Examining the Problems of the Teachers Appointed within the Scope of Supporting the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) Project[1]

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Abstract

PIKTES is an education project carried out by Ministery of National Education (MoNE) to contribute to the access of children under temporary protection to education in Türkiye. This qualitative study examines the challenges faced by teachers assigned to the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) project. Guided by social justice theory, focus group interviews were conducted with eight teachers to explore their experiences. Findings reveal significant disparities in employment conditions, including insecure contracts, inadequate compensation, and limited access to benefits compared to regular teachers. Participants reported confusion regarding their legal status and rights due to conflicting regulations. This research underscores the urgent need for policy reforms to recognize the contributions of these teachers, improve their working conditions, and ensure their professional development.

Introduction

Communication, as a fundamental aspect of culture, is significantly impacted by forced displacement, changing the way migrant children communicate and engage with their surroundings. Refugees who struggle with language barriers often find it difficult to express themselves, understand others and develop a sense of belonging in host societies (Baker, 1990). In order to facilitate the integration of refugees into the host society and promote a sense of belonging, it is essential for them to acquire a common language base with the citizens of the host country. The increasing phenomenon of forced migration and the resulting influx of refugees necessitate extensive research focusing on various aspects of second language learning among refugees and the challenges faced by language teachers in the host country.

While numerous studies have explored refugee students' experiences in second language acquisition (Alrawashdeh & Kunt, 2022; Seuring & Will, 2022; Welsh Government, 2013; Ameen & Cinkara, 2018; Sarmini, Topçu, & Scharbrodt, 2020; Atalay, Kilic, Anilan, Anilan, & Anagun, 2022), fewer have examined the complexities teachers face in this role. Alrawashdeh, and Kunt (2022) examined the difficulties that refugee children face while learning English from the perspective of teachers, Seuring and Will (2022) explored the role of pre-school and formal language education in supporting young refugee children to acquire target language (German) competences. The Welsh Government (2013) stated that foreign language learning has positive effects on people in situations of displacement and crisis, and Ameen and Cinkara (2018) investigated the resilience levels of displaced adolescents and the impact of learning English on their lives. Sarmini, Topçu, and Scharbrodt (2020) investigated the role of Turkish language skills in ensuring the integration of Syrian children into the Turkish education system. Similarly, Atalay, Kilic, Anilan, Anilan and Anagun, (2022) examined the experiences of Turkish teachers about the problems

encountered in the education of Syrian children. Indeed, most of the studies on refugees and second language learning have mainly investigated the experiences of refugee students, how language learning affects the lives of refugees, and/or the relationship between integrating refugees into host country education and language learning, but few studies have focused on the experiences and challenges of second language teaching teachers. Maralı (2018) identified several challenges that prevent Turkish language acquisition among Syrian refugee students. These include socio-emotional challenges caused by traumatic experiences, linguistic barriers due to phonetic differences between Arabic and Turkish, and curricular inadequacies. Classroom management issues such as absenteeism and behavioral problems contributed to these challenges. Moreover, inadequate parental involvement exacerbated students' academic struggles.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Türkiye: A Demographic Overview

The Republic of Türkiye has a long history of experiencing migration movements, particularly due to its geographical location and geopolitical circumstances (GİGM, 2019). The largest migration movement towards Türkiye occurred in 2011, primarily driven by the war in neighboring countries, particularly Syria. This influx of Syrian immigrants, granted temporary protection status through legal regulations in 2013, resulted in millions seeking refuge in Türkiye. As of the latest official figures, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status in Türkiye stands at 3.762.686 with a significant portion being school-aged children (GİB, 2022)[2]. As of the 2021-2022 academic year, the number of children in the education age population is 1.124.353 and 730,806 of these children are students (MoNE, 2022).

Government Policies for the Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System

Since 2014, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has implemented various policies to integrate Syrian refugee children into the country's education system. A cornerstone of these efforts is the Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) Project, fully funded by the European Union under the Facility for Refugees in Türkiye (FRIT). Implemented in two phases from 2014 to 2022, PIKTES aimed to expand educational opportunities for Syrian children under temporary protection and to support broader integration goals.

To deliver educational services to Syrian students, MoNE has employed both permanent and contracted teachers in public schools. Additionally, within the framework of the Readmission Agreement between the European Union and Türkiye, temporary Turkish teachers and guidance counselors have been assigned to regions with high Syrian populations. The PIKTES project, operational in 26 Turkish provinces, has further contributed to this effort by recruiting over 3,000 Turkish teachers, guidance counselors, and Arabic teachers, along with support staff. However, the temporary nature of these appointments has raised concerns about job security and working conditions.

While PIKTES has made significant strides in providing education to Syrian children, challenges persist. These include issues related to teacher qualifications, classroom management, and the socio-emotional well-being of students. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the successful integration of Syrian refugee children into Turkish society.

Addressing Challenges Faced by Temporary Teachers in the PIKTES Project

The important role of education, and therefore teachers, in the reintegration of refugee students into society cannot be underestimated. Existing research on refugee integration primarily focuses on the challenges faced by students (Aydın & Kaya, 2017; Crul, Lelie, Keskiner, & de Wal Pastoor, 2015; Hayes & Endale, 2017, Schneider & Biner, 2019; Sarmini, Topcu, & Scharbrodt, 2020) and the social support teachers need to improve student outcomes (Karkouti, Wolsey, Bekele, & Toprak, 2021), a critical gap remains in understanding the specific challenges faced by teachers seconded under the PIKTES Project.

The PIKTES Project has brought to public attention the urgent need to improve the working conditions of these teachers by advocating for secure employment over precarious and flexible arrangements (URL-3). However, the broader context of the declining value of the teaching profession in the neoliberal era characterized by rising unemployment and precarious work is crucial for international readers. This trend is not just a local or technical issue, but a global phenomenon that exacerbates the challenges faced by teachers, especially those working in temporary positions. By placing the problems of PIKTES teachers within this broader neoliberal context, the systemic inequalities and political factors that contribute to precarious working conditions can be better clarified.

This research aims to fill this knowledge gap by examining the challenges faced by temporary teachers within the PIKTES Project and proposing solutions to address these issues through a social justice perspective. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions will be addressed:

- What challenges do teachers encounter within the scope of the PIKTES project?

- How do these challenges reflect broader systemic inequalities and social injustices?

- What strategies can be implemented to address these injustices and improve teacher well-being?

Method

This study employs a phenomenological research design grounded in social justice theory to explore the challenges faced by teachers temporarily assigned to the Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) Project. By centering the lived experiences of these teachers, the study aims to uncover the systemic inequalities and power dynamics that shape their working conditions. This research seeks to understand how broader societal structures and policies intersect with teachers' individual experiences, thereby contributing to a deeper comprehension of the challenges they encounter. Given the focus on describing a specific phenomenon, a phenomenological design was employed to capture the lived experiences, problems, and solution proposals of teachers within the PIKTES Project. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence of a phenomenon by examining it from the perspectives of those directly involved (Teherani et al., 2015).

Focus groups were selected as the data collection method to gather diverse perspectives from participants in a discussion-based environment (Bas et al. 2008; Yıldırım & Simsek, 2018). This method's practicality and rich data potential made it suitable for the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Group interactions provide valuable insights and complement other data collection methods (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Homogeneous sampling was used to select participants who shared similar experiences related to the research problem (Creswell, 2013).

A semi-structured interview guide was developed, incorporating expert feedback to refine questions. The guide comprised three sections: demographic information, personal rights, and working conditions. Interviews were conducted online, lasting approximately three hours to allow for in-depth discussions. To ensure data integrity, interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using content analysis. Homogeneous sampling was employed to select participants sharing similar experiences.

A rigorous data analysis process was used to ensure the credibility of the findings. Focus group transcripts were meticulously analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial open coding involved identifying and labeling significant sections of the data. Patterns and relationships among the data were then uncovered to categorize codes into broader themes. To increase credibility, inter-rater reliability was established through independent coding by two researchers, followed by a consensus-building process. Identified themes were then validated through member checking, where key findings were presented to participants for validation and additional insights. This iterative process ensured the authenticity and credibility of the research findings.

Participants

The participants constituted a homogeneous group in terms of their employment within the PIKTES project, allowing for a focused exploration of shared experiences. Generally, focus group interviews are carried out on homogeneous groups (Creswell, 2013). By focusing on a group with similar roles, responsibilities and challenges, aimed to reveal the key issues faced by these teachers. While heterogeneous sampling could have offered a broader perspective, it could have reduced the focus on the unique challenges faced by teachers in the context of the PIKTES project.

Purposive sampling was employed to select eight teachers working within the PIKTES project. These participants, evenly divided by gender, were employed in various cities across Türkiye. With diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences ranging from five to six years, they represented a cross-section of teachers within the project. While class sizes generally ranged from one to twelve students, one participant reported a larger class of twenty students. Prior to their involvement in PIKTES, most participants had limited experience in private institutions. Almost all of the participants stated that they had positive feelings towards working as a teacher within the scope of PIKTES. Pseudonyms were assigned to maintain confidentiality (Table 1).

Table 1.

Demographic Information of Participants

ID (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	City	Subject Area	Appointment Year
Ankara	39	Female	Ankara	Primary School	6
Emine	31	Female	Ankara	Primary School	6
Gayda	34	Male	Adana	Primary School	5
Istanbul	33	Male	İstanbul	Primary School	6
Kilis	30	Female	Kilis	Middle School	5
Mersin	29	Male	Mersin	Primary School	5
Piktes27	32	Male	Gaziantep	Middle School	6
Ses	32	Female	Hatay	Primary School	6

Findings and Discussions

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the participants participating in the research are included in this section. First of all, the reasons for the participants to work within the scope of the project, the legal basis of their rights and responsibilities, the problems they experience in terms

of personal and financial rights, the effects of these problems on their daily lives, and solution suggestions are given. Then, the findings regarding the working conditions of the participants were presented.

