

The New Requirement for Instructor Recruitment at School of Foreign Languages: What Do Administrators Think?

Yabancı Diller Yüksekokullarında Yeni Öğretim Görevlisi İstihdam Sürecinin Gereklilikleri: Yöneticiler Ne Diyor?

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Özet

2018 yılında 2547 sayılı Kanun çerçevesinde “okutman, uzman, çevirci ve eğitim-öğretim planlamacı” olarak yükseköğretim kurumlarında mevzuatta belirtilen görevleri yerine getirmek üzere görevlendirilen kişilerin de unvanları değiştirilerek hepsi “öğretim görevlisi” adı altında birleştirilmiştir. Bu yasal değişiklik aynı zamanda yeni istihdam edilecek olan öğretim görevlilerinden istenen gerekliliklerde de değişime yol açmıştır. Bu değişiklikte birlikte yabancı diller yüksekokullarında istihdam edilecek olan öğretim görevlilerinin yüksek lisans derecesine sahip olmaları ön koşulu getirilmiştir. Bu araştırma ile yabancı diller yüksekokulu yöneticilerinin bu değişiklik hakkındaki görüşleri tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları özellikle yeni öğretim görevlisi istihdam etme sürecinde yaşadıkları zorluklardan dolayı yöneticilerin yeni uygulamaya ilişkin olumsuz görüşlere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. İngilizce öğretmenliğinde yüksek lisansa alternatif olarak sertifikasyon, öğretim deneyimi ve diğer ilişkili alanlarda yapılacak olan yüksek lisans derecesi gösterilmiştir. Öğretim görevlilerine özellikle kuram ve uygulamayı bütünleştiren sürekli mesleki gelişim çalışmalarının sağlanması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Öğretim görevlileri, öğretmen nitelikleri, yabancı diller yüksekokulu, yöneticiler.

Abstract

In 2018, a legislative change -law number 2547- resulted in the adoption of the title “instructor”, replacing “lecturers, specialists, translators, and education planners” for positions at the different departments of universities. This law also led to an adjustment in the instructor recruitment requirements. Correspondingly, the English language teaching instructors must have completed a master’s degree to be hired to work at School of Foreign Languages (SFLs). This paper aims to uncover the opinions and suggestions of School of Foreign Language administrators about this change. This study shows that administrators approach the new requirement unenthusiastically due to the possible problems in hiring instructors. As an alternative criterion to a master’s degree in ELT, administrators consider certification, teaching experience and graduate degrees in non-ELT programs. The results suggest that instructors be provided with professional development opportunities that merges theory into practice.

Keywords: Administrators, instructors, School of Foreign Languages (SFLs), teacher qualities.

Language teaching and learning at higher education have been investigated from multiple perspectives. Specifically, related research on language education that focuses on the challenges and problems in Turkey (British Council, 2015; Demirel, 1991; Kılıçkaya, 2018; Ünal & İlhan, 2017) highlights the need to focus more on teachers, teacher training, teacher quality and teacher recruitment along with many other topics of attention. As a starting point in teachers’

professional lives, recruitment of teachers needs immediate attention in line with the recent changes. To analyze the language instructors’ recruitment procedures in higher education institutions in Turkey, available research is not sufficient to deepen the discussion (Kılıçkaya, 2018).

The role of teacher quality in the learning process and the learning outcomes (Berry, 2013; Blömeke, Olsen, & Suhl, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Ferguson, 1991)

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can be a starting point to examine teachers as the leading agents in educational processes. Teacher quality covers teacher qualifications that ranges from educational background, teaching experience, professional development and even to the personality of the teacher (Blömeke, Olsen, & Suhl, 2016). Teacher quality is an essential point in the recruitment procedures. Even though these procedures vary across countries and educational levels, the qualities remain significant in hiring teachers. The recruitment requirements show differences in education systems. For instance, in Australia, Canada, Finland and Singapore, teachers are required to have completed a two-year research and practice-oriented graduate program (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Reimer & Dorf, 2014). Recruitment requirements affect various layers and institutions of education system such as teacher training institutions and their employment processes. Countries (eg. Finland) where teacher competencies are determined by education bodies are observed to experience less frequent and sudden changes in their employment policies.

Schools of Foreign Languages (SFLs) and Teacher Quality

In Turkey, the adoption of English medium of instruction at the higher education level can be traced back to 1956 when the first English-medium University was established. Later, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) made necessary language policy changes in 1984 through the Higher Education Act (Kırkgöz, 2014). Accordingly, to prepare university students for their undergraduate courses offered in English, a year-long preparatory programs running under the School of Foreign Languages (SFLs) were planned and started to be implemented.

These School of Foreign Languages programs offer intensive language courses to undergraduate students before their first year in their major. SFLs across the country implement different programs. Upon entry to the English medium of instruction universities, students take a language proficiency test. Students at the SFLs can complete the program after passing the exit test. SFLs aim to help students improve their language skills to enable them to succeed in their major in English. Students also maintain interaction and stay engaged in academic and social topics in English. However, SFLs experience difficulty in achieving their goals. They are often criticized for ineffective instructional methods and approaches (Balci, Durak-Üğüten, & Çolak, 2018). The problems are multifaceted. For instance, British Council's (2015) report on language learning and teaching at the higher education presents a poor language learning background of students and low motivation as the leading problems.

Key to solve many of the issues, instructors play an important role in attaining and maintaining program effectiveness. Hence, instructor qualities need to be investigated thoroughly. Ünal and İlhan (2017) point out teacher quality as a problem in higher education as stated by the students. Further, Akcan et al. (2017) collected administrator opinions about instructor qualities. The study reports language proficiency, openness to professional development, personality, and pedagogical competence as the key indicators of quality. Administrator opinions and suggestions contribute directly to the program effectiveness. They are also closely related to instructor recruitment and retention processes.

The Recruitment of English Language Instructors to Schools of Foreign Languages in Turkey - A Historical Perspective

English language teachers are trained in Faculty of Education programs to teach at all levels. The faculties do not offer programs that specialize according to the age of learners. Unlike some other countries such as Finland (Reimer & Dorf, 2014), English language graduates in Turkey can teach at any educational level from kindergartens to the university level. However, the recruiting processes differ for different grades.

While primary and secondary school English language teachers are appointed by the Ministry of National Education, university instructors are appointed by the CoHE.

English language instructors are usually appointed on a yearly or bi-yearly contract that are renewed at the end of each period.

English language instructors to work at SFLs have to meet the requirements stated in the Official Gazette (Resmi Gazete). The requirements as announced in the Official Gazette (Resmi Gazete, 2008) were ALES (Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Exam) score, language proficiency exam score and a BA degree from English Language Teaching, English Literature, Linguistics, or Translation undergraduate programs. Completing a master's degree was considered a bonus for the recruiters. In addition to a BA degree, teacher training certifications have sometimes been perceived more essential than a master's degree. Certification programs have been in practice since 1982 to meet the increasing teacher demand. These programs have well functioned without posing a threat to the quality of instruction. (Demirel, 1991). On the contrary, they offered intensive practice-oriented programs with well set-up mentorship features. CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) is a certification program widely used for teachers with little or no teaching experience (Cambridge English, 2020a). The modules



cover both practical and theoretical skills. DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) certification program provides advanced level of content in their modules that targets teachers with at least one year's experience (Cambridge English, 2020b). In Seferoğlu's (2007) study, teacher candidates favor the teacher certification programs as an alternative way leading to employment.

Until the recent amendments in 2018, graduates from English language teaching programs could apply for an instructor position with their ALES and language proficiency exam scores. With the recent change in 2018, a new legislation required fundamental changes in the recruitment conditions of English language instructors.

The New English Language Instructor Recruitment Policy in Turkey

The recent change in the recruitment requirements for language instructors working at the School of Foreign Languages started with a legislative proposal submitted to Grand National Assembly of Turkey on the January 17th, 2018. The proposal aimed to enact some changes in the policies about higher education staff recruitment (memurlar.net, 2018).

The requirements for recruitment of language instructors can be presented under three main criteria: undergraduate degree, language proficiency exam and Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Exam (ALES) (Resmi Gazete, 2018). The candidates are expected to complete a bachelor and master's degree in English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, American Literature, and Translation and Interpretation. The language proficiency exams that are accepted are KPDS (State Employees Foreign Language Exam), YDS (Foreign Language Exam), YOKDIL (Higher Education Institutions Language Exam) and some internationally recognized exams of TOEFL and PTE Academic. As a final requirement, a minimum score of 70 on ALES linguistic/verbal section is asked upon applying for a language instructor position.

