

# **Teachers' Attitude towards Professional Training for Teaching of English Writing through Problem Based Learning**

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## **Abstract**

*The present study aimed to measure the attitude of teachers who attended an in-service training (INSET) workshop for teaching English writing through Problem Based Learning (PBL) to secondary level students. The importance of INSET has been recognized as beneficial to teachers by many researchers. Therefore the researchers conducted the descriptive study at Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad, Pakistan. Data was collected from Sixty-three out of 80 randomly selected participants through a questionnaire and analyzed employing descriptive quantitative tools. The findings showed that teachers were satisfied with the achievement of INSET objectives; the management of the workshop was effective with good quality of proceedings and services. Overall rating of the program was very good showing their intention to attend such programs in future too. Suggestions include that such workshops should be frequently conducted for teachers of all levels and subjects, and these should be made compulsory and attractive through incentives.*

**Keywords:** In-service teacher training; Attitude measurement; Evaluation; Problem based learning.

## **Introduction**

Importance of in-service professional training is manifold as it is the shortest way to update knowledge, for meeting new requirements of job, and socialization. Teachers' in-service professional training is much desired and important than that of any other profession because teachers' personality, attitude and knowledge affects the students and shape the future of a nation. The world is changing rapidly in all fields and directions; same is true for knowledge, training and expertise. This change demands that a person's – especially a teacher's- attitude, behaviour and outlook should also change to keep him at par with ever increasing demands of this rapid transition. He should keep himself abreast of new knowledge and improvements in life (Homes, 2005), especially in his own field of work and profession. One can achieve these goals by his self-study, social interaction and in-service professional training. James, McCormick, and Black (2007) advocated continuous and progressive professional development as beneficial to teachers. Because if teachers are themselves lifelong learners; only then they can engage students as lifelong learners (Armour&Makopoulou, 2012). Yin (2013) fears that the quality of teaching that affects the whole school improvement may not improve without teachers' continuing professional development. Falus (2002) as cited in Kárpáti (2009) expresses that teacher needs a synthesis of knowledge, attitude and practice skills to accomplish his professional role. Professional training enhances these faculties to improve the overall quality of education. Barber and Mourshed, (2007) equate the quality of an education with that of its teachers.

Despite the fact that in-service training improves one's attitude and behaviour towards profession and enhances one's efficiency, the availability of INSET opportunity remained scarce up to the recent past. The teachers, especially working at school level, seldom came across any training program in their entire service career. Once entered in the profession, a large number of them were content with their qualifications acquired before their recruitment. Professional qualifications such as PTC/CT/ or B. Ed. were either considered enough, or sometimes enhanced for the sake of promotion or financial increment purposes. Majority of teachers preferred to enhance their academic or professional qualifications as private candidates. No doubt, they studied much in their spare times, or even performed in practice sessions as compulsory components of these courses. Benefit of these sorts of qualifications was more in financial terms for the incumbents rather than for academics and training of the students. Consequently, the quality of school education could not improve significantly.

This situation could not last long; there had to be some paradigm shift. It came with the realization that teachers should also be given the opportunities for in-service professional training. But the task of making all the teachers avail the chance to attend INSETs was a big challenge as their numbers are unmanageable in short or medium term plans. However this was made possible by planning and setting up resource centres and departments at federal and provincial levels. Like other education departments, Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad also started INSETs since 2001 by establishing resource centres. A number of INSETs have been

conducted during the course of time. Although feedback of participants was recorded at the end of each one but seldom analyzed to reach rational decisions for further improvement. This study undertook a comprehensive plan for in-service training and its formal evaluation. The researchers assumed that findings of present study would be beneficial for the teachers and other stake holders. Future training programs could be improved as per respondents' feedback, needs and job requirements. It would also help program designers to design training programs, develop training modules, and execute these accordingly for effective outcomes. They may design follow-up study programs to see the effective implementation in the classroom what is discussed and adopted in training workshops. The authorities may allocate more to make training workshops objective oriented and effective. The students would be taught more effectively after the teachers attend INSET.

### **Literature Review**

According to Guskey (2000), professional development [through in-service training] is a continuous systematic process of deliberately designing and executing it for enhancing teacher's professional knowledge, skills and attitude to improve students' learning outcomes. The effectiveness of professional training of teachers reflects through the evidence of better outcomes for students (Timperley, 2011). In-service professional training aims to enhance teachers' attitude, knowledge, and pedagogical skills. So that teacher can improve his competency and students' learning outcomes through making his lesson plans more effective and carry out these efficiently. Dupuis, Askov, and Lee (1979) emphasize changing teacher behaviour through changing their attitude first to achieve the goal of in-service education. Cantrell, Burns, and Callaway (2009) and Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) have emphasized the importance of collaboration in INSET.

Eurydice (2002) describes that in-service teachers' training is imparted in two different forms around the world: (a) continuing professional development, which aims at updating existing knowledge and skills, and (b) so-called additional programs which offer new skills and qualifications. Many INSET programs fail to achieve their goals and cast any positive impact on teachers' learning and teaching and students learning outcomes. The researchers stressed for more sustained and time invested programs and recommended that professional development programs should be of more than 14 hours for casting positive effect on student learning (DeMonte, 2013).

Teachers' attitude towards INSET and their feedback are important for continual refinement (Cook & Fine, 1997). They developed a broader and inclusive design to evaluate INSET. This design comprises of: (a) participants' perception of the professional development activity, (b) usefulness and relevance of the activity, and (c) long-term effects of the activity.

In-service teacher training program can be made effective through following the effective context-sensitive INSET models and ensuring the features

such as: (a) trainee teachers and their aspirations should be given pivotal importance by involving them to plan and execute the training programs (Sandholtz, 2002); (b) taking into account teachers' problems, their professional requirements, experiences, and their real life situations as vital, respecting their input, discussing the content with them, recognizing them as experts, and encouraging them to ponder upon their recent viewpoint and behaviours as significant factors to induce long-lasting changes in teacher practices (Atay, 2007; Fullan, 1982, 1995, 2001; Hayes, 2000 cited in Uysal, 2012.); (c) comprehensive and experimental teacher training approaches to INSETs, where a variety of methods and techniques are modelled, allowing the trainees to implement and evaluate the modelled lessons or approaches freely by being both students and teachers (Bax, 1997; Hockly, 2000 cited in Uysal, 2012); (d) a congenial environment where openness and collaboration with peers are encouraged for sharing "their own knowledge of classroom, children, subjects and pedagogy" (John & Gravani, 2005, p.122-123); and (e) the training program should be followed by feedback and evaluation (Bayrakçı, 2009; Fullan, 1982; Harland & Kinder, 1997; Hayes, 2000; Woodward, 1991) as cited in Uysal (2012). INSET programs encourage teachers broaden their thinking faculty for novel ideas (Bax, 1997; Wolter, 2000 cited in Uysal, 2012). These also boost teachers' awareness of their teaching, their professional confidence, and quality of their teaching as well as student learning outcomes (Daloğ, 2004; Hayes, 2000 cited in Uysal, 2012). DeMonte (2013) mentioned five characteristics of high-quality professional-learning opportunities for teachers: (a) conforms to school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional-learning activities, (b) focus is on prescribed learning material and teaching strategies are adopted according to the suggested content model, (c) provides for learning and experimenting with the new teaching strategies, (d) trainee teachers get opportunities to collaborate among themselves, and (e) follow-up and continuous feedback are ensured.

The INSETs are recognized for teacher development despite the fact that many educators and researchers have pointed out various shortcomings; (Tarrou, et. al., 1999 as cited in Uysal, 2012) suggested conducting evaluations at the end of each course as an imperative and foremost step to improve these INSETs. (Guskey, 2000) correctly opines that good evaluations can provide sound, useful, and sufficiently reliable information useful to reach at thoughtful and responsible decisions about ongoing professional development processes and the ultimate effects of these programs. (Cook & Fine, 1997) considered participants' feedback and comments collected at intervals during the program and used for continual refinement as important and essential.

Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) Islamabad, Pakistan is a governmental organization established to cater the educational needs of the populace of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through 422 schools and colleges functioning under its ambit. Keeping in view, in-service training needs of teachers and educational leaders, a training wing was established in 2001 at FDE for the training of teachers, educational leaders, administrative and supervisory officers, clerical and supporting staff, and the members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs)/ School & College management committees (S/CMCs). FDE has 20 cluster-based training and resource centres across six geographical sectors (Five rural, & one Urban) in ICT. It has a pool of well-trained lead trainers, master trainers and resource persons who got training competencies in specific areas from national and international organizations. The training has been imparted through training workshops of various durations; from one day to one month, but most of the workshops are of one week duration. So far a large number of stakeholders have got the benefit of training; some of them got the opportunity to attend various training workshops repeatedly; the details are presented in table 1:

*Table No. 1: Training Achievements FDE*

Academic Session	Teachers	*Heads	College Faculty	**PTAs	Clerical Staff	Total
2001-02	2000	350	--	360	--	2710
2002-03	1520	240	200	540	--	2500
2003-04	2927	420	--	-	--	3347
2004-05	1780	350	--	1264	--	3394
2005-06	2060	400	300	1600	--	4360
2006-07	2127	348	66	-	75	2616
2007-08	1500	160	--	-	200	1860
2008-09	720	80	--	--	160	960
2009-10	640	80	--	--	--	720
2010-11	413	50	20	--	30	513
2011-12	2181	500	--	--	200	2881
2012-13	1300	580	20	--	120	2020
2013-14	1340	570	--	--	--	1910
2014-15	1150	692	--	--	--	1842
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,658</b>	<b>4820</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>3764</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>31,633</b>

\* Heads: Head Teachers/ Principals      \*\*PTAs: Parent-Teacher Associations

## Method

### Statement of the Problem

Teachers' attitude towards their profession and in-service training plays major role for determining their performance and students' learning outcomes. (Ryans, 1960; Barnes, 1985 cited in Marsh, 2007) concluded after their studies that performance of newly appointed teachers is comparatively better at the early years of their job than in the later years of their service. They slowly lose interest in their job requirements and become lethargic for enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitude

as they gradually create a tendency to resist every change and prefer to maintain status quo in education policy. This is true for school teachers as well as for college and university faculty. This situation demands attitudinal change towards their profession and the need to improve either by their self-study or through INSET. The same situation prevails in Pakistan where teachers are generally reluctant to attend these training programs or attend them half heartedly resulting in poor teaching and weak student learning outcomes. Teachers' attitude towards INSET is hardly measured through evaluating the training program. It was felt that teachers' attitude towards training workshop should be measured through evaluating the workshop. Hence the researchers undertook the task of measuring teachers' attitude towards the INSET workshop.

### **Objective and Research Questions**

The main objective of this study was to measure the attitude of participating teachers' in short duration workshop for professional development. The objective was translated into the following research questions: (a) were the objectives of the workshop fulfilled? (b) How effectively was the course designed and managed? (c) What was teachers' level of likeness to participate in such workshops in future? and (d) how would these workshops be improved?

### **Research Design**

The study was descriptive and carried out at FDE Islamabad. An INSET workshop was evaluated; where teachers' attitude was measured employing questionnaire. A training program was designed for the teachers teaching English to secondary level students at various institutions under FDE. They were to train for teaching of English writing skill through Problem Based Learning (PBL). A training module was developed for this purpose covering a number of relevant topics essential to teach through PBL. These topics included: (a) "Communication Skills: Writing Skill (English) and Sub-Skills", (b) "Kinds of Writing: Essay Writing", (c). "Teaching of Writing Skill: Various Methods & Techniques", (d) "Rubric for Marking of Essays: Rubric Development and Implementation", (e) "Problem Based Learning (PBL) Introduction and History", (f) "Problem Based Learning (PBL) as Teaching-Learning Method", (g) "Implementation of PBL: Process & Procedure", (h) "Oral Communication Skills: Group Discussion in the Class", (i) "Competencies of Writing Skill & Guidelines for Teaching English Syllabus at Secondary Level", (j) "PBL, Writing Skill & Learning Theories: I. Traditional: Behaviourism, Cognitive", (k) "PBL, Writing Skill & Learning Theories: II. Modern: Constructivism; Cognitive Apprenticeship; Multiple Intelligence", and (l) "Difficulties in the Classroom and their Resolution".

Two INSET workshops were conducted (for 80 teachers: 40 in each group) during the academic session 2014-15 covering the above mentioned topics including a number of activities and discussions. Four sessions per day were conducted in the workshop. Each session lasted for one and half hour. Total duration of each workshop was 18 hours. Teachers' attitude towards INSET workshops for teaching

of English writing was conducted at the end of each through the feedback of participants.

### **Participants and sample selection**

A random sample of 63 was selected, from 80 teachers who attended INSET workshop, to measure their attitude towards this workshop through their opinion/ feedback.

### **Instruments**

A questionnaire that had been developed at FDE to have feedback of participants of training workshops was adapted for the purpose of this study comprising 23 statements/ questions to measure various constructs related to different aspects of training workshop as given below in table 2:

*Table 2: Detail of constructs/ Statements for Instrument*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Number of Statements</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Achievement of Program objectives	06	3 point Likert Scale
Design and management of the course	13	3 point Likert Scale
Rating, suggestion to improve, and inclusion of contents in future program	04	Rating Scale and Open-ended
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	

### **Validity and reliability**

The instrument/questionnaire was validated by the experts including teachers, principals and educationists. Reliability of instrument was found through applying Cronbach's Alpha which was .657 and in the acceptable range.

### **Results**

The data were analyzed through descriptive tools and the following results are found and given in the following tables:

First research question was related to achievement of the objectives of the workshop and the participants' response ratio is presented in table 3:

*Table No. 3: Respondents' Feedback Regarding Achievement of INSET's Objectives*

Construct/ Statements	Level of Achievement/ Number of responses		
	Not Achieved	Partially Achieved	Achieved
<b>Program Objectives</b>			
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This training workshop has:			
Updated the language teaching according to the National Curriculum 2006.	02	45	16
Equipped the teachers with such professional skills that may practically help them in putting contemporary knowledge in an interesting and absorbent way.	04	37	22
Enhanced the capacity of teachers for effective English teaching.	01	37	25
Familiarized the participants with new teaching techniques and conceptual understanding.	Nil	24	39
Enhanced assessment skills according to the rubric given in the New National Curriculum 2006.	05	25	33
Realized the professional problems of English teachers at secondary level and to find strategies for their resolution.	03	31	28

Analysis of data given in table 3 shows the following results:

45 respondents representing 72% of the sample were of the view that the training workshop updated their ability to teach English language according to the requirements of National Curriculum of Pakistan 2006, While 25 % thought that it had updated them completely for this purpose. 39 respondents representing 62% of the sample viewed that the training workshop had completely familiarized them with new teaching techniques and conceptual understanding, while 38% were of the view that this objective was achieved partially. 37 respondents representing 59% of the sample viewed that the training workshop equipped the teachers partially with such professional skills that might practically help them in putting contemporary knowledge in an interesting and absorbent way, while 35% considered that it equipped them completely for this purpose. 37 respondents representing 59% of the sample considered that the workshop enhanced their capacity for effective teaching of English language, while 39% were of the view that they had been completely recharged for this purpose. 33 respondents representing 52% of the sample considered that the workshop enhanced their assessment skills according to the rubric given in the New National Curriculum 2006, while 39% were of the view that this objective was achieved partially. And 31 respondents representing 49% of the sample were of the view that the training workshop had partially realized the professional problems of English teachers at secondary level and for finding strategies for their resolution, while 44% were of the view that this objective was achieved up to its maximum level.



The aforementioned results showed that majority of respondents were of the view that the objectives of this INSET workshop were partially achieved while a large number of them considered that it had completely achieved its objectives. While a thin minority (5% only) considered that the program failed to achieve its goals.

The second research question was related to the appropriateness of workshop design and content, and management of workshop including administrative services and facilities; the participants' response ratio is presented in table 4:

*Table No. 4: Respondents' Feedback Regarding Appropriateness of Design Contents and Management of the INSET*

The analysis of data given in table 4 above shows that 47 respondents representing 75% of the sample viewed the appropriateness of teaching material presented in the workshop as satisfactory, while 16% considered it as most satisfactory. 42 respondents representing 63% of the sample were satisfied with light, fans (during load shedding too) refreshment and tea arrangements, while 30 % appreciated these as most satisfactory. 37 respondents representing 59% of the sample viewed that course contents presented in the workshop were relevant to the topics, while 32% were of the view that these were most relevant to the topics. 36 respondents representing 57% of the sample were of the view that schedule and time allocated for each topic were satisfactory, while 29% considered these as most satisfactory. 36 respondents representing 57% of the sample viewed the evaluation of

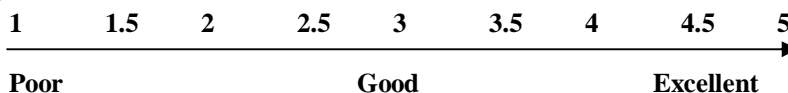
Construct/ Aspect	Level of Satisfaction		
	Number of responses		
Program Design, Contents and Management:	<i>Least Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory	<i>Most Satisfactory</i>
	<i>ry</i>	<i>ry</i>	<i>ry</i>
Appropriateness of teaching material.	05	47	10
Quality and adequacy of training equipment (AV aids).	07	32	23
Relevance of course contents.	04	37	20
Effectiveness of communication & delivery techniques.	03	33	25
Appropriateness of evaluation techniques for activities.	06	36	17
Over all management and coordination of program.	02	32	27
Effectiveness of Resource Person/Speaker.	01	26	35
Presentation of Activities.	09	34	18
Schedule and Time allocated for each topic/ session.	03	36	21
Quality of administrative and secretarial services.	01	29	28
Relevance with program.	04	31	25
Cleanliness & arrangements of training venue environment.	04	26	33
Light, fans, refreshment and tea arrangements.	Nil	42	19
Reception.	03	30	20

activities done during the workshop was satisfactory, while 27% considered it most satisfactory. 35 respondents representing 56% of the sample credited the resource persons and speakers as most effective, while 41% considered them merely effective in this regard. 34 respondents representing 54% of the sample viewed that presentation of activities during the workshop was satisfactory, while 29% considered it most satisfactory. 33 respondents representing 52% of the sample considered that communication and delivery techniques during the workshop were effective, while 40% viewed these as most effective. 33 respondents representing 52% of the sample appreciated the cleanliness and arrangements of the training venue environment, while 41% considered these as satisfactory. 32 respondents representing 51% of the sample considered over all management and coordination of program as satisfactory, while 43% viewed it as most satisfactory. 32 respondents representing 51% of the sample were of the view that quality and adequacy of training AV-aids utilized in the workshop were satisfactory, while 37% were most satisfied with these features. 31 respondents representing 49% of the sample considered these services as relevant with the program, while 40% appreciated these as being most satisfactory and relevant. 30 respondents representing 47% of the sample were satisfied with the warmth of reception they received in the workshop, while 32% were happy for these being most satisfactory. And 29 respondents representing 46% of the sample were satisfied with the quality of administrative and secretarial services, while 44% appreciated these as being most satisfactory.

It was found from the results of table 4 that majority of respondents were of the view that program design and contents presented in the workshop were satisfactory while a large number of respondents considered these as most satisfactory. Only a small number of respondents (up to 11%) were dissatisfied with these features. Majority of respondents were of the view that management of the workshop was satisfactory while a large number of respondents considered it as most satisfactory. Only a small number of respondents (up to 14%) were dissatisfied with this feature of the workshop. Majority of respondents were of the view that administrative and secretarial services provided during the workshop were satisfactory while a large number of respondents considered these as most satisfactory. Only a small number of respondents (up to 06% only) were dissatisfied with this feature of the workshop.

The third research question was related to likeness, rating of the workshop and respondents' willingness to attend future INSETs and their suggestions for further improvements. The results are given below:

The respondents' were required to rate the INSET on rating scale given in figure 1:



*Figure 1: Rating scale for overall rating of INSET*

Analysis of respondents' feedback showed the following ratio as given in

table 5:

*Table No. 5: Overall Rating of the Training Workshop*

\*Total number of responses: 63

Rating >>>	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
*No of Responses	NIL	NIL	NIL	03	15	15	24	02	04

The analysis of data given in table 5 showed that 95% of respondents rated the overall program between good to excellent. When asked whether they would like to attend such workshops in future, majority of the respondents liked this workshop in all its aspects and also suggested that such training workshops should be frequently conducted and all the teachers be given a chance to attend these; implying that they would like to attend such type of workshops in future too.

When asked to suggest something for further improvement of such type of INSET workshops under FDE, they were happy and thankful for providing opportunity of attending INSET workshop and suggested that these types of INSETs should be conducted frequently for all teachers. They wanted that more activities especially taken from syllabus should be included in the workshop and these should be conducted at the beginning of academic sessions. They also suggested to include more topics such as: (a) "Syllabus Based Activities: Model Lessons" (b) "How to Teach Grammar and Other Three Skills (Other Than Writing)" (c) "Moral Education and Management of Large/Overcrowded Classes" and (d) Use of IT and Presentations for Teaching English.

### Conclusions

The results of the study showed that the teachers showed positive attitude towards INSET workshop. They liked it, and felt that it achieved its objectives. They were satisfied with the services and facilities provided during the workshop. Moreover, they would like to attend such programs in future too.

### Discussion

The findings of this study are similar to the previous studies done; Uysal (2012) found the similar results of teachers' positive attitude towards INSET. DeMonte (2013) found positive attitude of English teachers and cited Rourke (1980). Lipton and Liss (1978 cited in Orlando, 1983) found that teachers of English and Social Studies had shown significantly more positive attitude than teachers of Mathematics, Science, Art and Physical Education towards combining literacy strategies into their lesson plans. Moreover, they (respondents) wanted that teachers should be involved at all stages of such programs: from planning to the development of module, and from execution to evaluation process just as suggested by Sandholtz, (2002).

It is recommended that INSET workshops may be arranged periodically for teachers at all levels and for all subject areas, adopting bottom up approach for planning, development of training modules and holding of these courses. Educational leaders and policy makers may arrange and facilitate for effective INSET programs

and make these compulsory for teachers offering incentives on the completion of such courses.

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