Analyzing the needs of private and state sector teachers of English regarding effective in-service training programs.

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Abstract: In-service teacher training programs are of great importance for teachers of English who work in the private and the state sector, as they augment their knowledge and enhance their teaching practices and as a result conduce to the improvement of the educational system. On account of the significance of these training courses both for teacher development as well as student growth, it is necessary to identify the training needs and preferences of the teachers.

The present paper aims to introduce and critically discuss if the views of the teachers of English who work in the private and the state sector in Greece regarding their in-service training are homogeneous or contradictory.

To this end, a research was carried out with both state and private teachers of English through a questionnaire and interviews. The accrued data pinpointed that both groups displayed similar preferences regarding the content, the place, the mode and the duration of in-service training courses. Moreover, a striking similarity emerged, that is the participants' requirement to express their training needs which in turn should be taken into consideration in the preparation of in-service training programs.

Key words: in-service training, state EFL teachers, private EFL teachers.

1. Introduction

In service teacher training focuses on teachers' professional development and rendering schooling more effective (Bolam, 1986); therefore the knowledge acquired, while attending in-service training courses, aims to meet the schools' requirements and curricula as well as the needs of teachers and students (Bayrakci, 2009; Chatzidimou & Taratori, 2003). Hence the 'conception, design and application' (Giavrimis et al., 2011, p. 284) of in-service training courses for the teachers of English who work in the private and the state sector in Greece prioritize their professional development.

Referring to teachers of English in Greece and Cyprus various theorists (Kakavoula, 2008; Karageorgi & Symeou, 2007; Kyranou, 2012; Fasoli, 2014) claim that they are in need of constant training courses that aim at professional growth as well as language development through standardized in-service training seminars. Reflection is enhanced through collaborative spirit among the teachers which leads to teacher development (Favrikopoulou, 2009). Although the aim of in-service training courses is to meet the teachers' needs and

further educate them, there is not always correlation between their training needs and the subjects they are taught in in-service training seminars (Darra & Saitis, 2010).

Gokmenoglou (2012) revealed that the teachers of English in Turkey were not satisfied with their in-service training programs and demanded from training program designers to take their needs into account (Altun & Gok, 2010).

In the present study the views of the teachers of English who work in the Greek private and state sector, regarding their in-service training courses, are to be analysed aiming to emphasize on whether they are similar or opposing. The issues that will be explored refer to the content, the duration of in-service training courses as well as the trainees' evaluation by the trainers. The teaching modes, the trainers' qualifications together with the time and place of in-service training seminars will also be put under the lens.

2. Research background

2.1 Research background on teacher education and development

Teacher education

Freeman (1989) claims that teacher education is an umbrella term that embraces both training and development, which in turn, according to Beaumont (2005, p. 83) refers to the 'strategies used for the education of teachers'. Lopez (2004) states that teacher training and development are connected to the teachers' needs for professional development as they complement one another regarding teacher education (Freeman, 2001).

Teacher training refers to the strategies used by a trainer in order to intervene directly in certain practices implemented by a teacher while teaching, focusing on a series of steps, during a certain period of time which in turn lead to specific outcomes. Teacher training aims to help teachers improve either their teaching skills, practices or knowledge (Beaumont, 2005).

Development on the other hand intervenes indirectly in the teachers' way of teaching aiming to raise their awareness through changes that lead to individual growth (Freeman, 1989); therefore teacher development is a process deriving from teachers' personal awareness and reflection on their teaching practices (Head and Taylor, 1997). Teacher development aims to assist teachers develop their teaching and as a result facilitate students to learn. It demands teachers' constant examination of already existing practices which are considered as 'personal theories' (Manolopoulou-Sergi, 2014, par. 3). Teacher development coexists with three new educational trends that refer to 'glocalisation, mentoring and re-thinking teacher evaluation' (Collinson et al., 2009, p. 5).

• Glocalisation illustrates the blending of local as well as global features which in turn transforms issues globally accepted due to the incorporation of 'local culture, values or norms'. Glocalisation regarding education is evident, since most of the curricula constitute a combination of ideas that are globally shared, but at the same time teachers and textbooks emphasize on local issues as well as values and culture (Collinson et al., 2009, p. 5).

• Mentoring is related to education in countries that offer their teachers one to two year

courses of induction. The aim of induction is to help the newly appointed teachers develop professionally through teacher training programs that promote their confidence (Collinson et al., 2009).

• Re-thinking teacher evaluation reflects the need to change teachers' evaluation through peer coaching, self evaluation and teacher portfolios (Glickman, 1992; Stronge, 1997). Evaluation programs that engage the teachers of a school along with the headmaster in the evaluation process promote and enhance the collaborative and democratic spirit at schools (Conley and Glasman, 2008).

