

## Needs of Future Faculty Members in Relation to Instructional Planning, Effective Teaching and Evaluation: A Case Study

### Geleceğin Öğretim Elemanlarının Öğretimde Planlama, Etkili Öğretim ve Değerlendirmeye İlgili İhtiyaçları: Bir Örnek Olay Çalışması

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#### Öz

The purpose of this study was to assess the needs of research assistants at Middle East Technical University in relation to instructional planning, effective teaching and evaluation, and their awareness level related to self-improvement in an academic context. Data sources were the research assistants who were enrolled on the program in the Fall term of 2001-2002 academic year, the instructor and her assistant. During the study, qualitative data were gathered and a content analysis technique was adopted to analyze data. Results revealed that prospective instructors have a subject-oriented approach in planning, teaching and evaluation, and they view self-improvement as the improvement of knowledge in the subject. Although program goals seem to be in line with needs, certain practices should be implemented to achieve better outcomes.

*Keywords:* Faculty development programs, needs analysis.

#### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi'nde araştırma görevlilerinin öğretimde planlama, etkili öğretim, değerlendirme ve akademik ortamda kendilerini geliştirmeye ilişkin duyarlık düzeyini arttırmadaki ihtiyaçlarını değerlendirmektir. Bu çalışmaya 2001-2002 Akademik Yılı Sonbahar Dönemi'nde ilgili dersi alan bütün araştırma görevlileri, dersin öğretim üyesi ve asistanı katılmışlardır. Çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmış ve veriler, temaların kodlanmasını, kategorilere ayrılmasını ve genel boyutların belirlenmesini kapsayan içerik analizi tekniği ile değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, geleceğin öğretim elemanlarının ders planı hazırlama, sınıf dinamiği ve değerlendirmeye ilgili olarak konu ağırlıklı yaklaşıma ve akademik bir ortamda kendilerini geliştirmek için sadece alana yönelik bilgiyi arttırmanın yeterli olduğu inancına sahip olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Sonuç olarak, söz konusu programın hedefleri her ne kadar ihtiyaçlara yönelik olsa da daha iyi sonuçlar elde etmek için pratikte bazı yeni uygulamalara gereksinim duyulmaktadır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Akademik elemanları geliştirme programları, ihtiyaç analizi.

#### Introduction

In our time, change is unavoidable. Each day, science contributes to what is known and this new body of knowledge changes the technology, the society and professions, which consecutively affect the individuals. Especially, in the area of teaching and learning, there is

such extensive research on curriculum design, effective teaching strategies, learning, and assessment that much effort is needed to remain competent in this field.

However, new faculty members lack the study and experience in this field. They are the product of post-graduate education that prepares them only to conduct research in an area of knowledge. This is an important task, but it does not prepare them for the full range of faculty responsibilities, and specifically not for teaching (Gaff, 1994). Furthermore, during the initial years, since the new faculty members are passing through a critical period for learning the job and forming attitudes about

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it, they may easily move from liberal, idealistic perspectives to more conventional and bureaucratic ones (Reynolds, 1992).

Murray and Holmes (1997) also noted that as long as lecturers in higher education are not trained, they will not be instructors. This statement addresses the inconsistencies in the career of an academic, which are:

- Subject specialism and research are the qualifications for the staff who teach;
- Instructors in higher education are left to design and deliver courses with only a partial understanding of the learning processes;
- Being faced with increasing numbers of students in classrooms, instructors are forced to use traditional teaching methods, even though there is no evidence to suggest that these methods are effective, and even when these methods do not suit their own personal style.

At this point, universities have the responsibility to provide opportunities for faculty members to continuously develop themselves to catch up or to get ahead of changing demands in order to produce effective and efficient outcomes. Therefore, innovations and improvements which are of high quality are required in higher education with regard to curricula, kinds and levels of study, teaching methods and procedures, and scientific research (Paykoç, 1992). This can only be realized through faculty development programs, the function of which is to support instructors in the performance of their designated roles and to help them fulfill their potential during the course of their employment (Reporter, 1999).

In line with this statement, most colleges and universities today operate formal faculty development programs and the most sophisticated offer one that supports the growth of faculty members in all aspects of their work as a person, as a scholar, and as an instructor.

