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# In-service teacher training program in EFL: The Woodland case

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## Abstract

In this qualitative case study, the in-service training (INSET) program, which was implemented for the first time at a state university in Turkey was investigated in order to find out the components of the program, and the views of instructors regarding the reasons for the emergence of INSET, the roles of the instructors in this process and the results of the program. The place where this study was conducted is named as Woodland due to the ethical considerations. Fourteen instructors working at Woodland participated in this study. The data was collected by means of documents, both focus group and individual semi-structured interviews and observation notes. Based on the results, teacher-talk and self-reflection, peer-coaching, peer-evaluation, research presentations, seminars, teacher network and student evaluation were obtained as the components of the program. Moreover, for the views of the instructors, needs for improvement, eagerness to participate, supportive participation, learning-based components and mutual understanding have emerged as the categories. It is predicted that the components that emerged as a result of this study may not only serve as a guide for in-service training practices in English as a foreign language (EFL) institutions, but also support different experiences and efforts in this regard.

**Keywords:** In-service training, EFL, teacher education, roles of instructors

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## 1. Introduction

Every phenomenon, ideology and implementation are urged to undergo changes in time. As for teaching English which is a universal discipline depending completely on international community and worldwide developments, tracking, and being adapted to change emerges as a necessity due to the ever-changing methodology from decade to decade with ongoing advances in the field. Thereby, EFL teachers need to update their professional knowledge and beware of the latest developments in the world, which necessitates the professional development (PD). Wong (2011) describes PD as “a lifelong endeavor, a way of being, and a perspective on how one practices as well the practice itself” (p. 142). In this case, even though one becomes a teacher, learning does not come to an end. Professional development enables constant and regular revision of knowledge, practices, and recent developments in EFL world as well as other areas. The ratio behind PD is that the knowledge must be recalled, adapted, and renovated through INSET courses.

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In order for teachers to track the latest curricula changes and developments, they must be trained and informed about the concomitant requirements of it (Çimer et al., 2010). INSET courses target to foster change and renovation, and they need to be effective in long-term (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008). Not only teachers obtain individual benefits, but also do students and institutions draw on the outcomes of INSET courses. However, the effectiveness of INSET courses and programs have been an important and debatable issue in the literature. While a number of researchers have found that INSET courses have brought benefits to both teachers and students, some studies have indicated its inefficiency to some extent (Önalın & Gürsoy, 2020). There may be several factors determining the effectiveness of INSET programs such as the quality and the content. Especially, the content of the training must comply with the teachers' professional needs. The underlying reason for an ineffective INSET program might be the negligent attitudes of program planners in determining the teachers' needs to be trained (Önalın & Gürsoy, 2020). In a similar vein, Sokel (2019) concluded that *coherence* between dimensions of teaching is a prerequisite of effective professional development. He also emphasized the importance of *active participation* and *collaborative work* for an INSET program to be effective.

As teaching English, national and international concerns are interwoven, the need for INSET becomes inevitable to be able to remain updated and be actively present. When the English language teacher education (ELTE) literature is examined, it is understood from many sources that INSET is not studied as much as pre-service education. Wong (2011) listed the reasons for teachers to take part in professional development, one of which is "raise awareness of strengths and weaknesses" (p. 143). As this could be exercised individually, peer discussions could also work out in emerging these sides by becoming informed of other practices and thoughts. Taking all of these into consideration, this study focuses on the whole school bottom-up INSET program. The importance of this study is the active participation of all school teaching staff and the creation of an INSET program in line with their own needs and prioritizing completely bottom-up processing rather than top-down organization that comes from the management. Although there are many different teacher training models in the literature (Palmer, 1993; Wallace, 1991; Wolter, 2000), it is understood from the literature that there is a need for specific implementations and organization emerges as a bottom-up with the active and voluntary participation of the whole school, and clear steps being identified and explained. In this specific case, an analysis is required since all educational institutions employ experienced and novice teachers. An environment should be provided to bring these two parties together and share their experiences and knowledge with each other. Also, considering the effect of INSET on teachers' motivations, such an analysis has become inevitable.