2.2 In-service teacher training

In-service teacher training focuses on teachers' training after they start working either in private schools or the State Sector. It is a life-long process that can enable teachers to increase their knowledge and skills as well as inform them about new practices and teaching techniques through a series of experiences that contribute to teachers' on-going development (Locke, 1984; Nelson, 2007; Richards and Schmidt, 1985).

Both the private and the state sector can organize in-service training courses in the form of 'seminars and lectures' or post graduate courses (Ayakli, 2005, p. 218; Ur, 1996). Aiming at teacher development in-service training courses should concentrate on teachers' needs and interests through a systematic planning of activities (Athanassoula-Reppa et al., 1999; Chatzipanagiotou, 2001) and needs analysis approaches (Nunan, 1988 as cited in Roberts, 1998). Reflection is also of vital importance as it helps teachers understand how to improve their teaching practices and techniques in the classroom and, thus, develop professionally (Britten, 1988; Hayes, 2000).

Teacher learning through in-service training programs

Characteristics of teacher learning

Teacher learning must be guided as it is a task that is considered to be demanding (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999). The experience teachers have due to their interaction with students, peers or parents, affects their 'knowledge of teaching' and therefore makes teacher learning a 'socially negotiated process' (Johnson & Freeman, 2001, p. 55). On the other hand, teacher learning is also 'normative' as it is based on the teachers' experiences as trainees and teachers (Johnson & Freeman, 2001, pp. 55-56).

Main characteristics of effective in-service teacher training

According to Desimone (2009, p. 183) and Mathews (2014) effective in-service training courses should centre on features that are to be presented in the following lines:

• The 'content focus in teacher learning' which is based on the deep knowledge of a subject matter combined to the appropriate teaching strategies.

• The 'active learning' through which teachers can take part in lesson planning, teacher observations or group discussions (Banilower & Shimkus, 2004; Carey & Frechtling, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1997).

• 'Coherence' which focuses on the fact that there must be a consistency between the

knowledge teachers already have (existing knowledge) and the knowledge they receive (received knowledge) (Elmore & Burney, 1997).

• The 'duration' of the training courses which, according to the literature, should not be short giving, thus, the teachers the opportunity not only to be familiar with innovative ideas in education but also practice them (Cohen & Hill, 2001; Guskey, 1994; Supovitz & Turner, 2000).

• The 'collective participation' of the teachers, who might either teach the same grade or work at the same school in the same in-service training program, can lead to a successful way of teacher learning through interaction on the issues attended (Banilower & Shimkus, 2004; Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2003; Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1994; Little, 1993; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998; Rosenholtz, 1989).

• Sapp (1996) and Yan (2005) clearly state that tracing the teachers' needs through a needs analysis, before developing in-service training courses, is deemed essential.

• The factor of follow-up that helps teachers to be guided constantly on how to apply new teaching methods and techniques in their classrooms is also very significant while attending in-service training programs (Sapp, 1996; Yan, 2005).

In-service training for the teachers of English in the State Sector

The Ministry of Education offers in-service training programs for the Greek State Sector on subjects that refer to the use of Information Computer Technology (ICT) in the classrooms or on ways to successfully apply new curricula (Eurydice, 2005). In-service training programs also train teachers on teaching students with dyslexia, teaching methodology as well as teaching the English language. There are various kinds of educational bodies that offer in-service training courses on the aforementioned subjects some of which are:

• Universities

• Technological Education Institutions (TEI)

• The Higher School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE)

• The Regional Education Centers (PEK), the School Advisors and the School Units (Eurydice, 2005; Fasoli, 2014).

In-service training for the teachers of English in the Private Sector

In-service training courses for the teachers of English in the Private Sector are mainly organized by Private Institutions (Stylianidou et al., 2004) such as

• The Hellenic American Union

• The Anglo Hellenic Teacher training Center

• Book Publishers

The aim of the aforementioned courses in the private sector is not only to present new materials to the teachers but also familiarize them with the techniques needed in order to teach each language skill separately so that the students can be well prepared for examinations of certificates which classify their proficiency in English.

- Networks of English language private schools also offer their teachers in-service training courses regarding their teaching techniques and practices based on specific instructions provided by detailed curricula.

- Greek Universities like the Hellenic Open University, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens also provide the teachers of English who work in the Private Sector with long distance in-service training courses.

3. Aim and scope of the present study

The present study focuses on the attitudes of the teachers of English, who work in the Private or the State Sector, regarding their in-service training needs. The aim of this study is to investigate whether the views of the teachers who work in different sectors are the same or opposing.

