

Class Teachers' Conceptions about In-Service Training (The Case of Turkey)

¹Ayşe Ülker and ²Ayşe Mentiş Taş

¹Ministry of Education, Classroom Teacher, Konya-Turkey

²Selçuk University Ahmet Keleşoğlu Training Faculty,
Department of Class Teacher Training, Meram Yeniyol, 42090, Konya-Turkey

Abstract This study attempts to determine the conceptions of class teachers, who teach at primary schools, about in-service training. The research is a qualitative study which was conducted with a survey model. The universe of the study is composed of 119 class teachers who teach in 14 primary schools during 2008-9 education year in Karapınar in Konya Province. The sample is composed of 75 teachers who voluntarily answered the questionnaires. The data for the study was gathered via the questionnaire form prepared by the researcher. In the data analysis, "descriptive analysis" as one the of the qualitative technique and percentage (%) and frequency (n) techniques as quantitative research paradigms were used. According to the data gathered from the study, teachers regarded in-service training as the most necessary for keeping update with innovations. However, they stated that for a more efficient and beneficial in-service training to be achieved, the mentors giving in-service training are to be experts in related fields, the physical conditions of the facilities where the activities are held are to be adequate and the dates of in-service training is to be well-arranged.

Key words: Education · In-service education · Class teacher

INTRODUCTION

Social, economic, scientific and technological developments and changes in the world make it difficult for individuals to be educated and to be able to keep up with these developments. Therefore, the quality of educational institutions and the teaching staff in these institutions is of significance importance.

Teacher is the most basic component of educational system. Teachers play the most significant part in the training of qualified labor force, in providing peace and social coherence, the socialization and preparation of individuals for social life and the transfer of culture and values to next generations. Teachers are the real social engineers and artist who shape the personalities of individuals. Therefore, teaching has been considered as a holy job and has always had a respective position in the society [1]. In our schools, we do not only need adequate number of teacher but also teachers of knowledge and competency who are dedicated to their occupation [2].

The quality of teacher is affected by pre-service training and his/her desire and effort to improve after starting the profession. A teacher should not close his eyes to changes and developments in his field. On the

contrary s/he must be in a continuous cycle of development and be a life-long learner. The teacher who teaches his students how to learn should himself be a life-long learner. S/he should always read, research, question and be able to use technology. The most important activity that makes teachers life-long learners is in-service training.

The main objective of in-service education is to inform teachers and directors about changing and improving understanding of education and to help them acquire necessary knowledge, skill and attitudes to be efficient and beneficial in this process [3].

The benefits of in-service training for teachers can be summarized as; the promotion of professional development by increasing teachers' scientific, educational and individual qualification, leading teachers to professional satisfaction, improving teachers performances, achieving teachers' general and personal objectives, developing educational sources, developing teaching material and teaching atmosphere and conditions [4].

Now then in-service training is a process which provides teachers to keep up with changes and developments and improve themselves. It is an

undeniable fact that it is necessary for teachers and contributes to their development. However, in-service training is beneficial to the extent that it meets the needs of teachers and it is efficient and fruitful. Therefore, the subject of this study is the conceptions of class teachers about in-service training they receive.

The Statement of the Problem: What are the conceptions of class teachers working in Primary schools about in-service training?

Sub-Problems

- What are the views of teachers about in-service training ?
- What are the views of teachers about the willingness to attend educational activities?
- What are the views of teachers about the contribution of in-service education to practice (its contribution to the application of new primary school programs)?
- What are the views of teachers about the place and time of in-service training?
- What are the views of teachers about increasing the efficiency and benefits of in-service training?

Method

The Model of the Research: The research is a qualitative study which uses research survey model. Survey models are research approaches which aim at defining a case as it is or it was in the past. They attempt to define the subject of study- a case, an individual or an object-as it is and in its own contexts [5].

