# PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF INSET PROGRAMS

## ÖĞRETMENLERİN HİZMET İÇİ EĞİTİM PROGRAMLARINDA KALİTENİN ARTTIRILMASINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions attending to graduate programs on improving the quality of INSET programs. The subjects of the present study were the teachers (n=92) who were attending graduate courses at various departments of A.İ.B.U, Faculty of Education during the spring semester of 2004 -2005 academic year. The quantitative data were collected through a likert-type scale during the spring semester of 2004 -2005 academic year. As a result of the study, the teachers mostly emphasized that it was essential to use appropriate means of educational technology (television, video, computers and others) together with appropriate teaching approaches, methods and techniques, to select and assign particularly field specialists for these programs. That INSET instructors prepare well before entering the classrooms and that evaluation of the INSET programs be made on the basis of participants' perceptions on the application of the program.

**Key Words**: Primary School Teachers, Inservice Training (INSET) Programs, Quality

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, lisansüstü öğrenim gören öğretmenlerin hizmet içi eğitim programlarında kalitenin arttırılmasına ilişkin görüşlerini almaktır. Çalışmanın örneklemini 2004-2005 öğretim yılı bahar döneminde A.İ.B.Ü. Eğitim Fakültesinin çeşitli lisansüstü programlarına katılan öğretmenler (n=92) oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma sırasında niceliksel veriler likert tipi bir ölçek ile 2004-2005 öğretim yılı bahar döneminde toplanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda, öğretmenlerin çoğunlukla uygun eğitim teknolojilerinin (televizyon, video, bilgisayar ve diğerleri) uygun öğretme yaklaşımları, metotları ve teknikleri ile birlikte kullanımının, konu alanı uzmanlarının bu programlar için seçilmelerinin ve görevlendirilmelerinin gerektiği, öğreticilerin derslere hazırlıklı olarak gelmeleri ve hizmet içi eğitim programlarındaki değerlendirmenin programa katılanların

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programın uygulanmasına ilişkin görüşleri alınarak yapılması gerektiğini vurguladıkları bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlköğretim okulu öğretmenleri, hizmet içi eğitim programları, kalite

## 1.Introduction

Various developments, transformations and changes have taken place and have been observed in all areas in the world. As a consequence of these developments, transformations and changes, knowledge and information technologies have been taken into account as the indicators of the information age in which we have been living. In this age, as Yalın (2001) pointed out, inservice training (INSET) programs as one of the parts of life-long education, aim at equipping people with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to make them more successful, productive and happier in their professions. In line with this fact, teachers - like other individuals in the societies - are expected to take over various roles, responsibilities, functions both in their personal and professional lives. In other words, it could be said that inservice training (INSET) programs are regarded as one of the necessary and essential means to improve teachers' professional qualifications and to increase their effectiveness at schools.

Bonstingl (1996) listed The Fourteen Points developed by Dr.W. Edwards Deming as; creating constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service, adopting the new philosophy, ceasing dependence on mass inspection, ending the practice of doing business on price tag alone, improving constantly and forever the system of production and service, instituting programs of training, instituting leadership, driving out fear, breaking down barriers between staff areas, eliminating slogans, exhortations, and targets for the work force, eliminating numerical quatos, removing barriers to pride and joy of workmanship, instituting a vigorous for educational retraining, and taking action to accomplish the transformation. When the implications of Deming's principles, as stated by Bonstingl (1996), are put in action, it is observed that in-service experiences or training programs are considered as one of the essential means in order to achieve quality in education and to increase teachers' effectiveness. Bonstingl (1996), in his interpretation of The Fourteen Points developed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming, pointed out that training programs must be instituted by school leaders for new employees.

Şişman and Turan (2001) defined quality as appropriateness to customers' expectations and meeting the needs and the satisfaction of customers, having examined various definitions of quality. Holt (1993), by referring to Deming's 14 points for the transformation of management, stated that quality is defined by the customer and quality comes from understanding and improving the process. On the

basis of these, if quality is satisfying customers' needs and expectations, and if quality is defined by customers, quality of inservice training (INSET) programs could be defined as identifying the INSET needs of participants and identifying the expectations of participants before these programs start and providing various opportunities to their involvement and participation.