For the reasons mentioned above, to understand the INSET program that was conducted, the answers to the following research questions have been investigated:

1. What are the components of the INSET program?
2. How do instructors explain the INSET program implemented?
  - How are the reasons for the INSET program defined by the instructors?
  - How were the components created?
  - How do instructors explain their roles in the INSET program?
  - How do instructors explain the results of INSET program?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Design

There are many different research methodologies such as experimental, survey, longitudinal and case studies to investigate and explain any subject, event, or phenomenon. Each research method mentioned has its own data collection and data analysis methods and ways of presenting the data (Creswell, 2003). This qualitative research has been designed as a single case study. Case studies are commonly used when a specific phenomenon that is the INSET program in this study is investigated. More specifically, in this research, Yin’s (2014) case study research design which can be seen in figure 1 below has been employed.

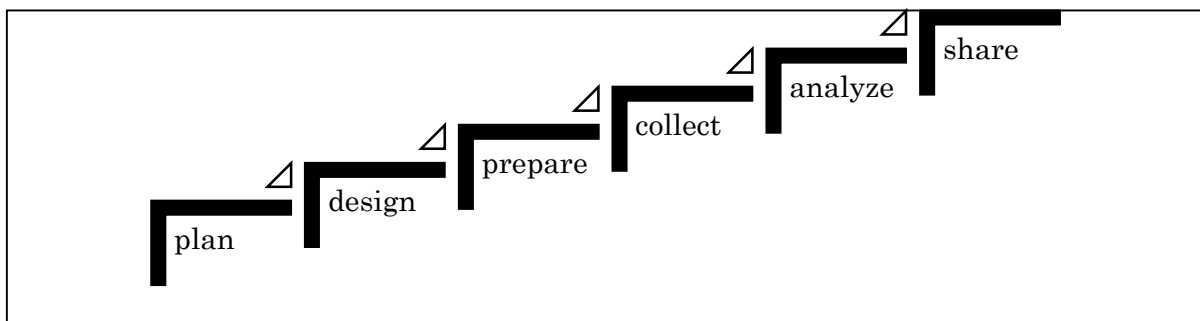


Figure 1. Yin’s (2014) case study research design

In this process, the researcher first plans the research and then design the data collection and analysis procedures. Then, the researcher prepares the required items. Afterwards, the data is collected and analyzed. Lastly, the researcher shares and presents the findings in a meaningful way.

### 2.2. Setting and Participants

The study was carried out in the English preparatory department of a university in Turkey. The university has a history of approximately 30 years, and intensive English courses are given. 34 faculty members are working in the department and 14 faculty members selected by convenience sampling method participated in the study. Woodland is used as a pseudonym in order to mask the identity of the institution. Intensive English education is given during one academic year at Woodland where the study was conducted, and an average of 900 students receive English education every year.

### 2.3. Data Collection

Three different data collection tools were used in the study; These are both focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews, observation journals, and documents. The data collection tools, and the purpose of these data collection tools can be seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Data collection tools and resources

<b>Data collection instrument</b>	<b>Data Resources</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Observation Journal	Instructors’ meetings	8 meetings	Interpret the results

		43 pages	Cross-check the interviews questions
Focus group interviews	Instructors	5	Interpret the results
Individual interviews	Instructors	9	Interpret the results
Documents	INSET documents	32 docs.	Interpret the results

Observational journals have been kept continuously since INSET started and the necessary notes are regularly taken by the researcher. Both hard and soft copies of the documents prepared for INSET are collected for analysis. In addition to these two data collection tools, a pilot study was conducted with a five teaching-staff in order to provide the interview questions, and interviews were conducted with the same teaching staff for interpretation. Afterwards, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the teaching staff and the data collection process was terminated. Some of the interview questions can be seen below:

1. Before the INSET program, did you think you needed such a program? If you think you needed it, what were the reasons?
2. How did you feel when you learned that the INSET program was going to be implemented and started? Did you think it would be useful to you? Did you show any resistance?
3. What was the content of the INSET program? What trainings did you think you needed? What were the trainings that were most and least helpful to you?
4. What were your roles in the INSET program? How did you contribute to this process?
5. Has the INSET program contributed to your professional development? If so, in which areas have you improved yourself? Did the training meet your expectations? Can you explain the positive and negative aspects on INSET?