Therefore, the research hypothesis is:

- the teachers of English who work in the Private and the State sector have coinciding views concerning their in-service training needs.

In this line, a set of research questions were formulated.

►To what extent, are the attitudes of the private and the state sector teachers of English towards their in-service training needs homogeneous?

►What are the attitudes of the private and the state sector teachers of English towards the topics, the length and the modes of teaching of effective in-service teacher training programmes?

►What are the attitudes of the private and the state sector teachers of English towards the instructors' qualifications, the evaluation of the trainees, the time and place in-service training courses take place?

►What are the suggestions of teachers of the private and the state sector for ameliorating their in-service training programmes?

4. Methodology and design

The research methodology of the present study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. More specifically the teachers' attitudes, who teach in the Greek Private and State sector, regarding their in-service training needs, were measured objectively through a questionnaire and qualitatively through teachers' interviews; thus, the research could provide reliable data (Ashley & Boyd, 2006; Neuman, 2003). The combination of the aforementioned methodologies leads to triangulation, which in turn, enhances the research through valid results.

4.1 Instrumentation

4.1.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire of the survey was addressed to teachers in Greece who work in the Private and the State sector. It aimed to record their attitudes towards the teaching modes, the place and time as well as the content of the in-service training courses. The duration of the aforementioned programs together with the evaluation of the trainees by the trainers as well as the qualifications of the instructors, were also investigated.

The questionnaire was cost effective, as it was sent to the teachers through email, and easy to complete (Dornyei, 2003). It ensured anonymity (Kearney et al., 1984) and after being piloted with three colleagues, it was rated as quick and efficient.

The questionnaire used for the survey is composed of two parts. The first part refers to 'factual questions' that provide background information about the teachers who participated in the survey. The second part of the questionnaire refers to the 'attitudinal questions' which reflect the teachers' ideas regarding their in-service training needs (Dornyei, 2003, p. 8).

4.1.2 The teachers' interviews

The ten-minute, phone teachers' interviews (Appendix I) took place after the completion of the questionnaire by the teachers. They were semi structured and they included follow up questions which helped with elaborating on the answers given by the teachers in the questionnaires (Brenner, 2006).

The questions of the interviews that were formulated in axis, investigated the teachers' views on the duration of in-service training courses, the instructors' qualities and the way trainees are trained. The teachers' ideas on how and whether their training needs are identified by the organizers before designing the in-service training courses were also put under the lens.

4.2 The participants

The questionnaire of the survey was completed by thirty one teachers who work in State schools and twenty nine teachers who work in private language schools in Greece so the two samples were almost equal numerically. The majority of the teachers work in Athens, yet there were some cases of teachers who work in schools in Macedonia and the Dodecanese.

The teachers who took part in the teachers' interviews were five in total, two of them worked in the private sector and three in the state sector.

4.3 Analysis of the data

The data of the survey were statistically analysed through the IBM SPSS statistics 21.0 software, aiming to compare and contrast the teachers' attitudes who work in the private and the state sector towards their in-service training courses.

5. Findings and Interpretation

Aiming to examine whether the research hypothesis and the research questions were verified, this section presents and interprets the results of the research. More particularly, the data collected through the questionnaire and the teachers' interviews revealed that the attitudes of the teachers of English who work in the Private Sector tally with the views of the instructors of the State Sector to a great extent as regards their in-service training needs.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 disclose that most of the teachers of English who are employed by the State and the Private Sector, take part in less than three, short in-service training programs annually, which are organized by State and Private Institutions in Greece together with Universities and School Advisors.

Table 1: In service training courses that teachers attend each year

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 3	43	17.7%	71.7%	71.7%
3-4	15	25.0%	25.0%	96.7%
More than 4	2	3.3%	3.3%	100.0%
Total	60	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 2: The length of the in-service training courses teachers attend

	Valid Percent
Short	83.87%
Long	12.90%
Other	3.29%
Total	100.00%

Table 3: The organizers of the in-service training courses

	Responses N Percent	Percent of cases
Private Institutions in Greece	31 31.3%	50.0 %
State Institutions in Greece (i.e. PEK, EKDAA)	15 15.6%	25.0 %
State School Advisors	28 29.2%	46.7 %
Universities	21 21.9%	35.0 %
Other	2 2.1%	3.3 %
Total	96 100%	160.0 %

Table 4 presents that a large number of the teachers of English (70%) who work in the State and the Private Sector are provided with a needs analysis questionnaire before attending in-service training courses which is indicative of the fact that their preferences are taken into

account in the design of the training courses to some extent.

