

Standards Assessment in English Language Teacher Education

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Abstract: Instructional quality among English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers requires the identification and assessment of professional standards for the field. Although Quality Assurance, Outcomes Assessment and Accreditation may be understood within language teacher education programs, successful and sustained implementation of quality improvement processes largely remain elusive. This paper explores standards assessment in EFL teacher preparation programs in Turkey. Primary issues examined were: 1) awareness of instructors in EFL teacher preparation programs of standards assessment; 2) the degree to which the standards are assessed; and, 3) the degree to which assessment data is analyzed and acted upon. This study utilized the Instrumental Case Study combined with a mixed-method approach. Data was collected via survey and interviews. An internet-based survey was distributed to teacher preparation faculty members across Turkey. One-on-one structured interviews were conducted with instructors from EFL teacher preparation programs at public and private universities. Results indicate that despite relatively high levels of awareness among university faculty members and the standards established by the Turkish Higher Education Council, there is little evidence to suggest that assessment data is collected or acted upon.

Anahtar sözcükler

Standartların
değerlendirilmesi,
yabancı dil
öğretmeni eğitimi,
kalite güvencesi

İngilizce Öğretmen Eğitiminde Standartların Değerlendirilmesi

Öz: İngilizceyi yabancı bir dil olarak öğreten öğretim elemanları için eğitimin kalitesi, standartların belirlenmesi ve değerlendirilmesini gerektirir. Dil öğretmeni eğitim programlarında Kalite Güvencesi, Öğrenme Çıktılarının Değerlendirilmesi ve Akreditasyon kavramları kavramsal olarak anlaşılabilmiş olsa da, kaliteyi geliştirme süreçlerini başarılı ve devamlı bir şekilde uygulama çabaları büyük ölçüde anlaşılabilir değildir. Bu çalışmada Türkiye’de yabancı bir dil olarak İngilizce (YDİ) öğreten öğretmen eğitimi programlarındaki standartların değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. İncelenen temel konular şunlardır: 1) YDİ eğitim programlarındaki öğretim elemanları kendi bölümleri içerisindeki mevcut standart değerlendirme programlarının ne derece farkındadır; 2) Hangi standartlar ne derece değerlendirilmektedir ve 3) Hangi değerlendirme verileri analiz edilmekte ve kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, karma yöntem yaklaşımı ile birlikte araçsal durum çalışması yönteminden faydalanılmıştır. Veriler anket ve görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. İnternet tabanlı bir anket, Türkiye’deki öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında görevli öğretim elemanlarına dağıtılmıştır. Kamu ve vakıf üniversitelerinin ilgili programlarında görevli öğretim elemanlarıyla birebir yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, üniversitelerdeki öğretim elemanları Türk Yükseköğretim Kurumu tarafından belirlenen standartlar konusunda nispeten yüksek seviyede farkındalığa sahip olsa da, değerlendirme verilerinin toplanıp bu verilere göre hareket edildiği konusunda fazla bulguya rastlanmamıştır.

1. Introduction

Standards in teacher preparation education act as a clearly defined and agreed upon reference point to establish whether students are adequately prepared for the challenges of teaching (Kuhlman & Knezevic, n.d.). They refer to normative statements written in broad terms with components that further explicate their meaning (CAEP, 2014), and they establish levels of achievement, indicators of quality performance, and degrees of proficiency expected from students in the teacher preparation program. Standards may also serve as a set of criteria for professional development (Çelik, 2011). The term standard is sometimes used synonymously with competencies, objectives, or goals.

This paper explores university-level instructor perspectives on the assessment of standards in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher preparation programs in Turkey. As a backdrop, the paper reviews the development of standards in teacher education in Turkey since the 1990s. In order to examine current views on the implementation and assessment of standards, a survey was developed and administered to teacher education faculty members across Turkey. Data collection also included structured interviews with a sample of EFL teacher education faculty members from private and public universities in Turkey. Based on an analysis of findings, suggestions are offered for effective implementation and assessment of standards.

