Perceived needs and wants in INSET provision - a study of the professional needs of teachers and the attitudes of trainers to INSET provision in St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Introduction

Teacher education in Russia as elsewhere has been through a period of significant change in recent years. Growing appreciation of the fact that successful teacher development determines '.... social, cultural and economic progress in the society' has led to increasing attention to teacher education (Finocchairo, 1083:177). This article reports on a study carried out into aspects of the needs of a selected group of recipients of teacher education - the teachers within the area of St. Petersberg, Russia. In particular it addresses two interrelated issues:

- what are the mainstream teachers' needs in terms of INSET as viewed by them and by their trainers

- how relevant is such training perceived to be by the recipients and their trainers

Contextual background to the study

Teacher training, as Mary Ashworth states in one of her articles, 'does not exist in a vacuum but in a constantly changing socio-political context. It is both helped and hindered by various forces over which it may appear to have little or no control'(1983:47). Some of these factors which determine the social and educational context of INSET in St. Petersburg are described below as they influence and affect teacher education in that context.

English in the Russian context

English occupies an important place in Russian education as the main foreign language (FL) which is taught in the majority of Russian educational institutions beginning at the primary school level. and because of an increasing demand for English, many schools have not only expanded the teaching of the language but have also introduced it at an earlier stage. The English language syllabus in schools varies according to the school type (general secondary school, schools specialising in English, gymnesia and lyceum) in terms of its organisation, time allocation and content, as well as the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, the responsibilities and the working conditions of teachers also vary, depending on the school type.

In contrast to the former more rigid system of Soviet school, current decision-making and planning at the syllabus level is mainly the prerogative of the school and the teacher. Though numerous methods are available in ELT, teachers still advocate the traditional approaches to language teaching: grammar translation, the direct method and especially the audio-lingual method. Practitioners of other methods are few.

In the majority of classrooms, the teacher still plays the dominant role and activities are very much teacher-centred. Frontal modes of teaching are quite a typical feature of the foreign language classroom. In spite of the fact that numerous attempts to introduce a communicative approach have been made by teachers, it is often done on the basis of trial and error rather than as a result of proper training (Ilyushina, 1995).
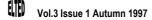
The status of teachers in the society

There is a clear tendency in ELT in Russia for young people to pursue careers other than teaching (teachers aged 20-25 constitute only 11.2% of teaching force). One of the obvious reasons for this state of affairs is the low value placed on the teaching profession by the state. This is reflected in poor salaries and social status of teachers. Tumalev (1995: 22) comments that:

One can understand the tragedy of the professional, who has to do his everyday work being virtually unrecognised by either the state or by the society.[1]

EL teachers differ not only in age and experience but also significantly in the nature and quality of their initial training.   In this connection, two main categories of teachers can be distinguished. The first category are qualified teachers - those who received pre-service training as teachers of FL. The second category (about 30% of those teaching English in schools) are non-qualified specialists - those who did not receive adequate pre-service training as FL teachers. This category of teachers is very diverse. At one extreme are those who have a profound command of the language but lack any formal pedagogical knowledge or educational expertise - e.g. former engineers. At the other are those who have sufficient teaching experience in subjects other than English; they possess some knowledge of the target language (TL) but their proficiency is usually only moderate. It is therefore not unusual that these teachers suffer feelings of inadequacy and insecurity in their teaching practice. This, in turn, forces them to seek any kind of language or professional improvement through in-service courses.

Overcrowded classes, mixed ability groups, heavy work-loads, little support by the state, whether it concerns finance, guidelines or materials for teaching or teacher training, are only a few of the problems with which teachers are confronted in everyday practice.   These problems constitute a cluster of both institutional and external factors which influence ELT at schools.   Nevertheless, most teachers are people who are dedicated to the profession, their pupils and school. So it comes as no surprise that the profession has reached a 'level of self-awareness' illustrated by its concern with the problems of teacher education (Stern, 1983).

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[1] According to his findings, 64% of teachers complain about insufficient financial support by the state.

The current state of affairs in FL teacher training

Teacher education and training in Russia are provided via two systems: PRESET and INSET. There is no evidence of a co-ordinated policy governing these programmes in practice. PRESET in the St. Petersburg area is represented by four higher education institutions, from where about 380 people graduate with a diploma as 'English language teacher'. However, the percentage of graduates who finally undertake ELT in schools is insignificant compared with the number of vacancies. Such newly qualified teachers have only been introduced to the basics of Methodology and have had only moderate opportunities to apply their knowledge in practice. Until about 1990, in-service teacher training (TT) was mainly provided by a key INSET institution - the University of Pedagogical Mastery (UPM) and teachers had to uncdergo INSET or refresher courses every five years. Although, in recent years, decentralisation and regionalisation, has brought changes to this system, UPM still plays an important role in in-service TT.In addition to national and regional programmes of teacher education, foreign organisations, often in conjunction with Russian educational establishments, play a role in teacher development through the encouragement and the stimulus to improve classroom practice. Regular seminars, courses and workshops are supported by the British Council, the United States Information Service (USIS), Canadian summer courses and the Soros Foundation. These courses are usually run by visiting trainers, in collaboration with Russian experts. As a result of these efforts, a body of skilled, highly creative and motivated teachers has begun to develop with a view to becoming teacher trainers and advisers.

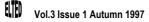## **The content of INSET and its organisation**

The balance between theory and practice: background and procedural knowledge.
The development of a rationale for a continuing effective language teacher education programme is complicated by the availability of a wide body of theory and numerous and various contexts for practice (Brown, 1983). In general, however, there is a

shared opinion that both theory and practice[2] are of crucial importance for language teacher education (Stern and Strevens, 1983). Theory comprises a view of the nature of language, language learning and an awareness of social and educational context. Therefore, the value of theory is that it provides a sound basis for making decisions in the various areas of ELT (Larson, 1983; Stern, 1983; Brumfit, 1983). Theory forms the basis of background knowledge which is predominantly received knowledge.