#### 2.4. Data analysis

In this case study, Schreier's (2013) qualitative content analysis, which is defining and describing construction and intention of the qualitative data (Mayring, 2000), procedures have been used in this research. This type of analysis is particularly effective in reducing raw data and requires the researcher to focus on selected phenomena. The modeling by Schreier (2013, p. 174) consisting of eight steps for qualitative content analysis which is used in this research is given below:

1. Deciding on a research question.
2. Selecting material.
3. Building a coding frame.
4. Segmentation.
5. Trial coding.
6. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame.
7. Main analysis.
8. Presenting and interpreting the findings.

In this study, research questions were determined as stated in the above section. Afterwards, the materials to be used were determined and the coding frame, which is the key point of the analysis, was created. This coding frame has been seen as the key point of the analysis, and it should consist of at least one category and more than one sub-category. In this study, INSET was determined as the main category, and sub-categories were given in the results section.

### 3. Results

### 3.1. The components of the INSET program

The INSET program examined in this study consists of many different contents. When asked about the content of the INSET program, the instructors stated that they chose the applications, the contents of which were determined by themselves, and which were completely tailored to their own needs. Looking at the document and observation notes, it is understood that the components listed below constitute the INSET program:

- teacher-talk and self-reflection
- peer-coaching
- peer-evaluation
- research presentations
- seminars
- teacher network
- student evaluation

#### 3.1.1. Teacher-talk and self-reflection

This practice is based on the fact that the teaching staff divided into groups of five or six and come together twice in a semester, and exchange ideas on the topic determined in the agenda. The senior lecturer in the group was appointed as the discussion leader by the department administration and was asked to lead the meeting. The newest teaching staff in each group was in charge of keeping a report of what was spoken. This lecturer, who kept the report, shared what was discussed at the meeting with other groups afterward, and it was ensured that each group had information about what was talked in other group meetings. Below (see document 1) you can find a sample of the meeting contents prepared by the department chair by taking the opinions of the faculty members in the department. The meeting leader would guide their meetings through these discussion questions. In the light of these questions, other teaching staff in the group would share their knowledge and experience with other teaching staff.

Document 1. Teacher-talk and reflection meeting example

**PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT**  
**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT**  
**TEACHER TALK 3**  
**READING & VOCABULARY**

- 1) What is your view against reading texts and activities in your class? Can you explain them?
- 2) How do you start your reading lesson? (Lead-in / warm-up)
- 3) How do you make connections between the reading text and students' background? Why do you do that?
- 4) How can we use the followings in a reading classroom?

- Activating prior knowledge
- Clarifying the text (teacher's guide)
- Context clues (references / unknown words)
- Drawing conclusions (by asking creative questions)
- Evaluating (make generalizations and criticisms)

5) After the reading text, what kind of extended activities can we use?

6) Which activities do you use most regarding reading? How?

- Dictation      -Summary      -Comprehension questions      -Paraphrasing -Comparing
- Reporting      -Maps (the plot, characters, actions, views, comments)
- Guessing (the conclusion/the next step)      -Strip stories      -Question generating
- Sequencing      -Fill in table (Inquiry Chart)      -Translation      -Back Translation

7) How can you use Reading texts for the following skills?

- Speaking      -Writing      -Listening      -Grammar      -Pronunciation

8) What kind of activities do you use to teach vocabulary?

9) How can you link teaching reading and vocabulary?

10) How can we make the reading and vocabulary teaching class a productive?

11) What activities can be implemented in order to improve fluency in Language regarding vocabulary & reading?

12) What is your irreplaceable reading & vocabulary activity?

