

INSERVICE TRAINING (INSET) PROGRAMS VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' OPINIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate primary school teachers' opinions in relation to inservice training (INSET) programs via distance education. The subjects of this study were primary school teachers (n=70) working in the city center of Bolu-Turkey in the spring semester of 2006–2007 academic year. During the study, the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews held with primary school teachers by the researcher. The results of the interviews revealed that the INSET needs of the participants should be analyzed before these programs start, the instructional activities of these programs should emphasize the application of the topic areas studied during these programs, should emphasize the active participation of the participants to the program in order to meet their INSET needs and an evaluation of the program should be made when these programs are over in order to examine to what extent the objectives of the program are achieved.

Keywords: In-service Training (INSET) Programs, Primary School Teachers, Distance Education

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, various changes, developments and transformations have taken place in all areas in the world, especially since the beginning of the new century in which we have been living and the possible effects and consequences of these are observed in the societies. In line with this fact, an increase is observed in the amount of the professional knowledge, the professional skills and professional behaviors that people are required to have. In this situation especially teachers have to develop themselves both professionally and individually in order to take over new responsibilities, to fulfill their new roles, to meet diverse needs of their students and of the societies in which they live as they are considered as initiators and agents of changes, developments and transformations in their societies. In relation to this fact, it could be said that the words of Locke (2006) says explains the whole idea and the situation mentioned above. According to Locke (2006), "As the agents of change in the educational system, teachers need to have the necessary knowledge and skills sets to educate all students to meet increased expectations and performance standards and to be credible competitors in a global economy (p:664)". This situation brings the importance and essence of teachers' professional development and in the light of this fact it could be said that in-service training (INSET) programs are considered as unique opportunities for teachers to develop themselves both professionally and individually.

In the meantime, we can observe the influences and impacts of the increased and widespread use of information and communication technologies both in our daily

personal and professional lives, especially the Internet and World Wide Web. This fact could be taken into account as one of the consequences of these developments, changes and transformations they have taken place in the world until recently. At this point what Charp (2000) states could be given as an example of how Internet and World Wide Web as information and communication technologies affect our lives? According to Charp (2000), "The internet is making an important impact on many aspects of our lives. It has changed the way work and communicate, as well as the way we learn. It is serving as a vehicle for the exchange of information regardless of social, economic or geographical differences (p: 8)".

Furthermore, in recent years the widespread use of Internet and World Wide Web as information and communication technologies has been recognized for educational purposes creating various changes in the traditional understandings and perceptions related to teaching and learning process (e.g. instructional delivery means, instructional tools, teaching - learning process, teaching - learning environment, course contents, assessment process and tools , nature of classroom interaction and communication between and/ or among students and teachers, and other issues). In this framework distance education is considered as one of the means of educating individuals and its various applications have been widely observed in recent years in this sense. According to Conceição (2006) distance education refers to instruction that occurs when there is a difference in time, location, or both and added that there are a variety of distance education delivery systems: correspondence, broadcast, teleconferencing, computers and digital technologies, and the Internet and World Wide Web. Meanwhile Kanuka and Conrad (2003) , having reviewed various distance education definitions, stated the separation of learners and instructors from each other and facilitating and providing of learning through information and communication technology as the common points of distance education definitions. Mupinga (2005), in the meantime, considers cable and public broadcast television, correspondence, interactive television (ITV), and online (web - based) courses as common distance education formats stating the fact that a number of distance education formats that are still in use have both advantages and disadvantages.

Mather (2000) implied a change in the student/participant profile of distance education courses saying that the students of almost all distance education courses organized today are the adults rather than students from different grade levels and among these students the number of educators are growing. In relation to the educators participated in distance education courses, Mather (2000) stated that these educators mostly participate in online workshops, degree programs and idea exchanges instead of participating conventional professional development programs organized and conducted by school districts.

In this respect it could be said that distance learning is not a new concept in continuing education and it can be used as a tool and/or as a means to restructure the staff development programs having both advantages and disadvantages as Killion (2000) pointed out. Killion (2000) grouped the possible advantages of online staff development under the following four categories, as: increased access, greater flexibility, cost savings, and greater opportunity for collaboration; however, Killion (2000) pointed out the quality of content and process, hidden costs, and readiness of the online learner, as some possible disadvantages of online staff development programs.

