

7-2012

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Hacer H. Uysal
Gazi University, Ankara

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Recommended Citation

Uysal, H. H. (2012). Evaluation of an In-service Training Program for Primary-school Language Teachers in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(7). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n7.4>

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Evaluation of an In-service Training Program for Primary-school Language Teachers in Turkey

Hacer Hande Uysal
Gazi University
Turkey

Abstract: Despite the critical importance of in-service education programs (INSETs) for teachers' on-going professional development, educators often report problems concerning many INSETs. However, due to lack of systematic evaluation studies of INSETs in especially language education field, specific problems in these courses cannot be diagnosed, and they are left unresolved. The present study, therefore, evaluates a one-week INSET offered by the Turkish Ministry of Education to explore its sustained impact on language teachers' attitudes, knowledge-base, and classroom practices. The program is first evaluated against the criteria for effective INSETs suggested by previous literature. Then, data are gathered through course materials analysis, interviews with trainers and teachers, and through a questionnaire distributed to 72 teachers 18 months after the course ended. Findings indicate that although the teachers' attitudes are positive towards the course in general, the program has limitations especially in terms of its planning and evaluation phases, and its impact on teachers' practices. Implications for future INSETs will be provided based on the findings.

Introduction

Although the value of in-service interventions for teacher development is acknowledged, educators highlight various shortcomings in many INSETs. To improve the current INSETs and to design more effective future INSET activities, conducting systematic after-course evaluations is often stressed as an important first step (Tarrou, Opdal & Holmesland, 1999). These evaluations are invaluable as they provide information not only about the weaknesses, strengths, and outcomes of INSET courses, but also about teacher needs for future educational opportunities.

Nonetheless, evaluation of INSETs against their objectives is often neglected when an INSET course ends. Furthermore, "follow-up-evaluation" or "tracer" studies exploring outcomes and long-term effects of particular INSET activities are rare both in the Turkish context and in the language education field (Mathew, 2006, p.26). Therefore, the present study aimed to evaluate a one-week INSET program offered by the Turkish Ministry of Education for primary-school language teachers 18 months after the course ended. The study first explored whether the course was congruent with the criteria for effective INSET programs suggested by the previous literature. Then, the course was evaluated in terms of its success in achieving the specific course goals and in terms of its usefulness and sustained impact on teachers' affective status, knowledge-base, and classroom practices.

Theoretical Background

Characteristics of Effective INSET Courses

As echoed in professional teacher development literature and in the participant and context-sensitive INSET models, an important requirement for an effective INSET is to place trainee teachers and their realities at the center and to involve teachers in both the planning and the execution phases of an INSET activity (Sandholtz, 2002). Considering teachers' needs, experiences, and contexts as central, valuing their ideas, negotiating content, accepting teachers as experts, and encouraging them to reflect on their current beliefs and behaviors are important factors to induce long-lasting changes in teacher practices (Atay, 2007; Fullan, 1982, 1995, 2001; Hayes, 2000) as these help teachers develop a sense of ownership of the new ideas (Bax, 1997; Wolter, 2000). Such programs also enhance teachers' consciousness about their teaching, their professional confidence, and quality of instruction as well as student learning (Dalo lu, 2004; Hayes, 2000).

In addition, holistic and experiential teacher training approaches to INSETs, in which a range of methods and techniques are modeled and in which trainers are allowed to practice and analyze the modeled lessons or approaches by being both students and teachers, were found to be more effective than the traditional transmission-based linear approaches (Bax, 1997; Hockly, 2000). For example, Miller (quoted in Sandholtz, 2002) claimed that teachers tend to forget 90% of what is taught in one-shot traditional INSET courses. Especially the variation and challenge in such activities are found to be important for enabling teachers to explore different perspectives and for increasing opportunities for reflection and change (Sandholtz, 2002).

A comfortable setting and collaboration with peers are also stressed as important factors for successful INSET programs. For example, it was found that teachers need a friendly and hospitable atmosphere where openness and collaboration are encouraged and where they can share "their own knowledge of classroom, children, subjects and pedagogy with peers" (John & Gravani, 2005, p.122-123). Teachers were also found to respect and accept their peers' views more than the views of university professors or researchers (Sandholtz, 2002).