Reasons for Teachers to Work within the scope of the PIKTES Project

Three main themes emerged regarding the reasons for teachers participating in the research to work within the scope of the PIKTES Project. These themes, along with their sub-themes, are detailed in Figure 1.
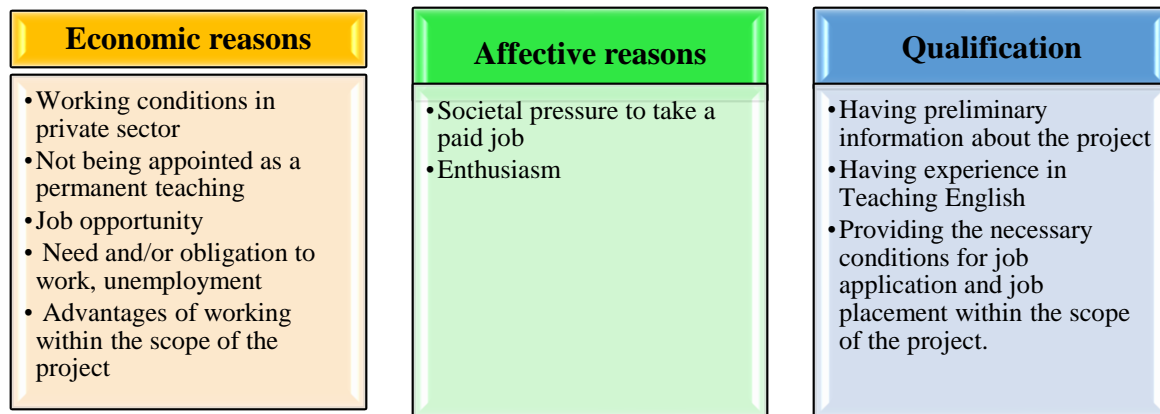
Economic reasons	Affective reasons	Qualification
• Working conditions in private sector • Not being appointed as a permanent teaching • Job opportunity • Need and/or obligation to work, unemployment • Advantages of working within the scope of the project	• Societal pressure to take a paid job • Enthusiasm	• Having preliminary information about the project • Having experience in Teaching English • Providing the necessary conditions for job application and job placement within the scope of the project.

Figure 1. *Participant views on the reasons for working in the PIKTES project*

Economic Reasons

Participants cited various economic factors influencing their decision to work within the PIKTES Project, including: working conditions in the private sector, not being appointed to permanent teaching, job opportunity, need and obligation to work/unemployment and advantages of working within the scope of the Project.

Working Conditions in the Private Sector: Some of the participants stated that they had paid teaching experience, working in the private sector before starting to work within the scope of the Project, and their working conditions

were heavy, insecure and low paid. Participants, such as Mersin, highlighted the challenging working conditions, insecurity, and low pay in the private sector, leading them to seek employment in the public sector. He said: "*After seeing the working environment in the private sector in Türkiye and the private sector employees not getting their rights, I thought that working in the public sector would be more logical and better.*"

Inability to Secure Permanent Teaching Positions: Some participants, like Kilis and Emine expressed frustration over not being appointed as permanent teachers despite passing relevant exams (the Public Personnel Selection Exam-KPSS in Turkish abbreviation), leading them to explore opportunities within the PIKTES Project. Kilis said, "*After graduating... I also took KPSS. My probability of being appointed was very high, but there was an 'interview obstacle' in front of me… When I couldn't be appointed as a teacher, I realized that there was such an opportunity (i.e., becoming a teacher in the PIKTES Project).*

Job Opportunity and Advantages: Others, such as Istanbul and Ses, viewed working within the project as an opportunity, either due to job availability or perceived advantages over permanent teaching positions, particularly in terms of income and potential future opportunities. Gayda and Mersin stated that working in the public sector within the scope of this Project was more advantageous than permanent teachers, especially in terms of income in the first years of their employment. In addition, they also stated that when transitioning to permanent teaching in the future, priority can be given to those working in this position.

Affective Reasons

Participants also mentioned affective factors influencing their decision, including: social pressure to work in a paid job, and enthusiasm.

Social Pressure and Enthusiasm: Some participants, like Ses, felt pressured to work, while others, like Gayda and Mersin, expressed enthusiasm for teaching Turkish to foreign students, viewing it as a fulfilling opportunity. Mersin said *"Teaching Turkish to foreigners was a field I wanted to work in for a long time, so I started this job willingly"*, Gayda expressed his views as follows:

> *When we went abroad at university, they (hosts in the country) first taught us their own culture and language. Then I thought, there are a lot of foreign students in my country, but we don't teach them Turkish. While I was questioning why we don't have such a study, I came across such a thing (PIKTES) and it attracted me. It was the job I wanted.* (Gayda)

Qualification

Participants mentioned factors related to their qualifications, including: having preliminary information about the Project, having experience in teaching English, and meeting the necessary conditions for job application and job placement within the scope of the Project.

Preliminary Information about the Project: Participants like Kilis and Gayda had prior knowledge of the PIKTES Project, influencing their decision to apply. Kilis said, *"we knew what kind of a system this work proceeded. knowing how it will progress, we set our heart on this project."*

Teaching Experience and Meeting Conditions: Participants met the necessary conditions for application and had relevant teaching experience, as highlighted

by Emine and Ses. Emine recalled "…*we took part in this project by taking the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) score, entering the interview, and making a choice based on the score.*" Ses described his experiences in the following words: "*Before I started this job, I was teaching Turkish to Syrian women at a UNICEF-supported community center.*"

<u>Legal Basis for Teachers' Rights and Responsibilities within the PIKTES Project</u>

Under this heading, first of all, according to the views of the participants, the legal basis of the rights and responsibilities of the teachers working within the scope of the project, the sources of information about the rights and responsibilities of the participants are given.

Legal Basis for Rights and Responsibilities

Participants identified various legal texts governing their rights and responsibilities within the PIKTES Project, including labor laws, agreements, and disciplinary directives. These legal foundations provided a framework for their employment and related rights. Table 2 shows the seven different legal texts stated by the participants.

Table 2.

Legal basis for being involved as a teacher in the PIKTES Project

Name of the Law or Agreement
1. Labor Law No. 4857
2. Civil Servants Law No. 657
3. Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Law No. 5510
4. National Education Basic Law No. 1739

5. PIKTES Project Agreement signed between the EU Delegation to Türkiye and the MoNE

6. Central and Provincial Organizations Workplaces Enterprise Collective Bargaining Agreement (operating in business line 10) affiliated to MEB signed between MEB and Turkish Cooperative and Office Workers Union (KOOP-İş in Turkish abbreviation)

7. Employment Agreement signed between the Ministry of National Education and the teachers assigned within the scope of the Project

In addition to the legal texts mentioned above by the participants, the discipline directive dated 03/02/2021 and numbered 20059672 was put into effect by the Ministry of National Education for teachers working within the scope of the PIKTES Project.

Information Channels and Challenges in Rights Awareness Among PIKTES Teachers

Participants described a range of challenges related to understanding their rights and responsibilities. While some participants lacked initial information, they acquired knowledge over time through in-service training, contract review, and peer support. Others relied on employment contracts, managers, unions, social media, peer groups, and litigation processes as sources of information. Figure 2 illustrates the diverse range of resources participants utilized to obtain information about their rights and responsibilities.
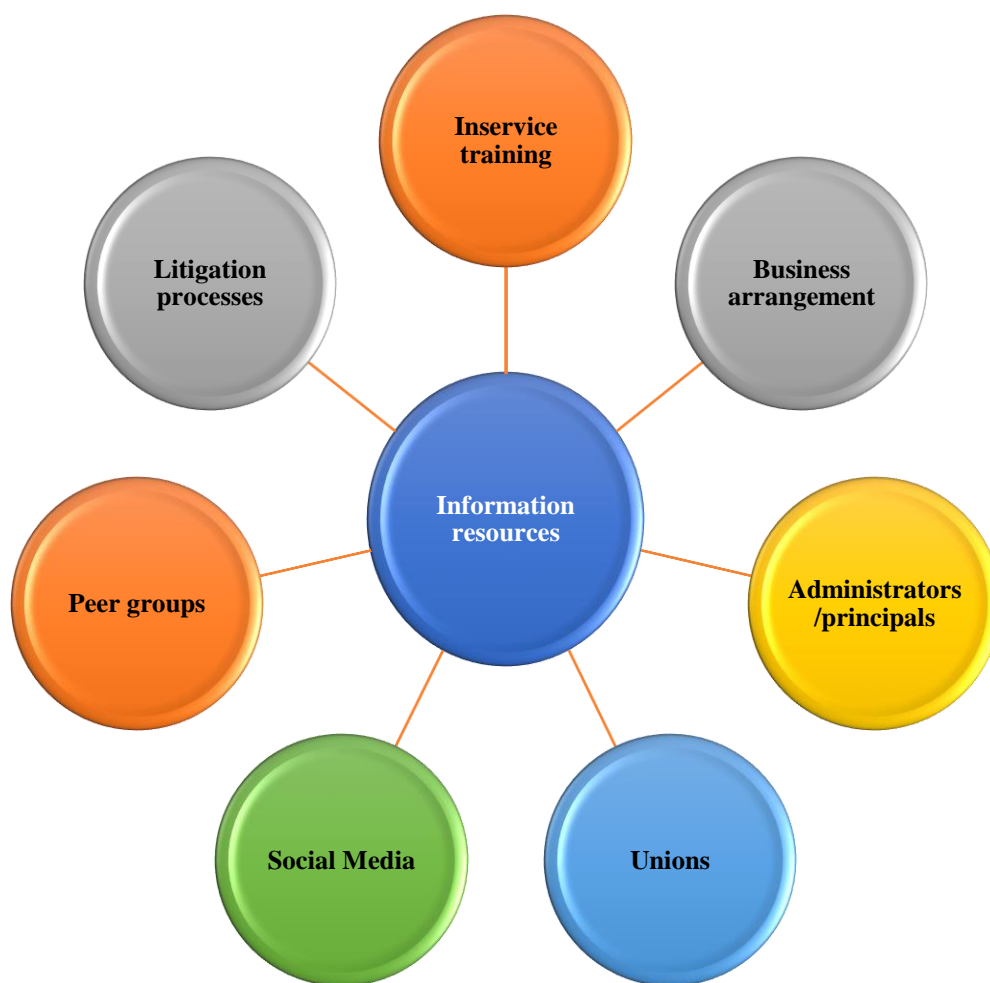
Figure 2. *Sources of information on rights and responsibilities*

