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## Perceptions of Teachers towards In-Service Training Activities

Ayhan Bulut   
Bayburt University, Turkey

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### Abstract

This research aims to determine the perceptions of teachers working at various levels of formal education in Turkey towards in-service training activities. The case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the research. The research was conducted in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year, using a semi-structured interview form with a total of 56 teachers working at various levels in public schools in Erzurum city and voluntarily supporting the research. In the analysis of the data obtained from the research process, both descriptive and content analysis methods were used together. When the results obtained from the research are examined, it is seen that a significant part of the teachers do not find the in-service training activities they participate insufficient in terms of scope and content, and they prefer in-service training on subjects such as information technologies, special education, training coaching, developmental psychology, teaching methods and techniques, software and material preparation. They stated that they prefer to attend on-the-job training activities mostly voluntarily and by using face-to-face training methods.

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### Introduction

All societies have pondered and continue to consider the issue of teacher education for a long time to build their future strongly and richly and teach their children the universal values required by the modern world most comprehensively. In the studies of Günel and Tanrıverdi (2014) examining the historical development of in-service training in the world and Turkey, it is seen that the studies in this field abroad date back to the 1930s, while the first academic studies on in-service training of teachers in Turkey started in the 1980s. Today pre-service training of teachers is not considered sufficient and their knowledge, skills and knowledge on the job and periodically It is stated that their attitudes should be improved (Tekin, 2019).For teachers to achieve this, they need to be well-educated before the service and constantly improve themselves in-service (Erdem & Şimşek, 2013). In-service training, which helps teachers create an environment that facilitates quality learning in schools and enables teachers to develop the competencies they need to pursue in their career options, also helps teachers and other staff maintain their motivation and excitement (Sathyanesan, 2001).

In-service training aims to carry out discoveries in education, increase the quality of teaching, and improve teaching methods (Veeman et al., 1994). According to Patel (2007), thanks to in-service training, a teacher desires to be a learner at every moment of his professional life, thus freeing himself from obsolescence, fossilization, and indifference of knowledge. Devjak and Polak (2007) stated that the primary purpose of in-service training is to

increase the professional development of the employees in education and the quality and effectiveness of the entire education system. When the literature regarding this issue is checked on, studies that deal with the in-service training of teachers and education administrators from various perspectives have been encountered (Boyle et al., 2005; Jeanpierre et al., 2005; Van Driel et al., 2001). It is the most objective way to determine the in-service training needs by taking the teachers' opinions. In this way, evaluation of in-service training programs is also provided (Retalick, & Mithani, 2003). When the relevant literature is examined, the studies on the in-service training of teachers in Turkey mostly depend on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the in-service training programs and the opinions of the administrators and teachers (Yağız, 2011; Ünal, 2010; Doğan, 2009; Aydınalp, 2008; Avşar, 2006) studies are seen.

This research is important in terms of enabling teachers to evaluate the subject by providing a broader perspective on how and in what way in-service training of teachers in the carried out in different countries. In addition, it is thought that the results obtained from the research will contribute to carrying the in-service training of teachers on a global scale to a more universal and applicable platform. This research aims to determine the perceptions of teachers working at various levels education in Turkey towards in-service training activities. For this purpose, the sub-problems of the research are given below:

1. What are the views of teachers about the scope and content of in-service training activities they participate in?
2. What are the views of teachers about the in-service training subjects they need?
3. What are the views of teachers about the necessity of in-service training activities?
4. What are the opinions and suggestions of teachers about the methods of in-service training activities?
5. What are the suggestions of teachers to increase the quality of in-service training activities?

## **Method**

In this study, in which the perceptions of teachers working at various levels in Turkey towards in-service training activities were evaluated, the case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. Merriam (2013), on the other hand, defines the case study as an in-depth description and examination of a limited system. The case study includes an in-depth and longitudinal examination of the data obtained through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document collection (Glesne, 2013).