When the literature (Kim, Wah and Lee, 2007; Leach et al., 2004; Schwerin et al., 2006; Sugar, 2005; Swan and Dixon, 2006; Uzunboylyu, 2007) in relation to in-service training

(INSET) programs via distance education is taken into consideration, positive effects and changes are observed in teachers' relations with their colleagues as they collaborate and share their professional learning, in their professional knowledge, behaviors, skills, competencies and perceptions, in their perceptions, approaches and attitudes toward their students, the content area they studied , online education , technology and technology use, in their students' learning, motivation and understanding, in their students' participation and engagement to class activities and in their perceptions related to their students' interactions with their peers and with their instructors during instruction, in their daily classroom practices as they implement and maintain (or integrate) their new knowledge and skills in their daily classroom practices as part of their instruction, in their feelings (e.g. feeling more comfortable, confident and secure) to use technology in their instructional activities and in their perceptions and understandings about the importance and essence of technology. On the basis of the literature , it could be said that when distance education is used as means of training teachers who are in-service, positive effects and changes are observed and positive outcomes and results are obtained not only in the participants' knowledge, behaviors, skills, perceptions, understandings, daily classroom practices , attitudes, feelings, relations with their colleagues and with their students but also in their students' learning, motivation and understanding , participation to instructional activities and in their perceptions related to their students' interactions with their peers and with their instructors during instruction. Even though the literature mentioned above presents positive outcomes in relation to in-service training programs via distance education, Baran and Cagiltay (2006) pointed out lack of practice, abundance of theoretical concepts and context independent examples as the problems observed in traditional and online professional development courses by taking the opinions of teachers as a base.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

In Turkey in-service (INSET) training programs for teachers are organized by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and ,as it is mentioned in (MoNE, 2000), "In-service training is arranged in accordance with the Regulations of In-service Training and In-Service Training Centers. These Regulations determine the principles, objectives, planning, application, evaluation and management of training activities to be performed. In-service activities were centrally planned by the Ministry of National Education until 1995 when the provincial administrations were also authorized to organize such activities (p: 37)".

Meanwhile, as it is pointed out in (MoNE, 2005), various in-service training programs are organized by Ministry of National Education at various periods in order to improve the work efficiency of staff at all echelons, particularly teachers, to ensure their orientation to new situations and developments, to prepare them for superior duties and to provide them scientific and technological information, skills and knowledge required by our age and for this purpose Ministry of National Education, cooperates with all central and provincial units and establishments of Ministry of National Education as well as other Public Establishments and Institutions such as of Higher Education Council/Universities, Foreign Culture Centers, and NonGovernmental Organizations (NGOs) under the coordination and planning of Ministry of National Education Department of In-service Training as pointed out in (MoNE, 2005).

In this respect, in recent years in-service (INSET) training programs on computer education for teachers have been organized by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) via distance education (implementing as web-based on internet) in order to

equip them with necessary computer knowledge and skills and to develop their computer knowledge and skills. It is stated by Ministry of National Education (MoNE)(2005) that the necessary studies and procedures concerning putting into implementation of the "Teacher Training Project through Distance In-service Training Method" have already been completed in Turkey by activating the era's technology computer and internet as well as existing traditional methods and applications under the circular 2005/17 of Turkish Ministry of National Education In-Service Training Department dated 17.03.2005 and numbered B.08.0.HED.0.25.07.00/931 and it is also stated that the first example of this project will be on computer education for teachers and this project will be implemented as web-based on internet.

It is, also, stated by Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2006) that an individual can follow more than one course simultaneously; 444.940 courses are offered by Ministry of National Education and 263.420 certificates were given in these courses where individuals can receive certificates on different subjects as of 28.02.2006 under "Teacher Training Project through Distance In-Service Training Method". Within this framework, the aim of this study is to investigate primary school teachers' opinions about the planning, application and evaluation activities of in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education.

METHOD

Study Group

(n=744) primary school teachers were working at primary schools located in the city center of Bolu–Turkey during the spring semester of 2006–2007 academic year (The Republic of Turkey, Bolu Governorship, Provincial Directorate of National Education, ILSIS Bureau Data). In the study, interviews were held with (n=70) primary school teachers, who were selected randomly via simple random sampling technique, formed the study group. When the primary school teachers were analyzed in terms of their genders, it is seen that 62.8 % (n=44) of them were female. When the years of experience in teaching is concerned, it is observed that 45.7 % (n=32) of them were teaching between 0-5 years. When the faculty that they graduated from is examined, it is seen that 57.1 % (n=40) of them were the graduates of education faculties. It is seen that 54.2 % (n=38) of the teachers were classroom teachers, and 50% (n=35) of them were teaching at the first grade levels (i.e. covering the first five years of primary schools) when teachers were examined in terms of their professional status and the grade levels they were teaching at.