Notably, six participants (Kilis, Ses, PIKTES-27, Ankara, Mersin, Emine) indicated a lack of sufficient information at the outset of their employment. Ses emphasized the importance of peer-to-peer knowledge sharing within the project, highlighting the role of social media groups in disseminating information among colleagues. Ses said, *"...no one informed us before (starting work). I started this work in Hatay Reyhanlı. No one was giving us a clear explanation about it there either... One month after (starting the job) we went to in-service training in Antalya and got some information there*." He stated that no systematic information was given in Ankara and that he learned something by reading the contract. While Piktes27 stated the effect of the social media

groups that became widespread among themselves in 2019, Ses stated that some teachers working within the scope of the Project spent time and effort in research and informed other teacher in the Project.

Problems Regarding Personal Rights

Within the scope of the research, the participants were asked about the problems they experienced in terms of personal rights. The analysis of participants' responses revealed four main themes, each with various sub-themes, as depicted in Figure 3. The four themes related to the problems experienced by participant teachers in terms of personal rights are as follows: employment, financial rights, leave, and service-work.
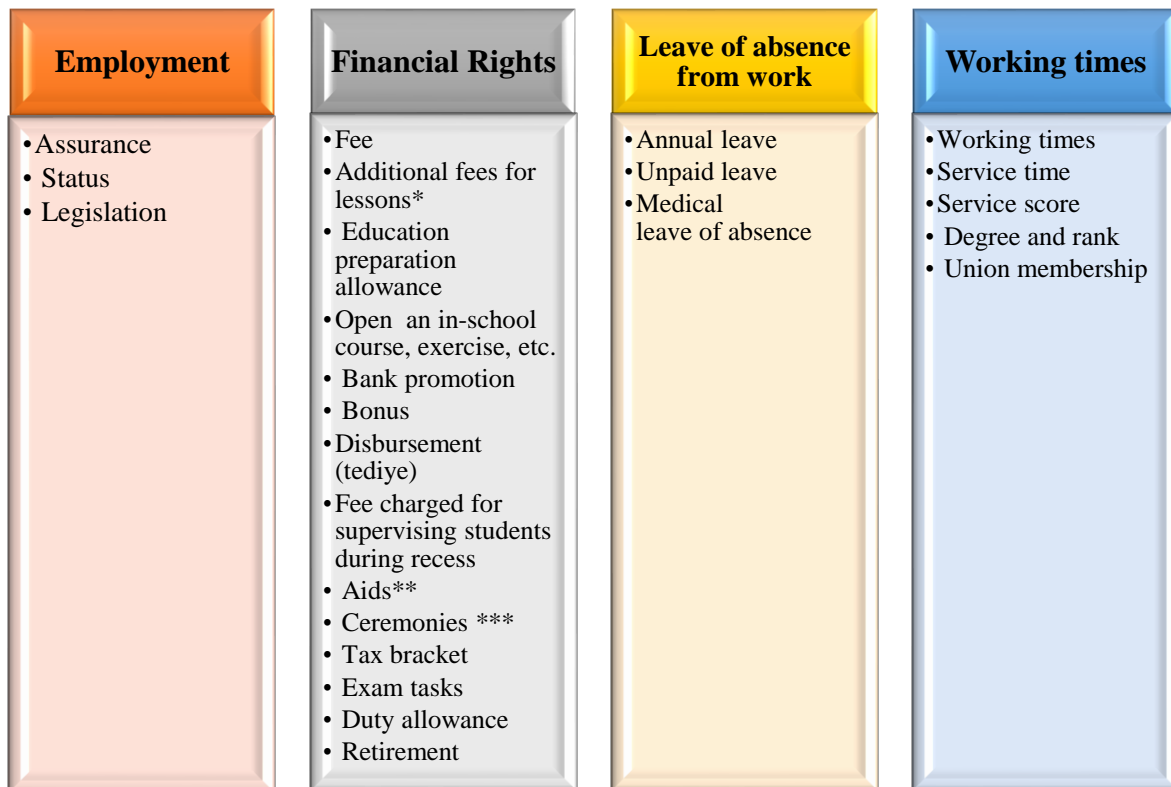
Employment	Financial Rights	Leave of absence from work	Working times
•Assurance • Status • Legislation	•Fee •Additional fees for lessons* • Education preparation allowance •Open an in-school course, exercise, etc. • Bank promotion • Bonus •Disbursement (tediye) •Fee charged for supervising students during recess • Aids** • Ceremonies *** • Tax bracket • Exam tasks • Duty allowance • Retirement	•Annual leave •Unpaid leave •Medical leave of absence	•Working times •Service time •Service score • Degree and rank • Union membership

Figure 3. *The problems they experience in terms of personal rights according to the opinions of the participants*

*In Türkiye, teachers receive additional fees for each lesson they actually teach, except for the lesson hours they are obliged to pay in return for a salary.

** Aids: Refers to the in-kind and cash aids paid to the workers within the scope of the Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Law No. 5510 in Türkiye. These are payments such as death, birth, marriage, food, travel, private health insurance premium, individual retirement contributions.

*** Ceremonies: Refers to the official holidays celebrated in schools in Türkiye (29 October Republic Day, 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day, 19 May Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day). On the days of these ceremonies, no lessons are taught in schools, only celebrations are held. Staff teachers are considered to have taught full-time because they participate in the celebrations.

Employment:

The participants stated that although there have been certain improvements from the past to the present in the problems they have experienced in these areas, these problems continue to a significant extent. All participants stated that the unionization of teachers in 2019, the solidarity and information sharing networks they established among themselves in the social media regarding the events/situations they experienced, and the litigation processes were significant developments regarding the solution of the problems they experienced. Participants highlighted several issues related to employment, including security, status, and legislation:

Insecure Employment: Teachers expressed concerns about the uncertain nature of their contracts within the project, leading to financial instability and an inability to plan for the future. Ankara said that: "*We do not have job security. We know that we will work until the contract ends. We can't see ahead for what's next.*"

Status as Workers: Despite being qualified teachers, participants felt they were treated as workers rather than educators, leading to discrepancies in their employment status and rights.

The participants stated that another problem they experience in terms of employment is that they are in the status of a worker, although they are actually teachers. Although the teachers working within the scope of the project are subject to the Labor Law No. 4857 in terms of personal and financial rights, it was stated that they were public workers in 2019 as a result of unionization and lawsuits. Piktes27 said: "*We were not accepted as public workers. With the unionization, it was accepted that we were public workers...Also, some of the appointed friends filed lawsuits through lawyers. As a result of those lawsuits, we learned that we have the right to such a thing.*"

Unclear Legislation: Participants struggled to navigate the complex legal framework governing their employment rights, leading to confusion and uncertainty regarding their entitlements. Participant teachers stated that working with so many legal texts in terms of their rights and responsibilities caused confusion and they often did not know which legal text was prioritized in which situations. Mersin expressed the uncertainty in terms of legal legislation as follows: "*A system that is unique in the world, consisting of the blending of the Labor Law and Law No. 657.*" Ses, on the other hand, stated the uncertainty they experienced with the following statements: "*It contains many things as a legal basis. After all, is the source of our problems in many issues according to this Labor Law or the Civil Servants Law? It is not yet clear which law it is based on exactly.*"

Financial Rights

The financial rights of participants were a significant concern, with sub-themes including wages, additional fees, educational preparation allowance, in-school course, exercise, etc., shift fee, exam duties, bank promotion, subsistence, bonus, disbursement, aids, ceremonies, tax bracket, promotions, deductions, and retirement.

Stagnant Wages: Participants (Piktes27, Ankara, Mersin, Istanbul, Ses) reported receiving fixed wages for several years without any salary increases, leading to financial strain and dissatisfaction. Ankara expressed this situation as follows:

> *the salary we received when we first started working was around 1000 Euros. We were not given a raise until we joined unions in 2019. And now, they say you can't get paid more than a newly appointed permanent teacher can get without additional tuition.*

Participants stated that at the time of the focus group meeting (16/06/2022) the wage they received was approximately 6,350 TL, and 367.54 Euros in foreign currency (exchange rate of 16/06/2022; 1 Euro=17.277 TL). Stating that not increasing their salaries twice a year contradicts the Labor Law, Istanbul also added:

> *One thing that seems strange here is that yes, we are bound by the labor law, we need to get a raise twice a year. But since our employment process is carried out within the scope of a Project, all salary calculations are made at the beginning of the Project. Therefore, they could not raise our salaries.*

Lack of Additional Fees: Teachers did not receive additional payments for extra duties such as supervision, exam duties, or educational preparation, impacting their overall income. They also stated that they could not receive

additional fees because they could not carry out courses, exercises, etc. in the school. Kilis said, *"We do not receive supervision fees, we do not receive additional tuition fees, we cannot receive stationery assistance, we only receive a gross salary."* Piktes27 recalled, *"Even though we have the duty of supervising students in recess four times a week, we cannot get paid. They constantly tell us 'you are a worker, you have to work 45 hours'."*

Promotion and Bonus Issues: Participants faced challenges in accessing promotions and bonuses, with some experiencing delays or denials in receiving these financial incentives. They stated that they could not receive a bank promotion until 2022, and then they received a one-time promotion of 1,500 TL in 2022 for the first time because they objected (Piktes27, Gayda, Mersin).