This paper mainly focuses on programs that aim to improve the prospective faculty member as an instructor in the context of higher education. To cater for the needs of prospective instructors in teaching, some strategies are employed and practised at universities. According to Jarvis (1991), these can be listed as mentoring, curriculum development projects, teaching resource centers, intervisitation, student advice, individual and collaborative research projects, and group activities.

Even though all these staff development activities and programs are intended to improve the teaching performance of staff, this research study concentrates on an example of group activities. "Instructional Planning and Evaluation" which is a graduate course offered at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey could be perceived as an example of group activities according to Jarvis's classification as it is also a term-length course. However, in the case of these long-term faculty development programs, desired outcomes rely highly on the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus, to plan and implement effective faculty development programs, some models were developed.

In order to establish effective faculty development programs, a step-by-step approach and an understanding of what effective faculty development programs involve are required. Therefore, it is necessary to be informed about the models that have been developed so far. Examples of these models are the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Loucks-Horsley and Stiegelbauer, 1970), Sparks's model (Sparks, 1983; in Caldwell, 1989), RPTIM (Readiness, Planning, Training, Implementation, and Maintenance) model (Wood, 1989), and Lawler and King's (2000) Adult Learning model.

In all of these faculty development models, the readiness level of the learners for the faculty development initiative, a needs assessment study, and the establishment of the goals according to these needs are observed.

Going deeper in the literature, Lauro and Dennis (1995) emphasized the acceptance of the selected program by staff and the ineffectiveness of a top-down approach; without any input from instructors. They pointed out that one way to assure success in training programs is to involve instructors early in the process of identifying their professional development needs and then to maintain that involvement and feedback loop all the way through the design and implementation process.

As mentioned above, many staff development programs are destined to fail if a needs assessment process is not carried out because this phase of the training process provides the information required to design the entire program. According to Goldstein

(1993), a complete needs analysis can be done at three levels: Organizational analysis, task and knowledge, skill and ability analysis, and person analysis.

The importance of these three levels vary from one situation to another but the last level-person analysis is necessary to include in any training program to ascertain any gaps in the competency of the staff in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes and to be able to close that gap.

Consequently, as stated by Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter and Ferguson (1996) needs assessment is population specific, systematically focused and outcome-oriented. It is a form of applied research that extends beyond data collection and analysis, and covers the utilization of the findings. In this context, the findings of such research should be used in the formulation of program goals and objectives. However, the course in question in this paper was not designed in line with this understanding. A detailed description of the course is as follows.

#### *Description of the Course*

The aim of "Instructional Planning and Evaluation" course is to develop the research assistants' conceptions, perceptions, and skills related to designing instruction, effective teaching and evaluation. Also, as Levine and Broude (1989) claimed, the goal of staff development programs is to teach new knowledge, perceptions and skills to the participants of such programs and this course is designed in parallel with this understanding.

It is a one-term course that is designed on the request of the Higher Education Council for research assistants who are studying and working at METU in line with the 35<sup>th</sup> article of the Higher Education Law. The 35<sup>th</sup> article of the Higher Education Law requires that after completing their doctoral studies, research assistants work as instructors at other universities in Turkey.

This course has been offered at METU since the spring term of 2001. It is held 5 hours of a week, three of which are dedicated to theory and two to practical activities. However, as notice of the request from the Higher Education Council came very late, no needs analysis study could be carried out before the program started.

Finally, content is based on research on instructional planning, effective teaching and evaluation, and it is also validated in practice. However, it was not provided to

the participants as a set of rules. The participants were informed that some adaptations could be made to it if they desired.

#### *Purpose and Significance of the Study*

Within this framework, the purpose of this study is to examine the readiness level of the future faculty members for the faculty development initiative and their actual needs in relation to the course, which focuses on instructional planning, effective teaching and evaluation. Specific research questions the study seeks to address according to Lawler and King's (2000) Adult Learning Model are as follows:

- A) Are the research assistants willing to participate in the faculty development program?
  - Does the program schedule fit into the research assistants' workload and the pace of the academic year?
  - Do the research assistants feel the need to learn?
  - Is the program promoted well?
- B) What are the needs of the research assistants in relation to the program?
  - That are the conceptions of the research assistants related to instructional planning, effective teaching and evaluation at the beginning of the course?
  - What are the affective characteristics of the research assistants related to teaching?
  - What are the perceptions of the research assistants of their teaching behaviors at the beginning of the course?
- C) Are the goals of the program established according to these needs?

