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How Do Teachers Feel About In-Service Education?

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If continuing professional growth is to be taken seriously, administrators and teachers must pool their knowledge and resources and seek to make in-service programs more responsive to the needs and interests of practicing classroom teachers.

IN-SERVICE education has long been recognized as a vital part of the educational process for the classroom teacher. A perusal of the literature, however, reveals that few research efforts have been under-

taken to determine the types of in-service programs which would be most beneficial to teachers as they carry out their daily classroom duties.

The professional preparation of teachers is a continuing process, and self-renewal must occur if teachers are to stay in tune

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with the changing needs of their students. Effective in-service programs should help the teacher meet these changing needs.

Problem. A statewide research study in Tennessee yielded the data presented in this article. The purposes of the study were (a) to identify the types of in-service education programs currently in use throughout the state and (b) to ascertain teacher attitudes

toward in-service education programs. This discussion will focus upon the latter area of concern.

Sample and Methodology. A stratified proportional sampling procedure was used to identify teachers for this study to include two percent of the teachers from each of the state's school districts. Usable returns were received from 646 teachers, or 65 percent of

Items	Per-centage Agreeing	X	Per-centage Disagreeing	Items	Per-centage Agreeing	X	Per-centage Disagreeing
1. The teacher should have the opportunity to select the kind of in-service activities which he feels will strengthen his professional competence.	89%	1.654	4%	17. A teacher should receive in-service credit for travel.	66%	.750	15%
2. In-service programs should include special orientation activities for the new classroom teacher.	95%	1.465	2%	18. The implementation of innovations presented in in-service programs is often a function of the support received from school administrators.	68%	.712	7%
3. The real test of an in-service program is whether it helps the teacher to cope with his professional tasks more successfully.	94%	1.398	2%	19. In-service education should relate directly to problems encountered in the classroom.	66%	.712	19%
4. In-service programs must include activities which allow for the different interests which exist among individual teachers.	96%	1.397	1%	20. Most teachers do not like to attend in-service activities.	63%	.606	20%
5. Teachers need to be involved in the developing of purposes, activities, and methods of evaluation for in-service programs.	93%	1.371	2%	21. A teacher should receive in-service credit for professional reading.	55%	.467	24%
6. The primary purpose of in-service education is to upgrade the teacher's classroom performance.	90%	1.293	6%	22. Most in-service activities should be carried on within the school in which the teacher works.	55%	.465	27%
7. Teachers should receive some release time for in-service education activities.	86%	1.248	4%	23. A teacher should receive in-service credit for professional writing.	54%	.463	22%
8. One of the most important ways to judge the effectiveness of an in-service program is whether the teacher uses the results of the training in his classroom.	90%	1.242	6%	24. More in-service activities should be scheduled during the school day.	59%	.456	24%
9. One of the most motivating in-service activities is an opportunity to become acquainted with new teaching practices or innovative programs.	87%	1.155	5%	25. Transfer of concepts presented and skills taught in in-service programs to the problems of daily classroom life and school operations is minimal.	49%	.291	24%
10. A teacher should receive in-service credit for participation in a graduate course at a university.	77%	1.026	11%	26. In-service training seems to be more effective when the total school staff is simultaneously engaged in a given activity.	43%	.212	29%
11. If more teachers were involved in planning in-service programs, teacher commitment to them would be greater.	77%	.969	6%	27. Most in-service programs do not seem well-planned.	44%	.155	52%
12. Every teacher should be required to participate in some in-service activities designed to build a team spirit within his school.	75%	.909	9%	28. Our in-service programs seem to suffer from a lack of financial support needed to carry them out.	29%	-.087	40%
13. A teacher should receive in-service credit for research.	76%	.901	11%	29. Most in-service programs arise from a study of the needs and problems of teachers.	34%	-.180	45%
14. We need to have more small group activities at in-service meetings.	78%	.877	8%	30. Most in-service programs are virtually useless.	31%	-.275	56%
15. Attendance at some system-wide activities should be required of all teachers.	76%	.826	12%	31. The objectives of in-service programs in my system are always specific.	27%	-.294	48%
16. Many in-service activities do not appear relevant to any felt needs of the teacher.	73%	.760	19%	32. Orientation activities for the new classroom teacher in our system are adequate.	21%	-.434	53%
				33. There is adequate follow-up to determine the effects of in-service activities in my system.	13%	-.702	65%
				34. I wish more of our in-service programs were scheduled as three-hour sessions at night.	11%	-1.109	79%

Figure 1. Tennessee Teachers' Responses to "Teacher Attitude Toward In-Service Education Inventory" in Rank Order (N = 646)

the sample. Teachers from each of the 147 school districts in the state were included.

Teacher opinions were obtained by means of the "Teacher Attitude Toward In-Service Education Inventory." The inventory included a series of 34 statements regarding in-service education programs. Using a Likert-type scale, respondents were asked to react to each statement. Response categories were strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. Values of 2, 1, 0, -1, and -2 were assigned to these respective response categories. A mean value was determined for each item of the inventory.

Findings. Figure 1 presents Tennessee teachers' responses to the "Teacher Attitude Toward In-Service Education Inventory" in rank order according to mean values. Of the 34 items included in the inventory, the one which received the strongest endorsement by teachers was, "The teacher should have the opportunity to select the kind of in-service activities which he feels will strengthen his professional competence." Eighty-nine percent of the teachers in the sample either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while only four percent disagreed. This suggests that an overwhelming majority of teachers prefer some sort of individualized in-service education program.

Teachers' desire for individualization of in-service education is further indicated by their responses to the statement, "In-service programs must include activities which allow for the different interests which exist among individual teachers." Although this statement ranked fourth according to mean value, 96 percent of the teachers surveyed indicated their agreement with it; less than one percent disagreed. A majority approved each of the following as an acceptable in-service activity: participation in a graduate course at a university (77%); research (76%); travel (66%); professional reading (55%); and professional writing (54%). Interestingly, the percentage of teachers endorsing these activities is far less than the 89 percent who want individualization or the 96 percent who endorse flexibility in in-service programs.

Teachers still want some group in-ser-

vice programs to be conducted. In fact, 76 percent of the respondents felt that attendance at system-wide in-service activities is desirable and should be required of all teachers. Also, teachers (55%) prefer that most in-service group activities be conducted in their own school setting. Whether at the system or local school level, indications are that more small group activities should be incorporated into the planned programs. Eighty-six percent of the respondents felt that teachers should receive some release time for in-service education activities.

Teachers indicated that in-service programs should include special orientation activities for the new classroom teacher. While 95 percent of the teachers felt that such activities should be included in in-service education programs, only 21 percent of the teachers felt that present orientation activities for new teachers were adequate.

Classroom teachers felt strongly (90%) that one of the primary purposes of in-service programs should be to help the teacher upgrade his classroom performance. Eighty-seven percent of the teachers indicated their approval of in-service activities which provide the opportunity to become acquainted with new teaching practices and innovative programs. In fact, respondents (90%) indicated that one of the important ways to judge the effectiveness of an in-service program is its usefulness in helping teachers to cope more successfully with their professional tasks.

A majority of the teachers surveyed (73%) said that too often in-service activities do not appear relevant to any felt needs of the teacher. Among the activities which teachers apparently judged to be more relevant are participation in university classes, original research, and professional reading, traveling, and writing.

Forty-four percent of the teachers thought that generally their in-service programs were not well-planned. Only 34 percent of the teachers believed that in-service programs usually arise from a study of the needs and problems of teachers, and only 27 percent found that the objectives of in-

service programs in their local system were specific. It is not surprising, therefore, that barely a majority (56%) of the teachers disagreed with the statement that, "Most in-service programs are virtually useless," and that 63 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement that, "Most teachers do not like to attend in-service activities."

Interestingly enough, however, the weaknesses of in-service education described by teachers apparently are not due to lack of financial support. Only 29 percent of the teachers responded positively to the statement, "Our in-service programs seem to suffer from a lack of financial support needed to carry them out."

The teachers indicated that there is a remedy for the deficiencies in planning in-service programs. An overwhelming majority (93%) of the respondents stated that teachers need to be involved in the development of purposes, activities, and methods of evaluation for in-service programs. More than

three-fourths of the teachers surveyed reported that such involvement would foster greater commitment on the part of their colleagues for in-service education programs.¹

There is apparently little or no follow-up of in-service activities to determine if they are effective or if objectives of in-service education have been met. Indicative of this is the fact that just 13 percent of the teachers surveyed stated that there is adequate follow-up to determine the effects of in-service activities in their system.

Discussion. Generally, this study substantiates the notion that in-service programs are poorly planned, inadequately executed, and lacking in proper evaluative procedures. Too often, in-service programs suffer more

¹ Although 88% of the school systems in Tennessee make use of in-service planning committees, the membership of these committees is heavily weighted with administrative staff, such as superintendents, principals, and supervisors of instruction.

A Call for Papers for the "Research Supplement"

Manuscripts are now being accepted for consideration for the "Research Supplement."

The "Research Supplement" is *not* designed for publishing reviews of research issues, calls for needed research analysis, or analysis of widely quoted research studies. *It has been established for the reporting of data.* Criteria for selecting articles include:

1. The manuscript must report data. Included in the article must be some evidence to support the reliability of the measures used in the study.

2. The article should concern itself with the behavior of teachers (or their surrogates) and that of students as dependent variables. Behavior is taken to mean achievement scores, responses to questionnaires, etc.

3. The article should present a discussion of the results in such a manner that the meaning of the research is clear to readers. Some suggestions to

meet this criterion include: a discussion of threats to the validity of the study's conclusion; an unambiguous definition of the independent variable; a distinction between the findings (data) of a study and the conclusion pertaining to the research hypotheses; a distinction between testing research hypotheses grounded in theoretical frameworks and answering research questions for which there exists no known theoretical base; and finally establishment of a basis for qualified conclusions.

Authors should send manuscripts to: Robert R. Leeper, Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006.

Manuscripts to be considered should be from 500 to 2,000 words, typed double-spaced. Submit original manuscript and three copies, and enclose return envelope and postage. All manuscripts will be submitted to an advisory panel, and prompt decisions will be made regarding their publication. □

from a lack of direction than from a lack of financial support or time for execution.

New classroom teachers need special orientation activities designed to familiarize them with available curriculum guides as well as materials and instructional aids. They should be helped to understand school regulations, local school board policies, and the school district's system of records and reporting. Teachers should be apprised of ways to enrich or supplement the curriculum such as the community resource file which identifies volunteers from the community who are available for classroom visits and presentations. Finally, the topic of in-service education and its relationship to continued professional growth should be discussed in a thorough and thought-provoking manner.

Teachers need release time for involvement in activities beyond those regularly scheduled during in-service programs. Release time could be spent visiting other schools and classrooms so that teachers could become acquainted with new teaching practices and innovative programs or working in a demonstration teaching or materials center. Such centers have staff who assist teachers in preparing materials or developing new teaching strategies for use in their own classrooms. Additionally, opportunities are provided for teachers to use these teaching strategies with students at the center.

Seldom has our understanding of learning been applied to in-service education. Those who plan in-service education programs continue to rely on traditional activities, such as faculty meetings, courses at the university, system-wide meetings, and regional and state-wide conventions. Usually these in-service programs feature lectures from which teachers are expected to gather data and receive inspiration sufficient for educational reform. Teachers seriously question the relationship between these activities and the improvement of classroom performance.

Teachers recognize the need for continuing improvement and are anxious to participate in conferences and workshops, which offer an opportunity to augment as well as strengthen their abilities and skills.

Teachers want and need the opportunity to seek cooperatively answers to problems and questions with which they are faced on a day-to-day basis. For the most part, however, in-service activities are impersonal, unrelated to day-to-day problems faced by the teacher, and developed without input from those most affected by them. The failure to direct the energy and talents of teachers toward a well-planned in-service program, inclusive of formalized objectives, has detrimental effects on the profession.

Implications. Many implications relative to in-service education may be drawn from this study. Determination of the needs of the teachers within the school system seems prerequisite to the planning of meaningful in-service education programs. Specific objectives should be developed and follow-up procedures established to determine if these objectives have been realized.

Too often the membership of in-service planning committees is composed largely of school administrators. Such committees should be reconstituted to include a majority of classroom teachers. Those systems which do not have teachers on in-service planning committees should take steps to improve the planning process by including them on such committees.

Most in-service activities should focus on the classroom aspects of teaching. An effort should be made to implement programs which present concepts and develop skills transferable to the problems of daily classroom life and school operations. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to offer in-service training in the schools in which participants are working. Such a plan not only allows teachers to focus upon problems which have personal meaning to them, but fosters the development of a team spirit within the school staff.

Finally, if teachers' professional growth is to be taken seriously, public school administrators and teachers must pool their knowledge and resources and seek to make in-service education more responsive to the needs and interests of practicing classroom teachers. □

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