

Generic Teacher Competencies and the English Language Teacher Education Program in Turkey*

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of the pre-2018 English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) program outcomes in the attainment of the generic competencies for teaching profession with a specific focus on professional skills. It collects the views of EFL teacher trainers and trainees to evaluate the extent to which these competencies have been achieved. It also presents the preliminary reviews of the trainers on the new ELTE program recently constituted. To this end, the study employs a questionnaire and retrospective interviews with trainees and trainers. The findings of the questionnaires and interviews reveal various views on whether the ELTE program complies with the competencies defined by MoNE. The findings also suggest the 7T framework to be considered in the design of the ELTE programs. The framework includes integrating theory and practice, talking to stakeholders, training the trainers, training for age and level appropriate teaching, teaching both the ideal and real classroom situations, tracking the developments and trends, and teaching and testing communicative skills. The study also argues that entry and exit requirements of the program should be reviewed in accordance with the outcomes as referred in generic competencies. Finally, the study explores the implications for stakeholders of the ELTE program.

Anahtar sözcükler

Öğretmen
yeterlilikleri,
İngilizce öğretmen
yetiştirme
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görüşler, 7T
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Genel Öğretmen Yeterlilikleri ve Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmeni Yetiştirme Programı

Öz: Bu çalışma, 2018 öncesi İngilizce Öğretmeni Yetiştirme programı çıktılarının mesleki beceriler özelinde genel yeterliklerin kazanılmasındaki etkisini araştırmaktadır. Bu yeterliliklerin ne dereceye kadar başarılı olduğunu değerlendirmek için yabancı dil öğretmen eğitimcileri ve öğretmen adaylarının görüşleri toplanmıştır. Ayrıca, yakın zamanda oluşturulan yeni program hakkında eğitimcilerin ön incelemelerini de sunmaktadır. Bu amaçla, araştırmada öğretmen adayları ve eğitimcilerle anket ve retrospektif görüşme uygulanmıştır. Anket ve mülakat bulguları, programın MEB tarafından tanımlanan yeterliliklere uyup uymadığı konusunda çeşitli görüşler ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgular ayrıca, bu programın tasarımında dikkat edilmesi gereken 7T çerçevesini önermektedir. Çerçeve teori-uygulama entegrasyonunu, paydaşlarla konuşmayı, eğitimcileri eğitmeyi, yaşa ve seviyeye uygun öğretimi öğretmeyi, hem ideal hem gerçeği öğretmeyi, gelişmeleri ve eğilimleri izlemeyi ve iletişim becerilerini öğretmeyi ve test etmeyi içerir. Çalışma ayrıca programın giriş ve çıkış gereksinimlerinin, genel yeterliliklerde belirtilen sonuçlara göre gözden geçirilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Çalışma, programın paydaşları için çıkarımları da araştırmaktadır.

1. Introduction

Communicative language skills are critical today to get into the global community which is changing rapidly through various technological, economic and social developments in the twenty-first century. English language skills at an appropriate level are gatekeepers to access the necessary information and knowledge needed for these developments (Richards, 2008). In this endeavour to join the global community, countries all over the world have been using lots of their resources and money to teach English effectively and appropriately. Such an effort requires training competent English language teachers and developing second language teacher education (SLTE) programs which would address the needs of the twenty-first century.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Council of Higher Education (CoHE), the two responsible institutions in reviewing and reorganizing English Language Teaching (ELT) policies and English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programs in Turkey, need to keep up with the global trends and changes in the rest of the world. The revisions are believed to comply with the international standards, such as those of the Council of Europe and the European Commission for teacher education and language teaching, and they also address the local issues and challenges of the country. Recently, MoNE has revised the generic teacher competencies to address the developments in local and international contexts (MEB, 2017). The new document grounds itself on the European Qualifications Framework (European Commission, 2008), Turkish Qualifications Framework (MYK, 2015) and the Turkish Higher Education Qualifications Framework (YÖK, 2011). In a similar vein, in an attempt to comply with MoNE standards, CoHE has also recently updated the ELTE program, reorganized the content of pedagogical courses and subject-specific courses and expanded the time frame of the practicum (with practice in two semesters) in a more structured way (YÖK, 2018).

Although no revision has been made for the subject-specific competencies of ELT for a primary level as recommended first in 2008, the generic competencies are said to be broader than the previous version (Uztosun, 2018), and they might be adapted to incorporate subject-specific competencies (MEB, 2017). Briefly, the new generic competencies include certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are organized in categories as *professional knowledge*, *professional skills*, and *attitudes and values*. Professional knowledge consists of content and pedagogical content knowledge as well as the knowledge of legislation. Professional skills pertain to in- and out-of-class practices which design and manage teaching and assessment. As regards attitudes and values, the former includes positive attitudes towards students, an openness to professional development and effective communication and cooperation with other stakeholders; the latter includes moral, local and universal values.

1.1. Overview of ELTE

ELTE programs are usually part of broader programs such as applied linguistics, education and languages and literature (Crandall, 2000), and the field of TESOL, focusing on various approaches and methods to teach English to speakers of other languages, also aims at training language teachers (Richards, 2008). While earlier programs typically undertook the branches of applied linguistics as the core of the language teacher education, today, general education theories, learning theories and teaching practices also shape ELTE.

Through the historical development of ELTE, research-driven approaches resulted in many conclusions on how effective teacher education should be. While the earlier behaviorist product-oriented approaches defined effective teaching as a ‘set of discrete behaviors,’ the approaches that followed evolved into more process-oriented cognitivist, constructivist and

socio-constructivist methods as a result of the trends which emerged in the mid-1970s, late 1970s, mid-80s and after (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Teacher education programs that accommodate direct application of the research knowledge generally advocate that learning to teach in one context, if practiced and observed carefully, would be applicable in other contexts. However, this traditional approach that “views teachers as passive recipients of the transmitted knowledge” (Crandall, 2000, p. 35) yielded to more cognitivist perspectives later. According to the cognitivist approach, teachers make judgments and reasonable decisions based on not only the amount of knowledge presented in research but also other sources such as the context of the teaching and principles of learning and teaching. This view emerged as teacher cognition, and by the mid-80s, it included the consideration of the prior experiences of teachers as learners, and their practical knowledge, values, and beliefs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Thus, sociocultural perspectives also shaped the idea of teacher cognition.

This paradigm shift from product-oriented to constructivist process-oriented theories (Crandall, 2000) were also observed in ELTE models. For instance, the teaching as doing (Freeman, 1991, 1996) or a craft or apprenticeship model (Wallace, 1991) adapts a behaviorist perspective suggesting the importance of observation of more experienced teachers by less experienced novice ones. On the other hand, Teaching as thinking and doing (Freeman, 1991, 1996), applied science or the theory-to-practice model (Wallace, 1991), advocate the acquisition of the theoretical knowledge that is to be applied in the context later. Lastly, the reflective model (Wallace, 1991), or teaching as knowing what to do (Freeman, 1991, 1996) recommends self-reflections on teachers’ practices, through which they evaluate and adapt the necessary changes to their teaching.

Today, shifts in the research of ELTE gave rise to modern approaches and policies defined and recommended by different organizations and councils worldwide. For instance, in the US, the TESOL Association and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in collaboration with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) defined, revised and organized the standards for language teacher education. In a similar vein, the Council of Europe and the European Commission set standards for language teaching and learning in European countries through a set of guidelines and documents including Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), European Qualification Framework (EQF), European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE) and European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). Currently, Turkey does not host any national council¹ for foreign language policies. Nevertheless, MoNE and CoHE have been working in collaboration with the Council of Europe to comply with trends and standards worldwide. The following section briefly introduces the developments in Turkey’s ELTE.

1.2. English Language Teacher Education in Turkey

There are few documents about the history of foreign language teacher education in Turkey. Nevertheless, we know that the history of foreign language teaching in Turkey is old, and it was mainly affected by the political and social developments. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire, Arabic was generally taught for religious purposes (Nergis, 2011). With the modernization and westernization process in the 19th century of the Tanzimat (reorganization) reforms and after, the teaching of western languages also emerged (Kırkgöz, 2007; Nergis, 2011). Because of its position as the lingua-franca, and the strong political, economic and

¹Recently MoNE has announced in its 2023 strategic plan that a national council of foreign languages will be formed to define foreign language teaching policies, teaching standards, and classroom practices (MEB, 2018).

social relations with France, French was dominant as a foreign language until the 20th century. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire's educational administration sent talented young people to France for the purpose of training them as teachers of French. These attempts were not fruitful until Galatasaray Sultanisi was opened with the support of the French government (Nergis, 2011). The medium of instruction was French in this school, but students were also learning other languages such as Bulgarian, Armenian, Greek and English (Tok, 2006). The school had a good reputation not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in other European countries, and it formed the base of foreign language teacher education in Turkey (Nergis, 2011).

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the modernization and westernization process continued with new reforms, and the aspiration to develop strong relations with the West affected foreign language teaching policy of the country (Kırkgöz, 2009). The emergence of the United States as the dominant power in global politics and economy after World War I (WWI) influenced the spread of English to Turkey and other countries which are classified as the expanding circle of English by Kachru (1992). English gained dominance over French during that period (Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998). Political, economic and social developments such as WWII, the Cold War, NATO membership, and European integration process affected Turkish foreign language policy which is mainly concerned with teaching English as a foreign language. Kırkgöz (2009) claims that no country in the expanding circle was more prone to English as a foreign language than Turkey, which made English compulsory at all levels of education.

The English language department for teacher training was first established in 1944 at Gazi Institute (Demirel, 1991). That was the period the Truman doctrine started the Cold War, and the American sphere of influence on Turkey's foreign policy began to influence its foreign language policy. Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952. In 1955, the government started to increase the number of colleges² offering content courses in English (Çetintaş & Genç, 2001; Kırkgöz, 2007). Once CoHE was established in 1981 following a military coup, management of the educational institutions and teacher high schools, which were under the responsibility of MoNE before, was granted to CoHE, and they evolved into faculties in 1982. Following these reforms, research-driven studies in educational sciences and teacher training were carried out at those faculties (YÖK, 2018). This systematized and planned process of teacher education brought certain foreign language policy acts.

As Kırkgöz (2009) reported, the Foreign Language Education and Teaching Act in 1983, Higher Education Act in 1984, and Primary Education Act in 1997 structured the foreign language policy and formed the content of the English Language Teacher Education Programs. Other educational reforms followed in 2006 and 2012 which affected the role and the place of foreign language education in primary and secondary schools. They also affected the standards of ELTE program in Turkey.

In 2006, the first list of generic teacher competencies was published by MoNE as an attempt at standardization. In 2008, MoNE also defined the subject-specific competencies for English Language Teaching at the primary level. The updates on competencies were believed to shape teaching practices (Arıkan, 2010). While setting standards, MoNE complied with the recommendations of the European Commission and Council of Europe, as well as the

²The colleges known as "Maarif Koleji" in Turkish were acknowledged as high schools in 1974 and the name was changed to Anatolian High Schools later in 1975.

scholarship in the area of general pedagogy, teacher education, teacher training, and teacher cognition. More recently, MoNE revised the generic competencies in 2017, and CoHE updated the ELTE program in 2018.

The generic competencies of 2006 consisted of personal and occupational values, professional development, knowing the students, learning and teaching process, monitoring and evaluating learning and development, school, family and society relationships and the knowledge of the program and the content as the projected knowledge, skills, and values (Uztoşun, 2018). The recent changes to the generic competencies are more structured and organized which are defined as a competency area, competency, and definitions. Table 1 shows the generic competencies in detail.

Table 1
Generic Teacher Competencies of MoNE – 2017

Competency Area	Competency	Definition
Professional Knowledge	Content (Subject) Knowledge	Has an advanced level of theoretical, methodological and factual knowledge to develop a critical perspective in the field.
	Pedagogical Content (Subject) Knowledge	Knows the content of the program and has pedagogical content knowledge.
	Legislation and Regulation Knowledge	As an individual and teacher, acts in accordance with the legislation on duties, rights and responsibilities.
Professional Skills	Planning Education and Teaching	Plans the education and teaching process effectively.
	Designing Learning Environments	Creates healthy and safe learning environments for effective teaching to all students and prepares appropriate teaching materials.
	Managing the Learning and Teaching Processes	Manages the teaching and learning processes effectively.
	Assessment and Evaluation	Uses assessment and evaluation methods, techniques and tools in accordance with the aims.
Attitudes and Values	National, Moral and International Values	Observes national, moral and universal values.
	Attitude toward Students	Shows a supportive attitude for student development.
	Communication and Cooperation	Establishes effective communication and cooperation with students, colleagues, parents and other stakeholders of education.
	Personal and Professional Development	Participates in personal and professional development opportunities by making self-assessment.

Table 1 portrays the competency areas, competencies, and definitions of each competency. Competency areas define a broad-based categorization of the capabilities teachers need to develop, and they include professional knowledge, professional skills, and attitudes and values as recommended by the European Commission. The knowledge base includes *content* and *pedagogical content knowledge* as well as the *knowledge of legislation and regulation*. Skills, which is the focus of this study, are expected behaviors and capabilities in teachers' classroom-related practices, and the area defines the skills necessary in terms of *planning education and teaching*, *designing learning environments*, *managing learning*, and *teaching processes* and using appropriate *assessment and evaluation* procedures. Another important competency area is defined as attitudes and values which include *national, moral and international values*, *attitude toward students*, *communication and cooperation*, and *personal*

and professional development. In the document, MoNE also provided indicators of achievement for each specific competency. For instance, for content (subject) knowledge, there are five indicators to be used in assessing the competency of the teacher/teacher candidates. We did not provide those indicators one by one, because the scope of this study comprises the area of professional skills holistically. Nevertheless, we used those indicators while evaluating ELTE programs.

As a matter of fact, MoNE presented the generic teacher competencies as a standardized guideline and a source to be used in defining, designing, evaluating and organizing the content of the programs and the practicum in pre-service teacher education; to be used in the criteria in teacher recruitment, candidate teacher training process, performance evaluation, career development and rewarding; and to be used as a source for self-assessment and continuing professional development (MEB, 2017, p. 9). In this study, we used the document as the criteria to evaluate the content of the academic program and the practicum of ELTE to discern the extent to which they meet the competencies. We consult senior prospective teachers of English (PTEs) and teacher trainers (TTs) to reveal their views on the effectiveness of their ELTE program in fulfilling the competencies in the professional skills area.

This study limits itself to the investigation of professional skills for various reasons. Firstly, the significance of practice and the practicum in ELTE has been emphasized more often as it can also be observed in the recent ELTE program of CoHE, which reserves a greater place for the practicum. Secondly, in relation to the first reason, teacher skills are more observable during the practicum and in micro-teaching sessions so that PTE's and their trainers could provide richer data through their observations and self-reflection. Thirdly, recent research trends in ELTE focus on the field of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) as it includes previous experiences (Lortie, 1975), personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), and beliefs and values (Pajares, 1992) of the teachers and teacher candidates. The trend in the research of this thought process, in which "teachers engaged in as they planned and carried out their lessons" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 400), directed us to focus on teacher skills which may also reflect the "thought process" in other areas of the generic competencies. Lastly, to limit the study for technical reasons, we preferred to focus on teacher skills. In the earlier version of this study, of which we distributed some of the results, CoHE had not updated the ELTE program yet.

2. Method

2.1. Context and the Participants

In Turkey, ELTE programs, whose curricula are designed by CoHE and consist of campus-based courses and the practicum, are offered by the faculties of education. The study was conducted with senior prospective teachers of English (PTEs) and teacher trainers (TTs) at an ELTE program that has been training pre-service teachers at the undergraduate level since 1982. The university offering the program is located in the central Anatolia, and the program offers a national curriculum which is theoretically based on a constructivist view of education and reflective approach. In the program we analyzed, the PTEs are introduced to academic English courses in reading, listening, writing, and speaking, some educational science courses and Turkish language and history courses in their first year. The second year of the program offers courses in applied linguistics, educational sciences, and ELT methodology. The third year of the program includes additional methodology and educational courses. The last year

of the program offers the practicum in which student teachers observe a mentor teacher in the classroom, and practice teaching.

Participants in this study were 90 PTEs and five TTs. The age of the PTEs ranged between 22-26, and the TTs have 10 to 22 years of language teacher education experience. The sample size of student teachers for the interview was limited to 11 based on the concept of saturation. Saturation means that the researcher starts to get the same answers and does not get any new information at a point of the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researchers continued to conduct the interviews, and at the same time, they kept doing the preliminary data analysis to check the saturation of the gathered data.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

To gather detailed information about how Turkish PTEs perceive the effectiveness of the ELTE program, we employed a questionnaire designed according to the indicators in the generic competencies document. We converted the indicators of the professional skills into 22 statements in a Likert-type scale and used them to understand whether their ELTE program covered the aspects that are mentioned in the indicators. The PTEs were asked to express their degree of agreement with (1) meaning strongly disagree and (5) meaning strongly agree. The questionnaire was checked by three experts in the field. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

To support statistical findings, we also employed a qualitative approach in which retrospective interviews with eleven PTEs and five TTs were included. After completing the first part of this study in which we collected the views of the teacher trainers and trainees on the pre-2018 ELTE program, we decided to carry out further interviews with the TTs since the program was revised by CoHE at that time. These additional interviews helped us to understand whether the new program addressed the issues highlighted by the participants in the very first step of the study. Based on its goal to evaluate the content of the ELTE program, we put forward one research question at the beginning of the study: What are the complementary perspectives of ELT student teachers and teacher trainers on teacher competencies and the ELTE program in Turkey? The qualitative data were analyzed through NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Qualitative content analysis technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was applied for the study. In this technique, the interview data were divided into chunks of meaning and labeled first. Then, similar codes were grouped into broader themes, and common categories were generated via following a constant comparison method. To achieve this, as a first step the researchers read all the data-driven from the interviews to get a general sense of the data and took notes for the coding phase. Secondly, they generated initial codes. After listing the codes, different codes were sorted into potential themes. The researchers repeatedly reviewed the themes during the analysis procedure. While constructing the themes, they also engaged in reviewing the related literature as a requirement of the content analysis. For inter-coder considerations, the data were given to two inter-coders to validate the findings since the subjectivity of the qualitative analysis (Nunan & Bailey, 2009) can be reduced in that way. Discrepancies were resolved through a process of negotiated agreement. The intercoder reliability was based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula and was found as 93%. As for the trustworthiness of the analysis, the study applied the strategy of peer debriefing, and an independent researcher ensured the quality of the analysis.

3. Findings

The questionnaire findings (Table 2) are given under the components of professional skills, namely planning education and teaching, designing learning environments, managing teaching, and learning processes and assessment and evaluation.

Table 2

Findings of the questionnaire (PTEs and TTs)

Professional Skills	M (PTEs)	SD (PTEs)	M (TTs)	SD(TTs)
Planning education & teaching	3,19	1.14	3,75	.85
Designing learning environments	3,37	1.05	3,42	.92
Managing teaching & learning processes	3,38	1.07	3,41	.91
Assessment & evaluation	3,24	1.04	2,91	.82

Table 2 shows that in a 5-point Likert-type scale, PTEs rated their ELTE program quite effective in all dimensions of professional skills. The program generally helped them to develop expected skills in planning education and teaching, designing learning environments, managing teaching and learning processes, and assessment and evaluation. On the other hand, TTs stated that the program is not fully effective in teaching the necessary skills for assessment and evaluation, while it is quite effective in other dimensions. The scores of PTEs and TTs show only a slight difference when compared. For a deeper understanding of how PTEs and TTs perceive the effectiveness of their program, especially regarding the teacher competencies proposed by MoNE, we focus on the results of the interview below.

3.1. Interview Findings

The interview results revealed various views on whether the ELTE program complies with the competencies defined by MoNE. Unlike the results of the quantitative data, the interviews portray the inefficiency of the program in meeting the competencies. Table 3 summarizes the findings of the retrospective interviews with both PTEs and TTs.

Table 3

The categories and themes of the analysis

Categories	Themes
Limited or No Teaching/Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning education & Teaching: <i>preparing a lesson plan, considering sociocultural features, environmental factors</i>, and national & moral values • Designing learning environments: <i>creating aesthetic & secure learning environments</i>, considering higher-order cognitive skills • Managing the learning and teaching processes: Teaching classroom management, considering students with special needs addressing environmental & socio-cultural factors, cooperating with stakeholders • Assessment & evaluation: Conducting objective and formative assessment, giving feedback to stakeholders
Theory-Practice Tension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning education & teaching/managing teaching & learning process: Using appropriate teaching methods & strategies • Designing a learning environment: Considering the goals & objectives of the course; real classroom environment vs ideal classroom environment

Miscellaneous issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or No Perspective on: <i>Objective assessment, democratic learning environment, higher-order cognitive skills, ICT</i> • ST's inefficiency in speaking skills • <i>Issues in developing teacher identity</i> • <i>Lack of cooperation between MoNE&CoHE</i> • Washback effect of entry and exit requirements
• Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More skill-based courses (i.e., speaking) • Reviewing entry-exit requirements • Early field experience • Training for age-appropriate teaching • Variety in practicum schools • Expert-apprenticeship relation

Note: Italic-Bold codes refer to the ideas put forward by TTs only, and deductions of the researchers from the data for the miscellaneous issues

Table 3 shows the views of participants on the effectiveness of the program in meeting the competencies defined by MoNE. The analysis revealed four main categories: limited or no teaching/learning of the competencies, theory and practice tension, miscellaneous issues, and suggestions. The findings are illustrated under these categories.

3.1.1. Limited or No Teaching/Learning

Student teachers and trainers believe that they have no or limited teaching/learning of some aspects of professional skill competencies grouped as a) planning education and teaching, b) designing learning environments, c) managing learning and teaching processes, and c) assessment and evaluation. As for planning education and teaching, TTs found their program limited in terms of teaching PTEs to prepare lesson plans which consider socio-cultural features and environmental factors, as well as the national and moral values. TT 4's statement exemplifies this point:

In our program here, we have nothing for how to teach national and spiritual values or what aspects should PTEs pay attention to, so we do not do special teaching for them (TT 4).

PTEs also stated that they do not know how to plan education and teaching which considers the national and moral values.

As for designing appropriate learning environments, TTs believe that the program is insufficient in teaching how to *create aesthetic & secure learning environments*, and both TTs and PTEs think that the program is limited in teaching how to *consider higher-order cognitive skills while designing learning environments*. TTs also mention issues, such as the attitudes of the school administration, in designing the learning environment.

They do not have much information about organizing learning environments, and they have to comply with the decisions of the administration when they start [practicum]. In some schools, administrators are ideal, and they offer all the facilities. However, they [school administrators] might not want to do anything in some schools (TT 4).

As TT 4 reports, teacher candidates generally do not have much opportunity in designing

appropriate learning environments, since the administration of the schools usually decides the design of the classroom. Interestingly, TT4 also stated that student teachers do not have much information about organizing learning environments although it is supposed to be taught within the pedagogical courses and subject-specific courses in the program.

In managing teaching and learning processes, the participants exclaimed that the program does not satisfactorily teach classroom management, consider students with special needs, address environmental and sociocultural factors and cooperate with stakeholders while managing teaching and learning processes. Here are some representative views:

For example, some children are very mischievous in class. For example [the program] did not teach [me how to deal with] classroom management in those situations (PTE 1).

In considering environmental and sociocultural factors and cooperating with stakeholders, one TT stated the following:

As a skill, the previous one [formal training in the campus-based program] is like a simulation, but it may not be ideal for real environments because their neighborhood can be a disadvantaged one. These are not easy to cope with at the very beginning of this profession. Relations with the administration, for example, not just student management, but how to establish professional relations with colleagues and managers, they are also very important. However, we do not have anything to do with these things (TT1).

What TT1 states is very striking since it opens another discussion while stating the ineffectiveness of the program. Accordingly, coping with the environmental and sociocultural factors is a very challenging process, and the novice teachers might not know how to cope with those issues, especially at the very beginning of their careers. Moreover, the simulative context of the campus-based program might fail to prepare the teachers for this real-life issue. This predication leads us to a discussion for the necessity of the differentiation of the competencies referred in the MoNE's document as those that are pre-requisites to start a teaching career as exit requirements of the program, and those that are developmental that teachers are supposed to develop at a specific stage of their career.

As for assessment and evaluation, they find the program ineffective in the teaching of objective and formative assessment and giving necessary feedback to stakeholders about the assessment results. Some representative thoughts are as follows:

The evaluation seems to me more like a result. The program did not teach the difference between the formative and objective assessment (PTE 2).

I don't agree that [we are teaching how to assess effectively]. I don't agree because of our education system. We focus on the exam. Even if the teacher candidate wants to do something in the process, she has to focus on results... Since the children are preparing for KPSS³, we cannot do this even within ourselves, so we will train them according to the school they will go to (TT 1).

We noticed how PTE 2 is confused about formative and objective assessment: s/he thinks there should be a difference as there is in between formative and summative assessment. TT1, on the other hand, criticizes the standardized exam system of the country which prevents

³ Public Personnel Selection Exam; a standardized exam required to be assigned as a teacher at state-operated schools.

teachers from focusing on process-based assessment. What is more, she states that even as teacher trainers, they are unable to use formative assessment in their program planning for the exit requirements needed for standardized KPSS examination, so they are unable to teach teacher candidates how to use formative assessment in their teaching.

3.1.2. Theory – Practice Tension

Another theme we observed was the notorious gap between theory and practice which we categorized as theory-practice tension, and it includes issues in competencies in a) planning education and teaching, b) designing learning environments and c) managing learning and teaching processes. As for the planning education and teaching, and managing the teaching and learning processes, the participants mentioned the program was insufficient in terms of teaching how to use appropriate teaching methods and strategies. One representative quote is as follows:

We give the general overview of teaching methods, techniques and strategies, so we give this theoretical knowledge superficially. But I am not sure whether the teacher candidate evaluates his future teaching [based on] these theories or incorporate it into [their]own learning... I am not sure whether they say “I am learning with this method; this method is good for me... I can follow my own learning with this method” (TT1).

As could be observed in the quote above, TT1 reflects a general concern as a teacher trainer about whether the student teachers are able to apply theoretical information into practice. While doing this, she is concerned about the performance not only in the practicum but also in future teaching. In this way, she mentions her concern about the gap between theory and practice.

Participants’ ideas also reflected the gap between theory and practice in designing learning environments which consider the goals and objectives of the coursework. Some PTEs and TTs claimed how the ideally taught classroom environment, and the circumstances in the real classrooms might be completely different, and how the theoretical coursework of the program might fail to address the realities of teaching. Below are some examples of what they have said:

Our teacher candidates are waiting for a student profile with all the books in their bags and doing their homework. They expect an environment where mothers and all family members are very interested in learning English and acknowledge the importance of it. [Hence] we [teacher trainers] should prepare our students better for [real-life] problems, and we should talk more about the problems they might face. We must raise consciousness (TT1).

It [the practice with theory] should be definitely implemented. [In the current program] teacher candidates seem to understand the theory, but they cannot do it in practice (TT4).

It [preparing materials according to the goals and objectives of the coursework] was not taught in practice. We learned them only in theory (PTE2).

As could be seen from the excerpts above, both TTs and PTEs highlighted the gap between theory and practice. TT1 is concerned with real-life issues in terms of student and family profiles in relation to the effects of socio-cultural issues and environmental factors in designing a learning environment that is believed to be not covered realistically in the theoretical coursework. TT4 and PTE2, on the other hand, are more concerned with the

pedagogical and subject-specific content of the program that, while it provides sufficient theory, student teachers were not able to apply them in practice.

3.1.3. Miscellaneous Issues

We employed this category to mention issues that the PTEs have limited perspectives on and to refer to other issues that are not directly addressed in the generic competencies of MoNE but emerged in the natural flow of the data collection procedure during the interview. The data revealed PTEs have limited or no perspective on certain competency indicators of the MoNE's generic competencies, such as objective assessment, democratic learning environment, higher-order cognitive skills, and information and communication technologies. Participants also mentioned other issues such as a) PTEs' limited speaking skills, b) issues in developing teacher identity, c) lack of cooperation between MoNE and CoHE, and d) washback effect of entry and exit requirements. An in-depth analysis of the data, in which the researchers repeatedly asked for clarifications and additional questions, revealed some issues were difficult for PTEs to comprehend. These included objective assessment, democratic learning environment, higher-order cognitive skills, and ICT. It is seen that PTEs have limited perspective on those issues such as what constitutes an objective assessment and a democratic learning environment. For this reason, they were unable to expand their ideas on whether their teacher education program was effective in teaching those or not.

Another sub-theme which emerged was about the inadequate speaking proficiency of the PTEs. Both PTEs and TTs highlighted the issue of language proficiency as part of teacher competence.

Students studying in the undergraduate program in the English language need to use the language naturally. They need to be able to communicate comfortably. Students are inadequate for speaking and speaking fluently (TT 2).

Here [the program] is trying to give something, it is trying to teach speaking, but we are afraid to talk. We have teachers who use English all the time, but still, we cannot talk in those lessons. I, for instance, can't say what comes to my mind. This may be because of our shyness. There are only a few who are talking fluently (PTE 6).

The participants also highlighted miscommunication between MoNE and CoHE for cooperation between the two institutions. They believe that the teacher training programs and real schools should collaborate more effectively. One teacher trainer noted the following:

If MoNE and CoHE work together, and if the program is prepared by considering the views of all stakeholders and the needs analysis, the efficiency of the ELTE program will be improved (TT 5).

Lastly, the analysis revealed a negative washback effect of entry and exit requirements. Admissions to the ELTE programs are processed according to the scores of a national exam which does not assess listening or speaking skills but reading, vocabulary, translation, and grammar mainly. Similarly, the test taken at the end of the program does not include the assessment of these communicative skills.

We do not measure the communication skills of the program candidates through the entrance examination. We do not measure at the exit as well. However, in the meantime, we are trying to improve them through speaking lessons or something [but they are inconsistent with each other]. Here we have to teach the child [PTE]

how to use a language at different levels, at different levels in the class [they teach], so that they must have a certain language background (TT 4).

TT4 states that the admission exam does not assess the communicative foreign language skills of the teacher candidates at the entrance, and they are not assessed at the exit either. He admits that they do their best to develop the communicative skills of the teacher candidates during the program; however, they are supposed to already know how to communicate. He also highlights that their very first aim is to teach PTEs how to use the language to teach it in an age and level appropriate way. In other words, the main concern of the program should not be teaching English to teacher candidates but teaching them how to teach language as a teacher. Hence, they are required to be admitted to the program with certain communicative language proficiency.

3.1.4. Suggestions

Apart from the limitations, theory-practice issues and other miscellaneous issues interviewed TTs and PTEs also had some direct suggestions for improvement of the ELTE program. These include *integrating more skill-based courses* (i.e., speaking), moving the *practicum to an earlier year* of the program, *training for age-appropriate teaching* in terms of teaching English to kids, adolescents and adults, ensuring a *variety of the school types in the practicum* as well as *reviewing the entry and exit requirements* in terms of *assessment of communicative language skills*. Participants also referred to the cooperation and collaboration between the mentor teachers and PTEs in *an expert-apprenticeship relationship* for increasing the effectiveness of the practicum.

Moving from the problems, limitations, and suggestions mentioned by participants in the first interview, a second interview was carried out with four of the TTs to understand whether any of those issues are addressed by the newly assigned ELTE program. The second interview with TTs showed that while some of the issues were met by the recent changes, most of the problems were not addressed. Moreover, some TTs believed that the new program may worsen some issues which were already problematic. Nevertheless, it is important to note that teacher trainers have just experienced the first year of the new program, and since it will be gradually employed with sophomores, juniors, and seniors, the ideas generally reflected the experiences of TTs in the first year of the new program.

In the new program, more elective courses to support the world knowledge of PTEs were included. Through these elective courses, issues such as creating democratic learning environments, improving intercultural competence of PTEs, learning about various types of world English and cultures, receiving valuable education, and offering differentiated learning for student needs are believed to be improved in the future. On the other hand, TTs stated that their concerns regarding classroom practices of teacher candidates such as planning lessons, designing appropriate learning environments according to students' needs, applying formative assessment and evaluation methods, managing classrooms as well as improving the course content to develop PTEs communicative language skills were not addressed in the new program. Moreover, TTs believed because of the shortened course hours in the content-teaching courses, they would be unable to carry out micro-teaching sessions in crowded classes in the following years of the program.

4. Discussion

As shown in the findings of the study, the ratings of each competency, namely, planning education and teaching, designing learning environments, managing teaching and learning

processes and conducting assessments and evaluations, yielded similar results both for the PTEs and TTs. The scores were relatively high in a 5-point Likert-type scale, and TTs rated assessment and evaluation as the most problematic area in ELTE. Despite these high scores, interviews revealed some problematic issues in pre-service teacher education programs in English in terms of its capacity and sufficiency in addressing the generic competencies defined by MoNE in 2017.

When results are analyzed holistically, it is seen that PTEs and TTs generally perceive their ELTE program ineffective in meeting some of the generic competencies of MoNE either as a result of a discrepancy between the campus-based program and the teaching practicum or because of the decontextualization of the theoretical information. Therefore, we can discuss the results in terms of how the nature of the campus-based program should be, the relation between the campus-based program and the school community, including mentor teachers, administrators, and stakeholders. Moreover, competency indicators should be designated as a threshold in each level of teacher education including pre-service, early years' in-service, and experienced in-service as form of continuous professional development.

In Turkey, the campus-based teacher education programs are composed of three groups of courses including teaching profession knowledge, content-teaching knowledge, and world knowledge. CoHE has recently updated the ratio of those courses in the ELTE program, and the total allocated class time has been decreased to 155 from 175 hours (YÖK, 2018). Names and the contents of the courses in the teaching profession have been revised. The most striking changes, considering the results of this study, are the inclusion of the "Ethics and Moral in Education" as a new course and the structural change in the practicum which would ensure more practice for student teachers in two semesters. In terms of the content-teaching courses, CoHE also changed the names and contents of some coursework to empower and enrich the capacity of them. Although those changes aim at increasing practice-oriented approaches in which different stakeholders are expected to collaborate closely, the general model of the program, moving from theory to practice or from campus-based learning to the school-based application, has not changed. In other words, the recent changes of CoHE have not presented a paradigm shift to reshape teacher education yet. As a matter of fact, some problems we defined in this study are believed to persist in the new program since the criteria of MoNE requires not a revision on the course content but a paradigm shift that will reform the whole teacher education program. Without such a shift, the new program cannot exact the necessary changes in the way we approach teacher education. This argument is clearly presented in the results.

The basic finding of the present study is that the ELTE program does not fully comply with the professional skill competencies recommended by MoNE. Considering the interview data, it can be argued that PTEs and TTs mentioned the insufficiency of ELTE program in improving teacher skills of PTEs. The participants diagnosed problems usually occurring because of the disintegration of theory and practice, failure to cooperate with stakeholders (TT), unavailable expert apprenticeship relation, focus on teaching for ideal not real, unprepared mentors for the practicum and the lack of early field experience.

Although the ELTE program theoretically teaches how to prepare a lesson plan, we found out that the core task of lesson planning might even be challenging when PTEs needed to consider sociocultural and environmental factors of their students and schools where they would work simply because they do not have this experience during their campus-based program, and they do not have chance to experience it during the practicum either. Although the flexibility to

address different sociocultural and environmental factors is presented as a competency indicator by MoNE, the TTs we interviewed do not believe that ELTE program prepares future teachers to be equipped with such flexibility in terms of applying this professional knowledge according to various social and environmental factors. Considering the fact that the limited micro-teaching sessions, which takes place in a largely artificial classroom environment, and the practicum are the only chances for PTEs to act out as a teacher, a limitation of this skill is quite expected.

The same limitation was also observed in the competencies of designing learning environments, managing teaching and learning processes, and conducting assessments and evaluations. Those issues remain mostly abstract during the initial teacher education and are not practiced well enough. Although practicum is presented as a chance for practice, student teachers still do not have full autonomy to change the design of the classroom independently because they have to comply with the administration. Classroom management is also found to be problematic especially when teaching to young learners during the practicum. These findings are in line with the previous studies revealing that students might not always apply theoretical knowledge to the practice as a result of the decontextualization of the practice (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Crandall, 2000), disconnection between the campus-based programs and the practicum schools (Richards, 2008; Bulut-Albaba, 2017) and the potential resistance from the administration which is also challenging even at the earlier steps of teaching career (Bulut-Albaba, 2017). Interviews also presented issues related to teacher competencies in terms of linguistics skills, teacher identity and washback effect of entry and exit requirements. Therefore, when discussing the nature of the campus-based program, the competency indicators, and the relation between the campus program and the school community, we need to consider practicum-related issues, teacher cognition and identity, and issues related to schools and school communities along with the theory-practice dichotomy.

As we already mentioned above, with the recent changes in the ELTE program, CoHE approached theory and practice as integrated components. It is a fact that theory and practice have a two-way ongoing relationship in which they affect each other through repeated observations, practices, dialogues and feedbacks (Cummins & Davison, 2007). However, the way the practicum is presented in the last year of the school-based teacher education program proposes theory and practice as integrated components in “theory,” but sequential in “practice.” In other words, although MoNE and CoHE agree that theory and practice should be integrated, with the practicum at the end of the program without offering an appropriate dialogic atmosphere where student teachers would review their practice, based on the theory and vice versa, the changes in the program do not serve to integrate theory and practice but present them as “two largely separate worlds existing side by side” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). The second interviews with TTs show that the problem of theory-practice integration has not been addressed in the new program either because of the sequential structure of the practicum which makes early field experience impossible. It is inevitable that such a division between theory and practice causes student teachers to have difficulties in applying educational theory in practice (Hammerness et al., 2005). Therefore, teaching experience should be presented earlier and assisted by a dialogic course in which student teachers would share their experiences with future colleagues and professors to receive feedback (Coskun & Daloglu, 2010).

Some would argue that presenting the practicum earlier in the program would be difficult to achieve, and micro-teaching sessions are alternatives for classroom teaching. Nevertheless, micro-teaching takes place in the shielded environment of the campus-based programs in

which other participants of the classroom are also the prospective teachers and not actual students. Although, guided micro-teachings might help learners to make connection between theory and practice (Kourieos, 2016), develop teacher identity (Mergler & Tangen, 2010) and improve teaching skills (Coşgun-Ögeyik, 2009, 2016), an artificial classroom environment, difficulties in material production, lack of feedback and lack of proper training to cope with the unexpected situations might make micro-teaching not very attractive and supportive for student teachers (Coşgun-Ögeyik, 2016). For this reason, placing the utmost importance on the practicum in collaboration and integration with the school community and other stakeholders is crucial, and it should be supported through feedback and reflection in which student teachers are able to reflect on their practice.

As a matter of fact, the practicum is a challenging process for prospective teachers even with help from the university supervisors and mentor teachers at schools. Their knowledge of practice, power, and culture in schools is not sophisticated (Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak & Lawson, 2015) as a result of the theoretical idealistic university context and decontextualization of the theory at the university. In other words, the idealistic standardized teaching of various professional skills such as using appropriate teaching methods and strategies, considering the goals and objectives of the course while designing learning environments, and applying formative assessment either do not fit into the realities of the classes where students take their practicum, or they are not fully contextualized because of the problems and issues faced during the practicum. As a result, student teachers might not feel ready to implement the methodologies and techniques they learn in their campus-based program (Bulut-Albaba, 2017).

As part of the problems faced during the practicum, there are also issues related to the ownership of the class and power relations as well as building a teacher identity. It is a fact that in pre-service teacher education programs PTEs go through belief change (Özmen, 2012) and cognitive change (Bulut-Albaba, 2017) in a way to develop teacher identity as future teachers; however, the representation of this change in the practicum is problematic. Student teachers do not generally have autonomy in their practicum schools and need to comply with the syllabus of the mentor teachers. This issue of teacher identity can also be explained in relation to discourse acquisition (Miller, 2004). While campus-based teacher education programs prepare student teachers with the necessary professional knowledge and skills, they are also expected to assist student teachers to negotiate a new identity: a teacher identity. In standardized teacher education programs, like the one in Turkey, the practicum is the only place where student teachers would negotiate their teacher identity by unfolding the social interactions they have with mentor teachers, teachers and students (Singh & Richards, 2006) as well as their supervisors. During this social interaction, we expect them to acquire the identity of a teacher along with its discourse. However, the existence of the PTEs in practicum class as a mere assistant following the orders of the mentor teacher or only observing what s/he is practicing, prevent them from experiencing critical incidents which would provoke a crisis shifting the PTEs' cognitive and emotional understanding of a teacher's role in the classroom (Illeris, 2002; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2008), which would eventually guide them to review and reflect on their practices and develop a teacher identity.

The issues we mention here in terms of a theory-practice dichotomy, the role, and structure of the practicum, developing a teacher identity, and the relation between campus-based programs, schools, and other stakeholders require a radical shift in the structure of ELTE program. More specifically, the longstanding problems of ELTE program in Turkey cannot be solved with conventional changes such as balancing the content of the courses, changing

course credits or adjusting practicum durations as so-called reforms. Motivated by this fact and the findings of this present study, we suggest a framework for improving both the quality of the ELTE program and make up for the insufficiency in meeting the criteria of MoNE. This framework also has its roots in previous research studies on the ELTE program in Turkey in terms of theory-practice issues (Seferoğlu, 2006; Şallı-Çopur, 2008; Coskun & Daloğlu, 2010; İpek & Daloğlu, 2017), the changes and trends in ELTE (Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Uzun, 2016), stakeholder-related issues (Balbay, Pamuk, Temir, & Doğan, 2018; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019), teaching for ideal and real (Kildan et al., 2013), training of the trainers (Balbay et al., 2018; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019), teaching and testing speaking (Kartal & Özmen, 2018; Salihoğlu, 2012), and training for age and level-appropriate teaching (Balbay et al., 2018). The components and sub-components of the framework are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
The 7T Framework

Component	Sub-Component
Theory-Practice Integration	Non-sequential early field experience with reflection
Talking to Stakeholders	Coordination and collaboration with schools, school communities, mentors, supervisors at all levels of campus-based program
Training the trainers	Mutual professional development programs CoHE and MoNE Coordination between CoHE and MoNE
Training for age and level-appropriate teaching	Courses (micro-experiences) and practice focus on Young learners
Teaching Ideal and Real	Observations at an earlier stage Scenario-based teaching based on observation
Tracking the Developments and Trends	ICT, technology, training models, etc.
Teaching and Testing Communicative Skills	Communicative proficiency as a tool not a target, revisions of the entry and exit requirements including communicative language skills including testing speaking

The framework, taking its roots from both the findings of the current study and numerous previous researches mentioned above on issues in the ELTE program in Turkey, presents seven components that need to be taken into consideration while designing the ELTE program. It can be claimed that both the previous and the current ELTE programs adapted an applied-science model (Wallace, 1991), in which practice follows theory in a sequential way. As we found out, such an approach makes theory-practice integration inefficient and problematic. Therefore, designing the ELTE program with non-sequential early field experience in which PTEs will be able to participate in the practicum, reflect on their experience through a dialogic course and re-attend the practicum at a later year might be much more effective in theory-practice integration. In order to make the practicum more effective, it is important to include other stakeholders to the process by ensuring cooperation and collaboration among campus-based supervisors, PTEs, and mentor teachers, which we named as talking to stakeholders above. This cooperation-collaboration is closely related to

the training of the campus-based trainers, mentor teachers and school administrators. The trainers believe they cannot follow every change endorsed by MoNE and CoHE, so such a collaboration might solve this problem.

Another important factor related to the practicum is the applicability of it in various school types which will ensure PTEs experience teaching students with different age and level groups. To prepare PTEs for such an experience, it is important that the campus-based programs also include courses related to age and level-appropriate teaching, and they should prepare PTEs both for ideal and real learning environments and teaching practices. Although CoHE states that courses that do not include practice in the program could be adapted by teacher trainers in a way to include practice (e.g., micro-teachings), reduced class hours might prevent such an adaptation in crowded classrooms. Moreover, teacher trainers also believe that the program should prepare PTEs both for ideal and real circumstances of learning conditions. Last, the framework recommends that TTs and the stakeholders of ELTE programs are required to track developments and trends in language teaching and learning, teacher education, and technology integration.

There was a clear agreement between student teachers and teacher trainers that the program fails to equip student teachers with communicative skills in the target language, especially in productive skills. It is reasonable to conclude that it can be traced in the washback effect of the national test in Turkey, in which reading, vocabulary, and grammar questions are included in the test but listening, writing and speaking skills are excluded. In Turkey, teachers are reported to insist on using the grammar-translation method (Akalin & Zengin, 2007; Oktay, 2015). One of the reasons to continue to use this method can be explained by the fact that it is the most effective route to success since the communicative skills of the learners are not tested in the Foreign Language Test (FLT), which is a part of the university entrance exam. A report by the British Council (2013) showed that Turkish EFL learners failed to use English on graduation from high school as a result of these grammar-based approaches. This exam-centric education system in Turkey prevents most PTEs from improving communicative skills that are not tested in the FLT. As a result, beginning from the first year of the ELTE program in Turkey, students have to put extra effort into improving speaking, writing, and pronunciation skills. This coincides with the results of Kartal and Özmen (2018), who found that the PTEs in Turkey have plans to improve their productive skills after graduation. Therefore, it is important to include the testing of those communicative skills at the entrance and the graduation of the program. Those with a certain communicative proficiency in English should be admitted to the program, and their language skills should be supported by a mandatory preparatory program in which teacher candidates are expected to develop language skills at least on B2-C1 level. This seems to be impossible with the conventional preparatory programs for basic English at universities, which generally aim at graduating students with a B1 level. Therefore, specific communicative-skills oriented English preparatory programs should be designed for PTEs before they continue with the teacher education program.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study found that the ELTE program is not effective enough to train PTEs to reach the level of teaching skill that is sought by MoNE. In line with the findings, the researchers recommended a 7T framework, which is also justified by previous research. Moreover, the study suggests that the entry and exit requirements of the program should be reconsidered in line with the revised competencies. The framework has suggestions for teacher trainers, program developers, and policymakers to improve the quality of the ELTE program. The

suggested framework can be checked via further research such as model studies that track issues in the ELTE program in Turkey.

The study is not without some limitations. It was limited to one teacher education program, which makes it difficult to generalize the results. However, as CoHE designs the curricula of ELTE programs centrally, and it sets specific goals concerning the content of each of the program courses, the framework suggested in this study has the potential to address most of the ELTE programs in Turkey. Moreover, the ELTE programs apply the same entry and exit requirements. Therefore, the findings are valuable for other programs. The PTEs in this study were all from a large state university in central Turkey. It is recommended to conduct broader research with pre-service teachers from other faculties in different regions of Turkey. As for the scope and external validity considerations, further study could be conducted both in state and foundation universities.

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