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In Service Training of ELT Teachers in Turkey Between 1998-2005

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to examine and describe the in-service training (INSET) programs which were organized by the Ministry of Education for English language teachers (ELT teachers) in Turkey, during the 1998-2005 academic years. 186 teachers and 5 instructors who participated in ELT INSET programs from 2003 to 2005 were randomly selected as samples. The data for the study were obtained by means of interviews and questionnaires. As a result of the study, it has been determined that the number and the content of the INSET programs for ELT teachers are insufficient. At the end of the study, it was concluded that INSET should be practised widely all over the country. All teachers should take part in INSET programs periodically. Each school should perform a needs analysis for its teachers and find out the necessary INSET topics and inform the Ministry of Education. The courses should be practice-based.

Key Words: In-service training, ELT teachers.

Özet. Bu araştırmanın amacı 1998-2005 yılları arasında Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından İngilizce öğretmenleri için düzenlenmiş olan hizmet içi eğitim (HİE) programlarını incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklerini 2003-2005 yıllarında bu eğitime katılmış ve rasgele örnekleme yöntemi ile

seçilmiş 186 öğretmen ve bu eğitim programlarında öğretici olarak görev almış 5 uzman eğitmen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verileri görüşme ve anket teknikleri kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda, İngilizce öğretmenleri için düzenlenen HİE programlarının sayı ve içerik olarak tatmin edici düzeyde olmadığı saptanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonunda hizmet içi eğitim programlarını iyileştirmek için tüm öğretmenlerin düzenli aralıklarla hizmet içi eğitimden geçirilmeleri ve bu eğitimler öncesinde öğretmenlere ihtiyaç analizi yapılması gereği vurgulanmıştır. Bunun yanısıra hizmet içi eğitimlerin ölçme değerlendirme süreçlerinin yeniden yapılandırılması önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizmet içi eğitim, İngilizce öğretmenleri.

1. Introduction

It is accepted that human resources have an important role in using and spreading new technologies. In-service training (INSET), which is defined as “all kinds of educational activities that meet the needs of the work force to improve and develop in the professional field.” (Garmston, 1998, 60), has an important place in human resource education. No matter which organization it is, human resource education is necessary for the following reasons;

- School education is not sufficient for finding out and leading all skills of individuals.
- It is possible to encounter problems which cannot be overcome only by means of school education.
- Cultural, social and economic patterns of societies constantly change and improve. It is a must to keep up with these changes.
- Scientific and technological developments require acquiring new skills (Slater, 1998, 382-386)

INSET is concerned with detailed work such as: to find out the INSET needs of staff, to provide certain programs according to these need analyses and to practise the curriculum to develop the knowledge and the ability of the participants and evaluate the programs and participants' attitudes for the improvement of INSET.

It is almost impossible to create the desired efficiency in the education system without effective teachers who can adapt themselves to recent developments. INSET for the new teachers of the 21st century means to

comprehend and do better jobs, as roles and responsibilities in today's education systems which are gradually changing are sometimes not sufficient. Teachers need to be supported by INSET in order to serve as more hardworking and more developed people in their fields. As changes in science, society, the school system, the teachers' field of interest and new developments in the field of teaching methods and technology are inevitable, the best way of improving their knowledge for teachers is INSET.

2. The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine and describe the INSET programs which were organized by the Ministry of Education for English language (ELT) teachers in Turkey during the 1998-2005 academic years. This study will present;

1. the number of INSET activities for ELT teachers which were conducted throughout Turkey between 2003-2005,
2. the views of the ELT teachers who participated in the INSET program between 2003-2005, with the aim of displaying whether INSET has helped them to develop professionally,
3. the views of the instructors who participated in the INSET program between 2003-2005.

3. Method

In this study, 186 teachers and 5 instructors who participated in ELT INSET programs between 2003-2005 were selected as samples. For the purpose of data collection, a questionnaire and an interview question list were used. They were developed by the researcher based on the related empirical and theoretical review of the literature. First of all 5 of the instructors who taught on these courses were interviewed. The instructors answered 10 questions in the list. When necessary they gave some explanations. Then 186 teachers were asked to express their ideas on 18 statements on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= undecided, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree). The data of the present study were collected in May 2005. The questionnaires were sent to the participating teachers' addresses via mail and were gathered in the same way. 186 questionnaires were sent and 150 of them were returned. The return percentage was 80.6%. The interviews with the instructors were held in June 2005 for two hours.

4. Findings of The Study

The findings of the study are presented in three parts. In the first part numerical information is given about the INSET programs in Turkey. Next, the results of the interviews held with the instructors are given. Finally, the teachers' opinions about the INSET programs are presented.

4.1. Number of INSET Programs in Turkey

At the beginning of the study, the total number of INSET programs for teachers and total number of INSET programs for ELT teachers all around Turkey were investigated in order to comment better about the ELT INSET programs. The Ministry of Education employs approximately 500,000 teachers (www.meb.gov.tr). In seven years (1998-2005) it only carried out 3201 INSET programs. Among these 500,000 teachers there are approximately 150,000 ELT teachers and for them only 122 INSET programs were realized. In table 1 the number of INSET and ELT INSET programs are given throughout these years.