Data Collection Instrument

Today, qualitative research is preferred and considered to be more satisfactory. The reason is that it requires spending more time, and qualitative evaluation techniques provide a possibility for a more comprehensive analysis. In addition, the main advantage of qualitative research is the provision of detailed and comprehensive data about the problem on hand (Yildirim and Simsek, 2003).

These advantages mean that details and comprehensiveness a researcher cannot predetermine are apprehended. For this reason, in this study a qualitative research method was used to collect more comprehensive data and semi-structured interview technique was used in order to collect the qualitative data.

In semi-structured interviews, the aim is to find out whether the statements of the persons interviewed are coherent, what differences there are and to obtain true

information about the subject by making a comparison. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are prepared before but the answer options are not defined.

In this study, triangulation strategy was used by the researcher for the reliability and validity of the interview questions. In order to learn different aspects and compositions of the truth, a researcher must introduce different points of view, different meanings, indications and resources concerning the researched fact or case. A researcher must also display these differences with all affluence as much as possible instead of reaching a conclusion by rasping these differences (Yildirim and Simsek, 2005). One of the criteria used in ensuring validity and reliability in a qualitative research is "triangulation" and triangulation is used to obtain data with different methods collected for the research question and to test credibility of the findings obtained in this way as Yildirim and Simsek (1999) pointed out. According to Maxwell (1996) triangulation strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that you develop. Meanwhile, Yildirim and Simsek (1999) stated that triangulation may also facilitate evaluation and explanation of the obtained results from different dimensions and thereby, the reader may have a better understanding of validity and generalization of the research results.

During the study, the reliability of the interview questions was examined in two ways as; external reliability and internal reliability. According to Freebody (2003) external reliability involves the extent to which independent researchers working in the same or similar context would obtain consistent results.

Internal reliability, in the meantime, involves the extent to which researchers concerned with the same data and constructs would be consistent in matching them. When the present study is concerned, it is seen that the answers of the participants were consistent with each other and with the literature in relation to the subject area. This fact could be interpreted and could be considered as the indication of both internal reliability and external reliability of the interview questions. During the preparation and the development of the interview questions, the literature in relation to the subject area (Paykoc and Schorn, 1993; Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design: Instructional Design in Distance Education, 2006; Taymaz, 1997; Usun, 2006; Zheng and Smaldino, 2003) was reviewed and the criticisms, the suggestions and the recommendations of 8 subject specialists were taken into account.

Meanwhile before holding the interviews with the primary school teachers, the pilot study of the interview questions was performed by the researcher. For this purpose, the interview questions were asked to a group of primary school teachers (n=10), who were taking M.A. courses on Educational Sciences and then taking the results obtained from the pilot study as a base, the interview questions were reviewed and were reorganized by the researcher in order to obtain the final form of the interview questions. Having obtained the final form of the interview questions, the interviews were held with the primary school teachers. During the interviews with the primary school teachers, the following three questions were asked to the primary school teachers:

- What is your opinion about the planning of INSET programs via distance education?
- What is your opinion about the application of INSET programs via distance education?

- **What is your opinion about the evaluation activities of INSET programs via distance education?**

Data Analysis

In this study, for the analysis of the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, content analysis and continuous comparison techniques were used by the researcher. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2005), the main objective in content analysis is to find out concepts and relations that will explain the collected data and the data summarized and interpreted in a descriptive analysis are subjected to a deeper process in content analysis and concepts and themes not recognized by a descriptive approach are discovered as a result of this analysis.

The main process in content analysis, as Yildirim and Simsek (2005) pointed out, is to bring together the similar data in framework of certain concepts and categories (themes) and interpret these by arranging in a way to be understood by the reader. When the present study is concerned, having collected the qualitative data through semi structured interviews, the similar opinions of teachers were gathered within the framework of the interview questions as certain concepts and categories; they were organized and were interpreted in terms of their frequency and percentage values.