When the literature (Brown 2002; Gould et.al., 2004; Grace, 2001; Tytler et.al.,1999) is examined, it is seen that the importance, the essence and the necessity of needs assessment for improving and the effectiveness of the inservice training (INSET) programs is emphasized. Gould et.al. (2004) pointed out that training needs analysis plays a crucial role in ensuring that service needs are met and according to them (2004), if needs assessment is misinformed because it has omitted the views of key stakeholders or has asked the wrong questions, any subsequent training is unlikely to reflect the needs of the organisation or its staff. According to Brown (2002), needs analysis must be done before training programs are developed and she (2002) listed the reasons of this as; identifying specific problems in the organization, obtaining the management support, developing data for evaluation and determining the costs and benefits of training. Grace (2001) noted that a training needs analysis (TNA) is the process of identifying the areas where both individuals and groups in an organization would benefit form training in order to become more effective at achieving their own objectives and the objectives of the organization. Tytler et.al.(1999) pointed out the importance of identification of needs saying that inevitably in any professional development program, there will be a range in teacher knowledge and experience and accordingly teachers have different professional development needs depending on their knowledge, experience and confidence in their particular area.

According to Lambert (1988) when staff development programs provide the involvement and the empowerment of the learners, teachers' beliefs about themselves, their works, their roles in and outside of the school with their peers, their instructional programs will change and teachers will redefine their roles as the producers of the new programs rather than the consumers. When the literature (George and Lubben, 2002; Lozano et.al., 2004; Patton and Griffin, 2005; Saban, 2005; Shepardson et.al., 2002; Stevens, 2001) is examined on the effects of participants' involvement to the various stages of these programs, it is seen that the literature presents positive results. On the basis of her experience of involving a staff development program, Stevens (2001) reported positive results in teachers' professional and individual behaviors and perceptions related to themselves and their professions, in their students' learnings and success and the perceptions of their adminisrators. Shepardson et.al. (2002) stated profesional development programs that engage teachers in conducting environmental science research

positively affect teachers' understandings of environmental science concepts, and issues as well as their abilities to design and conduct research - based field studies. According to them (2002), teachers have enhanced their knowledge base and have developed their abilities and skills to investigate the environmental issues and the nature of the professional program influences teachers' views of the environment and the skills and techniques for monitoring the environment.George and Lubben (2002) stated that the findings of their study show that professional growth of science teachers is indicated by changes in the nature of the contexts chosen as lesson foci, the role of these contexts in the overall lesson design, and teachers' perceptions of contextualised teaching. Lozano et.al.(2004) pointed out positive results in the leadership skills and in the academic content knowledge of the participants as the results of their three years professional development program (covering the years 1997-1998 through 1999-2000). Having actively participated in the planning and in the implementation of a teacher development project, Patton and Griffin (2005) reported changes on participants' thoughts and perceptions related to their students, their knowledge on the construction and the management of assessment tools. Saban (2005), after the termination of the inservice training program, stated that she had a chance to compare her students, their proficiency level in order to discover new styles and strategies which will help them while acquiring English (L2) and she learned that she should put herself in the place of her students in order to understand better.

Within this framework, the aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of teachers who were registered in various graduate courses offered at various departments of the Education Faculty of Abant İzzet Baysal University on improving the quality of inservice training (INSET) programs during the spring semester of 2004-2005 academic year. The main problem statement of this study is "what are the perceptions of teachers on improving the quality of inservice training (INSET) programs?". In relation to the main problem statement, the following subproblems are answered:

- 1. What are the perceptions of teachers on the quality of INSET programs?
- 2. What are the perceptions of teachers on the planning of INSET programs?
- 3. What are the perceptions of teachers on the application of INSET programs?
- 4. What are the perceptions of teachers on the evaluation activities of INSET programs
- 5. What are the effects of gender, years of experience in teaching, the grade level taught and the graduate program registered in upon teachers' perceptions on improving the quality of INSET programs?

#### 2. Method

The subjects of this study were the teachers (n= 92) who were registered in various graduate programs of Abant İzzet Baysal University (A.İ.B.U). Faculty of Education and who were teaching at various primary school teachers in Bolu, during the spring semester of 2004-2005 academic year. When the subjects were analyzed in terms of their gender, although 59.4 % (n=63) of them were female, 27.4 % (n=29) of them were male. When the years of experience in teaching is concerned, 59.4 % (n= 63) of the teachers were teaching between 0-5 years but 0.9 % (n=1) of them were teaching 21 years and more. 42.5 % (n= 45) of them registered in the M.A. program even though 4.7 % (n= 5) of them were registered in Ph.D. program. In the meantime, 38.5 % (n= 35) of the teachers were teaching at the first grade levels (i.e. covering the first five years of primary schools) although 0.9 % (n=1) of them were working at different schools and grade levels.

