 2019; Ozturk Karatas & Okan, 2019). Participants of the study illustrated their limited autonomies under accountability and performance expectations, causing them to distance themselves from the educational authorities. Moreover, especially inexperienced teachers face problems that are almost inherent in rural educational contexts (Ciftci & Cin, 2018). Infrastructural problems and issues around girls' education put participants under emotional burden (Benesch, 2017), affecting their mental wellbeing, as well. Further, limited professional development opportunities do not offer transformative change due to their transmissive nature (Kennedy, 2014), while the teacher unions are far from being supportive of teachers' rights, with their neoliberal agendas (Buyruk, 2015; Eraslan, 2012).

Hence, in this section, I offer some practical suggestions within the mainstream Turkish education landscape, to create spaces where *teachers of action* can flourish. Within the light of the problems related to the professional needs of Turkish teachers, some of which are discussed in the study and summarised in the previous paragraph, as well as the problems related to the foreign language teacher education in Turkey that are discussed at [the beginning of the thesis](#), some of which are older than a century, the current situation does not look bright. A large-scale, mixed-method study demonstrates the majority of Turkish students as not exceeding the basic English competencies even after a thousand hours of English classes throughout their schooling (TEPAV & British Council, 2014). Some primary findings include: English is taught like any other school subject, not like a language; English teaching is driven by grammar-based tests; learning is teacher and textbook centred while textbooks and other materials are far from meeting students' needs; in-service opportunities for teachers are insufficient; while teachers are under rigid surveillance of the

inspectors, who are not often English language teaching specialists (TEPAV & British Council, 2014).

In this regard, as I analysed earlier regarding the [Turkish context](#), The Turkish Ministry of Education declared a Teacher Strategy Paper for 2017-2023 (MoNE, 2017a), which is followed by the 'Education Vision 2023' (MoNE, 2018). Both of these documents target three main objectives, namely employing 'highly-qualified and well-trained teachers'; focusing on teachers' personal and professional development; and 'strengthening the status of the profession' (MoNE, 2017a, p. 2). As stated in the follow-up document, professional development goal overviews a comprehensive approach, with an emphasis on horizontal and vertical steps such as restructuring pre-service teacher education programs (already in effect, as discussed [earlier](#)) and supporting the professional development activities with post-graduate education for teachers. In-service training is only one element out of thirteen priorities of the professional development goals, which could be found in [Appendix I](#) (MoNE, 2018).

To realise the aim, a recent pilot project was initiated in September 2019 specifically for the professional development needs of teachers of English, with British Council's cooperation (MoNE, 2019c). It would be possible to argue that the pilot project aligns with the statement in the vision document: 'particular importance will be attached to the post-graduate and certificate-level in-service training of foreign language teachers, using international and national sources' (MoNE, 2018, p. 66). As the pilot project started recently, it will take a few years to see the initial results. However, an award-bearing professional development model like this should be categorised as 'malleable'. It can be 'transmissive' in maintaining the status quo, rather than being transformative, which is 'liberating, empowering and a significant contributory factor to enhancing teacher agency' (Kennedy, 2014, p. 693). For a transformative CPD strategy, Sachs (2016) prescribes the following:

The challenge then is how to create discursive spaces whereby a more collaborative or research-engaged teaching profession could develop and thrive. The development of a common shared vocabulary about practice and how to improve that practice is a beginning. Furthermore, recasting ourselves as learners and committed to personal and social transformation for the betterment of all citizenry is also fundamental. And finally, a profession that engages in systematic inquiry, develops strategies to constantly improve and be innovative in their practice and to share that practice is a good starting point. (p. 424)

When it comes to creating the spaces for preparing more teachers with a *teacher of action* mind-set, as Arshad (2008, p. 208) underlines, intuition is insufficient to 'take forward

effective anti-discriminatory practice' (Arshad, 2008, p. 208). In an attempt to increase the moral awareness and community engagements of student teachers in the country, following the examples across the globe, the Turkish Council of Higher Education introduced two compulsory courses into the curricula of the education faculties in the country in the recent years. One of these courses is in the fifth semester and called 'Moral and Ethics in Education', which is theory-based and started in 2018. The other one is in the seventh semester and named 'Community Service Learning', which is more promising with its fully practical nature. Community Service Learning aims to encourage student teachers to create and conduct projects on the social problems they identify, and/or volunteer in ongoing projects (YOK Egitim Ogretim Dairesi Baskanligi, 2019). Yet, although it deserves to be praised as a major step, considering it only started in 2008, there are various problems with its implementation, in terms of the course instructors', students', and the institutes' responsibilities (Kesten, 2012). Besides, as the course is in the seventh semester, it is in the final year, which makes it quite difficult for student teachers to benefit from it, since teaching practicum and preparations for the nationwide high-stakes tests right after graduation to become a state-school teacher happen simultaneously (Kesten, Kocer, & Eguz, 2014; Seban, 2013). It can be argued for the course to be more helpful, if it is introduced in the first years of four-year teacher education, to achieve more sustainable results, in addition to more careful planning and implementation.

Additionally, restructuring teaching practicum at the undergraduate level could be helpful for the pre-service teachers. Practicum is in the final two semesters in Turkish pre-service education, during which students observe a mentor teacher within the classroom in the seventh semester and practice teaching in the eighth semester (YOK Egitim Ogretim Dairesi Baskanligi, 2019). It is found to be quite late, offered in limited schools by unprepared mentors and not giving enough autonomy to pre-service teachers (Kartal & Basol, 2019; Kasapoglu, 2015).

Both teaching practicum and community service courses are highly important for Turkish teachers to explore their own identities during pre-service education. These courses could provide opportunities for student teachers to close the gap between theory and practice, a complaint voiced by both Zeynep and Cansu. However, these courses, albeit practical, might result in developing better technicians, who are transmitters of standards, rather than agents of change (Kennedy, 2014). These courses and continuing professional development opportunities should lead teachers to explore their own identities, identify the injustices in

education and reflect on their roles in possible solutions (Arshad, 2008; Flessner & Payne, 2017).

To sum up, working in a culture dominated by top-down managerial professionalism, teachers in this study seem to be under varying degrees of pressure, becoming more evident in recent years (Sachs, 2001). To give examples, the sources of the pressure have been changing profiles of colleagues within a shifting educational structure for Kemal, students and families for Zeynep, and administration for Ali. Under the current conditions, it is a highly unrealistic expectation to find numerous examples around the country like the teachers in this study, as many Turkish teachers would struggle to find those spaces where they would be more agentic and bring transformative change. The Ministry should consider focusing on creating transformative educational settings, where teachers can find spaces to become more autonomous and agentic in their professional environments (Kennedy, 2014).

In the following section, I discuss the possible implications of the study on the teaching profession, in regards to activism and teacher activism.

