

INVESTIGATING THE OPINIONS OF MoNE STAFF ABOUT INSET PROGRAMS VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the opinions of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) staff about in-service training (INSET) programs via distance education. The subjects of this study were the staff (n=15) of the Inservice Training Department of MoNE in 2008. During the study, the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews held with the (MoNE) staff by the researcher. The results of the interviews revealed the importance of needs assessment, the relationship between INSET program course content and participants' school curriculum, support mechanism in INSET programs via distance education, the application of what is learned and providing various opportunities to them that lead to their active involvement to the application of these programs, the characteristics of learning environments for these programs, INSET instructors' teaching competencies and skills to fulfill various roles in online learning environments, of measuring and evaluating the performance of teachers during INSET programs via distance education and of the effectiveness of INSET programs via distance education.

Keywords: In-service Training (INSET) Programs, Distance Education, INSET Programs via Distance Education

INTRODUCTION

Today "knowledge", "skills" and "competencies" become important concepts and an increase is observed in the amount of knowledge that people have and in the skills and competencies that people are required to have as the consequence of developments and changes taken place in the world. In line with these, teachers are required to develop themselves both professionally and personally in terms of their knowledge, skills and competencies they have in order to meet the demands of the societies in which they live and meet the diverse needs of their students. Delannoy (2000), at this point, states that teachers are now expected to know how to attend to the different learning needs of students and to create for their students exciting, age- and context-relevant learning experiences. In this respect, inservice training (INSET) programs are regarded as important means for the professional development of teachers.

In this regard, Street (2007) points out that teachers are different from their students in terms of their learning experiences and adds that they need ongoing professional development and support to update their acquired knowledge and skills with the ones that meet the demands of the environment in which the young people live.

On the other hand, technology, especially the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), becomes an important part of our lives as its direct and indirect effects can be observed in all areas. Meanwhile, the effects of these technologies are observed in education as observed in all areas. According to Levin and Wadmany (2008), change is observed not only in the characteristics of schools but also in teachers' knowledge, skills and competencies as they are required to have technical skills, competencies, knowledge, and expertise about information and communication technologies (ICT) in education in addition to their teaching knowledge, skills and competencies. They (2008) explain these as follows: "ICT creates new possibilities, dilemmas, and directions and encourages teachers to harness the new opportunities that ICT offers to make teaching and learning more meaningful and rewarding (p: 234)".

In this regard, various distance education programs that are considered as an alternative means of traditional education programs could be observed as one of the effects of technology and technological developments into education. According to Beldarrain (2006), technology has played a key role in changing the dynamics of each delivery option over the years, as well as the pedagogy behind distance education and is responsible for distorting the concept of distance between learner and instructor, and enabling learners to access education at any time and from any place. In this regard, the Internet and WWW are considered as educational resources used not only in traditional education programs but also in distance education programs. In the meantime, Trepper (1999) states that the internet is growing rapidly as an educational resource, providing the means for live and self-study distance learning. According to Trepper (1999), internet training opportunities are fast, becoming efficient and cost-effective ways for companies to keep their IT staff trained and current. Burd and Buchanan (2004) define distance education as any learning that takes place when the teacher and the student are separated by physical distance. Galusha (1997) points out that distance learning is considered as an appropriate medium for reaching adult learners.

Therefore, they need to have flexibility to compete with priorities in their lives such as those at work, home and school. According to Galusha (1997), even though distance learning provides some advantages for adult learners, that is to say it provides flexibility that adults need to have and control in terms of using time, place, and pace of education.

Besides, it is articulated that adult learners cannot escape from the barriers they are facing. In other words, they can easily lose their motivation because they lack face-to-face interaction with their peers and teachers. Hence, they constantly and naturally deal with possible excessive prices and expenditures for initiating distance learning and lack of faculty support. In the meantime, according to Eastmond (1998), distance education has expanded to the Internet to the extent that in some settings the terms distance learning and Web-based courses are becoming synonymous. In this framework, in the present study, "distance education" is used as the synonymous of "distance learning", "e-learning" and "web-based learning".

Today, various INSET programs via distance education are observed for the training of inservice teachers in addition to traditional INSET programs organized for teachers. It is, also, observed that the Internet and WWW are widely used as a means of instruction during these programs.