Other studies reported that whether the materials and resources such as handouts are adequate, whether new materials are created during the course, and whether feedback and evaluation are gathered after the course have further positive effects on the level of impact of INSETs on teachers' practices (Bayrakçı, 2009; Fullan, 1982; Harland & Kinder, 1997; Hayes, 2000; Woodward, 1991)

Finally, Waters and Vilches (2000) found that including a school based follow-up monitoring and after-care support element to INSET programs and connecting the seminar (theory) and school (practice) proved to be successful in long-term in terms of increased teaching competence and problem solving capacity, higher professional self-esteem, greater structure and self-direction, and improved working relations. Sandholtz (2002) also reported that teachers value school-based on-going opportunities connected with their daily work instead of out-of-school whole group sessions.

Although these indicators of effective INSETs may not be valid in all situations and contexts, these suggestions were considered as a framework in the current study while realizing the first step of the evaluation of the INSET course (see the checklist on p. 13) and while preparing the interview and questionnaire questions for a more detailed subsequent evaluation.

INSETS in Turkey and in the Language Education Field

In 1997, following a nation-wide educational reform, English as a foreign language (EFL) started to be taught at the 4th grade in primary schools and a new curriculum for young language learners with a constructivist perspective and a communicative approach was initiated by the Ministry of National Education (Kırkgöz, 2007; 2008a, b). However, the curriculum innovation, which took place in a very short time without the preparation of necessary infrastructure, could not be successfully implemented. Therefore, a series of nation-wide in-service teacher education programs have been organized by the Ministry of National Education to familiarize the practicing English teachers with the new curriculum goals, the constructivist and communicative teaching philosophies, and to provide them with special skills to teach young language learners (Kırkgöz, 2007; Mirici, 2006).

These efforts can be considered very affirmative because in-service interventions are reported to have positive effects on teachers' professional and personal growth by enhancing positive attitudes and self-confidence; improving teachers' knowledge-base about new theories and curriculum content; and improving their skills and teaching practices (Freeman, 1989; Joyce & Showers, 1980). In addition, such INSET courses are often linked to improvements in quality of education and successful implementation of curriculum innovations (Hayes, 2000; Lieberman & Pointer-Mace, 2008; Odabaşı-Çimer, Çakır & Çimer, 2010).

However, despite Turkish government's efforts, recent studies (e. g. Kırkgöz, 2007; 2008a) revealed that most teachers still follow grammar-based transmission oriented language teaching practices even at primary level, indicating that these professional development efforts had little or no impact on classroom teaching. Moreover, INSETs in general in Turkey have been reported to suffer from a lot of problems, such as insufficient number of these courses (Küçükşuleymanlı, 2006); top-down structure of the courses imposing topics and content selected by others (Bayrakçı, 2009; Odabaşı-Çimer, et al., 2010; Özer, 2004); presentation of the programs in forms of short "one-shot" courses (Daloğlu, 2004); implementation of transmission methods without allowing teachers to reflect on their experiences, participate in learning, and collaborate with peers (Bayrakçı, 2009; Özer, 2004); and lack of follow-up support and evaluation mechanisms (Bayrakçı, 2009).

These studies provided insights about government initiated INSETS in Turkey mainly with relation to the literature on effective INSETS at *macro-level* through analyses of legal documents and interviews with government authorities or teachers; yet, they did not provide information at *micro-level* about the content and goals of particular INSET activities, whether these intended goals were achieved, and whether these courses had any impact on teachers. However, scholars argue that success of any professional development activity is dependent on its systematic evaluation especially in terms of its long-term effects on participant learning (Guskey, 2000). As Tarrou, et al. (1999) state, such after-course evaluations are invaluable as they provide new perspectives that lead to revisions, improvements, and quality assurance. Therefore, such evaluations offer information not only about the weaknesses, strengths, and long-term impacts of an INSET course on teachers, but also about the needs of teachers for future educational opportunities. Unfortunately, such systematic "tracer" or "follow-up evaluation studies" investigating the impact of particular INSETS on teachers are almost lacking in the Turkish context as well as in the language education field (Matthew, 2006; Shocker-von Ditfurth & Legutke, 2002; Waters, 2006).