1.1. Turkish Teacher Education Standardization Initiatives

In Turkey, the Council on Higher Education (COHEC/YÖK) is responsible for the administration of the university system. Among its functions is the determination of standards for university degrees for faculties of education. COHEC also articulates the structure of teacher education programs that train qualified teachers, including EFL instructors. Faculties of education are recognized nationally, and their graduates are endorsed as qualified teachers only by conforming to COHEC requirements (YÖK, 2005; 2009). From a structural perspective, COHEC can be said to standardize teacher education (Tarman, 2010).

The Turkish COHEC has placed great emphasis on external evaluation and program-specific accreditation. The first effort to establish quality standards in teacher education in Turkey took place in 1997 when COHEC, in collaboration with the World Bank and the British Council, made an effort to establish an accreditation and quality assurance system for teacher education programs. In the same year, a national quality assurance system for teacher education programs was launched. For this purpose, the Turkish National Committee of Teacher Education was created by COHEC. The Committee undertook such responsibilities as increasing quality standards in the field of teacher education, and coordinating the studies related to accrediting, supervising, and evaluating programs implemented in faculties of education. Emulating the British and US systems, the committee developed teacher education standards and an accreditation framework.

Each of the specified standards in the model has input standards, process standards, and output standards (Günçer, 1999). The identified standards were piloted in faculties of education at six public institutions. The pilot led to the publication of an accreditation guide, which provided full details of the standards expected of education faculties (Brittingham et al., 1999). Subsequently, all faculties of education were required to assess and meet these standards (YÖK, 1999). By mid-1999, an accreditation system was established for future faculties of education in Turkey (Grossman & Sands, 2008), and individual university-level reports were subsequently published on the COHEC website. While the project was

implemented successfully for nine months, it was discontinued during the pilot stage. In a review of the 1997 teacher education reform in Turkey, accountable for ensuring those relevant changes were institutionalized. The study concluded that a countrywide national system of standards and accreditation in higher education could not be established (Grossman, Onkol & Sands, 2007).

With the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 2001, Turkey enacted reforms in the framework of its European integration process (Sözen & Shaw, 2003). In an effort to meet EU membership criteria, Turkey took measures to create a common European “space” for higher education in line with the 1999 Bologna Declaration (Çapan & Onursal, 2007). COHEC made efforts to align Turkish higher education to international standards, with a primary focus on the establishment of accreditation and quality assurance system in teacher education (YÖK, 2005). Quality assurance has been welcomed by public and private universities, with some Turkish universities having adopted institutional quality assurance programs in collaboration with American and British assessment institutions and/or agencies (Mızıkacı, 2003).

1.2. Standards and English Language Teacher Education Programs

As there are COHEC standards for classroom teacher candidates, such as subject-matter competence, pedagogical competence, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, and professionalism (YÖK, 1999), there are also specific standards for English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programs, covering competencies related to language and linguistics, Second Language Acquisition Theories, EFL Methods, Foundations of Learning and Teaching, and Instruction (Çepik & Polat, 2014). Beyond identifying and routinely updating standards, is the need for a “well-articulated” systematic monitoring of standards achievement (Kuhlman & Knezevic, n.d., p.9), both institutionally and nationally. This suggests that at one level, determining whether teacher candidates meet the relevant standards is the responsibility of the ELTE program, which should be obligated to share competency data with stakeholders.

Furthermore, Kuhlman and Knezevic point out that collaboration among instructors is “expected” for assessment data analysis in order to create improvement plans. However, evidence indicates that Turkish ELTE programs “exhibit a noticeable weakness in terms of having a comprehensive, current, and consistent conceptual framework that is informed by current L2 learning and teaching and teacher education research” (Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013, p. 9). Thus, systematic assessment of standards in ELTE programs in Turkey is undermined by the absence of an agreed-upon set of standards endorsed by COHEC.

A complicating factor in this scenario is the employment placement system for all teachers. Teacher candidates must take the Public Employee Selection Exam (KPSS), which has general knowledge as well as subject-specific sections. Performance on the exam determines geographical placement; the lower the score, the more rural the placement. Therefore, pre-service teachers place considerable pressure on their instructors to focus more on teaching to the test than relevant competencies (Dogutas, 2016). In other words, there appear to be top-down and bottom-up forces that are blurring the focus on standards.

The requirement in Turkey for the proper identification and regular assessment of professional standards for English language teachers is critical. Yet, there are numerous questions regarding the degree that such activities are taking place.