Table 4: The teachers who were provided with a questionnaire before in-service training courses

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	42	70%	70%	70%
No	18	30%	30%	100%
Total	60	100%	100%	

Table 5 refers to the content of the in-service training programs. It indicates that the teachers of English who work in the Private and the State Sector show almost equal preference for in-service training programs that include new methods of teaching as well as the use of computers in teaching English. The aforementioned finding is in line with the one revealed in Magga's (2011) survey as it expresses the teachers' preference for being trained on how to incorporate technology in the English classroom. The teachers of both sectors also favor in-service training courses that present ways to motivate students in the classroom and the teaching of English through the use of films (strongly agree and agree). Error correction, curriculum development together with the teaching of all skills and classroom management issues films (strongly agree and agree), are also prioritized by teachers of both sectors. Preference is also shown for in-service training seminars that deal with educational psychology in order to empower the teachers to help students with their problems, a finding which contradicts the one in Gokmenoglou's (2012) research since it disclosed Turkish teachers' partial need of training on the aforementioned issues. Even though both groups highly endorse the promotion of collaborative spirit among them, the state school teachers seem to feel more confident if an experienced colleague observes their teaching than their private school counterparts. The State Sector teachers of English express a higher rate of agreement than that of the Private Sector teachers as regards in-service training programs that include methodology to use drama activities in the classroom. This can be attributed to the fact that the private sector is more exam-oriented so more traditional methods are considered important.

Table 5: I prefer in-service training courses that...

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Teachers in the … Sector									
	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private
1. include new methods of teaching	64.5%	62.1%	29.0%	37.9%	6.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2. include the use of computers in teaching English	32.3%	41.4%	35.5%	41.4%	25.8%	13.8%	6.5%	3.4%	0%	0%

3. present ways to motivate students in the classroom	77.4%	69.0%	22.6%	24.1%	0.0%	6.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4. include ways to teach English by using films in the classroom	41.9%	24.1%	22.6%	31.0%	35.5%	41.4%	0%	0%	0%	3.4%
5. include methodology to use drama activities in the classroom	32.6%	3.4%	41.9%	44.8%	25.8%	31.0%	0%	20.7%	0%	0%
6. include methods to enhance the teaching of all skills	51.6%	53.6%	41.9%	46.4%	3.2%	0%	3.2%	0%	0%	0%
7. include error correction	19.4%	37.9%	32.3%	31.0%	32.3%	24.1%	16.1%	6.9%	0%	0%
8. include classroom management	60.0%	37.9%	26.7%	48.3%	10%	13.8%	3.3%	0%	0%	0%
9. include curriculum development	32.2%	17.2%	29.0%	41.4%	35.5%	41.4%	3.2%	0%	0%	0%
10. deal with educational psychology in order to help students with their problems	61.3%	53.6%	22.6%	32.1%	16.1%	14.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
11. enhance the collaborative spirit among teachers	32.3%	31.0%	29.0%	31.0%	32.3%	24.1%	6.5%	13.8%	0%	0%
12. include teachers' observation, while teaching, by experienced teachers	45.2%	31.0%	16.1%	10.3%	35.5%	34.5%	0%	17.2%	3.2%	6.9%

Table 6 refers to the place and time in-service training programs take place. Both Private and State Sector teachers illustrate their disagreement with attending in-service training seminars in the evenings. Teachers of both sectors express their preference mostly for taking part in in-service training courses at the beginning of the school year. Seminars that are held near the teachers' houses as well as courses that are far from the trainees' homes, but easily approachable by means of public transport are also favored by the teachers of both groups. With reference to programs that take place during the weekends, the teachers who work in the Private Sector illustrate statistically a higher level of agreement compared to that reported by the teachers of the State Sector. Maybe this is due to the fact that private sector teachers are used to working on Saturdays so they could fit the attendance of a seminar in their schedule.

Table 6: I prefer attending in-service training courses…

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Teachers in the … Sector									
	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private
1. during the weekends	19.4%	32.1%	22.6%	39.3%	19.4%	7.1%	12.9%	14.3%	25.8%	7.1%
2. in the evenings	12.9%	3.6%	16.1%	14.3%	19.4%	14.3%	25.8%	42.9%	25.8%	25.0%
3. at the beginning of the school year	51.6%	4.8%	32.3%	31.0%	12.9%	3.4%	3.2%	20.7%	0%	0%
4. in a venue close to my house	54.8%	31.0%	19.4%	31.0%	25.8%	27.6%	0%	6.9%	0%	3.4%
5. in a venue easily accessible by means of public transport even though it is far away from my house	35.5%	41.4%	25.8%	41.4%	29.0%	10.3%	3.2%	3.4%	6.5%	3.4%

