

Evaluation of In-service Training Seminars in Terms of the Views of Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims at determining the views of senior high school teachers on in-service training seminars provided by the Ministry of Education in Turkey. The sampling of the study consisted of 114 senior high school teachers (42 female, 72 male) who volunteered to fill in the survey, working at state secondary schools in Bartın city in 2015-2016 academic year. Descriptive survey model was used to carry out the study. The data were collected through a scale consisting of 21 five point likert-type items and one open ended item, which was validated by the academicians in the field of education. The open ended item asked "what should be done to increase the efficiency of in-service training seminars? The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS at 95% confidence interval. The answers for the open ended item were analysed through content analysis in which teachers' suggestions were analysed systematically and grouped under main categories. It was found out in the study that the views of teachers don't change significantly with respect to gender, experience and field of instruction ($p > .05$). In the open ended item, teachers mostly suggest that the seminars should be given by trainers with an academic career who are experts in the related field and familiar with the realities of teaching profession and they also state that the needs of teachers should be taken into consideration while planning the in-service training seminars. In-service training seminars should be sustained but revised taking into account the views and needs of teachers in order to increase their efficiency and participation of teachers.

Keywords:

In-service training; seminar; views; teachers

1. Introduction

In-service training activities are essential for teachers as in any other occupation since they enable them to keep up with the latest developments in the field of education. In-service training aims at helping individuals to adapt to the new technologies and new scientific information concerning their jobs and thus making them efficient in their jobs (Başaran, 1996). Also, in-service training seminars provide an opportunity for the parties involved in the process to discuss in detail and find solutions for the problems that arise during the implementation of the curriculum. So, Ministry of Education in Turkey organizes regular in-service training seminars for teachers.

In-service training is defined by Can, Akgün and Kavuncubaşı (1995, 195) as "teaching the knowledge, skills and behaviour needed to reach the performance level required by a particular job systematically starting from the date when the legal relationship between the person and the job was established until the date the person leaves that job". As for teacher training, Şahin (2006, 17) describes it as "the act of aiding teachers to acquire the knowledge necessary to carry out the teaching profession more effectively". As the knowledge and skills to carry out the teaching profession change over time, in-

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service training for teachers is fairly necessary to keep the efficiency of teachers. "Getting teachers to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude towards their job, in other words, to make them convert to lifelong learning individuals is achieved by in-service training" (Karasolak, Tanrıseven and Konokman, 2013). Also, as Şahin (2006, 19) puts it "by being *educated* in teacher training programs, teachers have the opportunity to use their capabilities and skills for development and improvement". Thus, it can be said that in-service training seminars reveal the potential of teachers.

As mentioned above, Ministry of Education organises the in-service training program for the teachers in Turkey. According to the Ministry, the aims of in-service training are; adapting the newly assigned teachers to the job, have the staff acquire a common implementation of the basic aims and principles of Turkish National Education, compensate the inabilities of teachers, have them acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the job, improve the professional competence of teachers and support the development of educational system (MEB, 1994). If all these aims are achieved, in-service training seminars will have a crucial role in the educational system of the country. To achieve this aim, the ideas of teachers about the training seminars can help a lot to develop the curriculum, plan the training and evaluate the process.

It is quite important to take into consideration the views of teachers so as to increase the efficiency of the seminars as they reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the seminars and they also aid in future arrangements to be made. Therefore, this study aims at determining the views of senior high school teachers on in-service training seminars provided by the Ministry of Education in Turkey.

2. Method

Descriptive survey model was used to carry out the study. The sampling of the study consisted of 114 senior high school teachers (42 female, 72 male) who volunteered to fill in the survey, working at state secondary schools in Bartın city in 2015-2016 academic year. The data were collected through a scale consisting of 21 five point likert-type items and one open ended item, which was validated by the academicians in the field of education. The likert items in the scale ranged from *definitely disagree* (1) to *definitely agree* (5). The score intervals for each item were as follows;

Table 1. The scores and corresponding score intervals in the scale

Statement	Score in the Scale	Score Interval
Definitely agree	5	5.00 - 4.20
Agree	4	4.19 - 3.40
Neutral	3	3.39 - 2.60
Disagree	2	2.59 - 1.80
Definitely disagree	1	1.79 - 1.00