The significance of this research lies in its usefulness in assessing the readiness level and the needs of the future faculty members for the faculty development program. Also, it will help suggest other faculty development activities that can be employed by METU to develop the course and the Higher Education Council to further improve the prospective faculty members.

#### Method

##### *Participants*

Twelve research assistants who were enrolled on the program in the Fall term of 2001-2002 academic year participated in the study. These are the assistants who

are studying and working at METU with the 35<sup>th</sup> item of Higher Education Law and when they complete their studies, they will be instructors at different universities in Turkey. The distribution of their universities according to geographical regions in Turkey is given in Table 1.

Table 1.  
*Geographical Distribution of Research Assistants' Universities*

Geographical Region	n	f (%)
Marmara Region	1	8.3
Aegean Region	4	33.3
Black Sea Region	1	8.3
Central Anatolia Region	4	33.3
Eastern Anatolia Region	1	8.3
No connection to any university	1	8.3
TOTAL	12	100

Of those research assistants, 8 were men and 4 were women. They ranged in age from 28 to 36 with a mean age of 31 ( $SD=2.01$ ). The assistants were also from a wide range of departments. Two were from the department of engineering sciences, 2 from biotechnology, 2 from biology, 1 from biochemistry, 1 from chemistry, 2 from economics, 1 from sociology and 1 from philosophy. Eleven of these participants were at the point of writing their doctoral dissertation and 1 was writing the master thesis. The assistants also ranged between 0 and 6.5 years of teaching experience with a mean of 2.41 ( $SD=2.12$ ).

Of the 12 research assistants, only one of them had participated in a course on "Young Learners" that was offered by the British Council and the others had not participated in any course, workshop or seminar related to instruction before.

The instructor of the program was a full time faculty member in the Department of Educational Sciences at METU. The instructor was a professor in the field and had 30 years of experience. She was also known to be experienced in faculty development programs and this was the second time she was giving the same course.

The assistant of the course was a research assistant in the Department of Educational Sciences at METU. The assistant was also employed in line with the 35<sup>th</sup> item of the Higher Education Law. He was supposed to observe the sessions and carry out some practice sessions.

#### *Data Collection Techniques and Instruments*

During the study, various data collection techniques and instruments such as reflection- sheets, concept-maps, individual interviews and document analysis were utilized. For reliability and validity purposes, reflection and concept-map sheets were used in the previous semester and revised for this study. As for the preparation of the interview questions basic dimensions and the activities suggested by Lawler and King's (2000) Adult Learning model, the goals of the course in the course outline, and the literature in this area were used as a basis, alternatives and probes were written and after the preparation of the interview guides, the opinions and criticisms of the subject specialists were taken into account and necessary adjustments were carried out. Detailed descriptions of these instruments are given below.

*Reflection-sheet:* This form mainly involved opinion/belief questions and the last item also involved knowledge and experience/behavior type questions according to Patton's (1987) classification of questions. More specifically, the reflection sheet was an open-ended instrument given in written form to the research assistants and it was utilized to obtain data about the overall opinions of the assistants in relation to the program, their needs and expectations. The form had 6 open-ended questions in relation to the reasons for taking the course, their goals, the problems they would like to tackle during the course, and what they already know, feel and do in terms of instructional planning, teaching, learning, curriculum development and evaluation.

*Concept-maps:* In this study, concept maps were used to examine the research assistants' conceptions of the terms "planning", "teaching", "learning", and "evaluation" to diagnose their conceptions and misconceptions at the beginning of the course. In this paper, the assistants were asked to write their own definitions of these concepts, draw their concept maps and then to give a short explanation of them.

*Individual Interviews:* In this study, individual interviews were carried out for data triangulation to assess the needs of the participants. During the administration of the interviews, interview guide was used. The interview guide utilized for the needs assessment process included questions about the goals

of the program, what to include in course outlines, the qualities of a "good" and "bad" instructor, and measurement and evaluation techniques.

