



Curriculum Development in Türkiye from the Perspective of Curriculum Specialists

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to reveal the Curriculum Development Process in Türkiye from the perspective of curriculum specialists. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study, with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher, and content analysis applied in the analysis of the obtained data. The participants of the study consisted of 48 faculty members from 19 different universities. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis by the researcher, having visited each of the universities where the participants worked. According to the study's findings, three main interrelated problems are present in curriculum development in Türkiye: Policymakers that dominate curriculum development and decision making; Non-fulfilment of the sine-qua-non (a thing that is absolutely necessary) of the curriculum development process; and, Abrupt and rapid changes introduced to curricula. However, these problem areas all stem from one major issue, policymakers' priorities, understanding, and thoughts about curriculum development and education. According to the solutions proposed by the study's participants, education should be accepted to have a supra-policy structure, and policymakers should be stakeholders in the curriculum development process rather than being the sole decision-makers.

Keywords

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Introduction

The key curriculum question –what knowledge is of most worth– is animated by ethics, history, and politics. As such, it is an on-going question, as the immediacy of the historical movement, the particularity of place, and the singularity of one's own individuality become articulated through the subject matter –history, poetry, and science, technology– one studies and teaches. No empty abstraction invoked to enforce compliance now for the sake of a time yet to come, the future is here and now. Finding the future in an era of pervasive presentism and instrumentalism is not obvious, however. In fact, the future will not be found in front of us at all, but in back of us. Reactivating the past reconstructs the present so we can find the future (Pinar, 2012, p. XV, Preface).

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Pinar's question about curriculum debate hinges on an old and familiar question of educational discourse: *What should schools teach?* For instance, in his 1884 book titled *What Knowledge is of Most Worth*, Herbert Spencer made it clear that his reason for questioning the content of school curricula was the tremendous social and economic changes that had taken place in England during the 18th and early 19th centuries, but that those changes had not been adequately reflected, if at all, in the school curricula. Spencer bemoaned that most discussions around what was worth knowing in his day was based not upon any rational discussion of the issues, benefits, and the cost of learning one thing over another, but driven instead by instincts and personal preferences (Spencer, 1884). Reading Spencer's question today gives one a distinct sense of *déjà vu*. This question, which has preoccupied educators from the earliest days of formal schooling, is there for several reasons, as Broudy (1982) sets forth; first, human life is multivalued and values are not always in harmony; second, formal schooling entails an investment of limited time and money, so that better choices can be made. Furthermore, educators are keenly aware that mistakes made in schooling are not easily corrected after the fact. Therefore, as Pinar stated, being aware of what happened in the past can shed light on future program development studies.

However, in his study concerning educational reforms including curricular activities during the republican period of Türkiye, in other words what happened in the Türkiye's past, Akşit (2007) reported that educational reform efforts in Türkiye have been somewhat piecemeal and have not generally impacted upon the core educational practices. For him, although various superficial modifications may have been applied in the past, most did not have the substantial effect that was intended or hoped for. Besides, the results of another study conducted by Akşan and Baki (2017), titled 'Content Analysis of Curriculum-Related Studies in Türkiye between 2000 and 2014', showed that the participants of studies dealing with the analysis of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards curricula mostly did not believe in its significance. The fact that the curricula do not have the intended effect and that the practitioners do not believe in the importance of the curricula reveals that there are certain problems in the curriculum development process in Turkey. The current study aims to present an important contribution to the literature by shedding a light on the problems of the curriculum development processes in Türkiye.

For Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), all domains of curriculum, curriculum development and design (theoretical or technical aspects) are crucial in any curriculum text. Curriculum development is a complex and iterative process that involves a great number of activities that can involve many different stakeholder groups. The traditional approach to curriculum development, however, involves developing the curricula first and then consulting with the stakeholders after, while more contemporary approaches invoke collaborative working agreements with targeted stakeholders as part of the curriculum development process itself (Keogh, Fourie, Watson, & Gay, 2010). Of all the identified stakeholders, it is the curriculum developers that have considerable interest in how curricula should be designed and delivered, as well as what competencies it should provide to its graduates. Also, they are the ones to get invaluable feedback, critique, and advice to contribute to the combining of content and delivery method in order to meet the wider community's needs (Matkovic, Tumbas, Sakal, & Pavlicevic, 2014). In other words, curriculum developers are the key informers and driving forces of the content, method of delivery, evaluation requirements, and curricula scope, and thereby offer a broader vision of the whole end-to-end curriculum development process (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2010). Hence, it is clear that the opinions of curriculum development specialist are extremely important in revealing the current status of the curriculum development process in Turkey.

However, when we look at studies undertaken in Türkiye in the field of curriculum development, they have mostly been at the theoretical level and are descriptive studies mostly based upon the opinions of teachers. Studies that have consulted the views of academicians who are specialists in the field of curriculum development are extremely limited in the current literature. For this reason, the aim of the current study is to create a picture of the curriculum development process in Türkiye by revealing the main problems facing the field, and to propose solutions from the perspective of academicians from the field of Curriculum and Instruction (major). For this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What problems are encountered in curriculum development in Türkiye?
2. What solutions could be offered to address the problems of curriculum development in Türkiye?

Solution proposals raised by specialists in the field of Curriculum and Instruction, which is a recognised area of expertise, for problems that currently exist, can directly contribute to the field of curriculum development, and it is thereby assumed that the current study may be seen as a resource for policymakers in the future. The current research is limited to the opinions of curriculum development specialists on curriculum development at the institutional/macro level; problems related to Curriculum & Instruction (Major), curriculum specific to certain education levels (primary education, secondary education, etc.), curriculum specific to a certain field (mathematics curriculum, etc.) and curriculum evaluation are out of the scope of the research. In addition, the opinions of other stakeholders (teachers, students, MoNE administrators, field specialists, etc.) involved in the curriculum development process are out of the scope of the study.

Curriculum

Although it has been defined in different ways in view of different approaches (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004), in its simplest form; the term curriculum can be used to refer to a planned, written academic curriculum (syllabus) and to co-curricular activities (hidden curriculum) (Marsh & Willis, 2003). From the behavioural or managerial perspective, curriculum is considered to be a plan to achieve goals that involve a predefined sequence of steps (Pratt, 1980; Saylor, Alexander, & Lewis, 1981; Tyler, 1949/2013; Wiles & Bondi, 2014). From the humanistic and postmodern approach, curriculum can be defined broadly as dealing with learners' experiences which refer to almost anything planned in or outside of the school environment that forms some part of the overall curriculum (Eisner, 2002). From an academic approach, curriculum can be defined as a field of study with its own foundations, knowledge domains, research, theory, principles, and specialists (Reid, 1999; Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

Ertürk (1972) defined curriculum as upbringing and cultivation, describing it as a set of regular learning experiences; while Varış (1976) interpreted it more as an operational concept, stating that it should be subject to a process of continuous improvement. Goodson (1994) described curriculum as a multifaceted concept; constructed, negotiated, and renegotiated at a variety of levels and within a variety of different areas. This view reflects the overriding complexity and interactive nature of what may be described according to the term, *curriculum*. According to Kelly (2009) curriculum has two meanings. First, it may be used to describe a set of courses from which students can choose the subject matter they wish to study, or it may collectively describe the teaching, learning, and assessment practices and materials made available for a specific course. In its second sense, curriculum means more than just a syllabus of content under various topics; instead, it may consist of several interrelated components, along with many other influential factors, which are also important to take into consideration. The common point of all these definitions is that curricula should be accepted as an open-ended, ongoing, and iterative process of regular development and innovative change that should continue throughout the lifespan of a course or programme of study (Dawley & Havelka, 2004). That is why the simple conveyance of subject knowledge is inadequate in terms of being an effective curriculum; as much more should be offered than just content in order to be productive (Kelly, 2009). Curriculum can be accepted as: (1) System/society/nation/state (or macro) level; (2) School/institution

(or meso) level; (3) Classroom (or micro) level; and, (4) Individual/personal (or nano) level (Van den Akker, 2003). No matter from what level it is taken, according to Tedesco, Opertti, and Amadio (2014), a curriculum is a product that reflects a political and social consensus about what education means, why and how it will be applied for the desired society of the future, and not therefore just a simple study plan or a collection of subjects being taught.

Curriculum Development

Defined as a planned, purposeful, progressive, and systematic process that is used to create positive improvement within an educational system (Kranthi, 2017), curriculum development refers to the improvement, changing, or rearrangement dense of pre-existing educational curricula (Primrose & Alexander, 2013). Curriculum development therefore cannot be seen as a simple, isolated, or steady process, but rather a complex, ever-changing, and ongoing process that requires a significant level of meticulous analysis by experienced curriculum developers. Curriculum development in education is a scientific field of study that takes *needs* as its starting point, and then examines in depth all the parameters in the structuring process related to the individual's learning (Örten & Erginer, 2016). As such, curriculum development has a variety of aspects starting from questioning individual and social events that arise in the educational process, to analysing the learning and teaching process, and developing solutions based on qualified testing problems. Furthermore, curriculum development requires cooperative and collaborative teamwork in order to develop workable and effective curricula, and it is therefore necessary to involve the participation of many different stakeholders, starting with the target learners, the local community, as well as subject and curriculum specialists, school teaching and administrative staff, and the wider society in general (Wood, 2010).

Brady (1995) stated that four components exist within any curriculum development process; objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. Stufflebeam et al. (1971) included situational analysis, and considered it part of both decision making and judgment. All kinds of human and physical resources need to be investigated through situational analysis which is referred to as a process of educational logistics by Pratt (1980), and should include materials, equipment, facilities, personnel, time, and cost. Similarly, Dillon (2009) suggested that needs analysis, goal identification, objective setting, materials development, learning activities, learning mode and environment, and evaluation should be included as the essential base elements. Based on these various viewpoints gathered from the current related literature, it may be summarised that the principal elements to consider in the process of curriculum development are as follows:

- **Learner** To whom? Who should be taught?
- **Aim** Why? To what end? Questions regarding the educational purpose, goals, objectives, aspirations, intents, end view, etc.
- **Subject matter** What? Characteristics of the subject matter, its nature and content, materials, and format.
- **Activity** How? Instruments, methods, including student and teacher activities.
- **Milieu** Where and when? Questions of time/timing and place, circumstance, surrounding conditions, context, environment, and the era that surrounds the curricular activity.
- **Result** What comes of it? How will the accomplished person be seen to act, feel, think, and live (behavioural, affective, cognitive changes)?
- **Teacher** By whom? Who should be the educator?

Who should create curricula is one of the most important questions to be considered in the whole curriculum development process. Having curriculum goals chosen by the largest stakeholder group involved in any educational enterprise is still the best overriding principle, which is certainly the case in most developed Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries

where a wider range of interest groups have direct involvement in the curriculum development process (Ross, 2000), and may include school-based personnel such as teachers, school principals and administrators, parents, university-based specialists, industry and community groups, and government agencies and politicians (Marsh, 2009). Similarly, Tanner and Tanner (2007) identified the following categories of decision-makers regarding school curricula: (1) District Board of Education, school administration, higher education personnel, students, and parents; (2) Governmental agencies, public and private interest groups, mass media, and private foundations; (3) External testing agencies and programmes, publishers, and businesses and industry; (4) Professional educational organisations, researchers, authors of course materials; and, (5) Colleges and universities.