## 10.5 Implications for the Teaching Profession: Do Activists need to be Radical?

It may be helpful to scrutinise the connotations of activism as a concept from the literature<sup>12</sup>, to shed more light on the reasons behind some participants' distance from the term 'activism':

- Activists' portrayal in the media, which can make activism 'an alien idea' and activists as "other' people – weird or dauntingly benevolent' (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010, p. 282).
- On the flip side of the coin, linking an activist identity 'to a 'perfect standard' that places label out of reach for some social movement actors' (Bobel, 2007, p. 156), in addition to 'foreground and romanticise the grandiose, the iconic, and the unquestionably meaning-ful' activism in social sciences (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 14).
- A tendency to ignore the small, silent and implicit ways of activism (Askins, 2015; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Greer, 2014; Martin, et al., 2007), which may be more appropriate to interpret the majority of teachers' activist

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<sup>12</sup> A detailed review of the literature around the 'discourses' of activism could be found in Horton and Kraftl (2009, pp. 16-17).

endeavours, as teachers' 'pedagogical opportunities for activism' are 'conducted at a micropolitical level more often than as visible acts of political contestation in more macropolitical areas' (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 127).

As the literature suggests, while not disregarding conventional activism, there should be opportunities for small and implicit ways of teacher activism to be recognised and heard (Marshall & Anderson, 2009), which may be "banal" acts' but 'eventually [would] make a difference in the long run' (Zembylas, 2013, p. 93). Indeed, in her doctoral thesis, Arshad (2008) discusses her learning in her study on Scottish teachers who were informed on activism and called themselves activists, which was that there are different ways of making a difference, small or big, global or local:

Two personal learning points that I take away from this study have been a realisation of the importance of valuing small changes and a strong belief that everyone can make a difference. I began the journey with assumptions that worthwhile change had to be political, radical and informed. I came into this study assuming that the teachers would tell me politicised stories of how they became involved, engaged and passionate about challenging injustice. [...] I have learnt that this is not necessarily the case but more importantly that change can be achieved through different ways, through small private steps such as changing the content of what we teach but also through bold and more public acts of political action such as being part of protest demonstrations. Different forms of change, provided they share in the objective of reducing discrimination, need to be valued and encouraged. I have also learnt to value that those who engage in small acts of change can be as effective as those who are prepared to stick their necks above the parapet. Teacher educators like myself can assist to empower student teachers' belief in themselves as change agents by improving student teachers' confidence to begin to make those small changes. (pp. 223-224)

In addition to various ways of taking action, another relevant issue is to be open towards different personalities, as Ahmet exemplifies with his insights into his introversion in the [previous chapter](#). This might also be argued to be related to the 'perfect standards' of activism (Bobel, 2007; Horton & Kraftl, 2009). As a noteworthy example, although Ahmet demonstrates it to be a difficult achievement for males, too, Craddock (2019) asserts that the 'perfect standards' are gendered:

[...] the 'ideal activist' is male given how the identity is narrowly defined by doing 'enough' of the 'right' type of activism (direct action), which results in women feeling guilt and blaming themselves for their perceived failure to achieve the identity. (p. 138)



The participants take action despite the adversaries in their country, local communities and educational contexts. Rather than playing the game according to its rules, they act as border crossers, as they perceive their contexts as a site of struggle for social transformation while ‘developing a politics of identity, community and pedagogy’ (Giroux, 1992, p. 32). While taking action, they engage in both big and small acts, within and beyond the spheres of schools and education, which are often unconventional. However, it is difficult to claim that they rely on a theoretical background in teacher activism or critical pedagogy, which is not surprising, given the activist teachers in Arshad’s (2008) study in the Scottish context were in a similar situation.

At this point, it is highly important to note that teachers of action can and should rely on or benefit from a more sophisticated and intellectual theoretical underpinnings. Otherwise, in their small circles with a few like-minded colleagues to encourage them, teachers of action themselves may fall into one of the neoliberal traps that they intend to oppose in the first place. That is, engaging in individualistic volunteering instead of collaborative action and being confined to remain isolated. Instead, teachers of action should seek ways to create and grow a critical mass enabling them to ‘locate their activism within an explicit anti-discriminatory practice that will engage with personal, cultural and institutional power’ (Arshad, 2008, p. 214). A starting point for teachers of action themselves and pre-service teacher education programmes should certainly be to develop understandings of social justice and critical pedagogy from theoretical perspectives, to pave the way for a bottom-up and transformative collective activism, which can challenge the status quo and be achieved by teachers as agents of change (please revisit section 3.1.2, [Teacher Activism](#), for a more detailed discussion).

To claim the middle ground, teacher activism studies could more explicitly take account of different personalities, genders as well as different ways of enacting activism (Horton & Kraftl, 2009). While becoming more inclusive, activism and teacher activism studies could benefit from acknowledging the link between activism and emotions more explicitly (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Zemblyas, 2013), which also seems to have been underplayed in Arshad’s (2008) study. Emotions are one of the ‘necessary link[s] between social structure and social actor’ (Barbalet, 2002, p. 4) alongside values (Campbell, 2003). Eyerman (2005, p. 42) asserts that ‘emotional responses can move individuals to protest and to contend and, once in motion, social movements can create, organize, direct and channel collective emotion in particular directions, at particular targets’. Especially in social justice education, emotions are highly important to work on, as students could reflect on their emotions and channel

them for good causes instead of accumulating hostility towards others (Zembylas, 2007). To achieve this, it is quite important for teachers to critically reflect on their students' and their own emotions and use them as a catalyst for action, whether big or small; explicit or implicit (Zembylas, 2013). Emotional reflexivity is also found to be crucial for sustaining activism, especially in the long run, arduous task in itself (Brown & Pickerill, 2009). During the interview, Zeynep gave various examples of how she felt her efforts were being exploited by people, who need her voluntary efforts. In these times, activists 'need to sustain activism through emotional reflexivity, building sustaining spaces to create space for emotion in activism' (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 25).

To conclude, as an answer to the question in the section's heading, without disregarding radical activism, activism and activists do not need to be radical. There are unconventional ways, which are also promisingly transformative but ordinary and quiet (Horton & Kraftl, 2009). Teacher activism could benefit from small and everyday action, which could attract a broader teaching crowd and be more applicable in the classroom (Arshad, 2008; Marshall & Anderson, 2009; Zembylas, 2013). While working towards it, both activism and teacher activism studies should acknowledge the structural constraints of global, political and contextual nature against activism as a concept, being more inclusive towards personal biographies such as different personalities and genders (Craddock, 2019; Horton & Kraftl, 2009). To overcome such constraints, (teacher) activism could benefit from critical emotional reflexivity as well as embracing different, unconventional and implicit ways of taking action (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Zembylas, 2013).