Tax and Deductions: The structure of their salaries led to participants entering higher tax brackets, resulting in larger deductions from their earnings. Piktes27 stated that since the gross salaries of teachers working within the scope of the PİKTES project are higher than permanent teachers, they enter the tax bracket earlier than they do, and for this reason, more deductions are made in their salaries towards the end of the year.

Ankara recalled, *"We do not receive bonuses in retirement for the time worked as a teacher within the scope of the PIKTES project. They give the payment for this period as 'severance pay' at the end of the contract.*

Ses stated that although they attended official ceremonies, they were not paid for those days. Piktes27 added that they do not benefit from the daily wage in case of a change of location and shared the following experience:

> *I was appointed from Adana to Gaziantep because my wife was there. Since it was stated in our employment contract that we would receive a subsistence allowance for non-provincial appointments, I applied for a subsistence allowance. Unfortunately, I was called to the provincial PIKTES authorized coordinator a week later and they put a petition in front of me. I was told that if I demanded subsistence allowance, my transfer outside the province would be cancelled. I had to sign that petition.*

Participants stated that the only additional payment (tediye) they could receive apart from their salaries was the payment paid to public workers. Mersin said, *"Since 2019, we receive disbursement 4 times a year. Currently, we have an additional income of 3,000 TL every 3 months, that is 12 thousand TL per year."* Ses stated that since 2019, although they were able to receive the disbursement paid, they could not receive the bonus paid to the workers twice a year.

Leave

Issues related to leaves, including annual leave, unpaid leave, and sick leave, were also prominent:

Annual Leave Entitlement: Despite being eligible for extended annual leave after five years of service, participants encountered difficulties in accessing their entitlements due to contractual constraints. The participants, who stated that they were subject to the Labor Law in terms of working provisions, stated that they were entitled to 21 days of annual leave for the first five years and 28 days afterward. However, the participants (Ankara, Piktes27, Kilis, Istanbul, Ses), who stated that they had been working for six years since the beginning of the project, stated that they could not benefit from their 28-day annual leave rights. Ankara explained the reason for this situation as *"...even though we have passed 5 years, they do not allow us to use 28 days because the contract is*

repeated. Because on the grounds that 5 years have not passed since the second contract we signed."

Unpaid Leave Restrictions: Participants faced limitations in taking unpaid leave, impacting their ability to balance work and personal commitments. Mersin stated that they are not entitled to unpaid leave. Regarding this situation, Kilis said, *"For example, I'm going to leave on maternity leave right now... but if I want to take unpaid leave after giving birth they won't pay my insurance."*

Sick Leave Challenges: Teachers encountered obstacles in obtaining sick leave benefits, including deductions from their salaries and restrictions on obtaining medical reports. Mersin, who stated that they had problems with the sick leave, expressed this problem as follows:

> *... when we receive a medical report, two days' wages are deducted from our salary. When we receive a medical report for more than two days, the fee for the two days is not paid in any way, we cannot get it. They say something like: 'Some people were taking a report to take a day off once in a while, and they abused it. That's why we are not given the right to get a medical report.'* Mersin

Service-Work

Within the service-work theme, participants highlighted various issues related to their working conditions, including working hours, service score, length of service, degree, level, and union membership.

Working Hours: All participants expressed concerns about the 45-hour weekly working period, citing instances of excessive workloads and extended hours, including weekends and holidays, to fulfill contractual obligations. Mersin said: *"They talked about that we will work 45 hours a week. In 2018-2019 academic*

year I worked 6 days in a week through the year without additional tuition fee. I was only off on Fridays, I even worked on weekends." İstanbul stated that they were appointed by opening online trainings and summer courses during the holidays in order to complete the 45-hour work week requirement. Gayda said that they were assigned to conduct field survey (e.g. detection of refugee children at school age, interviewing the families of children who do not attend school, etc.) during the summer holidays in the first years of the project. He also stated that they had to carry out field surveys on dangerous streets. Mersin added "*... as a result of objections to this situation, field surveys have started to be made on a voluntary basis for the last two years and have been paid for.*"

Service Score and Length: Participants noted challenges in receiving recognition for their service within the PIKTES Project when transitioning to permanent teaching positions, leading to discrepancies in career progression and salary increments. Regarding this situation, Ankara said,

> *When we switched to permanent teaching, the years we worked within the scope of PIKTES are ignored. It is shown as if we have never been teachers, as if we did not work in the Ministry of National Education. So, we can't use those years for promotions or salary increases.*

Union Membership: Participants discussed delays and hesitancy in union membership, with some expressing apprehension initially but eventually joining collectively, highlighting the importance of organizational support and solidarity. Regarding union membership, the participants stated that they learned that they had membership rights three years later and they started to become members of the union in 2019. The following excerpt shows the problems experienced by one of the participants in the process of becoming a union member and the effect of the organization:

We had the right to be a member of trade unions from the first day we took office, but we were not aware of it and we did not have an organization. Obviously, people (teachers) were hesitant. I was afraid to join the union. Then we got organized, everyone decided to become a member via WhatsApp groups. When we decided to become a member collectively, our reservations decreased. Mersin

Professional Identity

Participants voiced uncertainties regarding their professional identities within the context of the PIKTES Project, leading to ambiguity and frustration. All of the teachers who participated in the study stated that there is a great uncertainty about their professional identity. The definitions faced by the participants regarding their professional identities are given in Figure 4.
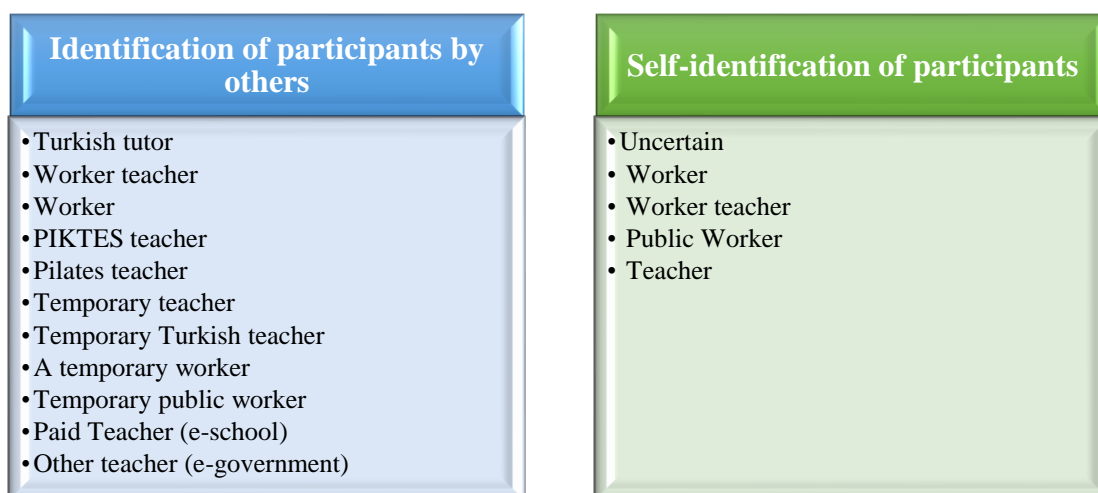
Identification of participants by others	Self-identification of participants
• Turkish tutor • Worker teacher • Worker • PIKTES teacher • Pilates teacher • Temporary teacher • Temporary Turkish teacher • A temporary worker • Temporary public worker • Paid Teacher (e-school) • Other teacher (e-government)	• Uncertain • Worker • Worker teacher • Public Worker • Teacher

Figure 4. *Definitions regarding the occupational identities of the participants*

Ambiguous Definitions: Teachers described varying and unclear definitions of their professional roles, including terms such as "*Turkish teacher", "worker teacher", worker, PIKTES teacher, "Pilates teacher", "temporary teacher", "temporary Turkish teacher", "temporary worker", "paid teacher",* and "*other teacher*" reflecting a lack of clarity and recognition in their professional status. The participants consider themselves to belong neither to the working class nor

to the middle classes to which teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education belong. Some of the participants' views on this situation are as follows.

...we were pronouncing them as temporary workers for the first 2-3 years. Later, when we rebelled, there were some changes with the union. Sometimes a Turkish teacher, sometimes a PIKTES teacher, sometimes a Pilates teacher, etc., a lot of things emerged. Piktes27

...we don't have a precise definition... I don't know who we are... when I first started this profession, I couldn't even explain the situation to my family. I signed a contract, but I'm not contracted. Are you a permanent teacher? No, I am not permanent, or paid teacher. I am nothing else. I am a temporary worker. I am a temporary Turkish teacher...Frankly, I see my profession as a laborer. I don't see myself as a teacher... I define myself as a public worker. Ses

Our profession has no legal basis. Therefore, the authorities use this uncertainty to their advantage. They treat us sometimes as paid, sometimes permanent, sometimes contracted teachers. İstanbul

Impact of Uncertainty: Since the participants do not have teacher ID cards, they cannot benefit from many advantages that permanent teachers enjoy (such as public transportation, discounted tickets in theatres, museums and cinemas, and use of teachers' houses). The absence of a clear professional identity hindered participants from accessing benefits and advantages associated with permanent teaching positions, exacerbating feelings of disidentification and marginalization.