On the other hand, practice provides theory with a context and essential experience that assigns meaning to it. Training, as observed by Duff (1988), should be practical and directly applicable to the teaching context. At the same time, there is a broad agreement that practice needs to be based on theory (e.g. Wallace, 1991; Duff, 1988; Thomas, 1987). In other words, explicit theory alongside the unquestionably necessary practice is justified in that it contributes to the development of the competence that implicitly underlies performance.

Background knowledge contrasts with 'procedural knowledge'. The latter can be defined as that type of knowledge deriving from, and through, experience and which is related to teacher experience and performance. This embraces: 1) practical ideas and techniques for teaching (the so-called 'recepies'), 2) the ability to implement them - i.e. teaching skills and 3) the ability to chose from a repertoire of techniques appropriate to a given situation.

In spite of the fact that language teacher education clearly needs both types of knowledge, most existing INSET programmes are criticised for having their major focus on either one or the other (Jarvice and Smith, 1980; Stern and Strevens, 1983). However, a balance should not be fixed and made identical for even similar groups of learners. Rather, this would depend on the trainees' prior education, experience, awareness and other factors. Assuming a huge diversity of such factors, the issue of balance is not a problem requiring a general solution. The balance of theory and practice needs to be adjusted during the course on the basis of an on-going evaluation of course effectiveness and the trainer's judgement.

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[2] Clarke makes the following attempt to define theory and practice: 'Theory is the essence; it is as close as we come to 'truth' and it provides the basis for all knowledge and experience, while 'practice' is the 'end-of-your-nose' preoccupation with the minutiae of the day-to-day trials and tribulations of classroom teachers (1983:112).

More than the problem of balance, the problematic issue seems to be the transmission of theory to practice and the demonstration of relationships between them. It has been suggested that the common theory-practice gap could be alleviated using a problem-solving mode or a reflective[3] approach. The latter, based on Schon (1983) and further defined by Wallace (1991) allows a reciprocal relationship between 'experiential' and 'received' knowledge[4] in the light of classroom experience, which can feed back into the 'received' knowledge sessions and also be influenced by them.

Teacher training course components and methodologies

Numerous lists of course components and classifications have been suggested in the literature (e.g. Hanock, 1977; Strevens, 1983; Altais, 1983; Fanselow, 1983). On the whole, most classifications are similar in that they suggest the inclusion of language studies and feeder disciplines. It would be inappropriate though to conclude that all the components need equal attention. For instance, pedagogy and education, having been explicitly focused on in PRESET, would need perhaps less emphasis in INSET. An appropriate conclusion would be that all the components need to be reflected in INSET programmes but the emphasis and the way these components are interrelated should depend on the trainees' starting point - their language command, needs , educational elvel and resources available. This demonstrates the importance of recognising and understanding the needs of the participants and not taking for granted that what trainers think teachers want from INSET is a reflection of their real needs.

The same applies to methodology. The effectivenesss of training depends to a large extend on how far that training is transferred to the real classroom situation. Although no teacher training programme can guarantee such a transfer , Altman rcalls an old aphorism: 'Teachers teach the way they are tuaght, not as they were told to teach' (Altman, 1983:233). In other words, this would imply that language teachers should be trained the way they are expected to teach. For 'learner centred' teaching to be carried out by trainees they should have been exposed to a trainee-centred

INSET.   Most scholars agree that effective course methodology should be trainee-centred, interactive and integrative (i.e. it should allow for different kinds of teaching modes and procedures) (e.g. Candlin, 1983; Gadere, 298e). Exposure to a wide range of procedures is necessary for those teachers, whose practices are often deeply roted in trandiational modes of teaching, and who, therefore, tend to find it difficult to choose activities appropirate for their students.   Whether participants on INSET share this view is addressed in the next section.

Research Method

For any INSET programme to be productive, we need to understand teachers' professional needs and this enquiry focused on the relationship between the teachers' vision of their professional needs and the actual provision of INSET as contrasted with the views of the trainers.

The study was conducted with the following aims:
1. to obtain an assessment of mainstream teachers' needs in terms of INSET;
2. to find out what type of training EFL teachers receive in Russia and to determine how relevant such in-service training is perceived to be in the light of everyday teaching practice.

In order to obtain information that is truly representative and generalisable, it was necessary to assess teachers' attitudes, beliefs and experience. Such a study required a combination of qualitative and quantitative investigation.   To obtain a more substantial picture of the reality, and as a means of verifying the results, 'multiple data gathering techniques' were used for investigating the provision of INSET in Russia (Berg, 1989: 5; Bell, 1987).   Therefore, in this research the process of triangulation included several techniques of data collection - namely,
a) a questionnaire survey;
b) a semi-structured interview and
c) literature/ document analysis.
This article focuses on the results of the questionnaire survey.

96 teachers practising in secondary schools in St. Petersburg took part in the survey. An attempt was made to make the sample truly representative of the population under

study. Therefore, teachers of different school types and with different teaching experience and different backgrounds of initial training were approached - i.e. general secondary schools, schools specialising in English, gymnesia and lyceum. Two other groups of subjects were eight practising teacher trainers and three administrators (KEP)[3], who are all involved in decision taking in INSET.

Teachers' answers were elicited through a questionnaire which, after preliminary piloting, was administered in schools in St. Petersburg and ELTRC (English Language Teachers' Resource Centre)within a week. The questionnaire consisted of three parts (Appendix 1). Part 1 eleicited data on teachers' experience and the nature of their initial training.. Part 2 was aimed at those who had had some experience in attending in-service teacher training courses. Part 3 addressed teachers' opinions and beliefs about INSET as well as their particular needs. In order to diminish 'ordinal bias' in question 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 , the 'split-ballot' teachnique was employed - ie. The order was randomised so that different respondents would hav been offered options in different orders.