Table 1. Number of INSET and ELT Inset Programs

YEAR	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Number of INSET	455	380	404	404	259	354	453	495
Total number of ELT INSET	13	14	9	13	13	17	21	22
Percentage of ELT INSET	2,85	3,68	2,22	3,25	5,01	4,80	4,63	4,44

Considering the total number of INSET programs, the percentage of the programs for ELT teachers is really insufficient. It is thought that the main reasons for this are financial reasons and the insufficient number of INSET trainers.

4.2. Results of the Interviews with the INSET Instructors

As a result of the interviews held with five of the ELT INSET program instructors the following points are reported to diminish the effectiveness of the programs:

- The Ministry of Education and The National Education Head Office in cities decide together who will teach on the courses.

- The periods between the courses are not definite. The Ministry decides where and when to run a program.
- The length of the courses and the number of the participants are determined by the Ministry of Education.
- Needs analysis is not carried out before the courses.
- The curricula of the courses are nearly the same and they are dictated by the Ministry.
- Not only the academic levels of the teachers but also the type of schools (high schools, Anatolian high schools, vocational high schools) they come from are different. So this leads to some difficulties concerning teaching methods and course content.
- Since the number of the participant teachers is high, some difficulties arise in classroom interaction and some of the participants are unwilling.
- The instructors indicated that they generally use “lecture” and “question –answer” techniques on the courses.
- There were a few attempts to establish cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the ELT Departments of the Education Faculties at the Universities. Some help could have been sought from academicians who follow the latest developments in the fields of knowledge and technology.

As can be seen, INSET programs are carried out in a centralized fashion and the needs of the participant teachers are not taken into consideration.

4.3. Teachers’ Attitudes about INSET Programs

The questions which aim to describe the teachers’ attitudes about INSET programs and the frequency and percentage of teachers’ answers are as follows:

In table 2, there are four statements about the aims of the INSET programs. 54.7% of the participants thought that they were informed about the aims of the program at the beginning of the INSET course. 58.6% declared that the aims of the program were suitable for their educational needs but 33% of them thought that the aims were not suitable for their needs. Answers to the first two statements are parallel to each other. This could be because the participants are from different schools and they have different backgrounds

and professional levels. As their educational needs are different, their satisfaction with the program and their attitudes and perceptions change. The ones who found the aims of the program suitable declared positive attitudes towards the consistency of learning and teaching activities. 46.7% of the participants said that the topics of the course were not given in the way that they needed and 16.5% were undecided about the statement. This can also be explained in the same way by the differering backgrounds of participant teachers. During the organization of INSET programs a diagnostic evaluation should be made to classify teachers into groups. In this way the different opinions about the aims of the program will be minimized.

Table 2. Aims of INSET Programs

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1) I have been informed about the aims of the program at the beginning.	37	24,7	45	30	19	12,7	17	11,3	32	21,3
2) The aims of the program are suitable for my educational needs	35	23,3	53	35,3	11	7,3	31	20,7	20	13,3
3) The learning and teaching activities are consistent with the aims of the program	39	26	47	31,3	9	6	28	18,7	27	18
4) The subjects of the program were taught in the way that I need	25	16,7	31	20,7	24	16	49	32,7	21	14

The main purpose of INSET is to provide success and improvement in the individuals' profession. If the organized INSET programs address the needs of the participants, the necessary knowledge, ability and attitudes will be easier to achieve. Furthermore, if the goals determined according to needs are supported by the appropriate methods and activities, the success of the program will be ensured. No matter how useful the programs, the educational needs of the participants should be determined initially.

In table 3 there are 3 statements about the methods, techniques and materials of the program.

Table 3. Methods, Techniques and Materials of INSET Programs

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
5) Learning and teaching methods and techniques are suitable for the program and the aims of the subjects employed.	41	27,3	55	36,7	6	4	29	19,3	19	12,7
6) Equipment and materials are employed to increase the efficiency of the program	31	20,7	34	22,7	22	14,7	44	29,3	19	12,7
7) The necessary materials are related to the subjects during the learning and teaching process.	45	30	41	27,3	8	5,3	38	25,3	18	12

64,5% of the participants replied that learning and teaching techniques and methods were suitable for the program and the aims of the subjects. In a way they revealed that the instructors were good at their job and applied the best techniques and methods for the participants. 43% of the participants thought that equipment and materials were suitable for the aims and that they increased the efficiency of the program, but 42% of the participants were opposed to that statement. 14.7% of them were undecided. 57.3% of the participants said that the necessary materials were given during the INSET courses.

Another benefit of the INSET program is that it allows the participants to share their knowledge and experiences gained both before and during the courses. In table 4 there are three statements about sharing opportunities.