## **Participants**

The research was conducted in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year, using a semi-structured interview form with a total of 56 teachers working at various levels in public schools in Erzurum city and voluntarily supporting the research. Since the universe of the research is very large, the participants were selected using the criterion sampling method. A criterion sampling is a study of all cases that meet a predetermined set of criteria. The criterion is created by the researcher, or a previously prepared criteria list can be used (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Criterion sampling is not only done with the time variable. Any situation that the research subject can be determined as a criterion (Grix, 2010). As a criterion, working at various levels teachers with more than 10 years

of professional seniority and willingness to voluntarily support the research were included in the research. 38 of the teachers constituting the study group are female, and 18 are male.

### **Data Collection Tool**

A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool in this study, in which the perceptions of teachers working at the working at various levels in Turkey towards in-service training activities were evaluated. Interviewing is a technique used to collect data through verbal communication. The primary purpose of the interviews is to open a space where the participants can express their opinions, thoughts, judgments, and understandings about the study subject (Patton, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

In the research data analysis, both descriptive and content analysis methods were used together. The data obtained in the descriptive analysis approach are summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes (Kozikoğlu, & Senemoğlu, 2018). In content analysis, the codes are determined by examining the data in depth. The related codes are brought together under the same concept to form themes (Berg & Lune, 2019; Creswell, 2020; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014; Seggie & Bayyurt, 2015). In this study, the answers given by the participants were examined separately by the researchers, then the data were coded, and themes were created from the codes reached. In the last stage, the codes and themes were interpreted by creating tables or figures to present them systematically.

In qualitative research, the researcher can fulfil these principles by using strategies such as expert opinion, purposive sampling, and participant confirmation to ensure validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014). In this study, to increase the validity and reliability, the opinions of four experts on the subject were sought, and the opinions on the subject were compared with each other, and an attempt was made to reach an agreement. The analysis process was completed by seeking another expert's opinion on the issues, which a consensus could not be reached. However, to increase the reliability of the research process, direct quotations about the opinions of almost all participants were included.

### **Results**

In this part of the research, the themes obtained from the content analysis were discussed and analysed by considering the research questions.

#### **Teachers' Opinions about Meeting the Needs of In-Service Training Activities in Terms of Scope and Content**

Teachers' opinions about meeting the needs of in-service training activities in terms of scope and content were tabulated under three sub-headings as a result of the content analysis.

Table 1. Opinions on Meeting the Needs of the In-service Training Activities They Participated in terms of Scope and Content

	<i>f</i>
<b>Do not meet the needs</b>	<b>(29-%51.8)</b>
Their opinions on in-service training needs are not taken into account	10
More practical information is included. Nothing applicable.	7
In general, the educators are not sufficient in their fields of activity.	5
It is done to fulfil the formality.	5
In-service training days are perceived as holidays by teachers.	4
It does not achieve the desired goals.	3
Field changes negatively affect in-service training activities	2
<b>Meet the needs</b>	<b>(22-%39.2)</b>
I think it was prepared by the needs of the era.	11
Very useful in the distance education period	7
Those who take the task of training in these activities know the subject	6
More beneficial when the participation is voluntarily	4
<b>Partially meet</b>	<b>(5-%9)</b>
It varies according to the planning and organization of the activity you participate in.	3
Awareness level of the participant about the subject	2

When Table 1 is examined, most of the teachers (f:29-51.7%) stated that the in-service training activities they participated in did not meet their needs in terms of scope and content. Regarding the in-service training needs, the pre-service teachers the most that their opinions were not taken into account (f:10), then more practical information was included in the in-service training courses, and applicable information was not included (f:7). The educators who provided in-service training were not sufficient in training subjects (f:5). On the same subject, teachers stated that in-service training activities were carried out to fulfil the formality (f:5), they were perceived as a holiday for teachers (f:5), they did not reach the desired goals (f:3), and that the field changes made by teachers from time to time affect in-service training activities negatively (f:2). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below:

*Organized in-service training courses come before us as an imposition. No one asks us what we need in this regard (T. 38).*

*I saw that the educators who took part in most of the in-service training activities I attended were not sufficient in the field they provided training (T.7).*