In this research, we aimed to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the teacher educators' awareness of standards in ELTE programs?
2. To what degree are standards applied within ELTE programs across Turkey?
3. What importance is given to assessment programs of standards in terms of identification, assessment, and action planning?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This research utilized the Instrumental Case Study (Stake, 1995) to illustrate a particular issue, the assessment of standards in Turkish ELTE programs, combined with a sequential mixed methods approach to providing a framework for both quantitative and qualitative exploration of the issue. Accordingly, we took a two-step, sequential approach (Creswell, 2013) in order to gain both a broad perspective as well as a deeper understanding of this process. Step one was to develop and administer a survey to academics in faculties of education across Turkey. Step two was to conduct interviews with a subset of those academics from ELTE programs. Data from both sources were analyzed for trends and categorized by themes.

2.2. Research Sample

A nonprobability, convenience sampling method (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used for selecting the population to whom we distributed our survey. A large-scale email database of academics in the Education Faculties in Turkey was acquired from a Turkish education journal. A request to complete the survey was emailed to the database of teacher education faculty members (N=998) at public and private universities across Turkey. After two months and two follow-up reminder emails, the final number of respondents was 101 (i.e. 10% response rate).

2.3. Research Instruments and Procedures

2.3.1. The Survey

In order to gain a broad understanding of standards assessment within faculties of education in Turkey, an online survey was developed and administered. A commonly accepted approach to survey design and implementation (Sue & Ritter, 2011, p.4) was followed by defining objectives, conducting a relevant literature review, selecting an online administration method, drafting and piloting, and finally launching the survey. The survey was drafted by the study's researchers (Hoonakker & Carayon, 2009). A conscious effort was made to keep the survey brief, with an approximate completion time of 15 minutes (See Appendix 1 for the survey questionnaire). A small-scale piloting was conducted to check the appropriateness and understandability of questions. To ensure reliability, questionnaire items were exposed to reliability test via SPSS and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was found to be .94, indicating that all items yielded reliable results. The survey comprised two sections. While Section 1 asked for the biographical information, Section 2 aimed to get participants' perspectives towards various aspects related to standards assessment through 9 questions.

2.3.2. Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of the standards assessment process, semi-structured topical interviews were conducted with 23 academics from ELTE programs in Turkish universities. Participants were selected using snowball and convenience sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Snowball sampling identifies participants "from people who know people" (p.28) who have an "information rich" base of knowledge of the topic area. Convenience sampling involves recruiting participants within one's own context, such as a faculty or at a conference, or, in the instance of this research, the final item on our survey

requested interview volunteers. The interviews permitted a cross-case analysis, thus “enhancing generalizability” (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p. 193). The interviews were a) structured as a series of questions with a limited set of response categories (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 52), and b) topical, as they focused “more on a program, issue, or process than on people’s lives” (Glesne, 1999, p. 69). The interviews were conducted by the second author of the study. Interview participants were asked questions regarding their understanding of teacher education standards, the extent to which standards are assessed in their courses and programs, and the use of assessment results for the course and program improvement.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis included data reduction (i.e. narrowing the range of data to be collected), data display, and finally conclusion drawing and verification, or “drawing meaning from the data” (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p. 180). As the interviews contained a defined set of questions, the classification of categories and themes was relatively pre-determined. Interview data were transcribed and categorized according to the four primary areas of investigation: Awareness of Standards, Assessment of Standards, Use of Assessment Results, and Collaboration. The interview data was first analyzed by the second author of the study. A sample of the data was chosen for analysis by the first author to ensure inter-rater reliability. Each participant was labelled as P1, P2, P3 and so forth. Extracts from the interviews are used to illustrate participants’ perspectives on various aspects of the research topic investigated.

3. Results

3.1. Survey Results

Respondents were evenly split between female (52%) and male (48%). Academic status was distributed somewhat evenly from assistant (34%) to full professor (13%); research assistants (18%) and part-time lecturers (13%) were among the population as well. Nearly all of the participants teach at public institutions (95%), with two-thirds (66%) reporting that they teach in ELTE programs and one-third (32%) in teacher preparation programs. There was an even distribution of years in the current department – from recently starting to 20plus years. One-third (27%) of respondents had over 20 years of experience, down to 12% having five or fewer years of experience; over 60% had been in the field long enough to have experienced the standards assessment and accreditation initiatives described previously.