The Universe and Sample: The universe of this study is composed of 119 class teachers from 14 Primary School in central Karapınar of province of Konya. The sample of the study is composed of 75 teachers who voluntarily answered the questionnaire.

Data Collection: The data of the study was obtained by the researcher with the survey form. While developing the survey form information was gathered through a pertaining literature review. Three teachers who attended in-service training were interviewed and their ideas about it were taken. Expert views were taken about the survey form and necessary corrections and developments were made to prepare the final form of the form. 5 open-ended questions were placed to determine class teachers' views about in-service training. 119 survey forms were sent to schools but 75 of them were answered and sent back.

Table 1: The Views of Class Teachers about the Necessity of In-Service Training

The Necessity of In-service Training	n	%
Necessary	70	93
Partially necessary	2	3
Unnecessary	2	3
No Comment	1	1
Total	75	100

Table 2: The Views of Class Teachers Who Render In-service Training as Necessary

In-Service Training is Necessary (Reasons)	n	%
Keeping up with Developments	28	40
Professional Development	19	27
Changes in Curriculum	15	21
Learning Up-to-date Application in Education	7	10

(*A Teacher stated more than one view)

Data Analysis: In this study, “descriptive analysis” – a qualitative research technique- and percentage (%) and frequency (n) as a quantitative research technique were used. In the analysis of the data, the questionnaire forms were numerated from 1 to 75.

Descriptive Analysis: According to this approach, collected data are summarized according to pre-determined themes. While the data can be arranged according to themes revealed by research questions, it can also be presented considering questions or dimensions used in interview and observation. In this type of analysis, the aim is to present findings in an arranged and interpreted manner [6]. It is important to give place to direct quotations from participants and to explain the results according to them. Therefore, some of the findings were given as they were to provide plausibility [7].

Findings: In this part of the paper, findings related to the data from the survey application are given in order.

When the views of the class teachers about in-service training in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that 93% of class teachers view it necessary, while 3% view it partially necessary and 3% view it unnecessary. In this case, it can be said that class teachers view in-service training as necessary.

The teachers made 15 statements about the essentiality of in-service training. However, the first 4 reasons are given in the Table. According to the Table, 40% of teachers stated that the reason that makes in-service training necessary as “Keeping up with developments”, while 27 % stated “Vocational

Table 3: Class Teachers' Views about the willingness for attending in-service training activities

Willingness to Attend In-service Training	n	%
Those Volunteered	29	39
Those Partially Volunteered	19	25
Reluctant	27	36
Total	75	100

Table 4: Class Teachers' views about the contribution of In-service Training to Practice

The Contribution of In-service Training to Practice	n	%
Yes	42	56
Partially	20	27
No	12	16
No comment (Empty)	1	1
Total	75	100

Table 5: The views of Class Teachers who stated that in-service Training Contributes to Application

In-service Training contributes to Practice	n	%
Vocational and Personal Development	19	45
Applying New Curriculum	18	43
Increasing Student Teacher Interaction	12	29
Up-to-date Applications in Education		
Adapting to Innovations and Developments	10	24

(*One teacher stated more than one view)

development", 21% "Changes in curriculum", 10% stated "keeping up with up-to-date applications" as the reasons. In this case, it can be concluded that teachers believe in the use of in-service training and especially attach importance to trainings about innovations. Similar findings were found in Baskan's [8], Uçar's [9], Hamdan's [10] studies. What follow are examples of statements made by teachers to indicate the essentiality of in-service training:

- It is necessary. People need to keep up with innovations in every field. Besides, sharing information increases success (Teacher 1).
- I think in-service training is necessary. Especially, the recent change in the curriculum makes it necessary (Teacher 2).
- It is necessary. Given in appropriate conditions and effective, in-service training is useful and necessary for teachers to keep up with recent innovations in education (Teacher 13).

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 39% of class teachers are willing, 25% are partially willing, 36% are reluctant. Accordingly, class teachers' are willing to attend in-service training activities.

