

## Cross-cultural reflections of teacher trainers on in-service training<sup>1</sup>

### Çeşitli ülkelerdeki öğretmen eğitimlerinin hizmet-içi eğitim değerlendirmeleri

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#### Abstract

English language teachers all around the world are offered many different in-service training programs throughout their professional lives. These programs are given in varying lengths and quality. The question is whether they are sufficient or not in teacher trainers' perspective. This study looks at how trainers from different parts of the world view the in-service training systems in their countries. One common belief is that they expect more from their government.

**Keywords:** Teacher training, in-service, comparison of countries

#### Özet

Dünyanın birçok yerinde İngilizce öğretmenlerine yönelik hizmet-içi programlar bulunmaktadır. Bu programlar kalite ve süre açısından farklılıklar gösterirler. Araştırmanın sorusu, bu programların öğretmen eğitimcilerinin bakış açılarına göre yeterli olup olmadığıdır. Çalışmada dünyanın farklı altı ülkesinden olan öğretmen eğitimcilerinin konu ile ilgili görüşlerine başvurulmuş ve ülkelerindeki sistemi değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Hepsinin ortak görüşlerinden bir tanesi de devletlerinden daha fazlasını beklemeleridir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Öğretmen eğitimi, hizmet-içi, ülkelerin karşılaştırması

#### Introduction

As Sue Yin, a student at Marjon, Plymouth, has put forward, there are differences and similarities between cultures. Her example about Japanese people making noise when eating is very interesting. If Japanese people do not make noise, it means they do not like the food. However, it is the opposite in Malaysian, Chinese or Turkish cultures. In Turkish culture, for instance, it is very rude to make noise when eating. Ferhan Alesi, an expert in intercultural

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communication, gives another example, when people visit the Covered Bazaar in Istanbul, they are offered tea or coffee; for her, this is unique to Turkish culture (Akgün, p. 2007).

There are similarities as well, such as our duties as teachers, or parents. For example, one day my tutor, Tony, from Britain, working as the Acting Dean in an educational faculty then, said he had to go home early to cook for his daughter and her boy-friend. No matter what our duties are at work, as parents, there are things that cannot be avoided. In almost every culture, parents care about their children; they cook for them and want to be with them after a certain hour.

In terms of educational systems, the situation is the same; there are both differences and similarities among cultures. To illustrate, there are a great many Turkish teachers who would blame themselves because they cannot reach only one of their students among a hundred. Such teachers even take the role of a psychologist to find a way to deal with that one problem student. However, in other cultures, teachers would simply ignore such cases and send such problematic students to professionals. For many Turkish teachers, this could well be a reason to decide to renew themselves and receive in-service training.

The terms in-service training, professional development, or continuous professional development are usually used interchangeably. Teacher development is the process of becoming “the best kind of teacher that I personally can be” (Underhill, 1986, p. 1). The motivation that urges “teachers to go on learning comes from the sense that they have the potential within themselves to become better teachers through deepening their own understanding and awareness of themselves and of their learners” (Head & Taylor, 1997, p. 5). There is a hidden agenda here that teachers not only try to develop themselves but also try to find ways to change their students. As Fullan (1993, p. vii-ix) puts it very clearly, “it is crucial for teachers to respond positively to change so that neither themselves would fall behind in this gradually changing world, nor their students, who need to be prepared to cope with this developing and ever changing world.”

Increasing teacher performance is crucial in many countries of the world and improving “teachers’ job-related learning” is one of the suggestions given by Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2005, p. 110). Dean (1991) mentions that professional training starts with initial training and

lasts till retirement. “It is an active process. The teacher must actually work to develop. Development does not happen merely as a result of years of teaching” (p.7).

In terms of in-service training, there are similarities and differences among cultures. When they are analyzed, we can have an idea on which applications work well and what should be done to improve the system. With this aim in mind, in this study, first, the in-service teacher training systems in six countries, namely, Turkey, England, Nigeria, India, Malaysia and Ethiopia have been examined. Later one teacher trainer from each country has been interviewed and commonalities and differences among their perceptions of their systems have been looked at. The result shows us that there is a common body of belief that the training that teachers receive is never enough, in other words, teachers, no matter where they work, need more and more training. Secondly, when teachers do not want to take such courses, in other words, when they are forced, the process turns out to be a great waste of time. Lastly, leaving students deprived of their teachers creates an additional burden.