*Document Analysis:* In this particular study, the documents analyzed were the course announcement used to promote the program and the course outline of the program.

#### *Procedure*

Before the process of data collection, the purpose, procedures and the benefits of the research study were explained to the research assistants and an informed consent form indicating voluntary participation, no risk involvement and data confidentiality was received from all of them.

To answer the research questions, first, the announcements made to advertise the course were collected from the instructor of the course. Then, the reflection-sheet was given to the research assistants on the first day of the course, and they were asked to answer the questions in about 20 minutes in written form. At the end of the session, concept-maps were also distributed to the research assistants to be collected in the following session. These two data collection instruments were given in English since they were also a part of the course. Furthermore, for the credibility or internal validity of the study, the researcher attempted to verify the data by the triangulation of data collection techniques and data sources. As for the triangulation of data collection techniques, individual interviews were administered to the research assistants over three consecutive days. For the triangulation of data sources, the same interview was administered to the instructor and to the assistant of the course.

The interviews were held in Turkish and they were administered to all research assistants before the instructor started the program. Before starting the interview sessions, the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the interview and were reminded of the confidentiality of responses once again. All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed in one week. The transcriptions were later member-checked; that is, they were taken back to the participants for approval to increase the validity of the interviews. With the feedback received from the interviewees, necessary adjustments were made to the transcriptions.

#### *Data Analysis*

To analyze the qualitative data collected in this study, first the raw data collected via reflection-sheets, concept-maps, and interviews were transcribed or written up by the use of a word processor and they were systematized considering different data gathering techniques. Subsequent to the organization of data, the steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing were followed.

Therefore, in this study, initially, the researcher developed a thematic framework representing the evaluation questions. Then, data were reviewed and codes were attached to chunks of meaningfully divided data. During this process, some certain themes proved to be unimportant and some new themes emerged. First of all, some data reduction was accomplished during coding, then, the data were further reduced by grouping these codes into smaller number of themes. Secondly, to visualize the data, tables with two columns were drawn. In the first column, the themes were written and in the second column, there were brackets with one or two numbers in them. The first number referred to the person from whom the raw data were collected and the second number symbolized the data collection instrument. Finally, in the last step, explanations were developed by looking at the patterns, contrasts, relationships, and by collecting respondent feedback.

#### *Results*

This part presents the findings of the study in relation to the specific research questions posed in the purpose section of this paper. The findings are supported by snippets extracted from the data collection instruments and each snippet is coded with the letters RA (Research Assistant) and with a number assigned to them to show that they are taken from a variety of research assistants.

#### *Willingness to participate in the program*

The results regarding the willingness of the participants to take part in the program indicated that these research assistants were not very willing to participate in the program. Their participation in the program was forced and if not, most of them (n=7) would not take part in it since the timing of the program did not fit their workload. The following were some of

the responses received from the interviews as to the timing of the program and the faculty workload.

"I am now in the middle of writing my dissertation and I have the problem of going to another city. When I go for a week, I will not be able to attend 5 blocks and maybe I will miss important points and it will not be beneficial for me." (RA -11)

"In the following one or two months, I have to prepare my proposal and I also have the experiments to be done. Because of these, in terms of timing, I am a bit under stress." (RA-5)

A few of the participants (n=5) reported that they would actually take the course if they were informed about it. Since the promotion of the program was one of the concerns of the study, further investigation related to it indicated that although the goal of the program was announced in written form before the program started, none of the participants were aware of it. Only the ones who were present in class at the beginning of the course knew what the course was all about.

Another reason that was brought about for reluctance to participate was "not feeling the need for it." When asked about their own goals and expectations in the reflection-sheet, the general tendency was towards the improvement of teaching, learning the techniques of planning, learning how to evaluate students' performance and learning more about the affective side of teaching like learning to communicate and learning to motivate learners. These goals and expectations very much overlap with the goals of the program. However, during the interviews nearly all (n=10) of the participants either indicated that fulfilling the course requirement of the Phd program was also one of their goals or they openly said that they actually did not have their own goals as this was an obligatory course for them. For instance, one of the participants said: "If we were not forced, we would not take this course... For the last 20-25 years, we have been students and we have been thinking that we would do what we have seen so far from our own instructors. We never felt the need for this course. We did not even realize that we could have deficiencies in this area." (RA-3)

The assistant and the instructor of the course also pointed out the same problem. The instructor stated: "When I asked about their goals, I realized that they did

not have deliberate goals in taking the course. Due to the name of the course and the information given to them, they are saying that they will get the knowledge and skills related to instruction. But their goals are the ones which are forced upon them, they are not the ones specified by them."