The present study, therefore, aimed to evaluate a one-week INSET course organized by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in terms of not only whether the program fitted into the descriptors of effective INSETS suggested by literature in terms of its planning, execution, and

evaluation phases, but also whether the course achieved its specific goals and had a positive impact on teachers' affective status, knowledge-base and practices. The study also investigated the aspects teachers found easy/hard to implement, their reasons for any difficulties they faced in their schools, and their needs for future in-service teacher education programs. Because any changes in teachers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are suggested to take place after a long period of time, once teachers have an opportunity to test new ideas and observe the outcomes in student learning (Guskey, 1986 in Dalo lu, 2004, p.679), the study was conducted eighteen months after the program took place. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. Does the program display characteristics of effective INSETS suggested by previous studies in terms of its planning, execution, and evaluation stages?
2. What are the teachers' opinions about the usefulness and effectiveness of the in-service training program?
3. What changes do the teachers see in themselves in terms of their affective status, knowledge-base, and practices 18 months after participating in the program compared with that before the course?
4. What challenges (if any) did the teachers face while implementing what they learned in the course into their teaching contexts? What were the reasons?
5. What are the teachers' needs and expectations for future in-service education programs?

Method

Participants

The study comprised three different groups of participants. The first group consisted of three teacher trainers (one female, two males) who were teachers themselves in a special type of high school (Anatolian high schools) for selected high achieving students with more intensive English courses. The trainers received two weeks of special training offered by the Ministry of National Education to become teacher trainers. The female trainer also had some additional training at the British Council. The second group consisted of six participant teachers with 7-15 years of experience (five female, one male) who were chosen on a voluntary basis to be interviewed. Finally, the third group, who were given the final questionnaire, consisted of 72 teachers (83% female, 17% male) from 37 different public primary schools. The third group comprised both novice teachers with less than 4 years of experience (8%) and experienced teachers with more than 15 years of experience (14%); however, most teachers had teaching experience from 5 to 14 years (78%).

The INSET Program to be evaluated

The program that is the focus of the present research took place in Ankara, Turkey in September, 2007 and lasted a week (around 22 hours). The course was compulsory for all English language teachers working at the primary level; thus, it had to be delivered to groups of 80-100 teachers. The three trainers were given the task to plan and organize the activities and to train the teachers. The aim of the course was to familiarize teachers with the new curriculum goals, communicative methods, and special techniques to be used with young learners. More specifically, the course content involved information about the needs and characteristics of young language learners, the role of the teacher in the new curriculum, constructivism and communicative language teaching, teaching four language skills (especially reading and

speaking skills), coursebook/materials adaptation, why English (L2) should be used in classes and situations where L2 can be used, use of story telling, drama/dramatization, games, songs to teach English to young learners, learning styles and multiple intelligences (Please see appendix 1 for the course program).

Data Collection

The data for the study came from multiple sources, such as face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the trainers and the six trainees, one questionnaire, and the course materials to increase the validity of the findings. First, the materials, notes, and presentations the trainers used in the INSET were collected. Second, the trainers were interviewed to understand how the course was planned, executed, and evaluated and to gain in-depth insights into the trainers' thoughts and experiences during the course from beginning to end. Third, interviews were conducted with the six participant teachers to understand their views and thoughts about the course, and what they expect from future courses. These two interviews with the trainers and 6 trainees and the course materials were also used as baseline information to prepare the questionnaire for the other 72 teachers.

The questionnaire was prepared based on the above-mentioned two interviews, course materials analysis, the literature on effective INSETs, and Guskey's (2000) model. Guskey's (2000) model suggests that evaluation of a professional development activity should first inquire about the participants' *level of satisfaction about the usefulness and effectiveness of the program* and then the program's impact on teachers' *affective status, knowledge-base, and classroom behaviors* (emphasis added). Hence, the questionnaire comprised four main sections as follows: Section 1 to inquire about the teachers' satisfaction level and usefulness of the course (questions 1-17), section 2 to inquire about the teachers' affective status (questions 18-20), section 3 to inquire about the teachers' knowledge-base (questions 21-29), and section 4 to inquire about teacher behaviors (questions 30-42). The Cronbach alpha values of internal reliability for each section were .89, .79, .86, and .92 respectively. The questionnaire also had questions regarding the demographic profile of the teachers, about the problems the teachers faced while applying what they learned in the course, and about what they expect from future in-service education programs with the purpose of needs identification. The questionnaire was prepared on the Likert type scale (from 1 to 5) with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The questionnaire was first pilot-tested on the six teachers who were interviewed to check item clarity and then the final questionnaire was distributed to 72 teachers by visiting 37 schools.