Table 6: Class Teachers' views about the Time and Place of In-service Training Activities

The place of in-service Training Activities	n	%
Suitable	6	8
Partially Suitable	3	4
Not Suitable	46	61
No comment	20	27
Total	75	100

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that 56% of class teachers replied that in-service training contributed to practice, 27% replied that it partially contributes (if some negative side are removed), 16% replied that it does not contribute at all. 1% made no comment. Accordingly, class teachers believe that in-service training contributes to practice of teaching.

Teachers' views about the contribution of in-service training to application are listed as 12 items. However, in Table 5 the first 4 items with the highest percentage are given. When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that 45% of teachers stated that in-service training contributed to "Vocational and personal development", 43% stated that it contributed to "The application of the New Curriculum", 29% stated that it contributed to increase student-teacher interaction", 24% stated that it contributed to "Adaptation to up-to-date applications, innovations and developments in education". Accordingly, teachers can be said to believe that in-service training contributed to practice. Similar findings were found in a study by Durmuş [11]. According to Durmuş's study the things taught in in-service training contributed to teachers' personal and vocational development. Knowledge and skills in in-service training are used for a long time. The following utterances can be given as examples for teachers' belief in in-service training activities contribution to practice:

- It (in-service training) contributes to vocational development and gives information about how to apply new curriculum program, how to increase student-teacher interaction and how to apply up-to-date applications in education. Moreover, it enables interaction among participant teachers (Teacher 7).
- In-service training is to be expanded because it contributes to vocational development, personal development, the application curriculum program, to interaction. Its contribution cannot be denied (Teacher 22).

When the Table is examined, it is seen that 61% of the teachers said that the place of in-service training activities was unsuitable, 8% stated that it was unsuitable,

Table 7: Class Teachers' views about suitable places for in-service training Activities

Suitable places for in-service Training Activities	n	%
In suitable environment (it must not be crowded or cold)	19	41
It must be in Workplaces	13	28
They must not be held only in city centers but also in towns	8	17
There must not be any transportation problem	3	7

(*One teacher stated more than one view)

Table 8: Class Teachers' views about the time of In-service Training Activities

The time of in-service Training Activities	n	%
Convenient	4	5
Partially Convenient	4	5
Not Convenient	47	63
No comment	20	27
Total	75	100

Table 9: Class Teachers' Views about Convenient Times for In-service Training Activities

Convenient Times for In-service Training Activities	n	%
On vacations	14	30
They must not hinder education activities	8	17
At the same time with Seminar Studies	6	13
They are ineffective when teachers are tired	5	11
At the beginning of education year	4	9

(*One teacher stated more than one view.)

4% said that they were partially suitable. 27% did not make any comment. Accordingly, it can be said that class teachers have negative ideas about the place of in-service training.

The views of teachers about suitable places for in-service training activities are listed in 11 items. However, in Table 7, the first 4 items with the highest percentage are given. When Table 7 is examined it is seen that 41% of the teachers stated that the activities are to be carried out in "Suitable environments" (it must not be crowded or cold), 28% said that they are to be done in the workplace. While 17% of them said that they are to be held not only in city centers but also in towns, 7% said that "there must not be any transportation problem" Accordingly, it can be said that in-service training will be more effective if they are held in a planned way in easy-to-reach places where necessary materials are available. Baskan [8] and Gülmez [12] found similar findings.

The following can be given as examples for teachers' views about suitable places for in-service training activities.

Table 10: Teachers' views about making in-service Training Activities More Effective

Class Teachers Suggestions	n	%
Mentors are to be Competent	18	24
Places are to be chosen carefully	17	23
Time is to be well-arranged	16	21
Practical Information is to be given	6	8

(*One teacher stated more than one views)

- They are to be held in town centers as well (Teacher 6).
- They are to be held in places where teachers work (Teacher 9).
- I generally got ill after the seminars I attended so far because the spaces are not heated (Teacher 11).

When Table 8 is examined, while 63% of the teachers deem the time of in-service training activities as not convenient and 27% made no comment. Accordingly, it can be concluded that class teachers have negative opinions about the times of in-service training.

According to Table 9, 30% of the teachers stated that in-service training activities can be done on "Vacation" (Summer vacations, weekends, semester vacation). While 17% stated that they should not hinder "Education activities", 13% stated that they are to be held "at the same time with Seminar studies", 11% stated that they are inefficient "When teachers are tired" and 9% stated that they are to be held "at the beginning of education year". Thus, it can be said that teachers prefer in-service training activities to be held on vacations. In a study by Baskan [8] and Hamdan [10], similar findings were found. Accordingly, teachers find the times chosen for the application of programs as partially convenient. Teachers uttered that the most important time for programs is vacations. The following can be given as examples for the statements of teachers about the times in-service training activities:

- Time is especially important for in-service training activities because I do not think that an activity done when we are tired can be very fruitful. (Teacher 2).
- Time is a problem for us. If activities are done before schools are opened or students come to school, they can be more useful (Teacher 59).

Teachers' views about in-service training activities are listed as 40 items. However, the first five items with the highest percentage are given in Table 10. According to Table 10, 24% of the teachers stated that "mentors are to be competent" as a suggestion for making in-service

training activities more effective and useful. This is the most stated suggestion. Of all the participant teachers, 23% suggested that “the Places are to be chosen carefully” and 21% stated that “Time is to be well-arranged” and 9% of the teachers suggested that the activities are to “meet the needs and be up-to-date”. Among the suggestions about making in-service training activities more effective and useful, the percentage of teachers who made the suggestion that “Practical information” is to be given is 8%. According to these findings, teacher experience problems with the place and time of in-service training activities and the mentors. If in-service training activities are planned and applied considering the views and suggestions of teachers, they can be more useful. The following statements can be given as examples for teachers suggestions about in-service training activities:

- The mentors are to be prepared. Sometimes, a mentor who teaches “how to motivate students” cannot motivate participants. The courses are to be convenient and serious. Qualified mentors are to give the courses (Teacher 1).
- The activities being up-to-date, meeting the needs of teachers and the mentors being competent increase efficiency (Teacher 11).
- Teachers views can be taken. In-service training for required subjects can be arranged (Teacher 19).
- I think that these activities are to be carried out in a long period of time and in a spacious and hospitable atmosphere (Teacher 65).

CONCLUSION

While 93% of the teachers participating the research stated that in-service training is necessary, 3% stated that it is partially necessary and 3% stated that it is not necessary. While 39% of the teacher participating in the research stated that they were willing to attend activities, 36% stated that they attended reluctantly and 25% stated that they attended the activities partially willingly. Of the participant teachers 56% stated that in-service training contributes to the practice of teaching, 27% stated that it partially contributed and 16% stated that it didn't contribute. 61% of the participants of the study found the place where in-service training activities take place unsuitable; 8% found the places suitable, 3% found them partially suitable. 60% of the teachers participating the study found the time when in-service training activities are performed inconvenient. 8% found it partially suitable, 5% found it suitable. The prior suggestion of the

participants is that the mentors in in-service training are to be expert in their fields. The places where in-service training activities will be carried out are to be appropriate places. The time for in-service training activities is to be convenient.

Suggestions

- The reasons that make in-service training necessary are to be observed. Vocational improvement and curriculum changes are to be considered and relevant in-service training activities are to be arranged.
- Teachers' voluntary attendance to in-service training activities is to the principle. Therefore, attendance must not be mandate, teachers are to be given chance to choose among in-service training activities.
- The physical conditions of in-service training activities are to be improved and the places where teachers feel comfortable are to be chosen
- The dates and times of in-service training activities are to be arranged to suit teachers' expectations
- While choosing in-service mentors, their being expert in pertaining filed is to be the criterion.

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