The research assistants had only a few expectations related to the structure of the course. What was most desired was focusing more on the practical side of the topics with concrete examples, problems and cases. They did not want to have too much theory. A flexible course in which they could share their opinions easily and no grading were also issues that were mentioned in the interviews.

In short, the research assistants were not really willing to participate in the program. As for what could have been done to increase their motivation, one solution that was suggested by both the instructor and her assistant was a kind of meeting or a seminar to introduce the field to the research assistants and to learn about their needs before the program took place.

#### *The Needs of the Research Assistants in Relation to the Program*

Since the research assistants did not have their own goals and specified needs in relation to the program, their needs were assessed by the researcher considering the goals of the program. The goals of the program as given in the course outline are as follows:

- to improve the basic perceptions and skills related to instructional planning, effective teaching and evaluation
- to increase the awareness level of the participants related to self-improvement in an academic context

In terms of instructional planning, in the concept-maps and interviews, it was seen that the research assistants mainly conceived planning as "a system composed of parts to reach the goals" and in the process of planning, time was mentioned frequently as a theme to be considered in planning. In addition to time, order had the second place. Only 3 of the participants (n=3) mentioned the needs of the target group and flexibility in planning.

Since in this course the research assistants were supposed to prepare course outlines, in the interviews,

they were also asked whether they would provide their students with a course outline in the future and except for two all of the assistants pointed out that they would. However, when asked what they would include in a course outline once they became instructors, content, references and information on evaluation were the most popular items that were brought up.

The second-most popular elements were general information about the course such as the name and the code of the course and the overall goals of the course in one or two sentences. Although there were some people (n=5) referring to the goals, no one mentioned the necessity of writing the objectives of the course in detail. Even one of the assistants, after a comparison of the course outline of the "Instructional Planning and Evaluation" course and the course outlines she had before, she pointed out: "I have the outlines of PhD courses and they all have the topics with a short explanation underneath them. But in the course outlines I have seen before, there were no objectives and I think they should not be there. Because when an instructor writes them, the students expect that the instructor will definitely give them. If an instructor does not do them, the students may say 'you said it but you did not do it' and they may use it to blame you. Therefore, if given, they should not be so specific." (RA-9)

Only a few of the research assistants (n=4) had a more learner-centered attitude in preparing course outlines. In addition to the items above, these either mentioned the necessity to include information about the instructor (the telephone number, e-mail adress and the office hours the instructor can be contacted) and the method of instruction or the need to have a motivating format for students.

As is understood from the findings, most of the research assistants have a subject-oriented approach in planning and as the assistant and the instructor of the course indicated, this results from not having any background in the field of educational sciences and also from being influenced by what they have been exposed to in their lives up to now. The instructor made this clear by saying "As is the case in the relationship of the master and the apprentice, they are doing what their own instructors are doing. . . Because of this, not all elements of planning are viewed as important. A general recall of

what they have said shows that what they emphasize most are content, references and timing. That is, they have the subject oriented approach in planning which has also a place in theory."

With regard to the conceptions of teaching and learning, in the concept-maps, nearly all (n=9) of the program participants defined teaching as "a process of transferring necessary information, knowledge, and skills to the students" and learning as "getting an idea or a skill". A small number of them (n=3) look at these terms from students' point of view and define teaching as "helping people think, feel or act in a new way" and learning as "behavior modification."

For effective teaching, nearly all of the participants (n=10) valued the cognitive qualities of an instructor as the most important quality in being effective. In the interviews, the research assistants stated that first of all, the instructors should know their subjects well, be good researchers in their fields, be able to provide students with enough references and should be intellectuals to be effective instructors.