Figure 1 refers to the duration of in-service training courses. It presents the fact that the teachers of English who work in the Private and the State Sector mostly opt for in-service training seminars that are short and last one day. Teachers of both sectors also favor intensive in-service training programs that last less than a month and are fulltime. The least favored programs by the teachers of both sectors refer to the ones that are either extensive or last two hours. It should be noted that only the highest percentages of each group are presented for convenience reasons.
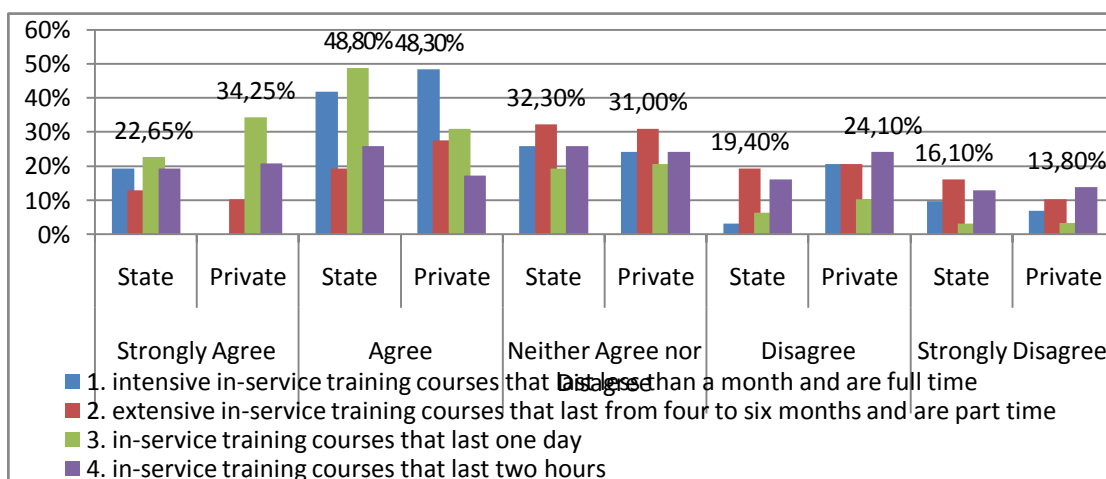
Figure 1: I prefer…

Table 7 illustrates the teaching modes of in-service training seminars. It presents the fact that both groups of teachers disagree with the use of theory or practice only while attending in-

service training programs. On the contrary seminars that apply theory and practice in a balanced way are mostly favored by both groups of teachers. In the same vein, the findings collected in Fasoli's (2014) as well as Darra and Saitis' (2010) surveys indicated the teachers' need for seminars that combine both practice and theory. Preference is also shown for lectures together with the use of workshops and group work by the teachers of English who work in the Private and the State Sector. Teachers of both groups also favor in-service training seminars that involve face to face teaching, distance learning and a combination of both, as well as courses that provide opportunities for teachers' interaction and exchanging of ideas.