The recent changes impacted the change of position title and required a graduate degree. First, the title of 'lecturer' was proposed to be replaced with 'instructor'. Secondly, the Official Gazette dated June 7th, 2018 announced that language instructors were required to complete a master's with a thesis degree. The final change has created some serious issues in hiring instructors with master's degree in the field of English Language Teaching. The change and its impact need exploration by analyzing the perspectives of administrators as the main agent of the change.

Indicators of Quality: Literature on Graduate Degree, Certification and Teacher Experience as Recruitment Requirements

In their analysis of teacher certification and preparation on teacher quality, Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford and Wyckoff (2007) point out that better student outcomes might be related to multiple factors. Research is often inconclusive about a direct and observable link between these variables. Many teaching contexts require master's degree that merge research and practice as a resourceful input for the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Reimer & Dorf, 2014). Studies examined the effect of a graduate education on teaching practice and on the achievement scores of students. For instance, Harris and Sass (2008) report no direct link between pre-service training of teachers and student achievement. However, the research about the effect of graduate studies is more controversial. While some studies confirm the positive influence of having a master's degree, such as positive impact on teacher cognition (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011), others have found no such discernible contribution (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vidgor, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

The relation between the field of study in a graduate degree and achievement remains weak. Research on the degree completed reveals varying conclusions with different variables in different fields of study. Some studies on math education found a positive correlation between teachers' completion of a graduate degree and students' math performance (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Harris & Sass, 2008). On the other hand, Boyd et al. (2007) describe a lack of evidence for the effect of graduate studies in English language and science teaching. Akbari and Dadvand (2011) explore the connection between teacher cognition and the degree completed and favor a master's degree over a bachelor degree in terms of the number of pedagogical thought units produced. Johnson's (2000) study highlights that students with teachers holding graduate degrees in subjects such as English and math perform better than those with teachers holding graduate degrees in pedagogy.

The link between teacher certification and student success is not clear. Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor (2007) examine the teacher certification exam scores in connection with their effect in the classroom and reached positive findings. In another study, a correlation is identified among math, teacher certification, and student achievement (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Hawk, Coble, & Swanson, 1985). On the other hand, some studies found conflicting results that indicate a very weak connection between teacher certification and student achievement (Gallagher, 2004; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006). Teaching experience is found as a stronger indicator of teacher effectiveness than the teacher certification exam scores (Boyd et al., 2007).



Research also focused on teacher experience and student success correlation (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Hanushek, 1989; Noell & Burns, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). Rockoff (2004) indicates that teaching experience leads to an increase in vocabulary and reading comprehension levels for elementary school students. In Noell and Burns' (2006) study conducted at the higher education level, compared to novice teachers, experienced English language teachers are found highly effective. Similar findings are observed at the high school level as reported by Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor (2007). Harris and Sass (2008) specify that experienced teachers deliver math and reading courses rather effectively. On the other hand, some research reports no positive effect of teaching experience on the pedagogical variables (Archibald, 2006; Heck, 2007) and some studies show negative effects (Huang & Moon, 2009). The findings agree that the number of teaching years makes a difference and the early years in the profession when teachers are flexible and more open to learning opportunities are also quite rewarding (Bird, 2017).

Taking into account the role of master's education, certification, and experience in English language teaching, this study concentrates on SFL administrators' perspectives on the new recruitment requirement process to fill a gap in research (Kılıçkaya, 2018). It is situated within the framework of instructor quality. These perspectives are enriched with the administrators' suggestions for possible challenges and outcomes. Therefore, this study is believed to contribute to English language education at the higher education level acting as a reference point for policymakers and administrators.

This paper aims to find answers to the following research questions:

- What are the opinions of SFL administrators about:
 - the difficulties they experienced while hiring new instructors,
 - the requirement of having a master's degree with a thesis to apply for an instructor position at a prep school,
 - certification as an alternative to master's programs to apply for an instructor position at a prep school,
 - teaching experience as an alternative to a master's degree with a thesis to apply for an instructor position at a prep school,
 - the requirement of a master's degree solely in ELT to apply for an instructor position at a prep school,
 - the requirement of having a master's with a thesis in the field of Educational Sciences, or non-ELT majors,
 - undergraduate and graduate ELT program courses at education faculties.

- What are the suggestions of SFL administrators:
 - to enhance instructor quality to be hired by the prep schools,
 - for Faculty of Education programs and policymakers?

Method

This research was conducted based on a qualitative case study model to reveal the opinions of the SFL administrators about the new instructor recruitment requirements. Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012) describe a case study as a detailed work of one or (at most) a few individuals or other social units, such as a classroom, a school, or a neighborhood. It can also be a study of an event, an activity, or an ongoing process. In this study, the case is the new policy implementation regarding instructor recruitment, and this was explored by the opinions of SFL administrators. The present study first collects the opinions and suggestions of the SFL administrators about the new recruitment requirements and then analyses the findings to provide an overall picture for the policymakers and university administrators.

Population and Sample

The population of the study is composed of 164 SFL administrators working in 107 state and 57 private SFLs in Turkey. A sample was not formed as all the university administrators were contacted either via email or phone. In total, 69 SFL administrators voluntarily participated in the study. The demographics of the participating administrators are displayed in ■ Table 1.

Approximately half of the participating administrators are female (45%). A balanced distribution of educational background is seen with a high number of master's degree graduates (86%). Administrators mostly fall into 21–40 (41%) and 41–60 (55%) age group range. The majority (63%) are graduates of English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. Their graduate degree programs show a similar distribution. The English Language Teaching program is the leading graduate program followed by non-ELT philology programs. Educational Sciences and the other category are listed below respectively. The duration of participants' administration experience is mostly (62%) 0–5 years, only a few (3%) have more than 16 years of experience. The number of instructors working at these universities is mostly between 0–60 (63%); 17% of the universities have 121 and more instructors. The number of universities with 0–20 instructors offering graduate degrees composes 80% of all participating universities. The populated big cities of Turkey -Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir- host the highest number of universities. The data for this research was collected in 33 cities which hold a total of 4259 instructors, 1473 of whom hold graduate degrees. Nine universities (4 in Istanbul,



Table 1. Demographics of SFL administrators.

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	38	55
	Female	31	45
Education	Undergraduate	65	94
	Master's	59	86
	Doctorate	27	39
Age	0-20	0	0
	21-40	28	41
	41-60	38	55
	61 and over	3	4
Undergraduate program	English Language Teaching / Education	40	63
	English Language and Literature / Translation-Interpretation / American Culture and Literature / Linguistics	22	34
	Other	2	3
Master's program	English Language Teaching / Education	27	46
	English Language and Literature / Translation-Interpretation / American Culture and Literature / Linguistics	16	27
	Educational Sciences	8	13.5
	Other	8	13.5
Doctorate program	English Language Teaching / Education	11	41
	English Language and Literature / Translation-Interpretation / American Culture and Literature / Linguistics	8	29
	Educational Sciences	4	15
	Other	4	15
Administration experience (in yrs)	0-5	43	62
	6-10	20	29
	11-15	4	6
	16 and more	2	3
The number of instructors	0-30	28	41
	31-60	15	22
	61-90	11	16
	91-120	3	4
	121 and more	12	17
The number of instructors with graduate degrees	0-10	37	54
	11-20	18	26
	21-30	3	4
	31-40	2	3
	41 and more	9	13

State-type of university			
İstanbul	State	1	1.45
	Private	20	29
Ankara	State	6	8.7
	Private	4	5.8
İzmir	State	2	2.9
	Private	2	2.9
Gaziantep	State	1	1.45
	Private	1	1.45
Antalya	State	1	1.45
	Private	1	1.45
Adana	State	1	1.45
Ağrı	State	1	1.45
Bartın	State	1	1.45
Bilecik	State	1	1.45
Bingöl	State	1	1.45
Bursa	State	1	1.45
Denizli	State	1	1.45
Diyarbakır	State	1	1.45
Erzincan	State	1	1.45
Erzurum	State	1	1.45
Total number of instructors		4259	
Total number of instructors with graduate degrees		1473	

	City	State	Private	Number of instructors
Sample number of universities with the highest number of instructors with graduate degrees	İstanbul	-	4	421
	Ankara	3	1	329
	Eskişehir	1	-	160
	Total			910