The present study is limited in its scope as it focused mainly on the subjects' value judgments regarding the INSET course, but could not include classroom observations of actual practices in the study. This limitation should be considered in future studies.

Data Analysis

First, the course materials were subjected to content analysis. Second, the audio-taped interviews were transcribed; and, along with the open-ended questionnaire questions, they were analyzed qualitatively by grouping findings under certain themes. Third, the questionnaire results were analyzed through computation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and means. The data were also analyzed considering the demographic factors to identify any associations with the results. One factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample *t*-test analyses were conducted to examine any relationships between questionnaire items and gender, years of experience, and participants' previous knowledge about certain contents of the course such as drama/dramatization, teaching language to young learners, learning styles/ multiple intelligences, communicative language teaching, and constructivism. Finally, the program was examined against the characteristics of effective INSETs suggested by previous literature in terms of its planning, execution, and the evaluation stages.

Results and Discussion

Program evaluation against the indicators of effective INSETs (Research Question 1)

Based on the course materials analysis, interviews, and open-ended survey questions, it was found that the course had problems especially in terms of its planning and evaluation phases, but had both positive and negative sides in the execution phase. In relation to planning, the trainers said that they were given the assignment to deliver the INSET course by the Ministry of Education only one week prior to the course, so they did not have enough time to prepare for and plan the course. The trainers said that they quickly came together, discussed what to cover, collected materials in three days, and then shared the content. This result confirms Özer (2004), who asserted that INSETs in Turkey lack systematic planning and scientific research on training needs of teachers due to the non-functional organizational structure and under qualified personnel of the Ministry of Education's in-service training department.

As for the execution phase of the course in terms of its strengths, the teachers mentioned that a variety of theoretical and practical information about different methods and learning styles as well as techniques to teach language skills, new songs, games, story telling, and drama was introduced. The teachers also said that they found the female trainer especially successful as she followed a holistic inductive approach in her teaching, modeling the new methods and allowing the trainers to participate in the activities as if they were students. Another point mentioned was that the trainees were asked to prepare and present a sample lesson integrating what they had learned in the course with their own contexts in groups of 8-10. The teachers were also pleased to be given chances to collaborate with peers, reflect, and think critically during the course. Nevertheless, the execution phase was not without problems. For example, teachers were not informed about the aims of the course beforehand; the course content was not exactly relevant to their own contextual needs; and they were not allowed to discuss their problems and develop solutions to their problems. Teachers also expressed that the setting was not suitable, the class was too crowded, the length of the course was not adequate, and the power-point presentations and lectures carried out by the male trainers were sometimes unorganized and boring. Another weakness was that the materials and resources were insufficient and no new materials were developed in the course. These results partially confirmed Bayrakçı (2009) and Odabaşı-Çimer et al. (2010) who claimed that Turkish INSET programs follow a pure transmission model to teach

theoretical knowledge without allowing teachers to take active participation in their learning, reflect on their experiences, or implement what they learn.

In terms of evaluation of the course, the study found that no feedback and evaluation mechanisms existed. Neither the trainers collected feedback from the trainees nor the Ministry of Education asked for feedback from the trainers or trainees, concurring with Özer (2004) and Bayrakçı (2009). The course also did not include a school-based follow-up support element. The summary of the evaluation of the INSET course against the indicators of effective INSETs based on the data gathered through the course materials analysis, interviews with the trainers and trainees, and open-ended survey questions is as follows:

| | Characteristics of effective in-service education programs | Yes | Some what | No |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----------|----|
| Planning | A systematic structure in planning was undertaken involving teachers | | | • |
| | The program was designed as a long-term on going course | | | • |
| | The program content were planned according to teachers' needs | | | • |
| | A bottom-up structure was taken | | | • |
| Execution | Materials and resources were adequate | | | • |
| | Physical atmosphere was suitable | | | • |
| | Teachers were given opportunities to reflect on their experiences | | • | |
| | Teachers' experiences and contexts were taken into consideration | | | • |
| | Teachers were actively involved in the teaching/learning process | | • | |
| | Teachers were given opportunities to practice what they learned | • | | |
| | Feedback was provided to teachers on their practice /application | | • | |
| | The theoretical reasons behind the activities were provided | • | | |
| | A variety of methods/tasks was used in the course | • | | |
| | Teachers collaborated with their peers | • | | |
| | The specific techniques and lessons were modeled by the trainers | | • | |
| | The content was negotiable | | | • |
| | Concerns about the implementation of the innovation were identified and solutions were found considering teachers' contexts | | | • |
| | Teachers' ideas were valued and they were treated as experts | | • | |
| Evaluation | The course was evaluated afterwards to improve the program | | | • |
| Follow-up | A school-based follow-up support was provided to teachers | | | • |

Table 1. Evaluation of the course against the indicators of effective INSETs

Perceived usefulness and effectiveness of the INSET (Research Question 2)

According to the questionnaire results (questions (Q) 1-17), the teachers had positive opinions towards the course in general, especially because the course was motivating and because they were allowed to participate (Q4 & Q5). They expressed problems only with the irrelevance of the content to their needs (Q2), lack of discussions regarding their own problems (Q10), lack of a materials development component (Q15), and lack of course evaluation (Q16).

| Items (N=72) | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 1. The course was well-planned and organized. | 3.76 | .778 |
| 2. The content of the course was relevant to my classroom needs. | 3.18 | .718 |
| 3. The course contained up-to-date information about my field. | 3.93 | .810 |
| 4. The course was motivating and interesting. | 4.00 | .903 |
| 5. During the course, we were encouraged to participate in the activities. | 4.15 | .816 |
| 6. A variety of teaching and learning approaches were used in the course. | 3.83 | .903 |
| 7. The resources and materials used such as handouts were adequate. | 2.52 | .804 |
| 8. The atmosphere was friendly and comfortable to share and discuss my experiences. | 3.84 | .898 |
| 9. The course helped me relate the theory to teaching practice. | 3.72 | .773 |
| 10. We were encouraged to discuss and to find solutions to our real-life problems. | 2.61 | .814 |
| 11. We were given opportunities to implement what we learned during the course. | 3.70 | .700 |
| 12. We were encouraged to collaborate with peers. | 3.86 | .860 |
| 13. The new constructivist and communicative approaches were modeled by the trainers. | 3.63 | .774 |
| 14. I was encouraged to think critically about my experiences in light of the new knowledge. | 3.75 | .689 |
| 15. We created materials to be used in our own classes. | 2.70 | .777 |
| 16. At the end, our evaluation about the course was collected. | 2.22 | .891 |
| 17. The course was useful for my teaching and professional development | 3.72 | .791 |

Table 2. Teachers' level of satisfaction with the aspects of the INSET course

Perceived impact of the course on teachers' affective status, knowledge-base, and practices compared with that before the course (Research Question 3)

Teachers said that after they participated in the course, they have more desire to learn about the field (Q20) and somewhat desire to try out new ideas (Q19); however, they did not agree that they have a better self-concept and confidence in themselves as teachers (Q18). In terms of the impact of the course on teachers' knowledge base, it can be said that in general teachers see themselves more knowledgeable. Teachers said that they have increased knowledge especially about teacher-student roles (Q23), characteristics of young learners (Q24) and learning styles (Q26). However, their knowledge about how to evaluate and use textbooks effectively did not increase much (Q27).

| Items (N=72) | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 18. I have a better self-concept, satisfaction, and confidence in my ability as a teacher now. | 3.15 | .620 |
| 19. I have more desire to try out new ideas. | 3.66 | .804 |
| 20. I have more desire to know more about my field. | 4.02 | .711 |
| 21. I feel better informed and knowledgeable about the new curriculum goals now. | 3.55 | .709 |
| 22. I feel more knowledgeable about constructivism and communicative language teaching. | 3.63 | .860 |
| 23. I have a better understanding of teacher and student roles in the class now. | 4.15 | .744 |
| 24. I have an increased awareness of the characteristics and needs of young learners | 4.34 | .674 |
| 25. I know better what multiple intelligences mean. | 3.81 | .827 |
| 26. I have a better understanding of different learning styles. | 3.94 | .689 |
| 27. I know better how to evaluate and use textbooks according to my classroom needs. | 3.37 | .680 |
| 28. I am equipped with variety of instructional strategies to promote student engagement. | 3.56 | .747 |
| 29. I feel more knowledgeable about pre-, while-, and post-reading strategies. | 3.75 | .884 |