### 3.1.2. Peer-coaching

According to the observation notes, peer-coaching, on the other hand, was carried out in order to facilitate and accelerate the induction and working processes of newly recruited faculty members. Here, the head of the department introduces the new teaching staff to at least two instructors who have been working in the institution for many years and are required to spend time at the workplace for at least one month. In addition, it has been tried to have them accustomed to the classroom, students and education by observing the lessons of the experienced staff. Thus, for the new academic staff, it is aimed to start knowing the institutional culture and learn the education life more efficiently and effectively.

### 3.1. 3. Peer-evaluation

According to the observation and document analyses, another content implemented in the institution is peer-evaluation. The teaching staff of a class teaches within the partnership system. In other words, lessons are taught 24 hours in a class per week. In this class, one lecturer teaches 12 hours and the other lecturer teaches 12 hours in the same class which means two instructors share the responsibility to teach one class. However, since the partnership is determined by the department chair, the harmony between the partners is not known by the management. At the end of the semester, a survey consisting of 12 questions is applied to all faculty members and it is aimed to reveal the compatibility of the partners. According to the results of this survey, the partnerships would be changed in the following semester, or the existing partnership would be supported. The peer-evaluation questionnaire can be seen in document 2 below:

Document 2. Peer-evaluation survey questions

1. My partner's having a good rapport with the class is	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Discussing the class rules (using mobiles, bringing course materials, doing homework) with my partner before the term begins is	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. I let latecomers get in the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. I need to be informed about the current pacing by my partner before the class begins.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Being cooperative and reasonable in planning weekly schedule is	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. My partner should use extracurricular materials such as worksheet/activities/ games in our classroom.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. I can re-teach the same subject after my partner finishes his/her part.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. I think there is a need to have periodic meetings with my partner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9.vMy partner’s keeping up with the pacing is utmost importance.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. My social relationship with my partner influences my performance.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11. I wish I had been partners with another colleague last term.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
12. I can be partners with any of my colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### 3.1.4. Research presentations

According to the observation notes, academic presentations were made at Woodland four times. These are the presentations to the teaching staff of the studies conducted on students at Woodland that were published. In the department, the studies that were applied to the students learning English and published in journals that were indexed internationally, are presented at a meeting organized by the management, and it is aimed that the lecturers have detailed information about the research results.

### 3.1.5. Seminars

Among the options presented to the teaching staff by the head of the department, the lecturers declare what they want to take seminars, and the department chair and the professional development unit (PDU) made this organization. For example, "understanding Z generation's behavior" was one of the seminar topics. All teaching staff attended these seminars and at the end of the seminar, they directed questions to the presenter about what they were curious about. The seminars lasted approximately two hours.

### 3.1.6. Teacher network

Teacher network is the sharing of the materials that the instructors have prepared for themselves with the other instructors. For this, the teacher network file has been placed somewhere accessible to everyone, and the faculty members leave a sample of the materials they use in their classes in this file for other teaching staff to use. The instructors who wanted to make copies of these materials for their own classes take one and copies it, and uses that activity in their own classes. Also, within the process, an online e-drive has been created, and the faculty members upload the materials they use to the drive.

### 3.1.7. Student evaluation

When the documents are examined, it is understood that the student evaluation questionnaire is also used at Woodland. Here, students were asked 5 point-Likert type questions and they were asked to evaluate the instructors who teach their classes. In order to protect the confidentiality and comfort of the teaching staff here, the results could only be seen by the PDU, and they were not shared even with the department chair. An example survey result is given in the following document 3 below:

Document 3. Student evaluation example

Statements	Instructor’s mean score	Whole school average
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1. Teacher uses the class hours effectively	4,74	4,33
2. Teacher explains openly and effectively	4,81	4,06
3. Teacher repeats the subjects that I do not understand	4,64	4,14
4. Teacher creates opportunities for me to practice the language	4,66	4,17
5. Teacher use mostly uses English during the class time	4,21	4,12

3.2. Instructors explaining the INSET program implemented

Considering the results of the instructors’ interview results, the INSET process started with the acceptance of all the instructors upon the proposal of the department administration. One of the participants stated that the INSET program was not actually on their agenda, but the department administration mentioned the INSET program in a meeting and made a short presentation to them. Another faculty member emphasized that the decision of the content of the INSET program or whether it can be implemented is left to them and that this program can be realized if they volunteer. According to these results, it is understood that the initiation of the INSET program was completely voluntary.

When the results of the interviews with the teaching staff were analyzed, five themes emerged. In addition, these emerging themes were supported by the analysis of the observation notes. The emerging themes are shown in figure 2 below. They are *needs for improvement*, *eagerness to participate*, *supportive participation*, *learning-based components* and *mutual understanding*. These themes are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

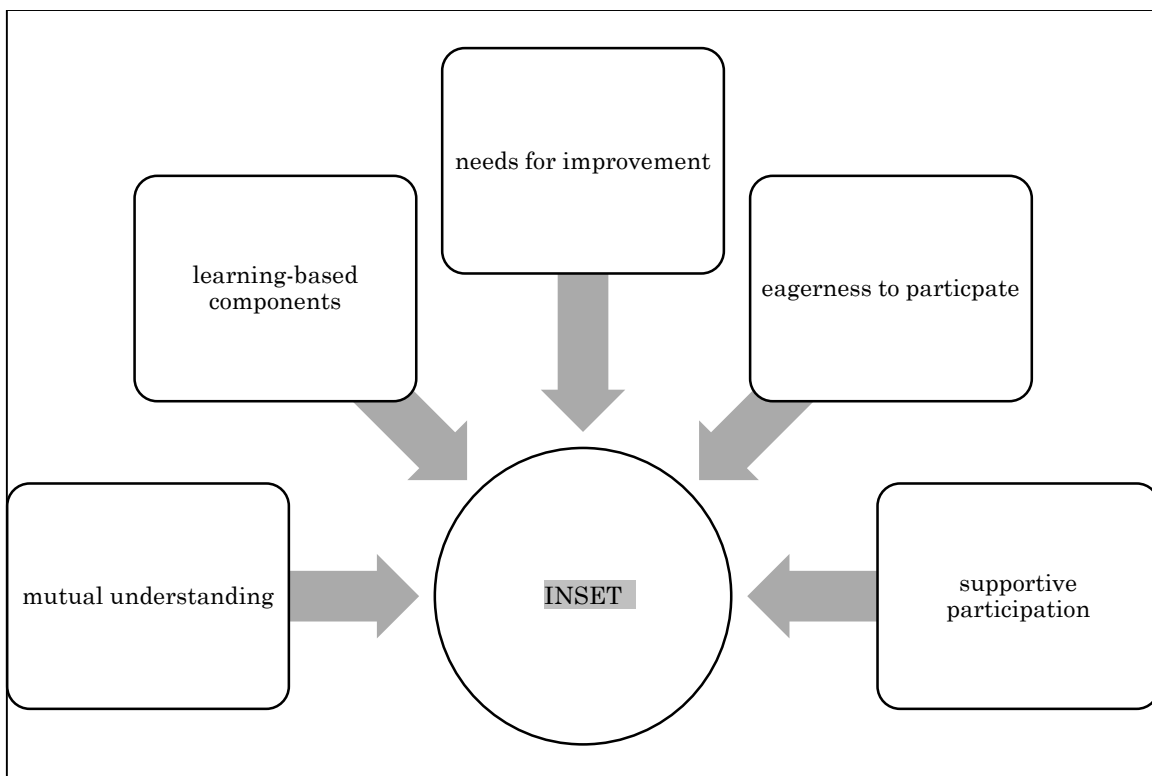


Figure 2. Themes emerged in INSET

As a result of the interviews, it was understood that the faculty members who previously worked at K-12 level in another institution participated in the INSET program. When asked about the content of those programs, a faculty member described INSET at the K-12 level as follows:



*“In-service training at the K-12 level was a mandatory practice of senior management. I have participated in these programs many times, but frankly, I did not see much benefit. This was because the central ministry determined a specific program and gave it as a presentation to all the teachers in the country. We were asked to listen to these presentations without any analysis of our needs or deficiencies.”*

Another lecturer who attended to the same INSETs stated that type of trainings which were designed as top-down had almost no effect on him, and that he saw those trainings as a waste of time. As it can be understood from these explanations, some of the teaching staff participated in the training programs put into practice by the central government, but they could not see the desired benefits. They stated that the biggest reason for the deficiency is that those trainings were not individualized or needs-oriented.