The Effect of Problems Experienced in Terms of Personal Rights on Life
Participants discussed the adverse effects of the challenges they faced concerning personal rights on their lives. The themes reached regarding the effects of the problems experienced by the participants are given in Figure 5.
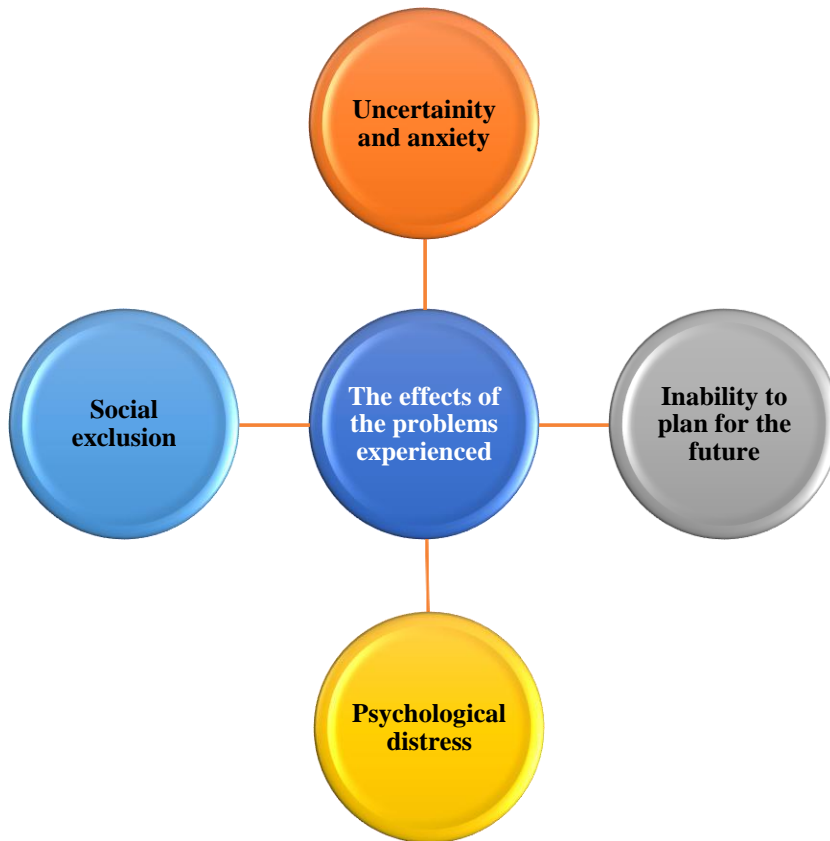
Figure 5. *The effects of the problems they experienced in terms of personal rights of the participants on their lives*

Uncertainty and Anxiety: The uncertainty surrounding their employment status and future prospects led to chronic anxiety and low motivation, impacting personal decisions such as marriage, homeownership, and financial planning. Piktes27 recalled *"Sometimes our elders tell us that there is no end to this job or just sit down and study for KPSS… an uncertainty is dragging us somewhere…we don't know where uncertainty is taking us.*

Inability to plan for the future: Participants also stated that they had difficulty explaining this temporary working situation to their friends and relatives, that they experienced similar problems with their colleagues working on the same project, and that they experienced uncertainty about the future. Expressing that

the uncertainty they are in affects their future plans negatively, Emine commented:

> *The uncertainty of what we will be after the project scares us to take a step towards the future. So, I can't take any steps towards the future. Let's say we want to buy a car, or a house, I can't get a loan. Because this project will be completed maybe in a year, maybe in 2 years. I don't dare. I see it myself. Even that, even for marriage, I always found my job as an excuse*. Emine

Psychological Distress: Participants reported experiencing psychological distress, including chronic anxiety and suicidal ideation, exacerbated by the precarious nature of their employment and uncertain future. The newly married Kilis explained this situation by saying, *"I just got married and I always worry about what I'm going to do if they stop the project... And I will have a new baby. I think about it… Therefore, I am very negatively affected by the uncertainty of the job and I am worried about the future."* Similar to Kilis, Piktes27, Emine and Mersin recalled their concerns for the future they experienced. Piktes27 stated that this situation lowered his motivation and caused him not to be able to study effectively in KPSS. Mersin explained the psychological state they were in during the first years of the project as follows: *"I think this is a process that can lead people to commit suicide, especially in the first years."*

Social Exclusion: Participants described feelings of exclusion and stigmatization within their professional and social circles, being perceived as part of the refugee problem and facing discrimination and marginalization as a result. The participants stated that they are perceived as part of the refugee problem and excluded by their colleagues and other individuals in the society (Emine, Ses, Mersin, Kilis, Gayda). Mersin explains this situation *"In the first*

years of the project, we were excluded by the administration, other teachers, parents and students, we were not accepted. In other words, we lived as refugees in our own country." As one respondent commented:

> *Teaching the refugee made us feel like refugees too… It even made us feel like we were responsible for all this (refugee crisis). When we entered the teachers' room, a misbehavior committed by a Syrian at school that day was tried to be attributed to us. This is the conjuncture, there is currently an anti-refugee, anti-migrant situation. As if we were encouraging their arrival in the country. I am not the cause or denominator of the refugee problem.* Ses

Solution Suggestions Regarding Personal Rights Issues

Participants were asked to propose solutions to the problems they experienced concerning their personal rights. The themes obtained from their responses are summarized in Figure 6:

The identified themes for solving personal rights issues include advocating for equal rights and seeking permanent employment. Gayda emphasized the importance of attaining the same rights as permanent teachers, a sentiment echoed by other participants. Gayda said *"Whatever personal rights permanent teachers have and whatever is given to them, we want the same."* Other participants also stated that they agreed with Gayda's statement. Kilis succinctly expressed the collective desire for permanent employment:

> *They do not need to make an extra effort for our personal rights. If they employ us permanently, we will have personal rights like permanent teachers. Short and concise, they don't need to do anything extra... We have been in this profession for 6 years and we have worked hard. I think we deserve this (permanent employment) very, very much.* Kilis

Role Ambiguity and Overburdening Workload

Participants reported significant challenges related to role ambiguity and an excessive workload. While their primary responsibility was teaching Turkish to Syrian students, teachers were frequently assigned additional duties that extended beyond their contractual obligations. Job descriptions were often vague, leading to a lack of clarity about expected roles and responsibilities. This ambiguity, coupled with the pressure to fulfill all assigned tasks, created a stressful and unsustainable work environment. Ses said "*…our duty is to teach Turkish to Syrian students within the scope of this project*" and added, "*but our job is not limited to this.*" Piktes27, Kilis, Ses, Gayda and Mersin stated that they had to do every task assigned by their school principal and/or school administration. Piktes27 stated that *"…They told us that you are responsible for doing all the work given to us."*

Teachers described being assigned tasks such as field surveys, administrative duties, and exam invigilation without additional compensation. Moreover, they were expected to fulfill the role of substitute teachers when regular staff were absent. Some participants even reported being assigned cleaning duties. These additional responsibilities not only detracted from their core teaching duties but also undermined their professional status. Ses expressed the uncertainty they experienced due to these two provisions in their contracts as follows:

> *...not fulfilling the orders given by the superiors is the reason for the termination of the contract. However, it is not clear what the responsibilities and duties in the contract are. So, there are no limitations or definitions of what orders are. The school management can choose the 'orders' in the contract as 'to fulfill the orders given by the supervisor' as they wish. In other words, if the administrator wishes, he can assign the task of supervising students during breaks or a task that the school principal or the administration has to do.*

Piktes27 states too that they are constantly reminded of the obligation to work 45 hours in a week while they are given tasks such as supervising students during breaks.
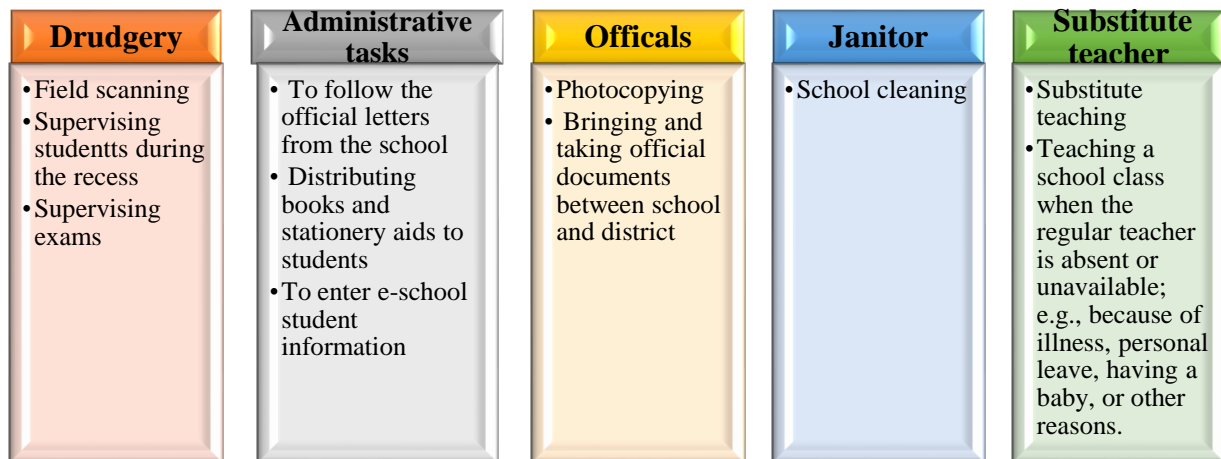
Drudgery	Administrative tasks	Officals	Janitor	Substitute teacher
•Field scanning •Supervising studentts during the recess •Supervising exams	• To follow the official letters from the school • Distributing books and stationery aids to students •To enter e-school student information	•Photocopying • Bringing and taking official documents between school and district	•School cleaning	•Substitute teaching •Teaching a school class when the regular teacher is absent or unavailable; e.g., because of illness, personal leave, having a baby, or other reasons.