The data obtained as a result of the survey was analysed within each category of respondents, and also compared and contrasted across categories. The findings represent: a) the current situation of inset, and b) teachers' objective and perceived needs. Questionnaires were placed into two groups: the responses of qualified teachers (qts) and non-qualified teachers (nqts). A separate though identical analysis was performed for the trainers .

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[3]Since the data collection procedures adopted to gain the perspective of teacher trainers were identical to those for KEP they are both described in this section.

<u>Results</u>

<u>Teachers' perspectives on INSET courses</u>

Given the variety and amount of information obtained through the questionnaire survey, this article will predominantly focus on the responses to part 3 of the questionnaire related to teachers' and trainers' perceived needs.

<u>Teachers' definitions of INSET</u>

The respondents were invited to suggest their definition of in-service teacher training by means of a free-answer question.

On the whole, INSET, as seen by teachers, should aim at:

- providing them with professional knowledge;
- providing them with opportunities for professional sharing and reflection;
- increasing their motivation and
- addressing the affective domain (e.g. 'reducing professional stress and promoting confidence).

The most frequently occurring categories in teachers' definitions of INSET are focused on gaining professional knowledge. Therefore, the discussion below will also focus on this category. The teachers viewed *professional knowledge* as comprised of three types of knowledge:

- *background knowledge* (including 'gaining new ideas about ways of teaching', 'understanding the learning process better', etc.);
- *procedural knowledge* (including 'gaining some practical ideas', 'practising new techniques', etc.) And
- s*ubject knowledge* (including language improvement and language practice).

Teachers also named two possible sources for gaining this type of knowledge: *professional sharing* (e.g. 'Meeting colleagues and sharing problems with them'), and *reflection* (e.g. 'It helps to analyse my work'). The fact that these sources were mentioned in a free answer question (although not by a large number of respondents) suggests that when aware of them teachers expect INSET to provide the opportunities and time for professional sharing and reflection. However, this has not proved to be common in <u>practice</u> according to the analysis of the current INSET programmes.

Expectations of INSET

This section discusses more specifically what teachers expect as the **outcomes** of INSET. Respondents were given the choice of fifteen alternatives from which they could indicate as many as appropriate. Therefore, the percentage was calculated from the total number of responses for each particular choice.

G*aining practical ideas* as a result of INSET was the first choice of both QTs (89.6%) and NQTs (86.1%).   In other words, teachers expect, as **the most significant** result of in-service training, tips and recipes. Further, more than half of teachers in both groups (69.4% of NQTs and 58.6% of QTs) expressed their readiness *to try out ideas and techniques presented in a training classroom.* This suggests that they still feel quite insecure about their teaching skills.   However, most existing INSET programmes do **not** provide such an opportunity for teachers to practise and develop the skills necessary for successful implementation of course ideas.

Among the other four most frequent choices for both groups of teacher were (ranking is presented in brackets for NQTs and QTs respectively):
- to understand the learning process better (2 for NQTs and 3 for QTs);
- to understand how to evaluate one's own practice (3 and 2);
- to receive help with particular teaching problems (3 and 4);
- to understand the theoretical ideas underlying practice (3 and 5) and
- to try out ideas and techniques presented in a course (3 and 6).

Evidently, for both groups the first six chosen components are identical; they only differ slightly concerning the number of respondents who opted for certain components. This suggests that both groups of teacher view the major outcomes of INSET programmes similarly. The choice of the main outcome suggests that teachers are oriented more to a product rather than process syllabus. However, one cannot disregard the fact that over half of respondents from each group see the process side of INSET as significant, nominating *the collaborative aspect* of training (58.3% of NQTs and 51.7% of QTs) and *sharing experience with colleagues* (55.6% of NQTs and 58.6% of QTs).   This result verifies the conclusion made when discussing teachers' definitions of INSET: teachers are aware of and need to be disposed to, such collaborative aspects of training.

The balance between theory and practice.

The literature on teacher education and development regarding the relationship between theory and practice is an issue on which there are alternative views, and therefore it was essential to get teachers' views on this matter. So teachers and trainers were asked to rate the importance of theory in relation to practice.

The majority of NQTs (72%) chose a balance of between 20:80 and 50:50 while the majority of QTs (78.4%) indicated a ratio of theory to practice in the range of 30:70 to 50:50.

It would appear that on the whole teachers regard both theory and practice as important. However, NQTs see this balance shifted toward practice more than QTs. Very few respondents indicated a preference for theory over practice. This may suggest that many NQTs operate on the procedural level, and feel insecure about classroom techniques. This could be explained by a lack of sufficient initial training that would have allowed them to generate procedural knowledge from background knowledge.

The content of an intensive short-term in-service course

Teachers' perception of particular areas which need to be addressed by INSET programmes could provide useful information for course organisers and INSET developers. Therefore, the respondents were asked to identify the areas of _Language Study_ and _Methodology_ that they would like to be included in an intensive course. They were asked to identify five components from each list.

Language study

The results of this study indicate clearly the areas of language study identified by both categories of teacher. The first five categories clearly indicated by the majority of **NQTs** are:

- _speaking practice,_
- _fluency activities,_
- _language update,_
- _activating_ and
- _extending vocabulary._

For **QTs** the list is as follows:

- *language update,*
- *speaking practice,*
- *fluency activities,*
- *work on typical mistakes* and
- *activating vocabulary.*

An obvious conclusion would be that QTs and NQTs perceive their language needs in a similar way but place a different emphasis on each area. Four components in these lists overlap. However, it is not being suggested that the two categories of teachers need to have identical input. Although the indicated areas might be nearly the same, the level of language command differs, and therefore, the quality of input will be significantly different.

Methodology

Among the first five most frequently mentioned areas for both groups of teachers were (the ranking given in brackets for NQTs and QTs respectively).

- *Teaching skills* (1 and 1),
- *Classroom management* (2 and 3) and
- *Testing* (3 and 4).

The former two options suggest that even the respondents who have received proper pre-service training feel that they need more training in these areas. This, in turn, might also be interpreted to mean that teachers perceive these skills as elements which constitute effective teaching (c.f. Alatis, 1983). Regarding *testing* there are at least two possible explanations for this choice. First, teachers are not satisfied with the existing testing techniques which tend to mismatch teachers' attempts to bring communicative methodology in the classroom. Second, teachers might have recently become more aware of modern types of testing technique with more information available about international language exams.

Apart from those options mentioned above, NQTs identified most frequently *Course planning* (ranked 3) and *Choosing a textbook* (ranked 4). The choice of the latter can be explained first by the fact that teachers still place markedly great value on textbooks and see them as an essential component for language teaching. In this connection it would be appropriate to say that for a variety of reasons (e.g. lack of

qualification, experience and photocopying facilities) many teachers are still textbook-bound. Secondly, these results might reflect the fact that in the last three years many new international and Russian course books have become available. Teachers might therefore feel that they need a more solid knowledge in the area of textbook evaluation.

Teaching grammar (ranked 2) and *Managing mixed ability groups* (ranked 4) were two areas considered very important by QTs but less so by NQTs. 37% of qualified respondents believed in the importance of including the teaching of grammar while only 12.5% of NQTs indicated this area. This may be indicative of the fact that QTs were taught language in a fairly traditional manner when knowledge of grammar was heavily emphasised. On the other hand NQTs are likely to have obtained their linguistic competence in a less structured manner and, therefore, they give a lower evaluation to this component. It would also appear from this study that a fair proportion of QTs (19.6%) experience problems with mixed ability groups. The remaining areas received the attention of less than 15% of the respondents.

In summary, these results indicate that teachers in their perception of INSET focus on the outcomes rather than on the process.

Teachers' views of INSET organisation

This section is concerned with the problems of overall organisation and methodology of INSET programmes as viewed by teachers. The results are reported in the following order: 1) types of course; 2) preferable modes of input 3) role allocation.

Types of course

The majority of QTs (59%) expressed their preference for short intensive courses (less than a month). At the same time 34.5% chose extensive courses and 6.9% said that they need both.

Regarding NQTs, more respondents said that they prefer extensive courses (44.4%) than intensive (33.3%). 22.2% said that they need both.

Many comments made by the teachers concerned time constraints. For instance one teacher said: 'I would prefer both types depending on the time available'. Others also specially noted lack of time as a reason behind their preference for full time intensive courses.

Modes of input

The analysis demonstrates that both groups are definitely favourably disposed toward **active** methods of learning - i.e. those involving co-operation and collaboration. This is especially true with regard to QTs: 66.1% of respondents prefer *discussions* and 61.0 % - *group work with plenary discussions*. For NQTs, these figures are slightly lower - 58.3% for each of them; however this is still very significant. 30% of QTs and 38.9% of NQTs preferred *collaborative learning groups*[4].

However*, lectures* as a mode of input were still favoured by 59.3% of Qts and 38.9% of NQTs - a fairly high percentage for the former. . This marked difference seems to suggest that the lecture mode is more popular among QTs while NQTs prefer experiential learning. However, according to personal observations as a trainer, this belief is rarely supported by trainees' behaviour: in seminars and workshops, teachers prefer to be given straightforward answers in the form of a lecture.

In general, the NQ teachers are oriented to both modes of training. First, those which involve them passively i.e. as an object of transmission: *a handout, demonstration* and *training tasks* (61.1% for each). Second, they wish to share some responsibility for their learning and, therefore, play a more active part: discussions, groupwork and collaborative learning groups. However, those modes which demand greater responsibility by learners were named by only one third of the respondents or less: *guided observation* (33.3%), *action research* (27.8%) and *project work* (25%).

Unlike non-qualified teachers, QTs preferred such active methods of learning as *discussions* (66.1%, *groupwork* (61.0%) and *training tasks* (61.0%). However, apart from *lecture* many QTs still regard more passive modes of input, e.g. *handouts* (40.6%) and *demonstration* (44.0%) as quite important.

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[4] It might seem that the lower rate of collaborative learning contradicts the results on the other methods involving groupwork. However, the reason could lie in the attitude to responsibility to learning: independent learning modes gained considerably less preferences than teacher centred ones. This might also explain the lower score of action research - 27.8 for NQTs and 18.6% for QTs. This difference between the two groups of teacher in their attitudes to action research suggests that NQTs have perhaps already been involved in this activity intuitively since they needed to make up for a lack of substantial knowledge by acquiring experiential knowledge.

Teachers attitudes towards in-service training and role allocation within it

Teachers were questionned about their beliefs primarily with regard to role allocation in INSET. The majority of NQTs (94.3%), as well as QTs (88.5%) believed that training is a *shared attempt* by both trainer and trainee. However, regarding the *roles assigned to the trainer,* 87.9% of NQs and 76.4% of QTs believed that the trainer is an *instructor*. This perception of the trainer might partly explain teachers' orientation to trainer-dependent tasks (see question 3.5)[5]. Nevertheless, 19.6% of QTs disagreed with such a role for the trainer. High percentages of both Qts and NQTs (50 - 80%) perceived the trainers as 'catylist','counsellor' and 'guide'
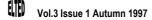
Altogether, it seems that teachers see trainers playing a multi-faceted role. The fact that the guide and instructor were two most preferred roles for the trainer for NQTs suggests that they are quite trainer-dependent unlike QTs who on the whole allocated the roles more evenly.

The teacher trainers' perspective

General information about trainers

None of the present Russian teacher trainers who took part in the survey has received special education in teacher training. Most of the trainers obtained their qualifications as either philologists or teachers of EFL in Hersen Pedagogical or State University. However, all the respondents have been seriously concerned with the issues of Teacher Education and during the last year have attended three intensive courses for teacher trainers provided by the British Council (BC). The respondents report that they have been working as a team for over a year and find their work stimulating and encouraging in terms of their own professional development as teacher educators. Although none of the respondents holds the post of in-service teacher trainer, all of them are directly involved in providing INSET by team training, one-off sessions, seminars and workshops. Mostly self-made, on average they have experience of working as INSET providers for two years. All the respondents reported a very enthusiastic attitude to this new development in their careers, i.e. becoming teacher trainers.

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[5] There seems to be quite a straightforward correlation with the prefered modes of input indicated in question 3.5: NQTs prefer transmissional modes of input.

The teacher trainers' definition of INSET

As with the teachers, the teacher trainers were asked to give a definition of INSET as well as to provide their vision of INSET goals.

In general, the respondents see INSET as an act of professional development 'enabling people to do things, make things happen'[6]. As reported by one of the respondents, the aim of INSET is '... to help teachers to become the best teachers they can be, to reach their potential'.

The responses lent themselves to a simple allocation to the categories developed from the teachers' responses to a similar question: professional knowledge (including background, procedural and subject knowledge), professional sharing, reflection and motivational and affective aspects. These categories were explicitly mentioned by most trainers. The fact that gaining *background knowledge* and *affective aspects* have been given special emphasis indicates that the trainers view a lack of background knowledge and confidence as the crucial factors that hamper teachers' professional performance. The special emphasis on the former, however, contradicts, first, the above mentioned opinion that INSET should encourage and enable people to do things. Secondly, it contradicts the teachers' opinion that their greatest need is to acquire procedural rather than background knowledge. It might be argued, however, that in order to ensure teachers' successful professional functioning, they need to be empowered with relevant background knowledge. Nevertheless, one can not expect professional performance to appear only as a result of acquiring such knowledge. Thus, adequate attention should be given to equipping teachers' with procedural knowledge and techniques for evaluating their own practices as well. Regarding the importance of increasing *confidence*, this is similarly highlighted by many teachers (61.1%) and trainers (50%).

The balance between theory and practice

In the next question the interviewees were asked to assess the relation of theory to practice. Half of the respondents see the ratio of theory to practice as 50:50. As they stated:

'The role of theory[7] is difficult to overestimate: it affects teachers' beliefs, opinions and ideas.';

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[6]Here and onwards, the discussion is illustrated by respondents' quotations.

[7] It is important to specify what the respondents mean by theory. The majority of the respondents refer to theory as meaning applied linguistics, pedagogical issues, psycho-linguistics and methodology. However, one trainer understands theory as more general than just FL methodology: e.g. psycho-linguistics and group dynamics.

'I believe in theory which provides the base foundation for reflection. I think that this foundation needs to be set first.';

'Teachers always want more practice but practical ideas can often be approached via theory.' and

'Classroom practices are only the tip of the ice-berg and they are hugely influenced by teachers' beliefs and opinions.'

Altogether these comments illustrate the major advantages of theory: it enables to form new beliefs, and provides the solid foundation for practice and the criteria for evaluating it.

The other half of the respondents see this balance as more flexible. As one respondent commented:
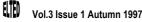
'It's difficult to think of striking a balance. The balance will depend on the group of teachers', and

'... the level of the teacher: lower levels need more theoretical knowledge while for advanced levels the training should be more practical but based on their (teachers') background knowledge'.

Altogether, the responses show a certain diversity of opinion on the questions of the balance between theory and practice and the relationship between them. Most of the opinions were expressed spontaneously and were supported by a rationale. This suggests that this is an issue which has been thought about by the respondents. It would seem that trainers would benefit from an exchange of these views in a free discussion on this matter.

Course components

To probe the issue further, and in order to see how teacher trainers relate the course components to each other, they were asked to indicate using a pie chart the relevant weighting of the different course components.

All the respondents gave about 1/3 of a short INSET course to a block of *Methodology* and *Applied Linguistics*, and between 1/4 and 1/3 of the course to *Language Improvement*. The remaining time was allocated to *Study Skills*, *Observed teaching* and *Update on National Educational Development* .

Although all the respondents seemed to agree readily on the importance of *ELT Methodology* they did not seem to agree on evaluating the relevance of *Applied Linguistics* to such a course. One trainer has excluded this component on the basis that 'It is not feasible to include it on a course', while others commented:

'Applied linguistics?... yes, as far as it is interrelated with methodology and backs it up' and 'The insights of applied linguistics will enable teachers to justify what they are doing in the classroom.'

Concerning *Language Improvement,* the majority of trainers (7) agreed that this component needs to be a substantial part of the course - up to 1/3 of it. One of the interviewees gave a reason for this: 'many problems in the language classroom can be explained by the poor level of teachers' language proficiency.' Alternatively another trainer, presented a very different view: that language should be given a small proportion because 'it is the responsibility of the teachers and they should seek opportunities to develop their language'. This is of course debateable: teachers will have already expressed their responsibility for and commitment to their professional development by seeking the services of INSET. Perhaps this view could have been justified provided that there was a sufficient choice of different courses for teachers, including those on language improvement.

Observed teaching was reported to be an essential part of the course by all the trainers. However, they weight this component differently. Those trainers who gave it nearly 1/4 of the total course time commented that: 'Observed teaching is the beginning of teacher development'. However, the respondents recognise that it is difficult to implement. Those who gave this component less emphasis explained their choice by the fact that this component should have been addressed in PRESET.

On the whole, trainers see observed teaching in a variety of forms: peer and real teaching, plus discussions on video or audio-taped classes.

Evaluating the components discussed above, the majority of respondents agreed that 'many of these elements are missing from the present courses.' Altogether the general agreement on the relative weighting of course components and the reasons behind it suggests that these issues have been discussed by trainers.