One of the teaching staff thinks INSET is very necessary and useful. He stated that all teachers, regardless of experience or inexperience, should keep their knowledge up to date and adapt to the new student profile, and that programs such as INSET are needed to achieve these goals. Professional development, strengthening communication between colleagues and self-assessment were emphasized as a requirement of INSET. Another faculty member stated that there was not a very comprehensive activity in terms of INSET before, and he believed that a step should be taken to improve what happens in the field and in terms of teaching activities. Another faculty member evaluated INSET in terms of the latest technology and student profile. He stated that education was also affected by the rapid technological transformation experienced in every field all over the world, and similarly, obvious differences began to occur in the student profile.

Another theme emerged as eagerness to participate. A faculty member stated that he was happy when he heard about the INSET program and that he did not have any objections. He stated that he believed INSET would be beneficial to him, and he supported it. Another faculty member stated that he felt excited about learning something new and benefiting from the experiences of his colleagues.

Learning based component is the other theme emerged. It has been understood that the teaching staff are more interested and open to activities that add something new to their philosophy and teach what they do not know. A faculty member stated that he knew that he had deficiencies in peer coaching and teacher network, so he benefited from INSET in these areas. Another faculty member stated that reviewing their own teaching, meeting with teachers, mentoring the newcomers and seminars were very beneficial for her. As a result of the interviews, it was seen that there was a consensus among the teaching staff that these activities were the most beneficial. As for the other teaching staff, it was concluded that student evaluation was very useful for them.

Faculty members see their own roles as supportive participants. This is because they stated that they can actively interfere with INSET program content and that INSET contents are arranged according to their wishes and needs. An instructor explained their roles in the process as follows:

*“I was in this program both as a participant and a presenter. I made a presentation on the use of Edmodo in the classroom. I explained how student-teacher relations can be more understandable and direct, and how to increase in-class interaction by communicating with students more easily by using Edmodo. With this presentation, I think that teachers' ideas about integrating technology into the classroom have changed positively. We have also received positive feedback from many classes after using this application.”*

Another lecturer stated that he led the session in a teacher-talk and self-reflection session, while he was a listener in the others. Another lecturer stated that he usually attends the meetings as a listener and as a participant in the meetings, of his own free will, and thus, he received maximum benefit from all activities.

As a result of the data analysis, mutual understanding emerged as the last theme. The reason for this is that they explained that the teaching staff constantly benefited from each other's

experience, learned from the knower, and compared them with their own situation and saw their own shortcomings in their teachings and teaching philosophies. One faculty member evaluated this process as follows:

*“I learned most of the things I expected to learn, listened to the experiences of other faculty members, gained new perspectives and learned techniques to increase my interaction with the student.”*

This was supported by another faculty member. They stated that the program contributed to their professional development, especially the teacher-talk activity with their colleagues played a great role in understanding what their colleagues thought and did professionally that enlighten and expanded their personal visions. In general, the teaching staff stated that it provides an environment where different ideas can be expressed on a common point and that it increases the variety of applications. The presentation of the results of the research carried out by the academic staff, especially those who continue their academic career, has been stated as the most prominent part where the results of theory and practice are shown. They think that they can get to know their students better. They stated that they have experienced that diversity in teaching practices contributes to teaching at the maximum level.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