## **Method**

The present study was conducted during a post-doctorate study at The College of St Mark & St John in Plymouth, UK. At the time of the study, teacher trainers from various countries were attending a course. One trainer from each of the aforementioned countries was interviewed about the in-service training systems in their countries and their answers were recorded and transcribed. The questions were as follows:

1. What’s the system (in-service teacher training) like at present in your country?
2. Do teachers get support from the government to attend such courses? Who else do they get support from?
3. What sort of other opportunities do they have (in order to develop professionally)?
4. What sort of topics do they improve in (in such courses)?
5. Are the teachers promoted at the end?
6. When? Where? How long? (are the courses)
7. Are private institutions / associations / universities involved?
8. What about conferences, seminars, workshops? Can they attend them during the educational term?
9. As a trainer, what topics do you teach / like teaching?

## **Participants**

The interviewee from England was a geologist and then he took geography as a subject before getting into teaching. For the last twenty five years or so he had been in higher education and had been working for teaching teachers; mostly developing the teachers already in post. His main interests are empowering pupils in the learning process, shifting away from the old kind of view of the relationship between the teacher and the learner, where the learner supports the teacher; the teacher takes control, etc. He believes that the learner should own the learning, and they should become intrinsically motivated, rather than being dictated to. He is interested in the concept of learning, how people learn, motivation of learning and how people are motivated to improve themselves.

The Ethiopian trainer works as a teacher trainer and mainly focuses on using stories in the classroom. For teacher training colleges, she hopes to get towards practicum in mentoring because it is an area that trainees need development. Together with a group of teachers they set up a group, supported by the British Council (BC). They divide topics among themselves and give presentations. When they first started, they had teachers from three different levels; elementary school, high school and teacher trainers. It was just an interested group but finally the number started to drop. Now they take part in projects, and present them to the BC.

The Indian trainer works at a university as an initial teacher trainer and gives courses to primary and secondary school teachers because the initial teacher training is only for them.

The trainer from Malaysia works at a university and from time to time he runs courses for in-service teachers. His main concern is materials development and adaptation. The trainer from Nigeria works at a private sector and basically teaches classroom management, which is very important in Nigeria. She also teaches record keeping. She is usually called upon to teach phonics, in other words, training teachers on how to teach reading. Sometimes she gives workshops on reading instructions. Lastly, she is involved in language training for teachers who need to improve their English.

The Turkish trainer works at a state school and is involved in a big project with a group of teachers, who are writing textbooks. During holidays he gives in-service training all around the country. His favorite subjects are the role of a teacher in EFL classes, lessons with integrated skills, new trends and approaches in EFL teaching, using movies, drama, and the Internet in EFL teaching, and NLP in ELT.

In short, all the trainers enjoy working with teachers and are experienced in that. Secondly, they believe in the importance of motivation because the trainings are more useful when the teachers are motivated to improve themselves; when the intention comes from them. Another commonality is they all try to improve the teachers' basic skills in teaching, such as classroom management, skills teaching, materials development, use of drama, stories, and the internet in language learning, etc. However, developing the teachers' English level is of equal importance to them.

### **Results:**

**In-service training systems** (The information about the systems is taken from the interview recordings.)

### **England**

In England the Graduate Teacher Program (GTP) was set up in 2000 to help the Local Education Authority (LEA) to solve the teacher recruitment problem. (Griffiths, 2007) It initiated "a school-based form of training to teach" (p. 109), so it was found to be more relevant than traditional training models. Mayes (2001) states that the British "government has a stated aim in developing a teaching profession committed to professional development and providing teachers with greatly increased opportunities for relevant, focused and effective professional development" (p. 65). There is an expectation that teachers will improve themselves professionally all the way through their professional life and there is a huge provision for that. It is looked on as a duty or responsibility for the individual profession. Currently there are national priorities, which are a motto, called the three Ps. The first one is to do with pedagogy, the ways and means of teaching people different ways of organizing knowledge to be taught. The second P is to do with personalization. If there is going to be real educational progress, it is very much to do with the competence and the confidence of the individual person. So they have a national curriculum and a curriculum for the individual. The third P is to do with People. A hundred years ago lots of young people and a few adults were teachers. They are now looking at how other adults in the community will also help with the learning; for example, football could be taken by a retired professional footballer who has lived in the community but not necessarily by a teacher who prefers rugby but has to teach football.

In terms of opportunities, there is a plethora of them where teachers can be developed. There are subject associations which provide training and enablement. There are also associations that are run by the unions of teachers; such as, The National Union of Teachers, etc, which provide programs. There are also local authorities. For instance, Plymouth, which is the local authority, has an education department, where educational consultants and advisors design programs for teachers.