Clearly, there are basic tasks that distinguish quality curriculum work from accidental or ad hoc instructional change. Therefore, no matter what curriculum model is chosen, curriculum developers are likely to take several certain steps in developing a curriculum plan, though the order of execution may of course differ significantly. Parkay, Hass, and Anctil (2010) explained the steps of curriculum development for any subject as part of the curriculum process/cycle as planning, implementation, and evaluation. The planning phase, the foundation for all steps in the process, includes the identification of issues, problems, and needs, forming a qualified curriculum development team, conducting a needs analysis of all components of the curriculum, specifying intended outcomes, selecting content, and designing methods along with evaluation and assessment instruments. The steps involved in the implementation phase involve producing curriculum products, testing, and revising the curriculum, training facilitators, and implementing the curriculum. The steps in the evaluation phase include designing evaluation strategies, evaluating all the components of the curriculum, and reporting resources. Curriculum development is a never-ending process affected by several different factors which curriculum developers should consider. Those factors can be internal or external to the educational field, or to a specific nation or locality (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Curriculum developers should therefore maintain an awareness of changes in any of these influential factors, and to respond accordingly.

Considering the factors that can affect the curriculum development process, it may be said that some common factors stretch as far back as the 1950s. For example, Dodson (1957) cited social changes resulting from social mobility, changes in intercultural relations, technological and scientific developments, and ideological differences among the factors affecting curriculum development. A short while later, in addition to the factors highlighted previously by Dodson, Breslow et al. (1960) emphasised that psychological research trends are also effective on curriculum development. It is possible to also encounter similar factors when looking at more recent literature, such as Tanner and Tanner (2007), who stated that social, political, technological, and economic influences are key to the curriculum development process. Soto (2015), on the other hand, examined the factors that influence curriculum development in a more general sense according to two dimensions; social forces and educational forces. While describing social forces as politics, economy, history, culture, ethnicity, and linguistics, Soto described educational forces as philosophical and psychological currents. In addition to the educational factors that Soto suggested, decades earlier, Tyler (1949/2013) also considered the learners, subject specialists, the school's philosophy, and the teachers themselves as agents that impact upon the development of curricula. Figure 1 was designed by the author in accordance with the related literature, and illustrates the dynamic, cyclical, and bidirectional relationship between key components of curriculum and the related influencing factors.

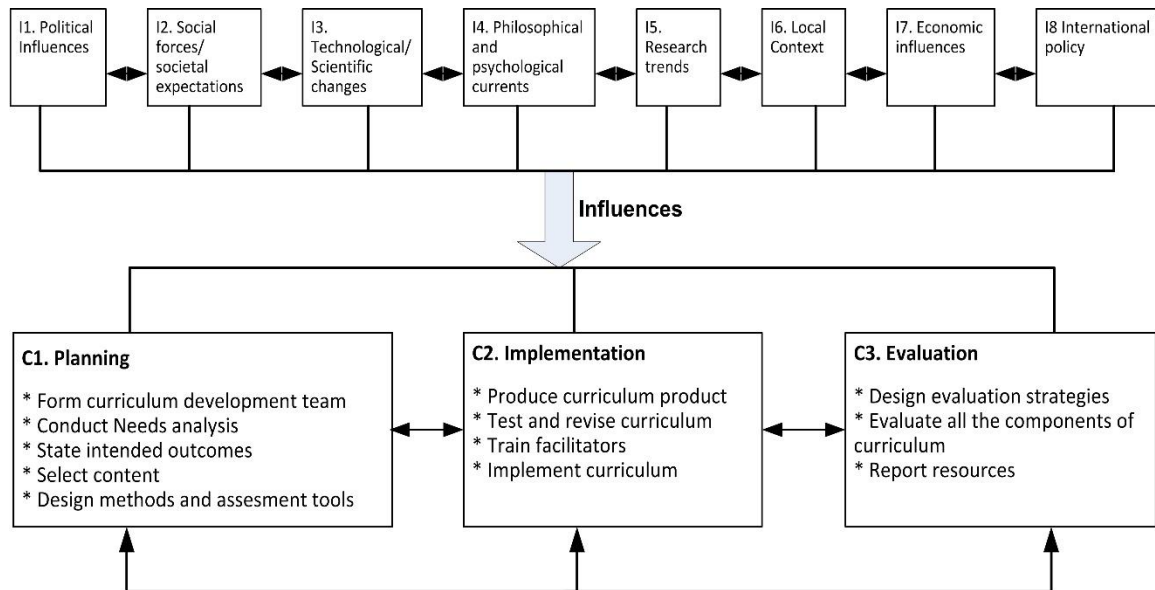


Figure 1. Flow diagram of cyclical relationship between key curriculum components (C1-C3) and related influencing factors (I1-I8)

As shown in Figure 1, a strong relationship exists between the influencing factors, and curriculum components. For example, research into problem-based learning (I5) has been enhanced by the availability of powerful e-learning facilities (I3), but which has necessitated improvements in the capacity of both teachers and students (I6) to work with specific computer platforms such as Moodle (I3), as well as a sufficient budgetary allocation (I7). Similarly, a strong relationship exists between the three components of curriculum. For example, the nature of the course objectives will determine the structure of the curriculum (C1), which will, in turn, determine what and how instructors teach and assess students (C2), and thereby how the students will actually learn (C3).

Overview of curriculum development in Türkiye

The fundamentals of curriculum development activities in Türkiye are formed on the basis of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu/Öğretim Birliği Yasası (Law of Unification), which was introduced along with the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Yüksel, 2003). When the attempts to develop educational curricula in Türkiye are considered from a historical perspective, it can be seen that numerous curricula have been prepared, issued, reviewed, changed, and renewed, along with some important structural activities and reforms having also been introduced. Of these, the 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1968, and 2004 primary education curricula are considered the most important ones, regarding their political background, social basis, distinctive emphasis on education, vision, and the elaborate inclusion of curriculum development processes and principles (Akınoğlu, 2008).

Although the first curriculum development initiative in modern Turkey started in 1924 with the primary education curriculum, which can be considered a transition curriculum; it can be said that the beginning of curriculum development starts actually with the more comprehensive 1926 curriculum which is important in that it covers basic principles of today's curriculum development approach such as the collective education, having relational diagrams that show the connections between courses (Bıkmaz, 2013), the general purpose of the primary school and the specific objectives of the courses, the methods, and techniques to be followed in instruction, and of being child-friendly, and covering principles like teaching the subjects from close to far (Fer, 2005; Gözütok, 2003; Orakçı, Durnalı, & Özkan, 2018). In 1936, a new primary education curriculum for rural schools was developed based on the principles of 'national education' ideals. Different from the previous iteration, the 1936 curriculum commission prepared a draft and sought the opinion of other ministries, as well as teachers and primary education inspectors, before finalising the new curriculum (Mala, 2011). In 1940, 'village institutes'²,

² Village institutes (1938-1954) were founded upon egalitarian principles in 7 regions and 21 different locations across Türkiye. These rural schools aimed to liberate villagers through education and culture, and to provide a means of enlightenment for the residents of Anatolian villages.

which had a unique curriculum which included both academic and practical courses designed to meet the special needs of rural villages, were founded to educate and nurture future teachers to work in village schools (Akyüz, 2018). Following the start of multi-party politics in 1946, a process of change was also started with Türkiye's primary education curriculum. In 1948, the curriculum for urban and rural schools was merged, and the new combined curriculum was prepared after a survey was sent to teachers to enquire about their curriculum needs (Kürkçü, 2021).

As of the 1950s, it is seen that efforts were particularly exercised to conduct curriculum development activities regularly and systematically (Gözütok, 2003), both primary and secondary education curricula being continuously modified or rearranged over different time periods. The 1968 curriculum is considered the most scientific one, since the principles of curriculum development were followed effectively, entailing 6 years of preparation and piloting (Bilasa, 2012; Gözütok, 2003; Mala, 2011). In 1982, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) created a new curriculum model in cooperation with university academicians in order to ensure continuity and standardisation in curriculum development. In this model, the working principles of the people to be involved in curriculum preparation and development were also determined (Gözütok, 2003). Although there is a binding decision that the entire curriculum to be prepared and developed follow this model, some curricula have been developed according to different models (Demirel, 1992), and curriculum standardisation has still to be achieved.

In the 1990s, certain important curriculum development studies attracted significant attention. Under the guidance of the National Education Development Project, which was supported by the World Bank, the plan was to develop high quality instructional materials and textbooks aimed at improving the level of schooling throughout Türkiye. As a result, a new curriculum was adopted in 1993 by the Department of National Educational Research and Development of Education (EARGED) in cooperation with the National Education Development Project (Işıksal, Koç, Bulut, & Atay-Turhan, 2007). Between 1993 and 2003, revisions such as a mathematics curriculum in 1998, were introduced in individual content areas. In 1995, the National Education Directorates Curriculum Preparation and Development Commissions Working Regulations was introduced, which allowed for curriculum development studies to be conducted under provincial directorates. This directive was implemented as a pilot in the central districts of Ankara, but the desired results failed to be realised (Yüksel, 2003). The other significant change during this period was the 1997 transition to an 8-year continuous compulsory primary education.

The latest curriculum development studies gained impetus along with a significant drive to provide individuals with multiple skills which better represent the needs of the age, Türkiye's adaptation process to the European Union, the World Bank's report on the necessity for changes within the Turkish educational system (Işıksal et al., 2007), and the low performances of Turkish students in international examinations such as PISA and TIMSS (Akşit, 2007). With the 2005 curriculum, whose primary aim is to help students acquire basic life skills and develop positive personal qualities, it was envisaged to move from a rigid, subject-centred, behavioural curriculum to a mental, cognitive, and constructive understanding (Fer, 2005). Since 2012, a compulsory 12 contiguous years of education was introduced for all students in Türkiye, with 4 years of primary education, 4 years of middle school, and 4 years of high school.

Lastly, a recent curriculum change was introduced in 2018. In 2017, unlike the way that had generally been followed in previous curriculum changes, the MoNE stated that they aimed to seek the opinion of the wider masses in updating the curricula, and sought public opinion, and especially from students and parents, about the draft curricula via the Turkish Board of Education (known as TTKB) website over a 20-working-day consultation period. Following that process, the final curriculum was introduced into primary and secondary education institutions throughout Türkiye. In that curriculum, Values Education was added to all primary and secondary education curricula. Moreover, the curriculum content was reduced, and the curriculum goals simplified (Kürkçü, 2021). In addition, according to the national 2023 Education Vision for Türkiye, curriculum development studies for the education of gifted individuals have been conducted at the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (known as TÜBİTAK) in cooperation with the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services of the MoNE.

Curricula in Türkiye are administered according to a fully-centralised model, and are developed by the Turkish Board of Education and then approved and applied by the MoNE in preschools, primary schools, middle schools, and high schools. In fact, some 20 years ago, Türkiye was stated as having the most highly centralised educational system of any OECD member state (Fretwell & Wheeler, 2001), and this has changed very little since. Within the MoNE, strategic planning practices take place at central, provincial, and local levels, directed according to a 5-year vision (OECD, 2020). The MoNE makes all policy decisions, arranges all aspects of the formal curriculum, and controls implementation via their provincial directorate offices.