During the study, the quantitative data were collected by means of a 5- point Likert type scale, (ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5)), developed and prepared by the researcher. During the preparation and the development of the scale, the literature in relation to the subject area was reviewed (Paykoç and Schorn, 1993; Taymaz, 1997) and the feedback received from subject specialists were taken into account. While the items of the scale were writing, the literature in relation to the subject area was taken as a base. The scale had four dimensions: the definition of quality of INSET programs, the planning of INSET programs, the application of INSET programs and the evaluation activities of INSET programs .There were 52 items in the scale (13 of which were related to the definition of quality of INSET programs, 16 of which were related to the planning of INSET programs, 17 of which were related to the application of INSET programs and 6 of which were related to the evaluation activities of INSET programs ) . The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) value of the scale was found .96. In the meantime, the following Cronbach alpha values were found for the dimensions of the scale: for the definition of quality of INSET programs. 92, for the planning of INSET programs . 91, for the application of INSET programs. 92, and for the evaluation activities of INSET programs .71 . Concerning the validity of the scale, the content validity of the scale was examined. The content validity of the scale was provided by the feedback received from subject specialists and by the revision of the literature in relation to the subject area. For this purpose, the scale was given to 7 subject specialists in order to receive their perceptions on the scale. During the study, in order to analyze the data collected, the percentages, the frequencies, the means, and the standard deviation scores of each item in the scale was calculated by means of SPSS program.

The results of this study were limited to the teachers' perceptions (n=92) who voluntarily completed the scale and who registered in various graduate courses offered at various departments of the Education Faculty of Abant İzzet Baysal University (A.İ.B.U) during the spring semester of 2004-2005 academic year.

## 3. Findings of the study

When the perceptions of teachers on the quality of inservice training (INSET) programs, the followings were highly observed: 57.6 % (n=53) of them defined quality of INSET programs as the use of appropriate educational technology means (television, video, computers and others) with appropriate teaching approaches, methods and techniques. 53.3 % (n=49) of the participants pointed out the quality of INSET programs as the beliefs of participants on the essence and importance of INSET programs. In the meantime, 51.1 % (n=47) of them considered the quality of INSET programs as an opportunity for teachers to exchange their ideas with their colleagues and with subject-specialists and dealing with the latest developments related to their subject areas during these programs. In addition to these, 48.9 % (n=45) of them defined quality of INSET programs as dealing with the classroom applications of the latest developments their subject areas. In relation to the planning of INSET programs, 77.2 % (n=71) of them stated that the instructors of these programs had to be selected and be assigned to these programs among the subject-specialists. According to 71.7 % (n=66) of teachers, the content of INSET programs had to reflect the latest developments in their subject areas. Meanwhile, 67.4 % (n=62) of teachers stated that the cooperation between Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the related departments of universities had to be established. Moreover, it was pointed out by 66.3 % (n=61) of teachers that the INSET needs of participants had to be identified and had to be assessed before these programs start.

Concerning the application of inservice training (INSET) programs, 75.0 % (n=69) of teachers believed that the INSET instructors had to be well-prepared and well-organized for the courses during the INSET programs. In addition to this; 73.9 % (n=68) of them stated that in the learning environments of INSET programs, the educational technology means had to be accessible during these programs and, in the meantime, 72.8 % (n=67) of them pointed out that during the application of INSET programs the contemporary educational technology means had to be used. In relation to the evaluation activities of these programs, 55.4 % (n=51) of them believed that the INSET participants' perceptions on the implementation of the program had to be taken through questionnaires, interviews and the evaluation had to be made on the basis of these. According to 52.2 % (n=48) of teachers, the evaluation of INSET programs had to be made through questionnaires, interviews

and through these the participants' perceptions on the planning of these programs had to be taken

Table 1: T-test Results Between Teachers' Perceptions and Gender of Teachers

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	sd	df	t	P
Female	63	218.75	31.37	90	2.33	.355
Male	29	230.76	17.85			

p<.05

t - test results, as in Table 1, indicated significant difference in favour of male teachers when teachers' perceptions on the quality of INSET programs are examined (t(90) = 2.33, p < .05).

**Table 2:** One-way ANOVA Results Between Teachers' Perceptions and Years of Experience in Teaching

Dimension		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Quality	Between Groups	3488.159	4	872.040		
INSET	Within Groups	46707.798	87	536.871	1.624	.175
Programs	Total	50195.957	91		-	

p<.05

One-way ANOVA results revealed no significant difference between teachers' perceptions in relation to quality of INSET programs and years of experience in teaching ( F=(4,87)=1.624, p<.05) (see Table 2). One-way ANOVA results, in the meantime, revealed no significant difference between teachers' perceptions on the quality of INSET programs and the grade level taught ( F=(4,87)=.281, p<.05) ( see Table 3 ) , and no significant difference was found between teachers'

perceptions in relation to the quality of INSET programs and the graduate program they registered in (F = (2,89) = .003, p < .05) as seen in Table 4.