4 in Ankara and 1 in Eskişehir) report 62% of their instructors hold graduate degrees ($n=910$); while the rest of the universities ($n=60$) indicated that 38% of their instructors have completed graduate degrees.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers collected the data using a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The questions prepared independently by the researchers were compared and reduced in number checking the similarities and differences. In the next step, to see the effectiveness of open-ended questions in revealing the opinions of the administrators, one expert (a faculty member) per program -English Language Teaching, Curriculum and Instruction, and Measurement and Evaluation- was consulted. The questionnaire was finalized considering the feedback received from the experts. The questions in the online questionnaire are as follows:

- Do you experience any difficulties in recruiting new instructors due to the new recruitment policy? If your answer is yes, then what kind of difficulties are you experiencing?
- Do you think that the applicants for an instructor position at SFLs should have a master's degree with a thesis? Please justify your reason/s.
- Do you think that certification programs are acceptable instead of a master's with thesis degree to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?
- Do you think that teaching experience is acceptable as a criterion instead of a master's to apply for an instructor position at SFLs? If your answer is yes, please indicate the required time of experience.
- Do you think that a master's degree in ELT should be the primary criteria to apply for an instructor position at SFLs? Please justify your reason/s.
- What could be the consequences of accepting non-ELT master's degree programs (i.e. Measurement and Evaluation in Education) as a criterion to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?
- What could be done to improve the quality of instructors working at SFLs?
- What do you think about the curricula of education faculties? Do you think they are efficient to train instructors to work at SFLs? Please justify your reasons.
- What are your suggestions to policy makers and administrators to train instructors to work at SFLs?

The data collected were analyzed by percentage and frequency for demographic information and by content analysis method for open-ended questions.

Permissions for the conduct of research were granted from TED University Ethics Committee (no: 61491896-050.06.04/). Before the implementation, administrators were e-mailed about the purpose and content of the study. They were invited for voluntary participation. The data collection form was emailed to voluntary participants. The data were collected through these online questionnaires between December 2018 and January 2019.

Demographic information data were analyzed through descriptive statistics whereas the answers of open-ended questions were analyzed through the NVIVO 8 qualitative data analysis program. Since open-ended questions constituted the themes, appropriate codes were formed under these themes; thus, a pattern-coding method was utilized (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Validity and Reliability

Miles and Huberman (1994) provide some suggestions for internal and external validity: research findings are meaningful when data collection setting is taken into consideration; these are to be confirmed using various data sources. The suggestions continue as detailing the sample to allow comparison with other samples, diversifying the sample to the basis of generalization, and maintaining the raw data for external examination.

In this context, the measures taken to ensure validity and reliability are as follows: In the analysis of the open-ended questions, the researchers examined randomly selected forms first independently and then together. In these reviews, the issues that administrators highlight, coding procedures and steps and the details of the reporting process are discussed. A researcher performed the frequency analysis of the administrator opinions and another researcher examined the results for appropriateness. Finally, the data were re-analyzed by a different researcher – an expert in qualitative data analysis with NVIVO 8, and the findings were discussed with the other researchers. As the main themes were previously determined by the questionnaire questions, appropriate codes were matched to these main themes; thus, a pattern coding schema was followed. Each sub theme was matched to the main themes and fitting codes were ranked under sub-themes showing their frequency. The NVIVO was used to match each theme, sub-theme and codes under applicable themes as well as to diagram the relationship between themes and codes with their frequency of state. The opinions of administrators were presented according to different variables. All data collected were archived in a virtual environment for collaboration with other researchers.



Results

The answers to the open-ended questions were examined with a content analysis method and presented under different headings. While presenting the ■ Figures 1–9, the values given in parentheses are related to their frequency; the thickness of the arrows refers to the relative intensity of the respective opinions.

The findings obtained for the question “Do you experience any difficulties in recruiting new instructors due to the new recruitment policy?” are displayed in ■ Figure 1.

It is seen that a large number of administrators ($f=47$) experience difficulties hiring new instructors to meet the new criteria. There are a few administrators ($f=12$) expressing no problems so far. As one administrator said: “No problems. We have a job post and people are applying for it.” These administrators who did not express any concern work in the state universities in big cities and these universities generally do not have vacancies. However, as the data revealed, numerous administrators ($f=47$) stated serious concerns about recruiting new instructors. As one administrator confessed: “Very much! It is not easy for us to hire suitable ones. Just as graduates from a literature program can be better teachers, others can be better teachers without a master’s degree.” Another administrator stated: “After the new implementation, applications for open positions decreased dramatically. The applicants could not meet the new requirement.”

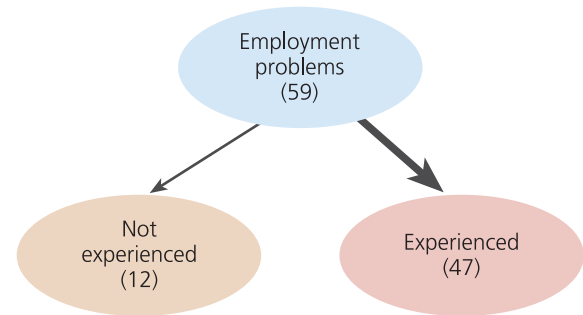
Hiring new instructors at small city universities is stated as a serious problem in central Anatolia. As one administrator warned: “Employing instructors with graduate degrees might not be a problem for universities in big cities. But for universities in Anatolia like us, it is a big problem. Unfortunately, new graduates prefer to work in big cities like Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir.”

Overall, administrators expressed the difficulties in hiring new staff that was a big challenge for private universities and universities in different regions of Turkey.

The findings regarding the question “Do you think that the applicants for an instructor position at SFLs should have a master’s degree with a thesis?” are displayed in ■ Figure 2.

A limited number of administrators ($f=22$) favored the requirement of holding a master’s degree. All of these administrators stressed the need for a master’s degree highlighting that a graduate degree provided analytical thinking and research skills. One administrator said: “We believe instructors who conduct research bring an academic perspective to our program. As we don’t function only as a language course, we need to be open to academic research. This is possible with instructors who completed their master’s degrees.”

On the other hand, the majority of administrators ($f=44$) believed that having a master’s degree as a requirement to



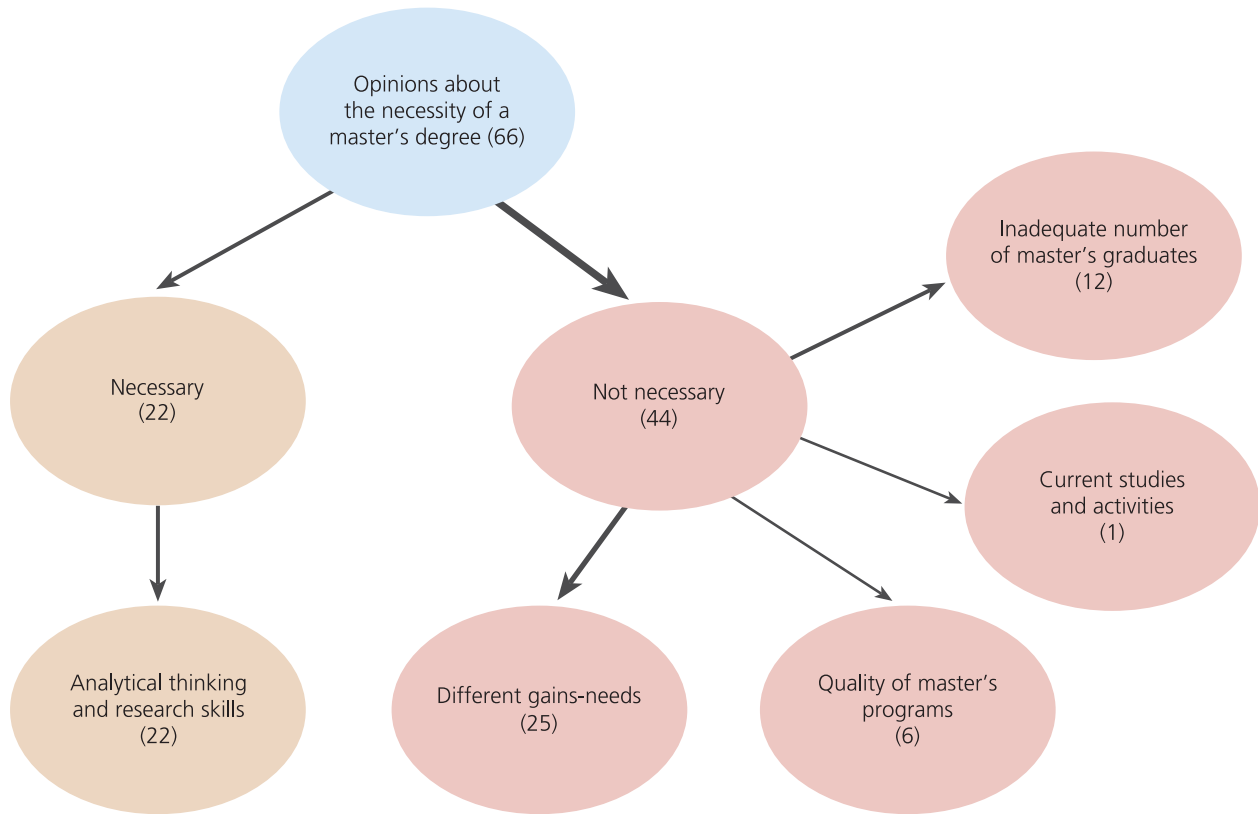
■ Figure 1. The opinions of administrators about the difficulties they experience recruiting new instructors.

