

Exploring the principals' attitudes toward the impact of in-service teacher training in India

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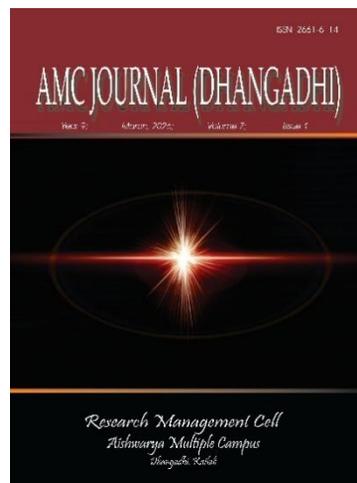
Abstract

This study examines secondary school principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training and compares these attitudes across gender, age, and professional experience in India. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to public and private school principals. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were employed for analysis. The findings indicate an overall above-average positive attitude toward in-service teacher training, with no statistically significant differences across gender, age groups, or years of experience. By incorporating principals' perspectives an area previously underexplored this study provides practical insights to inform the planning and improvement of in-service teacher training programs aimed at enhancing educational quality.

Keywords: Principal, attitude, in-service, teacher-training, India

Introduction

In-service teacher training (ISTT) is widely recognized as a cornerstone of continuous professional development and a critical mechanism for improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools. As educational systems confront rapidly changing curricular demands, diverse student needs, and evolving pedagogical expectations, the effectiveness of teachers has emerged as one of the most influential determinants of student achievement. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that teacher quality has a stronger impact on educational outcomes than structural or material inputs, underscoring the strategic importance of sustained professional development initiatives (Pennington, 1989; Okiror et al., 2017).



Within this context, school principals play a pivotal leadership role in shaping the success of in-service teacher training programs. Principals not only influence teachers' motivation to participate in professional development but also facilitate the transfer of training into classroom practice by fostering supportive institutional cultures. Effective ISTT equips teachers with updated knowledge, pedagogical skills, and adaptive competencies required to respond to increasingly complex and dynamic learning environments (Mercader & Gairín, 2020). Consequently, the quality of leadership support becomes a decisive factor in determining whether training initiatives translate into meaningful instructional improvement.

The impact of in-service teacher training is inherently multidimensional, extending beyond short-term skill acquisition to influence instructional practices, student engagement, and long-term professional growth (Hawley et al., 1984). High-quality training programs enhance teachers' capacity to engage students in academic learning, allocate instructional time effectively, and support learners' cognitive and personal development (Fraser et al., 2007). From an institutional perspective, continuous professional development represents a strategic investment that promotes innovation, instructional coherence, and a culture of lifelong learning among educators (Guskey, 2000; Penuel et al., 2007). These benefits further extend beyond individual classrooms, shaping broader educational trajectories and system-level quality improvement (Shewile & Dembélé, 2007).

Globally, education policy has shifted from an emphasis on access and expansion toward improving instructional quality and learning outcomes. In India, this transition is reflected in the institutional framework for teacher professional development led by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), and decentralized support structures such as Block Resource Centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs). Complementing public efforts, private-sector organizations also play a growing role in the provision of ISTT. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further reinforces this agenda by advocating classroom-centered, student-focused in-service training aligned with contemporary pedagogical goals (MHRD, 2020).

Despite the centrality of principals in implementing and sustaining effective teacher training, their attitudes toward ISTT have received limited empirical attention in the literature. Existing evaluations of in-service training programs have largely focused on teachers' perspectives or student outcomes, often overlooking the leadership dimension that mediates program effectiveness. Addressing this gap, the present study examines principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training and explores variations across demographic and professional characteristics. By foregrounding principals' viewpoints, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership engagement in teacher professional development and offers evidence-based insights to inform the design and implementation of more effective in-service training programs.

Objective and Hypothesis

The primary objective of this study is to examine secondary school principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training. Specifically, the study aims to analyze whether principals' attitudes differ based on gender, age, and years of administrative experience.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is there a significant difference in attitudes toward in-service teacher training between male and female principals?
- RQ2: Do principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training differ across age groups?
- RQ3: Do principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training vary according to years of administrative experience?

Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- H1: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean attitude scores toward in-service teacher training between male and female principals.
- H2: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean attitude scores toward in-service teacher training among principals from different age groups.
- H3: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean attitude scores toward in-service teacher training among principals with different years of administrative experience.