Secondly, they are aware of the fact that there is the affective side of teaching and learning and during this process the instructors should have good communication and relationships with the learners in and out of class. More specifically, they said that they should be accessible, be respectful to students, should not criticize a student in front of others, should not look down on them and should not discriminate between them. Also, out of class, the need to guide students and to share their problems were also mentioned. One of the assistants clarified the relationship between the instructor and the students as: "An instructor should be like a teacher. Why did I use the phrase to be like a teacher? In primary and secondary schools, a teacher is a teacher. That is, he/she shows attention to the students and tries to cater for the needs of the students. The instructors do not have this attitude. They say that the students are already old enough to give anything to them and they do not do such things." (RA-9)

A final remark for out of class behaviors of an effective instructor was the necessity of lesson planning which was a skill aimed to endow the assistants with in the course and which was mentioned by less than half of the participants (n=5).

A few of the participants (n=4) stressed the importance of personality characteristics such as being understanding, patient and open-minded. That they should have a smiling face and ethical standards were other characteristics that were deemed important.

One final quality that emerged was classroom management skills. Only a few students (n=4) mentioned this and their attitude towards it was spread on a continuum from "the instructor should have full authority in class" to "no authority at all."

Regarding how to teach and learn, the initial perceptions were really positive. It was seen that the research assistants were aware of the needs and interests of the learners, the difference between knowing the subject and teaching, the important role of the instructor in the teaching process, the need to use various methods in teaching, the effect of teaching techniques on learning, different ways of learning and the need for evaluation. However, when it came to more concrete terms; that is, in class teaching behaviors, the themes that appeared were more subject oriented. Having the ability to transfer knowledge, presenting the topics in a simpler way considering the level of the students, not repeating only what is written in the book, the choice and the use of right learning aids for the topic, the need for practice and examples to emphasize topics, being careful about body language and the requirement of effort from learners to learn were the items mentioned in the concept-maps and interviews.

All these themes reveal that the research assistants see instruction as transfer of knowledge or lecture. As the assistant of the course pointed out: "They see lecture as the lesson itself. They do not know that this is only a technique. Therefore, I believe that there is the need to focus more on instructional strategies."

The instructor of the course highlighted the same misconception by saying "For them, instruction is only lecturing. There are even some that use the term lecture plan instead of lesson plan... But this is also a traditional conception of teaching." The instructor also added that to be effective instructors, initially, the research assistants should stop seeing their fields only from the view point of their subjects but with its relation to the whole program of the department and with its relation to the other fields. Secondly, they should not see teaching

as knowledge transfer and the lesson as a list of topics. They should try to see this process from students' point of view, take the responsibility for learning and should bring variety to the strategies and the sources used, should feel the need to improve themselves, should do research on how to be more effective and make use of various measurement and evaluation techniques. Her assistant also suggested that they should learn to get feedback from their students about the methods used for effective teaching.

As for measurement and evaluation, in the concept-maps, there were acceptable conceptions such as "It is important to plan for evaluation and inform students about it at the beginning of the course.", "The aim should be to teach and to learn not to fail students.", "Evaluation shows progress" and "Evaluation is also the evaluation of teaching." However, some misconceptions also emerged. Some of these include "Evaluation is given to a group.", "It is the last step of teaching." and "It is done for the purpose of determining the level of knowledge."

Going more into detail on the types of evaluation, in the interviews, a few of the research assistants (n=3) stated that exams should not be the only evaluation instruments. Most of them (n=7) were inclined to include effort shown in and out of class, the attitudes, behaviors, participation and interest in the lesson in evaluation. However, only very few of them (n=3) pointed out the need to include other evaluation instruments such as oral exams, homework activities, papers and projects, and cooperative work assignments.

While preparing exam questions, the assistants emphasized that the questions should not be tricky but understandable, they should not test memorization, and they should be prepared from what is covered in class. Only one of the assistants mentioned the consistency of the exam with the structure of the course, and whether it is written, oral or psychomotor and another one talked about the representation of what is covered in class in the exam. However, the latter one also added: "Some instructors give importance to certain topics and they prepare the questions mostly from those parts. A friend of mine who graduated from the department of educational sciences said to me that if there are 10 chapters in a course and if you are spending 1 week for each chapter, then you need to ask one question from



each chapter. Asking 8 questions from one chapter and asking only two questions from the rest was not right. However, our instructors do not give importance to it. I also do not pay attention to it.” (RA-10)

For different types of evaluation techniques and instruments and preparing questions, the instructor had already figured out the same deficiencies and said: “With the help of the concept-maps and the discussions held in class, it is seen that these research assistants are more used to the exams that test knowledge or understanding...They cannot link objectives, instruction and evaluation to each other in a consistent manner.”