become an instructor is not necessary. First, they stressed that ($f=25$) instructor candidates to work at SFLs need different qualifications from a master’s program can offer. One administrator said: “It should be noted that the instructors working at SFLs do not teach better when they earn a master’s or doctoral degree, they only have theoretical knowledge. If the aim is to increase the competence levels of instructors, alternatives should be considered.” Another administrator confessed and warned: “Just deception. Master’s degree is related to research skills, not teaching. While we ask instructors to teach intensively, CoHE wants to hire doctorate candidates. CoHE once prohibited instructors to pursue graduate degrees by regulations and applied administrative action.” Besides, some administrators ($f=12$) stressed that there is an inadequate number of instructors holding a master’s degree; thus, the new master’s requirement will create a shortage because they will not be able to find applicants. Furthermore, several administrators warned that ($f=6$) this new requirement will put pressure on education faculties to offer master’s programs in the short term. The quality of these programs will possibly be negatively affected. As one administrator cautioned: “With the new implementation, universities will start to offer master’s programs and these will face the danger of turning into fast certification programs. The aim of improving instructor quality will backfire.”

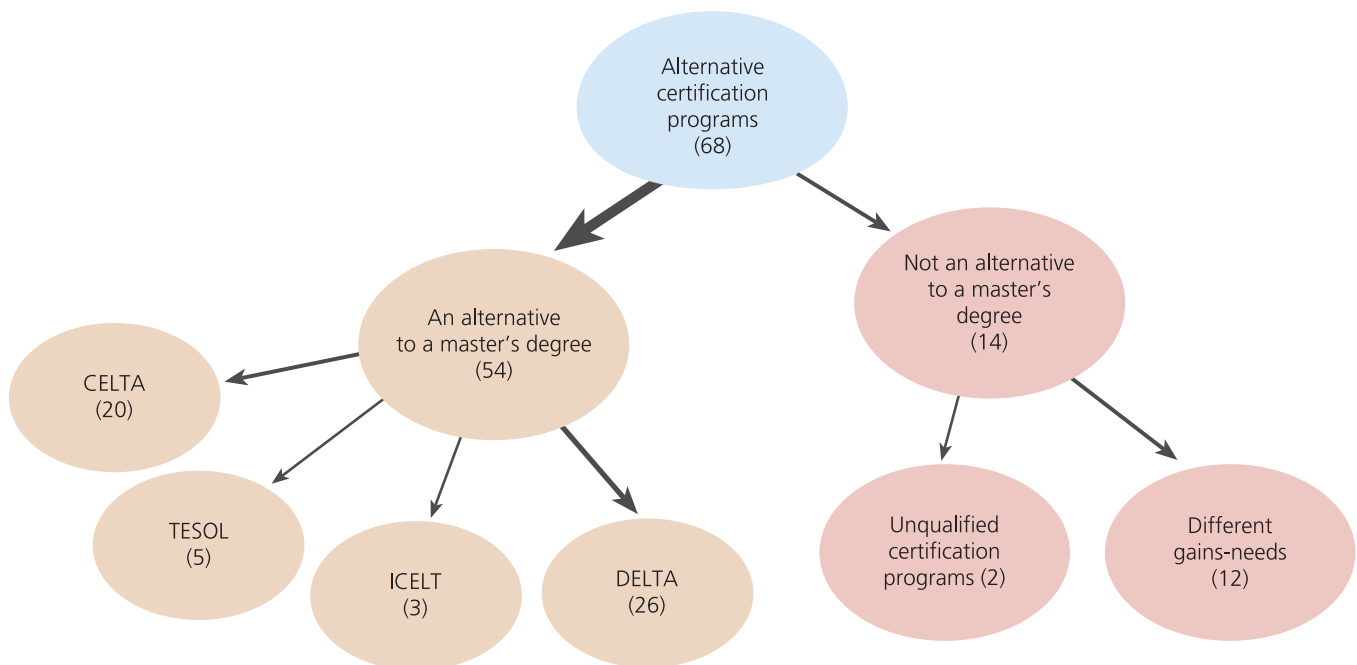
The responses show that most of the administrators do not see the requirement for a master’s degree with a thesis necessary, as they think master’s program outcomes do not match with those of SFLs. They believe experience makes a more significant difference in teaching.

The responses to the question “Do you think that certification programs are acceptable instead of a master’s with thesis degree to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?” are displayed in ■ Figure 3.

A limited number of administrators ($f=14$) disfavored teacher certification programs as an alternative to the master’s programs. They thought that such certification programs will



■ **Figure 2.** Opinions of administrators about the requirement of having master's degree with a thesis.



■ **Figure 3.** Opinions of administrators about certification as an alternative to master's programs.



not provide instructors the necessary knowledge and skills that a master’s program could offer. One administrator stressed: *“This will take us to a teacher education program that will train pedagogically poor instructors with a certificate. Why do we need an alternative when there is real training available?”*

On the other hand, the majority of administrators ($f=54$) believed that certain teacher certification programs will be more beneficial and influential than a master’s program. A large number of administrators offered DELTA ($f=26$) and CELTA ($f=20$) programs while a limited number offered TESOL ($f=5$) and ICELT ($f=3$) programs. The opinions of administrators, overall, show a tendency to accept certifications such as CELTA and DELTA instead of a master’s degree.

The responses to the question *“Do you think that teaching experience is acceptable as a criterion instead of a master’s degree to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?”* are displayed in ■ Figure 4.

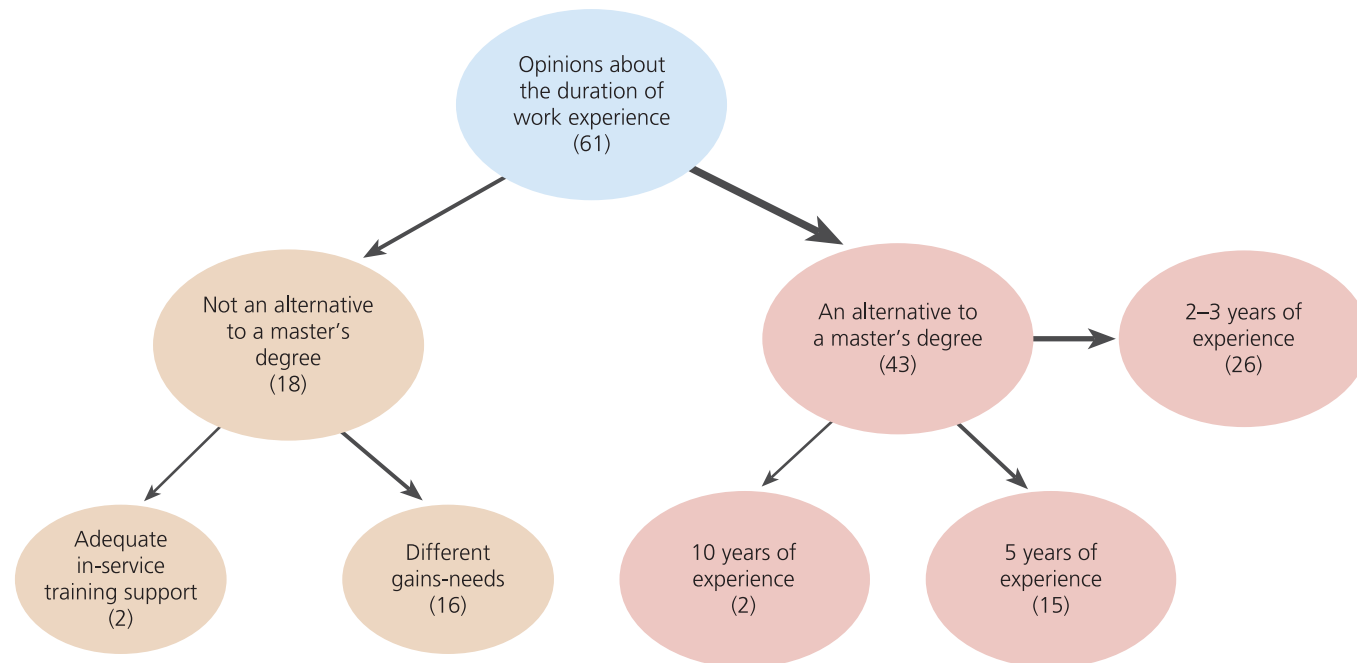
A limited number of administrators ($f=18$) opposed teaching experience as an alternative to a master’s degree. They believed that ($f=16$) instructors need methodological and pedagogical skills, so they have different needs than teaching experience can offer. Also, a few administrators ($f=2$) expressed that instructors could be inadequate during on the job training once they start the profession. One administrator said: *“...Very experienced teachers can even stick to only course books.”*

On the other hand, the majority of administrators ($f=43$) stated that teaching experience could and should be accepted as an alternative to a master’s program to apply for an instructor position. As an ideal duration, administrators offered ($f=26$) a range of 2–3 year to ($f=15$) 5-year experience. As one administrator stated: *“Minimum 2 or 3-year experience should be required. But new graduates should also be given opportunities.”* Another administrator expressed the importance of teaching experience saying that *“I believe experience counts more than a master’s degree.”*

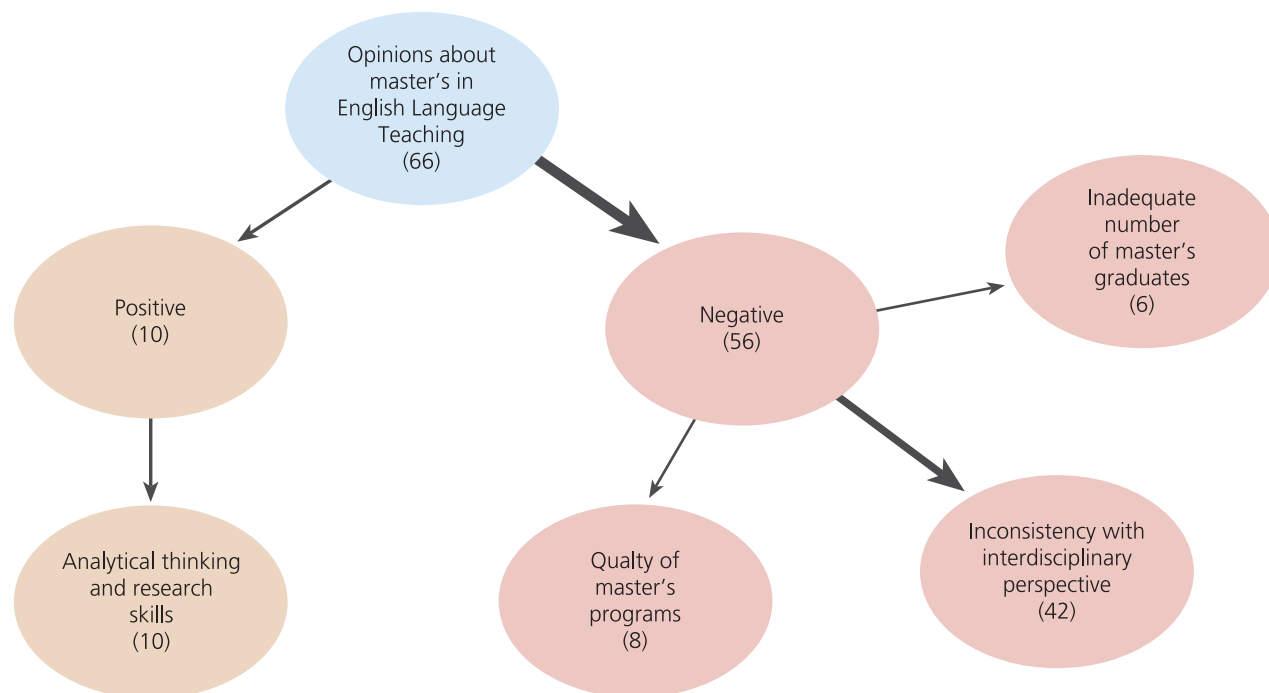
It can be stated that administrators favor experience over a master’s degree and they require a minimum of 2–3 years’ experience.

The responses to the question *“Do you think that a master’s degree in ELT should be the primary criterion to be eligible to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?”* are displayed in ■ Figure 5.

Only a limited number of administrators ($f=10$) believed that a master’s degree in ELT should be the sole requirement for the recruitment of instructors. These administrators believed that a master’s degree provides analytical thinking and research skills which are crucial for teaching pedagogy at SFLs. As one admin said: *“They should have a master’s degree in ELT. My answer is yes because these instructors can only integrate the language teaching approaches, methods and techniques with a master’s degree.”*



■ Figure 4. Opinions about teaching experience as an alternative to master’s degree.



■ Figure 5. Administrator opinions about the requirement of master's degree in ELT.

The majority of administrators ($n=56$), on the other hand, believed that a master's degree should also be pursued in non-ELT programs and these programs should also be accepted to apply for an instructor position at SFLs. They believed that master's degrees in the field of education (pedagogy) should be acceptable. An administrator put forward: *"If an instructor graduated from an ELT bachelor's program, s/he may pursue the master's degree in a field other than ELT such as curriculum development, educational management, educational technologies etc. or if they want to instruct departmental courses, they can choose other fields such as comparative literature, translation, technology-enhanced language learning."* Another administrator criticized ELT master's programs in Turkey saying: *"Absolutely not. ELT master's degrees in Turkey are research-oriented. There is no room for practice."*

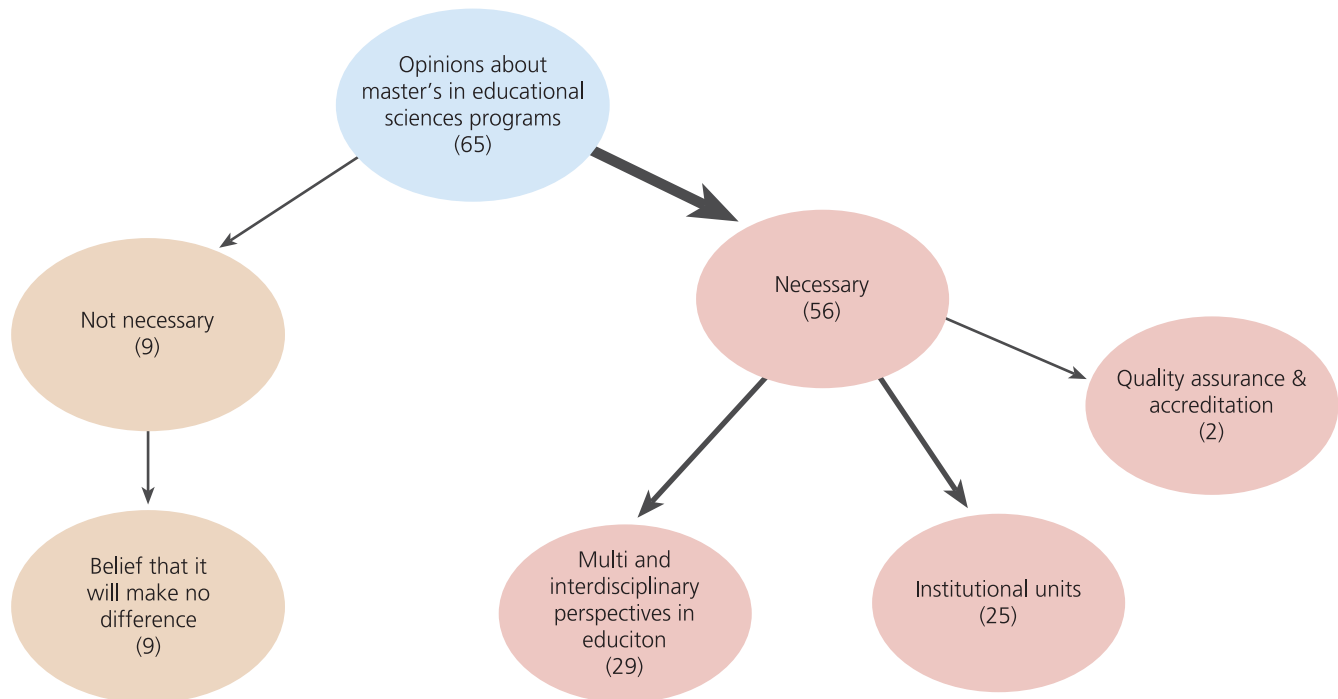
In short, administrators believed that master's degrees in various fields of pedagogy promote interdisciplinary studies and contribute to the professional development of instructors in a variety of ways.

The responses to the question *"What could be the consequences of accepting non-ELT master's degree programs (i.e. Measurement and Evaluation in Education) as a criterion to apply for an instructor position at SFLs?"* are displayed in ■ Figure 6.

A few administrators ($f=9$) thought that a master's degree in non-ELT programs would not be efficient, so should not be

accepted as a requirement to apply for an instructor position at SFLs. Their argument was based on the assumption that such master's programs would not make a difference in instructor quality. An administrator said: *"If the instructor will work at a program where his/her master's degree will be helpful, then it is acceptable. If the instructor will work at a SFL, there will not be much influence."*

The majority of the administrators ($f=56$) believed that a master's degree in non-ELT but education-related programs should be acceptable to apply for a position at a SFL. First, they stated that ($f=29$) master's programs in education will provide multi and interdisciplinary perspectives to instructors. An administrator stated: *"Following the interdisciplinary approach, these graduates will consider measurement and evaluation, curriculum development and special education in a learner-centered way based on the principles of accountability. They will not be limited to language teaching but will develop the competencies they lacked."* Also, many administrators ($f=25$) stated that these programs will contribute to instructors who work at professional units at SFLs. An administrator expressed: *"Graduates of Educational Sciences such as Curriculum Development are extremely valuable for the Curriculum Development Unit. The Measurement and Evaluation program is directly related to the Testing Unit. Graduates of Educational Management are powerful candidates as leaders and administrators. Instructional Technology program graduates contribute to any technology-related unit."*



■ **Figure 6.** Opinions of administrators about master's degrees in non-ELT programs.

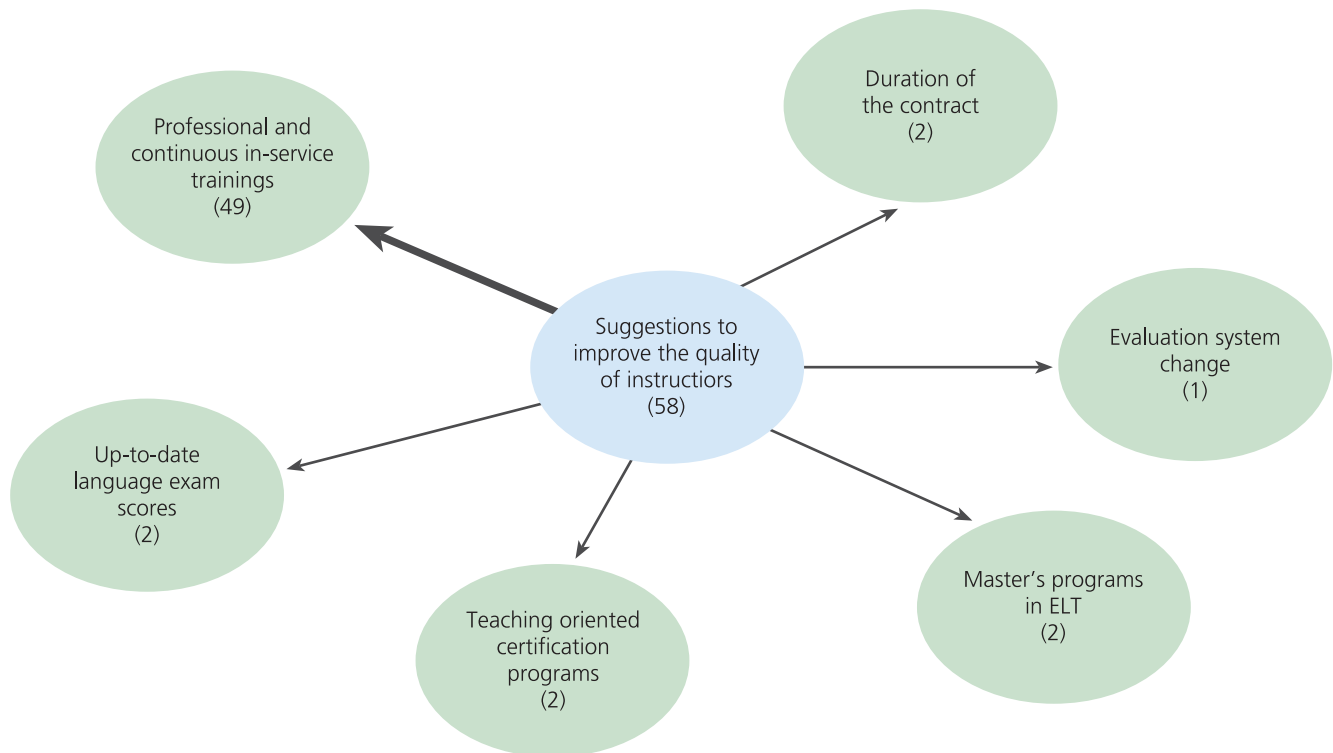
In brief, majority of administrators see the positive contributions of instructors holding master's degrees from various non-ELT education programs. These instructors are believed to empower interdisciplinary studies and be a valuable part of SFL units. The significant roles of different program graduates are well highlighted.

Findings of the responses to the question “*What could be done to improve the quality of instructors working at SFLs?*” are displayed in ■ **Figure 7.**

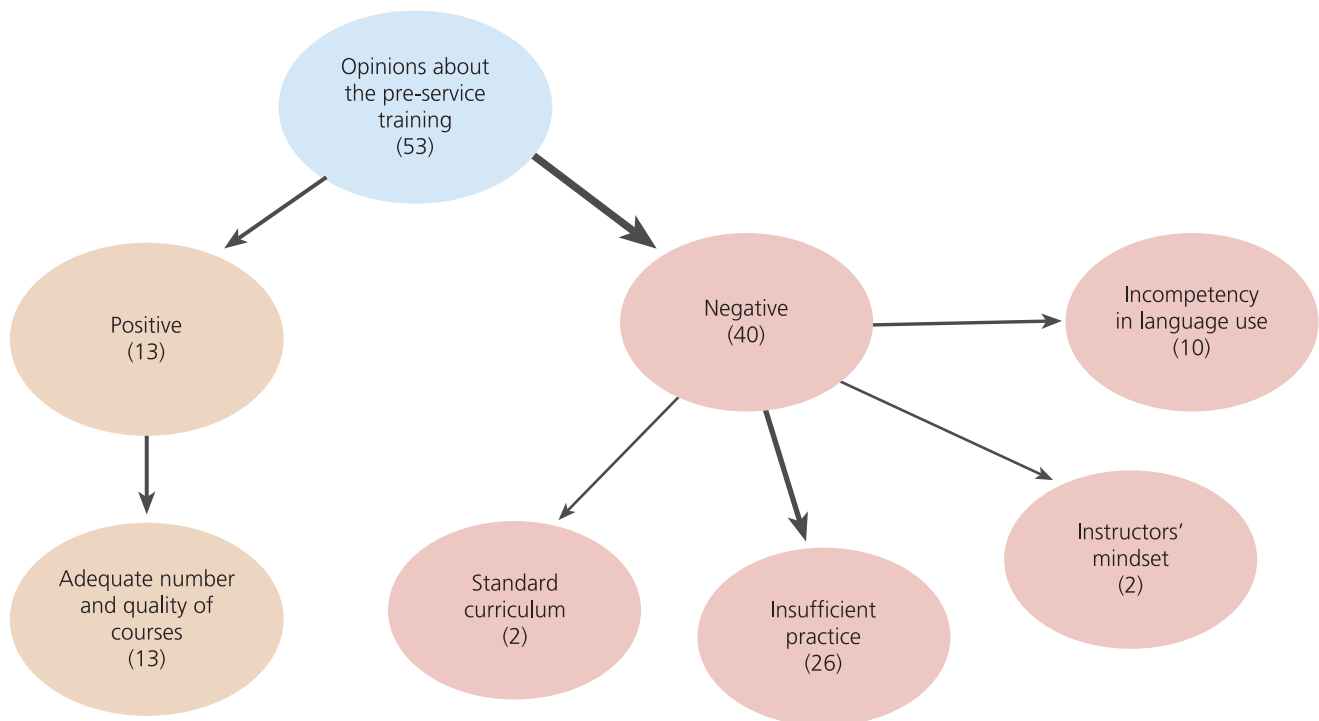
Nearly all administrators ($f=49$) pointed out the need to establish a professional development unit (PDU) at SFLs and the significance of in-service training. An administrator stated: “*In-service training should be compulsory and continuous at SFLs. All state and private institutions going through or that have gone through accreditation processes have to integrate trainings to their programs.*” Besides, a few administrators ($f=2$) suggested that instructors working at SFLs should hold up-to-date language exam scores and that they should be directed towards practice-oriented certification programs such as CELTA and DELTA. A few administrators ($f=2$) expressed their suggestions to renew the contracts for instructors annually, to implement a performance evaluation system, and to encourage instructors to take the language proficiency exam every 2–3 years.