Table 3. Perceived impact of the course on teachers' self-perception, motivation, and knowledge-base

The impact of the course on teachers' classroom practices was the most problematic part. The teachers said that compared to their classroom practices before the course, they consider learner needs more (Q31); they are more tolerant to student errors (Q35); and they use more pictures and visuals (Q36). However, they did not improve in terms of using more peer/group work and fun activities (Q32 & Q33), more L2 in classroom instructions (Q34), drama/dramatization (Q37), and art and craft activities (Q41).

| Items (N=72) | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|
| 30. My English class includes more activities enabling students participate and learn by doing. | 3.62 | .777 |
| 31. I consider individual learner needs more. | 4.08 | .745 |
| 32. My English class includes more peer to peer interaction, group and pair work now | 2.98 | .863 |
| 33. My English class is more fun now. | 3.43 | .885 |
| 34. I give instructions in English and use more English in class. | 2.91 | .851 |
| 35. I am more tolerant to student errors. | 4.05 | .689 |
| 36. I use more pictures and visuals. | 4.13 | .756 |
| 37. I have successfully used drama and dramatization. | 2.94 | .767 |
| 38. I have included more songs and rhymes. | 3.68 | .852 |
| 39. I have used story-telling more. | 2.81 | .793 |
| 40. I have used more games. | 3.66 | .804 |
| 41. I have used art and craft activities more. | 2.94 | .917 |
| 42. I have developed new activities/ games | 3.61 | .814 |

Table 4. Perceived Impact of the Course on Teachers' Classroom Practices

In terms of the relationship between the demographic factors and responses, it was found that female teachers more strongly agreed to the questions 8, 9, 17, 25, 26, 27, 30, and 40 than the male teachers. Teachers who had experience between 15-19 years more strongly agreed to the question 9 (relating theory to practice) than teachers with 5-9 years ($p>0.05$; 0.86) and 20-24 years of experience ($p>0.05$; 1.42). Teachers with 5-9 years of experience also more strongly agreed to question 25 (know better about multiple intelligences) than the teachers with 20-24 years of experience ($p>0.05$; 1.76), and teachers with 0-9 years of experience strongly agreed to the question 29 (about teaching reading skills) than the teachers with 20-24 years of experience ($p>0.05$, 2.09). No significant differences were found between the teachers' prior knowledge about the aspects covered in the course and their responses as well as whether they took a "teaching languages to young learners" course at the university as these were also asked in the survey.

Problems faced with the implementation and their reasons (Research Question 4)

Majority of the teachers (76%) stated that they had problems implementing what they learned in the course. The reasons mentioned in the questionnaire and the interview according to their frequency were: The crowded classes, time constraints, intense curriculum and textbook requirements, low English level of students, classroom management problems, Turkish school culture, the need for speaking in Turkish in classes, and insufficient materials and technological equipment in schools such as CD, TV, and computer. This result was similar to the challenges and contextual constraints found to hinder the implementation of communicative language teaching in different EFL contexts (e.g. Lamb, 1993; Carless, 2002; Richards, Gallo & Renandya, 2001). Some comments made by teachers can be seen as follows:

- "Because of the crowded classes, games cannot be played. Students don't obey the rules, they shout, run, and make a lot of noise."*
- "Noise in class is not tolerated in Turkish school system, school administrators think this is because the teacher is not competent."*
- "I tried to use these activities, games, but then could not finish the book and felt behind."*
- "When I tried these activities, lower level students felt behind."*
- "I tried to explain everything in English, but it took a lot of time and students did not understand. I ended up speaking in Turkish again."*
- "Students don't stop speaking in L1 during communicative activities."*
- "Students need to learn in Turkish, especially the grammar."*