When the relevant literature is examined, it can be seen that four studies stand out in justification of the importance of the current research. The first study to analyse doctoral dissertations from 1974 to 2009 in the field of Curriculum and Instruction was seen to specify that the primary focus was on the effect of teaching-learning approaches, methods, and techniques (Hazır Bıkmaz, Aksoy, Tatar, & Atak Altınyüzük, 2013). According to the results of another study, articles published between 2007 and 2014 in the field of Curriculum and Instruction were primarily based on the field of teaching, student-teacher characteristics, and learning, but that the number of articles on the elements that form the basis of curriculum development and evaluation were found to be lacking (Ozan & Köse, 2014). Similarly, Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2015) examined dissertations conducted in the field of Curriculum and Instruction between 2009 and 2014, and reported that the most preferred topics were teaching and learning methods and techniques, while the least preferred were studies on the actual curriculum development process. In a study conducted by Schreglmann (2016) on postgraduate theses from 1998 to 2014 on curriculum development, it was revealed that the most discussed topics were based on teachers' opinions about the curriculum. Within the scope of the current study, when the Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC) Thesis Centre was searched according to the title 'Problems of Curriculum Development' there were no postgraduate theses found. However, in a search performed according to 'Curriculum Development', a total of 61 postgraduate theses were encountered in the education/instruction category between 1992 and 2022, and of these studies;

- 20 evaluated the effectiveness of implemented curricula,
- 18 examined the effectiveness of instruction designed for a specific course/subject/skill,
- nine theoretically analysed the importance of certain elements/approaches (cultural dimension, constructivism, etc.) in curricula,
- five looked at needs assessment of instruction,
- three revealed the competencies/attitudes of preservice and inservice teachers about curriculum development,
- two looked at the opinions of teachers involved in the curriculum development process,
- four studies aimed to determine the opinions of curriculum development specialists (Arsal, 1998; Düzgün, 2011; Esener Taşpolatoğlu, 1993; Kürkcü, 2021).

In the search for research articles on Google Scholar with the same titles, in addition to topics similar to those in postgraduate theses (evaluating the effectiveness of an implemented curriculum or an instruction for any course/subject/skill, etc.), there are also theoretical studies (Demirel, 1992; Genç, 2007; Gözütok, 2003; Hotaman, 2017; İşeri, 2014; Tutkun & Aksoyalp, 2010; Ünal & Ünal, 2010) that have addressed curriculum studies from a historical perspective during Türkiye's Republican period or have theoretically considered one or a few of the basic elements of the curriculum development process. Studies dealing with curricula at the theoretical level constitute a framework for curriculum development, whilst research on the effectiveness of curricula from the perspective of the educators who implement them significantly contribute to the literature in terms of reflecting the opinions of practitioners. However, it is significant that the main problems related to curriculum development in Türkiye should be handled not only by practitioners, but also by specialists in the field.

When the related literature was reviewed, it was seen that studies in which curriculum development were evaluated from the specialists' perspective were extremely limited in number, with only very few studies referring largely to the opinions of curriculum development specialists. For instance, according to the results of a study conducted by Aarsal (1998) on the importance of needs analysis in curriculum development, based on curriculum development specialists' opinions, the participants indicated needs analysis to be a vital part of the curriculum development process in reflecting scientific and technological developments, individual differences, and the needs of the subject area to the curricula. According to the results of the research conducted by Esener Taşpolatoğlu (1993), based on the opinions of curriculum development specialists working in three different universities and the MoNE, participants in their study stated that the curriculum development studies up until 1980 were conducted without considering any scientific theory or approach, and that curricula were prepared by some additions to or exclusions from the then present curricula. More recently, in a study conducted by Düzgün (2011), the function and problems of the personnel working in the curriculum development and education branches in the Turkish provinces of Izmir, Denizli, Aydın, and Muğla were discussed. According to the results, it was revealed that the personnel had difficulties in expressing both their job descriptions and organisational structures. In a study by Gökmenoğlu and Eret (2011), the researchers revealed the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of curriculum development faced by Türkiye in recent years, basing their findings on the perspectives of research assistants working in the field of Curriculum and Instruction at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara. Following their research, it was revealed that the student-centred studies and the competence of the academicians in the field were considered as strengths, whereas lack of needs analysis and communication between stakeholders were the weaknesses, and the EU process and experiences of former village institutes were seen as opportunities, and the reflection of politics on curriculum development was stated as the overriding threat. In a study based on the metaphorical perceptions of curriculum development specialists, Örtten and Erginer (2016) revealed that Curriculum and Instruction staff believed that their field would become more prominent in the future. In a study published by Kürkçü (2021), curriculum development practices in Türkiye were explored through the experiences of seven curriculum academics who researched curriculum studies for the MoNE, and reported that academicians saw Türkiye facing curriculum development process issues such as competency and transparency.

Although these various studies have provided important contributions to the field, a study with broad sampling and in-depth research has yet to be undertaken in the field of curriculum development in Türkiye. Research that reveals how the curriculum development process in Türkiye is perceived by the relevant specialists is considered important for the development of the area, and also currently presents a significant gap in the literature. Since curriculum development specialists work behind the scenes to apply their specialised skills in creating effective and developmentally appropriate curriculum that is aligned to their state or national standards, their thoughts with regards to the current curriculum development process in one region or country could provide invaluable insight on the perspectives of current research regarding the curriculum development process.

Method

Research Design

Education involves complex human interactions that can rarely be studied or explained in simple terms. Since complex educational situations demand complex understanding, the scope of educational research can be extended using qualitative methods. The current research was therefore conducted according to the descriptive phenomenology pattern, which is one of the qualitative research paradigms. This approach refers to the study of personal experience and requires a description or interpretation of the meaning of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013); which in the case of the current research is Curriculum Development. As a researcher, since I wish to study a particular phenomenon in depth and I am mainly concerned with meaning (i.e., how individuals make sense of curriculum development in Türkiye, how they experience or what meaning they attribute to the phenomena); in other words, since I am more preoccupied with the quality of experience, rather than causal relationships, descriptive phenomenology pattern was chosen as the method of the current study. In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering in-depth data through inductive methods such as *interviews* or *discussion*.

Participants

Since the more diverse the experiences of the participants are, the harder it will be for a researcher to identify the underlying essences and common meanings attributed to the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2013), the current research purposefully included 48 faculty members from 19 different universities (Hacettepe University, Gazi University, Ankara University, METU, Anadolu University, Çukurova University, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Sakarya University, Kocaeli University, Marmara University, Yıldız Technical University, Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Adnan Menderes University, Ege University, Pamukkale University, Gaziantep University, Adıyaman University, and Atatürk University). As Patton (2002) mentioned, qualitative inquiry requires an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, and deals with small, purposefully selected samples. In the current study, purposeful sampling was employed since the aim of the research was to reveal the current situation, the underlying meaning of what is occurring, and the relationships of formations and happenings, and since the study does not aim to reach any statistical generalisations (Merriam, 2009). In order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, rather than draw empirical generalisations, it is considered important to select information-rich cases from which a great deal of information can be gathered for the specific purpose of the intended study (Patton, 2002).

Criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling were employed in the current study as purposeful sampling, which allows for in-depth research by selecting information-rich cases according to the research purpose. Criterion sampling, which helps the researcher study very specific or narrow criteria, and to understand the implications of that criteria, involves the selection of a sample based on predefined criteria (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The criteria in the current study were faculty members holding a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction or Educational Sciences, and who worked within the Curriculum and Instruction departments. Maximum variation sampling was also employed as a purposeful sampling type since the aim of the research was to reveal what is currently happening, the underlying meaning of what is occurring, and the relationships of these formations and happenings, and since the study does not aim to reach any statistical generalisations (Merriam, 2009). A maximum variation sample is constructed by identifying key dimensions of variations and then finding cases that vary as much as possible (Suri, 2011). This sampling yields: 'important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity' (Patton, 2002, p. 235). The current study therefore aimed at achieving the maximum variation in the sample; to integrate only a few cases, but those that are as different as possible, to reveal the full range of the variation and differentiation (Flick, 2002) found in Türkiye's curriculum development processes. Thus, as a research synthesist, employing maximum variation sampling enabled me to identify the essential and variable features of curriculum development in Türkiye, as experienced by diverse stakeholders among varied contexts, to construct a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Table 1 presents the cases according to the maximum variation sampling employed in the current study.

Table 1. Cases in maximum variation sampling

Durumlar	Detaylar (durumların sayısı)
³ Academic title	Professor (12) Associate Professor (12) Assistant Professor (16) Research Assistant (holding a doctorate) (8)
Length of service in C&I (major)	From 7 (minimum) to 38 years (maximum)
Geographical region ⁴ / The initials used in coding the participants	Marmara (4) / M Mediterranean (2) / A Aegean (3) / E Black Sea (2) / K Central Anatolia (5)/ IA Eastern Anatolia (2) / DA South-Eastern Anatolia (2) / GDA
Experience teaching at different levels	None (27) Preschool/primary education (13) Secondary education (5) Higher education (3)
Experiences in any curriculum development	None (8) MoNE (6) University/ faculty/ department (34)
Bachelor's Degree	Curriculum & Instruction ⁵ (24) Social Sciences/Language Education (16) Science/Mathematics Education (5) Other (3)

The sample in the current study consisted of 12 professors, 12 associate professors, 16 assistant professors, and eight research assistants holding doctoral degrees. As can be seen from Table 1, the participants' selection was based on their academic title, the university where they were employed, their length of teaching service, their bachelor's degree, whether they had been involved in any curriculum development studies, and whether or not they had any prior teaching experience at other education levels other than C&I (major). Since the participant academics came from many different institutions or had different understandings dependant on the institutions at which they worked, and because they varied by academic title and tenure status, had varying experience levels with curriculum development studies, and varied experiences as a practitioner at the school level that may have affected their experiences, perception, or point of view regarding the curriculum development process, one of the current study's criteria was to ensure that the selected participants had both common and different experiences regarding the phenomenon under study. A participant coding system was used in the study, such as PROF 25 to refer to a participant with an academic title of professor and 25 years of service in the teaching profession. For participants that held the same length of service and academic title, the initials of their geographical region were also added. For example ASC A 16 refers to a participant with the title of associate professor who has been working at a university in the Aegean region for 16 years.

³ Participants' titles at the time of conducting the study.

⁴ Detail shows the number of universities per geographical region of Türkiye, not the numbers of participants in that region. To ensure participant confidentiality, cases were created based on geographical region rather than university.

⁵ Curriculum and Instruction Department (Bachelor's degree) was closed in the 1997-98 academic year following restructuring studies by the HEC.

Researcher's Role

Since, the qualitative researcher needs to describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumptions, and experiences to qualify his/her ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003), at this point, it would be appropriate to talk about my own experiences and assumptions. As the researcher in this study, I have been working within a Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) department for 18 years, with 12 years of teaching experience at different education levels (primary, secondary, and higher education). Although I have participated in curriculum development studies at the faculty / university level from time to time within the institutions I have worked, I have never yet been involved in curriculum development studies at the national level, i.e., for the Turkish Board of Education and Discipline. The question that we ask ourselves and from time to time with colleagues at the institutions I have worked or at academic congresses, and which we answer in similar yet different ways, is basically what role curriculum developers play in today's education system in Türkiye. Another question we often ask is on what basis and how are the national curriculum development experts selected? In fact, up until this current research, I had not met any colleagues who had worked at the national level in curriculum development. These two questions led me to undertake the current research to garner the opinions of specialists working in the field of Curriculum and Instruction with regards to the curriculum development process in Türkiye. I maintained a researcher diary throughout, in which I recorded notes about the interviews conducted. Whilst the diary entries themselves (see Appendix) were not analysed, they served as a guide for the continuity of the overall study. I personally conducted all the steps of the study apart from the support of an independent expert coder during the data analysis process. As the researcher of the study, my role, as Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2015) stated, was to construct the studied phenomenon according to its own manifestations, structures, and components. Since phenomenological research design requires the researcher to bracket whatever a priori assumption they have about the experience or phenomenon (Creswell & Miller, 2000), my comments about the interviews are in parentheses on the parts with direct quotations from the participants.