The open ended item asked "what should be done to increase the efficiency of in-service training seminars? The likert items of the scale were divided into five subcategories defined as follows; functions of in-service training seminars, time planning for in-service training, efficiency of the seminars, quality of in-service training and participation of teachers in in-service training seminars.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.77, which means that it is highly reliable. As a result of the normality test, it was seen that the data didn't have a normal distribution. So, non-parametric tests were used to analyse the data. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS at 95% confidence interval. The answers for the open ended item were analysed through content analysis in which teachers' suggestions were analysed systematically and grouped under main categories. Statistical analyses such as mean, standard deviation, percentage, Mann Whitney-U and Kruskal Wallis were used to analyse the data in SPSS.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographic Data

Teachers of almost all school subjects were included in the study the most frequent ones being Turkish Language and Literature (14), History (13), Maths (12), Vocational Courses (12), Physics (9), Chemistry (9), English (9), Geography (8), Biology (8) and so on.

The mean age of the participating teachers was 40,16; ranging from 26 to 56 years. As for the experience of teachers, the mean experience of the participants was 17 years ranging from 1 to 26 years. The most frequent category of experience was 16-20 years with a percentage of 43%, which was followed by 21 years and more (23,7%) and 11-15 years (20,2%). There were fewer young teachers in the sampling, which was not an intentional outcome.

3.2. Item Mean Scores of Five Sub-categories

3.2.1. Functions of in-service training seminars: In the first nine items of the scale, the functions of in-service training seminars were questioned. The mean scores and standard deviation values of the first nine items are given in table 2 below.

Table 2. Teachers' views on the functions of in-service training seminars

	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	n
1	In-service training seminars provide the participants with knowledge regarding their field of study.	3,99	1,09	114
2	In-service training seminars increase the efficiency of the participants.	3,44	0,82	114
3	In-service training seminars improve the instructional skills of the participants.	3,50	0,85	114
4	In-service training seminars improve the communication skills of the participants.	3,25	0,87	114
5	In-service training seminars increase the self-confidence of the participants.	3,21	0,78	114
6	In-service training seminars enable the beginning teachers to adapt to their job and institution.	3,44	0,85	114
7	In-service training seminars improve the assessment and evaluation skills of the participants.	3,57	1,15	114
8	In-service training seminars provide the participants with the information, skills and behaviours required by the innovations and developments in the field of education.	3,27	0,87	114

When the above table is examined, it is observed that the highest mean score belongs to the first item ($\bar{X} = 3,99$), which means that the teachers agree with the idea that the seminars provide knowledge concerning their field of study. The lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 3,21$) and standard deviation value belongs to the fifth item, which means that the participating teachers are neutral on whether the seminars improve their self-confidence or not.

3.2.2. Time schedule in in-service training seminars: The second subcategory of the scale questioned time scheduling of the seminars. The mean scores and standard deviation values of the items in this category are given in table 3 below.

When the table is examined, the most remarkable difference is that the standard deviation values are relatively higher than the ones in previous category. It can be interpreted in such a way that teachers don't have similar views on this category, only the mean scores give a hint about their views. The highest score ($\bar{X} = 3,64$) belongs to the ninth item stating that existing seminar schedule decreases the efficiency of the seminars. It can be claimed that teachers want the schedule to be changed as most of

them agree with this item. The participants don't have a clear decision about the remaining two items as their mean scores, 10th item ($\bar{X} = 3,21$) and 11th item ($\bar{X} = 3,36$), are between 2,61-3,40 interval, which suggests that they are neutral about what is being questioned.

Table 3. Teachers' views on the time scheduling of in-service training seminars

	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	n
9	In-service training seminar schedule decreases the efficiency of seminars with its current format.	3,64	1,29	114
10	In-service training seminars should be planned so as not to restrict the vacation periods.	3,21	1,54	114
11	In-service training seminars should be extended over a period of time instead of short periods.	3,36	1,20	114

3.2.3. The quality of the seminars: In this part of the scale, the quality of the seminars are questioned and the participating teachers are asked whether the seminars are adequate, useful, necessary and given by experts. Their views are demonstrated in table 4 below.

Table 4. Teachers' views on the quality of the seminars

	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	n
12	The training given in the seminars is adequate.	2,54	0,90	114
13	In-service training seminars are useful.	3,53	0,92	114
14	In-service training seminars are given by the experts in the related field.	3,21	1,07	114
15	In-service training seminars are necessary.	4,09	1,12	114

The items that should be stressed here is the twelfth and fifteenth items. The 12th item has the lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2,54$) in the whole scale, even lower than the negatively worded ones. Teachers don't agree that the training given in the seminars are adequate. They may not be satisfied with the content of the seminars or they demand and expect more from them. As the first nine items of the scale questioning the functions of the seminars have an overall mean score of $\bar{X} = 3,45$ and the teachers also think that the seminars are useful in the 13th item ($\bar{X} = 3,53$), the latter interpretation could be regarded more reasonable. As for the 15th item, it has the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4,09$) in the scale. It suggests that teachers regard the seminars necessary. This is an important outcome as it may provide a hint about the motivation of teachers to participate in the seminars.