The outcomes of INSET

The respondents were asked to specify how they see the results of INSET. Among the major outcomes expected from INSET, the trainers reported:

1. *Awareness raising,* concerning: a) teachers' own practice, and b) other different practices plus current EFL trends and their applicability to the particular educational context in which they work;

2. *Change* regarding 'the relationships in the classroom' and the 'shift to professional competence'. As one respondent commented: 'Teachers should feel that they can do something new or they can do something more effectively, that they have seen different ways and were trained to do it.' and

3. *Ability to reflect* on actions.

The respondents agreed that the achievement of these is difficult to be evaluated or assessed. Therefore, one of the trainers suggested that it would be preferable to think of INSET in terms of process rather than a product: 'I'll be very happy if during the course I will observe teachers willing to broaden their horizons, doing things, getting excited about ideas, discussing professional matters with their group mates ... developing their own ideas and changing certain attitudes and beliefs.'

Altogether, apart from the pragmatic and developmental aspects, the respondents considered the emotional aspect as important. Most trainers describing the desirable results of INSET used words like 'inspiration', reviving interest' and 'motivation'. To relate these results to the teachers' perspective, it should be said that while the trainers see the outcomes in terms of changes in teachers' attitudes, teachers themselves see INSET outcomes mainly in accumulating different types of knowledge or problem solving. At its best teachers discuss the process side of INSET (i.e. highlighting meeting and sharing with colleges) but do not identify their personal or professional change as an important result of this.

Language Improvement and Methodological components of the course

Like the teachers, the trainers were asked to identify the particular areas of two major course components that need to be addressed: the areas of Language Improvement and Methodology.

Areas of Language Improvement

The analysis of the responses revealed that, on the whole, trainers believed in the importance of language development work: 'Language improvement is important because teachers are perceived as models in the classroom.' However, they felt that it 'should address clearly and economically just those areas which seem to be problematic rather than developing overall fluency.' *Language update* was nominated by 4 trainers as a major area. The trainers also considered important the following:

- *speaking practice* (3)
- *language awareness work (2)*
- *activating vocabulary (2).*

Areas of ELT Methodology

Regarding Methodology, the respondents perceived it to be a more important component: the ratio of Methodology to Language improvement is 3:2. This result correlates with the ones obtained for teachers.

On the whole, trainers commented that teachers 'need everything (among the areas offered in the inventory) in a very integrated way'. Among the most important areas of ELT Methodology to address, the following were mentioned:

- *teaching skills* (5)
- *classroom management* (3)
- *managing mixed ability groups* (3)
- *evaluation of currently used textbooks* (3) and
- *materials development* (3).

The choice of the latter was commented on by one respondent: 'Proficient teachers inevitably come up with something of their own, but teacher-generated materials do not always look good.' *Course planning*, *correction techniques* and *teaching grammar*[8] were each nominated by only two trainers. Finally, *using authentic materials* and *testing* gained only one vote each.

In summary, there was greater harmony of opinion concerning Methodology than Language Improvement. This suggests that the area of Methodology is currently

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[8] One respondent suggested the choice of *grammar structures* and its place in the syllabus. The other suggested 'unteaching' rather than teaching grammar and pointed out a problem: 'There is a lack of understanding among teachers that there is a written and spoken language and what they are doing in the classrooms - they encourage learners to produce pieces of written language as if they produced spoken language'.

addressed more intensively and, therefore, problems and priorities have been identified in it.
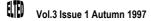
Modes of input

The next question sought information on the modes of input that trainers use in their training classrooms in order to compare the modes preferred by teachers with those provided by trainers .

All the trainers believed in a variety of training modalities. The choice was said to depend on various factors, including 'trainer personality' and efficiency in using particular modes.   However, the results revealed that the prevailing mode of input is a *lecture,* which was nominated by all 8 trainers. A foreign trainer commented on this: 'In my classes, people prefer to sit silently and not to say anything. They prefer me to lecture. And they get very angry with each other if a person from the audience starts speaking too much ... because they want to listen to me ... I do not think this is valuable but I had to surrender the battle.' Apart from this traditional culturally bound view of trainers as instructors, the preference for this mode can also be explained in terms of time and space constraints. On the other hand, the respondents themselves value a good lecture - as one of the respondents said: 'I have all confidence that if teachers want to institute a technique they can do it'.   In contrast teachers seem to be concerned more with gaining procedural knowledge and skills. This state of affairs also seems to contradict the trainers' own opinions about the importance of developing teaching skills as discussed above. Finally, this does not seem to match trainers' concerns about teachers' ability to articulate their knowledge and 'stand for what they do in the classroom'. Trainers explained the predominant use of the lecturing mode by the fact that teachers coming to INSET sessions are very tired and find active involvement perhaps too demanding. However, it can be argued that it is often a matter of qualification and can be addressed by the use of special techniques to involve the audience in active participation.

Apart from the lecturing mode, 3 trainers claim to regularly use the following modes of input:
- *discussions,*
- *training tasks,*
- *group work,*

- *demonstrations* and
- *handouts.*

Finally, only one trainer mentioned *guided observation* and *action research*. This result regarding *guided observation* seems to contradict trainers' opinions discussed in the previous section. However, when questioned, some trainers explained this by the fact that they do consider guided observation as important but would not define it as a mode of input.

In summary, the analysis of responses for this question allowed the identification of a conflict between trainers' beliefs and behaviour regarding modes of input. Two possible explanations can be suggested here. First is that their beliefs and values exist on an intentional rather than an operational level. Alternatively, addressing too many problems simultaneously, trainers might lack certain professional competencies which would allow them to set priorities to choose and deliver the appropriate mode of input according to their beliefs and to balance the existing constraints.

Role allocation in the training classroom

Like teachers, trainers were asked to identify the roles of course leaders and course participants in a training classroom. This would allow a comparison of the two perspectives:

In brief, discussing the roles of trainers, the respondents see themselves as:
- facilitators (3),
- providers (2),
- agents of change (1) and
- counsellors or advisers (2).

