

Evaluation of EFL Teachers Opinions about Online In-Service Teacher Training Programs in Iran

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Abstract

Despite the technological advances of the 1990s which have led to increasing integration of web-based courses in educational areas, teachers' attitudes still have not been clearly diagnosed regarding the implementation of online in-service training (hereafter INSET) programs. Understanding factors in successful online programs from the point of view of teachers can offer suggestions for INSET program holders to promote the quality of both learning experiences of teaching courses as well as the quality of professional development for teachers. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to determine the opinions of the school teachers about online in-service teacher training programs in the Iranian educational system. More specifically, the present study examined the effect of different variables such as gender, years of experience on 150 participants EFL teachers from 10 different schools in Sabzevar, Iran. A researcher-made questionnaire based on five-point Likert scale was employed to collect data. The collected data were analyzed conducting t-tests and ANOVA. The results showed that teachers prefer online INSET; moreover, they prefer such programs to be held by university lecturers who are experts in their fields. In addition the results depicted the difference between the general perceptions of male and female teachers. Respondents think that such a program is a necessity for teachers' professional development. Implications for future INSETs were discussed based on the findings.

Keywords: EFL Teachers' Opinions, Evaluation, In-service training, Online learning, Teachers' professional development.

1. Introduction

A glimpse at review of literature depicts that many countries consider in-service training (hereafter INSET) programs as significant for teacher professionalism since such programs play a major role in increasing the quality of education. These programs focus on creating a change in the teachers' behavior after they start their profession. Such programs provide a life-long support for teachers. Teachers usually participate in INSET programs after their initial education to boost their efficiency and professional development. In other words, INSET programs are either means for some teachers to keep in touch with the recent developments in their respective field, or for some others an opportunity to refresh and broaden their previous knowledge as well as their teaching skills practice and management ability to cope with the problems in future. Teacher education programs can function as an important link between a nation's institutions of higher learning and the public they are designed to serve (Shahmohammadi, 2012).

Moreover, INSET creates an atmosphere of sharing. In such programs, trainees share and discuss their problems and experiences to find practical solutions or bring about new ideas with academic help from trainers (Turhan & Arıkan, 2009). Given that there has been transit from the traditional stage to the industrial stage, continuous trend of changes in different aspects of social life, considerable development in different sciences and technologies, technological advancement with their impacts on service areas of institutes and educational organizations, training and improving human resources of organizations are felt to be imperative. Given the abovementioned remarks, there is a need to discover and develop more effective ways of preparing teacher education programs at all levels to meet the challenges of a changing society.

There are dozens of studies on teacher education programs evaluation conducted both inside and outside Iran. Literature in this field indicates that in the process of evaluation researchers have focused on the content, social skills instruction, teachers' beliefs, and administration as different dimensions. Shahmohammadi (2012) examined the state of pre-service and in-service programs for teachers in Iran especially with the purposes of finding out the aims of in-service programs, their organization, nature of curriculum, the methods of teaching, and techniques of evaluation, educational agencies involved in this program, and their strengths and weaknesses. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the target group. The results reported that recent changes towards student centered learning and qualitative assessment have brought teaching closer to the ideal status.

Another study carried out by Birjandi & Derakhshan Hesari (2010) in Iran, displayed that most teachers were not satisfied with the in-service program; they believed that the program cannot boost their proficiency level. Although these studies provide some information regarding evaluation programs' in terms of their efficiency and deficiency, there is scant research on how teacher education programs should be administered. It would be beneficial to assess and review both the teachers and the students-teachers' attitudes towards online INSET. Therefore, the present study tries to examine the perceptions and opinions of novice and experienced EFL teachers about online teacher education programs. The findings can potentially have implications for program holders and educators in charge of teacher training classes.

2. Review of Literature

Without a shadow of doubt, education is one of the main concerns all over the world. Education can bring about learning experiences to lead students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. Teachers play key role to bring about this transformation. Teachers have multifaceted functions, they can function as educational leaders; can serve as councilors; can trigger change in the classroom and in the lives of their students and can shape or alter the environment, or even the future of a country. On the other hand, teachers can also spoil the lives of individuals or even ruin the future of a country. Becoming a professional teacher entails teacher education.

Teacher education is a multifaceted process. It includes teachers' preferences, pre-service training, practice period and monitoring and evaluation during this period, and INSET, (Demir, 2015). Among these elements, in-service and pre-service programs are an important step toward professionalization and receive considerable attention. Pre-service education programs offer some special courses for teacher-students in universities and teacher training centers in order to prepare them to teach and to cope with real language class problems in future before they graduate and experience real teaching. Usually, an in-service teaching program refers to professional development activities for all employed teachers, those with and those without formal qualifications offered after primary training and after they have had some teaching experiences. These programs range from occasional workshops to continuous, comprehensive, career-long programs of professional learning. Such professional development programs play crucial role in developing and maintaining teachers' quality, and improving their knowledge.