3.2.4. The efficiency of the seminars: The three items in this part questions the efficiency of the seminars, especially what factors increase or decrease their efficiency. The resulting scores obtained in the scale are given in table 5.

Table 5. Teachers' views on the efficiency of the seminars

	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	n
16	Inadequate social and cultural activities during the seminars decrease the efficiency of seminars.	2.93	1.32	114
17	Low physical quality of the places where the seminars are held decreases the efficiency of seminars.	3.71	0.91	114
18	Giving teachers equal opportunities in benefiting from training seminars increases the efficiency.	4.08	1.05	114

In this group of items, 16th and 17th ones were negatively worded. The 16th item stating that the efficiency of the seminars are negatively affected by inadequate social activities has the lowest score ($\bar{X} = 2,93$) and it implies that teachers don't have a common view on this item. Thus, inadequate social and cultural activities are not considered a problem by the participants. The 18th item suggests that giving teachers equal opportunities in benefiting from the seminars increases their efficiency ($\bar{X} =$

4,08), which has the second highest score in the scale. It is implied in this item that there is an unequal application among teachers when it comes to making use of seminars. Finally, teachers agree that the places where the seminars are held have a low physical quality.

3.2.5. Participation in seminars: In this group of items, the factors that may influence the participation of teachers in the seminars are questioned. The mean scores and standard deviation values are shown in table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' views on the participation of teachers in the seminars

	Items	\bar{X}	Sd	n
19	Participation in seminars is low as the certificates given aren't taken into consideration in promotion and changing the workplace.	3.79	1.16	114
20	Low financial assistance provided to participants decreases the interest in these seminars.	2.95	1.48	114
21	Teachers participate in the in-service training seminars willingly.	3.78	1.17	114

When table 6 is examined, it is observed that nineteenth item has the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 3,79$), which suggests that seminar participation certificates can't be used for pragmatic purposes that's why the participation rates are low. The 21st item has almost the same mean score ($\bar{X} = 3,78$) as the 19th one. In this item, teachers agree with the idea that they are eager to attend the seminars. The only unclear point here is that teachers don't have a certain idea regarding the relation between low financial assistance given to the participating teachers and the participation rate.

3.3. Difference of Mean Scores with Respect to Gender

There is a slight difference between the mean scores belonging to female and male teachers and Mann-Whitney U test was made to test whether the difference is significant or not. The output of the analysis is given in table 7 below.

Table 7. Difference of mean scores with respect to gender

Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Female	42	57,05	2396	1,493E3	,911
Male	72	57,76	4159		

As it is demonstrated in table 7, mean ranks of both genders are very close to each other. The p value verifies that there is not a significant difference between the mean scores ($p > .05$). It can be interpreted in such a way that male and female teachers have similar views on in-service training seminars.

3.4. Difference of Mean Scores with Respect to Experience

As it was mentioned in the first part of the findings, the experience of the teachers involved in the study ranges from one year to twenty-six years. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test whether the views of teachers differ in terms of experience. The results of the analysis are shown in table 8.

Table 8. Difference of mean scores with respect to experience

Experience (years)	n	Mean Rank	df	χ^2	p
1-5	2	15,75	4	4,862	,302
6-10	13	57,54			
11-15	23	55,59			
16-20	49	62,42			
21+	27	53,28			

When table 8 is examined, it is seen that the difference among the experience groups is not significant ($p > .05$). The first group differs from the rest as its mean score is remarkably lower than remaining four

groups. However, this is not enough to say that there is a significant difference among the groups in terms of experience.

3.5. Difference of Mean Scores with Respect to Field of Instruction

In order to find out whether the mean scores of teachers differ significantly in terms of their fields of instruction, a Kruskal-Wallis test was employed. The outputs of the analysis are shown in table 9 below.