Limitations of the Study

The results of the present study are limited to the opinions of primary school teachers (n=70) who voluntarily participated in the interviews and who were working in the city center of Bolu-Turkey in 2006–2007 academic year.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Primary school teachers' opinions about the planning, application and evaluation activities of in-service training programs via distance education are presented in Table: 1, Table: 2 and in Table: 3.

Table: 1
Teachers' opinions about the planning of INSET programs via distance education

Teachers' Opinions	f	%
The INSET needs of participants should be identified before these programs start.	42	60
The information related to INSET participants (e.g. their subject areas, readiness levels, years of experience in teaching, ages) should be taken into account	24	34.2
The time schedule of the program should be appropriate for the participants	32	45.7
Application of the subjects to be studied should be emphasized and the content of the topics should be selected according to this criteria during these programs.	25	35.7

During the planning of these programs the internet and computer facilities should be taken into consideration.	21	30
The participation for these programs should be voluntarily.	7	7
The INSET instructors' professional qualifications and teaching competencies should be appropriate for INSET programs via distance education.	6	8.5
The participants should be informed about these programs before they start.	3	4.2

Primary school teachers' opinions about the planning of in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education are presented in Table: 1. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 60% of them (n=42) believed that the in-service training needs of participants should be identified and assessed before these programs start while 4.2 % (n=3) of them stated that the participants should be informed about these programs before they start.

Table: 2
Teachers' opinions about the application of INSET programs via distance education

Teachers' Opinions	f	%
The internet, computer facilities and learning environments should be sufficient and should be appropriate for the application of INSET programs via distance education.	19	27.1
The instructional activities should emphasize application of the topic areas studied, should provide the active participation of the participants and should meet the INSET needs of the participants.	40	57.1
The appropriateness of INSET instructors' professional qualifications and their teaching competencies should be considered.	12	17.1
The characteristics of the participants should be taken into account.	12	17.1

Primary school teachers' opinions about the application of in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education are presented in Table: 2.

When the opinions of primary school teachers concerning the application of INSET programs via distance education are the focus of attention, as presented in Table 2, it is observed that 57.1 % (n=40) of primary school teachers pointed out that the instructional activities of INSET programs via distance education should emphasize the application of the topic areas studied during these programs, should provide the active

participation of the participants during the instructional activities and should meet the participants' identified and assessed INSET needs.

On the other hand, it is seen that 17.1 % (n=12) of primary school teachers emphasized that the INSET instructors' professional qualifications and their teaching competencies should be considered and the characteristics of the participants should be taken into account during the application of INSET programs via distance education.

Table: 3
Teachers' opinions about the evaluation activities of
INSET programs via distance education

Teachers' Opinions	f	%
During these programs, the participants' instructional activities should be observed and their evaluation should be based on these observations.	12	17.1
The evaluation should be made when the programs are over to see and/or to observe to what extent the program objectives are achieved.	25	35.7
The evaluation of these programs should be based on questionnaires and interviews with the participants during and after these programs, to examine their perceptions related to the program they participated in.	15	21.4
After these programs, the participation of the participants should be certified and these certificates should have significance for their careers.	7	7
The participants should be informed about the evaluation results when the programs are over.	2	2.8
There should be a centralized evaluation system for carrying out the evaluation procedures of these programs.	16	22.8
The evaluation results obtained from these programs should be considered and should be implemented during the planning, application and evaluation of possible future INSET programs.	7	7

Primary school teachers' opinions about the evaluation activities of in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education are presented in Table: 3. When Table: 3 is

examined, it is seen that 35.7 % (n=25) of primary school teachers emphasized that the evaluation should be made when the programs are over to see and/or observe to what extent the program objectives are achieved (see Table: 3). However, 2.8 % (n=2) of primary school teachers believed that the participants should be informed about the evaluation results when the programs are over as seen in Table 3.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The aim of this study is to investigate primary school teachers' opinions about the planning, application and evaluation activities of in-service training programs via distance education and for this purpose , semi-structured interviews were held with the primary school teachers (n=70) working in the city center of Bolu-Turkey. When the primary school teachers' opinions in relation to in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education is concerned, it is observed that they emphasized the importance and essence of identification and analysis of INSET needs of the participants during the planning of these programs, they emphasized the active participation of participants, the application / experiencing of the topic areas studied in order to meet the INSET needs of participants during these programs and they emphasized that when the programs are over an evaluation should be made in order to examine to what extent the program objectives are achieved.