This issue is important because providing the programs and conditions that create better teachers have become a high priority in most countries that are rapidly expanding their educational systems to meet the education for all students (Ginsburg, 2011). It is widely acknowledged that education quality interpreted in accordance with a country's policies, practices, and standards of achievement is the product of many factors such as relevant curriculum, transaction modes, good learning materials, safe learning spaces, governmental support, strong leadership and so on (Ginsburg, 2011). To educate well-prepared teachers, well-designed INSET courses are crucial. To facilitate such goals certain principles should be considered in the design and implementation of programs. The principles are outlined as follows:

1. Consider in-service programs as part of a continuum of professional development.
2. Involve teachers in the planning and implementation of programs.
3. Emphasize pedagogical content knowledge in designing program content.
4. Use adult-oriented models of active learning as the pedagogical design for in-service programs.
5. Build reflective practice and action research within teacher learning communities.
6. Include all teachers in learning opportunities and base most of the in-service program at the school or school-cluster level.

7. Incorporate strong instructional leadership by school administrators and local supervisors.
8. Link teacher in-service programs to a more-holistic school improvement approach involving community members in planning for and monitoring school quality.
9. Successful participation in in-service professional development programs should receive official recognition by the ministry or local authority.
10. Consider the budget implications of building realistic and sustainable programs (Ginsburg, 2011).

In addition, it should be securitized as to what extent these programs are in line with teachers' and learners' needs. Just as the development of any program should be based on the needs of its audiences so do programs of professional teacher development. One of the prerequisites for implementing context-bound INSET models is to take into account teachers' beliefs and their context realities as well as to involve teachers in both the planning and the implementation phases of an INSET activity (Sandholtz, 2002). To catch up with the changes in teaching and teacher education theories, teachers' needs and experiences, and their opinions about all aspects of teacher education programs need to be accepted and reflected in such programs. Some studies have evaluated the needs and expectations of teachers in relation to their professional development as reflected in these programs. An investigation carried out by Razi & Kargar (2014) indicated that the status of the current in-service foreign language teacher education program in Iran is not satisfactory with regard to improving English teachers' language proficiency level, teaching skills, management skills, and evaluation skills. It was also revealed that the program suffers a relative inadequacy with respect to increasing teachers' motivation and the administration of the courses.

Another factor is setting. Determination of setting is an important factor in organizing INSTE. According to John and Gravani, (2005, cited in Uysal, 2012), Teachers need a friendly atmosphere where openness and collaboration are encouraged and where they can share their own knowledge of classroom, students and pedagogy with colleagues. Such INSET courses are often linked to improvements in quality of education and successful implementation of curriculum innovations. In a study conducted by Kavak *et al.* (2012), it was found that teachers participating in this study suggested that in-service teacher trainings be conducted in the teachers' own school, within working times, and by experts in their fields.

Other important factors are content, materials, and resources such as handouts, audio, and visual texts. According to Uysal (2012), whether new materials are created during the courses, and whether feedback and evaluation are gathered after the courses have further positive effects on the level of impact of INSETs on teachers' practices. Rahimi (2008) in his study reviewed the content of EFL teacher education program, its knowledge/competency base, procedures utilized to present that knowledge/competency to student-teachers, and the types of teaching materials that best suit this provision. Based on insights provided by Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell (2006), he proposed four principles for evaluation/selection of teaching materials and sources of information in EFL teacher training programs. These principles are as follows (1) aims and objectives of an EFL teacher training

program with regard to the knowledge/competency base, (2) student-teacher's role, (3) cultural issues, and (4) teacher trainer's role.

How to administer and how to deliver INSET is as critical as other factors. A review of studies on INSET shows that research in this area is desperately needed to improve INSET practices in general. At present, considering the fact that science and technology have improved in recent decades, more than any other time in human history, their role should not be ignored in INSET. Rapidly changing technologies and the need to integrate them into teacher education entails the restructuring of the current program. There is also a need for a needs analysis before restructuring the program. Recognizing and knowing the needs of today's teachers and how technology impacts their educating is one of the keys to providing them with such education that meet their needs.