Figure 6. *Tasks given to participants except for teaching Turkish*

Figure 6 illustrates the diverse range of tasks assigned to participants beyond their primary teaching responsibilities.

Participants listed the duties assigned to them regarding administrative affairs as follows: following the official letters received within the scope of the project, distributing books and stationery for foreign students, entering foreign student information into the e-school. Ses described the administrative tasks that were made to them as follows:

> *.. we go and bring the books from the warehouses... We distribute not only the books of the students we teach, but also the books of all Syrian students in the school. Actually, the school administration has to do this job... For example, I write the information that needs to be written to the e-school while the student is enrolled in the school.... We read and explain official documents, because they don't read them. We write down what the text means and give it to them.* Ses

Participants stated that they had to do the work and procedures such as sending official documents (Gayda and Kilis), recording incoming documents (Gayda and Kilis), photocopying (Kilis) that had to be done by the officers at the school. Kilis expressed this situation as follows:

> *For example, when some of my friends could not enter the classrooms, the principal assigned them a job at the copy machine…some teachers who were not assigned to the classrooms were employed as civil servants alongside the deputy principal. They work as deliverers or to save the documents on the computer.* Kilis

Kilis also stated that they were asked to wash the school and they were used as servants. Ses recalled:

> *…If our student does not come to school, the principal immediately asks, 'Are you sitting idle, teacher? He says, 'Substitute the lesson of a teacher who does not come to school'. If a permanent teacher has a medical certificate or is pregnant and wants to sit down and rest, we substitute them for their course as temporary teachers. Do we have the right to object to this situation? Of course not.*

Attitudes and behaviors of administrators

Participants reported a range of negative experiences with school administrators, including arbitrary practices, threats, and harassment. These behaviors significantly impacted the teachers' job satisfaction and overall well-being. Common complaints included excessive workloads, unclear job expectations, and a lack of support from administrators.

For instance, several participants described instances of verbal abuse and threats from school principals. As one participant, Kilis, stated, *"The school principal was saying, 'I will call Ankara and I will fire you. You are already subordinate to me. I am your employer, I will terminate your contract."* Such experiences created a climate of fear and intimidation among teachers.

Additionally, participants reported unrealistic workload expectations and arbitrary task assignments. For example, Piktes27 mentioned being pressured to work beyond contracted hours and to undertake non-teaching duties such as student supervision. These excessive demands contributed to job stress and decreased morale.

Business Responsibility

Participants were asked about their responsibilities within the scope of the project. Mersin indicated that they are accountable to managers at all levels, ranging from the deputy principal of the school to the Minister of National Education.

Audit

Participants were asked what kind of audit process they are subject to regarding their work and transactions. Kilis mentioned that the Ministry of National Education's Lifelong Learning Monitoring and Supervision Department visited her classroom for inspection. However, only students were questioned during this inspection.

Curricula, Textbooks and Learning Materials

Participants were asked about the curricula and textbooks used, as well as how these materials were prepared. Initially, participants (Gayda, Mersin, Kilis) stated that they were not provided with any formal curriculum during the project's early years. Consequently, they relied on lesson plans written by project teachers, the official primary school curriculum, or plans from public education centers for teaching Turkish to foreigners.

In 2019 (MoNE Circular No. 2019/15)[3], annual framework plans for compliance classes were introduced. Ankara highlighted the lack of initial

teaching plans, leading to chaotic teaching practices based on school administrators' initiatives. However, current arrangements have improved, although issues persist in communicating and delivering annual work plans prepared by the project center to teachers.

Initially, participants used resource books from the Yunus Emre Institute for teaching Turkish to foreigners (Kilis, Mersin, Ankara). However, Kilis noted that these books were more suitable for university students than their intended audience. Subsequently, textbooks suitable for primary, secondary, and high school levels were developed based on teachers' feedback, consolidated into a single book titled 'I'm Learning Turkish.' Additionally, the project office now prepares all textbooks and storybooks supporting Turkish teaching, such as the 'Salih Story Set' (URL-4). Gayda stated that they use the textbooks used in public schools in other courses (mathematics, life studies, etc.) other than Turkish. Despite these improvements, participants (Ankara, Kilis, Gayda, Mersin) reported delays in receiving textbooks after the start of education. Ankara stated that although the project started for Syrian students, currently Afghan, Iraqi and Turkmen students are also included in the project. Since the needs of each child are different, textbooks cannot meet the needs of all children. The following quote exemplifies this situation:

> *For example, Turkmen students do not have a language barrier. They often have literacy problems. However, the prepared books are only intended for the integration of Syrian students. Therefore, it starts from A1 level and continues up to B2 level. However, since Turkmen students do not have problems with Turkish, I cannot use those books much.* Ankara.

Student Engagement and Integration

Teachers were asked about their relationships with refugee students. Participants noted that these relationships were influenced by students' characteristics, which varied from the project's inception to the present. According to the participants, the common features of the student profile they encountered when the project first started are as follows: they have experienced the war/the direct effects of war, are traumatic, introverted, have difficulty in communicating, are excluded, have no experience at school, are completely unfamiliar with Turkish, are absent from school, and are prone to violence. The common features of the student profile their current classrooms are as follows: exposed to the indirect effects of war, not traumatic, accepted, knows Turkish to a certain extent/interested in learning, and is extrovert. Nonetheless, school dropout rates remain high, driven by cultural and economic reasons. Sample excerpts from participants' experiences illustrate the evolving student profiles and the challenges faced in teaching and integrating them into the education system.

Sample excerpts from the participants' experiences with the students from the beginning of the project to the present are presented below:

> *The first student body we encountered was very difficult. In other words, the children had experienced severe traumas. They had huge trust issues. They were complete strangers to the country. We couldn't do anything about teaching Turkish with them for almost four or five months... They were ostracized by their friends. Before this project started, there were only one or two Syrians in the classrooms and there were students sitting in the row without being asked their names throughout the year... These children did not come to school for 15-20 days. We first tried to establish a relationship of trust with those students. The violent behaviors, games and reactions of the children were very high.* Ankara

We start all over again, with the most basic things. Because children forget what they have learned. because they never encounter what they learned at school at home or on the street. His neighbors also speak Arabic, and the market he goes to is an Arab market. It is easier to go and speak Arabic with Turkish people instead of having language problems. For this reason, they will encounter Turkish, the only place where they will learn Turkish is school...Ses

Communication with parents

The participants were asked about their relationship and communication with parents. As seen in Figure 7, three different themes were reached regarding communication with parents. These are communication with parents, access to parents, and parent support.

Communication with Parents	Reaching the Parent	Parent Support
• Translator • Student	• Telephone • Face to face • Social media	• Prejudice • Language barrier • Negative attitude towards school • Lack of field knowledge • Violence • Gender roles regarding their children

Figure 7. *Problems in communication with parents*

Two sub-elements related to communication with parents were identified. These are translators and students. Participants stated that interpreters were provided in schools by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in the past. However, these interpreters were not assigned later, leading to communication between parents and teachers being facilitated through students who know Turkish and whom the teacher trusts. Ses expressed this situation as follows:

> *...in the past, there were three to five volunteer Syrian teachers at the schools who worked as interpreters. However, they are no longer present. Students are now the only individuals who assist us in communicating with parents. We invite a student whom we know and trust as an interpreter to facilitate communication with the parents.*

Regarding the theme of reaching the parent, three sub-themes were identified: telephone, face-to-face, and social media. Participants highlighted significant challenges in accessing and communicating with parents. They noted that parents often do not answer phone calls and frequently change their contact numbers. Moreover, they expressed difficulty in communicating face-to-face with parents due to irregular attendance at school. Additionally, some parents actively avoid communication through social media platforms, making it challenging for teachers to establish contact. Ses emphasized this difficulty, stating: *'We can't find parents to communicate with. Parents rarely visit the school, and many do not respond to phone calls. For instance, when attempting to inquire about a student's absence, reaching the parents can be extremely challenging...''*

Regarding the parent support theme, several sub-themes emerged: prejudice, language barrier, negative attitude towards school, lack of subject knowledge, violence, and adherence to traditional gender roles. Participants, including Ankara, Ses, Kilis, Mersin, and Gayda, highlighted the considerable difficulty they face in gathering parental support. They noted that parents often have prejudices against the school, primarily due to language barriers and insufficient understanding of the curriculum. Additionally, parents' negative attitudes towards formal education and their perception of school as a temporary obligation rather than a long-term investment hinder their support. Emine said, *"The father of one of my students wants to help his child with his lessons, but he cannot do it because he does not speak Turkish."* Participants stated that parents

have a negative attitude towards school and that they send their children to school for a certain period of time due to necessity. Generally, when children reach a certain age (13-14), girls are not sent to school because they are of marriageable age, and boys because they have to work. Ankara elaborated on this cultural perspective:

> *There is a strong emphasis on traditional gender roles among parents, where girls are expected to marry by the age of 13-14, and boys are expected to contribute to the family's economy. As a result, parents view schooling as a brief childhood ritual rather than a pathway to future opportunities. This cultural mindset significantly affects parental support for education.* Ankara

Discussions and Conclusions

There are three different reasons why the participants agreed to work as teachers in this project: economic (i.e. working conditions in the private sector, not being appointed as a permanent teacher, job opportunity, need and obligation to work and advantages of working within the scope of the project), affective (i.e. social pressure to work in a paid job, being enthusiastic) and competence factors (i.e. having prior knowledge about the project, having experience in teaching Turkish and meeting the job application and settlement conditions within the scope of the project). The findings show that most of the participants chose PIKTES Project teaching due to financial concerns and they did not know the job description of this profession. Teaching is a profession that demands conscious choice and entails high levels of social responsibility (Çelikten, Şanal & Yeni, 2005; Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara & Memiş, 2010). Viewing teaching solely as a job opportunity driven by financial concerns can detrimentally impact both the prestige of the teaching profession and the academic success of learners.