Some of the teachers participating in the research (f:22-39.2%) stated that they met their needs regarding the scope and content of the in-service training activities they participated in. Regarding the subject, teachers stated the most that in-service training activities were prepared by the needs of the age (f:11), in-service training activities organized were very useful in the distance education period (f:7), those who took part as educators in in-service training activities are people who know the subject(f:6), and it is more beneficial when they participate in-

service training activities voluntarily (f:4). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below:

*I think that the in-service training activities organized are decided by the experts of the subject within a planning according to the needs of the age (T.3).*

*I thought that I needed much in-service training on distance education during the pandemic process. To meet this need, in-service training activities related to my field were organized enough in this process (T.55).*

*The people who were the educator in most of the in-service training activities I attended were competent in their fields (T.40).*

Some of the teachers participating in the research (f:5-9%) stated that they partially met their needs in terms of the scope and content of the in-service training activities. Teachers stated that this situation varies the most according to the planning and organization of the in-service training activities they attend and the awareness level of the participant (f:2). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*Of course, in-service training activities determined as needed, well-planned and organized are very beneficial. On the contrary, it is just a waste of time (T.16).*

*If you participate in these activities to learn something and improve yourself, it helps. If you have participated in such activities for no reason, it would not be right to expect much from these activities (T.44).*

### **Teachers' Opinions on Which Subjects They Need In-Service Training the Most**

The opinions of teachers on which subjects they need in-service training the most were tabulated under four sub-headings as a result of the content analysis. When Table 2 is examined, most of the teachers (64.2%) stated that they needed in-service training on various subjects related to education. The subjects they need in-service training related to education are mostly special education (f:8), then (f:7), developmental psychology (f:7), teaching methods and techniques (f:5), measurement, and evaluation (f:5) and communication (f:3). In addition, related to this issue, they stated that they needed in-service training on issues such as professional development and competence (f:3), professional legislation (f:3), pedagogical formation (f:2), school-family cooperation (f:1), values education (f:1) and professional ethics (f:1). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*Sometimes, there are students who need special education in the classes I teach. I'm having a problem with what and how to teach these kids. It would be very helpful if there were in-service training activities on these subjects (T.8).*

*I think we need in-service training on developmental psychology, where we can make sense of our children's development (T.15).*

When Table 2 is examined, a significant portion of teachers (24.3%) stated that they need in-service training on various topics related to technology. The subjects that they need in-service training related to technology are

mostly information technologies (f: 10), then software and material preparation (f: 4), web.2.0 use of tools (f:2) and technology design (f:1). Some of the teachers' opinions on this subject are presented below.

*As technology develops rapidly and is actively used in every field of education, we need constant innovation in information technologies. We always need in-service training activities to be organized on this subject (T.1).*

*With the thought that our field is constantly developing, it will be very productive, especially in the field of robotic coding (T. 34).*

Table 2. Opinions on which Subjects They Need In-service Training the Most

	<i>f</i>
<b>On educational subjects</b>	<b>(45-%64.2)</b>
Special education	8
Educational coaching	7
Developmental psychology	7
Teaching methods and techniques	5
Measurement and evaluation	4
Communication	4
Professional development and competencies	3
Professional legislation	3
Pedagogical formation	2
School family cooperation	1
Values education	1
Professional ethics issues	1
Professional Ethics	1
<b>On technological subjects</b>	<b>(17-%24.3)</b>
Information technologies	10
Software and material preparation	4
Using Web.2 tools	2
Technology design	1
<b>On health subjects</b>	<b>(6-%8.6)</b>
Harmful habits and substance abuse	4
Health and first aid	2
<b>On socialization subjects</b>	<b>(2-%2.9)</b>
Collaborative work	1
Social activities and club work	1

When Table 2 was examined, some teachers (8.6%) stated that they needed in-service training on health-related issues. They stated that they needed healthy in-service training for harmful habits and substance abuse (f:4) and health and first aid (f:2). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*We have seen an increase in harmful habits and substance use among our young people and students in recent years. In-service training on how we can protect them from these harmful habits would be very valuable for us (T.31).*

*I do not know even the simplest first aid issues. An in-service training course in this field would be very useful for those who do not know these subjects like me (T.12).*

When Table 2 was continued to be examined, some of the teachers (2.9%) stated that they needed in-service training on subjects related to socialization. Teachers stated that they need in-service training on socialization as collaborative work (f: 1), social activities, and club work (f: 1). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*Even with our colleagues from the same group, we cannot work in cooperation were necessary to increase the quality of education. I think we are lacking in these matters. We certainly need education on this subject (T.25).*

### **Teachers' Opinions on Whether Participation in In-Service Training Activities Is Compulsory or Not**

Teachers' opinions on whether participation in in-service training activities is compulsory or not were tabulated under two sub-headings as a result of the content analysis.