Another way of developing is the post-graduate program, which enables teachers to do a masters degree since all teachers are graduates. The government has been very generous. They provide £27 million for this program. Currently 5% of all teachers are engaged in such a program across the country.

Teacher training programs could be a two or three week programs or they could be a short one-day programs or conferences that teachers can go to. There are also developmental packages that the government provides to schools; such as, the thing called the PED Pack, or Pedagogical Pack, which includes materials schools can use. Schools provide their own training; they have five days a year when it is mandatory for them to go to school to help pupils. However, they are not always used in the way they should be used.

When it comes to the topics, the government has been looking at how they can put learning as a concept. There has been a push towards assessment for learning, which is about enabling the children to understand clearly what they want to know, understand and be able to do. The idea is to share with the pupils how they are assessed and show them how to get more marks by changing their work. It is not so much the pupil, pupils' doing some work and then being marked discretely. It is actually engaging the children themselves in making some judgments about what they think their work is like and what they might be able to do to improve it. That has been a major emphasis currently, about the processes of learning.

In England, professional development is not connected to promotion. However, it is obvious that if teachers are engaged in professional activities and improve themselves, then they can be promoted. The two go together. In Scotland, which is a different system altogether, teachers can undertake a master's degree and pay for it themselves but if they successfully gain the degree, their salaries increase. There is an incentive to do that.

There is an amount of money that goes into schools for teacher development. It is up to the individual schools to decide what they want to access their teachers to both in terms of individual teachers' improvement and the school's improvement. So all the schools have the school improvement plan on annual basis; for instance, if there is an issue about boys' underachievement, and there is a national conference in London about it, teachers can go there and their expenses will be paid.

### **Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, the in-service programs are supported by The Ministry of Education, teacher training institutes, colleges of teacher education and the university. Some of the aims of the INSET programs are to upgrade teachers' academic and professional knowledge; to prepare them for new roles such as, teaching at a higher level, being director or supervisor; promotion or pay-rise, etc (Gebremariam, 1995, Woldemariam, 1993). However, Gebremariam (1995, p. 17) states that "staff development in primary schools is not a 'culture'". Only a limited number of teachers can attend staff development programs, which are "institutional and college-based" (p. 17). Other than those, there are hardly any courses for professional development. The existing courses do not include primary school teachers. Therefore, the need to establish programs for them is critical. For Gebeyehu (2005), there are long term and short term training programs but they are not of value to teachers, as they are top-down and prescriptive, and they waste the teachers' time.

In 2003 some changes to the teacher training system were introduced, which focused on ITT and in-set courses. With the restructuring, and the new CPD (Continuing Professional Development), teachers have been encouraged to take courses which introduce them the new courses in the program. Basically, there are two major CPD courses; one is given as an English language improvement course; all teachers in high school and the elementary school are supposed to take the free English language development courses supported by the government. Teachers are given allowances when they attend them.

The other one is for college teachers and for school administrators, called the Higher Diploma Course, which is an in-set because teachers work at the same time. Like the first one, this course is compulsory and the attendants are promoted at the end. In these courses the teachers study methodology. For example, how to teach in the learner-centered way or how to facilitate the practicum, which is a new thing in the ITT course. It is a teaching practice

component. It starts from the first year and runs up until the students graduate. Basically the courses are given with the aim of equipping the teachers to facilitate the practicum and to make the classroom interaction student-centered because the classes are teacher-fronted. The courses are held during holidays, four hours a week on week days. The teachers do not have to travel to other places as they are regionalized. The Higher Diploma lasts for almost a year. It is divided into three parts. One is the 60 hour face-to-face course during practition. The other one is an 80 hour distance course where teachers are given materials to practice in their schools. The last one is a 60 hour face-to-face English course. In between these courses, there are free workshops, conferences, seminars, paper presentations. Teachers have other opportunities but they are very few.

### **India**

In India, the authority for training is The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), which works at a federal level and is responsible for policy, design and implementation. It is represented all over the country through The District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and senior teachers are responsible for them. The NCTE designs policies and curriculum and leads them to DIETs. Government selects some senior teachers and they are given the charge of DIETs. They decide whether to follow the given programs or design new ones. They receive financial support from the central government or the state government. Since they are trainers, they are able to do everything themselves. Every six years teachers have to do new senior refresher courses, which usually take place at DIET centeres during the summer or winter vacation. They get salary implement and they can be promoted as head teachers or supervising teachers. Courses usually last for ten days, but teachers do not want to spend their vacation in these programs. There are so many agencies who are taking interest in in-service training. There are private universities, NGOs, like The British Council and The American Embassy.