Data Collection Instrument

The most appropriate data collection strategy for phenomenological research is the profound interview. Interviews are social encounters where retrospective (and prospective) accounts or versions of interviewees' past (or future) actions, experiences, feelings, and thoughts are elicited. In the current research, semi-structured face-to-face interview was conducted since it enables the researcher to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, whilst approaching the reality of the phenomenon under study as faithfully as possible (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

Questions included in the interview schedule were prepared by the researcher based on the related literature. Later, the form was checked by two academicians from the field of Curriculum and Instruction and one academician from the field of Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The interview schedule was then applied to three academicians from the field of Curriculum and Instruction as a pilot test. The participant academicians were asked to comment on the clarity of the questions posed, the type of questioning, interview duration, and the relations between the study aim and the context of the questions. According to the academicians' and experts' responses, revisions were applied to the questions contained in the interview schedule. As detailed in Table 2, the interview schedule consisted of introductory questions, main questions with probing questions, and also closing questions.

Table 2. Initial interview schedule, and final interview schedule with applied changes

Initial interview schedule	Final interview schedule
<u>Introductory questions</u>	One question was added based on interviewee responses that teaching experience may affect understanding of curriculum development.
1. How long have you been working in the department of Curriculum & Instruction?	
2. Have you ever been part of a curriculum development team (own institution, MoNE, etc.)?	4. Have you had any prior teaching experience other than at the undergraduate and graduate level?
3. What is your undergraduate area?	
<u>Main questions</u>	One question was amended and one new question added.
1. How would you define the concept of curriculum development?	1. What are the main problems faced in Türkiye's curriculum development process within national level curriculum studies?
2. What do you think are the main factors affecting the curriculum development process in Türkiye?	2. What are the solutions to those problems?
3. What are the main problems faced in Türkiye's curriculum development process?	
The first question was then removed on the grounds that it disrupted the integrity of the research and was not deemed relevant.	
The second question was removed from the main questions, but included as a probing question for use as/when deemed necessary or appropriate.	
The third question was clarified as it caused some confusion.	
<u>Closing remarks/questions</u>	No changes were applied.
Is there anything you would like to add or suggest regarding the current study?	

Data Collection Process

The data collection process of the research was the most challenging part of the current study. Since I also work at a university, certain national-level hindrances (e.g., the suspension of all travel permits following the attempted coup in Türkiye on 15 July 2016) and global obstacles (e.g., curfews and restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic) had to be faced, in addition to problems such as travel permits, arranging mutually suitable times to conduct the participant interviews, budgetary constraints, accommodation, as well as technology-related issues. Due to these various difficulties that were largely out of my control, the data collection for the current research took 4 years in total to conclude, including the pilot test application.

After assuring Ethical Approval of the interview schedule, prior to each interview, the interviewees were contacted via e-mail in order that the aim of the study could be explained, and a mutually suitable interview time arranged. Two-third of the academicians who were asked to participate in the study responded positively, whilst some were unable to participate as they were working abroad or did not have sufficient free time to take part. Next, the questions to be discussed were sent in advance to those academicians who agreed to be interviewed. Each interview was arranged to take place in a private area (mostly in their offices at university) in order that the environment did not detrimentally affect either the researcher or the participant in terms of the effectiveness of the

interview. An audio-recording device was used during each interview in addition to the prepared interview guide. Each interview started with rechecking the participant's permission to audio-record the interview, to reassure that the collected data would remain confidential and that their identity would be anonymised in any reporting, and to reiterate the purpose of the research being conducted. In order to provide a comfortable interview environment, the participants were first asked general questions about the research topic and their own experiences, and then the questions in the interview form were posed. If a participant provided adequately detailed answers during their interview, no intervention was applied, and the interview maintained its natural flow. The interviews lasted between 45 and 70 minutes.

Data Analysis

Content analysis, one of the procedures commonly employed for the analysis of textual material, was chosen for the current research. As a data analysis technique, content analysis is used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material, and to provide the opportunity to uncover themes and dimensions that may not have been predetermined, or that may otherwise remain unclear or nonvisible (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In the analysis of the data collected in the current study, in the first stage, the interview obtained data were transferred to a computer with no changes applied and converted into plain text. In the second stage, the relevant parts of the text were selected for further analysis. Textual passages containing ideas related to the research questions of the study were then highlighted. This process continued throughout the entire transcription process. Once the textual scanning process had been fully completed, the *relevant* (underlined) passages were then copied into separate files as the third stage. In the fourth stage, the files were saved to a larger folder and separate individual files created for each interview transcript. In the final and fifth stage, ideas that were found to have been repeated by two or more interviewees were gathered into a separate file.

During the coding of the collected data, of the three forms of coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), *Coding in a General Framework* was selected for use in the current study. In other words, prior to analysing the collected data, coding was performed based on the existing conceptual structure, with new codes added during the examination and some pre-existing codes removed where they were found not to fit the situation in hand. In accordance with the nature of this coding process; (1) general themes were predetermined, whilst detailed codes placed under each theme were established during the data analysis; (2) data were read and reread, and reduced based on the relevance of both phrases and themes, which were then grouped to form clusters of meaning; (3) relevant topics were grouped into units of meaning; (4) textual descriptions were written and verbatim quotations included where appropriate in order to add meaning; (5) structural descriptions were written; and (6) common repeated elements (according to textual and structural analysis) were identified so as to construct the universal meaning of the situation or experience, and thereby to arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Content analysis of the data was conducted by two independent coders, the researcher and an expert from the Curriculum and Instruction department at Kocaeli University. The reliability formula for the two coders, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), was calculated using the $P = N_a / (N_a + N_d)$ formula. The coding reliability was established as .92, which indicates a high level of reliability. A language expert was consulted to reveal whether the meanings in the minds of the coders during coding were consistent with the real meaning of the subject matter concepts.

Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research relies upon four general criteria, as developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Developed by the researcher based on the literature review (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Koch, 2006; Kornbluh, 2015; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Stahl & King, 2020), table 3 shows the quality criterion and its description, strategies to provide that criterion, and processes carried out by the researcher in the current research.

Table 3. Quality criterion and description, strategies to provide criterion, and researcher's actions

Quality criterion and its description	Strategies used to attain criterion	Researcher's actions in the current research
<p>Credibility Asks how congruent the findings are.</p>	<p>Adoption of appropriate, well-recognised research methods.</p> <p>Prolonged engagement. (Investing sufficient time to become familiar with the context, to build trust, and to get to know the data).</p> <p>Providing a brief description of the sampling method.</p> <p>Developing self-awareness of the researcher.</p> <p>Triangulation. (Use of different data sources, investigators, data collection methods, informant types).</p> <p>Ensuring honesty of informants.</p> <p>Detailed the researcher's background, qualifications, and experience.</p> <p>Independent coders for data analysis.</p> <p>Thick description of phenomenon under scrutiny.</p> <p>Description of previous research to frame findings.</p>	<p>Phenomenology, a research methodology refers to the in-depth study of personal experiences (see: Research Design).</p> <p>Participants encouraged to support their statements with examples, and follow-up questions asked. Researcher studied raw interview material until theories emerged within the scope of the studied phenomenon (See: Data Analysis and Data Collection Instrument).</p> <p>Sampling was described and tabulated (see: Participants).</p> <p>Pre-interviews conducted to determine research questions, and their suitability to obtain rich and reliable data (see: Pilot Test in Data Collection Instrument).</p> <p>Person triangulation – data gathered from different participant types (see: Participants).</p> <p>Investigator triangulation – data analysed by two independent coders (see: Data Analysis).</p> <p>One-to-one, face-to-face interviews conducted in participant's location (see: Data Collection).</p> <p>Researcher's biographical information supplied (see: Role of the Researcher).</p> <p>One researcher and one specialist working in the Curriculum & Instruction department (see: Data Analysis).</p> <p>Detailed description of curriculum development concept, factors affecting curriculum development, and stakeholders involved in curriculum development process (see: Introduction).</p> <p>Previous research described in detail (see: Introduction).</p> <p>Findings presented in relation to previous studies (see: Discussion).</p>
<p>Transferability Showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts.</p>	<p>Thick description.</p> <p>Provision of copious information regarding every aspect of the research.</p>	<p>Detailed description of the phenomenon in question (see: Introduction), participants/ sampling and location (see: Participants), data collection instrument, data collection process, data analysis and trustworthiness (see: Method), reactions observed that may not be captured from audio recordings (see: Findings), and researcher's feelings (see: Appendix) all included to allow for comparisons to be drawn.</p>

Table 3. Continued

Quality criterion and its description	Strategies used to attain criterion	Researcher's actions in the current research
<u>Dependability</u>	In-depth methodological description allowing study to be repeated. Peer Scrutiny. Independent researcher not involved in the research process examining both the process and product of the research study.	Participants, sampling, pilot study, data collection instrument, data collection process, and data analysis all described in detail. Generated codes and whole process examined by a measurement and evaluation expert, plus a qualitative research expert from the Curriculum & Instruction department. Turkish language teaching department expert consulted to ensure linguistic integrity of the codes, categories, and themes emerged during data analysis.
<u>Confirmability</u> Transparently describing research steps taken from a research project start to the development and reporting of the findings.	Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias. In-depth / transparent description of research steps to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised. Audit trail. A collection of materials and notes used during the research that documents the researcher's decisions and assumptions. Reflexivity. Examining assumptions of researcher's own conceptual lens, preconceptions, etc., and how these may affect research decisions. Verification of researcher's thoughts.	Two independent coders (see: Data Analysis). One Measurement & Evaluation specialist, plus one Curriculum & Instruction specialist (whole process). Entire methodological process detailed; from the start to the development and reporting of findings. Study materials including interview transcripts, data analysis and process notes, and final report drafts were reviewed by experts in Measurement & Evaluation and Curriculum & Instruction. Reflexive journal in which the researcher's methodological decisions and reasoning, the logistics of the study, etc. were maintained (see: Appendix). Direct quotations from the participants included (see: Findings).

Findings

Problems encountered in curriculum development in Türkiye

The central theme, themes, and categories that emerged at the end of the content analysis for the first research question are presented in tabular format in order to present the overall picture. Later, each theme is discussed together with its respective categories, codes, and presented with direct participant quotations. Table 4 presents an overview of the central theme, themes, categories and the codes that were formed on the views/ opinions of the participants.

Table 4. Central theme, themes, categories, and codes

Central Theme: Policymakers' priorities, understanding, and thoughts about curriculum development and education

Theme	Categories	Codes
The dominance of policymakers on curriculum development and decision making	Failure to form a (scientific) curriculum policy or education policy	Failure to develop curriculum models specific / unique to Türkiye Direct implementation of curricula from other countries
	Non-pluralistic curriculum development process	Demand for change always comes from the top, not the bottom / lack of consensus Uniformity rather than unity Failure to include other stakeholders, especially teachers and learners, in the curriculum development process Assigning specific people / same people in the curriculum development process Limited participation of curriculum experts in the curriculum development process Inadequacy of involving stakeholders in curriculum evaluation Lack of transparency
	Non-acceptance of curriculum development as a specialty by policymakers	Neglecting the field of Curriculum & Instruction / curriculum development specialists The dominance of subject-matter specialists on the curriculum development process Failure to recruit curriculum development specialists on a provincial / school basis

Table 4. Continued

Central Theme: Policymakers' priorities, understanding, and thoughts about curriculum development and education

Theme	Theme	Theme
Non-fulfilment of the sine qua non of the curriculum development process	Lack of holistic perspective to curriculum/ Lack of consistency	Inconsistency between the elements of the curriculum Lack of clarity in the philosophy of the curriculum Neglecting factors that affect curriculum development
	Lack of continuity / systematicity	Curriculum preparation rather than curriculum development Frequent replacement of policymakers at MoNE Constant/rapid changes
	Insufficient needs analysis	Societal needs Individual differences Regional/ inter-school differences
	Insufficient pilot studies	Insufficient allocated time to pilot studies Failure to share the results with the stakeholders / Lack of transparency
Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula	Local/global changes/pressure	Demands of international decision-makers (e.g., European Union) National and international assessment test results Technological developments
	Failure of inter-institutional coordination (HEC, MoNE, Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre)	Teacher training curricula (preservice education) Central examination system Lack of teachers' readiness to new curriculum (inservice teacher education)

Considering the opinions of the participants on the problems seen in Türkiye with curriculum development at the national level, three main problems were highlighted: (1) Policymakers dominating curriculum development and decision making; (2) Non-fulfilment of the sine-qua-non of the curriculum development process; and, (3) Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula. As can be seen in Table 4, although these problems are addressed under different themes, they affect one another, and as such are intertwined yet based on a single issue or source. Although it was expressed in different ways by the participants (such as what politicians believe, the priorities of policymakers, and the opinions of policymakers), it was the policymakers and politicians who they clearly expressed and highlighted throughout the interviews as the most influential and base (for some participants the only) factor that directly affects and even determines every stage of the curriculum development process in Türkiye. For example, as can be seen in the third theme, 'Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula', the participants pointed to there being global changes and pressures such as European Union, technological developments or international exams held such as PISA, but they also stated that Curriculum Development in Türkiye is influenced from the way in which policymakers interpret these changes/pressures rather than from the changes themselves. Considering the size and diversity of the sample, it is a remarkable and clear result that all of the participants expressed the influence of policymakers on curriculum development with statements such as 'most, only, I think only, I can't count anything else, but still politics...'. When the statements of the participants are taken as a whole, they consider this as a negative situation, and that the contribution of curriculum developers to the process of curriculum development to be limited.