3. Online Learning

Nowadays the use of Communication Technology has become an important part of the teaching-learning process. The emergence of new technologies prompted educators to understanding and applying these technologies for classroom use. Online learning is defined as an innovative form of distance education that delivers instruction to a remote audience, using computer networks as the main medium. In particular, online learning has captured the attention of many educational institutions throughout the world, and as a result, over the past few years, the number of courses offered online has increased to accommodate the increasing number of students who are interested in online learning. The rationale underlying the application of new technology is attributed to many economic, political, and societal factors. These factors include low cost, full access to various learning resources, and the ability to provide high-quality learning to off-campus learners providing students with more opportunities for interaction with instructors, access to diverse learning resources, and development of certain skills, such as time management (Al-Jabri, 2012).

In addition, web-based technology with the removal of the time, place, and political barriers has increased access to education for individuals located throughout the world; besides it has developed a cost-effective approach by providing interactive learning opportunities for adults and school quitters. Today universities are able to offer high-quality learning to anyone who has access to the Internet. Web-based learning provides a learning environment where different cultures, people, and needs are met. The use of online technology enables learners who are unable to attend face-to-face classes for whatever reasons to attend class from home or at work. It offers users with choices about when, where, and how they want educational material be presented to them.

Communication technologies fall namely into two categories: synchronous or asynchronous. The former refers to any real-time online interaction between learners and instructors through media such as online text-chat systems, video conference, whereas the latter refers to any non-real-time online interaction between learners and instructors anytime and anywhere through media such as e-mail, social networking sites, and Blackboard (Gasaymeh & Jwaifell, 2013). Each has its own pluses and minuses.

Asynchronous courses enjoy more flexibility compared to synchronous courses; because in asynchronous learning settings, students are able to access the educational material at anytime and

anywhere. Disadvantages of asynchronous courses are associated with moderating large-scale conversations lack of reflection time for students and intimidation of poor typists. The advantage of the use of synchronous online courses is that it allows learners to have choice concerning when and where they want to take part in the class activities. Disadvantages of asynchronous communication include the feeling of isolation and disconnection from other group members, and difficulties in keeping track of and facilitating the responses of large. (Al-Jabri, 2012). The focus of the present research is on synchronous online courses.

Although online-learning has got a special place in the modern education, however, when applied in teacher education learning, the attitudes towards online may be different. As noted by Tok & Dos (2010) if the online teacher education programs are well-designed to create new opportunities in teacher education, the cost of teacher training activities can be reduced. Hence research shows that online education via the web provides learners with an opportunity to develop new learning experiences by managing self-directed learning, and sharing information and ideas in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Online in-service programs with the removal of time and space barriers will provide more teachers with getting instruction at any time and any place.

Today more and more, educational practitioners appreciate a web-based course's merits and regard it as a useful resource for making the learning process more diverse and attractive. Yet, comparing web-based education to traditional face to face classes does not mean that the former is in the more right position. Gaining more insight into the participants' opinions and understanding teachers' attitudes toward the application of modern communication technologies and the need for quality professional development and technological training of teachers would allow educational practitioners select and incorporate communication technologies in the teacher education programs much better.

4. Research Questions

The present study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the online in-service programs from the perspectives of teachers?
2. Is there any significant difference between the pedagogical beliefs of Iranian male and female instructors about online INSTE programs?
3. Is there any significant difference between the pedagogical beliefs of Iranian instructors about online INSET programs with reference to their years of experience?

5. Methodology

The present study enjoys a quantitative and qualitative mixed-method design. The data collection instruments used in this study were a researcher-devised questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire (Appendix B) was devised by using the opinion and experience of several experts and teachers. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the personal, academic, and contextual profile of the participants. The second section consisted of content areas under study on a five-point Likert scale. In order to decide on these areas, the author first conducted interviews with the two

experts of English programs who gave useful insights into the professional needs of in-service teachers from their own perspective. Based on this information, on a review of the relevant literature on measurement of attitudes, informal feedback from teachers, as well as the researchers' understanding of language teaching and experience of language learning, the first draft of the questionnaire was developed. The first draft of the questionnaire later was examined and slightly modified. The total number of items in the questionnaire was 30. To estimate the reliability coefficients in the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha Analysis was conducted, and a value of 0.81 was found which is acceptable. In addition, the validity of the questionnaire was examined by two faculty members.

5.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 150 teachers with university degrees ranging from BA and MA to PhD. This sample was asked to complete a questionnaire about teachers' beliefs about in-service program practices via web. They had about 15 minutes allocated time to answer the questions. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 8 teachers. The purpose of the interviews was to provide more detailed explanation of teachers' attitudes toward online programs (Appendix A).

5.2 Data Analysis

Having collected the data, the analysis was done through computation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and means. *T*-test and *ANOVA* were also run to examine any relationships between questionnaire items and gender, and years of experience. Then the audio-taped interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively along with quantitative analysis.