Table 9. Difference of mean scores with respect to field of instruction

Field of Instruction	n	Mean Rank	df	χ^2	p
Maths	12	49,67			
Literature	14	59,68			
History	13	51,96			
Geography	8	61,75			
Physics	9	41,33			
Chemistry	9	41,17			
Biology	8	55,12			
English	9	59,94			
Philosophy	1	80,50	13	8,175	.832
Religious Culture	4	41,12			
Physical Education	3	74,17			
Music	3	49,33			
Drawing	2	52,25			
Vocational Course	12	61,17			
Unspecified	7				

As the table above displays, the mean scores of teachers don't differ significantly with respect to field of instruction ($p > .05$). This means that they have similar views about the seminars or there is not a concession granted in seminars peculiar to a specific field of instruction.

3.6. Open Ended Item

In the open ended item, the participating teachers are asked: "What should be done to increase the efficiency of in-service training seminars?" The most outstanding responses are given below.

Teachers mostly suggest that the seminars should be given by trainers with an academic career who are experts in the related field and familiar with the realities of teaching profession. This sentence implies that teachers may have suffered from trainers who lack the required knowledge and skills and possibly not employed in an educational institution.

They also state that the needs of teachers should be taken into consideration first while planning the in-service training seminars. Some of them state that the seminars are organised for the sake of appearances. The seminars, as they stress, should target the deficiencies of teachers and the content of them should be prepared accordingly. They point out that time planning is quite important. The seminar schedules should be rearranged taking into consideration the busy periods and vacation periods of teachers. When this isn't done, they believe that discontent may arise among teachers regarding the seminars.

The other points mentioned by the teachers with less frequency are as follows; the physical deficiencies of the places of seminars should be eliminated; participators shouldn't regard the seminars as an opportunity to have a vacation; the teachers attending the seminars should be rewarded; the subjects taught in the seminars should be taught not only in theory but also in practice and seminars should be supported by social and cultural activities.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The teachers involved in the sampling of this study have evaluated the functions, time planning, quality and efficiency of in-service training seminars organised by the Ministry of Education in Turkey and the factors affecting teachers' participation in these seminars. When considered generally, teachers' views regarding the seminars are usually positive and they have stressed some important points to be taken into consideration by the authorised people.

For the category of the functions of in-service training seminars, most of the teachers agree with the idea that the training seminars contribute positively to teachers. In the study carried out by Ayvacı, Bakırcı and Yıldız (2014), 65% of the participating teachers maintained that training seminars have positive contributions to their professional development. In addition, most of the teachers agree that the current training seminar schedule reduces the efficiency of the seminars and it should be rearranged, which is also stressed by Uysal (2012). Also, for the quality of the seminars, teachers regard seminars necessary and useful, which is mentioned in the studies of Gültekin and Çubukçu (2008) and Sarıgöz (2011). But they don't think that the training is adequate. For the efficiency of the seminars, the participating teachers think that everybody should be given the equal opportunity to benefit from the seminars. They point out that the physical facilities are usually inadequate, which is also mentioned in Bayrakçı's (2009) study. Teachers also indicate that they participate in the seminars willingly, which is also observed in Sarıgöz's (2011) study. Most of the teachers state that they want to participate in the training seminars in the study carried out by Ayvacı, Bakırcı and Yıldız (2014). It is maintained by teachers involved in the study that the certificates of attendance given in the seminars are ignored for appointment or promotion reduces the participation of teachers. Similarly, Sarıgöz (2011) points out that teachers should be rewarded for attending the training seminars to increase their enthusiasm to participate in the seminars.

It was found out in this study that teachers' views on in-service training seminars don't differ significantly with respect to gender, experience and field of instruction. The results obtained by Sarıgöz (2011) verify that gender doesn't affect teachers' views on in-service training. However, he states that there is a significant difference among the views of teachers in terms of experience, which doesn't comply with the results of this study.

In the open ended item, teachers mostly suggest that the seminars should be given by trainers with an academic career who are experts in the related field and familiar with the realities of teaching profession. This is supported by the findings of Bayrakçı (2009), who states that the main concern for in-service training activities in Turkey is the lack of professional staff. Moreover, as Bunker (1977, as cited in Ahmadi and Keshavarzi, 2012) points out "training programs have been planned by people who are not teachers, and it can be said that these people do not take into account teachers' emotions and their requirements" (p. 921). They also state that the needs of teachers should be taken into consideration while planning the in-service training seminars. Again, Bayrakçı (2009) draws attention to the same point and points out that "no research is conducted to identify the real training needs of teachers in terms of their professional development" (p.18).

The views of teachers should be taken into consideration to overcome the problems encountered before, during and after the seminars. To conclude, in-service training seminars should be sustained but revised taking into account the views and needs of teachers in order to increase their efficiency and participation of teachers.

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