When we look at the results of the first research question, it has been revealed that there is a diverse and varied content. It is also revealed that the participation of the teaching staff is utmost important. In the Woodland case, content such as teacher-talk and self-reflection, peer-coaching, peer evaluation, research presentations, seminars, teacher network and student evaluation were determined as a result of negotiations between Woodland staff and the department administration. As in the Woodland case, Duzan (2006) reports that INSET should include many different and varied activities, and that they should be organized in order to broaden the knowledge and professional perspective of the teaching staff. In addition, Waxman et al, (2006) reported that it should consist of content that includes language theories, sustainable coaching, and evaluation of teacher practices. Moreover, Koc (1992) emphasized that there should be a sharing-oriented environment in INSET programs, and that environments where faculty members can easily share their teaching experiences with other teachers should be created. In this respect, Woodland case was able to meet the implementations mentioned and the Woodland case has created a result consistent with this research. In addition, Bezzina (2006) stated that it is quite appropriate to guide the new teaching staff instead of going directly into the classroom. This result is in parallel with the peer-coaching practice implemented in Woodland. As one of the most important results of the Woodland case, faculty members think that they should be at the center of INSET programs which is supported by Gultekin’s (2007) study who emphasized the importance of centralizing the teaching staff.

As the findings of the second research question showed, five themes emerged in the Woodland case. These are listed as needs for improvement, eagerness to participate, supportive participation, learning-based components, and mutual understanding. Sokel (2019) conducted a qualitative study with 28 Israeli EFL teachers to determine what makes a professional development course effective. The participants, whose teaching experiences range from 5 to 20 years, completed a 30-hour professional development course designed by the Israel Ministry of Education. Then they were asked to write a reflection on their thoughts about how the course contributed to their teaching. Various findings include gaining new knowledge and skills, positive influence on classroom practice, and changing or reshaping their teaching beliefs. Furthermore, the research findings revealed that coherence, active participation, and collaboration are the elements that make in-service training effective. Similarly, Onalan and Gursoy (2020) set out a study to find out in-service EFL teachers’ needs and demands on how an ideal in-service training (INSET)

program would be. The research was a quantitative research design. 985 EFL teachers with varying years of experience from 1 to 15 years were participants. According to the findings, the teachers, especially experienced ones, demand regular, consistent, and practice-based training rather than theory-based and traditional sessions. Moreover, Bayar (2014) investigated key components of an effective professional development program from teachers' point of view. The study was a qualitative research design. The researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with 16 (eight male, eight female) teachers. The results suggest that the aim of the in-service program should be consistent with the teachers' and institutions' needs, and they should actively participate in the activities. Koç (2016) investigated perceptions of English teachers about INSET activities. 32 elementary school ELT teachers with experiences ranging from 1 to 25 years participated in the study. The study adopted a mixed-method research design. The findings revealed that the activities were not relevant to the teachers' needs and interests neither motivating. In addition, the participants did not believe the evaluation process of INSET activities was satisfactory. This study shows us that teachers should be in the core of the process as in the Woodland case.

On the other hand, Tosriadi et al. (2018) investigated how INSET EFL teachers utilized their experiences and reflective practices. Four female Indonesian EFL teachers participated in this qualitative case study. The findings showed that teachers benefited from keeping journals, lesson observations of other teachers, recording their lessons, and action research. Nonetheless, the level of utilization was far beyond than expected. Similarly, Altun (2011) searched what makes a practical in-service training for ELT teachers and what kinds of activities schools and administrators could provide. The researcher compared in-service education and training activities between Turkey and the UK. The research design was a literature review. According to the study, the main differences were that the UK has a firm, developed system of INSET, on the other hand, Turkey is categorized as a developing one. Another difference is the organisations providing INSET programs (school based in the UK, whereas central in Turkey).

As for implications for future studies, the Woodland case exists as a unique and single case. More comprehensive studies of the INSET program should be done with a larger number of participants. In addition, this study was carried out with academic staff working at the university level. It is important to carry out similar studies at the K-12 level as well. Another study that can be done in the future can be investigating how much the students benefit from the INSET program.

As a result, with the developing technology, changing teaching pedagogy and student profile in foreign language education institutions, the implementation of INSET programs is inevitable. The most important focal point in the realization of INSET programs should be the instructors who work in the institution and who will benefit from this training in the first place. The content should mostly be prepared in line with the needs and requirements of the instructors, and the teaching staff should be actively involved in the process.

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