In this regard, the *teacher of action* concept becomes an additional discourse through recognising the authentic ways teachers engage in to make changes in their students' and communities' lives for better. To become the *teachers of action* in their careers, as the following section demonstrates, teachers can find the inspiration, should they need it, in a pedagogy of hope.

## 10.6 Implications for a Pedagogy of Hope

After writing the influential 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', in 1992, Paulo Freire wrote 'Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. This was twenty-four years after the first book. In the meantime, Freire went to live and teach in many countries, returned to Brazil after many years in exile and eventually became the Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo (Freire, 1994). Although Pedagogy of Hope's content is not dramatically different than Pedagogy of the Oppressed, as its name also suggests, it is certainly a refined version of the

previous book in terms of the arguments, with more than two decades of international experience. The main difference was, obviously, to highlight hope, instead of oppression. A pedagogy of hope is not only taken on by Freire, either. As an example, bell hooks (2003) has a somewhat similar book, which is also dedicated to Freire, called 'Teaching community: A Pedagogy of Hope'. While Freire (1994, p. 2) defines hope as 'an ontological need [...] [,] an existential, concrete imperative', hooks (2003) stresses the importance of reconnecting with the communities of teachers and students beyond the academia, to share the hope for a transformational pedagogy.

In this vein, even though my research is limited to the teachers of English in my country, it aims to offer hope to all teachers across the globe. Through the inspiring stories the five participants shared with me, the main implications of the study for the readers could be the following:

- The study illustrates that there are multiple ways to implement a transformative education.
- Engaging in any forms of voluntary activity outweighs the tiredness it brings for a full-time teacher, a student or others with the emotional reciprocity and the serendipities it offers.
- Eventually, taking action becomes a stance for the *teacher of action*. Their stance has not only been affected by their values and identities but also has reconstructed and transformed them. In this way, it influences their personal and professional behaviours and decisions. Even if they are involved in a project every day or not, they carry on engaging in small acts in their daily teaching, too.
- Taking action reconnects them with the foundations of education and constantly reminds them what teaching is actually about, against the never-ending bombardment of high-stakes tests, standards and accountability expectations by the educational authorities.
- Adopting a *teacher of action* stance offers hope to those whose professional development needs are not adequately met formally. Through these engagements, teachers can find discursive spaces to collaborate with a wider community, be more agentic teachers and empower themselves as well as their students and beyond.

To sum up, it is possible for all teachers across the globe, not just those who are perseverant, to embrace a *teacher of action* identity. Whether early or later in life; big or small; and individual or collective, taking action brings numerous serendipities for personal

and professional life by feeding itself for more action through transforming teachers' identities.

## 10.7 Concluding Remarks – Personal Reflection

When I first came up with the research topic, I reflected on my own voluntarily tutoring experiences. One of my goals throughout the study has been to find and learn from good examples, due to my experiences, which were often brief and loosely structured, making me feel uneasy afterwards. Participant teachers showed me that there are myriad ways of taking action for others. Moreover, even if the engagements are brief, small or individual efforts, they demonstrated that it is about making *teacher of action* a stance that influences the way we perceive the world, take our decisions and engage in action.

Undertaking a PhD is often described as a journey. I would rather define it as an intellectual quest. When I reflect on the research process, it has been an intellectual endeavour from the very first day and a transformative three and a half years for me. However, not only have I found all this process painstakingly enjoyable, but I have always felt that I kept improving my cognitive and intellectual capacities. In this bitter-sweetness, this research process empowered me from multiple aspects. It has taught me many new concepts and refined several others that I had thought to have known, with activism and teacher activism being the most prominent. As an introvert myself, it provided me academic knowledge that having different personalities does not necessarily hinder political action for a transformative education.

Currently, the world is going through a pandemic, indicating global major changes. Some of the precautions and reactions from the governments imply the brink of a totalitarian era. Yet, although I cannot predict what is going to happen in the near or far future, I choose to remain hopeful and optimistic. In the midst of uncertainties, despair and gloom, I still see a glimpse of hope when I see people taking initiatives, sharing their food and medical supplies, taking more active roles in charities and helping their communities.

In this regard, this study chooses to offer hope. I believe the participants illustrated, not just to me but to all teachers, that there is always a way, a venue and an audience to take action. They manifested that, small or big, all these engagements, are not just valuable but also helpful for teachers' personal and professional identities. With their inspiring stories, they provided numerous valuable ways for teachers to engage as *teachers of action* as a pedagogy of hope (Freire, 1994). If teachers could take the first step towards taking action, I believe they will see that need not be difficult, it is helpful and transformative for others as

well as for themselves. Teachers will also see the serendipities it brings while reconnecting the self with the essence of good education in an age of numbers, measurements and standards (Biesta, 2009).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: General Competencies for the Teaching Profession in Turkey

<b>A Professional Knowledge</b>	<b>B Professional Skills</b>	<b>C Attitudes and Values</b>
<b>A1. Content Knowledge</b>	<b>B1. Planning of Education and Teaching</b>	<b>C1. National, Moral and Universal Values</b>
She/he has an advanced and critical perspective on theoretical, methodological and factual knowledge in his/her subject field.	She/he plans education and teaching processes effectively.	She/he observes national, moral and universal values.
<b>A2. Pedagogical Content Knowledge</b>	<b>B2. Creating Learning Environments</b>	<b>C2. Approach to Students</b>
She/he has a good knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge of her/his subject area.	She/he prepares appropriate teaching materials and builds an healthy and safe learning environments, where effective learning can be achieved for all students.	She/he has an attitude that supports the development of students.
<b>A3. Knowledge on Legislation</b>	<b>B3. Managing the Teaching and Learning Process</b>	<b>C3. Communication and Cooperation</b>
As an individual and teacher, she/he conducts her/himself according to the legislation related to her/his duties, rights and responsibilities.	She/he manages the teaching and learning process effectively.	She/he establishes an effective communication and cooperation with students, colleagues, families, and other educational stakeholders.
	<b>B4. Assessment and Evaluation</b>	<b>C4. Personal and Professional Development</b>
	She/he uses the methods, techniques and tools of assessment and evaluation that fit for purpose.	By carrying out self appraisal she/he participates in personal and professional development activities.

*General Competencies for the Teaching Profession in Turkey (MoNE, 2017a, p.14)*

## Appendix B: Attitudes and Values as Competencies for Teachers in Turkey

C	<b>COMPETENCY DOMAIN: ATTITUDES AND VALUES</b>	
C	<b>SCOPE:</b> This competency domain involves with the general attitudes and values of the teaching profession that includes approaches to students, national, moral, and universal values, communication, cooperation, personal and professional development.	
COMPETENCIES	COMPETENCE INDICATORS	
<b>C1. NATIONAL, MORAL AND UNIVERSAL VALUES</b> She/he observes national, moral, universal values.	C1.1. She/he respects child and human rights.	
	C1.2. She/he respects individual and cultural differences.	
	C1.3. She/he helps students to grow as individuals that respectful of national and moral values and open to universal values.	
	C1.4. She/he is sensitive to protection of the natural environment and the historical and cultural heritage.	
<b>C2. APPROACH TO STUDENTS</b> She/he has an attitude supports the development of students.	C2.1. She/he values every student as a human being and individual.	
	C2.2. She/he advocates that every student can learn.	
	C2.3. She/he guides students in their personal development and planning of future.	
	C2.4. She/he serves as a role model for students with his/her attitudes and behavior.	
<b>C3. COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION</b> She/he establishes an effective communication and cooperation with students, colleagues, families, and other educational stakeholders.	C3.1. She/he uses effectively the Turkish language effectively without grammatical errors.	
	C3.2. She/he pays attention using effective communication methods and techniques.	
	C3.3. She/he builds relations with others through empathy and tolerance.	
	C3.4. She/he is open to sharing knowledge and experience with his/her colleagues.	
	C3.5. She/he cooperates with families in educational activities.	
	C3.6. She/he participates in activities intended for school development actively.	
<b>C4. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b> By carrying out self appraisal she/he participates in personal and professional development activities.	C4.1. She/he carries out his/her profession happily and willingly.	
	C4.2. She/he makes a self-evaluation by taking advantage of opinions and suggestions from stakeholders.	
	C4.3. She/he involves in activities to improve himself/herself personally and professionally.	
	C4.4. She/he takes care of his/her personal well-being and health.	
	C4.5. She/he participates in cultural and artistic activities.	
	C4.6. She/he ensures her/his professional commitment and dignity by adhering to professional ethics and principles.	
	C4.7. She/he follows national and global agenda.	

*Attitudes and Values Domain in the Turkish Ministry of National Education's General Competencies for Teaching Profession (MoNE, 2017a, p. 23)*



## Appendix C: Information Sheet for the Participants



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
Moray House School  
of Education

Research and  
Knowledge Exchange  
Ethics Committee

### Information Sheet

**Research project title:** A Study into the Teacher Identity Constructions of EFL Teachers in Turkey

**Research investigator:** Ammar Tekin

**Address & contact details of research investigator:** Moray House School of Education, St Leonard's Land, 2.18, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ. Email: s1573334@sms.ed.ac.uk; ammartekin@gmail.com

#### About the Project

This PhD study aims to explore the nature of the professional and personal identities of Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers who tutor free outside school hours in various venues.

My research aim is based on the question below:

- How does tutoring outside the official school environment contribute to Turkish EFL teachers' professional identity constructions?

#### Who is responsible for the data collected in this study?

I am the only researcher. A narrative type of data will be collected from you via interviews. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to be used for analysis purposes. Data will be stored encrypted and password protected in the university's cloud system and my password-protected hard drive. I and my two supervisors will have access to the data and I will retain it for three more years after the PhD project finishes. All data will be deleted permanently afterwards. This project was granted ethical permission by the Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee.

#### What is involved in the study?

During 2018, I am to conduct two interviews with each participant. Each interview is planned to take about one hour. I also plan to ask for reflections and feedback from you when necessary (should you prefer to contribute more).

#### What are the benefits of taking part in this study?

You may appraise the interviews to be an opportunity to have a conversation in English, which we, Turkish teachers of English, usually lack. You may also see this as an occasion where you will have a chance to reflect on your practices and as well as contributing with valuable insights to research on Turkish EFL teachers.

**Are there any risks involved in this study?**

There are no personal risks for you. All data collected will be kept anonymous and the utmost care will be given to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality. I will send transcripts and the analysis to you, after our interviews and before the thesis is submitted, should you require any information to be removed.

**What are your rights as a participant?**

Participating in the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons, should you wish.

**Will I receive any payment or monetary benefits?**

You will receive no payment for your participation. I will not use the data for commercial purposes. Therefore, you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future.

**For more information**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Ammar Tekin

Moray House School of Education, St Leonard's Land, 2.18, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ  
s1573334@sms.ed.ac.uk; ammartekin@gmail.com

**You can also contact my supervisors:**

Dr Aileen Kennedy

3.16A Charteris Land, Moray House School of Education Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ

[aileen.kennedy@ed.ac.uk](mailto:aileen.kennedy@ed.ac.uk)

Dr Ann Rae

2.10 Charteris Land, Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ

[ann.rae@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ann.rae@ed.ac.uk)

**What if you have concerns about this research?**

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact Research & Knowledge Exchange, Old Moray House, Moray House School of Education, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ (or [MHSEthics@ed.ac.uk](mailto:MHSEthics@ed.ac.uk)).

## Appendix D: Consent Form

### RESEARCH ETHICS: CONSENT FORM

**Full title of Project:** A Study into the Teacher Identity Constructions of EFL Teachers in Turkey

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:** Ammar Tekin, PhD Student, Moray House School of Education, St Leonard's Land, 2.18, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ  
Email: s1573334@sms.ed.ac.uk; ammartekin@gmail.com

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

*Note for researchers:*

*Include the following statements if appropriate, or delete from your consent form:*

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix E: Interview Questions

### The first interview questions:

1. How did you become a teacher?
2. How did you decide to learn English?
3. How was your school life (high school, university)?
4. Could you talk about your projects, what you have done?
5. What are the reasons motivated you to become a volunteer?
6. What demotivates you? Are there de-motivational issues/events hindering you?
7. What satisfies you in teaching and volunteering? What are the satisfactory elements/factors?
8. In your opinion, what are the reasons for you to take action for others? Are there any crucial moments/epiphanies causing it?
9. What do you think about activism?

### The second interview questions:

1. What are your perceptions of yourself as a teacher of English and as a volunteer?
2. What are your aspirations for the future for yourself in your profession? Do you have any academic or other kinds of plans?
3. What are your aspirations for the future for your students and the country in terms of education?
4. What are your aspirations in terms of volunteering?
5. What do you think about the position of English and teachers of English in society?
6. What do you think about the content of English teaching in the country? What do you think about the themes covered?
7. Do you think that English language teaching is test focused in Turkey? If so, how does it affect you as a teacher?
8. What are your ideas and feelings about educational policies? There is a consensus that it changes too often, would you agree?
9. One of the most common discourses about teachers is a teacher's performance and its assessment. The ministry, public and parents expect teachers to perform in a certain way with some priorities about teaching, such as enabling them passing the tests. What do you think about it? How do you evaluate your teaching and volunteering in relation to this performativity culture and expectations?
10. Are you a member of a teacher union? What do you think about teacher unions? Do they help you to feel better, more equipped or more active? Or, are they, simply, just political?
11. Do you do reflection? What do you know about reflection?
12. What do you think about in-service training opportunities? Do you attend any? Are there enough opportunities?
13. What kind of topics are covered in the mandatory in-service training at the end and the beginning of the academic year?
14. Have you read the curriculum? Are there any particular themes that you see as positive or negative in it?
15. Do you think you influence your students? Would they want to become like you? Do you consciously work on transforming your students as more mindful people?
16. Do you know any other languages? You are an intercultural person. How was your upbringing? Is it from your family or the profession, do you think?

## Specific Questions

### For Kemal

1. In our first meeting, you talked about the contextual factors that resulted in your teaching career. Can you talk about your family? Your social conditions? What kind of upbringing resulted in your participation in scouting and volunteering?
2. I was quite surprised to hear when you said that you are not political in our first conversation. Because when I was your student, I always thought the opposite. You are also an influential person, which aggregates with your position as a high school teacher. What are your thoughts on that?
3. Although you do not like the term, I think you are an activist teacher and let me tell you what I mean by that. I think you believe in science, democracy and universal values. You want to make positive changes for your students, you want them to be democratic, critical and intercultural citizens like you. You want to go beyond training and teach them. The literature suggests that teachers like you are teachers taking action, activist teachers. Would you agree with the definition?
4. As a senior teacher, do you think that volunteering could be taught? Or, should it be incorporated into the education system? If so, how?

### For Cansu

1. In our first conversation, you talked about your family, your father, who is your biggest supporter. Could you talk a little more about your upbringing and your family?
2. When we talked last year, you were at the end of your first year, tired but content with the projects you conducted. Where are you in terms of that now, beginning of a new academic year?
3. What do you think about being a woman in a patriarchal society? How does it affect you? What are the negatives and positives, especially concerning your status in the society and the appreciation (or lack of it from your superiors) in return to your accomplishments in your job?
4. In our first conversation, you othered yourself from some of your colleagues. How does it affect you in your workplace?
5. Have you had any time to think of activism after our last talk?
6. Have you had any chances to read the articles as well as Kumaravadivelu's literature on post-method teaching that I sent you? What are your thoughts?

### For Ahmet

1. In our first conversation, you talked about your love in the first sight with English but we did not talk much about your family. Would you like to talk a little more about your family and upbringing?
2. You are from a unique city in Turkey, as you mentioned, where your desk-mate could be a Christian. Moreover, you have an Arabic heritage in your family and your city. What kind of an effect does it have in your identity in relation to your active, volunteer and intercultural personality?
3. After going through our conversation interview, I wondered if you were an introvert. I know that you have completed a master's in psychology as well. What do you think about it?

4. My guess is especially related to your clear indication of solo volunteering instead of organised action. Do you think it is of personal, biological reasons or are there also other reasons stemming from experiences?

#### **For Ali**

1. We did not talk about your upbringing much in our first conversation. Could you talk about your family, your childhood? Where did you live as a kid?
2. When I was analysing our conversation, I thought that you use your volunteering work with the club as seclusion from your reluctance with your teaching. Would you agree to that?
3. Do you think that you already had a status in your community with your family, although you indicate that you did not have it as a teacher? Did it help you in terms of reaching this circle and accomplish what you have accomplished with your friends?
4. As a teacher who is fairly new in volunteering, when you look back now, would you want to start volunteering earlier, when you were a university student?
5. Do you think volunteering should be incorporated into university education? If so, how?
6. What do you think of activism?

#### **For Zeynep**

1. I know that your parents are teachers. Could you talk about your childhood and upbringing as well as your family?
2. You seem to be involved in many projects, duties at the same time. Is it related to your personality or being a new teacher who has many aspirations? Besides, do you find it difficult to be interested in many things at the same time?
3. You indicated that you had problems with your principals and directors. What are your thoughts on that?
4. You talked about your status as a woman in our first conversation. I want to expand on that, what do you think about it in terms of women's position in society? Could it be one of the main reasons why you are undervalued by your seniors?
5. How do you feel about volunteering now? Last time, you said that you do not want to do active volunteering after Ekin's passing away.

## Appendix F: Initial Coding: 'Politics' as a Code

### Politics

<Files\\1> - § 3 references coded [2.66% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1.19% Coverage

Once I started, university life was very easy, studying in my hometown. There were political incidents all over the places. Although I was never involved in politics, there was the right on one side and the left on the other and we were always expected to be one a side. When you were in the middle, both right and left would trouble you. In a climate of uncertainty, not knowing what to do, I finished the three years and became a teacher so suddenly.

#### Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

But, of course, it was also about the school directors. I mean, working with a school direction that knows that what you do is for students only, you are not involved in any politics and you can make up for it, even if you make some mistakes is motivating.

#### Reference 3 - 0.79% Coverage

I do not have any membership in any unions and I have never signed up for one. Of course, I have a world-view, a political view, a vote and I do not say that I am equidistant to all political parties. Yet, I get along well all colleagues working for a union. When necessary, I tell what I want to tell.

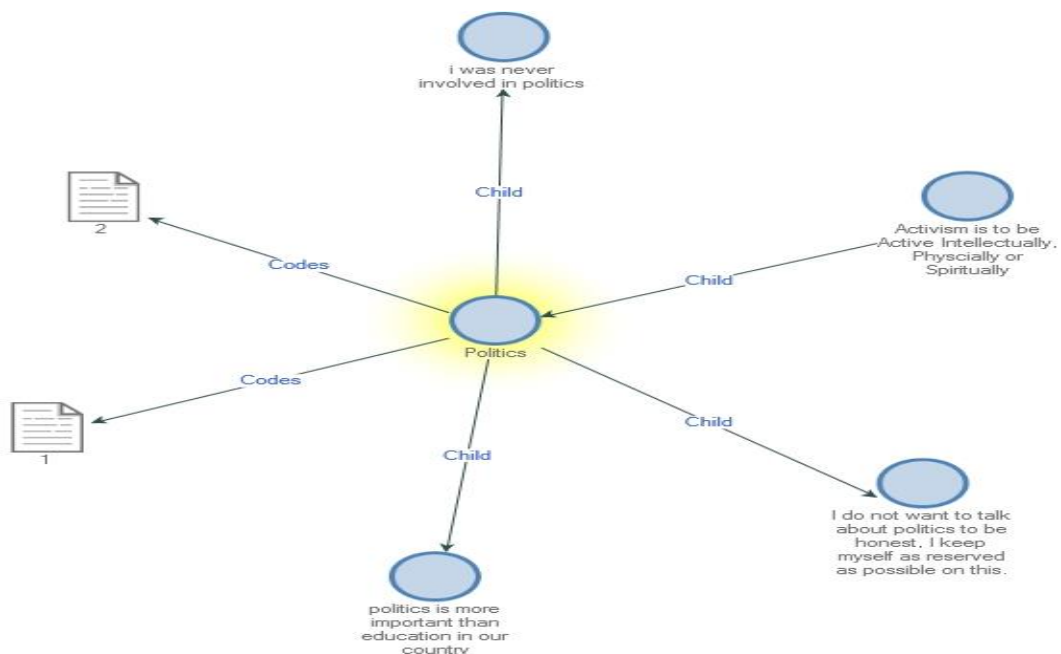
<Files\\2> - § 3 references coded [0.36% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0.16% Coverage

I do not want to talk about politics to be honest, I keep myself as reserved as possible on this.

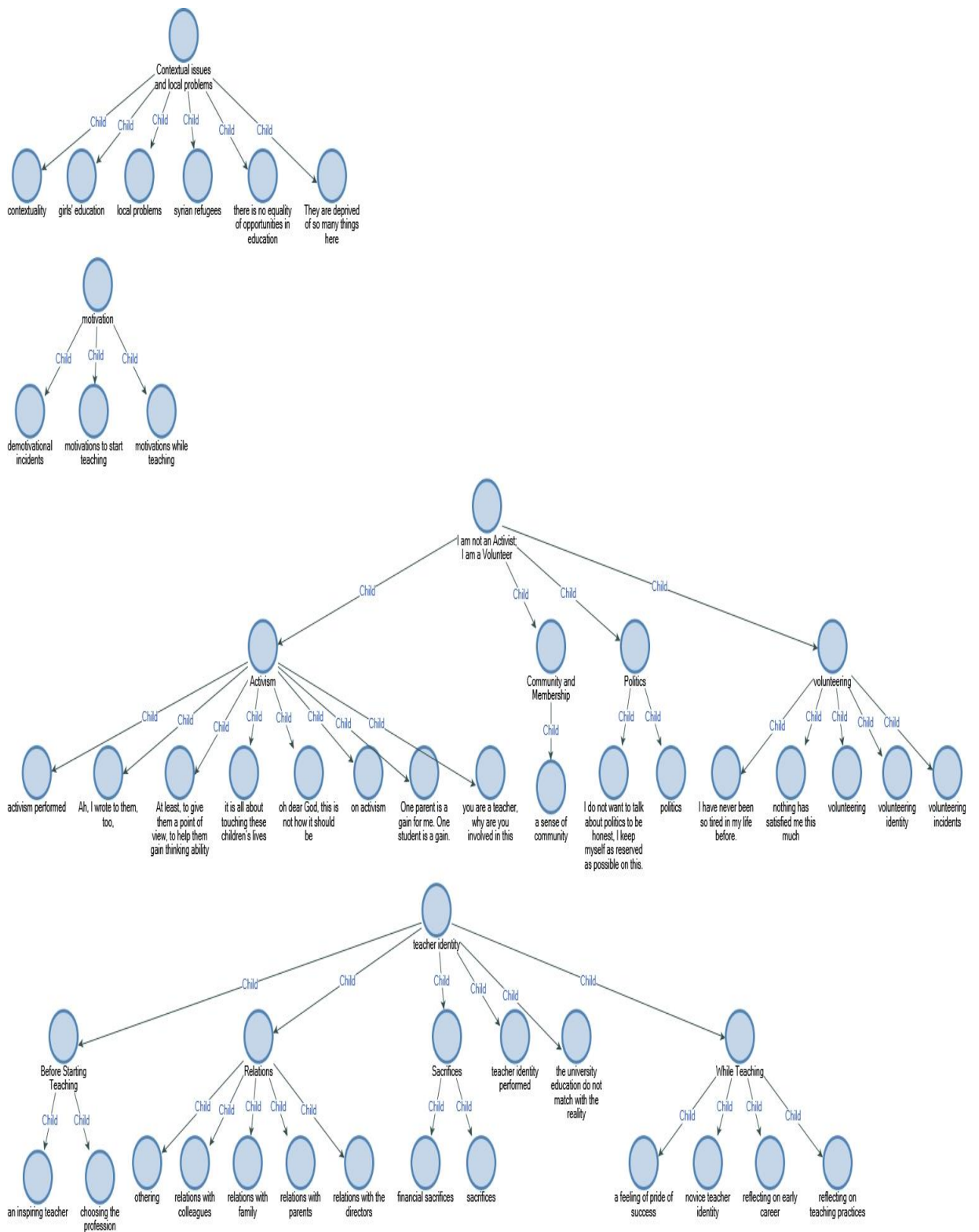
#### References 2-3 - 0.20% Coverage

That is why, as I said, politics is more important than education in our country, this word is also overwhelmed with -politics.





## Appendix G: Initial Theme Building from the Codes



## Appendix H: Building up the Discussion Chapters after the Data Analysis

### Chapter One: Teachers of Action: Individual Narratives

- A Born Volunteer – Kemal’s Story (Teacher 1)
- Everything I Do is for my Students – Cansu’s Story (Teacher 2)
- Healing through Volunteering – Ahmet’s Story (Teacher 3)
- Club Chair Ali is more Valuable than Teacher Ali – Ali’s Story (Teacher 4)
- I am an Activist and Raise Activists – Zeynep’s Story (Teacher 5)

### Chapter Two: A Collective Analysis: What do their Data Tell in Common?

#### Habitus

- Multicultural people
- Outside-the-box-thinkers
- Some born volunteer, some learned
- Stronger agencies

#### Volunteering and Activism, is there a dichotomy?

- I am a volunteer, not an activist and I am an activist and I raise activists
- Volunteering as a transformative act
- Volunteering solo vs volunteering through membership

#### Volunteering Motivates

- Volunteering as a motivational source for teacher identity

### Chapter Three: Fragmented Identities: Teaching English in Turkey – A sense of disconnection

- I love my job but not my institution
- There is not enough support from my managers and colleagues
- There should be more CPD opportunities and they should serve the purpose
- To have tests or not to have tests, that is also the question
- Unions: in Turkey, they are not nothing more than ideological labels stuck on teachers

# Appendix I: Turkey's Professional Development Action Plan for Teachers for 2019-2023 Period

**GOAL 1** **THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS WILL BE RESTRUCTURED**

With the cooperation of the Council of Higher Education, improvements will be made to incentivize the top-ranking students to prefer teaching degrees. <b>1</b>	Horizontal and vertical career specialization areas will be structured for teachers and school administrators. <b>2</b>	Post-graduate professional specialization programs will be launched to enable both horizontal and vertical career steps. <b>3</b>
Post-graduate professional development programs will be designed to improve both the general and field-specific skills of teachers and school administrators. <b>4</b>	Certificate-based pedagogical formation will be replaced by a Teaching Profession Specialization Program at the postgraduate level that will be easily accessible across the country. This program will initially be open to candidates entitled to work as teachers under MoNE, within the framework of professional development. <b>6</b>	Some of the in-service training activities for teachers and school administrators will be converted from the practice of a participation certification to that of an accredited certification program to be run by universities. <b>7</b>
Cooperation initiatives will be developed with universities and NGOs for face-to-face, formal, and/or distance training programs to support the vocational development of teachers and school administrators. <b>5</b>		

Minor degree programs will be launched at the post-graduate level in cooperation with the institutions of higher education in areas of need, in order to equip teachers with the skills of the 21st century. <b>8</b>	Within the framework of cooperation and coordination with YÖK, teacher training programs will be specifically restructured by focusing on the practice of teaching at those teaching faculties fulfilling the defined criteria across Turkey. <b>9</b>	<p>Preparatory work will be undertaken to shorten the compulsory service time requirement for contracted teachers.</p> <p>School administration which is based on professional specialization skills will be structured as a professional career field at the post graduate level.</p>
In coordination with the Council of Higher Education, high-level officials from the Ministry of National Education will also be part of the evaluation team that will visit universities (limited to teaching faculties) with the Higher Education Quality Board. <b>10</b>	Priority will be given to the restructuring of pre-service teacher training programs at the preschool and primary school teacher training departments of teaching faculties. <b>11</b>	
Vocational development programs will be developed for teachers who will provide teaching services to the children of our citizens who live abroad. <b>12</b>	After providing the required infrastructure, the Ministry of National Education will consider, as part of appointment conditions, whether the pre-service teacher training programs of teaching faculties are conducted in alignment with the needs of schools. <b>13</b>	

Turkey's Education Vision 2023 43

Professional Development of Teachers and School Administrators in Education Vision 2023 (MoNE, 2018, pp. 42, 43)

## Appendix J: Ali's Career Story

*Ali: After graduating from the university in February 2004, I started working as a teacher within fifteen days. It was a public boarding school. A primary school in south-east of Turkey. After three years of working there, I applied to become an Anatolian high school teacher, passed the test and started working at the same town's Anatolian high school. Worked for four more years before coming to this city. While working there for so long, I would think, 'I could do this and that if I go to a city'. I had some attempts to become a tutor at a university as well. From the tests, I could not take the necessary scores. I used to think, it would have been different if I had been in a city. Because you are not motivated enough when you are in a rural town. Alternatively, I would think of doing a master's, worried that time was passing by. What made me think that was inadequate satisfaction at school.*

**Ammar: Why was that do you think?**

*Ali: Well, I think you come to your senses late. I was not a bright student at university. I had to extend the university for one extra semester. There was a short story course that I could only pass in my fourth year although it was from the second year. It was because I started loving literature.*

**Ammar: You were a bit late☺.**

*Ali: Yes, but you start university as a seventeen-year-old. What you had done before that was only solving tests. You had had that image about the university that you would be hanging around. As I said, you come to your senses quite late. I do not know if it was about the guidance at university because a seventeen-year-old could make a lot of mistakes. What I mean by mistakes is this: when the university does not look promising, when courses do not appeal to you, you are not dying to study in that department or learn about those courses, I mean. I also think if it should all be expected from a seventeen-year-old. I may not have built that consciousness. [...] Later, when I started the profession, I realised that teaching is quite simple. I thought I had to do something else. Looking with plain logic, the next step was university. I came here and the university's principal of the school of foreign languages was my high school teacher. I saw an ad in the university website that they were looking for a tutor for evening classes that term, as theirs were not enough. I did that for a year, and it was an intense tempo. I had ten hours a week. Two hours of that was with vocational students. The rest with was prep class. However, there was something with the prep class. Classrooms in the school were not enough so they had some of them in another faculty's building. It turned out that they sent the tutors they did not get along with well to that school and us as outsiders. It also turned out*

that they did a placement test and the lowest ones were ours. Therefore, the teachers they do not like and students they do not want are away from their eyes. What first caught my attention in academia was this extreme hierarchy. There were 130 tutors and many groupings. I did not see that much groupings in schools. I mean, cooking other's goose, really weird things. Then I told myself, 'I am good at my school, do not need this drama'. I mean, it turned out that working in a university is not stepping into a new age. Then, I thought, 'why I am not doing a master's?' and applied for it. Applied to two places, one was in the neighbouring city. By the way, I could not get enough scores for my field. One of them was in educational sciences, I was eliminated in the interview. The other one was in tourism management. I thought tourism is language students' sub-branch and I like it as well. I did not have a primary concern to be a teacher by the way. I had a nice score when I entered university. I had the chance to study at many universities' English language teaching departments. Yet, I had never had an idea of studying teaching. I wanted to study English literature. I do not know if I was an influence of my teachers in high school or the reason that dad was a teacher and I had not wanted to become one like him. Because I saw that teaching is not a fulfilling or rewarding job, financially or sentimentally. However, in my senior year, dad was retiring, and I had to do something. I can call it a bandwagon effect that I saw all my friends taking pedagogical formation classes required to become a teacher and joined them. And this formation period was more like a formality. I mean, in the last year of the university, at the weekends and after the classes. Something to get out of the way with a quite intense programme. Maybe it was among the lesson notes, I memorised it, answered in the exam and that is it. Otherwise, I do not remember anything about it 😊. Had it done, what was in my mind was: I should take it so it can stay aside if needed. It would not be a loss. Yet, I was caught off my guard when I was appointed fifteen days after my graduation 😊. It was unexpected to me as well 😊. Therefore, I started directly, saying myself that I could think of the future later on. Long story short, I became a teacher with the bandwagon effect. Besides, gaining financial independence as fast as possible was a primary factor. I was the oldest child in the family, had to earn my living so the remaining four could have better means. That was how I started; I had not had any aspirations or anything like that.

We had a meeting recently, a seminar for the first-year teachers. As I also had trainee teachers, I was invited to the seminar, too. There, we filled a questionnaire. In that, they asked what we would have liked to see when we were doing our training, about what we would have liked to be trained. I wrote this immediately, it was what came to my mind first: 'wish I had known how the public saw the teachers, how they thought of us'. I could have

*thought twice if I had known how the people think of teachers, and not just the people but also the ministry. I used to believe that I was going to be an opinion leader in this society; enlighten the people around us, everybody would expect something from me, would listen to me, etc. I could not see this. Yet, when I was the chair of the club for a year, I felt valuable. I had never felt that valuable as a teacher. It was just an amateur football club. I mean, I could get an appointment, go to the governor's office, and enjoy a coffee or tea there with a nice conversation. As a teacher, I cannot do that. Never... However, it has helped to break some taboos in me, too. It gives you a new identity. You can act quite differently with your identity as a football club chair, differently than your identity as a teacher. I mean, it changes you. Gives you encouragement at some points.*