**Table 3:** One-way ANOVA Results Between Teachers' Perceptions and The Grade Level Taught

Dimension		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Quality	Between Groups	640.364	4	160.091	L	
of	Within		1			
INSET	Groups	49555.592	87	569.605	.281	.890
Programs	Total	50195.957	91			

p<.05

**Table 4:** One-way ANOVA Results Between Teachers' Perceptions and The Graduate Program Registered In

Dimension		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Quality	Between Groups	3.152	2	1.576		70 TO
of	Within Groups	50192.805	89	563.964	.003	.997
INSET	Total	50195.957	91			
Programs						

p<.05

## 4. Discussion of the findings

The main aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of teachers registered in various graduate courses on improving the quality of inservice training (INSET) programs. When the perceptions of teachers on improving the quality of inservice training (INSET) programs were examined, it is seen that their perceptions could be summarized under the following headings, as: their beliefs on the essence and importance of INSET programs, the use of appropriate educational technology means (television, video, computers and others) with appropriate teaching approaches, techniques and methods, the selection of subject-specialists as the instructors of these programs, dealing with the latest developments in their subject

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areas through their active participation to the application of these programs, the cooperation between Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the related departments of universities, the identification of participants' INSET needs before these programs start and the evaluation of these programs.

It is believed that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and their awareness on the importance and the necessity of inservice training (INSET) programs have effects on the success and effectiveness of INSET programs. Dilaver (1992) pointed out that the teachers' awareness about the importance and the necessity of the programs and their voluntary attendance to these programs could be considered among the necessary requirements of effective INSET programs In the light of these, it could be said that teachers believe that their interests, inservice training needs are met and are taken into account during the inservice training (INSET) programs when the national and school priorities are met or are satisfied.. However, teachers consider the inservice training (INSET) programs as one of the effective means to develop their professional skills and expertise. Meanwhile, Dickson et.al. (2003) believed that staff development is tended to be viewed as an isolated activity whose purpose is to satisfy some bureaucratic imperative, rather than to serve as significant strategy for student learning by many districts and teachers. Dettmer (1998) (cited in Wycoff et.al.,2003) stated that unfortunately, staff development tends to be regarded by too many educators as " irrelevant, timewasteful, poorly presented, and lacking in follow-up assistance". In relation to this, Wycoff et.al.(2003) continued their words saying that in spite of importance of professional development, teachers do not always accept mandated in-service sessions with enthusiasm.

As the instructors of inservice training (INSET) programs meet the diverse needs of INSET participants during these programs, the professional and instructional skills, competencies, behaviors and knowledge that they have considerable effects upon the quality and the effectiveness of INSET programs. They are, also, expected to be different from the teachers who are teaching at various grade levels of the educational system in terms of their professional competencies, skills, behaviors, knowledge. In the light of these facts, it could be said that they should be selected on the basis of certain criteria and special attention should be paid on their selection during the planning of INSET programs. It is believed that instructors of these programs should both be subject specialists and have certain qualifications (in terms of their teaching competencies). In other words; it could be said that instructors of INSET programs should be both subject-specialists as stated by Özen, 2005; Özen, 2004; Özer, 2004 and should have certain teaching competencies as recommended by Bozan, 2004 and pointed out by Özen, 2005; Paykoç and Schorn, 1993.

Today various rapid changes and developments have taken place and have been observed in all areas and knowledge grows exponentially. In line with this fact, teachers are required and are expected to participate in various inservice training or professional development activities in order to follow developments and changes in their subject areas and teachers have to develop themselves both individually and professionally. According to Harvey (2003), the goal of any professional development program is to inform and change teacher behavior as a result of new information and Harvey (2003) pointed out that teachers and other educators spend countless hours in professional development activities learning to use new instructional strategies or materials. In addition to these, the contents of inservice training and / or professional development programs should be rewieved, be revised and be changed in such a way that the latest information on the subject areas of teachers should be provided and should be given to the teachers. When the latest developments in their subject areas are dealt with through using appropriate educational technology materials with appropriate teaching approaches, techniques and methods during these programs, teachers will understand and will learn how to meet the diverse and challenging needs of their students at their schools. As a consequence of this, it is believed that the INSET programs will have positive effects and impacts upon teachers' professional qualifications in terms of teachers' professional skills, knowledge, behaviours, competencies and in the meantime the professional qualifications and competencies of teachers will have both positive effects and impacts upon the quality of their instructions in their classrooms and the success of their students at their schools.