Table 3. Opinions on whether Participation in In-service Training Activities is Compulsory or not

	<i>f</i>
<b>It should not be compulsory</b>	<b>(34-%60.7)</b>
Must be voluntary based	21
Should be according to need	8
Participation should be encouraged	5
<b>It Should be compulsory</b>	<b>(22-%39.3)</b>
Professional development	10
To be able to apply the reflections of the developments in technology in education	7
Personal development	5

When Table 3 is examined, most of the teachers (60.7%) stated that participation in activities related to in-service training should not be compulsory. As the reasons for this subject, teachers stated that participation in in-service training activities should be voluntary (f:21). Participation in in-service training activities should be arranged according to the needs (f:7) and participation in in-service training activities should be encouraged. The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*It should be voluntary. Forcing the teacher to participate in an activity that he does not want does not benefit anyone (T.48).*

*If in-service training is organized on current and necessary issues in the current conditions, there will be no need for forcing (T.9).*



When Table 3 is continued to be examined, a significant portion of teachers (39.3%) stated that participation in in-service training-related activities should be compulsory. As the reasons for this subject, teachers stated that their participation in in-service training activities would contribute to their professional development (f: 10). Their participation in in-service training activities will help them to apply the reflections of technological developments in education (f: 7) and that they will be necessary for their personal development (f:5). The opinions of some of the teachers on this subject are presented below.

*I think it should be compulsory (T.56).*

*Above all, I see it as an obligation to participate in such activities for my personal development (T.53).*

### Opinions of Teachers about the Methods They Prefer to Participate in In-Service Training Activities

Teachers' opinions about the methods they prefer to participate in in-service training activities are tabulated under three subheadings.

Table 4. Teachers' Opinions on the Methods They Prefer to Participate in In-service Training Activities

	<i>f</i>
<b>It should be face to face</b>	<b>(30-%53.8)</b>
Being able to learn by doing and experiencing	18
To be able to communicate effectively	8
To be able to provide collaborative learning environments	4
<b>It should be mixed</b>	<b>(16-%28.8)</b>
It should be determined according to the content of educational activities	6
It should be determined by paying attention to the integrity of the academic year	6
This situation should be adjusted according to the cost of the activity to be performed	4
<b>It should be distance education</b>	<b>(10-%17.4)</b>
Attendance is easier and more accessible	8
It offers more comfortable education experiences and opportunities for repetition	2

When Table 4 is examined, most of the teachers (53.8%) emphasized that they prefer face-to-face education methods in participating in in-service training activities. Teachers mostly stated that face-to-face in-service training activities allowed them to learn more by doing and experiencing (f: 18), then it allowed them to communicate effectively (f:8) and collaborative learning environments (f: 4). Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are presented below.

*We have the chance to apply what we learned in face-to-face training more. What we cannot learn does not remain only in knowledge and practice (T.4).*

*I already attend in-service training to meet my training needs. I don't think it will be very useful if I can't ask anyone anything if I can't talk to people who know the subject face to face if I can't communicate with anyone. (T.50)*

When Table 4 is continued to be examined, a significant portion of teachers (28.8%) emphasized that they prefer the mixed education method in participating in in-service training activities. As the reasons for this subject, teachers mostly think that the method should be determined according to the content of in-service training activities (f:6), that it should be organized by paying attention to the integrity of the academic year (f:6) and also considering the costs of in-service training activities. (f:4), and stated that mixed methods could be used. Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are presented below.