For in-service training courses it is easy to get permission. At such courses, teachers' primary target is to improve their language skills. They generally focus on innovation or some new technique but they are not teacher-initiated programs. When teachers attend trainings, they get support from the government. They are given duty leaves, and salary. If they are traveling to other places, they also get travel allowances. However, the schools do not permit teachers to participate in conferences, workshops, etc. If they wish to join them, they have to ask for leave. When they go to conferences, they have to pay the fee themselves.



## **Malaysia**

In Malaysia, The Teacher Training Division and The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of The Ministry of Education are responsible for designing in-service courses for teachers. The Teacher Training Division tries to meet the teachers' needs and to provide teachers with better training. That is why the new curriculum renewal programs have been introduced (Foong, 1993). There are short term and one-year courses at teacher training colleges and the language training institutes. However, there is a restriction about that, teachers who want to take these courses must have at least five or more years of teaching experience and the Ministry selects the teachers for post-graduate and higher degree courses (Ritikos, 1991).

In-service training is open to all teachers, whether they are teaching in the primary or the secondary level or even at the private. At the beginning of the year the ministry sends circulars to schools to inform teachers about the courses. The courses usually last for one week but they can even last for up to three months depending on the title of the course, and the needs of the course participants. The ministry takes care of the fourteen states and at the state level the committees are in charge of these courses. They plan and organize all the courses where teachers can choose from a variety of topics; such as, methodology, counseling, IT, computers, etc. The courses are held throughout the year. When the teachers travel for them, they get allowances. Universities are involved in these courses. Sometimes people from the universities or teacher training institutions run the courses for in-service teachers. At other times, teachers can attend seminars designed by the universities. There are also associations, for example, the BC, which give seminars and workshops.

In terms of promotion, teachers have to wait for an advertisement, and then apply for it. They have to compete and attend interviews, they have many stages to go through and those who have attended many courses are more likely to be promoted. However, some researchers think that the in-service training in Malaysia is not enough. To illustrate, Mahalil (1995) criticizes the staff development programs, stating that they are 'top-down' by nature and that the staff developers assume that the trainees "will change instantly" (p. 44) after the training. Moreover, the participants are not asked whether they want such trainings or not.

## **Nigeria**

In UNESCO's Education Sector plan for 2005-07, it was indicated that "in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), a conservatively estimated 4 million additional teachers will be needed by 2015

to meet the Universal Primary Education goal” (Menon, 2005, p. 1). In the late 1980s The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was established with the focus of training teachers in all levels in SSA. They organized workshops in association with local institutions on issues such as “course writing and editing, radio and video script writing and production, instructional design and course development, tutor orientation training, management of student support services, course design for audio-teleconferencing, desk-top publishing and the use of the computer as a management tool in distance education” (Menon, 2005, p. 2).

Teacher education in Nigeria is in a sort of ferment and many International Development agencies are making inputs to improve the system. In-service and or school-based strategies such as cluster teacher training, mentoring, open and distance learning and the use of radios and TV are being implemented to improve the quality of existing teachers. The idea is to salvage the unqualified or sub-standard teachers already in service while at the same time ensuring that pre-service teachers being produced by the training colleges are of the required quality. UNESCO supports both pre-service and in-service teacher education in Nigeria (Isyaku, 2006).

In Nigeria most schools are owned by the government, which is responsible for training. In addition, there are private schools owned by organizations or individuals. The Nigerian government tries once in a long while to set up in-service trainings, which are neither consistent, nor centralized. The Ministry of Education in each state tries to organize some kind of training, however, they hire trainers from universities or colleges to give workshops. The biggest problem about this process is that, most of the time, university lecturers do not know the primary school system so the teachers working there seem to be skeptical about the training because it is too far apart. Inset programs are usually very short, two days or one week. However, when the government starts a new system, its training lasts longer, or when the government sends the experienced teachers without teaching qualification, their training is longer as well. At the end of the training, such teachers are given The National Certificate of Education. Apart from these trainings, the government started a one-year program, with The British Council (BC), but it is only for teacher trainers working at colleges or universities.

The program was pioneered in 2005-2006. During the pilot, the program was free but from 2007 on, the teachers had to pay for it so they started to complain about it, saying that since the government is going to benefit from their training, they should not be paying anything.

When it comes to support from the government, teachers get allowances when the training is in another city. However, the payment is never enough. The trainers cannot get enough payment either. They are supposed to provide their own material; this increases their expenses. Moreover, when teachers go to conferences, workshops, etc., they have to pay the fees themselves. The government only supports the organizations which organize events.