It is believed that the cooperation (or collaboration) between the government offices and the related departments of universities during the planning of inservice training (INSET) programs has paramount and vital importance on improving the quality of INSET programs. In this framework, Bilir (2004), on the basis of his observations, recommended that an organic link between the inservice training (INSET) training centers and the teacher training departments of universities should be established. Bozan (2004), also, pointed out the importance of the cooperation between the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the related departments of the universities and recommended that the cooperation between MoNE and universities should be established on the basis of a plan and an agreement signed between them.

Needs assessment is considered as one of the most important prerequisites and requirements of any effective inservice training (INSET) programs since through needs assessment, the INSET programs are structured and teachers' involvement are provided. When the literature (Esu, 1991; Gould et.al, 2004; Mathews et.al., 2001; Tytler et.al., 1999) is examined, the essence and the importance of needs assessment

for INSET could be easily recognised. When the INSET programs are the focus of attention, what was stated by the literature could be summarized as the importance of needs assessment in INSET programs as; assessing the INSET needs is an important and essential stage and it requires the use and implementation of various combinations of techniques during which assumptions could not be used as a base, the assessed needs give direction for determining their goals and provide a guide for the evaluation, they reveal teachers who have different professional development needs depending on their knowledge, experience and confidence in their particular area.

According to Hughey and Mussnug (1997), training entails personal involvement, commitment and experiential gains, involves learning by doing, and aims to provide employees with proficiency in the execution of given tasks. On the basis of these what Hughey and Mussnug (1997) pointed out imply the active participation of INSET participants. In other words; the active participation of INSET participants in the context of INSET programs could refer to "trying out new things" and "experiencing". While experiencing and trying out new things, the participants will have a variety of opportunities in order to share, to learn and to connect their learnings to their real classroom situations in appropriate learning environments through using and implementing appropriate educational technology materials by the help of instructors. During this process, teachers will observe, try out the classroom applications of the theoretical knowledge provided by the INSET instructors. As a result of experiencing and trying out new things, teachers' attitudes, and beliefs about their professions, about their works, about their peers and about themselves, and about their instructional applications are expected to change and they learn and acquire new professional skills, behaviors, attitudes, knowledge and information related to their subject areas as stated by Lambert, 1988; Patton and Griffin., 2005; Wang, 2000.

When the perceptions of teachers were examined it was observed that the participants completely agreed on the fact that an evaluation had to be made after the completion of INSET programs. According to Griffin (1978), in order to evaluate staff development programs, various qualitative data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaires, observations, interviews) should be prepared and they should be implemented together with formative and summative evaluation means instruments during the evaluation of these programs.

In the meantime, t-test results indicated male teachers have different ideas from female teachers on improving the quality of INSET programs This could mean that the awareness level of male teachers is higher than the female teachers. On the other hand, one-way ANOVA results revealed that the variables years of experience in teaching, the grade level taught and the graduate program they are

registered in have no effect on teachers' perceptions. This could mean that teachers are having and are sharing the same ideas on improving the quality of inservice training programs.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, it could be said that teachers defined the quality of INSET programs as the use of appropriate educational technology means with appropriate teaching approaches, methods and techniques during INSET programs, during the planning these programs subject specialists should be assigned to these programs, during the application of these programs the INSET instructors should be well-prepared and well-organized for the courses and for the evaluation activities of these programs, the INSET participants' perceptions on the application of the program should be taken through questionnaires, interviews and the evaluation should be made on the basis of these perceptions. In addition to these, ttest results indicated that male teachers have different perceptions from female teachers on improving the quality of INSET programs and one-way ANOVA results revealed that years of experience in teaching, the grade level taught and the graduate program registered in have no effect on teachers' perceptions related to improve the quality of INSET programs. In order to improve the quality of INSET programs, the followings could be recommended: subject specialists need to be assigned as the instructors of these programs, the INSET programs need to reflect the latest developments in their subject areas of teachers, the cooperation between Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the related departments of universities, institutions need to be established, the INSET needs of participants need to be identified and need to be assessed before these programs start, the learning environments of INSET programs the educational technology means need to be accessible and need to be used during these programs, the active participation of teachers to the process need to be emphasized and various opportunities for their active participation need to be provided, the INSET participants' perceptions on the planning and on the application of these program need to be taken through questionnaires, interviews in addition to formative and summative evaluation tools.

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