In Türkiye, there are approximately half a million teachers who graduated from education faculties but were not appointed (URL-5). Despite the recent increase in private schools, public schools remain the largest work sector and the primary choice for teachers. The lack of coherent planning between universities and the Ministry of National Education regarding teacher training, coupled with populist policies in university establishment, has resulted in a surplus of unemployed individuals seeking precarious employment under challenging conditions. The establishment of universities for economic and political motives has drawn criticism from scholars and politicians alike (Kaynar & Parlak, 2005; Demirer, Duran, & Orhangazi, 2000). Kaynar and Parlak (2005) state that the unplanned and unprepared university establishment process has become a bad tradition. Similarly, Demirer, Duran, and Orhangazi (2000) emphasized that universities were opened according to the political needs of the period rather than academic requirements, and the quality of universities decreased. Mehmet Salih Yıldırım, a parliament member, emphasized the need to prioritize rational and scientific criteria over populist policies in opening new educational institutions (Meclis Tutanakları, 1997).

The findings of this research underscore the significance of the PIKTES Project as a vital employment opportunity for many teacher candidates, despite the challenges faced by teachers within the project. While some teachers opted to join the project individually, others did so due to economic and social pressures. Participants highlighted economic struggles, lack of permanent appointments, and societal pressure to secure paid employment as motivating factors. To mitigate financial constraints, many teachers resort to taking on additional precarious work, viewing the PIKTES project as a viable job opportunity.

Teachers expressed discomfort with the uncertainties surrounding their duties, responsibilities, and arbitrary administrative practices within the project. This

uncertainty stems from a lack of clarity regarding the legislative framework governing their recruitment. The reliance on eight different legal documents for teachers' financial and personal rights leads to confusion and potential exploitation. While standard practice dictates resolving conflicts in favor of the employee when multiple legal bases exist, this research found that institutional and administrative interests often override teachers' rights. Ambiguous job descriptions and uncertain working conditions contribute to an environment where teachers face coercion, harassment, and threats from school principals. Friedman (1997) states that *"clearly defined roles and structures correspond to ambiguous psychological boundaries that allow practitioners to concentrate on their tasks and protect them from being overwhelmed"* (Hirschhorn, 1990, as cited in Friedman, 1997, p.362). Policies, bureaucratic rules, procedures, and regulations are principally designed to avoid uncertainty (Ponticell, 2003). The reason for this problem can be explained by the fact that the procedures and principles of selecting and assigning managers are quite problematic in Türkiye. In other words, managers are not determined according to objective criteria, they are generally chosen according to political motives. As a result of this, the regulation of assigning administrators to educational institutions is constantly being changed due to the debates (URL-6).

According to the findings, the most important professional problem experienced by the teachers working within the scope of the PIKTES Project is the unclear job descriptions and insecure working conditions. Because of this uncertainty, school principals want them to do things that are not included in their job descriptions by coercion, harassment and threatening. Within the scope of the research, the following four themes regarding the problems experienced by PIKTES teachers were reached: employment (assurance, status and legislation), financial rights (salary, additional course, preparation allowance for education, in-school course, exercise etc., shift fee, exam duties, bank promotion,

subsistence, bonus, disbursement, benefits, ceremonies, tax bracket and retirement), leaves (annual leave, unpaid leave and health leave), and service-work (times of work, service points, length of service, degree and level, union membership).

All teachers working within the scope of the project graduated from education faculties as teachers. For this reason, within the scope of this research, different from the legal definitions, the expression "*teachers working within the scope of the project*" was preferred and these people were described as teachers.

One of the basic inputs of the market economy inherent in capitalism is the commodification of the labor of workers who have no existence other than selling their body power (Marx, 2011). In the process of commodification of labor, capital tends to dominate the body, time and power of the worker by ignoring the human, social and holistic side of the worker in order to increase productivity. Capital, which sees labor as a cog in the machine in the Fordist production process, has developed continuous backup policies by dividing labor into parts in the neoliberal process. Employment policies that allowed for the collective unity of labor under one roof were abandoned and flexible and precarious employment policies that differ in terms of form, duration, wages and continuity were developed (Gorz, 2001). In a short period of time, this type of employment has rapidly become widespread in all types of services, including public services. The fact that we are faced with more than one type of employment (permanent, contracted, paid) in the employment of teachers in the field of education in Türkiye today is a reflection of these policies. Another dimension of neoliberal policies in the field of education is the redefinition of teacher identity (Kiraz & Kurul, 2018). The transformation of teachers' understanding of their profession, their sense of self, and their understanding of students, education and society is closely related to employment policies (Ünal,

2005). An important step in the reduction of the teaching profession to technical work in the classroom by dismantling its role as an intellectual and pioneer that transcends the boundaries of the school and penetrates all areas of society is the abolition of guaranteed employment and the expansion of flexible and precarious employment types.

The precarious employment of teachers under the PIKTES project in the form of annual contracts is directly related to neoliberal education policies and employment approach. The study identified four primary themes regarding the challenges faced by PIKTES teachers: employment assurance and legislation, financial rights, leave entitlements, and service-related issues. Despite being qualified teachers, individuals within the PIKTES project are subject to non-educational tasks without additional compensation, reflecting a vulnerable employment status susceptible to exploitation. The lack of sick leave, paid annual leave, and recognition of working time exacerbates disparities between PIKTES teachers and their permanently employed counterparts. That is PIKTES teachers are employed in a precarious and flexible way. Although they started to work with a higher salary than the permanent teachers at the beginning of the project, the salaries of the PIKTES teachers were not increased. In the face of inflation in Türkiye, besides the decrease in their salaries in a short time, they cannot benefit from any of the additional payments paid to the permanent teachers. In addition, teachers working within the scope of the project, who are deprived of many financial rights due to their worker status, are vulnerable to labor exploitation.

Another finding is that teachers working within the scope of the project do not have the right to sick leave or paid annual leave. Working time of PIKTES teachers within the scope of the project is also not counted as a teaching profession. This situation faced by PIKTES teachers, whose professional status

is not fully specified, results in the fact that they cannot benefit from the same rights as teachers who do the same job in schools. These findings can be interpreted as teachers working within the scope of the PIKTES Project comply with the definition of precariat defined by Standing (2011). Standing (2011), the defining characteristics of the precariat are outlined as follows: their career paths lack clear progression, they lack the protection of unions or collective bargaining, many are disconnected from their employers, they have uncertain coworker relationships, unreliable income, and lack social status, financial security, and benefits typically associated with the middle class.

Furthermore, teachers within the PIKTES project face implicit pressure to overextend themselves to safeguard their positions, with administrators leveraging their temporary status as a means of coercion. In another saying, school administrators use the temporary status of teachers working within the scope of the project as a threat (e.g. we can terminate your contract), forcing teachers to work in jobs not included in their job descriptions. The findings show that although the teachers working within the scope of the project are obliged to teach Turkish to foreign students, due to the provisions of "working 45 hours a week" and "fulfilling other duties and responsibilities given by their managers" in their contracts, they also perform many duties and responsibilities such as chores, administrative affairs, civil servants, servants and substitute teachers. Every job/task that is made to the teachers working within the scope of the project, even though it is not related to the teaching profession, is drudgery. Any unpaid work is forced labor. Forced labor and forced labor are prohibited and criminal under national and international law (Ünlütürk-Ulutaş & Ulutaş, 2015). However, the provisions of the contract to work for 45 hours and to perform other tasks given by their superiors are interpreted broadly and arbitrarily by school and MONE administrators.

In terms of workload, temporary position teachers working within the scope of PIKTES are expected to work an average of 45 hours a week during the term, while teachers in permanent positions are expected to work a maximum of 30 hours. The contractual obligations to work 45 hours per week and fulfill other managerial directives are interpreted broadly and arbitrarily, resulting in excessive workloads comparable to those documented in previous studies (Şahin, 2008; Bayram, 2009).

In addition to heavy workloads, financial instability and lack of job security, other factors contributing to increased insecurity experienced by teachers participating in the PIKTES Project include unclear expectations and guidelines from project leaders, limited resources and support for professional development, and lack of recognition and appreciation for their efforts. These factors can exacerbate feelings of insecurity and make it difficult for teachers to fully fulfill their role in the project. Sverke et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of research on precariousness and found that job insecurity negatively affects employees' physical and psychological health, their attitudes towards work and the organization, and their relationships with their organizations.

Another significant problem expressed by participants is the deprivation of their financial rights. Despite opting to participate in the PIKTES Project due to perceived better economic conditions compared to appointed teachers, participants have experienced a considerable decrease in their incomes over the years. Teachers within the project cited excessive demands from principals, heavy workloads, insufficient income, and lack of clear job descriptions as factors contributing to burnout. While the teaching profession aims to fulfill educational responsibilities with a high level of social obligation, teachers within the PIKTES Project often find themselves without the entitlements associated with their professional status (Atay, 2009). In Türkiye, most teachers

work as public servants in public schools under the Civil Servants Law No. 657 (DMK abbreviation in Turkish), granting them rights such as professional, financial, protection against third parties, and social rights.

Moreover, all participants highlighted the low value and status attributed to teachers within the PIKTES Project by society. The professional factors determining the status of the teaching profession, such as personal rights, qualification, advancement opportunities, and salary, are largely unmet for teachers within the project (Ünsal, 2018).   Unfortunately, these teachers are deprived of many professional rights outlined in the DMK, such as the right to security and service, promotion, leave entitlements, benefits from public institutions, and the right to unionize. Although the right of teachers to form a union was defined in the DMK, teachers working within the scope of the PIKTES Project could not benefit from this right when they first started their profession, they acquired this right later.

The findings reveal that teachers working within the context of the project encounter frustration due to their professional identities not being accepted by the society and school community. Participants face confusion surrounding their professional identity, being labeled with various titles such as "Turkish teacher", "worker teacher", "worker", "PIKTES teacher", "Pilates teacher" (the letters of PIKTES resemble Pilates, this word is used, there is no analogy with the work of Pilates teachers), "temporary teacher", "temporary Turkish teacher", "temporary worker", and/or "paid teacher".These labels contribute to professional identity confusion among teachers as they are constantly referred to with different designations, leading to unclear roles and responsibilities within the education system.

Furthermore, being identified as a "temporary teacher" or "worker teacher" may suggest lower status or less permanence in their position, which can negatively impact their sense of belonging to the profession and their self-esteem. The lack of a distinct professional identity poses a significant barrier for participants in accessing benefits associated with permanent teaching positions within the PIKTES Project, amplifying feelings of disidentification and marginalization. Teachers grapple with uncertainties regarding their professional roles, contending with ambiguous labels such as "temporary worker", "PIKTES teacher", and "paid teacher. This lack of recognition and status exacerbates job stress and insecurity (Coetzer & Rothmann 2007; De Bruin & Taylor 2006).

As Demir et al. (2023) assert, this situation detrimentally affects the personal and social development dimension of the teaching profession, which is crucial in the process of establishing a professional identity. Consequently, participants in the PIKTES Project are subjected to a process of dehumanization and oppression, as articulated by Freire (1970). The absence of a clear professional identity not only hinders their access to benefits but also reinforces the perception that they are being treated as objects rather than respected professionals. This situation may further increase their feelings of disempowerment and exclusion within the education system.

The uncertain and temporary nature of the professional identities of teachers working in the PIKTES Project prevents them from gaining the social recognition and status necessary to access permanent teaching positions. This lack of recognition not only increases feelings of disidentification and exclusion, but can also increase job stress and insecurity. Participants in the PIKTES Project find themselves ensnared in a state of "symbolic violence" where their professional identity is consistently undermined and devalued. This not only obstructs their access to social benefits and stability but perpetuates a

cycle of disempowerment and marginalization within the education system, as expounded by Žižek (2008).

As highlighted by Lasky (2005), the process of identity formation in the teaching profession is intertwined with how teachers define themselves and how others define them. When teachers are viewed as mere technical staff disconnected from their role as educators, negative concepts may be associated with them, hindering the development of their professional identity. Freire (2019) posits that a pedagogical approach devoid of essential qualities and reduced to pure technicality is unrealistic. Teachers are not merely instructors but intellectuals who embody qualities such as humility, love, courage, tolerance, and wisdom. They actively participate in the learning process alongside their students, constantly evolving and growing.

According to the literature, a teacher's identity is a complex synthesis of their personal and professional identities. The development of identity linked to the teaching profession is dynamic, active, and multifaceted. It is dynamic because as the demands in education shift in temporal and spatial dimensions, so do the expectations from teachers who are pivotal in delivering education. It is active because teacher identity is a sphere of contemplation and reconstruction. It is multifaceted because it is continuously evolving in interaction with both the teacher's own perception of their identity as an individual and how they are perceived socially. As Demir et al. (2023) state, variables such as professional knowledge and skills, classroom behaviors, professional beliefs, etc. are also involved in teacher identity development. All these processes determine the direction of the development of teaching identity. The combination and competition of ideals and expectations characterize the complex procedure of integrating personal and professional expectations (Britzman, 1991; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Danielewicz, 2001). Learning to be a teacher requires

one to develop a teacher identity (Alsup, 2008). For refugee teachers, this intersectionality is even more intricate, leading to liminal identities where being a teacher and a refugee becomes contested yet crucial for political agency and subjectivity (Keser Ozmantar, Cin, & Mkwananzi, 2023).

Temporary workers experience more job insecurity than permanent workers (Rigotti, De Cuyper, De Witte, et al., 2009). Knight (2021), in his article on the problems of temporary teachers, stated that temporary teachers work insecurely even though they do the same job as permanent teachers. The findings of the study hope that it will be an advantage for the participants to become teachers working within the scope of the project in order to move into permanent employment. However, as one participant in Knight's (2021) study stated, "temporary teachers are valuable but not considered worthy of permanent employment" and yet they "work in the same way as permanent teachers". The value and status of the teacher in society is one of the most important factors affecting educational outcomes. Increasing the status of teacher can directly increase the performance of students (Bozbayındır, 2019), so the status of the teaching profession should be given importance and efforts should be made to improve this status (Dolton, Marcenaro, Vries & She, 2018).

Findings revealed that these challenges led to a sense of uncertainty in teachers working within the PIKTES Project, as they had to constantly adapt and negotiate their roles and responsibilities in order to manage the complex dynamics of their professional identities. Some teachers working within the scope of the project reported that they felt tension with permanent teachers about their employment. Polat (2013)'s research results are consistent with this finding. According to her, school administrators and permanent teachers see paid teachers as 'temporary', school administrators can give more jobs to paid teachers. In addition, permanent teachers do not communicate adequately with paid teachers and they want these teachers to take on more responsibilities.

Based on the findings, it can be said that teachers working within the scope of the PIKTES Project experience a struggle for symbolic capital and recognition in the field of education. This struggle is evident in their constant need to determine their position within the project and negotiate to obtain their employee rights, as well as the tensions they feel with permanent/appointed teachers who have more established positions and power in the education system.

Temporary or contract employment is associated with greater job insecurity and greater risk. In other words, this insecurity has negative effects on psychological well-being, as those who are employed temporarily or on a contract basis know the expiry date of their jobs in advance (Shakir & Zia, 2014). As stated by the participants, the uncertainties and the feeling of being underestimated by the stakeholders are very demoralizing and negatively affect the daily lives of the teachers working within the scope of the project. In other words, they are not able to plan for the future due to these uncertainties, they also experience psychological problems, are excluded and are seen as a part of the refugee problem. Shakir and Zia (2014) stated in their study that teachers who are appointed on a temporary or contract basis always work under stress due to their temporary situation, and the stress is permanent even though their jobs are temporary. It can be concluded that the temporary and contractual employment of teachers in this project creates a feeling of insecurity and marginalization. This insecurity affects not only their daily lives but also their general well-being and social status. Lack of job security and constant reminders of their temporary status further reinforce their exclusion from mainstream society.

Participants expressed frustration with the inadequacy of teaching materials initially provided for the project, which were deemed unsuitable for student levels. This situation aligns with Freire's concept of the 'banking' model of

education, where teachers are positioned as knowledge transmitters and students as passive recipients. As Güngör and Şenel (2018) argue, a lack of appropriate curricula and instructional materials hinders effective teaching and learning for foreign students. While access to official MoNE materials has improved, concerns persist regarding their effectiveness and suitability. These challenges highlight the systemic barriers faced by teachers in providing quality education to refugee students.

There are studies in the literature that language is an important part of public life and is a means of getting appropriate education, and that learning a new language not only improves individuals' global awareness skills, but also provides connections between the host culture and society (Arendt, Bolvig, Foged et al., 2020; Conteh, 2015; Hesser, 2006). Language plays a particularly important role in the process of individual and social integration (Hesser, 2006). Although language teaching is a priority issue for the integration of refugees and school-age children into the host culture, the findings indicate changes in the student profile over time, with Syrians transitioning from a minority to a majority status in some provinces, diminishing their motivation to learn Turkish. Participants claimed that over time, there have been notable changes in the student profiles, as initially, students experienced war trauma, were introverted, lacked communication skills, and had little knowledge of the Turkish language. This finding can be interpreted as follows: Syrians, who thought that they came to Türkiye temporarily in the first years, realized that they were permanent as a result of the politics over the years. Therefore, they have started to adopt Türkiye, and even a significant number of Syrians have acquired Turkish citizenship and continue to do so. Since most of the primary school children were born in Türkiye, they ceased to be a minority in some provinces and did not feel the need to learn Turkish. This shift poses challenges

to the project's integration goals, as students no longer perceive a need to learn Turkish outside of school.

Teachers reported significant challenges in communicating with parents due to their working conditions. While children indirectly experienced the war's impact, their parents faced its direct consequences, including forced migration and social exclusion. Parents' priorities centered on survival, hindering their ability to learn Turkish and support their children's education due to cultural and economic factors. Teachers sought equal rights and staffing benefits similar to permanent teachers.

Language proficiency is a critical factor influencing access to education, employment, and social participation. While language skills alone do not guarantee integration, a lack of proficiency can hinder social inclusion and economic opportunities (Esser, 2006). Teachers play a pivotal role in helping refugees acquire language skills, thereby facilitating their integration into host societies. Enhancing the professional status of teachers involved in language instruction is essential for improving educational outcomes and broader societal integration. Early childhood education can accelerate language acquisition and smooth the transition into formal schooling for refugee children.

Although there is no scientific consensus on a specific language proficiency threshold for integration, the ability to communicate in the host language is crucial for refugees to understand societal norms and values. Teachers working with refugee populations face multifaceted challenges, including financial disparities, professional recognition issues, limited access to suitable teaching materials, and communication barriers with parents. Addressing these challenges and improving teacher working conditions are essential for successful refugee integration. Future research should explore these issues

through quantitative surveys or interviews with project officials to inform policy recommendations.

Notes

[1] An earlier version of the study was presented orally at the EJER Congress 2022 and its brief summary was published.
[2] These are the official figures announced by the Directorate of Migration Management as of 28.04.2022.
[3] https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/www/uyum-siniflari-icin-cerceve-yillik-plan/icerik/1019

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