*The method should be chosen according to whichever is most appropriate by looking at the content of the activity to be carried out in this regard and the structure of the achievements (T.10).*

*Which training method is least costly should be used (T.52).*

When Table 4 was continued to be examined, some of the teachers (17.4%) emphasized that they preferred the distance education method in participating in in-service training activities. Teachers mostly stated as the reasons for this subject that participation in distance education is easier and more accessible (f:8) and that distance education offers more comfortable educational experiences and repetition opportunities (f:2). Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are presented below.

*I think the concept of distance education is an indispensable method for conducting in-service training activities. It offers you the opportunity to attend these training wherever, and under any conditions you want (T.54).*

*If there are parts that I don't understand, I listen to them again later. I can participate in these activities from the comfort of my home. If you ask me, it is a great comfort (T.12).*

### **Opinions of Teachers on Increasing the Quality of In-Service Training Activities**

Teachers' opinions on increasing the quality of in-service training activities are tabulated on one sub-title.

Table 5. Teachers' Opinions on Increasing the Quality of In-service Training Activities

	<i>f</i>
<b>Opinions on increasing the quality of in-service training activities</b>	<b>(38-%100)</b>
Activities should be planned by performing a needs analysis	13
Field experts should provide training	8
Classes should not be crowded	7
Flexibility should be provided to the participants about the place of participation	7
The educational game method should be used more in these activities	3

When Table 5 is examined, a significant portion of teachers (f:13) stated that activities should be planned by performing a needs analysis to increase the quality of in-service training activities. Regarding the same process, to increase the quality of in-service training activities for teachers, it is necessary that the training should be given by field experts (f:8), the classes should not be crowded (f:7), flexibility should be provided to the participants about the place of participation (f:7). The educational game method should be used more in these activities (f:3). Some of the teachers' opinions on the subject are presented below.

*Needs analysis of "Is there a need for this activity?" should be done before in-service training activities are organized (T.47).*

*In some of the courses I attended, I saw that people who were not experts in their fields gave training. I do not find it appropriate for people who are not experts in their fields to take part in these training activities. (T.20)*

*Efficiency is low in face-to-face in-service training activities because the classes are usually crowded (T.41).*

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

When the findings obtained from the research were examined, it was seen that a significant part of the teachers stated that they did not find the in-service training activities they participated insufficient in terms of scope and content and expressed negative opinions. In this context, teachers expressed a negative opinion by emphasizing the deficiencies that their opinions on in-service training needs are not taken into account, more practical information is included in the training, the training providers are generally not sufficient in their field of activity, it is done to fulfil the formality, that it is perceived as a holiday by them, and field changes negatively affect the process, they did not reach the desired goal. These negative opinions of teachers about the research results may be due to their thoughts and desires to be not only the object but also the subject of this process while creating the scope and content of in-service training activities.

With the results of this research, other research results were found in the literature that overlaps the current study with various aspects. In the study conducted by Durmuş (2003), teachers' opinions about in-service training activities organized for classroom teachers were examined. In the study, teachers complained that in-service training activities were not held at appropriate times, their opinions were not taken, the scope of activities was insufficient, and the methods-techniques used were ineffective in teaching. In another study, most administrators and teachers think that the instructors assigned in in-service training activities are not selected among experts in their fields (Aslan Keleş, 2019; Karadağ, 2015). On the other hand, some teachers emphasized the positive aspects of the in-service training activities they participated in, as they believed that they were sufficient in scope and content, they were prepared by the needs of the age, they were very useful in the distance education period, the educators were experts in their field and that they would be more beneficial when they participated voluntarily. In this context, some of the teachers stated that they found the in-service training activities they participated in as partly sufficient in terms of scope and content, depending on the planning and organization of the in-service training activity they participated in, and the awareness level of the participant on the subject.