Table 7: I prefer in-service training courses that…

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Teachers in the … Sector										
	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private	State	Private
1. employ lectures	6.7%	17.2%	30%	41.4%	30%	17.2%	23.3%	17.2%	10%	6.9%
2. use theory only	0%	0%	3.2%	0%	12.9%	24.1%	61.3%	58.6%	22.6%	17.2%
3. use practice only	10%	3.4%	6.7%	20.7%	30%	31%	50%	41.4%	3.3%	3.4%
4. embrace both Theory and practice in a balanced way	51.6%	55.2%	41.9%	41.4%	3.2%	3.4%	3.2%	0%	0%	0%
5. use workshops	45.2%	34.5%	41.9%	55.2%	9.7%	6.9%	3.2%	3.4%	0%	0%
6. use group work	35.5%	31%	51.6%	44.8%	12.9%	13.8%	0%	10.3 %	0%	0%
7. involve distance learning	30%	27.6%	26.7%	17.2%	23.3%	44.8%	20%	6.9%	0%	3.4%
8. involve face to face teaching	22.6%	24.1%	54.8%	44.8%	22.6%	27.6%	0%	3.4%	0%	0%
9. involve both distance learning and face to face teaching	45.2%	24.1%	16.1%	37.9%	35.5%	31%	3.2%	6.9%	0%	0%
10. provide opportunities for teachers' interaction and exchanging of ideas	67.7%	37.9%	29%	48.3%	3.2%	13.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 2 presents the teachers' attitudes towards the trainers' qualifications. Both groups of teachers believe that in-service training instructors should not only have the knowledge to teach adults, but also be colleagues that are experts in the field they teach. The teachers of English who work in the Private and the State Sector agree with the fact that in-service training instructors should be university teachers, whereas they illustrate a neutral stance towards the idea that the trainers of in-service training programs should be native speakers of English.
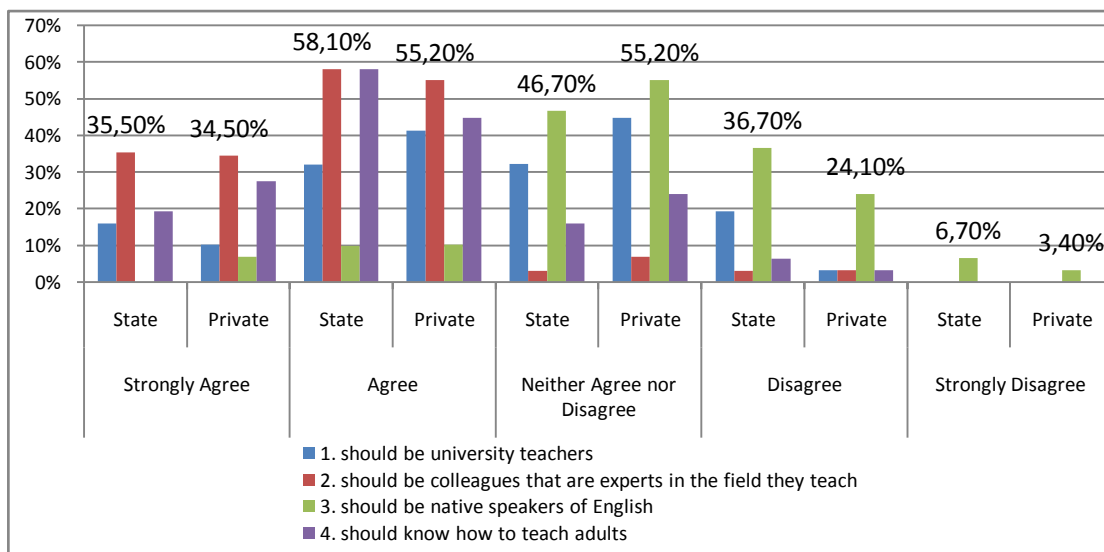
Figure 2: In-service training instructors…

Figure 3 emphasizes on the trainees' evaluation by the trainers. Specifically, the teachers of English who work in the Private and the State Sector are in favor of a written assignment but they are highly opposed to being evaluated through an exam. The aforementioned finding is in line with the one unearthed in Darra and Saiti's (2010) together with Fasoli's (2014) surveys which shows the trainees' disapproval of being evaluated through an exam. Contrary to the aforementioned result, the teachers of both groups show their preference for in-service training programs which are evaluated through a written assessment as well as the observation of the trainees, while teaching, by the trainers.
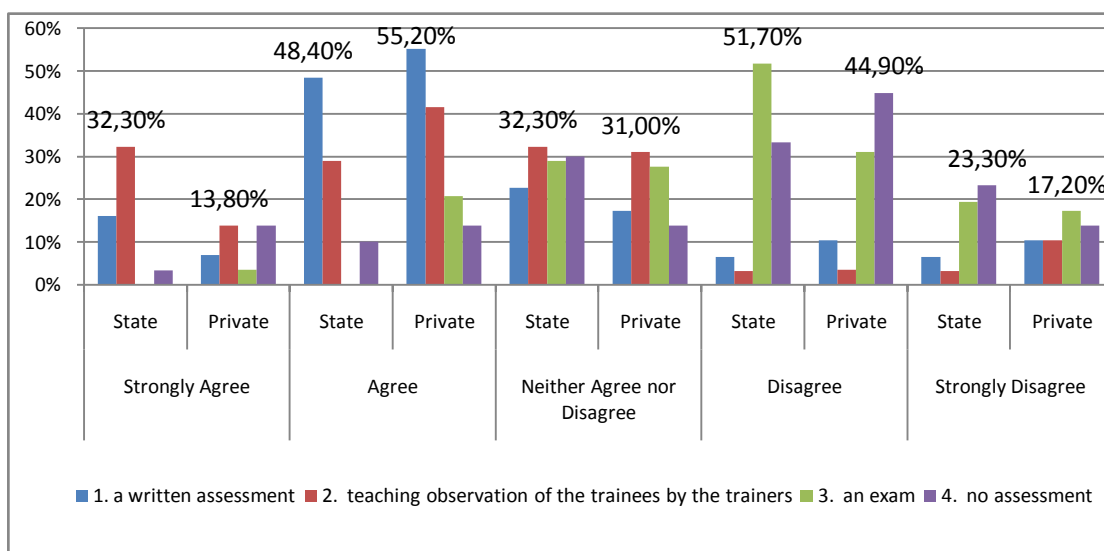

Figure 3: I believe that the participants' evaluation of the in-service training course should take the form of The data collected through the teachers' interviews revealed that the teachers who work in the Private and the State Sector show their preference for in-service training courses that are extensive and thus give them the opportunity to be involved in theoretical and practical issues,

interact with other teachers and therefore develop their teaching. This finding seems to contradict the relevant questionnaire item in which the majority showed little preference. Perhaps, at the interview they rethought about the duration of a course and realized that an extensive one offers them the opportunity to implement theory to practice and receive feedback at the same time.