In other words, it could be said that the distance education facilities are considered as part of teacher professional development programs through integrating various distance education means – especially Internet and WWW into teacher professional development programs. This fact could be interpreted as one of the possible reflections and implications of technological developments and changes observed in the world upon professional development and/or inservice training programs for teachers. As Chellman and Duchastel (2000) state, distance education is seen as an important answer to the professional development needs of large masses of the population. Meanwhile, Fok and Ip (2006) believe that “In an era of e-learning, Web-based learning should be an indispensable element of CPD activities in addition to the other activities such as participation in seminars, formal training courses, conferences, e-learning, and industrial visits (p:49)”.

The literature (Boutelle, 2008; Bradburn, 2007; Erbas, Cakiroglu, Aydin and Beser, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Overbaugh and Lu, 2008; Slepko, 2008; Stevens, To, Harris and Dwyer, 2008; Vavasseur and MacGregor, 2008; Yang and Liu, 2004) in relation to INSET programs via distance education indicates , positive effects and changes both in teachers’ and their students. When the literature is examined, it is observed that positive changes and effects are observed not only in teachers’ attitudes towards technology and feelings, ideas, beliefs, views, and about technology, beliefs and ideas about technology and technology integration to instruction, knowledge and skills about technology, their daily teaching as they integrate technology into their classroom practices, relations with their colleagues as they share and collaborate with them and work together, comfort and confidence levels to use technology , teaching self-efficacy beliefs and competencies, interests about technology, willingness and enthusiasm to learn and use technology, use of technology for different purposes, relations with their students but also in their students’ relations with their peers during instruction, academic achievement levels, performance and learning, technology knowledge and skills, use technology effectively and efficiently for educational purposes, willingness and enthusiasm to participate in the courses and class activities, comfort and confidence levels to use technology, interest and motivation to learn technology and attitudes towards technology.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Temel (2007) points out that the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey executes comprehensive studies in order for all individuals in education, mainly teachers and students, to benefit from ICT. He (2007) states that the training of educators on the use of ICT is considered as one of the subject areas emphasized by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey and in line with this fact, Temel (2007) expresses what to be done as follows: “For this purpose, the training of formator teachers and computer training of formator teachers is actualized through INSET programs in cooperation with the representative offices of international reputable companies, and during these programs both traditional and distance education methods are used”.

As the consequence of these, various INSET training programs on computer and Internet technologies are organized by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey in recent years for teachers in order to equip, to develop, to update and to empower teachers’ computer and Internet knowledge, skills, competencies and their classroom applications at their schools.

During these programs distance education facilities are implemented as web-based on internet. In this regard, the Ministry of National Education (2005) states that the necessary studies and procedures concerning putting into implementation of the "Teacher Training Project through Distance In-service Training Method" have already been completed in Turkey by activating the era's technology computer and internet as well as existing traditional methods and applications and it is also stated that the first example of this project will be on computer education for teachers and this project will be implemented as web-based on internet.

Within this framework, the aim of this study is to investigate the opinions of Inservice Training Department staff of the MoNE of Turkey about the planning, application and evaluation activities of INSET programs via distance education.

METHOD

Study Group

In the study, interviews were held with the staff (n=15) of Inservice Training Department of the Ministry of National Education of Turkey.

The staff that was selected randomly via simple random sampling technique formed the study group of the present study. When they are analyzed in terms of their genders, it is seen that 73.3 % (n=11) of them were male.

When the year of experience in teaching is concerned, it is observed that 40 % (n=6) of them were teaching between 6-10 years. It is seen that 66.6 % (n=10) of them were subject teachers in terms of their professional status.

Data Collection Instrument

In this study the researcher used a qualitative research method in order to collect more comprehensive data. Meanwhile the researcher used semi-structured interview technique in order to collect the qualitative data as the aim in semi-structured interviews is to find out whether the statements of the persons interviewed are coherent, what differences there are and to obtain true information about the subject by making a comparison. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are prepared before but the answer options are not defined.

In the present study, the researcher used the interview questions prepared and developed by Ozen (2008). It was reported by Ozen (2008) that the triangulation strategy was used to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview questions. One of the criteria used in ensuring validity and reliability in a qualitative research is "triangulation" and triangulation is used to obtain data with different methods collected for the research question and to test credibility of the findings obtained in this way as Yildirim and Simsek (1999) pointed out. Meanwhile, they (1999) stated that triangulation may also facilitate evaluation and explanation of the obtained results from different dimensions and thereby, the reader may have a better understanding of validity and generalization of the research results. Moreover, Maxwell (1996) stated that triangulation strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that you develop.

According to Yildirim and Simsek (2006), one of the fundamental principles of qualitative research is to accept that facts keep changing according to individuals and the context in which these individuals live, and also to accept, in the first place, that the repetition of a previous research with similar groups will not yield the same results (external reliability that is replication). They (2006) state that human behaviors are never static; and they are continuously changeable and complex in nature and they add "That's why an exact repetition of a research is impossible about social phenomena regardless of the type of the method pursued and followed. As seen, principles related to external reliability are in contradiction with the basic principles of qualitative research study. Therefore, external reliability has a different meaning for qualitative research study (p: 259)". In the present study, the researcher used the same questions in Ozen (2008). As the consequence of this, getting different answers are expected in the present study due to the reasons Yildirim and Simsek (2006) mentioned above.

In the meantime it was stated that the reliability of the interview questions was examined in two ways as; external reliability and internal reliability as Freebody (2003) pointed out. According to Freebody (2003), external reliability involves the extent to which independent researchers working in the same or similar context would obtain consistent results. Internal reliability, in the meantime, involves the extent to which researchers concerned with the same data and constructs would be consistent in matching them. It was pointed out that interview questions had both internal and external reliability (see Ozen, 2008).

Concerning the preparation and development of the interview questions, it was pointed out that the literature in relation to the subject area was reviewed and the criticisms, the suggestions and the recommendations of 8 subject specialists were taken into account. Furthermore, it was stated that before holding the interviews, the researcher performed the pilot study of the interview questions in order to obtain the final form of the interview questions as indicated in Ozen (2008). In the interviews with the MoNE staff, the following three questions were asked as in Ozen (2008).

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

Data Analysis and Interpretation

During the interviews the following stages were performed by the researcher. At first, the researcher took notes, converted these notes into interview texts.

Secondly, the texts were turned into matrixes by the researcher in order to ensure detailed, clear and comprehensible data processing and analysis process as Yildirim and Simsek (2003) stated and Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed.

During the formation of matrices, even though the researcher took only the perceptions and ideas related to the scope of the present study into account, the unnecessary perceptions and ideas were disregarded by the researcher.

Thirdly, the number of perceptions and ideas repeated in matrix was found out and the perceptions and ideas repeated for 4 times or more were considered as the general tendency of the participants. On the other hand the unrepeated perceptions and ideas were regarded as a finding which was peculiar to each of the group members who participated in the interviews.

As at the beginning of the interviews, the interviewees were guaranteed that their names would not be revealed and deciphered during the research, the participants were named with codes of letters (such as A, B, C) instead of using their names by the researcher. For this reason, the participants' statements were presented with these codes in the findings part of the present study. The obtained findings were interpreted and the results were deduced on the basis of the theoretical background information.

Limitations of the Study

The results of the present study are limited to the opinions of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) staff (n=15) who voluntarily participated in the interviews and who were working in the Inservice Training Department of MoNE in 2008.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study obtained as the consequence of the interviews held with the Ministry of National Education staff about the planning, application and the evaluation activities of INSET programs via distance education and the discussion of these findings are presented below.

What Is Your Opinion About The Planning of INSET Programs via Distance Education?

The INSET training needs of participants should be identified, be assessed and the INSET program priorities should be determined in accordance with these participants' training needs (A, B, C, D, E, G, H, J, L, M and O).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the literature (Kent, 2004; Treacy, Kleiman and Peterson, 2002) emphasizes and stresses the importance and essence of assessing INSET participants' training needs not only in traditional INSET programs but also INSET programs via distance education. The INSET participants should be informed in advance about the main features/ characteristics (e.g. information about the participants of the program, the necessary requirements for participating the program, technology facilities, course materials and other resources used during the program, time of the program and instructional activities of the program, others) of the program they would participate in advance (B, C, M, H, N).

The relationship between the INSET course content and participants' school curriculum should be established and be considered during the selection of the course content when and if necessary additional subjects and /or topics should be included in the course program (A, C, F, G, I, J, N). The staff development programs are expected to provide practical solutions to teachers' problems about their schools and professions. In this respect, the findings of Desmarais (1992) support this idea in that she (1992) found in her study that "Teachers agree that inservice programs should relate directly to problems encountered in the classroom, and that the program should include activities which allow for the different concerns and needs which exist among teachers (p: 13)".

In this regard, the content and the instructional activities of these programs should be related to not only school curriculum but also teachers' subject areas. Even though, Anderson (2003) points out that the course is useful to participants when it is designed by activities applicable to the subjects that the participants are currently teaching, Lieberman (1995) says that "Most of the inservice training or staff development that teachers are now exposed to is of a formal nature (pp: 591-596)".

Meanwhile Lieberman (1995) points out that these programs are not connected to teachers' classroom lives as they present various theoretical ideas that have both little contributions to teachers' continuous learning and impacts upon teachers' classroom practices.

There should be a support mechanism (e.g., professional, technology, psychological) that the participants would benefit from during the programs (F). Support is considered as one of the most important aspects of distance education programs. In line with this fact, the literature (Burns, 2002; Hasler-Waters and Napier, 2002; Restauri, 2004) points out and presents different forms and types of support (e.g., instructor, technical, student, administrative, and others) in distance education programs. Meanwhile, when professional development programs are concerned, the literature (Guskey, 1991) considers support as one of the most important elements and characteristics of effective professional development programs.

In this regard, the literature (Cole, Simkins, and Penuel, 2002; Polselli, 2002) reports positive results and changes in teachers' enthusiasm to participate the program again in the coming years, to learn more about technology and to develop their technology knowledge, technology knowledge, skills, abilities and their classroom and teaching practices, views about the school program, integrating technology into their classroom practices, their roles in their classrooms and in their students' academic achievement levels, learning and the quality of their projects having received support during the programs they participated in.

What Is Your Opinion About The Application of INSET Programs via Distance Education?

During INSET programs via distance education, the active involvement of participants and application should be emphasized. For this purpose, various opportunities should be provided to the participants in order to see, experience, observe the real-classroom applications of what they learn in INSET programs (C, D, F, G, H, L, O). Having reviewed the literature, Trotter (2006) states that there are some important points to be kept in mind in relation to instructional techniques to be used with adult learners effectively in adult development research.

As a result of this literature review, Trotter (2006) points out the importance of adults' learning experiences and interests, the learning environments in which adults learn at their own speed, reflection and inquiry in their learning. On the basis of this fact, during INSET programs the importance and significance of application should be considered and kept in mind by program organizers as an important part of these programs. Meanwhile, an emphasis should be given to the application of theoretical knowledge, skills gained, learned and acquired during these programs in that teachers, as adult learners, should see, observe and try out the practical applications of their INSET gains in new situations.

In this way, they could consider these gains in their daily classroom activities at their schools in order to meet their students' diverse needs. Furthermore; during INSET programs, various opportunities should be provided to participants in order to experience and to see the practical applications of what they have learned in new teaching situations and contexts.

In order for participants to see, experience, observe the real-classroom applications of what they learn in INSET programs, their active involvement to these programs is required. Active involvement of participants to staff development programs is considered as one of the characteristics of effective staff development programs. Through their active involvement to these programs, teachers as the participants of these programs see, observe how to use the knowledge they have in practice through various applications. In other words, they have a chance and opportunity to see and to observe the possible applications of the theoretical knowledge they learn in the program.

As the consequence of their active involvement, positive changes are expected in their knowledge, skills, behaviors ideas, views related to not only about their professions but also about themselves having shared their ideas, knowledge, views with their colleagues and with instructors during these programs, communicated and interacted with each other, tried out new things and experienced what they learn during the programs. In this respect, Wood and Thompson (1980) regard "lack of participant (teacher and administrator) involvement in the planning and implementation of their inservice (p:375)" as one of the most common defects of programs and recommend "Include opportunities for participants in inservice training to practice what are they to learn in simulated and real work settings a part of their training and encourage the learners to work in small groups and to learn from each other (p:377)" in their proposed guidelines for effective staff development having reviewed what educators say and what is known about adult learners. In relation to this, the finding of Desmarais (1992) supports the ideas mentioned above.

Accordingly, Desmarais (1992) found that "A significant number of teachers agree that teachers should be involved in the planning, selection, and method of evaluation of inservice programs rather than administrators or others outside of the school district (p: 10)". In this regard, what Anderson (2003) points out summarizes the importance of active involvement for the success and effectiveness of an online professional development course.

According to Anderson (2003), in online professional development programs, the participants' active and intense participation and interaction with the resources in the learning environments should be provided in order to grow professionally and the nature and the number of learning experiences that participants undergo determine their professional growth levels.

The programs should be performed in interactive learning environments where various audio-visual instructional technologies and facilities are provided and sufficient. There should be no problems about technological infrastructure and technological infrastructure should be appropriate for these programs (H, N, M). Teles, Ashton, Roberts and Tzoneva (2001) state that there a variety of characteristics and features associated with collaborative online learning environments.

Mioduser, Nachmias, Lahav and Oren (2000), in the meantime, point out the different aspects of web-based learning environments as: "The identities of their originators , their goals, their target populations, the developers' pedagogical conceptions and beliefs, which are either explicitly stated or implicitly embedded in the site's design, the configuration of technological features (p: 56)".

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the literature presents not only the importance and significance but also various important characteristics of online learning environments for INSET programs via distance education. According to the literature (Cercone, 2008; Herring, 2004; Norton and Hathaway, 2008; Street, 2007), the online learning environments of INSET programs via distance education should have some features, as:

The characteristics of adult learners and adult learning, flexible environments where different teaching approaches are effectively used and implemented, the effective

use and implementation of technology as part of teaching-learning process, the interaction between teachers and students as they motivate each other and act as partners in teaching-learning process to create a collaborative learning environment, easily accessible information and learning materials accessible and available computer, internet and other technologies, a support network for effective teaching practices, a variety of educational tools and materials related to course content and course activities organized during the program, scaffold time management, pacing of work, timely completion of tasks, the use of appropriate learning strategies, learner's sense of ability to succeed, facilitate self-regulating activities for learners, teachers' roles, the training needs of students, embedding of assessment within the learning process, creation and facilitation of problem-based learning and multiple approaches to knowledge development, flexible learning environment where they are responsible for their own learning and where they look for information.

According to Berge (2002), the learning environment should be designed in a way that learning is contextual, learning and learner centered and there should be planned pre-learning activities to take the full advantage of active, interactive and reflective learning in which learners are aware of why and what they learn, make the meaning through their interactions with the content, peers and their instructors then reflect their gains and deal with the material in their own pace, time.

Considering these facts, it could be said that the learning environments of online professional development programs should meet the characteristics of online learning environments mentioned above. The instructors of these programs should be assigned to these programs among the subject-specialists and they should have some competencies, they should be able to fulfill the roles that online learning environments require (E). According to Poon, Low and Yong (2004), in online learning and online learning environments the instructor's role plays as a factor that has impacts upon the effectiveness of online learning.

In this regard, as Fontaine (2000) says, "Introducing ICTs to the learning environment brings an entirely different set of capabilities to teachers and learners (p: 15)". On this basis it could be said that online teachers should fulfill various roles in online learning environments.

The literature (Poon, Low and Yong, 2004; Restauri, 2004; Seok, 2008) points out that in online environments online teachers should demonstrate certain roles, as: Instructional designer, discourse facilitator, subject matter and content expert, technology resource person, technology specialist and technician, motivator and an administrative advisor. When INSET programs via distance education are concerned, instructors of these programs are expected to have certain competencies as observed in the literature (Darabi, Sikorski, and Harvey, 2006 ; Furst-Bowe, 1996; Spector and de la Teja, 2001).

In their study, Darabi, Sikorski, and Harvey (2006) identify the competency areas that could be used in the selection and training of distance education instructors as follows:

To have effective communication skills and behaviors in learning environments, to encourage, motivate and stimulate learners to learn and to guide learners during learning, to use relevant technology effectively and solve technology related problems, to create and to provide an appropriate learning environment and learning experiences through which participants interact and involve in learning process actively, to evaluate course effectiveness, to monitor and assess learner progress and provide feedback, to use appropriate instructional methods and technologies effectively, to develop themselves professionally. According to Spector and de la Teja (2001), the instructors of INSET programs via distance education should have the following competencies, as: To create and implement highly engaging and effective online environments, to implement and utilize information technology facilities effectively in online environments online environments.

Meanwhile, the participants in Furst-Bowe (1996) study report the ability to use technology, to assist trainees in the use of technology, the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific technology, the ability to develop programs or systems as some of the competencies that instructors of INSET programs via distance education should have. During the application, of these programs, there should be various opportunities for interaction between and among the participants (H, M). In online learning environments interaction is considered as an important element and an integral part of online learning programs as they affect students' attitudes and performance (Hirumi, 2002).

In this regard, Battalio (2007) uses the term interaction as a general term for a variety of interactivities and examines different types of interactions in online learning environments, as:

Student-instructor, peer-to-peer, peer-to-peer-to-instructor, collaborative group and interaction with technology. When online professional development programs are concerned, as Chen, Tseng and Lin (2005) state, interaction is an important attribute for teachers' professional development online learning in that "online professional development provides a way for teachers to interact with colleagues and professionals across time and place and to become part of a global community of lifelong learners (Treacy, Kleiman and Peterson, 2002:46)".

McCrorry, Putnam and Jansen (2008) consider subject matter, tasks, representation of the content and organization and communication structure as key issues of interaction in online courses for teacher education.

What Is Your Opinion About The Evaluation Activities of INSET Programs via Distance Education?

The teachers' performance (their participation to activities, assignments, and others...) during these programs should be taken into account as a base for the evaluation (A, L, O). The evaluation should be made by the end of these programs, end of each unit or topic areas studied in order to see to what extent the program objectives are achieved or not. In this way, the effectiveness of these programs is examined through the feedback received from the teachers as participants (B, C, H). On the other hand, there should be a multiple choice type centralized examination (C, E, G, H, I, O).

The literature on distance education and online education programs considers evaluation as an important and integral part of distance education programs in which various assessment techniques and tools are implemented and utilized (Gaytan and McEwen, 2007; Lockee, Moore and Burton, 2002; Milam, Voorhees and Bedard-Voorhees, 2004; Sims, Dobbs and Hand, 2002).

In addition to formative and summative evaluation procedures, the literature points out the implementation of other evaluation and/or assessment tools and techniques as, peer and self-evaluation and assessment, examinations as timed tests and quizzes, various projects, discussions in electronic board, electronic portfolios, software simulations, assignments on a weekly basis with immediate feedback, case studies in online learning environments. When the possible implications of the assessment techniques and tools implemented in distance education programs upon INSET programs via distance education are dealt with, it could be said that during these programs, formative and summative evaluation procedures should be used together with other evaluation and /or assessment tools and techniques utilized in distance and online education programs. Additionally, observations, questionnaires, interviews should be used in INSET programs via distance education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The interview results indicated the importance and significance of identification and assessment of INSET participants' training needs, information provided to the participants before these programs start, the correlation between the content of these programs and their school curriculum and the support mechanism during the planning of INSET programs via distance education, application dimension of their learning during these programs, actively involved in the process, interaction in online learning environments, characteristics of learning environments where various audio-visual instructional technologies and facilities are provided and sufficient and the participants access and use ICT equipments easily, the competencies and qualifications of INSET program instructors since they fulfill different roles characterized and defined by the nature of distance and online learning, of evaluation for INSET programs via distance education in order to see to what extent the program objectives are achieved or not. Considering these, the following can be recommended:

The training needs of INSET participants need to be identified and assessed before these programs start, the importance of participant support needs to be kept in mind by program organizers during the planning of these programs, the participants need to

be supported during the application of these programs when they are in need of them, the correlation between the content of these programs and the primary school curriculum needs to be established during the planning and the application of these programs, the application dimension needs to be emphasized by the program organizers, participants need to be provided various opportunities to experience and to observe the practical applications of what they learn in the program, the instructional activities need to provide the examples of the classroom applications of the topics studied during these programs, the topics studied during these programs need to be related to their school curriculum, participants need to have opportunities to be actively participated in the application of these programs through various instructional activities, the learning environments of these programs need to be rich in terms of information and communication technologies, the technological facilities needs to be appropriate for the application of these programs, the instructor of these programs needs to be selected and assigned to these programs among the ones who have the necessary competencies and skills and who can fulfill the roles required for these programs, subject-specialists and academicians need to be selected and assigned to these programs as the instructors of these programs, formative and summative evaluation instruments need to be prepared and developed to examine whether program objectives are achieved or not , in addition to formative and summative evaluation procedures , other evaluation and/or assessment tools, techniques used in distance and online education programs and observations, interviews, questionnaires need to be implemented and used.

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