They also believed in trainers' task of promoting a 'co-operative style' (2) and the active involvement of the teachers (2).

The trainees' roles were seen as:
- active and equal participants and contributors (3),
- providers of information about the classroom (1) and feedback (1) and also
- listeners or 'in-takers' (1) in 'a trainee-oriented classroom'.

Trainees were expected to share responsibility for INSET (3), to be
- 'inquisitive',

- 'open-minded',
- 'willing to change' (5) and
- 'to put things into practice and learn further'(2).

These responses suggest that the trainers promote an interactive and trainee-centred type of syllabus. However, this is in contrast to the modes of input used by the teacher trainers. This, in turn, reinforces the above conclusion that trainers' real practice does not reflect their intentions..

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

This study set out with the aim:of investigating the needs of practising teachers, and their evaluation of and satisfaction with INSET provision in St. Petersburg and teachers' satisfaction with it. By addressing similar questions to the trainers, it was hoped that any discrepancies between the two groups regarding the aims of INSET and its mode of provision could be identified.

The overall needs of teachers

The first point to be made is that the present study underlies the complexity of teachers' needs and supports the theoretical assumption that INSET should pursue the following aims: develop teachers' attitudes, raise their awareness and equip them with knowledge of three types:

- procedural,
- background and
- subject knowledge.

However, it has been established that the domain of the consciousness and the frame of mind is explicitly seen as an objective of INSET only by teacher trainers and administrators while teachers themselves predominantly see training in connection with transmission and accumulation of knowledge.

One of the points that emerged particularly strongly is that the teachers felt that INSET should supply them with procedural knowledge. This concern has been

identified both at the levels of attitudes and behaviour: procedural knowledge was not only perceived by teachers as their prior need and the most valued element in existing courses but, further, the accumulation of this type of knowledge was declared as the most important change brought about as a result of INSET into teachers' practice. All this allows one to conclude that at present the majority of teachers under study operate at the procedural level of the professional development cycle (Pennington, 1995).

It has been found that although the teacher trainers are aware of teachers' demand for this kind of knowledge and skills, they still aspire for teachers to act at the conceptual level which the trainers view as a direct result of addressing the 'deep structure'. Nevertheless, there is evidence that in order to move from the procedural to the subsequent levels of the change cycle (i.e. interpersonal and conceptual), teachers need to develop a mastery of techniques and materials, gain confidence in using them by implementing them in their practice, and reflect on their own performance and experience gained as a result (Schon, 1983; Peninngton, 1995). This study provides support for this view. It has been detected that those teachers who have attended a number of courses (more than 3) with a practical emphasis still claim a need to develop procedural knowledge and skills. Hence, it has been argued that the accumulation of procedural knowledge does not **necessarily** enable teachers to generate practical ideas independently. Therefore, it is important to help teachers to become more critical and evaluative of their practice alongside addressing and evaluating the concepts behind procedural knowledge (i.e. theory). This would result in teachers creating their own theories of teaching and learning (Mc.Niff, 1993).

Although teacher trainers see the need for more background knowledge, their suggested means for achieving it are perhaps too straightforward and would require more than just an increase in the allowance for theory in the syllabus; they also need to

satisfy teachers' 'thirst' for procedural knowledge. This study also produced evidence that teachers seek a better understanding of the learning process. This appears quite significant because it suggests that teachers have the potential and motivation for making educational enquiry into their own practice in order to evaluate and improve it (Mc.Niff, 1993;). Therefore, if the ideas of reflective practice are introduced to teachers, they are likely to be effectively used and should promote teacher development leading them to the interpersonal and conceptual levels.

The fact that teachers with different experience and qualifications all seek procedural knowledge does not seem to support the idea that training at initial stages should be more competency-based while further training should be more holistically- oriented. The results of the present study show that in-service teachers are **equally** concerned with the practical usefulness of training and, therefore, support the view that training at any stage should be relevant and applicable to teaching (Duff, 1988)

Contradictions in views on INSET

This study identified serious contradictions in the views of different groups involved in INSET which are likely to affect negatively the provision of INSET in St. Petersburg. These contradictions cover 1) a mismatch in the views of teacher trainers, administrators and teachers on INSET, its methods and content, and 2) a mismatch between the declared views and the actual behaviour of teacher trainers.

First, while teacher trainers INSET as **process-oriented**, teachers are much more **product-oriented**. Although both categories of teachers see the value of a negotiated participatory syllabus, this concerns content rather than process. Also, while teacher trainers and administrators view INSET as a means of continuous professional development, teachers see it in terms of short-term rather than long-term goals, believing more in the power of quick-solutions. Since the society in general, and educational authorities in particular, are traditionally product-oriented, teachers' desire for attainable and apparent goals comes as no surprise. Moreover, unless

teachers have acquired the ability for critical awareness and evaluation of their own professional development, they do not benefit from a process-oriented syllabus. Therefore, it can be suggested that this issue needs to be tackled with care by gradual transformation of the fixed product-oriented syllabus toward one with elements of both .

The results also indicate a mismatch concerning INSET methodology: in spite of the fact that both groups of teacher prefer active modes of training, in reality trainers predominantly utilise the lecture mode. The latter seems to contradict the trainers' own expectations that trainees should reflect on their experience. Also, although both groups of teacher value training tasks, it was found that trainers do not widely use them for training purposes. This is in spite of the fact that trainers rate teaching skills as a high priority.

Also, as discussed above, there is a mismatch in the views of teachers and trainers on the content of INSET courses concerning background and procedural knowledge. These contradictions might be rooted in inconsistencies in the teacher trainers' views and actions. On the one hand, they declare support for a process syllabus but tend to bring to it a fixed and predetermined body of background knowledge in a transmissional mode. The conclusion is that the values held by trainers are not backed up by their behaviour. This might be due either to lack of awareness, competence and/or experience. A similar mismatch is true for teachers: while they declare the active modes of teaching, in practice, they tend to support transmissional modes.

