

Chapter 63

The Features of a Standard INSET: Drawbacks in Key Components

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ABSTRACT

Adopting a qualitative descriptive methodology, the current study aims to explore whats and hows of planning, delivery, and follow-up in in-service teacher training. While doing this, together with presenting the general picture of in-service teacher trainings in Turkey, the study also makes use of a delivered in-service teacher training program so as to find how issues regarding planning, delivery, and follow-up were dealt with. The data collected through semi-structured written interview and supported with informal dialogues and telephone conversations revealed what was done and how was done for the three components. However, similar to many other trainings, the findings showed that lack of needs assessment, hands-on practice, and follow-up unfortunately makes the training to be restricted to what is known as traditional and top-down. For this reason, the findings shed light on the reality to consider teachers' needs, their active involvement, and on-going practice for effective in-service teacher trainings.

INTRODUCTION

Over a couple of decades, with the advancement in science and technology, there has been a growing interest for the improvement of teaching profession. Having an inherently complex nature, improvement urges teachers to move beyond their abilities and capacity. However, becoming an effective teacher is not simple; rather it is a continuous process stretching from pre-service experiences to the end of teachers' professional career. In this context, initial teacher education may not be adequate to provide teachers

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with knowledge and skills necessary throughout their whole career. Therefore, teachers are called upon not only to acquire new knowledge and skills, but also to apply a number of practices to gain development in their teaching skills.

As the core of teachers' professional identity building, during their pre-service education, teacher candidates are provided with the required knowledge and skills for teaching. However, as teaching is a life-time profession built upon the renewal and update of knowledge and skills, teachers need to be trained in order to keep up with the changes and innovations in the field. In this sense, INSETs are vital for the refreshment of teachers' knowledge, improvement of their teaching skills, enlargement of their point of views, and therefore reorientation of their professional selves. Recognizing the need for teachers' growth, many researchers in the field of teacher education regards in-service teacher training (hereafter INSET) as a common form of teacher learning, and explain INSET as a continuous, career-long activity contributing to their professional development (Fullan, 1991; Fullan, 1993; Altınışık, 1996; Boydak Özcan & Dikici, 2001; Özer, 2004; Odabaşı Çimer, Çakır & Çimer, 2010; Caena, 2011; Aydın, 2012; Taşlıbeyaz, Karaman & Göktaş, 2014).

In INSETs, which are as important as pre-service teacher education, the aim is to provide teachers with resources, skill training, and consultation as they develop new or different capacities (Hall, 1978). Thus, the purpose is to enable them to learn discrete teaching items so that they can improve their teaching skills (Freeman, 1989). Moreover, in INSETs, as formal or informal, short-term workshops, teachers also have the chance to broaden their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes through refresher courses, seminars, or peer visits.

So as to maintain productivity, effectiveness, and success of INSETs, researchers suggested some basic characteristics to be kept in mind (Hayes, 1995; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Holly, 2005; Odabaşı Çimer et al., 2010; Altun, 2011). Among others proposing tips for the effectiveness of INSETs, Haye's (1995) suggestions make sense the most as they highlight three main aspects for the design, implementation, and follow-up components. First and foremost, Hayes indicates that participants are vital as they should actively take place in training, rather than supposed to be passive recipient of the knowledge. Secondly, the content delivered in the program needs to be put into practice, so it has to have a practical value in teachers' day-to-day teaching. Last but not least, follow-up, which is mostly the ignored component, should definitely be incorporated into the training.

Although the value of INSETs in teacher training and development is obvious, and there is also a worldwide appreciation regarding their significance to develop the quality of education, parties such as teacher education institutes, trainers, and teachers involved in INSETs have been observed to highlight various drawbacks. Among them, the approach to the design and delivery of INSETs comes first (Hayes, 1997; Özer, 2004). To be more specific, as Uysal (2012) puts forth, INSETs in Turkey have been reported not to be free from some shortcomings such as insufficient number of courses with a traditional top-down structure imposing topics and content selected by others. Similarly, in his interviews with national and local authorities, Bayrakçı (2009) reports that the major concern relating to in-service trainings in Turkey is the lack of professional approach and understanding in planning and delivering activities which are planned to be for development in theory, but do not work as they are planned to work in practice. For this reason, understanding, "*whats and hows*" of in-service training in terms of *planning, delivery, and follow-up* processes is believed to be contributory for readers to better understand what makes INSETs *top-down*. This is the departure point which is aimed to be addressed through the current study. Before giving insights from the study itself, the theoretical frame of top-down INSETs are provided as follows.

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