In the interviews, as to what should be considered during and after an exam, generally the assistants could not come up with different answers. The themes that were mentioned by very few of them was “not allowing cheating“, “giving enough time” and “making students feel comfortable during the exam.” There was even one who did not care about cheating. In terms of grading, while most of them believed in objectivity or the use of criteria in grading, some said that grading is and can be subjective. Finally, while reporting the results, the themes that were mentioned again by the minority were reporting the results quickly, being open to objections, giving individual feedback, confidential reporting and using statistics to report the results.

Considering the number of participants who had answers for what should be done during and after an exam and the limited ideas they had, it is seen that they are also not very well informed about the reliability of exams.

Regarding the affective goal of the course, in the reflection-sheets and the interviews, the majority of the research assistants believed that an effective instructor should read books, journals or other sources related to teaching, should observe their own instructors and students, and should be a good researcher in the field. Other themes that were brought up were participating in seminars and learning to use the computer and the internet. Willingness to improve and self-reflection were mentioned only by one participant. As for what they actually do to improve themselves, the themes that emerged were trying to have advanced knowledge in the field, observing instructors, taking this course, talking with parents who are also teachers and buying exercise

books to use in teaching and in evaluation. As is seen, although the research assistants have a kind of awareness related to self-improvement, they do not put it into practice much.

In order for the assistants to increase their awareness level related to self-improvement in an academic context, the instructor emphasized the need for carrying out observations and trying to understand and see what successful instructors do, reading sources related to instruction, sharing information about what they do and what others do, trying to see the process from students’ point of view and either applying what is given to them in the course or thinking what may happen if they apply what they learn.

#### *Consistency Between the Needs and the Goals of the Program*

In terms of planning, teaching and evaluation, the research assistants have a subject-oriented approach and this is reflected in the elements they would include in a course outline, in their conceptions of teaching as transfer of knowledge and their belief in the use of measurement and evaluation techniques and instruments that test only knowledge and understanding. Thus, the research assistants also need to see planning, teaching and evaluation from the students’ point of view and bring variety to the strategies and the sources used. To be able to do this, feeling the need to improve themselves and doing research on how to be more effective which is another goal of the program is unavoidable.

On the other hand, it was found out that the research assistants did not have the required knowledge related to classroom management and this was not included as one of the objectives of the course. Secondly, as to the structure of the course, they want a course more in the form of a seminar with more concrete examples, problems, experiences and cases rather than a normal course in which everything is more or less prespecified. As the assistant of the course stated: “...They expressed their needs saying let’s find some examples of ice-breakers. Then, one of them told us about a certain event that took place in his class and he asked ‘If you were me, what would you do in the same situation?’ Here, it is clear that they want cases because they are not aware

whether the reactions they give in the process of teaching are right or wrong.” However, at first glance, according to the information they got from the course outline, they got the impression that the structure of the course was not as they expected. To support this, during an interview, one of the assistants said: “There could have been more interaction in the specification of the goals. Instead of saying, the course is going to be like this, it could have been said that in the future, you will encounter such events in your profession so let’s start with your experiences about them and then we can take everything a step forward.” (RA-3)

As can be deduced from these findings, the research assistants need to improve their knowledge, perceptions and skills in relation to the goals of the program. Nevertheless, it is observed that they also have the need to gain classroom management skills and have some expectations about the structure of the course which are not met. Thus, it seems that the needs of the research assistants and the goals of the program are consistent only to a certain extent.

### Discussion

In summary, initially it was observed that the willingness of the participants to take part in the program was not considered much and the course was forced upon the research assistants as an obligatory course. Therefore, the research assistants were reluctant to participate in the program at the beginning of the course. More specifically, the timing of the program did not fit their workload, the research assistants did not have specific goals and expectations in relation to the course and the program was not promoted well.