Altogether, the revealed contradictions characterise the current situation of INSET in the Russian context as complex and problematic. The success of the further development of INSET will partly be determined by the solving of these contradictions. Otherwise, the inevitable aggregation of these problems could lead to isolation and alienation of teacher trainers and teachers. Finally, although found in the St. Petersburg context, I suspect such contradictions might be widespread in the profession. However, this hypothesis would require further research.

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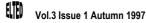
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** A fuller version of this study can be obtained from the author or from CELTE , University of Warwick.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Questionnaire on Teacher Training for Teachers, St.Petersburg, Russia
Spring 1996

Dear Teacher

We are currently investigating different approaches to *in-service teacher training* in order to improve current training in St-Petersburg and make it more relevant to your professional needs. Therefore, a significant part of the study is a *survey of teachers' needs and expectations* from such courses. This is the purpose of the questionnaire.

We would be most grateful if you could spend *about 20 minutes* going through the attached questionnaire as your feedback is very important for this study.

You **do not** have to give your name but if you would like to give it, please do so. All comments will be treated confidentially.

If you have any *questions* please do not hesitate to consult the interviewer.

Part 1
1.1. What teaching experience do you have? Please indicate the number of years in the space provided.
school _____ (number of years)   college _____
university _____   other (Please specify) _____

1.2. Are you qualified as a teacher of EFL? Please circle what is appropriate.
                    YES   NO

1.3. Where did you receive your initial training? Please circle what is appropriate.

a. Pedagogical University
b. State University
c. Other (Please specify) _____

Part 2
2.1. How many in-service teacher training courses have you attended in the recent three years?
If your answer is *'none'*, please go to *Part 3*.
_____

2.2. What kind of courses were they? Please circle as appropriate.

a. intensive   b. extensive
(less than a month, full time)   (part time over a significant period of time)
2.3. Who were the courses run by? Please circle as many as appropriate.

a. Pilgrims   e. Russian state courses
b. Soros   f. Other Russian courses (Please specify)
c. International House   _____
d. Cambridge University
g. Other foreign courses (Please specify) _____

2.4. Think of one particular course you enjoyed or/and found useful. Please name it.
_____

2.5. What did you find the most and the least useful on that course for your professional practice?
most useful _____
least useful _____

2.6. From what was presented on the course how much did you manage to apply in your professional practice? Please circle as appropriate.

a. most ideas
b. some ideas because   _____
c. nothing because _____
Please, continue on the back if you wish to write more.

2.7. In the last year can you identify *two* changes in your recent practice as a result of in-service training?

Part 3

3.1. In general, what does in-service training mean to you?

_____
_____
_____

3.2. What balance between theory and practice do you expect on an in-service teacher training course?

Theory _____ %   Practice _____ %
                              (e.g. designing classroom materials,
                              practising
                              classroom techniques)

3.3. What do you expect from in-service training? Please circle as many as necessary.

a. To gain some practical ideas
b. To understand theoretical ideas underlying practice
c. To learn how to manage stress
d. To receive help with particular teaching problems
e. To meet people who have the same problems and share with them
f. To receive an update on research in ELT
g. To understand better how to evaluate your own practice
h. To gain confidence
I. To understand the learning process better
j. To have opportunities to articulate and discuss what you already know
k. To learn how to manage change
l. To do observed teaching
m. To share experience
n. To try out ideas and techniques presented on a course
o. To organise a collaborative team for further professional development

3.4. What would you like to be included in a short training course? From the two lists below, please choose these **5** , which you think are the most important to you and underline them.

Language Improvement	Methodology
activating vocabulary	teaching skills
extending vocabulary	classroom management
language update	revision
work on typical mistakes	teaching vocabulary
fluency activities	information gap activities
pronunciation	using authentic materials
reading skills	course planning
listening skills	choosing a textbook
writing skills	correction techniques
study skills	management mixed ability groups
speaking practice	teaching grammar
functions of grammatical structures	overview of recent course books
	testing

cultural aspect   evaluation of currently used textbooks at
                                                   schools
                                                   material development

Other (Please specify)

_____   _____

3.5. In what form do you prefer to receive input? Please underline as many as appropriate.

a lecture   group work with plenary discussion
a handout   guided observation
a poster   guided reading
project work   demonstration
collaborative learning groups
discussions   other methods (Please specify) _____
training tasks   _____
action research   _____

3.6. Below are some statements concerning in-service teacher training. Please read them and
indicate how strongly you agree with them using *the following scale:*

   1-strongly agree   **2-** agree **3-**disagree **4-**strongly disagree **5-** uncertain

training is   mostly the responsibility of the trainer   1 2 3   4 5
                a shared attempt of a trainer and trainees   1 2 3   4 5
_____

a trainee needs to work on	language	1 2	3	4	5
	class room data	1 2	3	4	5
	methodology	1 2	3	4	5

a trainer is	an instructor	1 2	3	4	5
	a catalyst	1 2	3	4	5
	a counsellor	1 2	3	4	5
	a guide	1 2	3	4	5

a trainee is	a researcher	1 2	3	4	5
	a learner	1 2	3	4	5
	a negotiator	1 2	3	4	5

3.7. What type of courses do you prefer and why? Please circle as appropriate.
a. short intensive coursers this is usually less than a month
b. extensive coursers
c. other (Please specify) _____

3.8. When you come to a training course, you expect the trainer ...
Please circle as appropriate.

a. to offer you a totally detailed fixed course syllabus

b. to negotiate the syllabus according to your own agenda/needs
c. to be preferably a native speaker
d. to not necessarily be a native speaker

3.9. What kind of assessment would you like at the end of a training course?
a. an exam
b. a test
c. a written assignment
d. observed teaching
e. other kind of assessment (Please specify)
f. no assessment

Thank you