Policymakers dominating curriculum development and decision making

As seen in Table 4, three interrelated categories appear under the theme ‘Policymakers dominating curriculum development and decision making’; (1) Failure to form a curriculum policy or education policy, (2) Non-pluralistic curriculum development process, and (3) Non-acceptance of curriculum development as a specialty by policymakers. Codes related to the first category titled ‘Failure to form a curriculum policy or education policy’ are presented in Table 5, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 5. ‘Failure to form a curriculum policy or education policy’, related codes, and direct participant quotations

Category: Failure to form a curriculum policy or education policy	
Code	Direct participant quotes
Failure to develop curriculum models specific / unique to Türkiye	‘We have no policy. Whichever power, or more precisely, whichever party comes into office, restructuring is implemented accordingly. What will happen if Party X leaves power and Party Y takes over? Here is my point: The entire current education system will be blown away’. [AST E 12]
Direct implementation of curricula from other countries	‘...somehow a need is stated from somewhere that a course is required; Let’s say an Environmental Education course, and that this course needs to have a curriculum because this course needs to be implemented and taught. When approached with such a mentality, of course, neither the course itself nor its place in the general school curriculum is very well defined. And a few years later, perhaps, when the [global] pressure recedes, the course is cancelled due to the absence of a well-designed curriculum’. [PROF E 20] ‘In the process of curriculum development in Türkiye, we begin to develop curricula long before we fully understand the theory, or simply appropriate them from another country as-is, but never even questioning if it is sociologically or historically appropriate [for Türkiye]’. [ResAST 9]

As seen in Table 5, the participants state that the sociological, historical, etc. foundations of curriculum development have not been taken into account sufficiently during the curriculum development process, and that the successful curricula that have been tried in different countries are adapted to Türkiye as-is. The majority of the participants describe this situation as a reciprocal relationship or a vicious circle; Curricula taken from different countries create an obstacle to the formation of a curriculum development approach specific to Türkiye, and the lack of a Turkish-specific curriculum development approach causes the curricula in Türkiye to be fragile against curricula adapted from other countries.

The codes related to the second category titled ‘Non-pluralistic curriculum development processes in the theme ‘The dominance of policymakers on curriculum development and decision making’ are presented in Table 6, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 6. ‘Non-pluralistic curriculum development process’, related codes, and direct participant quotes

Category: ‘Non-pluralistic curriculum development process’	
Code	Direct participant quotes
Demand for change always comes from the top, not the bottom / lack of consensus	<p>‘...the politicians are the ones who decide whether to change the curriculum, whether it is “needed”, what changes should be made, and how soon it will be implemented...’ [PROF 24]</p> <p>‘Well ... ideology and politics are affective here [Türkiye]; that is, the curriculum development teams are doing whatever the MoNE wants them to do. Sure, nothing else counts really’. [ResAST 7]</p> <p>‘...and even where it [decisions to be made in the curricula] is clear, there is no communal or scientifically acceptable consensus...’ [ASC A 13]</p> <p>‘It’s natural to have politics, but it should be about education policies. [Today] The structure is like this [in Türkiye]; the authoritarian state uses education to spread its ideology; education seems like an instrument and curricula are its written document. Academic studies cannot affect that flow ...’. [ASC 15]</p>
Uniformity rather than unity	<p>‘...France, Japan, for example, are relatively successful countries with centralised education systems. Unity is not a problem, even sometimes it is a need. The problem is not unity, but uniformity in the curricula in Türkiye’. [AST A 12]</p> <p>‘I even need to shout it out, it’s not actually “Curriculum Development”, of course, but as a result, a curriculum is somehow there obviously. A regulated curriculum...’ [ASC 19]</p> <p>‘It’s [centralisation in Türkiye] about standardisation. This [standardisation] is the function of the official curriculum, but it arose out of a need in Türkiye. Is it necessary now? Yes, it is, even more so today. What we term as decentralised is regional or school-based [as in the German model], and it would be a very, very big problem for us to move away from that since there is no infrastructure, and so an already big problem would become even larger’. [AST E 14]</p>

Table 6. Continued

Category: 'Non-pluralistic curriculum development process'

Code	Direct participant quotes
Failure to include other stakeholders	<p>'When you look at it on the basis of our country, when you ask what you would put in first place, of course, I would say politics. Decisions are made politically and somewhat under pressure. Of course, when you look at this, it eventually passed the A committee, passed the B committee, so many fingers were raised, but you know, the curriculum is being developed without adequate discussion among the relevant public, namely in the education community, among Educational Scientists, within schools, I should even say it with an exclamation point. This is not curriculum development, it is a curriculum regulation'. [ASC A 18]</p> <p>'Teachers should also take an active role in the [curriculum development] process. However, let alone that, the teachers don't even know that the curriculum has been updated. I don't even say the students at all. In one of our studies, most of the teachers we interviewed said that they taught based on the textbook rather than the curriculum'. [ASC IA 18]</p>
Assigning specific people / same people in the curriculum development process	<p>'I don't know how the [Curriculum Development] commission members are selected... I don't know what role the curriculum developers undertake because I have never participated in such a study. After all, I'm usually within the "uninvited group". I think you have to work at [specific university's name] to join the commission'. [PROF IA 30]</p> <p>'There are people with whom the MoNE always work, and it is always the same people. Leaving aside the obvious fixed points of view and value judgments that they may hold, we should not work with the same person all the time from even a scientific perspective'. [PROF 31]</p>
Limited participation of curriculum experts in the curriculum development process	<p>'Curriculum development specialists are already included in the curriculum development process; but are they? We simply don't know... <i>[laughs and asks the researcher]</i>. Do you know?' [ASC K 16]</p> <p>'When, X [talking of some figure in authority] came to the panel, I told X directly, "As a curriculum developer, I do not have any information about it [last curriculum change in Türkiye at the time], and thus I cannot make an explanation to our teachers". X responded by saying, "Invite me along and I will explain". Now what class of teachers should I invite them along to explain to?' [PROF 28]</p>

Table 6. Continued

Category: 'Non-pluralistic curriculum development process'

Code	Direct participant quotes
Inadequacy of involving stakeholders in curriculum evaluation	'...they [the Turkish Board of Education] say that they are doing great work. There are some among them who make a good effort, sure, but... They said that teachers evaluate their work, but we later learnt that they just clicked on the relevant page and wrote something [talking about "pending" curriculum evaluation]. They counted that as curriculum evaluation. They also said that many people clicked, and that was considered public opinion. I just don't know what sections of the process to criticise [<i>said with a clear hint of sarcasm</i> ']. [AST A 14]
Lack of transparency	'In a curriculum, what targets, learning experiences, and assessment methods available to be used should be made visible, as should what needs to be taught too; only then can society and curriculum makers be duly informed about the preparation, implementation, and evaluation. We must be convinced that these end-to-end processes are fully implemented'. [ASC EA 16]

As seen in Table 6, the category titled 'Non-pluralistic curriculum development process' is based on the views that relate to what stakeholders are involved in the curriculum development process in Türkiye. Accordingly, most of the participants think that the principle of pluralism is neglected in the curriculum development processes. In other words, the participants state that the curriculum development stakeholders, especially curriculum development specialists and teachers, are not included in the process or are not allowed to decide if there is a need for curriculum development, and in designing, implementing and evaluating the curriculum, and that even if there are positive / negative developments, these are not shared with the public transparently. According to the participants, the demands for curriculum change mostly come from above (policymakers), which leads to uniformisation rather than standardisation. Some participants state that the central education approach is necessary for Türkiye for the time being, and that the problem stems from the understanding of uniformisation rather than the central system itself.

Codes related to third category titled 'Non-acceptance of curriculum development as a specialty by policymakers' in the theme 'The dominance of policymakers on curriculum development and decision making' are presented in Table 7, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 7. ‘Non-acceptance of curriculum development as a specialty by policymakers’, related codes, and direct participant quotes

Category: Non-acceptance of curriculum development as a specialty by policymakers	
Codes	Direct participant quotations
Neglecting the field of Curriculum & Instruction / curriculum development specialists	<p>‘...we [curriculum specialists] are only there [in the curriculum development process] <i>[said with a reproachful expression]</i> to evaluate, discuss, object, or like them [curriculum changes]’. [PROF A 27]</p> <p>‘We misunderstand the impact of the policy in our country [Türkiye]. There is a policy in education, but the policy is in the implementation of the decisions taken by the “experts”. In other words, we [as curriculum specialists] are not decision-makers in the curriculum development process.. When you can’t set the policy right, no matter what you do, the rest won’t happen. I think this is our biggest problem’. [ASC A 16]</p>
The dominance of subject-area experts on the curriculum development process	<p>‘...of course, a science expert also needs to know the curriculum. However, subject area experts are actually just people who have received training at that point, but have little knowledge of curriculum. You look at the learning outcomes that have been devised in the curriculum and you ask, what does this [achievement outcome] have to do here?’ [ASC M 13]</p>
Failure to recruit curriculum development specialists on a provincial / school basis	<p>‘...when I think on a provincial basis, the curriculum is applied in [province name]. But, as a curriculum developer, I could review whether or not it would likely work. I wish I was given such a task, I try to do it by my own means, after a certain point I see doors and walls’. [ASC 15]</p> <p>‘In this direction [to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in a systematic way], curriculum specialists should be assigned to schools... just as graduates of psychological counselling and guidance are appointed to every school ...’. [AST 15]</p>

As seen in Table 7, the participants accept that curriculum development specialists are not sufficiently included in the curriculum development process, because the Curriculum & Instruction (Major) is not recognised as an area of expertise. In fact, almost all of the participants think that politicians are influential in the decision-making processes in the first place and field experts are in the second place. Emphasising that curriculum development specialists can only be involved in the process to the extent of their academic studies, they also state that curriculum development specialists should be involved in the process by taking active roles in schools in order to be successful in the implementation of the curriculum, but this has never been done.

When the categories in the theme of ‘The dominance of policymakers on curriculum development and decision making’ are considered holistically, the results can be summarised into three areas; (1) Source of the curriculum change, (2) Who is involved in the curriculum development process, and (3) The process of curriculum evaluation. When considered as the source of curriculum change, it is stated that the demand for change always comes from above (policymaker level), and not from the bottom, in other words, the demands of stakeholders in the society are ignored, and if there is such a demand, it is not explained transparently. Participants stated that curricula cannot be handled independently of the national and local conditions, and that curricula/systems that are successful in other countries cannot be immediately adapted to suit another country, as they often are in the case of Türkiye. As such, country-specific models should be developed. The inability to develop models specific to Türkiye and, in the words of some of the study’s participants, to ‘copy-paste curricula’ relates directly to the inability in Türkiye to create an effective curriculum or educational sciences policy.