Needs and expectations of teachers from future INSETS (Research Question 5)

Majority of the teachers (93%) said that they wanted to attend a further in-service education course. 45% of the teachers preferred a long-term and 55% preferred a short term course. Responses to the open ended survey and the interview questions revealed that the teachers had concerns mainly with applying the new approaches and techniques they learned in the course into their own contexts; thus, they mainly expect solutions that would fit into their own realities as well as useful materials and resources and opportunities to use and practice English in future courses. Some comments by the teachers can be seen below:

- "I want to know how I can both teach grammar, cover the book, and do such activities in such a limited time."*

- "I want to learn activities and games that won't cause noise in crowded classes."*
- "The activities, techniques offered in the course were too complex and difficult. We need simpler and easier activities for primary schools."*
- "I want a course including more information and applications suited for the coursebook contents."*
- "More story telling, games, songs, art and craft activities should be included."*
- "Visual materials, vocabulary games, puzzles, worksheets, CDs may be given. I spend all my time searching in the Internet for activities and materials."*
- "I want an English speaking atmosphere to improve my English"*

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future INSETs

Although recent theoretical developments and research indicate a shift from traditional in-service training to professional development models (Avalos, 2010), as evidenced in the present study, in practice, one-shot INSET training activities that are top-down and mainly transmission-based are still common. The present one-shot top-down INSET was condemned to face challenges right from the beginning as it aimed to achieve many ambitious goals—a very intense content—in just a week in classes of 80-100 teachers and without the necessary planning, preparation or needs analysis.

The study; however, was successful in detecting the specific problems and limitations of the INSET activity; thus, it confirmed the necessity of systematic after-course evaluation studies conducted in *local* contexts. This study was carried out in Turkey as the local context to be able to evaluate an in-service education program after it ended in a more detailed manner and to provide suggestions for its improvement. However, although the study is conducted in Turkey, the results may also be relevant to other contexts in the world because despite its limitations, 'one-shot' method is still the most economically and therefore most commonly preferred approach in in-service teacher education in many countries. The results are especially pertinent to many European and Asian contexts which went through similar curriculum reform movements aiming at communicative language teaching and constructivist approaches (Nikolov & Curtain, 2000; Nunan, 2003). Such communicative and constructivist curriculum reforms are becoming globally widespread; yet, many problems are reported for the failure of these approaches by teachers. In-service education, on the other hand, is a big opportunity for teacher development and for successful implementation of curriculum innovations. Therefore, every attempt should be made to increase the quality of current INSET programs to enable them to achieve such desired goals in each context. This study pointed out that evaluation studies on INSETs should be an important part of such endeavors.

In the present study, the results revealed that the teachers' attitudes towards the course were positive in general and the execution phase of the course had many positive elements, such as the use of variety of theoretical and practical information and new techniques, use of a holistic inductive approach by modeling the new methods, presence of opportunities for teachers to participate in the activities and to collaborate with peers and reflect. However, the planning and evaluation stages of the course were seriously problematic, the course had no follow-up component, and the course suffered from various setbacks, such as insufficiency of materials and resources, lack of discussions about teachers' own problems to find solutions to them, uncomfortable setting, and transmission-based presentations. Nevertheless, the most important problem was that the course content was not based on the contextual needs of teachers and the teachers were not involved in the planning and the execution phases of the course. This lack of

connection between the teachers' own realities and the INSET resulted in low sustained impact especially on the classroom practices of teachers, which supports the previous literature such as Fullan (1995; 2001) and Hayes (2000).

The study has many implications for future INSETs. First, the study revealed that teachers expect future INSETs to be designed based on their needs and specific contexts. This finding is in line with the existing literature. As Hayes (2000) suggests "[T]eachers are at the heart of any innovation within national education systems and, therefore, that *they* and *the contexts in which they work* need to be studied to inform the innovation process" (p. 136, emphasis added). Hence, to ensure maximum quality, relevance, and impact on teachers, a comprehensive needs-analysis should be conducted before INSETs (John & Gravani, 2005). A committee including members from both universities and practicing teachers can be formed to take charge of the needs analysis and the planning stage of such courses.