In particular teachers claim:

'*Yes, because there's enough time to practice what you learn under real circumstances, observe how certain tools or approaches work in your teaching context, get feedback and improve*' (Teacher 1).

'*In the course of six months, teachers would have the chance to try out the new techniques in class and then share their experiences with fellow teachers*' (Teacher 2).

'*...as it is enough time to work both on the theoretical part and the practical*' (Teacher 3).

'*...engage in numerous training and teaching practices*' (Teacher 5).

Both groups of teachers favor part time courses as there is lack of time and these seminars are not stressful.

In this vein, teachers claim:

'*Well... I've always liked full time programs but they are stressful and difficult to follow when one also works full time. So, I would opt for part time*' (Teacher 1).

'*I think for adults it is impossible to have full time courses especially if they work*' (Teacher 3).

'*...If it's during the school year, during the school lessons I think that part time training lessons are more convenient*' (Teacher 4).

As regards in-service training courses that last two hours the teachers of both sectors express a neutral attitude. Despite the fact that only one teacher favors this course- type the rest of the teachers believe the seminars that last two hours are too short; thus there is no time for the trainees to be engaged in theory and practice, as a result longer courses are more preferable.

'*...Yes, they would, because even within the 2-hour session I would also be able to explore issues of concern, ee, enhance my consciousness, collaborate with peers and uu, reflect on my classroom practices* (Teacher 5).

Two teachers who work in the State Sector and one teacher who works in the Private Sector support distance learning in-service training seminars on condition that there is teachers' exchanging of ideas and good organization. Nonetheless, one private teacher puts forward the importance of collaboration and experiential learning in face-to-face tuition.

More specifically teachers claim:

'*...they do help, as long as they are well-organized...*' '*...they do not involve the presence of a superior in class, which might be threatening to some or discouraging to me*' (Teacher 1).

'*For me, distance learning on an exclusive basis means faceless communication, therefore*

lack of motivation to participate' (Teacher 2).

'If teachers are willing to make their own effort then yes distance learning training programs would help improve teaching practices' (Teacher 3).

'Um, partly yes, partly no. They'd give some ideas but I think that experiential learning is better because you see things that the instructor may apply and you imitate him or her to do it in your class' (Teacher 4).

According to the teachers of both sectors, in-service training courses that combine face to face teaching with distance learning should emphasize on theory and practice together with experiential learning that enhances teachers' exchanging of ideas.

Most of the teachers believe that the trainers of in-service training seminars should not necessarily be native speakers. Two of the State Sector teachers report that instructors that are non native speakers can understand non native teachers' problems better. Nonetheless, all the teachers believe that the instructors who are native speakers can help with their pronunciation together with their listening and speaking skills.

In this sense, teachers claim:

'If they are native speakers, they will certainly urge us to improve on our language skills, ye…. If they aren't, they can better understand the challenges non-natives face' (Teacher 1).

'One point which I believe a native English speaker would assist in as an instructor is the teachers' accent' (Teacher 2).

'The trainer could help me improve my pronunciation and the English language in general' (Teacher 3).

'…they would help us acquire better pronunciation' (Teacher 4).

'Native speakers of English could deal with areas relevant to speaking, or pronunciation, vocabulary or uu, and listening comprehension' (Teacher 5).

As the questionnaire showed that not all the teachers of both sectors support the view that their training needs are identified before in-service training courses, the interviews tried to elaborate more on this issue. In this light the interview further revealed that a needs analysis questionnaire is deemed highly essential so that the teachers can express their ideas and at the same time contribute to the design of in-service training courses that are context appropriate.

Specifically:

'A questionnaire would be reliable, too, because it would provide the chance for trainees to express their opinions and in this way shape the course design' (Teacher 2).

'I think that questionnaires are really important as they help trainers to decide on the subjects that they are going to deal with' (Teacher 3).

'I think that they should base their subjects, the topics they want to deal with, on a needs analysis, on questions that would be distributed to schools' (Teacher 4).