Concerning the first research question which aimed to find out teacher educators’ awareness of standards, nearly three-quarters (68%) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of standards in Turkey, with a slightly lower number (32%) reporting that they knew the standards for Teacher Education programs in Turkey. Nearly half of the respondents (30%) noted that their departments have not discussed standards assessments, with 3% having assessed them. Only 3% reported having established a systematic assessment process in place. Departmental standards assessment programs were reported as either non-existent (40%), at the beginning (30%), or at the growth stage (20%).

To move from awareness to application, the second research question aimed to determine to what degree standards are applied within ELTE programs across Turkey. As revealed from survey findings, 24% of the participants stated that standards were assessed in their departments; with small percentages (16%) having collected data and 24% of the respondents noted that their department had collected but not yet assessed data. Half of the respondents (50%) did not know who in their department was responsible for standards assessment data, while one-quarter (23%) indicated that a team handled this task. Similar percentages reflected

the creation of action plans. Finally, two-thirds (66%) of the respondents indicated that they played no role in their departmental assessment program.

In terms of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), an important component of the assessment process, nearly one-third (27%) had not identified SLO; two thirds had identified them, with a split between alignment with standards (25%), and 39% considered SLO as different from standards. Of significance, over two-thirds (65%) reported that their department had yet to collect SLO data.

Concerning the third research question which intended to find out what importance is given to assessment programs of standards in terms of identification, assessment, and action planning, survey findings revealed interesting results. 25% of the respondents noted that in courses for which they were the primary instructor, standards had not been identified. Half of the respondents (50%) reported that the standards for their courses had been identified, but assessment data had not yet been collected; and 20% indicated that collected data had not been analyzed.

In relation to alignment between course-level assessments and standards, over one-third reported no alignment, with half (47%) indicating ongoing attempts at alignment. In cases where the respondents were members of a team of instructors for a single course, 70% reported that standards were identified for a course; 30% reported identification, data collection, but no analysis, with 12% stated that they had no idea of their status in this process.

3.2. Interview Results

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 instructors from ELTE programs in public and private Turkish universities. The interviews were conducted by the second researcher of this study both face-to-face and via email exchange. Interview participants were asked questions regarding their understanding of teacher education standards, the extent to which standards are assessed in their programs and courses, and the use of assessment results for program and course improvement. Interview data were transcribed and categorized according to the four primary areas of investigation: Awareness of Standards, Assessment of Standards, Use of Assessment Results, and Collaboration.

3.2.1. Awareness of standards

Interview participants were first asked about their awareness and definition of standards for teacher education. The majority generally defined standards as, “the necessary knowledge that the student teachers should have in order to be effective teachers.” Some offered more categorical distinctions such as “attaining proficiency levels in language competence, such as academic written and spoken English, general pedagogic knowledge, and subject field courses in order to get a license to teach.”

Participants remarked that standards across the field in Turkey were essentially not valued at the personal, institutional, or national levels. To this point, one instructor noted that, “there are no specific standards that apply in the Turkish context, either for teacher educators or in terms of proficiency indicators for students.” Another echoed this sentiment with, “I’m not sure the standards thing would work in Turkey,” citing the absence of a system for collecting and analyzing data at the institutional and national levels.

3.2.2. Assessment of standards

The interviews also explored how instructors and departments actually assess standards. A common voice emerged in that instructors utilize assessment to improve individual student performance. In this regard, one common thread was that instructors use the performance not only for the here-and-now, but to help students develop for the long-term. One instructor illustrated this by explaining that, “We give feedback to each student about the assessment results. Each student has to realize what the assessment score means for his or her learning process, what his or her progress is like, and what his or her next step is.”