Review of Literature

In-service teacher training (ISTT) is widely recognized as a continuous and essential component of teachers' professional development, enabling educators to adapt to changing curricular demands, pedagogical innovations, and diverse learner needs (Jennings & Frank, 2015; Cheng, 2016; Dreer et al., 2017; Livingston, 2016; Osamwonyi, 2016; Saleem, 2016). Given teachers' critical role in shaping student learning, continuous professional development has become indispensable in modern education systems (Essel et al., 2009; Saleem, 2016). However, despite extensive research on ISTT, principals' attitudes toward such training remain largely underexplored.

Research indicates that competencies acquired during pre-service training may become outdated over time, necessitating ongoing in-service training to meet evolving educational demands (Chuene, 1999; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gilbert, 2005). Teachers enter ISTT programs with diverse beliefs and attitudes shaped by pre-service education, personal experiences, and professional contexts (Bullough & Baughman, 1997). Evaluating the effectiveness of ISTT is challenging, as most studies rely on teachers' self-reported implementation practices, which may overestimate actual classroom application (Halpin et al., 1990; Knapp, 2003; Flecknoe, 2000).

A substantial body of econometric research has examined the relationship between teacher training and student achievement (Hanushek, 1986). Several studies report positive effects of teacher training on student outcomes (Wayne & Youngs, 2003; Rice, 2003; Wilson et al., 2001; Clotfelter et al., 2006). However, findings regarding teacher experience are mixed, with some studies reporting no significant relationship (Aaronson et al., 2007; Betts et al., 2003) and others identifying positive associations (Clotfelter et al., 2007).

In-service training is considered a key mechanism for facilitating educational change and improving instructional quality (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2001). Scholars emphasize the need for alignment between pre-service education, induction, and in-service training to address curricular reforms and skill upgrading (Aspland & Brown, 1993; Iredale, 1996; Malone et al., 2000). The role of teacher educators in professional development has been widely discussed, particularly in developing contexts, alongside critiques of teacher education practices (OECD, 2005; Loughran, 2006; Mayer et al., 2011; Reichenberg et al., 2015; Berliner, 2000; Nieme, 2002). Core dimensions of professional development—pedagogy, knowledge, beliefs, experience, and teaching behaviour have also been extensively examined (Coronel et al., 2003; Chitpin, 2011; Hadar & Brody, 2012; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Loughran, 2014).

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into ISTT has gained increasing attention, as ICT enhances instructional delivery and professional learning (Hughes, 2005; Hew & Brush, 2007; Jagannath & Jobanputra, 2011; Naaz, 2020). Education systems are therefore expected to regularly update ISTT frameworks to support effective technology integration (Bhattacharjee & Deb, 2016). The growth of online professional development reflects this shift (Macià & García, 2016; Bragg et al., 2021; Dille & Røkenes, 2021). While online ISTT offers benefits such as flexibility, networking, and cost efficiency (Kim et al., 2017; Rets et al., 2020; Howard, 2021), concerns remain regarding individual needs, cultural diversity, and communication barriers (Jayatilleke et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2016; Dille & Røkenes, 2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that teachers who participate in effective ISTT are better prepared to implement innovative instructional strategies, integrate new knowledge, and utilize technology (Sabri, 1997; Sokal & Sharma, 2014). Training approaches such as collaborative teaching, facilitator observation, professional learning communities, co-teaching, and participatory action research have been widely documented (Villa et al., 2013; Cavanagh, 2013; Morales, 2015). Nevertheless, scholars caution against overestimating training outcomes due to limitations in evaluation metrics and methodological rigor (Amadi, 2013; Zaslow, 2014; Newton, 2013; Lehiste, 2015). Despite these limitations, ISTT remains a key driver of teacher quality, professional motivation, and instructional effectiveness (Glickman, 1990; Bayar, 2014; Guskey, 2014; Zlatić et al., 2014; Borg, 2018).

Methods and Materials

Research Philosophy and Design

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy, employing a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training and to test group differences based on gender, age, and administrative experience (Upadhyay et al. 2025). This approach is appropriate for hypothesis testing and statistical comparison of attitudes across predefined demographic categories.