'They should administer a needs analysis questionnaire before the training program' (Teacher 5).

As regards improving in-service training seminars, the teachers of both sectors feel that they

are in need of being trained on specific issues, along with methods and techniques that can be used in real classrooms. Teachers prioritize their taking part in experiential learning, their collaboration with other colleagues and the teachers' observation. The provision of feedback, well organized training courses that focus on the training needs of the teachers and versatile trainers that act as motivators, are vital elements that are conducive to efficient in-service training courses.

In particular teachers claim:

'...teaching one subject or related subjects...' 'I think they should incorporate actual feedback from instructors too' (Teacher 1).

'I think that the content of the course is the number one aspect that needs to be in the minds of course organizers. Choosing efficient trainers who can inspire teachers would also make courses more appealing. Another point that needs to be considered is the fact that in most in-service teacher training courses, teachers are taught about interesting techniques and methods, yet these cannot always be implemented in real classrooms' (Teacher 2).

'...If there is collaboration between trainers and teachers' (Teacher 3).

'...if better organization would be applied to those programs and if the needs teachers have in today's schools are taken into consideration' (Teacher 4).

'Taking into consideration the trainees' needs...' '...encouraging collaborative interaction...' '...exchanging of ideas between peers...' '...well-informed and flexible trainers are all elements which can improve in-service teacher training programs' (Teacher 5).

6. Pedagogical Implications

6.1. The need for α needs analysis questionnaire

The data of the research revealed that the teachers' training needs are not always sought for by the organizers of in-service training courses; hence the teachers must complete a needs analysis questionnaire in order to express their ideas and needs.

6.2. The need for teacher observation

In-service training seminars that promote active learning and teacher collaboration through exchanging of ideas are highly preferred by the teachers of both groups; therefore teachers' training on teacher observation is deemed essential for reflection and teacher development.

7. Limitations of the study

Most of the teachers who work in the Private and the State Sector were not willing enough to complete the questionnaire and take part in the interviews; thus, there was not only a limited number of subjects but also of research findings. More participants would render the findings

more generalizable.

The second limitation is related to the time needed to collect the research data. Specifically, if the researcher was given more time for the survey, more research data would have been gathered.

8. Conclusion

The present study revealed that the attitudes of the teachers of English, who work in the Private and the State Sector, as far as their training needs are concerned, are similar. To be specific, the research data that emerged revealed that the teachers of both sectors share the same ideas regarding the place and time, the duration and the content of in-service training courses. The attitudes of the teachers also are in agreement to a great extent as regards the qualifications of the trainers, the teaching modes and the evaluation of in-service training seminars.

The teachers of both sectors expressed their preference for having their needs traced through a needs analysis questionnaire, before taking part in in-service training programs.

Experiential learning, getting and giving feedback and teachers' collaboration in part time courses that do not last very long, were praised by the teachers of both sectors.

Taking part in in-service training courses that take place at the beginning of the school year in centers which are close to the teachers' homes or easily accessible, were favored by the teachers.

Teachers of both sectors illustrated their preference for being evaluated while attending in-service training seminars through written assignments. Another means of evaluation referred to their being observed by the trainers while teaching.

Motivating and flexible trainers who have been trained on how to teach adults were also preferred by the teachers.

As a result all the research questions of the survey were substantiated.

Finally, a step for further research could focus on the reasons that motivate the teachers who work in the Private and the State Sector to attend in-service training courses.

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Appendix I

The questions for the teachers' interviews

Axis 1: The duration of the in-service teacher training programs

1. Do you think that extensive in-service training programs that last up to six months would help you improve your teaching practices? If yes why/If not why?

2. Would you like extensive training courses to be full time or part time?

3. Do you think that in-service training courses that last two hours would help you improve your teaching practices? If yes why/ If not why?

4. Which do you consider the most suitable in-service training course regarding its length?

Axis 2: The teaching modes of the in-service training programs

5. Do you think that in-service training programs that involve distance learning would help you improve your teaching practices? If yes why/ If not why?

6. Which do you consider the most suitable in-service training course regarding its teaching modes?

Axis 3: The Instructor quality of in-service teacher training programs

7. Do you think that the instructors of the in-service training courses you attend should be native speakers of English? If yes why/ If not why?

8. How do you think the instructors that are native speakers of English could help you improve your teaching practices, skills and techniques?

Axis 4: Tracing teachers' needs before developing in-service teacher training programs

9. How do you think trainers should decide on which teaching subjects to present in in-service teacher training programs?

10. Do you think the organizers of the in-service teacher training courses should provide you with questionnaires so that they can trace your needs? If yes why/ If not why?

11. What do you think could improve in-service teacher training programs?