The responses to the question “*What do you think about the curricula of education faculties? Do you think they are efficient to train instructors to work at SFLs?*” are displayed in ■ **Figure 8.**

A limited number of administrators ($f=13$) believed that the education and courses offered at faculties of education were effective enough to equip candidate instructors with the necessary knowledge, and skills. They stated that courses at faculties of education were adequate and the quality was high. On the other hand, majority of administrators ($f=40$) believed that pre-service courses offered at education faculties were inadequate and ineffective. Most ($f=26$) see teaching practice at faculties as inadequate. That is, most courses are theory-oriented and do not provide students with enriched opportunities for practice. An administrator said: “*The biggest lack I see is that the graduates cannot link theory (regardless of the program they graduated from) to actual practice. I believe most education faculties are insufficient in providing students with the necessary competence and practice.*” Besides, some administrators ($f=10$) criticized the faculties of education stating that their graduates were incompetent in English language use especially in terms of fluency in speaking. One administrator confessed: “*Almost everybody graduates from undergraduate programs. Unfortunately, I have witnessed graduates who were not only inefficient teachers but who were also incompetent English speakers.*” A few administrators ($f=2$) stated that the fixed compulsory curriculum at faculties



■ **Figure 7.** Opinions of administrators about enhancing instructor quality.



■ **Figure 8.** Opinions of administrators about undergraduate and graduate ELT program courses.



of education did not provide teacher candidates with required skills and competencies.

Briefly, administrators are seen to complain about the excessive emphasis on theory when they require practical experience. Since the language competencies of instructors is a crucial issue at SFLs, there is a need to improve the proficiency level of instructors starting with pre-service teachers.

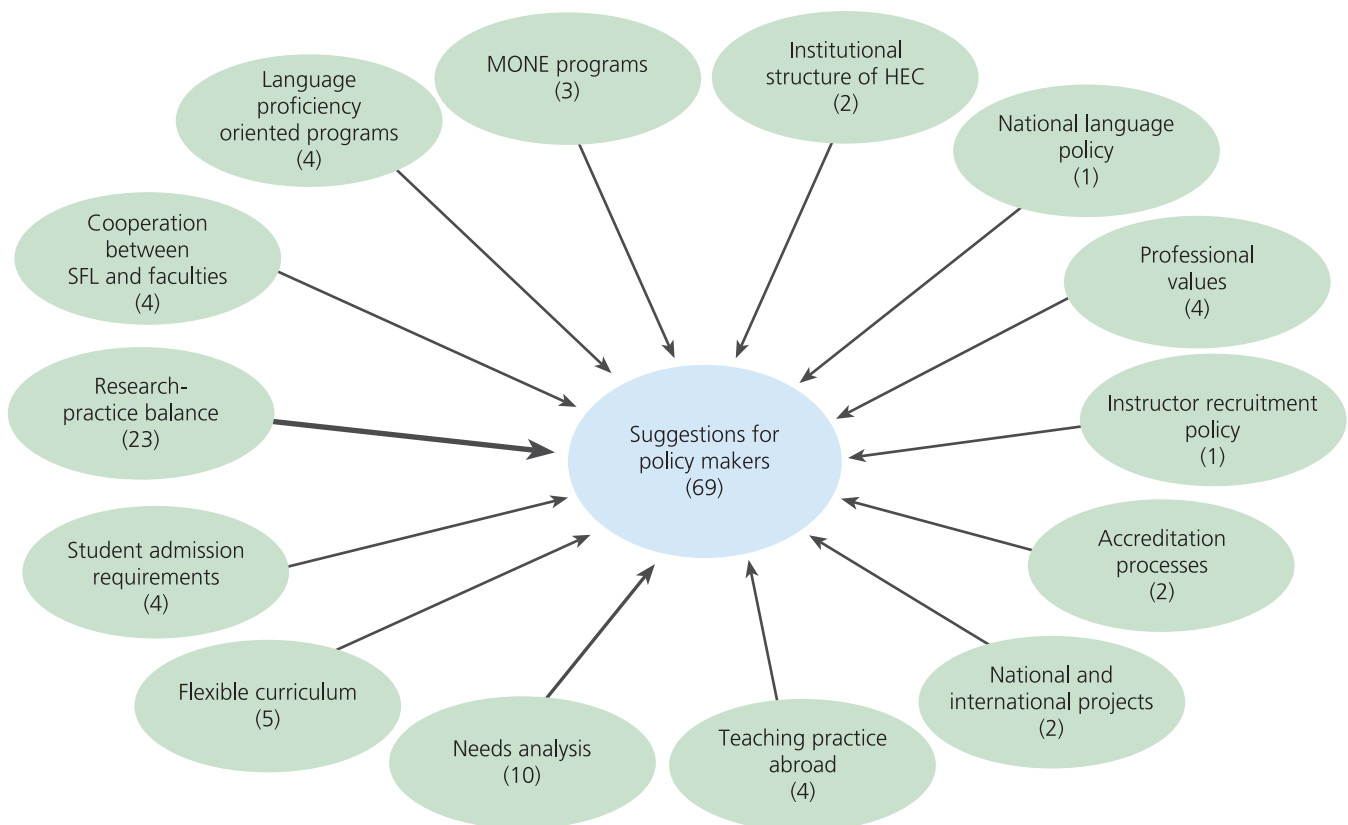
Findings of the responses to the question “*What are your suggestions to policy makers and administrators to train instructors to work at SFLs?*” are displayed in ■ Figure 9.

Administrators’ suggestions highlight the theory-practice balance and the necessity of a needs analysis in faculties of education.

Majority of administrators (23) offered that education faculties should provide more practice-oriented courses to their students so that theory-practice balance could be achieved. In its present form, pre-service teachers only have two practice courses at the end of their fourth (final) year. An administrator reported the following: “*Students should be provided with more*

opportunities for teaching practice. I think teaching practice should be 2 years long. There should be more observation at different educational levels. Reflective teaching should be an integral part of teaching.” Further, some administrators (f=10) suggested that their opinions should be consulted more since they want to be understood more by the authorities. For this, they suggested the authorities conduct a needs analysis. An administrator suggested: “*I think the system should not be changed very often and even if it changes, it should not put people into a disadvantaged position. The changes that have taken place only consider the theory, not practice. I suggest administrators be listened to more.*”

When other suggestions of the administrators are examined, it is seen that preparatory schools and faculties should work together more closely (f=4) and undergraduate students should receive internship which allows them to gain practical experience at SFLs (f=5). A need to increase the number of courses offered at education faculties to improve language competence (f=4) is observed. More opportunities for study and work abroad for the instructors (f=4) and the professional values of instructors (f=4) are other highlights.



■ Figure 9. Suggestions of administrators for faculties of education and policy makers.