6. Results

One hundred and fifty teachers from 10 different schools in Sabzevar participated in this study. As Table 1 displays, teachers have different years of professional experience. Furthermore, all of them had participated in in-service teacher training in their professional life before this study. 91.5% of the participants have computer with 90% internet access at home. 47.7% of the teachers considered themselves as average computer users and 30.7% think of themselves as advanced users.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristic	Number
Gender	-
Male	60
Female	90
Education degree	-
Bachelor	118
Master	40
PhD	2
Professional experience (years)	-
Less than one year	0
1-2 years	0

3-5 years	10
5-10 years	60
More than 10 years	80

6.1 Questionnaire Findings

The results of questionnaire analysis are presented in Table 2. As it is demonstrated, the majority of the teachers (67.6%) are at ease with computer and they favor online program more than traditional programs. 46% participants report that they do participate in online programs.

Table 2 The Mean and Percentage of Questionnaire Items

Items	SA%	A%	UN%	DA%	SD%	M
1. I feel at ease with using computer.	14.6	53	4.9	18.3	0.6	2.31
2. I think I will participate in online programs.	6.1	40.9	11.6	31.7	1.2	2.73
3. I have phobia for online equipment.	24.4	7.9	33.5	25		2.92
4. If something goes wrong I will not know what to do to fix it.	12.2	42.7	26.8	9.8		2.37
5. I think participation in online INSET programs should be done voluntarily.	34.8	53.7	1.8	0.6	0.6	1.67
6. I favor online INSET to traditional INSET courses.	18.3	51.8	9.8	9.01	2.4	2.19
7. I prefer the material to be presented by an expert in the respective field when the course is offered.	28	53	10.4	91.5		1.81
8. The time schedule of the program should be appropriate for the participants.	29.3	60.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.72
9. The instructional activities should provide the active participation of the participants.	27.4	61	1.8	1.2		1.75
10. Instructional activities should meet the INSET needs of the participants.	29.9	59.1	1.2	1.2		1.71
11. Online INSET provides better learning experiences.	18.3	40.2	15.9	14	3	2.38
12. Online INSET makes the training course more interesting.	22	43.3	14	11.6	0.6	2.19
13. Online INSET gives teachers opportunity to learn more.	3	36.6	28.7	23.2		2.79
14. Online INSET enable teachers to interact with each other better.		33.5	32.9	25		2.91
15. Online INSET saves teachers' time and energy enabling them to attend to other activities, too.	1.2	49.4	31.7	9.1		2.53
16. Online INSET reduces training costs.	36.6	49.4	4.9	6		1.67

17. Online INSET facilitate teachers' access to the latest techniques and methods.	27.4	52.4	11.6		1.83
18. Online INSET contributes to teachers' autonomy.	27.4	48.2	12.8	0.3	1.91
19. Online INSET helps teachers to keep abreast of new technology	27.4	51.8	12.2		1.83
20. Online programs can accommodate a large number of teachers at a time.	21.3	54.3	15.9		1.94
21. Administrators should offer sufficient online facilities to implement online INSET	21.3	56.7	13.4		1.94
22. Administrators should offer courses for teachers with limited computer skills.	20.1	56.7	14.6		1.93
23. The accessibility of the internet and computer facilities should be taken into consideration.	22	54.3	15.2		1.93
24. The INSET needs of participants should be identified during these programs.	22	50	18.9	0.6	1.98
25. Today online programs are a necessity.	23.2	51.8	15.9		1.93
26. I think traditional programs are better, when it comes to making teachers actively involved in the teaching-learning process.	1.8	29.9	12.8	47	3.15
27. I think in traditional programs the specific techniques and lessons are modeled by the trainers better.	4.3	36.6	9.8	40.9	1.2 2.95
28. I think traditional programs are suitable for the computer-illiterate.	16.5	60.41	14.6		1.98
29. In traditional programs teachers collaborate with their peers more.	44.5	47			1.51
30. In traditional programs the physical atmosphere is of more fun.	37.2	42.7	6.1	5.5	1.78

Note: SA: Strongly Agree A: Agree D: Disagree SD: Strongly Disagree, % Percentage, M: Mean

6.2 Interview Report

During the interviews, six interviewees said that they would like to attend such an online- in-service program for their in-service professional development as it appears below:

A. "I'll attend such a program if the program include both latest educational theories, especially those related to language teaching, and teaching practice. What is important for me is that the in-service professional development should expose us to the latest theories or concepts in our field and offer opportunity to share our experiences and exchange our practice, and learn from each other. What's

more, the program should be goal-oriented, that is, it should increase our knowledge in daily teaching.”

B. “I think an online program is more convenient for teachers, because they have heavy load work. I support such programs. Some teachers are so busy they cannot participate in these programs. So, the role of online programs is very important.”

C. “It is a good idea. Because some teachers may have problems which prevent them from participating in in-service programs. When it is supposed to be held online, we can follow it better. The important factor is time I think.”

D. “I have been teaching English for more than ten years. Of course, I know the reform that our Ministry of Education is now implementing on teaching with this fast pace, and we need to update ourselves. But how can we do it? I have to teach over ten hours a week, two different courses. After this, I have to save some time to take care of the family, so what can I do with my professional development? I know it’s important and necessary, if there would be such program it would be very convenient, consequently we’d not miss in-service programs. I will participate in this program if the education office offers bonus for internet connection.”

As for item five 88.5% highly agreed that the course should be optional. They did not want to attend the courses obligatorily. About item six 69.9% teachers reported that they would prefer online to traditional programs. Concerning item seven, 8.4% participants believe that the courses should be presented by experts. Almost All teachers in the interview strongly agreed on the same issue as well.

B. “The instructors should be lecturers; they should be experts in the respective area; they should be knowledgeable, they should be among those who are familiar with teaching issues. Those who have been successful in teaching should be invited to share their experiences with other colleagues. In addition, we like to receive training on concepts and scientific developments related to our subject matter, new approaches for instructional strategies and methods.”

Regarding item eight, the majority of the teachers (89/7%) deemed that the time for the program should be suitable to encourage participation; besides, the interviewers reported that they sometimes are not duly informed of programs as explained in the following comment:

A. “Sometimes school managers and principals do not inform teachers of programs. We sometimes miss programs; if programs are announced by text messages or phone, it would be convenient.”

With respect to items nine and ten, teachers expressed that they desire such programs involve them actively and enable them use and share their teaching experiences and use other colleagues’ experiences. They complained that sometimes in-service programs were inefficient, and did not lead anywhere. They like their needs to be met by such programs. Interviewers stated they sometimes do not know the ends of such programs. They think such programs have wasted their time without taking them anywhere.

A. “The challenges of such programs are that these programs are not goal-oriented. They are offered by some non-experts without sufficient knowledge in their fields. These programs have been held in

order to pass a course rather than being considered as serious matter. They have been held without any results. They were held in vain, without any aim.”

Regarding items eleven through item twenty, about 50% to 70% of teachers emphasize the advantages of online programs.

A. *“The courses enable teachers to upgrade their knowledge through participating in online activities. In other words, they give teachers more opportunities to get involved in the learning experiences by participating and sharing their experiences. Teachers have more time to prepare resources such as handouts, materials, CDs to be used for future reference and for classroom use. These classes should be offered without fees. Some teachers do not participate in such classes because they have to pay for them. If they are free, more teachers will participate. I think internet charge cards and technological facilities should be provided by education authorities to meet this need.”*

B. *“In-service education facilitates teachers’ access to the latest techniques and methods as an online in-service education creates a continuous and accessible environment for teachers. The use of online programs would bring about change in teachers’ trend of teaching. They might become familiar with new materials by searching the net.”*

With regard to items twenty one to twenty two, about 70% stated that there should be sufficient facilities to implement such programs. They stated that the education office or ministry of education should pay for the internet charges of online programs. In their interview, they pointed out that certain teaching of computer skills should be taken into count for the lack in computer literacy.

A. *“If the education office does not receive fees for such programs or get the fees through method, or it offers bonus charge for internet connection, that might serve as an incentive; as a results, more teachers will participate in such a program.”*

B. *“Given the advances of information technology and the computer sciences, teachers expect to learn computer skills which would help them to take advantage of online courses with ease. If such a class is offered, teachers will be more motivated to attend online courses. So far, some of our colleagues have participated in computer classes. With such skills, teachers can use the internet to get needed materials/test samples in their filed or for their students.”*

With respect to item twenty four, 75% believed that for the sake of the effectiveness of the program, the participants can be given an opportunity to control the process of their own development and choose the topics and activities they need to investigate. Similarly, the participants believed INSET courses should identify their actual needs rather than offer a course just for the sake of presenting such course. They reported that before carrying out a program, a need analysis should be conducted to hold the courses in line with their needs. They mentioned that mostly such programs laid less emphasis on the issues existing in teaching, but focused too much on its theories.

B. *“In my opinion, the program for in-service professional development should be something that can lead to a goal-oriented practice. It can attract us to follow it willingly and continuously, and we can have it as a base to improve our daily teaching, and share our experiences with our colleagues, and of course, participating in online programs can help us to learn more and further practice toward our professional development”*

C. "As a matter of fact, when talking about the "in-service teacher training program", we expect that teachers be directly taken into account. I mean, those who are responsible for holding these programs should pay attention to our needs, they should offer programs that meet our needs. For the content of the program, the education experts ask teachers' opinions, a needs survey has to be conducted. They should try to design and hold a program in line with those identified interests and working needs."

Concerning item 25, 70% believed that today online programs are essential. As far as the remaining items are concerned, approximately 40% to 70% respondents stated that traditional programs are suitable for the computer-illiterate.

6.3 Gender Difference and Years of Experience

To determine whether there is a difference between male participant's opinions, an independent *t*-test was run. The results were presented in tables 3 and 4. According to Table 4, with alpha set at $p < 0.05$, there is statistically significant mean difference in the perception scores about online in-service programs according to gender. As seen in table 3, mean of females ($M=24.96$, $SD=14.491$) and is larger than that of males ($M=100.50$, $SD=29.011$).

Table 3 Mean for Gender

variable	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	male	50	24.96	14.491	2.049
	female	100	100.50	29.011	2.901

Table 4 Independent Samples T-Test for Gender Differences

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
id	Equal variances assumed	14.892	0.000	-19.608	148	0.000	-75.450	3.848	83.054	67.846
	Equal variances not assumed			-21.164	147.987	0.000	-75.450	3.565	82.495	68.405

not
assumed

To find out whether there is any difference among teachers' opinions in terms of years of experiences, one way ANOVA was carried out (Table 5). It should be mentioned that teachers with more than one year experience were classified as less experienced and those with more than five years of experiences were classified as experienced. The results revealed that there is a significance difference among teachers in terms of years of experience. As the following table shows, the mean of for the less experienced group (M 5.50) with $p=0.00$ is smaller than 0.05 and indicates a statistically meaningful difference among the groups. Thus, years of experience have a meaningful effect on teacher's opinion about online in-service programs.

Table 5 Mean For Years of Experience

Years of experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
less than five	10	5.50	3.028	.957
more than ten	140	67.88	40.693	4.132

Table 6 One Way ANOVA For Years of Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	223055.771	3	74351.924	178.634	0.000
Within Groups	60768.869	146	416.225		
Total	283824.640	149			

7. Discussion

Based on the results, it can be claimed that the importance of needs analysis including need identification, assessment of learners' abilities, and assessment of the teaching environment should be taken into account when planning or developing teacher training services, since identifying and satisfying the needs of teachers determine the applicability of the service that is provided. As regards the aims of in-service programs, it is expected that training programs should offer opportunity for teachers' involvement, commitment and experiential gains, and involve learning by doing. Moreover, training should aim to provide teachers with proficiency in the execution of given tasks. On the basis of findings of the current study, the active participation of INSET participants during the application of these programs should not be ignored. By active participation it means that the participants in the

context of online INSET programs can practice by trying out new things, modeling new experiences while experiencing and trying out new things; the participants can take advantage of opportunities in order to boost their professional development. The current paper is one of the first study of its kind evaluating teachers' opinions regarding on line training courses in Iran. Some studies (TOK & DOS, 2010) conducted in Gaziantep City in Turkey reported that teachers believe that online programs will increase the teachers' technology skills and will be more useful than traditional in-service education. Furthermore, they view online programs as an essential tool needed for teachers' professional development. The findings of this paper are in agreement with the above mentioned study.

In general, since the participants of the present study report technological changes in their setting, accessibility to internet, confidence in their uses of technologies, and their knowledge of these technology and computer skills, online INSET programs are counted as a necessity. Of course some respondents acknowledged that they were computer illiterate and would not participate in online programs. Thus teachers also need some improvement and education in their computer literacy and internet knowledge to participate in such courses. 44% of respondents preferred attending traditional programs to collaborate contact with their peers. It seems that in traditional programs collaboration and actual contact with peers and their lectures has had a positive impact on teachers' affection especially among older teachers with more experience.

As the findings indicate the respondents' opinions supported the merits of online programs mentioned in the questionnaire. Program holders need to appreciate the advantages of such programs. Thus when planning a program, they need to consider time flexibility, needs, cost, availability of internet, and setting. As for gender variable, there were significant differences in the responses of both males and females. Regarding years of experience, there is difference between less experienced and more experienced teachers' opinions. In a nut shell, respondents preferred online training to the conventional method because of its flexibility and convenience. Online courses could be a convenient way of perusing professional development for teachers to study from their own location, in their own time.

8. Conclusion

Planning for a comprehensive in-service teacher professional development program is normally driven by policy and curriculum reform and organized by national education authorities, However, it is important that teachers, school administrators, supervisors, and in-service teacher educators be involved in the planning of both the structure and the content of in-service programs so that both their needs and their students' needs are addressed. In particular, if teacher involvement and the inclusion of classroom realities are taken into account in program design, it would promote teachers' ownership of and support for the programs.

The results of the present study revealed that teachers' attitudes towards online programs were positive in general, and the use of a new technology offers opportunities for teachers to participate in the activities and to collaborate with peers and reflect. However, teachers point out that the planning and evaluation stages of the online course, the contextual needs of teachers as well as the characteristics of teachers and their facilities, their internet knowledge and computer literacy need to be considered. In the current research project, teachers expressed a need for more time and resources such

as handouts, materials, CDs, etc. to be used for future reference and for classroom use. Therefore, technological infrastructures should be provided by administrative authorities to meet these needs.

Future research should further identify and contrast the impact of teachers' place of residence whether in the city or remote villages. Researchers should also consider how government facilities contribute to implementing programs and what technical and technological infrastructures should be provided by government authorities. Moreover, another line of research could investigate the content and resources for offering such courses. The designing of curricula compatible with computer use puts extra burden on administrators' shoulders. The sample of the current study was small. Conducting the same study with a bigger sample can yield more or different findings than the ones found in this study. Administrators should also consider the results of such a study while designing and altering the materials for teacher education courses.

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Appendix A

Interview questions:

1. What are your opinions about in-service teacher training program (INST) held via online?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online INST?
3. What factors should be taken into account in offering online INST?
4. As a teacher, who do you like to attend offer such courses?
5. What factors encourage teachers to attend online INST?
6. What are the factors that limit attending such programs?
7. What are your suggestions and recommendation on improvement of the process of in such courses?
8. How do you like in-service programs to be announced?
9. In general, do you think the use of online facility in the programs would be useful? Why? Why not?
10. Should participation in such program be voluntary or obligatory?

Appendix B

Online in-service program evaluation (English version)

Directions: Please complete the following survey as completely and honestly as possible.

Name: (optional) -----

School: (optional) -----

Nationality: -----

Gender: Male Female

1- Are you an English teacher? Yes No

Qualification: Diploma B.A M.A PhD.

English Teacher Training: Attended sessions Not Attended

English Teaching Experience:

Less than one year 1-2 years 3-5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years

Level of computer literacy basic intermediate advanced

Do you have access to Internet at home? Yes No

Would you like to receive an electronic copy of the study results? Yes No

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Circle ONE answer only.

Note: INSET stands for in-service teacher training programs

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=undecided 4=agree

5=strongly agree

1. I feel at ease with using computer. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I think I will participate in online programs. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have phobia for online equipment. 1 2 3 4 5
4. If something goes wrong I will not know what to do to fix it. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I think participation in online INSET programs should be done voluntarily. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I favor online INSET to traditional INSET courses. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I prefer the material to be presented by an expert in the respective field when the course is offered. 1 2 3 4 5
8. The time schedule of the program should be appropriate for the participants. 1 2 3 4 5
9. The instructional activities should provide the active participation of the participants. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Instructional activities should meet the INSET needs of the participants. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Online INSET provides better learning experiences. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Online INSET makes the training course more interesting. 1 2 3 4 5
13. Online INSET gives teachers opportunity to learn more. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Online INSET enable teachers to interact with each other better. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Online INSET saves teachers' time and energy enabling them to attend to other activities, too. 1 2 3 4 5
16. Online INSET reduces training costs. 1 2 3 4 5
17. Online INSET facilitate teachers' access to the latest techniques and methods. 1 2 3 4 5
18. Online INSET contributes to teachers' autonomy. 1 2 3 4 5
19. Online INSET helps teachers to keep abreast of new technology 1 2 3 4 5
20. Online programs can accommodate a large number of teachers at a time. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Administrators should offer sufficient online facilities to implement online INSET 1 2 3 4 5
22. Administrators should offer courses for teachers with limited computer skills. 1 2 3 4 5
23. The accessibility of the internet and computer facilities should be taken into consideration. 1 2 3 4 5
24. The INSET needs of participants should be identified during these programs. 1 2 3 4 5
25. Today online programs are a necessity. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I think traditional programs are better, when it comes to making teachers actively involved in the teaching-learning process. 1 2 3 4 5
27. I think in traditional programs the specific techniques and lessons are modeled by the trainers better. 1 2 3 4 5
28. I think traditional pograms are suitable for the computer-illiterate. 1 2 3 4 5

29. In traditional programs teachers collaborate with their peers more.

1 2 3 4 5

Online in-service program evaluation (Persian version)

نظر سنجی در مورد بر گزاری کلاسهای ضمن خدمت معلمان بصورت آنلاین لطفا به این پرسشنامه به طور کامل و صادقانه پاسخ دهید. تنها یک گزینه را تیک ✓ بزنید.

نام (اختیاری)

مدرسه (اختیاری)

ملیت

جنسیت: مذکر مونت

آیا شما معلم هستید؟ بلی خیر

مدرک: دیپلم فوق دیپلم لیسانس فوق لیسانس دکترا

کلاسهای ضمن خدمت شرکت داشته ام

فوق لیسانس

دکترا

شرکت نداشته ام

10 سال بیشتر

10-5 سال

5-3 سال

2-1 سال

سابقه تدریس کمتر از یک سال

آیا در منزل دسترسی به اینترنت دارید؟ بلی خیر

سطح سواد کامپیوتر مقدماتی متوسط پیشرفته

تمایل دارید نسخه الکترونیکی نتایج دست امده این تحقیق را دریافت نمایید. بلی خیر

توجه اندازه با موارد زیر موافق هستید؟ فقط یک گزینه را علامت بزنید.

کاملا موافقم = 1 موافقم = 2 نظری ندارم = 3 مخالفم = 4 کاملا مخالفم = 5

1. کار با کامپیوتر برای من آسان است. 5 4 3 2 1

2. من در کلاسهای آنلاین حتما شرکت میکنم. 5 4 3 2 1

3. من از تکنولوژی آنلاین میترسم. 5 4 3 2 1

4. اگر کامپیوتر هنگام حضور در برنامه آنلاین دچار اشکال شود نمیتوانم آن را درست کنم. 5 4 3 2 1

5. به نظر من شرکت در کلاسهای ضمن خدمت بایستی بصورت داوطلبانه باشد. 5 4 3 2 1

6. من برنامه ضمن برنامه ضمن خدمت آنلاین را به برنامه ضمن خدمت به روش سنتی ترجیح میدهم. 5 4 3 2 1

7. ترجیح میدهم درس مربوطه توسط متخصص مربوطه ارائه شود. 5 4 3 2 1

8. برنامه زمان بندی بایستی برای شرکت کنندگان مناسب باشد. 5 4 3 2 1

9. فعالیتهای آموزشی بایستی برای شرکت کنندگان مشارکت فعالانه فراهم آورد. 5 4 3 2 1

10. فعالیتهای آموزشی بایستی پاسخگوی نیازهای شرکت کنندگان باشد. 5 4 3 2 1

11. به نظر من برنامه های آنلاین تجربه های یادگیری بهتری فراهم می آورند. 5 4 3 2 1

12. به نظر من برنامه آنلاین دوره آموزشی ضمن خدمت را جذابتر میکند. 5 4 3 2 1

-
13. به نظر من برنامه های آنلاین فرصت یادگیری بیشتری فراهم می آورند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
14. به نظر من این برنامه ها باعث تعامل بهتر بین معلمان میشود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
15. برنامه های آنلاین باعث صرفه جویی در وقت و هزینه معلمان میشود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
16. برنامه های آنلاین باعث کاهش هزینه های دوره تربیت معلم میشود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
17. به نظر من شرکت در کلاسهای آنلاین باعث آشنایی معلمان با تکنیک و روشهای جدید میشود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
18. به نظر من این برنامه ها به استقلال معلمان کمک میکند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
19. به نظر من شرکت در کلاسهای آنلاین باعث آشنایی معلمان با تکنولوژی جدید میشود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
20. روشهای آنلاین تعداد زیادی از معلمان پوشش میدهد. 5 4 3 2 1
-
21. مسولان مربوطه بایستی امکانات آنلاین کافی برای ارایه این برنامه ها ارایه کنند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
22. مسولان مربوطه بایستی برنامه آموزش کامپیوتر برای کسانی که مهارت کمتری در استفاده از کامپیوتر دارند ارایه کنند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
23. در دسترس بودن اینترنت بایستی در نظر گرفته شود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
24. نیازهای معلمان بایستی در طول دوره شناخته شود. 5 4 3 2 1
-
25. امروزه برنامه آنلاین یک ضرورت است. 5 4 3 2 1
-
26. روشهای سنتی بهتر معلمان در گیر فرایند آموزش و تدریس میکند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
27. معلمان در روشهای سنتی بهتر تکنیکها و روشهای خاص را الگو برداری میکنند. 5 4 3 2 1
-
29. برنامه های سنتی برای کسانی که سواد کامپیوتر ندارند مناسب است. 5 4 3 2 1
-
30. برنامه های سنتی جو فیزیکی جالبتری دارند. 5 4 3 2 1
-