The teachers' needs should be taken into consideration not only during planning, but also during the execution phase of the courses. During the course, a "participant-centered approach" should be followed; thus, the content of the program should be negotiable, teachers should have rights to say in the selection of issues, materials, and activities, and when they have any concerns with any aspects of the innovation, these conflicts should be immediately addressed and resolved (Wolter, 2000, p. 315). The participants should feel that they are valued and involved in the process of teaching and learning to develop a sense of ownership which is needed for a change to occur (Fullan, 1982).

Moreover, a "context-sensitive approach" (Bax, 1997, p. 233) or "ecological perspective" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 188) should be taken, giving priority to teachers' existing experiences and local classroom contexts. Teachers should be allowed to describe their own problems and situations and share their expertise (Bax, 1997, p. 237) as they are in a better position to determine how the innovation should be implemented than the course instructors. A context-sensitive approach would fill in the gap between the ideal teaching methodologies introduced in training courses and teachers' practical realities.

An INSET course promoting a constructivist curriculum should be designed reflecting this model in teacher training; hence, the course should enable teachers to socially-construct new information building upon their prior knowledge through reflections on current beliefs, collaborations, and social interactions (Reagan & Osborn, 2002, p. 59). Participant teachers should be given more opportunities to get involved in the learning experiences by participating, creating materials, and solving real life problems within a context as similar as possible to the real life one (Wallace, 1991; Waters, 2006; Reagan & Osborn, 2002). To help teachers to replace their old memories of learning/teaching, a new modeling including different model lessons and classroom techniques should be offered in INSET courses by either trainees or through sample videos (Hockly, 2000).

In the present study, teachers expressed a need for more time and resources such as handouts, materials, CDs to be used for future reference and for classroom use. Therefore, technical and technological infrastructure should be provided by government authorities to meet this need. Teachers can also be given opportunities to prepare materials, activities, games more appropriate for crowded classes, and low proficiency level students parallel with their textbooks or syllabus.

Teachers also need some improvement and education in their English language skills as open ended questionnaire responses indicate serious language problems which may be another reason for failures in implementation of communicative approaches. As language talk is the main medium of teaching and learning for young learners, especially primary-level teachers need high competence in spoken English to conduct the lessons orally (Cameron, 2003). Therefore, as

expressed by some teachers as a need, the courses should be in English aiming at enhancing oral spoken skills of teachers as well.

As the present study pointed out, the main problem was the gap between the course and teachers' practices. Therefore, follow-up monitoring and support should also be incorporated in future courses to bridge the course and the real context (Waters & Vilchez, 2000; Waters, 2006). For example, an aftercare workshop for follow-up can encourage classroom application of course learning and provide feedback on teachers' classroom teaching and the kinds of adjustments needed.

In summary, in order for educational reforms to be successful and promote productive change in teachers' behaviors, in-service teacher education programs in general should be planned in not a top-down one-shot manner, but as an ongoing professional learning process with a follow-up component. Authorities or change agents, trainers, and trainees should work in cooperation with each other at all stages of this professional development process. Teachers should receive in-service education based on their own contextual needs because as Fullan (2001) notes in the change process "uniqueness of individual setting is a critical factor as what works in one situation may or may not work in another" (p. 32). Teachers should also be allowed to participate and reflect on what they learn, they should be introduced with various new techniques and methods through different models, they should be provided rich resources and materials, and they should be valued and additionally supported and monitored in their own contexts so that they will develop a sense of ownership of the change process, which is likely to result in changes in teacher beliefs and behaviors.

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Appendix 1. INSET Course Program

COURSE TIMETABLE

| Hours Days | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------------------|---|--|------------------|---|--|
| 09.00-10.30 | Opening Ceromony Icebreakers-Warmers | Receptive Skills | Drama&Games | Productive Skills | What Have we Learnt? Group Presentations |
| 10.30-11.00 | Coffee Break | | | | |
| 11.00-12.30 | Introduction to the new English curriculum overview of the course | Classroom management | Songs&Chants | Learner Differences and Multiple Intelligence | Planning for Implementation in your classroom Group Presentations |
| 12.30-13.30 | Lunch Break | | | | |
| 13.30-15.00 | What's the difference? Small group discussion of key language curriculum issues and problems | Coursebook adaptation and material development | Story Telling | Assesment Group Presentations | Closing ceremony |