*Therefore, after eight years of working as a teacher of English, I started the master in tourism management. The first year was induction year; it is called scientific preparation and is for students whose majors are not in tourism. I had four courses in the first semester. To be honest, it was a disappointment, as I could not find what I was looking for. I had to take two days off my programme, which is difficult to organise and had to go to another city and stay away from the family; my child was so little. Then, I started to think, 'what I am going to do when I am done with this'. I mean, you prepare presentations and stuff, but everything is so unglamorous. I could not see any future there. To be honest, I compared it with my undergraduate and concluded that it was better than this master. As I said, I started loving literature towards the end of my undergraduate. What was nice about it was discussing things. I come to think that it should be like that at the university. For example, interpret the following lines was our classical question. On American literature and American drama, etc. We could discuss it for hours. I told to myself, this should not end here. I like discussing things. University is the place for that. I go to master's with these expectations and it turns out there is none. It did not exist in there. I mean, 'memorise this and that'. 'Professor, why did you break the points on my paper? What did I tell you in the class? Black. What did you write? Dark'. This is just an example, of course. Therefore, because of these kinds of things, I could not find what I was looking for there. I still look for, by the way, if I could find an environment to discuss ideas, brainstorm, where some ideas might develop, I mean. To develop myself. I want that freethinking environment of academia. Yet, I do not know if I could find it. Then I went to Germany to teach. I could have stayed there for up to five years. Yet, the organisation was very bad. I could not find accommodation for three months, during which time my family was in Turkey. My son had an ongoing epilepsy treatment. Because of these circumstances, I had to return after three months. Since I returned, I am occupied with the football club only. I have*

started to set aims that are more tangible in the last couple of years. I have a special group of six students who have extra lessons that I prepare for high-stakes university tests. Last year, it was the first time in my career that I had this kind of a group. I am more motivated now in my job, as I receive feedback from them. I set a short-term goal of sending them to university this year. It increases my motivation. As you know, there is this endless discussion of whether teachers work hard enough or enough hours. If I am more motivated now, it means that I want to work harder, yet I need a group that I can work with. This is my short-term aim, if I could help them get a place in a university, my motivation will increase more. When it comes to long term, it is about the country's expectations. The retirement age is sixty. I have been working for fifteen years and I am expected to work approximately twenty-five years more. I am trying not to think too much. This profession requires much effort. I am trying to use my energy efficiently; I could say that. I mean, I do not want to wear down. The country's agenda is included in this. If I puzzle my head on everything, I cannot do this job. I would tear off within a few years. Both educational policies in general and things at school are included in this. I am trying to be relaxed. I am looking forward to the new Minister's plans about providing master's education to all teachers. It will draw our path; hope it will not fizzle out. I will be happy if this turns out to be as I want, an environment where we can discuss, etc. I have recently entered the nationwide tests to make sure that my scores are ready if they are needed when this thing happens. You know what, there are not many colleagues like me around. People are... Some of them do not want to disturb their comfort. Some others are angry or offended and do not want to do anything anymore. What I always think is that I will be doing this job for a long time and I may not be able to do it with my current state. How can I improve myself? How can I take one step further? These are my concerns. We talk about these issues with my colleagues. They are trying to privatise education, as much as they can. For example, they have recently increased pensions. If they could make people retire, what is going to happen? For example, we cannot ask to be assigned to project schools. Directorate and the Ministry choose their teachers. There is now one project school in this neighbourhood, what is going to happen when they decide to increase the number? They will probably look at certain qualities like better proficiency in the language, postgraduate education or conducted projects. This is what I tell my friends, my colleagues, how will be chosen to be a teacher there, with what qualifications? Do we have anything else than our undergraduate diploma? That is why we have to improve ourselves. I went to conservatory, for example, for one year and learnt to play traverse flute, thinking if I could do something with music in my lessons. It was also my hobby, yet I could not do much progress. Took it to the class a few times. However, the audience is also important.

Children's expectations are important, I mean 😊. It is not nice when are they disinterested 😊. I am waiting with excitement about the announcement of this master's for teachers. I have never had this mentality, I have never thought of getting my salary and enjoying my life, the less I work the better. I talk this with my wife all the time as well and she is a teacher, too. Never been like that. Yet, I have come to this conclusion. When somebody asks me if I like my profession, I say, 'I like my profession but I do not like my institution'. [...] No one asks me why I am taking all these troubles, taking exams, going all the way to another city to take an exam for example. I am at a certain age, my wife is also a teacher; I have a house, a car. This is what people on the top should notice, what is this man trying to do? This man is trying to do something; they should be able to notice it from somewhere. Yet, should I have a concern to advertise myself wherever I go? Should I feel the need to say how good a teacher I am? I am not claiming to be a good teacher, by the way. I may be a bad teacher. Yet, this is what I am thinking, when I go home, I become tired. I feel that. If I got tired, it means that I did something that day. If I feel it both psychically and mentally when I get home, if I cannot be attentive enough with my children, if I feel the need to take a quick nap it means that I got tired that day. Would a non-working person get tired? This is the simplest indicator, I tell myself. I would want, for example, a cooperation with the universities. We are talking about performance, right? Last year, I had trainees for the first time. Their professor came only once, came and then left, just like that. If there is a consensus that English is not taught well enough, these people are academicians, why do not they come and see what is going on in these schools? The Ministry had once something called National Teacher Strategy draft. I met the people writing it in my seminars for abroad teaching. They asked if we knew about it and it was only I, who knew and read it. It was the draft then became the official text. There were these things in it. It was talking about mentoring. It stated, 'there should be mentors in the universities', and I would think to myself, 'it could be great if applied'. My training should not end when the university finishes. I mean, teaching is learning, learning is teaching 😊. You need to continue developing yourself. Yet, we only saw the professor once. She is simply too busy, does not have enough time. I want her to call me, to have a chat with me. By the way, I went to the university to meet with the staff at the English Language Teaching Department. However, I could not even proceed to the corridor, as there was the card system to enter the corridor! They probably want to work more productively. Yet, it is so detached from the realities, there is no such world. That is why, it is so important what you are doing here right now, as a doctoral researcher. You keep asking me if I have time as we are talking here for more than two hours. I have time when somebody comes and listens to me, yet he/she should advise me, too. I cannot know



*everything myself. He/she should give me suggestions to read, people to listen to. That is why, I would want academics to come and listen to me, exchange ideas with them. [...] When it comes to colleagues, there are various types of people in the teaching profession. You go into a group; teachers there talk about cars, another talk about stock markets or estates.*

**Ammar: Does anyone talk about the profession☺?**

*Ali: Well, they think they do but so superficial generally, 'they all come at teachers', blah blah. I mean, it is not like, we come together, argue things, find solutions and develop ideas. Therefore, you become too selective. Here, there is only one person that I spend the most time with. I met him when I was teaching at university. He has a different background, not from this city, graduated from Middle East Technical University. That is outside the box, maybe. There is a limited amount of people that I could be in rapport when we come together. I do not have a concern to be like society. I am not like, 'I should change my interests to fit the majority, I should pursue what they talk and talk about those'. Internet, at this point, saves me from a lot of trouble. I spend much time on social media. I mean, watching various things on YouTube, for example. That is my fuel.*