When considered in terms of who involves in the curriculum development process, all participants stated that since politicians are the most affective/dominant element, curriculum development studies are not conducted based on a pluralistic approach; in other words, the stakeholders specified in the related literature as needing to be involved in the curriculum development process are not included. In addition, most of the participants stated that it is not only curriculum development experts who are excluded from the process, but also students and teachers, who are the primary stakeholders of the curriculum development process. It was said that teachers generally only become aware of new or changed curricula during the implementation phase, and that they are seen as 'curriculum officers' by the central policymakers, as some of the current study's participants put it. These problems expressed by the participants led to the finding that the curriculum development itself is not accepted as an area of expertise by the policymakers. According to the participants, curriculum development specialists have no say (or far less than policymakers or field experts) in the curriculum development process, and even if there are curriculum developers assigned to the commissions on curriculum development, these people are always selected from among the same group of experts or institutions. One of the participants said, 'After all, I am in the uninvited group', whilst another said, 'I do not know these people, what about you?' and another asked 'Who are these people, according to what are their competencies are determined?' It was emphasised that no transparency exists in terms of how the selection criteria of the curriculum development specialists working in the commissions are determined. The participants stated that the studies in the field of Curriculum Development and Instruction were limited to studies on the effectiveness of the curricula after the curricula was implemented and, in their own words, these studies "remain on the shelves of HEC". According to the participants, one of the notable indicators here is the absence of a curriculum development specialists working in schools. Finally, when considered in terms of the process of curriculum evaluation, some of the practices (e.g., online 'pending curriculum' practices conducted by the MoNE) during the evaluation of the curricula were not deemed to be sufficient, scientific, or satisfactory. It was also stated that evaluation results are not shared transparently with the relevant stakeholders, and especially not with the curriculum developers.

Non-fulfilment of the 'sine qua non' of the curriculum development process

As seen in Table 8, four categories related to the scientific processes or stages of curriculum development, in other words, planning, implementation and evaluation, emerge under the theme of 'Non-fulfilment of the 'sine qua non' of the curriculum development process', which mostly relate to the planning of a curriculum process; (1) Lack of holistic perspective to curriculum / Lack of consistency, (2) Lack of continuity / systematicity, (3) Insufficient needs analysis, and (4) Insufficient pilot studies.

Codes related to the first category titled 'Lack of holistic perspective to curriculum / Lack of consistency' are presented in Table 8, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 8. ‘Lack of holistic perspective to curriculum / Lack of consistency’, related codes, and direct participant quotations

Category: Lack of holistic perspective to curriculum / Lack of consistency	
Codes	Direct participant quotations
Inconsistency between the elements of the curriculum	‘...if we look at the direction given to education, or try to understand the system that we call education, derive some sense out of the elements of the current system, try to understand the relationships between all the elements, and then to organise them and guide the curriculum development process, it all leads us to a single term: “dynamism” – the term we always talk about, but is something that stands in definition. Whilst not wanting to appear unfair to our practitioners or decision-makers, unfortunately I see nothing worth seeing in this area.’ [AST 17]
Lack of clarity in the philosophy of the curriculum	‘...I see that it [curriculum development] is viewed from a more holistic viewpoint, but I also realise that this is not fully reflected in the curriculum. It is not really known “how to teach” but said more as a slogan. They may write the philosophy behind the curriculum, but they don’t know how to implement it’. [ResAST 8] ‘...the philosophy of the curriculum needs to be established. But... I see that it’s really a problem... especially after the 4+4+4 system was implemented, I think that our education system has largely gone bankrupt’. [PROF GDA 20]
Neglecting factors affecting curriculum development	‘I think the most important factor [in the curriculum development process] relates to ... the politicians, nothing else counts, I think’. [ResAST IA 8]

As seen in Table 8 and according to the participants, there is an inconsistency among the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes, which are the stages of the curriculum development process. This is related to the fact that the philosophy of the curricula is not clear according to some participants and that factors such as sociological, psychological, and economic factors that affect curriculum development are neglected in the curriculum development process, according to some others. In many of the codes that emerged in this category, as in the previous category, the emphasis on policymakers is often conspicuous.

The categories, codes and direct quotations from the participants related to the theme of 'the lack of continuity / systematicity' are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. 'Lack of continuity / systematicity', related codes, and direct participant quotations

Category: Lack of continuity / systematicity	
Codes	Direct participant quotations
Curriculum preparation rather than curriculum development	'...well, ... in fact ... it is perhaps necessary to ask whether or not there is really curriculum development in our country [Türkiye]. Fatma Varış used to call it a "patched fardel". In other words, rather than developing a curriculum, they add a lesson, remove a lesson, and prepare the lesson's curriculum again. But, after you prepare, you know that three cycles have three basic legs; prepare, apply, evaluate, re-prepare, re-apply, re-evaluate. This system should be a constant process, but unfortunately it is not possible for our country [Türkiye] to talk about developing a systematic curriculum. In fact, while there are occasional curriculum preparation studies, they do not turn into any sort of effective development process'. [ASC A 16]
Frequent replacement of policymakers (prime ministers) at MoNE	'Undoubtedly, politics determines the curriculum development process [in Türkiye]. There is probably no other education ministry that changes every 2 years. It has literally changed five times in the last 10 years. Therefore, teacher training, a sub-branch of the curriculum, is determined according to a populist approach...'. [ASC M 17]
Constant/rapid changes	'When you look, we all use the word "new" ..."new curriculum": new, new, new, we have dozens of "new" curricula'. [ASC M 14] 'No continuity: extremely fast decisions are being made, but according to what? It is unclear ... for example, a Media Literacy course was put in place, but the reason was unbeknown to me. It was then removed within just a few years; again, the reason is still unclear to me. Did the community become media literate suddenly? [said with a wry smile of sarcasm]. Or was it [the course] just not necessary? Do you know, for example, how those needs were determined? Now, considering that you [as a researcher] are conducting this study, I guess you obviously don't know... [smiling] oh, but wait, aren't we both, so to say, curriculum development specialists?' [ASC E 15]

As seen in Table 9, according to the participants, one of the problems experienced in curriculum development in Türkiye is the inability to provide systematicity and continuity, which is one of the important elements of curriculum development. All the participants in the research emphasised that the continuity in the curriculum development studies could not be ensured, albeit with different expressions such as 'patch pack, copy-paste, add-remove'. Hence, they state that in Türkiye, more curriculum preparation / arrangement studies are carried out rather than curriculum development studies, depending on the frequent changes of the ministers of national education. According to the participants, this cycle starts with the replacement of the minister of national education and continues with a quick curriculum preparation since every minister feels to make a new preparation. This cyclical process, which one participant stated as 'new, new, new... we have dozens of new curricula', causes problems in having a systematic and continuous curriculum development.

Codes related to the third category titled 'Insufficient needs analysis' are presented in Table 10, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 10. 'Insufficient needs analysis', related codes, and direct participant quotations

Category: Insufficient needs analysis'	
Codes	Direct participant quotations
Societal needs	'So, we asked them [decision-makers] with regards to the latest curriculum: "Did you undertake any needs analysis?" but no answer was received. Even a journalist asked the same question, deliberately or otherwise, but asked it anyhow. "Needs analysis was completed", he was told; but through what kind of a process, how many people were involved, from where were they chosen; and where's the report?' [PROF IA 25]
Individual differences	'...For example, we have a fast-developing student now. It does not allow for acceleration in this direction, there is a relationship of gradualism, for example, National Education says that you (don't mess with) the content of the upper class's achievements in the curriculum. It says you can't use additional resources. If we cannot use additional resources, if we cannot meet the needs of this child, if we make other students wait, this does not coincide with constructivism' [ResAST IA 9] 'The second point is about needs analysis. Let's say they develop a curriculum for a 72-month-old child, then they say it's suitable for a 60-month-old. What is the rationale behind that? Then, when the public reacts, they say "okay okay we'll apply it to 66-month-olds instead". What is that all about?' [ResAST 11]
Regional/ inter-school differences	'...curriculum on paper is very, very different, but different in practice; some parts of it can be implemented, maybe it can be implemented more in some schools. However, there are huge differences between schools in Türkiye.' [ASC M 16]

In the category titled Insufficient Needs Analysis, it is seen that the codes related to the needs analysis have emerged; the codes are included in the planning phase of curriculum development. According to the participants, social, individual, regional differences or differences between schools are ignored in needs analysis studies. In addition, some of the participants revealed that they did not know how the needs analysis studies were carried out and what kind of results was obtained; they also stated that the results of the analysis were not sufficiently shared with the public.

Codes related to the fourth category titled ‘Insufficient pilot studies’ are presented in Table 11, along with direct quotations from the participants.

Table 11. ‘Insufficient pilot studies’, related codes, and direct participant quotations

Category: Insufficient pilot studies	
Codes	Direct participant quotations
Insufficient allocated time to pilot studies	<p>‘Curricula should not be too quickly prepared or implemented, as happens in Türkiye. It is a profoundly serious business, because we are implementing a national curriculum, and therefore it should be fully tried and tested prior to its general release’. [ASSOC K 18]</p> <p>‘Curricula are forced through without adequate piloting. There’s usually just an impatience to implement’. [ResAST A 10]</p>
Failure to share the results with the stakeholders	<p>‘...These points should be formally explained and publicised. There is no institutional information forthcoming about the curricula being currently implemented; that is, they are just drafted and implemented, as in 2017’. [PROF E 29]</p>

As seen in Table 11, the codes in the category of ‘insufficient pilot studies’ are related to the implementation and evaluation stages of curriculum development. Most of the participants think that no sufficient time is allocated for the pilot studies, and according to the direct statements of some participants, they are conducted in a hasty and impatient manner. The participants also stated that the evaluation of the pilot studies was not spread over a certain period of time, and that the results were not even shared with the actors, and stated that there were some problems during the evaluation phase of the pilot studies.

When the categories emerging under ‘Non-fulfilment of the sine qua non of the curriculum development process’ theme are considered as a whole, it is seen that the cyclical and systematic nature of the curricula and the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the curriculum development process were mostly emphasised by the participants. However, according to the participants, varied problems exist regarding the sine qua non of the curriculum development process. The most important problem expressed by all the participants was a lack of continuity, which is considered an important feature of curricula and curriculum development. Constant changes of policymakers can result in abrupt changes in the curricula, which prevents continuity from being maintained. When considered in terms of curriculum planning, almost all the participants stated that one of the negative consequences of the abrupt changes in the curriculum was the inability to perform adequate needs analysis studies, the ignoring of the individual, inter-regional and inter-school differences, and the general needs of the society.

The second problem related to the planning process is that the various elements of the curriculum (purpose, content, context, assessment, and evaluation) are not always compatible with each other, or with the philosophy of the curriculum itself. According to some participants, the curricula do not even have any clear philosophy. Another problem at the planning stage is that among the factors stated in the related literature (e.g., political, social, technological, philosophical, and psychological currents, research trends, local context, economic influences, and international policy) that affect the curricula, it is the policymakers, and often them alone, and who are the most effectual and have the most say during the planning process. According to the participants, some of the most significant problems experienced during the implementation and evaluation stages of curriculum development in Türkiye are the allocation of insufficient time to pilot studies, and of not sharing the results with all the relevant stakeholder groups, especially curriculum developers.

Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula

Two categories appear under the third theme ‘Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula’; (1) Local/global changes/pressure, and (2) Failure of inter-institutional coordination (HEC, MoNE, and The Centre for Assessment, Selection and Placement⁶). Categories and codes related to the theme titled ‘Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula’ are presented in Table 12, complete with direct participant quotations.

Table 12. ‘Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula’, related codes, and direct participant quotations

Theme: Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula		
Category	Codes	Direct participant quotations
Local/global changes/pressure	Demands of international decision-makers (e.g., European Union)	‘Again, perhaps it’s related to politics, but the curriculum is greatly influenced by international developments. To give an example, whilst I don’t think it is important whether or not we intend to enter the European Union –the European Union may continue, it may collapse– but the decisions taken by the European Union itself require us to review our education system...’ [ASC M 14]
	National and international assessment test results	‘...even international exams, at least, which show us that we need to find our place, somehow return to our curricula, and the need to do something about it’. [ASC 21]
	Technological developments	‘...developments in technology and science also affect the curricula in certain ways, but it seems as if political factors are more influential, especially in recent years’. [AST DA 15]
Failure of inter-institutional coordination (HEC, MoNE, Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre)	Teacher training curricula (preservice education)	‘At least they (MoNE) are trying to do something. We (HEC) did do that after a few years’. [AST IA 14]
	Central examination system	‘...No matter how many curricula you develop, you have an existing system. We have an exam indexed system. The 2005 curriculum was developed according to constructivist teaching and learning; so you require students to construct their knowledge, but then there are only options A or B (referring to multiple-choice questions in centralised exams); whereas, it should be option C... Whatever system we bring in, we just end up patching up the existing system, so ultimately we fail’. [ASC K 16]
	Teachers’ readiness to new curriculum (inservice education)	‘MoNE applies constructivism...though I think it is largely misunderstood. But, can our teachers really perform their duties accordingly?’ ResAST 10 ‘The success of any curriculum is its success in practice, and it’s the teachers who implement the curriculum in reality. However, apart from implementing it, teachers fail to take the initiative... They say, give me a task and I will do it. The approach of placing teachers on a certain guided path has resulted in this situation’. [PROF 30]

⁶ The Centre for Assessment, Selection and Placement is the centralised body responsible for Türkiye’s national level university entrance exam and Student Selection and Placement System, as well as several other largescale national exams.

As seen in Table 12, most of the participants state that technological developments, national and international exams, and international pressure, especially the European Union, have an important place in curriculum changes. However, although the majority of the participants consider these factors that cause curriculum changes to be important, they state that how policymakers interpret these changes is more important, with expressions such as 'they are interpreting according to themselves', 'taking the side they want if it suits their agenda at the time', 'not taking the ones they don't want'. These sudden changes are implemented when other relevant institutions in Türkiye are not ready for the change, and this situation causes coordination problems between institutions.

When the codes that emerged under the categories of 'Abrupt/rapid changes applied to curricula' are considered as a whole, it is seen that there is a cause-effect relationship. The fact that the results of national and international assessment and evaluation are not at the desired level, the current policies of international decision-makers and, although less emphasised, technological changes cause sudden and rapid curriculum changes, and these changes cause a lack of coordination between other institutions and curricula. For example, teacher education curricula are structured after this change, not before or parallel to this change. This lack of coordination causes the training of teacher candidates not prepared for the changes. Not only the teacher-training curricula, but also the central examination practices and the unpreparedness of the current teachers for the change of the curriculum or the change-fatigue created by the frequent changes create negativities in the implementation of the curriculum.

Solutions to problems in Türkiye related to Curriculum Development

Table 13 presents the main suggestions put forward by the interviewed academicians with regards to the problems faced in Türkiye related to Curriculum Development.

Table 13. Academicians' suggestions for solutions related to Curriculum Development problems

Theme	Categories	Codes
Education and curriculum should be seen as a supra-political structure/the impact of policy should be limited	Curriculum development studies should have scientific qualities	Continuity in curricula should be ensured Pluralistic curriculum development process should be ensured Needs analyses and pilot studies should be done on a scientific basis
	Curriculum development specialists should take an active role in the curriculum development process	Curriculum development teams should be assigned on a merit basis Curriculum development specialists should be actively involved in National Education directorates Curriculum development specialists should be recruited on a provincial / school basis

As seen in Table 13, when the themes, categories and codes of the solution proposals of the participants are examined, it is seen that two categories stand out under the theme titled 'Education and curriculum should be seen as a supra-political structure/the impact of policy should be limited': (1) Curriculum development studies should have scientific qualities, and (2) Curriculum development specialists should take an active role in the curriculum development process. Considering the codes in the category of basing curriculum development studies on scientific foundations, the participants think that continuity in curriculum development, planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of curriculum development should be done with all stakeholders. At this point, it was frequently stated by the participants that teachers should take a more active role, especially as practitioners. Participants also state that needs analysis in the planning phase of the curriculum development process and pilot studies in the implementation phase should be made compatible with scientific processes. Some opinions of the participants are exemplified as follows.

It's up to them, the teachers, to adapt lessons to the local environment. The more proficient the teacher is, or the more initiative they will likely take, and the more everything changes for the better. They should possess good teaching and curriculum skills. One solution is that curricula should be contextualised, and teachers must cooperate with the curriculum specialists recruited in schools. [ResAST 10]

Continuity... We need to be constantly looking at objectives and outputs at the schooling level. What should we expect from a student graduating from primary school, or from middle school, high school, or even from university? What should be the outcomes that we have defined for these objectives after setting the curriculum objectives? In this context, we have to look to what extent our curricula serve these goals through a holistic perspective. [PROF E 29]

When the codes under the category of 'curriculum development specialists should take an active role in the curriculum development process' are examined, the participants think that more effective tasks should be assigned to curriculum development specialists in national-based curriculum development studies and that these assignments should be based on merit. Participants also think that local/school-based assignments of curriculum development experts will provide great convenience and bring order in terms of the implementation of the curricula. Sample quotes are as follows.

From time to time, efforts have been seen in this direction [curriculum development]. For example, in the 1990s, curriculum development specialists worked within [education] commissions. At that time, there was a MoNE development project being undertaken that was supported by The World Bank, and a commission for each field was established, with a curriculum development expert assigned to each field. However, it was not an effort that lasted exceptionally long, like a flame that just flickered from time to time and went out. One solution, perhaps, is to apply a significant level of connectedness and continuity to our curricula. [PROF 30]

As an association [EPÖDER⁷], we have written to various places on justifiable grounds; explaining where they are incorrect because of this or that and what it should be like, adding how and where the research results support what we are saying. We let them know the problem, proposed solutions, told them why they should not go on as they have been, but until now they have not responded back, and all because they have to act in accordance with central policies within a politically governed framework. Taking into consideration the suggestions made by curriculum developers may be just the beginning of the solution. [ASC M 18]

Figure 2 presents the research findings in the form of a diagram, relating them to the literature in order to present a holistic picture to the reader. The discussion and the conclusion section of the research were presented on the basis of this figure.

⁷ EPÖDER [Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Derneği – Curriculum and Instruction Association] was established in 2009 in order to contribute to the modernization of curriculum at all levels of education by cooperating with national and international educational institutions and to contribute to the scientific, professional and cultural development of individuals, institutions and organizations working in the Curriculum and Instruction field.

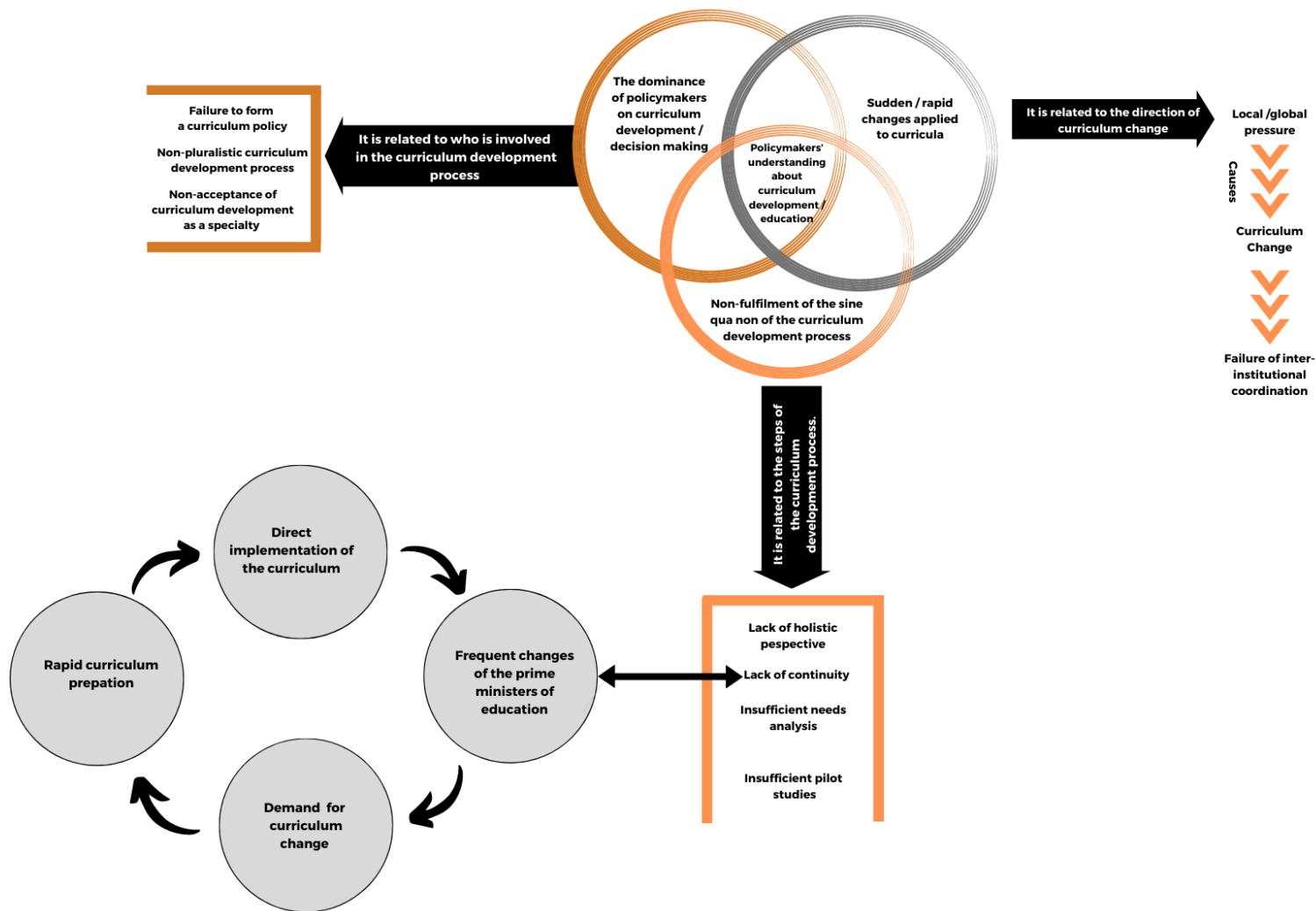


Figure 2. The diagram of research findings related to the literature

Discussion and Conclusion

Within the scope of this study, curriculum development specialists considered that the problems related to the curriculum development processes at the national level in Türkiye gathered around one single basic issue. Although the participants may have talked about issues using different terms (decision-makers, policymakers, administrators, ministries, power, government), they considered the politicians to be the most fundamental factor, in fact mostly as the only factor to have extensive influence over the curriculum development process in Türkiye. Though they also mentioned other problems such as demand for curriculum changes due to local or global pressures, they considered the *politicians' way of interpretation of these factors* as being the most affective determining factor in curriculum development. In planning educational objectives, content development, the learning strategies to be used in delivering educational content, instructional materials, the evaluation of learning outcomes, and the number of resources invested in education, etc.; politics clearly wields significant influence in Türkiye as it has the power to dominate decision-making across all areas of the school curriculum. This result from the current study was found to be consistent with the research of Gökmenoğlu and Eret (2011) in their study entitled, *Perspectives of Research Assistants in the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction on Curriculum Development in Türkiye*. In their research, using SWOT (Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) as the data analysis technique, the two most important threats observed were political decisions and frequent changes in curricula. To summarise; the political power of an individual or group of individuals holds more influence in decision making than all other influences and policies concerning educational matters that are directly manipulated by political will. This finding has also been stated by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995), who referred to the shifting domain of curriculum development towards politicians rather than school practitioners. In addition, according to Akşit (2007), fragmented changes may have been seen to be applied in Türkiye, and usually to gain political advantage, but the basic systems to a large extent have remained the same. The most hazardous result or consequence of this situation in the near and long term is a costly one, however, as it becomes more expensive when educational policies no longer address the actual problems they were or should have been designed to tackle.