Regarding general attitudes toward standards assessment within their own departments, a general preference was expressed for the demonstration of mastery of learning outcomes and higher-order thinking. In preparing mid-term and final exams, one faculty member noted that he is guided by learning outcomes or program requirements, avoiding “simple yes-no questions about specific names or terms. I ask open-ended questions to see if they can explain the rationale or justification behind theories and implications teachers can draw from theories.” A tendency toward performance-based assessments became evident as well, supported by the statement, “As a teacher trainer, I do not support pen and paper type of assessment. Instead, I try to provide teacher trainees with opportunities to learn by getting involved in some kind of process.” One department head described this activity at the departmental level:

During the departmental meetings, I as the head of the department make sure that my colleagues always make the students, think, read, speak, write and give them feedback. We even integrated this type of viewpoint into our assessment system. During the exams we ask evaluation, argumentative questions, we give oral tests and give them take home exams. Sometimes even open-book exams. Where, indeed, we try to test their thinking. Transferring their knowledge they acquired from books to the local context (P5).

A related topic was who identified and developed outcomes and assessments. A frequent response was they are “prepared by the instructors who teach them. Then, at a meeting, these were discussed by all members of the department.” Among those departments that made efforts to identify outcomes, there was also a conscious effort to align them with “learning outcomes prepared by other universities” or those articulated by the Bologna process. Informants also revealed the numerous challenges to successful implementation and adoption of assessment initiatives, exemplified by the sense that learning outcomes were prepared as a requirement, resulting in “diminished effort and faith in the process”. Another informant highlighted an incongruence raised by a number of faculty members, noting that the chair of her ELTE program is a “literature person,” suggesting that the department head does not have the background to guide an ELTE assessment program. This led to her rhetorical question, “you can ask, but who do you ask?”

3.2.3. Use of assessment results

Regarding assessment results, three broad categories emerged from our conversations: awareness, application, and collaboration. A small number of informants demonstrated awareness of the value of utilizing assessment results, such as noting that the “results should be used to evaluate the methodology used in the course.” Another lamented that the use of results was beyond his control, mentioning that, “if I had the chance to make modifications in

the syllabus, I would definitely use the results to make modifications in the [European Credit Transfer System] credits of certain lectures.”

Beyond awareness, informants also discussed application, that is, the collection and use of assessment results. At an individual level, some instructors indicated that they use assessment results to determine “whether the results match learning outcomes or not,” with another adding, “to shape my future courses.” Instructors emphasized the role of students, illustrated by, “Assessment should be threefold. The courses should be assessed by students, course instructors and administrators.” As for use of results, a different informant noted, “I think the best way to use assessment results effectively is to share the results with students, discuss them in departmental meetings and improve teaching materials, techniques and practices accordingly.” Timing and transparency were also stressed by the instructors, with “the results should be evaluated seriously to be able to make improvements for the following terms,” and, “assessment results should be accessible to anyone so that lecturers can be motivated and be open to change.”

Regarding the use of results at the departmental level, some instructors suggested a more individual interaction between the instructor and the department, while a few described a more formal, systematic process, such as:

At the beginning of each academic term, we have a meeting with the instructors who will teach a given course and discuss what to do throughout the term. At the end of the term, we take student opinion anonymously and evaluate the results to make improvements for the following terms. Evaluation results, instructors’ impression and recommendations for improvement are discussed at a departmental meeting (P16).

3.2.4. Collaboration

The fourth area in which the interview data was gathered concerned collaboration in the standards assessment process. In the case of collaborative planning for a Practicum course, one instructor noted that, “We hold meetings to improve the checklist and make sure everybody understands the details that will affect scoring.” However, in contrast to relatively active department-level collaboration, there appears to be limited course-level or lateral collaboration among colleagues. This is mostly due to the reality that many departments only offer one section of a course and such collaborative opportunities don’t exist. Some instructors did highlight vertical collaboration, such as:

We always collaborate for the same group of courses such as teaching methods of ELT courses, linguistics and language structure courses, literature and reading courses and such. The courses have to be following each other and not necessarily repeating in nature (P 26).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Identification and consistent assessment of standards for English language teacher preparation programs are critical. In addition to the inequitable and potentially detrimental impact that the lack of standardization may have on language instructors and learners, the absence of standards and their assessment leaves academics without a common ground in defining and measuring the quality of instructor preparation. Over the last two decades, there has been much discussion in Turkish higher education regarding the implementation of standards

assessments for teacher preparation. The driving question for us, however, is the distinction between the identification and application of standards.