Table 4. Sharing Opportunities Among ELT Teachers

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
8) I have the opportunity to share the knowledge and process with the other participants	17	11,3	25	16,7	30	20	41	27,3	37	24,7
9) I am given the opportunity to practice what I have learnt	21	14	33	22	18	12	45	30	33	22
10) The instructors explain where and how I can use the knowledge and abilities that I have gained in this program	36	24	29	19,3	7	4,7	40	26,7	38	25,3

52% of the participants said that they did not share the knowledge and experience with the others before the learning and teaching process. Moreover, 52% of the participants declared that they did not have the opportunity to practise what they had learnt. This can be explained by the crowded classes and differences among the teachers who participated in INSET programs. 52% of the participants said that they were not shown where and how they could use the knowledge and abilities that they had gained from this program. The answers to questions 10, 11, 12 are not consistent. 62% of the participants declared that it was not explained how they could solve the problems that may arise during the applications based on the knowledge and abilities they had gained from the program. INSET is performed in order to find a solution to a problem. For this reason INSET activities should be organized with the aim of solving problems determined as needs and should serve as a guide to the people attending this program for solving the problems they have met or will meet in the future while practising the knowledge and abilities they have obtained. In order for teaching to be more effective, the practice of the acquired knowledge is vital. Practice ensures that individuals realize and correct their mistakes.

The length of the INSET program is directly related with the aim and the contents. The opinions of the participants on this subject are illustrated in the table below:

Table 5. Length of INSET Programs

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
11) I think the program's length is sufficient	48	32	35	23,3	3	2	35	23,3	29	19,3
12) I think the program time is used efficiently	31	20,7	26	17,3	20	13,3	27	18	46	30,7

The opinions about the length of the INSET course are very contradictory to each other. 55.3% found the length too long and 42.6% found it short. This can once again be explained by the differences between the participants. The efficient use of time is as important as the length of time. 38% thought that the program time was used efficiently but 13.3% were undecided about the statement. This percentage is significant because how a teacher cannot evaluate either the course time is spent efficiently or not. The time should be

arranged according to the goals and the contents of the program. Faults in organization, the insufficiencies of the teachers' preparations for the subjects and spending more or less time on the subjects than necessary are the handicaps to using time efficiently.

Table 6. Evaluation of The Teachers

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
13)At the beginning of the program my proficiency level was measured	29	19,3	21	14	-	-	37	24,7	63	42
14)My success was evaluated during the program	12	8	20	13,3	5	3,3	48	32	65	43,3
15) My success was evaluated at the end of the program	26	17,3	24	16	3	2	47	31,3	50	33,3
16) An overall evaluation of the program was done.	37	24,7	28	18,7	11	7,3	36	24	38	25,3

66.7% of the participants agree that their proficiency level at the beginning of the program was not measured. This is one of the main faults of the INSET program because as the instructors said in the interviews, there are differences between the proficiency levels and needs of the participants. If their level is evaluated at the beginning, the course content, methods and materials can be arranged in that way. 75,3% of the participants answered that their success was not evaluated during the courses, in other words formative evaluation was not done. If it is, the shortcomings of the instruction can easily be avoided during the courses. 64.6% said that a summative evaluation was not made at the end. This is a negative aspect. For each INSET program a summative evaluation should be made to see the positive and negative sides of the course. With this information, subsequent programs can be improved. In table 6 the significant point is seen in the 16th statement which is about the overall evaluation of the program 49,3% said that an overall evaluation was not done but 43,4 % said it was. It is surprising that teachers can have very opposite ideas about a very concrete matter.

Table 7. Organization and Instructors of the Program

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
17)The organization of the INSET program was satisfactory.	53	35,3	41	27,3	8	5,3	27	18	21	14
18)The instructors were experts on their subjects	27	18	28	18,7	9	6	39	26	47	31,3

In table 7 the participants declared that they were satisfied with the organization of the program (62,6%) but 57,3% did not find the instructors experts on their fields.

Suggestions

In the light of these findings some suggestions about INSET programs for ELT teachers will be given.

1. INSET should be practised widely all over the country. All teachers should take part in INSET programs periodically. For the necessary building and personnel of INSET, the other sources of government, especially the ones which are not active at all, can be used.
2. INSET topics should be verified and be helpful for education directly and contain subjects of developing science, technology and methodology. As the data of this study indicates, the INSET programs of the Ministry of Education are few in number. The teachers participating in these courses should transfer their knowledge to the other teachers in their institutions.
No matter how useful the programs, the educational needs of the participants should be determined initially.
3. Each school should perform a needs analysis for its teachers and find out the necessary INSET topics and inform the Ministry of Education. INSET courses which are organized to satisfy educational needs should be parallel to the participants' needs. Therefore, it is vital to carry out the needs analysis. The course program should be organized by obtaining the opinions and suggestions of the teachers and others in this field.
4. The number of participants in each class should be smaller. If this is done, interactive teaching methods can be applied during the program.
5. The courses should be practice- based. During the courses teachers should practice what they have learned and discuss classroom applications.

6. Participating teachers are from different schools. They have various needs and backgrounds. They should be categorized into their levels by proficiency tests. Different curriculum plans should be made for teachers from different levels and types of schools.
7. The teachers should be given the opportunity to share their experiences with each other and to apply the knowledge and ability they have gained in the schools where they work, and this should be supervised.

Formative and summative evaluations should be made in the INSET programs.

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