Another problem is that the government decides who is going to take the training; it is a top-down approach. Sometimes teachers want to go to trainings just because they want to be out of the classroom, not because they want to learn something. From time to time, the government sends trainers to schools, especially when there are changes in the system. Apart from government training, teachers can attend a part-time or a distance learning program in colleges or universities. However, the topics are limited; such as classroom management because the classrooms are very crowded, information communication technology (ICT) or workshops on record keeping, like class records, diaries, etc.

As for other training opportunities, teachers can enroll a post-graduate program at a college or university but in that case they have to either take a part-time job or resign. Therefore, very few teachers are interested in doing this. Even when they get training, they are not promoted. The Nigerian government decides on which level the teachers will work and how much they will get, depending on the teachers' education. Teachers are prompted every two or three years based on the reports they get from their schools.

### **Turkey**

In Turkey the Ministry of Education In-service Training Division is responsible for the training of teachers. The trainings are conducted mostly in the capital city, Ankara but there are local ones as well. The local ones are usually compulsory, while the ones at the centre are voluntary. When the teachers have to travel to attend a course, they get allowances from the government. The courses usually last for a week and during that period, the participants are given permission. The trainers can be from the Ministry, the universities, the Language Teachers' Association (INGED) and The British Council. However, very few teachers can attend these courses so it can be said that they are not satisfactory in amount (Eratalay & Kartal, 2006).

The in-service Teacher Training Department at The Ministry of National Education is responsible for all the training events. This department prepares an annual teacher training program every year, which includes training events for all teachers - not only English teachers - for the whole academic year. The teachers apply for the training or refreshing events on line and the Teacher Training Department approves or refuses the applications. The teacher training system in Turkey is centralized and managed from the capital city, although there are teacher training departments in every national education liaisons. Once the teachers' applications are accepted, all the expenses are funded by the Ministry of Education.

Other than these courses, the teachers can apply for the grants provided by EU Comenius teacher training program. They can also attend the ELT events which are held at various universities throughout the year as long as they pay for themselves or are sponsored by the universities. Moreover, there are conferences, seminars, workshops but they are very limited and are not found in every city.

The topics discussed are EFL teaching methods, techniques, approaches, classroom management, teaching four skills, vocabulary, grammar teaching, materials development and adaptation, national curriculum and textbooks, etc. Lastly, in Turkey the promotion system is not related to taking courses.

## **Discussion**

In terms of the systems, there are both similarities and differences. In all the countries, the government is involved in and supports in-service training. However, in England, for instance, it has become a government policy; all teachers are expected to improve themselves professionally. While in other countries, the government does not have so much power and control over this issue.

When we consider the information given at the interviews, in terms of opportunities, Nigeria is the least lucky one. In Nigeria, the government sets up the trainings but as the Nigerian trainer pointed out, "they happen once in a long while." Similarly, in Ethiopia only a limited number of teachers can attend the courses and in Malaysia the ministry selects teachers for post-graduate or higher diploma programs. It is not a democratic system. In Turkey the courses are held at different cities; this creates a challenge for the participants, both

financially and psychologically. In all the countries mentioned, except for England, some teachers attend the courses to improve their English and others see them as a waste of time. It appears that teachers working at private sector are luckier because of the competition among schools; the administration hires consultants or teacher trainers either from the universities or from private organizations to give workshops. However, this brings with itself some problems. In Nigeria, the trainers work mainly at universities or colleges and they do not know the system at primary or secondary school level; so, “the teachers seem to be skeptical about the kind of training they are receiving because it is too far apart.” It is the same in Turkey, too.

When we look at the topics they improve in, it can be said that they are determined according to the needs of the teachers. To illustrate, while there has been a push towards assessment for learning in England, in others, the topics are basically, methodology, new applications and innovations in education. However, getting permission can be a big problem in all these countries. To conclude, it is known that education is a rapidly developing science, and teachers need to be aware of the innovations. However, they need time, money, and most importantly, encouragement to do that.

### **Conclusion**

Like all sciences, educational sciences is a fast growing one. In order to cope with the ever changing needs of the society and students, teachers should be encouraged and supported to renew themselves. Teaching can be very demanding from time to time. When teachers come together, they realize that others have similar problems. This will reduce their stress and increase their motivation. As long as the programs are seen as small breaks and great gatherings, they can help with teacher burn-out as well. As a result, such programs could be designed more frequently with larger participation.

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