To cater for these needs, as recommended by the instructor of the course, in the future, a couple of meetings or seminars can be arranged before the actual program starts. These can be announced or e-mailed to the prospective participants and in one of these gatherings, the possible timing for the course can be discussed instead of setting definite times for the course with a top-down approach. As Lawler and King (2000) pointed out, making assumptions about faculty schedules can result in more work and the faculty may perceive it as lack of support. Furthermore, if the faculty

members are left alone to arrange their time-tables for the program, this will only be a barrier to their involvement.

Regarding the goals of the research assistants in relation to the program, it was seen that the research assistants did not have their own goals as they were not aware of their needs. Therefore, during these seminars, some awareness raising activities can also be carried out. As Wood (1989) emphasized, faculty members with assistance from staff developers may examine the major problems in their own educational process or teaching if they have the opportunity to teach, they can be familiarized with new practices in education and a needs assessment process can be carried out to define what needs to be changed or improved.

Although an informal needs assessment process was carried out at the beginning of this particular program, the characteristics of the present participants, their needs and expectations were unknown till the program started. Thus, a formal needs assessment procedure is required before any faculty development program takes place (Lauro and Dennis, 1995; Lawler and King, 2000; Wood, 1989). In the TÜSİAD report on education, the importance of the needs assessment process was also implied when it said the training programs should be restructured and reorganized to meet the needs and expectations of the participants (TÜSİAD, 1996; in Özen, 1997).

The reason for this lies in the fact that the identification of the gap between real and ideal conditions provides a responsive program rather than a fixed program planned ahead of time. It helps to identify high priority needs as perceived by program participants, faculty developers and those who are responsible for the service provided. In other words, it brings about a compromise among all parties concerned. In contrast, this program is based on the high priority needs mainly as perceived by the faculty developer. Although an assessment of the needs in relation to the program goals revealed that the research assistants had also certain needs in these areas, collecting this information from the research assistants themselves could have brought about more acceptance and willingness to participate in the program.

To increase willingness to participate in the program, the course can be organized around the experiences and problems of the research assistants using the case method. Cases are often actual descriptions of problem situations in the field and they involve the possibility of several alternative approaches and some evaluation of values and costs of various solutions to the problems posed (McKeachie, 1999). Faculty members seek simple and practical messages instead of too much theory (Steinert, 2000) and as Kowalski (1995) pointed out, case studies provide an excellent vehicle for bridging theory with practice and they create opportunities for developing skills in critical thinking, problem solving, decision making and reflective practice.

As mentioned before, since relevancy is the key word in this context, it would be better for program participants to reflect on their own experiences and write about their own problems. Thus, before or at the beginning of the program, the faculty developer may come together with the participants and brainstorm on the cases. Then, the research assistants can write about their cases or dilemmas individually.

The results of the needs assessment process also indicated that the needs of the prospective faculty members were consistent with the goals of the program. Only, it was found that their classroom management skills were very weak and this could have been included as one of the cases in the program.

Finally, the promotion of the program was also disregarded. This program was promoted only through notices on the notice boards which included only the goals, the timing and the place of the program. Moreover, these notices can be said to be ineffective as many of the program participants were not aware of them and they were not informed about the goals of the program before they started the course. However, if the faculty members are expected to participate in the program more willingly, it should not be forgotten that participation involves the individual's reaction to a particular faculty development offering, motivation to develop or enhance a specific skill, being available at the time of sessions and overcoming the barrier of admitting the needs (Rubeck and Witzke, 1998; in Steinert, 2000). Thus, faculty developers should try to

overcome these potential barriers and market the program in such a way that resistance to participation is replaced by commitment to learning (Steinert, 2000). For instance, colourful posters or brochures that provide a picture of the need, objectives and the relevance of the sessions to the faculty's context and frequent reminders via e-mail may help enhance the motivation to participate.

In conclusion, the research carried out was a case study and it was limited to 12 research assistants who took the course in a particular term. However, this characteristic of the study will not limit its transferability to similar situations. At least, the results of the study can be considered as a guide or may bring about a new perspective in the development of other faculty development programs at M.E.T.U. and other universities.

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