Discussion

Collecting the administrators' opinions and reflecting on their suggestions about the new requirements for instructor recruitment yields some productive findings. Administrators, overall, see the new requirement about having a master's degree in English Language Teaching program as neither a timely nor a necessary decision. Despite its potential effect on enhancing teacher quality and improving the analytical thinking and research skills of instructors, this specification is seen as a big drawback for instructor employment.

Currently, there is a huge gap between the total number of instructors ($n=4259$) and the number of instructors with graduate degrees ($n=1473$). When the demographic characteristics of the managers are examined, it is seen that 37% of the undergraduate program graduates and 54% of the graduate program graduates are majors in non-ELT. Therefore, it is evident that, when more than half of the administrators have a diploma from the non-ELT areas, the new teaching staff employment process, as implemented by the CoHE, seems like a decision that was made without a need analysis. The responses to the open-ended questionnaires also support this conclusion. A significant group of administrators expressed their concern about the new criteria and stated that they had serious difficulties in the recruitment process. They had to hire instructors they would not have chosen if a graduate degree was not required or hired part-time lecturers as a temporary solution.

Most instructors holding graduate degrees work at SFLs in big cities. Thus, these big-city universities have not yet experienced major problems in recruiting new instructors. However, the employment gap across the country needs to be diminished by providing alternatives and/or opportunities for graduate studies. It is to be kept in mind that quality is not easy to measure. To see the link between teacher quality and student outcomes, isolating and determining measurable effects does not always lead to actual results.

As described by King, Feltey and Susel (1998), a needs analysis should be done, and the opinions of the practitioners and stakeholders should be taken into consideration before major decisions are enacted that concern the whole system. The total number of instructors employed in the SFLs is 4259, while the number holding graduate degrees is 1473. In other words, only less than half of the lecturers working in the SFLs have obtained master's and/or doctoral degrees. More importantly, most graduate students work at nine universities concentrated in Istanbul, Ankara and Eskişehir. This shows that there is an insufficient number of instructors with a graduate degree in the country, and that those with a master's degree are densely clustered in only 9 universities. Therefore, it is consid-

ered useful to identify the current situation and requirements before a radical implementation can take place.

Having a master's degree is a must for teachers in many countries (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Reimer & Dorf, 2014). This is a newly required condition for instructors to work at the SFLs in Turkey. It raises many issues concerning the number of instructors, the pedagogy and the program of master's degrees. The effect of graduate degrees on teaching quality, classroom practices and student achievement have not yet been explored in the Turkish context, still some studies favor having a graduate degree (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011). Moreover, the theoretical nature of most ELT master's programs in Turkey, as stated by the administrators, is believed to limit the positive effects on teaching.

As for the requisite of having a master's degree, most administrators find it unnecessary. SFLs are intensive English programs that offer courses approximately for one year. They are more practice-oriented as they have to teach English to a range of students with varying English proficiency; they all have high academic expectations to pursue their studies. The mission and vision documents of SFLs point out that they need instructors strong in practice rather than in theory. Therefore, the expectation of having a master's degree does not appear to be a priority for most SFLs.

The administrators' opinions about the need to complete a master's degree in ELT show that the majority perceive it as negative. On the other hand, almost all the administrators have positive opinions about having a master's degree in the field of educational sciences. The units at SFLs provide services in the fields of measurement, evaluation and program development. The administrators expressed that graduate studies completed in the field of educational sciences provide immense value for teaching English. In the context of interdisciplinary studies, the fields of educational sciences are considered highly significant. However, the ELT program course content is heavily theoretical. Therefore, the expectation is the inclusion of education sciences areas if CoHE keeps the requirement for a master's degree.

The demographics of the participants illustrate that more than half of these administrators completed their graduate degrees in non-ELT programs. Having completed a master's degree in a non-ELT field can be an asset when the instructor works in units such as curriculum development and testing. Moreover, it brings an overall interdisciplinary approach to the program. Master's programs need to be encouraged in other areas that provide a broad, diverse perspective. However, some administrators stated that they have not observed any significant contribution of a graduate degree either in ELT or non-



ELT. Though this assumption is based on observation, some studies support these comments (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vidgor, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).

As for the administrative experience, the majority of the participating administrators have experience ranging from 0 to 5 years, which can be interpreted as a result of the frequent administrative changes in the SFLs. It is not desirable that administrators change so often because each incoming administrator may modify the system and introduce a new approach and possibly ignore the previous practices. Therefore, administrators are recommended to be more stable in their positions.

Majority of administrators see teacher certification programs such as CELTA and DELTA as alternative requirements to a master's degree. These programs meet the needs of SFLs with their well-grounded approach to practice, observation and mentoring. Certification programs are found to make contributions to student achievement at varying degrees (Gallagher, 2004; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Hawk, Coble, & Swanson, 1985; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006). Teacher candidates see them as a good opportunity to get hired and find them effective (Seferoğlu, 2007).

Administrators show concern about increasing the quality of instructors, and in-service education is strongly emphasized by the majority (Akcan et al., 2017; Kılıçkaya, 2018; Ünal & İlhan, 2017). It is seen that continuing professional development units (CPDU) do not exist in many SFLs, but it is essential to establish them. In-service training plays an important role in maintaining and upgrading the quality of the institutional agents. In this context, institutions without CPD units are recommended to establish these units and those with established units should empower their units.

Administrators find work experience as an alternative to a master's degree acceptable and find a higher education experience of 2–3 years as sufficient. Teaching experience is well-perceived and even required in many kinds of educational institutions. Teaching experience is seen to be an influential factor in increasing the academic achievement. In this context, 2–3 years of higher education experience can be considered satisfactory as an alternative to the requirement of having completed a master's degree. Teaching experience also makes an observable impact on the learning outcomes (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vidgor, 2007; Hanushek, 1989; Noell & Burns, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). Administrators find a minimum 2-3 years of experience as an adequate alternative to having a master's degree. To Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005), new teachers struggle first to adjust to their work environment and to the teaching profession, and they could be in the process of deciding about their career paths. This transition and adjustment period might endanger retention

that makes experienced teachers more desirable and possibly more professionally stable. Administrator opinions about the English language teaching program courses reveal a negative stance. The most important reason for this negativity is the theory-practice imbalance and graduates' lack of English language competence. Instructors to work at SFLs should be well-trained with strong English language skills, and they should not be restricted with theoretical knowledge. English language teachers are expected to be competent in their language skills. This situation reveals itself mostly in the skill of speaking. Therefore, the pre-service teachers must excel in English.

Administrators find undergraduate and graduate courses at the English teaching programs overly theoretical. Only two courses of teaching practice are offered in the last year of the undergraduate programs. Teaching practice courses should be increased in number and should be implemented in the earlier years of the programs, and as the administrators stated, the teaching profession should be practice-oriented. It is recommended that teacher certificate programs such as CELTA or TESOL can be made more accessible and considered an equivalent to the master's degree requirement.

Administrators urge immediate attention be paid to the theory-practice imbalance. Many administrators find undergraduate and graduate courses too theoretical and this conflicts with their need for instructors with strong practical knowledge and linguistic competence. Several administrators describe the new implementation as rapid and sudden and point out the lack of a need analysis. The inadequate number of instructors with a master's degree and the nature of graduate courses as too theoretical lead to unmet expectations and needs of the SFLs.

Conclusion

In line with the suggestions by the administrators, it can be concluded that SFLs need instructors with a good language competence, preferably having completed a master's degree in either an ELT-related or an educational sciences related major. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Units are seen as essential components to be established at every SFL. Functions of these units might be organized in a way that serves to improve the language competences of instructors or to provide input about classroom interaction and dynamics. Most importantly, changes in recruitment processes should be based on a needs analysis with a consensus of stakeholders.

Therefore, if the newly-recruited instructors are required to complete a master's degree with a thesis, this requirement should be extended to non-English language teaching programs such as educational sciences. Teaching certification programs of CELTA or DELTA could be considered as an alter-

native to a master's degree. Establishing continuous in-service training units in all SFLs and increasing the quality of the existing ones is highly recommended. The opinions of stakeholders need to be consulted in each stage of a new implementation. A needs analysis is a must before any important decision is taken that affect higher education institutions and their staff.

Limitations

This study is limited with data gathered from the participants and their opinions as well as suggestions. The study considers the opinions of both private and state university administrators together, so the difference between the two groups of administrators is beyond the scope of this study.

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