When the literature (DeSilets, 2007; Henczel, 2005; Nash, 2005; Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Stanley, 2002) is examined, it is seen that needs analysis is considered as an important, essential and necessary phase, stage and component of effective in-service training (INSET) programs. According to DeSilets (2007), identification of learning needs is the first step in planning a professional development activities and a needs assessment can be used as a decision-making tool to identify specific competencies or to direct programmatic activities , or as a guide for content and learning strategies. Meanwhile, Stanley (2002) considered needs analysis as the first and the most important step in designing a training program in that by using a needs analysis, as Stanley (2002) pointed out and implied, deficiencies can be objectively addressed, learning is heightened by positively influencing employee knowledge, skills and attitudes, knowledge and cognitive abilities, the necessary skills, psychomotor capabilities, and manual dexterity proficiency, attitudinal areas in order to get the job done can be defined. Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) stated that there are several outcomes of needs analysis phase and they considered the specification of learning objectives, which are used for shaping the design and delivery of training and the development of criterion as one of the outcomes of this phase. Nash (2005) considered training needs analysis as an important tool when planning or developing services and in relation to this fact Henczel (2005) implied that identifying and satisfying the clients' needs are critically important as these identified and satisfied needs determine the applicability of the service you provide and supply.

When distance education programs are focus of attention, it is seen that needs analysis is considered to be an important and essential part in developing distance education programs. In their study Cook and Dupras (2004) outline the essential steps in developing web-based courses and curricula that employ principles of active learning and they consider needs analysis as the first step to be performed while developing web-based courses and curricula.

They (2004) stated the essence and importance of needs analysis saying that the first step in any educational endeavor is needs analysis, including problem identification, and assessment of learners' needs, assessment of the teaching environment.

According to them (2004) needs analysis should be used to develop goals and objectives, taking into account available resources and learner perceptions and clear objectives help define the role of online learning in your setting.

According to Ascough (2002) during the design of online courses, an analysis need to be performed to identify whether there is a need for online courses or not and whether there are institutional goals and objectives to be met or not, to identify the learner characteristics as; who they are and what they can do and this analysis involves the instructor looking at her or his own characteristics and style.

Meanwhile, Perreault, Waldman, Alexander, and Zhao (2002) stated the importance of training to solve the problems indicated by the educators and they added that to make the educators more familiar and comfortable with distance education technologies, the training needs can be refocused onto issues related to curriculum design and delivery. DuCharma–Hansen and Dupin-Bryant (2005) stated the fact that education has been completely changed with the implementation of online (web-based) distance education, the needs of adult learners become more important and more crucial for effective distance education as striking increases in the number of online education participants who are mostly adult learners have been observed.

According to them, assessing the needs of web-based learners for web-based instruction includes a series of procedures as; the collection, the synthesis and the interpretation of data about learners and according to the information obtained as the consequence of this assessment, an appropriate, responsive and beneficial online learning environment for all learners involved can be arranged in such a way that there is a match between the needs of learners and the demands of the online learning environment. In line with these, the results of the following studies (Briers and Edwards, 1998; Meyen, Ramp, Harrod and Bui, 2003) could be considered as examples of needs analysis studies within the framework of in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education. Meyen et al. (2003) selected five topics as; meeting the national criteria including curriculum design and instructional accommodations for secondary students with mild disabilities, relating instructional assessments to standards, models for collaboration, transition-focused secondary education for all students, and developing standards-based IEPs and they reported that online modules were developed on these topics.

Briers and Edwards (1998) identified facilitating adult learning environments as the area in which in-service training is most needed and they identified facilitating balance in professional relationships as the area in which in-service training is least needed. In the light of these, it could be said that the identification and analysis of INSET needs are crucial, essential and important for INSET programs via distance education as observed in traditional INSET programs.

Hughey and Mussnug (1997) pointed out that training entails personal involvement, commitment and experiential gains and involves learning by doing. Moreover, according to Hughey and Mussnug (1997) training aims to provide employees with proficiency in the execution of given tasks. On the basis of what Hughey and Mussnug (1997) pointed out it is seen that the active participation of INSET participants during the application of these programs could be implied.