Participants and Sampling: The study was conducted in India and involved 55 secondary school principals from public and private schools. Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility constraints. Participants' ages ranged from 30 to 60 years ($M = 45.54$, $SD = 8.01$) and were later categorized into three age groups: 30–40, 41–50, and 51–60 years, in line with the research objectives.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed through consultation with school principals and teachers and informed by an extensive review of literature on in-service teacher training. The questionnaire comprised two sections: (i) demographic characteristics and (ii) principals' attitudes toward the professional impact of in-service teacher training.

A cross-sectional study was conducted in India to assess the attitudes of secondary school principals towards the professional impact of in-service training for teachers. A 3-page questionnaire was distributed to 55 principals, with questions grouped into two categories: demographic characteristics of principals, and attitudes on the impact of in-service teacher training. The questionnaire was developed in consultancy with principals and teachers, incorporating insights gained from a comprehensive literature review on in-service teacher training. This collaborative approach ensured that the tool effectively addresses the needs and perspectives of educators. Convenience sampling was used to collect the data. The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic information and the second part was the attitude of principals assessed by 25 questions that included closed and open-ended questions. The 22 close-ended answers were evaluated by a 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from strongly agree (score 1) to strongly disagree (score 5). The questions on attitude towards in-service training were centered on voluntary participation, influence on teachers' personality, relevance to school administration, impact on the adoption of new methods and ICT, and academic achievement of the school. The survey questions on attitude also addressed pre-service shortcomings, evaluation of training, and state policies regarding training. The suggestions and other observations were studied in open-ended questions that discussed problems associated with training and ways to improve. The reliability coefficient was accessed by Cronbach alpha of 0.65 for attitude.

Statistical Analysis

All the data from the filled-in questionnaires were collected and coded for each parameter to examine the principals' responses. The principals' ages ranged from 30 to 60 years, with a mean of 45.54 years and a standard deviation of 8.01. However, the variable "Age Group" was later categorized into three groups: 30-40, 41-50, and 51-60. The principals' answers were compared to identify the impact given their age, gender, and years of administrative experience as a principal on their responses. Scientific methods were used for the analysis of the Likert scale (Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Norman, 2010).

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to describe principals' overall scores on attitude. Categorical data were represented as frequencies. The principals' attitude towards in-service training scores based on gender was analyzed using a t-test for comparison of mean scores of male and female principals. Similarly, the principal's attitude score based on age group and years of experience was analyzed using one-way ANOVA to compare mean scores. $P \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. Data analyses were performed using the jamovi 2.3.28 for the Windows version.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 55 secondary school principals participated in the study. The mean age of respondents was 45.54 years (SD = 8.01), with the majority belonging to the 41–50 years age group. Of the participants, 36 (65.45%) were male and 19 (34.55%) were female. Regarding administrative experience, 49.09%

of principals had 6–10 years of experience, followed by 27.27% with 11–20 years and 23.64% with 0–5 years of experience (Table 1)..

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Values (mean ± SD/n (%))
Male	36 (65.45%)
Female	19 (34.55%)
Experience	
0-5	13 (23.64%)
6-10	27 (49.09%)
11-20	15 (27.27%)
Age Group	
30-40	16 (29.09%)
41-50	22 (40%)
51-60	17 (30.91%)

Gender Differences in Attitudes toward ISTT

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in attitudes toward in-service teacher training between male and female principals. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in overall attitude scores between male principals (M = 2.79, SD = 0.41) and female principals (M = 2.74, SD = 0.28), $t(42) = -0.31, p = 0.379$ (Table 2). The effect size was small (Cohen’s $d = 0.14$), indicating negligible practical difference. Across all individual attitude items, none of the gender-based comparisons reached statistical significance ($p > 0.05$), supporting H01.

Age-Based Differences in Attitudes toward ISTT

A one-way ANOVA was performed to assess whether principals’ attitudes toward ISTT differed across age groups (30–40, 41–50, and 51–60 years). The results showed no significant difference in overall attitude scores among the three age groups, $F(2, 63) = 1.06, p = 0.353$. Mean attitude scores were comparable across groups: 30–40 years (M = 2.48, SD = 0.37), 41–50 years (M = 2.64, SD = 0.31), and 51–60 years (M = 2.87, SD = 0.40). The effect size was small (Cohen’s $d = 0.13$), confirming H02.

Experience-Based Differences in Attitudes toward ISTT

To examine differences based on years of administrative experience, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing principals with 0–5, 6–10, and 11–20 years of experience. The analysis indicated no statistically significant difference in overall attitude scores across experience groups, $F(2, 63) = 0.18, p = 0.836$ (Table 4). Mean scores were closely aligned: 0–5 years (M = 2.70, SD = 0.32), 6–10 years (M = 2.78, SD = 0.37), and 11–20 years (M = 2.81, SD = 0.41). The effect size was negligible (Cohen’s $d = 0.03$), supporting H03.

This study represents the independent sample t-test for mean scores of male and female principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training. The significance value for all factors is more than 0.05. There was no significant difference in the attitude scores for male principals ($M=2.79$, $SD=0.409$) and female principals ($M=2.74$, $SD=0.279$) conditions; $t(42) = -0.310$, $p = 0.379$. The effect size, measured by Cohen's d , was $d = 0.143$, indicating a small effect. These results suggest that there is no significant difference in the mean attitude scores of male and female principals toward in-service teacher training.

Table 2:

One-way ANOVA for comparison of mean scores of principals' attitudes toward in-service teacher training across three age groups

Factors	30-40		41-50		51-60		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Teachers participate in ISTT voluntarily	2.69	1.25	3.05	1.43	2.88	1.36	0.321	0.727
ISTT is an integral part of the profession	1.75	0.447	1.77	0.973	1.88	0.993	0.116	0.891
ISTT increases confidence among teachers	2.88	1.31	2.23	1.31	2.71	1.1	1.405	0.255
ISTT improves interpersonal skills	2.63	1.15	2.18	0.795	2.82	1.07	2.147	0.127
ISTT helps teachers with time management	2.63	1.15	2.18	0.795	2.82	1.07	2.147	0.127
Teachers discuss ISTT learning with the principal	2.69	1.4	1.5	0.512	2	0.866	7.236	0.002
ISTT facilitates school administration	2.25	0.931	2.77	1.19	2.82	1.07	1.438	0.247
ISTT participation increases motivation at work	3.25	1.13	2.64	1.09	2.76	1.25	1.386	0.259
ISTT addresses pre-service training shortcomings to some extent	2.56	0.727	2.5	0.74	2.29	0.686	0.645	0.529
ISTT implements state education policies only	3.75	1.06	3.73	1.08	4.18	0.809	1.141	0.327
ISTT impacts personal development negatively	4.19	0.75	3.95	0.722	3.76	0.903	1.183	0.314

Factors	30-40		41-50		51-60		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Female and male teachers show equal impact of ISTT	3.44	1.15	3.36	1.26	3	1.12	0.67	0.516
Teachers with less experience show more enthusiasm for ISST	2.63	1.15	2.18	0.795	2.82	1.07	2.147	0.127
ISTT gives a sense of ownership and responsibility to some extent	2.25	0.775	2.14	0.64	2.18	0.529	0.142	0.868
ISTT provides a platform for collective brainstorming for effective earning	2.94	0.998	2.27	0.985	3.18	1.42	3.324	0.044
ISTT leads to innovative methods of teaching	2.38	1.2	2.68	0.995	2.82	1.13	0.716	0.494
ISTT influences ICT use in teaching only partially	3.63	1.02	3.27	1.16	3.65	1.41	0.599	0.553
ISTT enhances content delivery	3.13	1.26	2.64	1.26	2.41	0.87	1.654	0.201
ISTT promotes knowledge on choice and use of effective teaching methods	2.38	1.02	2.68	1.13	2.71	1.16	0.466	0.63
School management facilitates the implementation of ISTT learning	2.44	1.09	1.77	0.752	2.59	1.28	3.47	0.038
ISTT learnings are evaluated in school to some extent	3.06	1.06	3	1.15	3.35	1.22	0.487	0.617
ISTT has little impact on academic achievement	3.25	0.775	3.5	1.19	3.53	1.07	0.363	0.697

Table 2 compares the mean scores of principals of three different age groups regarding attitudes toward in-service teacher training. The mean scores and standard deviation for each age group were: 30-40 (M=2.48, SD=0.370), 41-50 (M=2.64, SD=0.31), and 51-60 (M=2.87, SD=0.40). We conducted a one-way ANOVA to compare the means of the three groups. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference in the mean scores of principals of different age groups, $F(2,63) = 1.06, p = 0.353$. The effect size, measured by Cohen’s d, was $d = 0.128$, indicating a small effect.

The mean scores of principals with different years of administrative experience about attitudes toward in-service training across 22 factors. The mean scores and standard deviation of the different years of administrative experience as a principal are as follows: 0-5 years (M=2.70, SD=0.32), 6-10 years (M=2.78, SD=0.37), and 11-20 years (M=2.81, SD=0.41). We conducted a one-way ANOVA to compare the means of the three groups. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference in the

mean scores of principals' attitudes with different years of experience, $F(2,63) = 0.179$, $p = 0.836$. The effect size, measured by Cohen's d , was $d = 0.034$, indicating a small effect.

Discussion

This study examined secondary school principals' attitudes toward the professional impact of in-service teacher training and explored how different attitudinal dimensions interact. The findings indicate an overwhelmingly positive perception, with 89% of principals identifying in-service training as an essential component of the teaching profession. This aligns with evidence that structured professional development enhances pedagogical effectiveness, teacher–learner communication, and the adoption of effective instructional practices (OECD, 2019; Manso et al., 2019).

Consistent with prior research, principals perceived in-service training as a catalyst for positive changes in teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices, ultimately improving student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002; Day & Sachs, 2004; Avalos, 2011). Although principals strongly endorsed professional development, participation was not always voluntary. Younger principals (30–40 years) and those with less administrative experience were more supportive of voluntary participation, while barriers such as work–family conflict, compulsory attendance, lengthy programs, and dissatisfaction with prior training were reported—findings echoed in earlier studies (Damianidou, 2021; Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009; Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2007).

Gender emerged as a meaningful factor influencing attitudes toward training. In line with earlier evidence, female teachers were perceived to benefit more from in-service training and demonstrated more favorable professional attitudes (Bozdogan et al., 2007; Capa & Cil, 2000; Fazilet, 2014). Principals also highlighted the role of training in enhancing teachers' personal and professional development, reinforcing the view that professional growth is an ongoing, reflective process shaped by experience and openness to change (Bredson, 2003; Segon & Booth, 2010; Cross & Papadopoulos, 2001; Nastasa & Cazan, 2013).

The integration of ICT and innovative teaching methods was another critical outcome. While principals acknowledged limitations in teachers' technological competencies particularly among senior teachers most believed that in-service training effectively promotes ICT adoption and pedagogical innovation. This supports existing literature emphasizing the transformative role of technology-oriented professional development in modern classrooms (Chavis & Kim, 2015; Spazak, 2013; Afshari et al., 2009).

Principals also emphasized the importance of training evaluation, noting improvements in teachers' self-evaluation practices and student assessment. However, systematic evaluation of training outcomes remained limited, despite its recognized importance for sustainable professional development (King, 2014; Borg, 2018). Less experienced and female principals demonstrated greater enthusiasm for applying and evaluating training outcomes.

Finally, principals strongly associated in-service teacher training with improved academic achievement. By fostering reflective practice, student-centered instruction, and professional conduct, such training contributes to classroom environments conducive to learning and academic success (Hopkins & Stern, 1996; Kazmi et al., 2011; Johnson & Sloat, 1980; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

Conclusion

Principals must recognize that to improve the quality of education and provide students with the best possible learning experiences, investing in the professional development of teachers through in-service training is essential. Teachers are the backbone of our education system, and the impact of investing in their continuing education is directly reflected in their effectiveness in the classroom. In-service training offers teachers the opportunity to enhance their teaching techniques, incorporate innovative technologies, and address the unique needs of their students. It fosters a culture of continuous learning that motivates teachers to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in their field. Effective strategies should be implemented to cater to the needs of both educators and learners. The training should be personalized and tailored to meet the specific requirements of the teachers. Principals should employ a multi-layered evaluation mechanism to ensure that the training achieves its desired goal of teaching-learning improvement. Principals need to prioritize the ongoing development of teachers to enhance the quality of education and provide students with the best possible learning experiences.

Authors' Contributions

K.M. Joshi conceptualized the study and provided overall academic supervision. **Kinjal V. Ahir** contributed to the research design, literature review, and methodological refinement. **Govinda Raj Upadhyay** (Corresponding Author) conducted statistical analysis and prepared the initial draft of the manuscript. Professor **Ashutosh Priya** guided data interpretation and critically reviewed the manuscript to enhance its academic rigor and policy relevance. **Dharma Dev Bhatta** assisted in data validation, and manuscript editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript and take responsibility for its content.

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