Our findings can be categorized into four broad areas: Awareness, Assessment, Use of Results, and Collaboration. An initial finding, not surprisingly expressed by both survey respondents and interviewees, was the significant gap between awareness and implementation of standards assessment initiatives within ELTE programs. Respondents indicated that awareness of teaching standards is marginally high, yet this is arguably insufficient. An equally troublesome finding was that among those who expressed awareness, there exists a subset who believes that standards assessment cannot succeed in Turkey because the standards are not adequately defined for broad usage or because local contexts are unique and preclude effective application.

Our second broad finding concerned assessment. From the high water mark of awareness, there is a significant decline in any level of assessment activity; only 20% of survey respondents reported having administered standards-related assessments. When asked about specific courses they were teaching, 50% of the respondents indicated that assessments had been identified, but data had not been gathered. A similar picture emerged for those courses with multiple instructors. Our interviews revealed that while there is substantial attention given to individual students through assessment results, little standards data is gathered and used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. There does appear to be a tendency toward greater use of performance-based assessments, which is a good sign.

Overall, the picture that has emerged is that in ELTE programs across Turkey, assessment of standards is rare and mostly ineffective at promoting improvement, leading to “diminished effort and faith in the process.” This highlights the need for leadership at the national and local levels to provide quality education. Beyond identification of standards, a nationwide standards assessment database is necessary so that analysis can contribute to improved ELTE instruction. To this end, COHEC should provide equitable support (Çepik & Polat, 2014) (e.g. software and training) as well as ongoing professional development to in-service language teachers (Altan, 2006; Çelik, 2011). Genesee and Harper (2010) point out that all teachers should understand why certain approaches may (or may not) work with language learners, and how to adapt up-to-date teaching practices. Without standards, and their assessment, this cannot take place. In the end, it may become a downward spiral where, if quality instruction and learning do not occur, the lack of support for language instruction becomes justified (Çelik, & Kasapoğlu, 2014, p.2). Therefore, there is also the need for leadership at the faculty or departmental level in that a vision for continuous improvement through assessment must be established and embedded into the culture and day-to-day activities of the organization.

As our research moved closer to the focal point of the use of results for improvement, we realized very limited activity within ELTE programs. Less than 5% of survey respondents reported an established systematic assessment data collection and analysis process; three-quarters of respondents noted that their department had not yet collected assessment data. Half of the instructors reported that standards for their courses had been identified, but no assessment data had been collected, with less than one-quarter indicating that no data had been analyzed. Çepik and Polat (2014) suggest that this context warrants the establishment of independent ELTE accreditation agencies, as they are peer-based, provide support, and instill accountability.

The final category explored was collaboration on assessment. In short, there appears to be little movement within ELTE departments toward the establishment of sustained assessment initiatives. Consequently, in terms of assessment activities, little collaboration is taking place. One persistent concern was that a significant number of those administering and teaching in ELTE programs are outside of their area of expertise (Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013). This may translate into a disinterest in standards and quality at the leadership level. What is also a stark reality in many departments is that the workload of quality assurance falls on the shoulders of either a few dedicated instructors or unsuspecting junior faculty members.

To this last point, equitable diffusion of workload may be sufficient for short-term needs, but it invariably fails to achieve the larger purpose of establishing a culture of continuous improvement. In order to foster an environment in which cooperation and collaboration lead to improved quality, it is instructive to consider Distributed Leadership (e.g., Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), as it provides a useful analytic framework for determining the extent to which leadership is distributed throughout an organization. Distributed Leadership is not the distribution of power. It is the distribution of belief in a vision. In the case of standards assessment initiatives within ELTE departments, that vision should be to develop and maintain a culture of inquiry and improvement. Purposeful cooperation among instructors to achieve these goals is a critical component in the assessment plan implementation process.

Certainly, a number of lines of research could follow from this study. At the national level, it would be useful to have conversations with COHEC officials to discuss issues raised in this study, namely the seemingly erratic nature of implementation of a nationalized standards assessment system. Another useful question to explore would be which standards are assessed and why. Although the data clearly shows faint attention to active standards assessment, it would be useful to gain an understanding of which standards are deemed relevant and thereby worth measuring and acting upon. Other useful lines of inquiry are the exploration of sustainability of assessment programs through the lens of organizational structure and organizational culture. Finally, it would be relevant to conduct a comparative analysis with other countries that are endeavoring to establish similar standards assessment systems.