In other words; the active participation of INSET participants in the context of INSET programs could refer to "trying out new things" and "experiencing" during the application of INSET programs. While experiencing and trying out new things, the participants will have a variety of opportunities in order to involve in the process, to

share, to learn and to connect their new skills, behaviours and learning to their real classroom situations in appropriate learning environments through using and implementing appropriate educational technology materials provided by their instructors. During this process, teachers as the participants of these programs are assumed to observe and try out the classroom applications of the theoretical knowledge provided to them by the INSET instructors. Having experienced and tried out new things, the participants of these programs are expected to develop and improve themselves both professionally and individually.

Meanwhile when traditional in-service training programs are considered, positive effects and changes are observed in teachers' professional knowledge, behaviors and skills, in their perceptions, ideas and attitudes about the topics they learned, in their instructional activities as they implement and maintain what they learned during these programs in their professional and daily lives, in their perceptions and feelings about themselves (e.g. feeling more comfortable, confident and effective) as it is presented in the literature (e.g. Krebs, 2005; Pruneau et al., 2006; Rock and Wilson, 2005). In line with this fact when in-service training programs via distance education are the focus of attention, the literature (e.g. Boling and Martin, 2005; Hornberger, 2002; Marra, 2004; Owston and Wideman, 2002; Weinberger, 2000; Wells,2007) presents positive results and positive changes in teachers' professional knowledge, skills and behaviours, in their classroom practices as they implement and maintain what they learned during these programs, in their roles as learners, in their technology related knowledge and skills, in their perceptions and ideas in relation to their professions, their relations with their colleagues and their students and in their perceptions and ideas related to technology and technology use as it is observed in traditional in-service training (INSET) programs. In addition to these, when the findings of the studies mentioned in the introduction (i.e. Kim et al., 2007; Leach et al., 2004; Schwerin et al., 2006; Sugar, 2005; Swan and Dixon, 2006; Uzunboylu, 2007) are examined, it could be said that similar results and findings are observed with the studies mentioned above.

When the literature is examined, the evaluation process is regarded as one of the most important and essential components of INSET programs. In line with the literature based on the evaluation of the INSET programs emphasized the preparation, development and implementation of formative and summative evaluation procedures together with qualitative and quantitative data collection tools (e.g. observations, interviews, questionnaires). According to Griffin (1978) and Yalin,Hedges, and Ozdemir (1996) in order to evaluate staff development programs, various qualitative data collection instruments should be prepared and they should be implemented together with formative and summative evaluation instruments during the evaluation of these programs.

When distance education programs are considered, it could be said that the evaluation process is an important, essential and integral parts of distance education programs (Ascough, 2002; Usun, 2006; Zheng and Smaldino, 2003). Stewart, Waight, Norwood, and Ezell (2004) and Usun (2006) imply the critical importance of formative and summative evaluation of the course design in online learning environments to ensure learning effectiveness regarding the process and the product of the programs. They also emphasized the importance of feedback received from the, peers and instructors, user interface, and communication media. According to them; the instructors should be aware of how to meet the diverse learning and educational needs of their students. Taking these as a base, it could be said that in order to evaluate INSET programs via distance education both formative and summative evaluation procedures should be used together with observations, interviews and questionnaires.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the interviews highlighted the importance of needs assessment in INSET programs, importance of the active participation of the participants to the instructional activities that provide experiencing and observing the application of the theoretical knowledge, skills, behaviors in real and actual learning environments (i.e. in actual classroom settings), interacting and communicating with other colleagues to share their ideas and experiences, and meeting their INSET needs and importance of the evaluation of the programs when they are over in order to see to what extent the program objectives are achieved.

In line with the findings of the present study, the followings could be recommended for INSET programs for teachers via distance education programs: The INSET needs of the participants need to be identified before these programs start, the information (e.g. age, their readiness levels, years of experience in teaching, and other information) related to the participants need to be taken into account during the planning of these programs, the time of the programs need to be appropriate for the participants, the learning environments need to be appropriate for organizing various instructional activities, the internet and computer facilities need to be sufficient and the learning environments need to be appropriate enough to actualize the INSET programs via distance education, the instructional activities need to provide the active participation of the participants and the instructional activities need to provide the examples of the classroom applications of the topics studied during these programs, the topics studied during these programs need to be related to their school curriculum, subject-specialists and academicians need to be selected and assigned to these programs as the instructors of these programs, formative and summative evaluation instruments need to be prepared and developed to examine whether program objectives are achieved, in addition to formative and summative evaluation instruments, observations, interviews and questionnaires need to be implemented in order to obtain the participants' perceptions about the program.

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