Teachers stated that they needed in-service training on subjects primarily such as on educational issues, special education, then education coaching, developmental psychology, teaching methods and techniques, measurement and evaluation, communication, professional development and competence, professional legislation, pedagogical formation, school-family cooperation, values education, and professional ethics. However, they stated that they needed in-service training mostly in information technologies, followed by software and material preparation, use of web.2 tools, and technology design on technology-related subjects. In this context, teachers stated that they

need in-service training on health-related subjects, such as harmful habits and substance abuse, health, and first aid. Regarding the same process, teachers stated that they needed in-service training in areas such as collaborative work and social activities and club work on social subjects. Based on the findings of this research, it is possible to say that teachers need more in-service training on subjects such as information technologies, special education, training coaching, developmental psychology, teaching methods and techniques, software and material preparation, harmful habits, and substance abuse. Similar research results supporting this research were also found when the relevant literature is examined. It is stated that teachers' self-confidence, motivation levels, and attitudes are as effective as their proficiency in using technology in the use of information technologies in education (Russell et al., 2003; Uşun, 2009). It is stated that a single course will not be sufficient to train teachers in the use of technology, and as the duration of the training on computer use increases, the frequency of using computers in the classrooms of teachers also increases (Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999; Schrum, 1999; Suduc, 2007). Gökmenoğlu (2012) concluded in his research that teachers need in-service training on guidance and special education and technology use.

An important part of teachers stated that participation in in-service training activities should not be compulsory. In this context, teachers stated that participation in in-service training should be based on volunteerism, that this situation may vary depending on the nature of the activity, and that teachers' participation in these activities should be encouraged. However, some teachers stated that participation in in-service training activities should be compulsory. In this context, teachers stated that their participation in in-service training activities should be compulsory, stating that in-service training would contribute to their professional development, applications of the reflections of technological developments in education, and personal development. It may be more beneficial for teachers to participate in such in-service training activities voluntarily to obtain better efficiency from the participation processes in the in-service training activities and to ensure a higher level of motivation. Similar research results were also found in the literature supporting these results obtained from the study. Many studies have stated that teachers participate in in-service training as compulsory, and they are not satisfied with this situation (Bayar & Kösterelioğlu, 2014; Karadağ, 2015). It is stated that in-service training carried out according to teachers' wishes is more effective (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005).

According to another result obtained from the research, most of the teachers stated that they prefer face-to-face education as their preferred method of participating in in-service training activities. In this context, teachers stated that they prefer face-to-face training in their participation in in-service training to learn by doing and experiencing, communicating effectively, and provide collaborative learning environments. However, some teachers stated that they prefer mixed training in their participation in in-service training. Teachers prefer face-to-face education due to the need to communicate with other colleagues working in their field and to learn new and updated information in the field in mutual interaction. In this context, teachers emphasized that it can be done by using mixed methods according to the content of the training activities, taking into account the integrity of the academic year, and according to the conditions and considering the cost of the in-service training activity.

Regarding the same process, some teachers stated that they prefer the distance education method in their participation in in-service training. In this context, teachers stated that they prefer the distance education method

in participating in in-service training activities because it is easier and more accessible and offers more comfortable educational experiences and repetition opportunities. One of the factors affecting the quality of distance education is the richness and quality of learning-teaching resources and materials (Chao et al., 2006).

According to another result obtained from the research, teachers in-service training activities take a critical approach in terms of quality with the thought that activities are not planned by conducting needs analysis, mostly the instructors are not experts in their field, the classes created during in-service training activities are crowded, the teachers use methods less such as educational games that will enable their active participation in the activities, and that there is no flexibility for the participants in the places of participation in these activities. The results obtained from this study are also similar to the results of other studies examined in the relevant literature. It has also been emphasized in studies in the literature that it is important to organize in-service training activities in a way that addresses the needs of teachers to be effective (O'Sullivan, 2001; Tekin, 2004).

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations can be made. While organizing in-service training activities, it can be paid attention to include practice-based activities as scope and content within the training programs. More sensitivity can be shown for experts in their fields to serve as trainers in these activities. Participation in in-service training activities voluntarily can eliminate teachers' negative perceptions of these in-service training activities in their minds at the point of participation. To increase the quality of in-service training activities, it may be beneficial to include needs analysis studies in the process, to provide these training by experts in the field, to avoid crowded classroom environments, and to use teaching methods and techniques that will provide active participation in the activities to be held.

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### **Author Information**

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**Ayhan Bulut**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6482-8032>

Bayburt University

Bayburt

Turkey

Contact e-mail: [ayhanbulut44@hotmail.com](mailto:ayhanbulut44@hotmail.com)

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