Identifying and assessing standards for ELTE programs is critical. Despite arguments that standards equal prescription, in a country such as Turkey we have seen the results of an ineffective implementation of a standards assessment system. Although the Turkish Higher Education Council took the initial step to identify standards some years ago, there has been little movement toward the assurance of continuous assessment of standards. The clear picture that has emerged for us is that despite high awareness of standards in the ELTE profession, assessment and analysis for improvement is woeful. In those isolated instances where it is working, it appears to be the result of a local leader as opposed to leadership at the national level.

A standards assessment program at the national level opens the door to a nationwide conversation about the level of quality of ELTE program effectiveness and accountability; it also establishes a comprehensive data set for comparative analysis and quality planning. Finally, a standards assessment program is research-based and reflective of the most current knowledge in language learning and cognitive research. Emerging economies, such as Turkey, that are important participants in today's global marketplace, must ensure that they maintain an elevated status by continuously focusing on the effectiveness of their education systems. High quality English language education is an essential outcome for the Turkish

education system. This translates into the need for identification of standards as well as the implementation of a national system that solidifies the assessment, analysis, and reporting of standards assessment data. Furthermore, a nationwide standards assessment system would allow for the more effective and efficient administration of professional development programs. The field of English language teacher education should not settle for a mere list of outcomes. The greatest need is for systemization and support of the implementation and monitoring of teaching standards in order for the profession to progress in a healthy manner.

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Appendix

Standards Assessment Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire is designed to find out your opinion about standards assessment in your institution. You are expected to complete Section 1 with your personal information and choose one of the most appropriate options for each statement in Section 2. Your answers will be used only for a research study, and they will be kept confidential. Please write your Email if you want to follow up on the interview.

Thank you for your participation and valuable contributions.
Assist. Prof. Dr. Donald Staub & Prof. Dr. Yasemin Kirkgöz

SECTION 1

1. Gender

- Female
- Male

2. Academic status

- Assist. Prof. Dr.
- Assoc. Prof. Dr.
- Full Prof.
- Lecturer
- Other

3. Institution

- Private
- Public

4. Department

- ELT
- School of Languages
- Teacher

5. Current years of teaching experience

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20+

6. Overall higher education teaching experience

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20

SECTION 2

7. Are you aware that standards for Teacher Education programs exist in Turkey?

- Yes No

8. If so, are you aware of what the standards are for Teacher Education programs in Turkey?

- Yes No

9. My department:

- Has not discussed the standards
 Has discussed the standards, but we are not assessing them
 Has assessed the standards at least once, but we have not acted on the data
 Has assessed some standards more than once, and has acted on the data at least once
 Has established a systematic process whereby we collect and analyze standards data on a regular basis
 Other:.....

10. Overall, my department's standards assessment program is:

- Non-existent At the beginning stage At the growth stage
 At the mature stage Other:

11. My department has collected standards assessment data for:

- We have not yet collected data Less than one year 1-3 years
 4-6 years 6+ years Other

12. The results from standards assessments collected in our department:

- Have not been collected
 Have been collected, but not analyzed
 Have been collected and analyzed, but that is all
 Have been collected, analyzed, and action plans have resulted from the analysis
 I have no idea where they are
 Other.....

13. In courses for which I am the primary instructor, standards:

- Have not been identified
 Have been identified, but data has not been collected
 Data has been collected, but not analyzed
 Data has been collected and analyzed, but action plans have not resulted
 Data has been collected, analyzed, and action plans have resulted from the analysis
 I am unaware of the status
 Other.....

14. Courses for which I am the primary instructor, and standards are assessed:

- Have no alignment between the assessments and the standards
 We are attempting alignment between the assessments and the standards
 Have strong alignment between the assessments and the standards
 Other:

15. In courses for which I am on a team of instructors, standards:

- Have not been identified
- Have been identified, but data has not been collected
- Data has been collected, but not analyzed
- Data has been collected and analyzed, but action plans have not resulted
- Data has been collected, analyzed, and action plans have resulted from the analysis
- I have no idea of their status
- I don't do any such teaching
- Other: