

A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE DISTANCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM (DELTP) IN ANADOLU UNIVERSITY, TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a preliminary evaluation of a relatively new interactive distance learning model for training English language teachers in Turkey. The Distance English Language Teacher Training Program (DELTP) was established as a result of the contractual agreement between the Ministry of National Education and Eskişehir Anadolu University, Turkey in 2000, whose goal is to train a sufficient number of EFL teachers, in the shortest time possible, without abandoning the high quality of professional training provided heretofore (AOF, 2006).

In order to seek objective information regarding their current status as well as to obtain opinion data concerning their perceptions of the adequacy of their education, 2004 and 2005 graduates of the DELTP Program were administered questionnaires. Four interviews were conducted with different stakeholders. The results and statistics indicate that DELTP is presently unable to train English teachers of the desired number and in a short period of time due to a variety of factors; however, the program has been successful in maintaining a high standard of quality and has not abandoned the essentials needed for foreign language teacher education.

Keywords: Anadolu University DELTP Program, distance education, foreign language teacher education, program evaluation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TURKEY

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which is a fully autonomous national board of trustees without any political affiliation, became the supreme authority for the regulation of higher education in Turkey after changes to the state constitution in 1981 (Turkish Constitution of 1981, Law No. 2547). Since then, YÖK has been the planning, coordinating, and policy-making body for public and private higher education.

All universities and schools of higher learning are affiliated with the Council of Higher Education. Each university consists of faculties (e.g. School of Engineering) and four-year schools, offering bachelor's level programs, and two-year schools offering pre-bachelor's (associate's) level programs with a strict vocational emphasis. Students are admitted to higher education through a centralized, nation-wide single-stage examination administered by the Student Selection and Placement Center (OSYM) every year. The center was established in 1974 and became affiliated with the Council of Higher Education in 1981.

The entrance examination system consists of two parts: The Student Selection Examination (OSY), and the Foreign Language Examination (YDS).

The latter examination is administered approximately two weeks after the former to candidates who wish to enter a higher education program requiring a foreign language background, such as the teaching of English, translation, and English language and literature. The Student Selection Examination, in turn, has two parts: one measures mainly the candidates' verbal abilities, and the other, their quantitative abilities. As for the Foreign Language Examination, it tests the candidates' knowledge in the related foreign language regarding vocabulary and grammar (25% of the test questions), translation (15%), and reading comprehension (60%) (OSYM, 2000). The test includes 100 items and the total time allowed to answer the items is two-and-a-half hours.

After the exams, placement of candidates is done according to their composite scores. Taken into account are the OSS and YDS scores, as well as high school grade-point averages, which are weighted differently. Table A.I in Appendix 1 shows some of the universities and their lowest acceptable entrance scores for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and for the English language and literature programs.

This table shows that Anadolu University DELTTP Program ranks third from the bottom among other English-related undergraduate programs (353.837), following the TEFL programs of two private universities; Yeditepe (338.572) and Maltepe (329.793).

CURRENT STATUS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Distance education is a modern system of delivering instruction that facilitates learning by utilizing various communication technologies. People of different ages, incomes, and occupations can take advantage of distance education, which has been implemented in many developed and developing countries. Students of distance education programs continue their studies while maintaining their productivity, and can arrange their education according to their own capacities and at their own pace. Distance education is, thus, an educational practice that uses modern technology by gathering students, faculty members, and instructional materials together regardless of their geographic locations (AOF,2006).Anadolu University in Eskişehir is the first and only institution that offers two-and four-year higher education programs through distance education in Turkey. When it opened in 1982, the School of Distance Education had only two degree programs; economics and business administration. However, it has been greatly expanded in recent years to include programs in public administration, accounting, foreign trade, social sciences, and tourism. According to Turker (2002), Anadolu University is the largest university in the world that offers distance education programs in terms of the number of students served.

Learning within the School of Distance Education is facilitated through printed materials, broadcasted lectures, and is supported by the internet, computer-assisted instruction, and video-conferencing. In some cities, contact hours, academic advising, and face-to-face instruction are also available. The essential purpose of the School of Distance Education is to fill the country's need for qualified workers with various two-year pre-bachelors vocational training, as well as for teachers of English and pre-school teachers, with four-year bachelor's degrees (AÖF, 2006).

DISTANCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM (DELTTP)

The Distance English Language Teacher Training Program in Anadolu University is a four-year undergraduate program affiliated with the School of Distance Education. The program began training teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) after the agreement between the Ministry of Education and Anadolu University in February 28, 2000, and it is considered equivalent to the other formal EFL programs in Turkey.

The first two years of DELTTP are carried out by traditional (face-to-face) education, while the last two years are completely done by distance education with on-line support for each class.

Purpose of the program

Kose, Ozkul, and Ozyar (2002) stated that English is acknowledged as the "world language" in Turkey as well as in many foreign countries and that "there is an ever-increasing demand for 'English teaching and learning' activities." However, higher education programs that have offered various English language degrees have not been able to meet the growing demand for English teachers even though they increased their number of enrollments up to a maximum capacity. The Eight-year Development Plan prepared by the Turkish Ministry of National Education indicated the need for teachers of English from 1999 to 2006 as shown in Table: 1.

Table: 1
The estimated need for EFL teachers from 1999 to 2006

School Year	# of needed new EFL teachers each year
1999-2000	9,946
2000-2001	11,444
2001-2002	9,789
2002-2003	7,891
2003-2004	8,011
2004-2005	8,143
2005-2006	7,661
Total	62,885

Source: Taken from Kose, et al., (2002).

As this table shows, the approximate number of EFL teachers required to fill the country's need in each school year was between 7,000 and 10,000. However, in the 2006-2007 school year, the total number of students who will be accepted to undergraduate English language programs is only 5,853, and in previous years, the enrollments were even less. (Maximum enrollments of such programs are provided in Table: 2). Therefore, even assuming that more than half of these students choose a career in teaching English, the shortage would not be covered by conventional teacher education programs.

Table: 2
English Language Programs and Their Maximum Enrollments for 2006-2007 School Year

Program	Maximum Enrollment
Teaching English as a Foreign Language	3451
English Language and Literature	1316
American Culture and Literature	445
Translation and Interpretation	356
Tourist Guiding	90
Comparative Literature	85
English Philology	110
Total # of Students	5853

* Data obtained from official 2006 OSS Guide of Centre for Student Selection and Placement (OSYM)

* Total of maximum enrollments including the programs in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are 6529.

Furthermore, the introduction of eight-year continuous compulsory education in 1998 increased the demand for teachers of English due to the fact that 2 hours of English per week for 4th and 5th grade students are included in the curriculum. Although the Ministry of National Education has utilized a broad array of options to supply teachers of English, the need has still not been met.

Thus, taking the circumstances of the country into consideration, a distance and open education project, which was considered relatively more economical, was developed, and DELTTP was established to train a sufficient number of EFL teachers, in the shortest term possible, without abandoning the traditional high quality of training for EFL teachers (AOF, 2006).

Operational Details

In the agreement that was reached between the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and Anadolu University in 2000, the major decisions regarding DELTTP were as follows:

- DELTT Program would start in the 2000-2001 school year in 10 cities (Eskişehir, Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Adana, Konya, Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Sinop) in the institutions allocated by the MNE.
- 2,500 students would be accepted into the program in the 2000-2001 school year.
- Circumstances permitting, the number of cities in which face-to-face education is carried out would be increased over the following years (MEB, 2006).
- DELTTP would be discontinued four years after the enrolled number of students balances the EFL teacher need of the MNE. (MEB, 2001).

As it was suggested in the 2000 agreement, in the 2001-2002 school year, the number of cities was raised to 16, although the maximum enrollment, which was 2,500, remained the same.

In 2002-2003, the number of cities and the size of maximum enrollment were kept the same, while in 2003-2004, the former was decreased to 10 and the latter became 1,500. Starting in the 2004-2005 school year, a radical change was made within DELTTP; face-to-face education was going to be held in Eskişehir only, with fewer students, who totaled 750. The following year, Eskişehir was the only city in which face-to-face education was held and 750 students were accepted to the program, as in the previous year. For the coming 2006-2007 school year, the suggested enrollment for new students is 800. An academic year in DELTTP consists of a period between early November and late May with a 20-day break in January.

Curriculum of DELTT

The curriculum of DELTT was developed by Anadolu University in compliance with the curriculum of formal English language teacher training programs, which was prepared by the Council of Higher Education in 1998.

There are 30 year-long courses in the curriculum of DELTT, unlike the 52 semester-long courses typical of other formal education programs under YOK's regulations. Table:3 shows the courses offered in the curriculum of DELTTP. The curriculum of the traditional EFL programs can be viewed in Table A. II in Appendix 1.

Instructors in DELTTP

From 2000 to 2004, some of the instructors who took part in the face-to-face education were selected from among the high school teachers affiliated with the MNE.

They were required to have at least three years of experience and to have scored at least 70 (B) out of 100 in another nation-wide exam, KPDS, which stands for Language Exam for Public Personnel (MEB, 2001). In some cities, teaching staff from schools of foreign languages in related universities were employed as well.

In addition, instructors were given a 90-hour in-service training in Anadolu University in order to be certified to teach DELTTP students. However, after Eshisehir became the center city of face-to-face education, the policy of recruiting MNE teachers was abandoned. For the last two years, DELTTP has employed its own academic faculty, including assistant and associate professors.

Table: 3
Courses in the curriculum of DELTT

Freshman Year	Instruction Delivery
English Grammar-1	Ftf, E
Reading Skills	Ftf, E
Spoken English	Ftf, E
English Composition	Ftf, E
Introduction to the Teaching Profession	D, T
Computer Skills	D, T
Sophomore Year	
English Grammar-II	Ftf-E
Advanced Reading Skills	Ftf-E
Advanced Writing Skills	Ftf-E
Translation (Turkish-English/English-Turkish)	Ftf-E
School Experience-I	F
Oral and Written Communication in Turkish	D, T
Principles of Ataturk and the History of the Turkish Revolution	D, T
Instructional Planning and Evaluation	D, T
Development and Learning	D, T
Junior Year	
Introduction to Linguistics	D, E
Introduction to English Literature	D, E
English Language Teaching Methodology	D, E
Approaches to ELT	D, E
Teaching English to Young Learners	D, E
Classroom Management	D,T
Guidance	D,T
Senior Year	
Instructional Technology & Materials Evaluation and Development	D, T
Language Acquisition	D, E
Teaching Language Skills	D, E
English Language Testing and Evaluation	D, E
Using English Literature in Teaching	D, E
Turkish (Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics)	D, E
Pedagogical Grammar	D, E
School Experience II and Practice Teaching	F

* Ftf: Course offered through face-to-face instruction, E: Course offered in English, T: Course offered in Turkish, D: Course offered through distance education, F: Field Experience

Educational Materials

For the first and second year courses, which aim to develop basic English language skills, books published by Longman, Oxford, Heinle & Heinle (e.g. *Cambridge Skills for Fluency and English Grammar in Use*) are used. Additional course packs are developed to support these materials as well. The textbooks of the pedagogical courses offered in Turkish have been written by the academic staff in the School of Education, Anadolu University, and published by the School of Distance Education.

Annual course packs and other materials of the courses offered through distance education are mailed to the Centers of Distance Education all around the country for students to pick up.

Testing

Students are required to take one midterm and one final exam for the courses offered in Turkish, whereas they have to take three mid-terms and one final exam for the courses offered in English. They must get at least 70 out of 100 to qualify to pass the courses taught in English. The passing grade for the courses taught in Turkish is 50. Exams are carried out in two days with four sessions. Students who fail can take a make-up exam at the end of the summer to improve their final grades.

Except for the courses involving the productive skills of speaking and writing, multiple choice tests are given, and these are assessed by the Anadolu University Information Processing Center. The number of items in a multiple choice exam is 35 for courses offered in English and 30 for courses offered in Turkish. Speaking and writing skills are tested by oral and written exams, and evaluated by the School of Foreign Languages.

Online Academic Advisement

Anadolu University has been investigating the possibilities of incorporating online technologies "to increase the educational effectiveness, improve access and provide flexibility to the system" (Kose et al., 2002). As a result of its efforts, online academic advisement facilities, using WebCT, have been put into practice since the 2005-2006 school year. Online academic advisement is provided for the third- and fourth-year courses offered through distance education. For each course, there is an assigned advisor who can be instructors as well as assistant, associate, or full professors. Advisors are supposed to direct discussion groups, respond to students' questions and e-letters. Multiple-choice quizzes are also provided on WebCT.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

DELTP is the first and only program that trains EFL teachers through distance education in Turkey. As Sakar stated, DELTP differs from other distance education programs in Turkey, since students in the first two years attend traditional "real time" classes unlike other distance education programs (Sakar, 2002).

Richard, Pratt, and Weber (1985) define evaluation as "the systematic gathering of information for purposes of decision-making." As a basis for ongoing change and development within an organization, for improvements to increase its effectiveness, evaluation is required. Thus, as a newly implemented program, DELTP and its various aspects need to be evaluated for future innovations and improvements. The basic motivation for training teachers of English through distance education was the imbalance between the country's need for teachers of English and the supply of teachers graduating from the traditional English teacher-training programs. However, according to statistics released by the MNE, only 119 students graduated from DELTP at the end of the first four years, namely in 2004.

Among these 119 students, 15 were appointed as teachers by MNE in 2004 and 52 in 2005. As for 2005, 554 students graduated from DELTP with 32 of them being appointed as EFL teachers by the MNE. In brief, out of 4,919 enrolled students in 2000 and 2001, 673 students graduated from the program and 99 of them were appointed by the MNE. The fact that only 99 out of 673 graduates were employed by the MNE and the discrepancy between the enrolled number of students in the program and the number of graduates provided the major motivation for engaging in this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

General research questions

The questions that guided this study are as follows:

- Has the program achieved its main objective, which is to train English teachers in adequate numbers for the Ministry of National Education in the shortest term possible and without abandoning the previously established high quality of teacher training?
- Why does it take too long to graduate from this program?

Descriptive questions

- How many of the participants graduated in the shortest time (4 years) from DELTTP?
- How many graduates from 2004 and 2005 are appointed as teachers of English by the Ministry of Education?
- How many of the participants are "teaching English" and in what types of institutions?
- How many of them eventually chose a career different than teaching English?
- Are there unemployed participants?
- How many of the participants have taken the Exam for Public Personnel Selection (KPSS)?
- What are the scores of the participants who have taken the KPSS exam?
- Why did participants choose the DELTTP Program in Anadolu University over more traditional programs?
- To what extent were the participants satisfied with their education in DELTTP?
- Did any participants consider dropping out the program and, if so, what were their reasons?
- Is there a significant difference in KPSS scores for those who are employed and those who are not?
- Is there a negative or positive correlation between the graduates' KPSS scores and their grades from the educational courses, e.g. Introduction to Teaching Profession?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants of this study were chosen among 2004 and 2005 graduates of DELTTP. The sample size was 26, which represented 25% of the target population.

The mean age of the participants was 24. Out of 26 participants, 19 were female (73%) and 7 were male. Eleven (42%) of the participants reported that they graduated from a "super high school," that is, a school that offers an intensive language preparation year in English and that has a more language-focused curriculum than general high schools.

As for the parents' occupations, 10 (38%) out of 26 fathers were said to be retired and 5 (19%) to be in the field of education. Only six participants reported that their mothers were working.

Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were adopted in this study. Quantitative data were collected by means of a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire had three parts and was prepared in Turkish in order to

eliminate the language barrier for more reliable and detailed results. In Part A, there were 12 items including 3 factual questions that required yes/no answers, 3 multiple-choice questions, 1 question prepared by using the Likert scale, and 4 semi-guided, open-ended questions. Part B was organized to obtain data regarding the participants' grades from several courses. Unlike Parts A and B, Part C included 1 qualitative, open-ended question that asked participants to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the DELTTP Program.

A translated version of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 3. Two structured interviews were conducted with one program graduate, and one third-year student who entered the program in 2000 and who is among the first students of DELTTP; two semi-structured interviews were carried out with one program administrator who plays an important role among the people who oversee the program and one staff person who was in charge of evaluating students' writing exams for writing courses in the School of Foreign Languages.

Procedure

Participants in the study were contacted one-by-one during the 6-month data collection period, which began in January 2006 and lasted until June 2006. The first three participants were reached via e-mails by the researcher's personal contacts in Turkey. Then, each of these participants was asked to provide an e-mail of another friend or acquaintance who graduated from DELTTP. Before the actual questionnaires, a cover e-mail including a brief statement that described the study and its purpose followed by a question inquiring if they would like to join this study was sent to the potential participants. In total, forty participants were reached and of these, the response rate was 65%. The twenty-six participants who agreed to join the study were sent the questionnaires via e-mail attachments and they returned the completed questionnaires via e-mail attachments as well. Test-retest reliability was implemented on eight of the participants to measure the reliability score of the questions in Part A and Part B. There was a 15-day interval between the two tests and the reliability coefficient for Part A was 1.00 while for Part B, it was .87.

RESULTS

Survey Results

Descriptive statistics were obtained by using SPSS 10. Out of twenty-six participants, nineteen graduated in four years' while seven graduated in five years. Twenty participants reported that they were working at the time that the questionnaires were administered and six reported that they were unemployed.

Table: 4
Participants' reasons why they preferred DELTTP

Reasons of preference	Frequency
1. the last two years of the program could be completed through distance education	1
2. limited access to financial means	0
3. low university entrance exam score	9
4. the right of substitute teaching gained in the junior year	3
5. other reasons (e.g. parental demands, direction of teachers)	5
1, 2, 3 and 4	1
Both 3 and 4	5
Both 1 and 4	1
Both 3 and 5	1
Total	26

* Participants were allowed to check more than one alternative if applicable.

A Seventeen of the employed participants wrote that they had worked as EFL teachers while three of them preferred a career in the fields of foreign commerce, translation and private business. Eight of the participants were appointed permanently by the Ministry of National Education (MNE) as EFL teachers, five worked as contractual teachers¹ affiliated with the MNE, one worked in a private school, one in a private language teaching institution, and the remaining three worked as substitute teachers who were paid by the hour by the MNE. Among the twenty-six participants, twenty-five took the Exam for Public Personnel Selection (KPSS). The one who did not take the KPSS exam was working in the field of foreign commerce. The mean score of the participants' KPSS exam is 63.5.

The mean score of the eight participants who were appointed as permanent teachers of English by the MNE is 70.9, while the mean KPSS score of the participants who were unemployed at the time when data collected was 67%. One of the participants who had a KPSS score of 80 reported to be unemployed at the time that the questionnaire was administered.

As seen in Table: 4, the main reason why the participants preferred DELTTP Program was its low university entrance exam score. Other frequently reported reasons were the right of substitute teaching gained in the junior year and other reasons such as parental demands and opinions of high school teachers about the program.

As to the levels of satisfaction with the education received in DELTTP, none of the participants chose the first option, which was "very satisfactory." Eight participants reported that the education was "satisfactory," while three said that they were "undecided." Out of the remaining fifteen participants, twelve found the education "unsatisfactory" and three "very unsatisfactory." As far as gender is concerned, the percentage of female participants who found the education satisfactory, excluding the "undecided" participants, was 26%, whereas for males, it was 42%.

As far as thinking about dropping out the program, out of seventeen participants who chose either "undecided," "unsatisfactory," and "very unsatisfactory" options, seven said that they thought about quitting the program based on the following reasons: the program was extremely difficult, the school of distance education made a bad impression in general, the system within the program wasn't well-established, it was difficult to explain the program to other people, and more could have been achieved with relatively less effort. Despite such reactions, all of these participants continued their education and stated the following reasons for doing so: unwillingness to be a quitter; perseverance and belief in self; the relatively low expense, years spent in program already, and future job opportunities; unwillingness to lose years of work after switching schools; the hope that improvements would be made to the program; and, a feeling that there was no better option.

There was not a significant difference in participants' KPSS scores for those who were employed and those who were not ($t(22) = 1.18, p = .250$, (two-tailed)). However, there was a modest but significant correlation between their grades in a pedagogical course: the Introduction to the Teaching Profession course and KPSS scores ($r = .568; p < 0.05$). Regarding the participants' grades in departmental courses that are offered only through distance learning and their current employment statuses, no significant difference was found, either ($t(20) = -1.49, p = .150$, (two-tailed)).

As for participants' comments on the weaknesses and strengths of the program, ten participants focused on the fact that DELTTP helped them gain personal virtues; they had become self-disciplined, responsible, strong, and independent individuals, in

short, autonomous learners. For example, one participant wrote "Through this program, I improved the speed of my reading, my reading comprehension, my ability to identify important points, and my ability to summarize." Four participants considered the opportunity to teach in schools as a substitute teacher in the junior and senior years as one of the strongest features of the program. Four participants mentioned the advantages of the centralized testing system. They wrote that the exams were fair¹ since they were evaluated by computers and since face-to-face instructors couldn't use their opinions when grading. However, one participant thought that this was among the weaknesses of the program, and that instructors should be given more control in determining students' grades. Other strengths, each mentioned by three participants, were summer school, the textbooks, and online academic advisement. They pointed out that summer school was beneficial; they could understand the topics better through face-to-face instruction, by asking simultaneous questions to instructors.

They found the textbooks to be "carefully selected, not simplified for distance education and being published by good publishers such as Cambridge and Oxford." On the other hand, two participants criticized the lack of application-oriented materials and assignments, particularly concerning the departmental courses in distance education. Regarding the online academic advisement, three participants wrote that they could communicate with academicians via discussions and e-mails, and benefited from the quizzes. Other strengths cited, each raised by two participants, were; being able to graduate from the program as a teacher, the fact that DELTTP produces qualified teachers, and the fact that it weeded out the "bad" students to keep the bar high.

The weaknesses that participants touched upon centered around several main issues. Ten (38%) participants declared that departmental courses (e.g., English Language Teaching Methodology, English Language Testing and Evaluation) were squeezed into the last two years of the program and it was too difficult to succeed in these courses only through distance learning.

They suggested that some of the departmental courses be offered face-to-face by exchanging them with some of the relatively easier first and second year courses. One participant wrote that the number of years in face-to-face instruction should be raised to three and only the last year should be carried out through distance education. Three out of these ten participants wrote that the system prompted them to memorize the course content in order to pass the exams. Seven participants stated that there was ambiguity within the program regarding many issues. While one claimed that "Everything got stabilized after two years, despite the fact that the program was prepared in a short time," the majority emphasized that a more stable system is needed.

The fact that the passing grade is 70 was criticized by seven participants. One participant compared the bell-shaped curve used to determine grades in the traditional TEFL Program in Anadolu University with the grading system of DELTTP, noting that: "the language acquisition course in the formal TEFL program can be passed by getting 35-40 due to the curve system while you can fail the same class by getting a 69 in our program." Another participant wrote that getting 70 from the departmental courses in distance education wasn't easy, but self determination helped considerably.

Lastly, one participant stated that they passed their exams thanks to the private institutions that were opened in several cities to help students with third and fourth year classes. However, despite these seven participants, a passing grade of 70 was considered as strength by two participants, who wrote that "it increases the quality of education in DELTTP."

Three participants touched upon the fact that high school teachers were utilized as instructors in many cities before Eskisehir became the center city for face-to-face education, and this was seen as “not adequate” for college education. They wrote that every undergraduate student should get education in universities from professional faculty members. Other issues that were brought up by at least two participants were:

- feedback was needed after the exams so that students could learn more efficiently
- tuition fees were too high
- pedagogical courses were not valued highly enough; the passing grade was 50 and thus students didn't care much; furthermore, this created serious problems in their student-teaching or actual teaching
- students' opinions were taken for granted by the administration of DELTTP
- distance education was not efficient
- course meeting hours in face-to-face education were not sufficient
- the students needed interactive learning as far as a language was concerned.

Interview Results

Four people including a program administrator, a third-year student, an instructor in the School of Foreign Languages, and a recent graduate were interviewed for descriptive details about the effectiveness of DELTTP.

Interview with a program administrator

When an administrator of DELTTP was asked about the discrepancy between the large number of accepted students and the small number of graduates, the answer was as follows:

When you say that only 119 students graduated out of 2500 students, it sounds bizarre; however, there are reasons for this. In our higher education system, entrance scores of a newly opened program are calculated according to the students' scores who choose the program that year. As a result, first-year scores usually turn out to be low. In the following years, the lowest entrance score increases. This is what has happened in our case, too. If a student has a low language score, that means he or she has a low level of English proficiency. And if students want to succeed in the departmental courses, they have to have sufficient English proficiency. Moreover, English language programs in most of the universities provide one year of language preparation in order to develop students' proficiency in English, but our program doesn't, and it is hard for students to improve their skills on their own. When the program first started, more students had problems with English compared to recent years, so they had to struggle a lot in the first and second years. It was like a prep class for them. To sum up, if students have a low level of English, they can't graduate from our program and this is how we maintain the quality.

For these reasons, the interviewee pointed out, more reliable results about the program would be obtained by looking at the percentage of fourth-year students who graduated from the program, not at the percentage of the number of the graduates as compared with the number of accepted students. Regarding the number of graduates appointed by the MNE, the interviewee said that it was also important to know how many of the graduates applied to the MNE to obtain a more reliable percentage about MNE's recruitment of DELTTP graduates.

According to the interviewee, DELTTP started to offer summer courses to make "learning from professors and experts of School of Education" available to students.

As to the question about the rapidly increasing number of private institutions that offer classes for DELTTP students, the interviewee responded by saying that they cannot prevent them from opening since it is their legal right to do so.

Moreover, the students were warned at the beginning of each year not to trust these institutions since the instructors working there are not experts and might misdirect students. However, students choose to attend these institutions since they claim that they cannot plan their schedules well enough to study on a regular basis for the courses in distance education. According to hearsay received by DELTTP administration, these institutions translate materials from English to Turkish and explain course content in Turkish. The interviewee also added that DELTTP does nothing wrong that would cause students to attend such private institutions.

The interviewee was also asked about the availability of online support to DELTTP students. According to her, the administration kept track of the number of students utilizing online academic advisement regularly and the outcomes were quite satisfying; however, they also acknowledged the fact that DELTTP has a wide range of students and that there are some who reside in villages who lack access to computers and the internet. Taking the circumstances of the country into consideration, online support facilities are optional.

As far as the high tuition fees compared to the those of other state universities, the interviewee declared that tuition was calculated according to the expenses of the program such as the prices of books published abroad (e.g., Cambridge University Press) and the publication of exams, so there was little to be done to alleviate the cost of tuition.

Interview with a third-year DELTTP student

A student interviewed for this study claimed to be satisfied with the content of the program itself but not with how it is administered. He found summer school and online academic advisement services to be quite beneficial and effective although he would prefer that summer school was based on a grading system since, if a student fails one class only, s/he can still take the summer school and pass the course. If s/he is about to graduate, a grading system would be even better since the student can apply to the MNE without waiting for the make-up exams, which are given after the first appointments of MNE.

The interviewee pointed to many deficiencies of the program despite the recent innovations and changes. According to him, private preparatory institutions have cropped up in all the major cities, and many students enroll despite the high costs. He added, "In Istanbul, there is a famous one. The price of one year's courses is \$2,000. But still students go. The annual price of those in Eskisehir is around \$1,000." Some of these institutions employ retired faculty members, native speakers, which attracts students. The interviewee also said that there is a good reason why these students attend these institutions; it is to make up for deficiencies in the instructional delivery of DELTTP.

Interview with an instructor in the School of Foreign Languages

An instructor from the School of Foreign Languages told the interviewer that students who first entered the program in 2000 had significantly less proficiency than those who entered the program in following years. According to him, "Some of the first students of this program had little English proficiency. For example, some of them didn't even know what 'am, is, are' meant. However, as time went by, students with better English skills entered the program. There were students who got 90 out of 100 questions right in the Foreign Language Exam (YDS)." He also added that many

changes had been implemented concerning the curriculum and operation of the program. For that reason, the information obtained from the first graduates needed to be evaluated carefully. Concerning online academic advisement, the interviewee said that students' computer skills are not always well developed, so many did not use the online support.

Interview with a DELTTP graduate

A student who entered DELTTP in 2000 and graduated in 2004 was interviewed for her views about the program. Responding to the question regarding course materials, the interviewee said that students had been sent a syllabus together with the other materials. In this syllabus, a schedule showing what topics would be studied in what weeks was provided, and according to her, "If you study regularly, you are fine but if you skip even one week, you get into trouble." A 50-page booklet was sent at the beginning of each year with information concerning the program, courses, tuition fees, frequently asked questions, registration, etc., which the interviewee found to be beneficial. Regarding the question about whether online support helped or not, the interviewee's response was positive. However, when asked about the private institutions, she said that "unfortunately 70 or 80% attend these institutions."

DISCUSSION

Although the findings of this study cannot be relied on too heavily due to the small sample size, they do provide a preliminary evaluation and descriptive results about DELTTP, which can inform further research into the effectiveness of distance learning for the training of EFL teachers.

The major purpose of this study was to shed light on whether the Turkish program trains sufficient numbers of EFL teachers for the Ministry of National Education in the shortest time possible without abandoning the high standards of quality characteristic of traditional teacher preparation programs. Even though the majority of the participants in this study graduated within the expected time and now work as EFL teachers for the MNE, statistics regarding the number of graduates show contradictory results. Table A.III in Appendix 1 shows that 4,919 students enrolled for the program in the first two years and of those, 111 students quit the program at the end of the first year and 272 at the end of the second year. So, out of the remaining 4,536 students, excluding the dropouts in future years if there were any, 119 graduated in 2004 and 554 graduated in 2005. Among the graduates, 99 were appointed as permanent teachers by the MNE.

As a result of these statistics, it can be inferred that DELTTP hasn't achieved its stated objective so far regarding training EFL teachers in sufficient numbers in the shortest possible time. As for its objective to maintain a high quality of education, many of the participants, including the administrator interviewee, thought that qualified teachers result from the program primarily because of the high minimum passing grade required for graduation. Thus, within the scope of this study, it can be concluded that while a relatively small number of students are able to meet the graduation requirements, those who do are qualified EFL teachers. However, future research is necessary to define the characteristics of a "qualified" EFL teacher. Moreover, to determine whether DELTTP indeed trains qualified teachers, it would be necessary to compare its graduates with those of traditional EFL programs in their actual teaching environments.

In her interview, the administrator suggested that looking at the percentage of the number of fourth-year students as compared to the final number of graduates would give more reliable results about the success of the program. According to Table A.III, the percentage of the number of fourth-year students as compared with the number of graduates in 2004 is 60%, while for 2005, it is 50%. Thus, it can be concluded that at least half of fourth-year students in the DELTTP do graduate the next year.

Realistically speaking, these percentages do not change the fact that DELTTP is not meeting its stated objective in terms of providing enough EFL teachers for the country.

However, it can lead us to an explanation of why it takes too long to graduate from this program: students' low proficiency levels in English at the beginning of the program create enormous obstacles for them during their first and second years. For additional explanations, it might serve well to conduct a comparative study with a traditional TEFL program whose lowest entrance scores are close to those of DELTTP. This would allow the researcher to see the percentages of successful and unsuccessful students in the first two years.

Sakar, in a 2002 survey carried out with 4,144 first- and second-year DELTTP students, found that 93% of the students wanted to receive their education on a university campus. Based on the fact that DELTTP centralized the face-to-face education in Eskisehir as of the 2004-2005 school year, we can infer that students' opinions were, in fact, taken into account and that improvements were made contrary to what two participants wrote about the value of students' opinions for the program administration. In the same study, Sakar also reported that students, in general, were satisfied with the instructors of face-to-face education, written materials, exams, face-to-face education centers in 16 cities and representatives of DELTTP in these cities (Sakar, 2002). The current study supports some of Sakar's conclusions, while contradicting others. Similar to Sakar's findings, three of the participants in the current study stated that they were satisfied with the books, and four wrote that multiple-choice testing was fair.

However, out of twenty-six participants, fifteen reported that they were dissatisfied with the education they received in DELTTP and three were unsure if they were satisfied or not. Considering the likelihood that participants of the present study were among those in Sakar's study, some element of the program must have changed to make the participants change their minds about their overall education. It is reasonable to conclude that this element was the distance-learning component of the program, the different instructional delivery method that these students experienced between the two studies.

According to the results of the present study, more than half of the participants (14 out of 26) said that they chose DELTTP because of its low university entrance score requirement. This supports the administrator's explanation of the discrepancy between the large number of accepted students and the small number of graduates, that is, the low level of incoming students' English proficiency.

However, closer scrutiny is needed to further investigate the reasons for this discrepancy. For example, as two of the participants also pointed out, the class hours of face-to-face instruction--10 hours weekly in grammar, reading, writing, and speaking skills-- may not be sufficient for students to improve their skills in English in the given time. Although increasing the number of hours may not be practical for financial and other reasons, this should at least be considered, since the lack of English proficiency may explain why students are trapped in the first two years of the program.

Seven out of seventeen participants who were either unsure or not satisfied with the education offered by DELTTP wrote that they considered quitting the program mainly because it was too difficult. Indeed, the majority of participants found succeeding in the departmental courses during the distance learning exceedingly difficult. These findings are indicators of problems within the last two years of the program.

Future beneficial research could evaluate the curriculum, the content of the materials, tests, and administration of the departmental courses offered through distance learning. Among the participants who found succeeding in the departmental courses during the distance learning exceedingly difficult, several suggested that some of the departmental courses could be offered face-to-face by exchanging them with some of the “relatively easy” first- and second-year courses.

However, this would not be possible, since the first two years of the program aim to improve students’ language skills. It might also be better for DELTTP to maintain a curriculum in accordance with that of traditional TEFL programs under YOK’s regulation, in order to standardize the training of EFL teachers throughout the country.

The administrator’s remarks about the role of the private institutions deserve mention. If the modus operandi in these institutions is to translate English materials supplied by DELTTP into Turkish and to use Turkish as the medium of instruction on a supply-and-demand basis, this begs the question of the students’ proficiency in English. Under normal circumstances, a student is supposed to have sufficient level of proficiency to be able to follow the course content in English after s/he successfully becomes a third-year student. It should be cautioned, however, that the information about the methods of private institutions was obtained from one individual only.

The finding that participants’ grades in the Introduction to the Teaching Profession course were significantly linked to their KPSS scores was not surprising, given that KPSS has a section to test candidates’ pedagogical knowledge, and this section would likely include questions related to the content of that course. However, the finding that there was not a significant difference in participants’ KPSS scores for those who were employed and those who were not was unexpected, since the major criterion to be appointed by the MNE is the KPSS score. Thus, it is suspected that the present results were affected by the fact that one of the participants who had a KPSS score of 80 reported to be unemployed at the time that the questionnaire was administered. This participant was likely waiting to be appointed during the second wave of permanent teacher appointments in February.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As pointed out by Kose, Canturk, and Ulsever (2002), “Once the evaluation of exam papers is complete, students’ papers are photocopied and sent to all of the students in the program so that they can see their errors and read the comments written by the evaluators in their papers.” Although feedback was given for the writing exams, this was not the case for the multiple-choice exams during the distance-education period, and two of the participants regretted not being provided with the correct answers to the multiple-choice questions for more efficient learning. DELTTP could easily provide the correct answers on each multiple-choice exam with short explanations on the WebCT. Several participants stated that departmental courses should be supported with application-oriented assignments. o increase the efficiency of providing course materials for the departmental courses, application-oriented assignments, and various examples for ESL activities could be posted online. In addition to these, DELTTP could organize some online activities, such as a “best EFL activity competition,” to increase students’ motivation during the distance-education period.

CONCLUSIONS

Many innovations and changes have been made to DELTTP since it began in 2000, and these apparently have contributed to a better education for its students each year. However, a more stable system, one that would increase students’ motivation, should be a goal.

Currently, DELTTP does not train sufficient teachers of English in the shortest time possible for Turkey's needs. This is due to a wide range of factors; thus the statistics in the forthcoming years should be tracked in order to obtain more reliable conclusions about the program. Some of other important conclusions that can be suggested from this study are:

- the majority of the graduates of DELTTP chose a career in teaching, particularly in the Ministry of National Education;
- DELTTP has helped many students become self-disciplined, responsible, independent individuals, and autonomous learners;
- the summer school and online academic advisement facilities offered by DELTTP are beneficial and efficient; these elements of the program might help students graduate more quickly in the following years.

As noted above, this is a preliminary evaluation of a relatively new program. At the time of the study, data for only the first and second classes of graduates were available, and the sample size does not sufficiently represent the target population. Therefore, the results are tentative.

However, it is important for DELTTP administrators to identify and understand problems such as those listed above and to take proper measures to facilitate learning. Finally, this evaluation should be ongoing, with the goal of finding more efficient ways to train EFL teachers via distance learning, of improving DELTTP and helping it to meet its stated objectives.

Note:

(1) Contractual teachers are appointed after permanent teachers according to the need. They have less benefits and prestige compared to permanent teachers. For example, until the summer of 2006, they were paid on a and prestige compared to permanent teachers.

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- Turkish Constitution of 1981, Law Number 2547.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE A. I.
Universities and lowest entrance scores according to
Center for Student Selection and Placement as of 2005

University	Location	Program	Lowest entrance score
Akdeniz University	Antalya (South)	Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	365.427
Anadolu Univeristy	Eskisehir (West Anatolia)	TEFL-Formal Education	366.393
Anadolu Univeristy	Eskisehir	TEFL- Distance Education (DELTP)	353.837
Ataturk University	Erzurum (Northeast)	TEFL	361.126
Ataturk University	Erzurum	English Language and Literature	357.244
Bogazici University	Istanbul	TEFL	394.439
Bogazici University	Istanbul	English Language and Lit	373.280
Cukurova University	Adana (Southeast)	TEFL	363.169
Cukurova University	Adana (Southeast)	TEFL-Evening Education (IO)	360.723
Dicle Univeristy	Diyarbakir (East)	TEFL	360.815
9 Eylul University	Izmir (West coast)	TEFL	371.888
Ege University	Izmir	English Language and Literature	361.141
Erciyas University	Kayseri (East)	TEFL	364.534
Gazi University	Ankara (Middle Anatolia)	TEFL	370.953
Gazi University	Ankara	TEFL- Evening Education (IO)	364.090
Gaziantep University	Gaziantep (East)	English Language and Literature	358.278
Hacettepe University	Ankara	TEFL	384.687
Marmara University	Istanbul	TEFL	369.060
Mersin University	Mersin (South)	TEFL	362.916
Mersin University	Mersin (South)	TEFL-Evening Education (IO)	360.447
Middle East Technical University (METU)	Ankara	TEFL	389.688
19 Mayıs University	Samsun (Blacksea)	TEFL	364.169
19 Mayıs University	Samsun	TEFL-Evening Education (IO)	360.961
Selcuk Univeristy	Konya (Middle Anatolia)	TEFL	364.311
Selcuk University	Konya	TEFL-Evening Education (IO)	360.384
Trakya University	Edirne (European side)	TEFL	362.280
Yeditepe University (Private)	Istanbul	TEFL-Private	338.572
Yeditepe University (Private)	Istanbul	TEFL-With full scholarship	373.089
100.Yil University	Van (East)	English Language and Literature	356.777
Kafkas University	Kars (East)	English Language and Literature	356.341
Maltepe University (Private)	Istanbul	TEFL-Private	329.793
Maltepe University (Private)	Istanbul	TEFL-With full scholarship	361.286

*Data obtained from official 2006 OSS Guide of Centre for Student Selection and Placement (OSYM)

TABLE A. II
Curriculum of the formal EFL programs under YOK's regulations

Freshman Year	First Semester
	English Grammar
	Spoken English I
	Reading Skills I
	English Composition I
	Introduction to Teaching Profession
	Principles of Ataturk and History of the Turkish Revolution I*
	Turkish I: Written Communication
	Second Semester
	English Grammar II
	Spoken English II
	Reading Skills II
	English Composition II
	School Experience I
Principles of Ataturk and History of the Turkish Revolution II	
Turkish II: Oral Communication	
Sophomore Year	Third Semester
	Advanced Reading Skills
	Introduction to English Literature I
	Language Acquisition
	Turkish Phonology and Morphology
	Computer
	Development and Learning
	Non-Departmental Elective I*
	Fourth Semester
	Advanced Writing Skills
	Introduction to English Literature II
	Approaches to ELT
	Introduction to Linguistics I
	Instructional Planning and Evaluation
Turkish Syntax and Semantics	
Non-departmental elective II	
Junior Year	Fifth Semester
	Introduction to Linguistics II
	Short Story Analysis and Teaching
	English- Turkish Translation
	Special Teaching Methods I
	Instructional Technology & Materials Development
	Non-departmental elective III
	Sixth Semester
	Research Skills
	Teaching English to Young Learners
	Novel: Analysis and Teaching
	Special Teaching Methods II
	Classroom Management
	Non-departmental elective IV
Senior Year	Seventh Semester
	English Language Testing and Evaluation
	Drama: Analysis and Teaching
	ELT Materials Evaluation and Adaptation
	English Course book Evaluation
	School Experience II
	Non-departmental elective V
	Eighth Semester
	Turkish-English Translation
	Poetry: Analysis and Teaching
	Practice Teaching
	Guidance

- * Curriculum obtained by comparing the curricula of formal TEFL programs of various universities (e.g. Hacettepe University, Anadolu University)
- * Semesters in which Principles of Ataturk and History of the Turkish Revolution (I-II) and non departmental elective courses are offered may change university-wise.
- * Bogazici University and METU use slightly different curricula compared to other formal TEFL programs.

Table A.III. Official Statistics of DELTTP*

Academic Year	Maximum Enrollment	# of accepted students	# of incoming students	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior
2000-2001	2500	2520	2431	2431	N/A	N/A
2001-2002	2500	2532	2488	3574	1234	N/A
2002-2003	2500	2587	2548	3073	3535	656
2003-2004	1500	1500	1500	1652	3806	3070
2004-2005	750	750	750	827	2927	4353
2005-2006	750	750	750	790	1347	4183

- * Statistics obtained http://oyegm.meb.gov.tr/ogr_yet/ingilizce_ogr_yet_prj.htm, official website of MNE. Some of the statistics such as drop out rates were calculated by the researcher according to the provided data.
- **Number of enrolled students is assumed to be equal to the maximum number of enrollment since data wasn't released by the MNE.