According to the participants in the current research, policymakers' limited understanding of curriculum and education as a science causes three important interrelated problems. Being connected to this central issue, the first problem identified in the current study relates to who is involved (as stakeholders) in creating the curriculum. According to the participants, the overriding dominance of policymakers in the process results in curriculum changes that are made without consensus, even though the curriculum is a product that should reflect a political and social consensus about what education means, and why and how it is intended to be applied for the desired society of the future. As the participants of the current research emphasised, politicians, and even subject-area specialists, are more affective in Türkiye than teachers, practitioners, or curriculum specialists when it comes to the curriculum development process, which is also a point made by Pinar et al. (1995). This lack of consensus can also be considered as a reason why educators mostly did not believe in the significance of curricula, which Akşan and Baki (2017) reported in their studies. The participants think that much of the difficulties experienced in Turkish schools today stem from a lack of involvement of serving teachers in the planning of the curricula. In a study conducted by Ünver and Erdamar (2015), it was stated that teachers were only informed about curricula changes after they had been approved and were being implemented. Additionally, some teachers even continued to apply the previous curricula as they were unaware of a curriculum change having been introduced until having been retrospectively notified (Ünver & Erdamar, 2015). Also, in Schreglmann's study (2016), it was revealed that the most discussed topics were based on teachers' opinions, and that the teachers stated that the desired efficiency in practice could rarely be achieved due to certain deficiencies, and especially where they possessed inadequate knowledge regarding the philosophy behind the curriculum. However, as suggested by Tanner and Tanner (2007), teachers must take an active and integral part in any curriculum development since changes in practice depend on teachers' ability and willingness to modify their existing teaching procedures and practices.

Another key finding of the current study in terms of the actors involved in the whole curriculum development process is the lack of participation of the target audience (i.e., the learners) in the whole decision-making process. In Türkiye, learners are involved only at the implementation phase of any curricula change; however, they are not involved at all in the actual decision-making phase. In other words, curriculum planning, including decisions taken about what to teach and for what purpose, occurs only at the national level (i.e., board of education and national curriculum reform committees), which are accepted as being the most remote and far-removed from the intended learner community (McNeil, 2009). Ideally, everyone affected by a curriculum should be involved in its development, as Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) also emphasised. The problem of having a politically driven education system is partly associated with the centralised curriculum understanding based on the principle of uniformity in Türkiye's educational system, wherein curriculum developers are not given any significant role in the curriculum development process, but it always awards roles to specific people (and often the same few people). This is because the administrators of the system do not consider curriculum development to be a valid or pertinent area of expertise. In addition, although the current study's participants did not see a centralised curriculum approach as negative in terms of providing unity, and even accepted it as a necessity in countries such as Türkiye where the centralised education approach is perceived somewhat differently to that of other countries, as it is understood that politicians provide uniformity rather than unity. The participants also pointed out that the dominance of Türkiye's policymakers in decision-making also prevents the educationalists from developing curriculum policies that are specific to the country's needs. Hence, Turkish curriculum, by its very nature, is both sensitive and fragile to any changes that are practiced on it. One potential solution suggested by the participants was that curricula should have a supra-political structure or be protected against the effects of political influence. In general, curriculum development cannot be properly applied when processes are managed according to the demands for change from those who are politically appointed at the top of the system, rather than from the base up (i.e., the core stakeholders of education). Additionally, curriculum development needs to be seen as a bona fide branch of educational science, with curriculum developers assigned on a local or school basis in order to be sufficiently involved within the curriculum development process. The curriculum development process, therefore, should include cooperation from MoNE-appointed curriculum development specialists, along with curriculum developers who should be appointed to curriculum commissions based on their merit and experience, rather than their personal or political connections. Education in Türkiye should be autonomous, with politics having no direct involvement, which is a point also suggested by both Demirel (1992) and Gediklioğlu (2005).

In relation with the central issue, the second issue that was raised in the current study as a problem defined with the current curriculum development process in Türkiye was its general failure to perform the essential requirements of the recognised curriculum development processes (i.e., planning, implementation, and evaluation). In the current study, the participants often held the same opinion about the lack of needs analysis being performed, limited or no pilot implementations undertaken within the required timeframe or to the desired quality, and implementation results not being adequately reflected in the overall process, with results not even shared with the public (i.e., some of the key stakeholders). All the participants agreed that the basis of these problems was down to a lack of continuity principle. Indeed, a major non-governmental organisation, the Turkish Education Association (known as TED), in a report published by TEDMEM under the umbrella of a Roadmap Proposal Process to conduct research on education in Türkiye entitled, 'Transformation in Secondary Education', declared that the MoNE had not developed a tradition of monitoring processes or their outcomes, and thus there appeared to be a distinct lack of continuity in Turkish curriculum development studies (TEDMEM, 2013). The same report also pointed out that, due to a lack of training and to disagreements in educational philosophy in Türkiye, the educational policies in place are often weak in terms of their cultural and scientific aspects, and that they are gradually weakened as political goals and educational philosophies very often become intermingled and indistinguishable. When the participants' views were analysed, a cyclical situation became apparent, which was seen as the most significant of obstacles to ensuring continuity was maintained within the national education system.

For the participants, one of the most important reasons for constant curriculum changes were seen as the frequent changes of senior personnel and political appointments at the Turkish Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Board of Education. Curriculum priorities are often determined in line with the beliefs of the policymakers working at the MoNE, and as such mandatory changes are often introduced to curricula within a very short timeframe. These changes relate mostly to specific aspects of the curricula, but all elements in the system can be affected by even the smallest of changes. This cycle continues as policymakers change and are routinely replaced.

The last issue related to the central issue is the abrupt /rapid changes applied to curricula. However, although global and local pressures can affect the demand for curriculum change, most of the participants stated that whatever the global pressures are, they can significantly affect curriculum development studies in Türkiye depending on how policymakers interpret these external influences rather than the the mode of the pressures themselves. In addition, as also stated in the report of the Turkish Education Reform Initiative [Eğitim Reformu Girişimi] (Feriver & Arık, 2021), partly because of global pressures, policymakers tend to make additions to the curricula for every need that arises, in other words, to add fashionable approaches to the existing curricula. With all elements in the system being significantly affected by changes instigated by those appointed to political positions, other centralised institutions in Türkiye such as the HEC or the Measuring, Selection and Placement Centre are often unable to put the designated changes fully into practice or in a timely manner, too. The results of the research may be said to present a similar picture to the studies of both Demirel (1992) and Özdemir (2009). They stated that there is a distinct lack of cooperation between Turkish universities and the MoNE, and that there is discontinuity in the participation of scientists in Curriculum Development studies.

Opinions published in the TEDMEM reports over several years (TEDMEM, 2013, 2014 2015) are in line with the views put forward by the curriculum developers interviewed within the current research. As such, in an ideal education system, multiple parameters would be synchronised, with each prospective education project put forward not only by educators, but also having included the involvement of anthropologists, ethical specialists, system analysts, financial analysts, and specialists on global change, and with a causality approach to be developed by the MoNE and such an understanding that particularly includes the concepts of transparency, accountability, and democratic governance. Needs analysis should be fully conducted, and the subsequent design, implementation, and evaluation stages, which are equally and severally indispensable parts of the curriculum development process, should then be shared with the public, and that their widespread impact should also be closely observed and monitored. The current study, together with the ideas put forward by McNeil (2009), shows that there should be a national curriculum policy at force in Türkiye, and that decisions should be based on careful analysis of curricula content according to the appropriate disciplines and based on societal needs, or on studies of the learning process that address the qualifications of the target learners. The current study also showed that certain essential factors such as philosophical and psychological currents, research trends, local context, and economic dimensions are currently not taken into consideration, whilst others such as societal expectations, technological or scientific changes, and international policy are addressed purely at the discretion of those in political power. The need for recognising the interdependence of the fundamental factors in the curriculum development process has been neglected in schools, especially at times of narrowly directed socio-political pressures and influence. This has meant that not only political factors but also all other factors mentioned in the literature review need to be taken into consideration independently, dynamically, and holistically throughout the entire curriculum development process.

On the other hand, the Curriculum Development Professors Committee of Curriculum and Instruction (Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Alanı Profesörler Kurulu, 2005) were of the opinion that pilot implementations of curricula changes, and the feedback gained from them, should play a significant role in the whole curriculum development process, as negative factors that affect the functionality and effectiveness of any curriculum are usually identified during such practices, and as such appropriate remedial measures can be taken accordingly. However, it is an important condition that the sample set in which the trial implementation is applied should be appropriately representative of the whole target population. The similar views expressed by the program development experts participating in this study on pilot implementations; are remarkable in that the same question has been raised since 2006, the date of the report.

The current study attempted to address problems related to curriculum development in Türkiye in accordance with the views of curriculum specialists currently employed at universities across Türkiye. Regarding the problems faced with in curriculum development in Türkiye, researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies that aim to deal with the more positive aspects of the system since the current research is limited to the opinions of curriculum development specialists on curriculum development at the institutional/macro level and researchers are recommended to conduct research on curricula specific to certain education levels (primary education, secondary education, etc.), curriculum specific to a certain field (mathematics curriculum, etc.), and the opinions of other stakeholders (teachers, students, MEB administrators, field experts, etc.) involved in the curriculum development process. Last but not the least, as the results of the current research have shown, problems related to curriculum development at the institutional and theoretical level cannot be considered as being separate from problems in the field of curriculum and instruction at the institutional level (i.e., higher education institutions and universities). Therefore, the author and researcher of the current study aims to continue to scrutinise the data obtained from the participants of the current research with the aim of shedding light on the problems faced in the curriculum and instruction as a field of science.

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Appendix

Excerpts from the Researcher's Diary

My mind opened again; what I listened to in one hour made my doctoral process pass before my eyes like a film strip. I realised that I forgot some things too, and I felt sad.

The interviewee I talked to said that he actually had no free time, but when he heard that I was travelling from city to city, he was very impressed and said, 'Actually, this is exactly what we need to do'. The ideas that I obtained from everyone, from my professors, whom I call the veterans of my field, to the young research assistants, opened my mind, so much so that I became enthusiastic and felt excited like before my dissertation jury.

With a lack of sleep and the previous interview having been long and tiring, I asked an interviewee offhandedly, 'Are you thinking of...'. I then realised my mistake and corrected it, 'Sorry, I seemed to direct you there, what do you think of...'. She stopped for a moment and said, 'I guess it was a bit like that, let me give it some thought so I can answer you'. She then started to respond after a minute or two. I should have paid attention to avoid trying to direct her.

I wanted to say 'You are wonderful, how beautifully you expressed it' but I could not. However, I, too, had many things to say.