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English Language Teacher Education Programs at Turkish Universities: A Statistical Overview

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Abstract

Considering the significant role of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programs on future English teachers' teaching skills and eventually on the English proficiency of future generations, the present study investigated some statistics concerning the academics and students of these programs. All the statistics were gathered from YÖK Atlas, a website initiated by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) in Türkiye. The data were analyzed to find out the differences between public and private universities' ELTE programs, and to find out correlations among various elements of the ELTE programs regardless of the type of universities. The findings revealed the superiority of the ELTE programs at public universities over the ones at private universities in various aspects. However, students' decreasing number of ELTE program preferences in recent years at both public and private universities were among the major findings of the present study. Moreover, some positive correlations among the variables were reported. The findings were discussed in light of the related literature. Finally, some implications including employment of more professors and a better projection while opening new ELTE programs are drawn based on the findings.

Keywords: English language teacher education, Public universities, Private universities, Language teaching in Türkiye

Introduction

Considering the significant role of English as a global language, all countries, especially the ones where English is spoken as a foreign language, intend to reach higher standards in teaching it by placing foreign language teaching as one of the primary concerns in their national education systems (Ertuğrul Seçer & Erişen, 2020). Türkiye has also made considerable efforts and investments in the teaching of English through reforms in both foreign language teaching and general education in the past 30 years (Çapan, 2021).

Despite the best efforts, Türkiye's performance in English proficiency has been ranked among the 'low' or 'very low proficiency' countries in international indices (Tuzcu Eken, 2021). Since peoples' poor proficiency skills in English may stem from the deficiencies of the ELTE programs (Şenol & Cesur, 2021), the number of studies addressing various aspects of these programs has increased recently (see Asmalı, 2020; Asmalı & Çelik, 2021; Ataş & Balıkcı, 2021; Balbay & Doğan, 2021; Karakaş & Yavuz, 2018; Kic-Drgas & Comoglu, 2017; Öztürk & Aydın, 2018; Şenol & Cesur, 2021; Uzun, 2016). The findings indicated the urgent need for some reforms both in the student selection process, such as employing integrative tests or measuring students' attitudes and aptitude (Asmalı & Çelik, 2021) and in the pre-service education phase, such as practice-based training and training teacher candidates for different age groups (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). The findings of recent cross-cultural studies also showed the common points and differences in ELTE programs in Türkiye and Poland (Kic-Drgas & Comoglu, 2017) and Malaysia (Karakaş & Yavuz, 2018) as well as the differences in entry requirements in ELTE programs in Türkiye and the Netherlands (Asmalı & Çelik, 2021). Moreover, the contribution of specific

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courses in ELTE programs, such as content knowledge elective courses (Şenol & Cesur, 2021), educational and technical courses (Uzun, 2016), and materials, testing and practicum courses (Ataş & Balıkçı, 2021) have been investigated. In addition, the historical development of ELT in Türkiye (Balbay & Doğan, 2021) and comparison of ELTE programs at public and private universities through various statistical findings based on document analyses (Asmalı, 2020; Ertuğrul Seçer & Erişen, 2020) have been among the topics of recent publications.

Despite the growing number of studies addressing various issues of ELTE programs, some potential correlations among important elements of ELTE programs based on the detailed statistics, such as the average number of academics, students' average number of preferences, the average number of publications per academic and program, students' average foreign language test scores, and graduates' test scores have remained scarce. Moreover, how ELTE programs at private and public universities differ in terms of different statistics is also among the less studied topics. Drawing on these gaps in the related literature, this study attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences between ELTE programs at public and private universities regarding:
 - a. the average Foreign Language Test scores of students over six years?
 - b. the average KPSSP121 scores of graduates?
 - c. the average number of publications per academic?
 - d. the average number of publications per program?
 - e. the average number of academics?
 - f. students' preference statistics across the country?
2. Are there any significant correlations among the average number of academics, the number of publications per academic and program, students' average number of ELTE program preferences and average foreign language test scores, and graduates' KPSSP121 scores?

The Journey to Become an English Teacher in Türkiye

Admission to the Program: The graduates of high schools who would like to be placed in an ELTE program in Türkiye are required to take two tests, Basic Proficiency Test (BPT) and Foreign Language Test (FLT), which are organized by Measuring, Selection, and Placement Center (MSPC). In BPT, students need to answer 120 multiple-choice questions in Turkish language, social sciences including history, geography, philosophy, and culture of religion and knowledge of ethics, math, and science including physics, chemistry, and biology in 135 minutes. There are 80 multiple-choice questions that have to be completed in 120 minutes measuring students' grammar, translation, vocabulary, and reading skills in FLT. Students can choose one of the following languages: English, Arabic, German, Russian, and French. For the evaluation of BPT, first, 33% of both Turkish language and math tests as well as 17% of both social sciences test and science test are taken. The total foreign language score is calculated by taking 40% of the BPT score, 60% of the FLT score, and students' high school GPA multiplied by 0.12.

Students' placement to the ELTE programs is regulated by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) depending on the students' preferences and the quotas of the programs. The result of the placement, which is made according to the ranking of the students based on their scores, is announced by the CoHE. The most recent statistics indicated that among 104,909 candidates who took FLT in 2021, 98,641 of them took the test in English. Their average number of correct answers was 39,054 out of 80 questions (ÖSYM, 2021a). To keep the quality of the students who will study in the teaching programs at a certain level, the CoHE has introduced the mandatory requirement of taking place in the first 300,000 students in admission to the faculties of education (ÖSYM, 2019).

ELTE Undergraduate Programs: As of 2021, ELTE programs are offered at 57 public and 15 private universities in Türkiye. Private universities offer different scholarships ranging from a full scholarship to paid programs, with a total of 36 different ELTE programs. Students also have the opportunity to study in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (25 programs at 10 different universities), Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (three programs at one university each), and North Macedonia (three programs at one university).

The ELTE program in Türkiye lasts four years. Although the programs at each university may have their own different applications, the students at almost all universities take a proficiency test before the program starts, and the ones who fail that test have to take a one-year English preparatory class. A fairly centralized curriculum provided by CoHE is followed in ELTE programs (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018). The courses in the first year mainly aim to improve freshmen students' English language skills in writing, reading, listening, pronunciation, and speaking separately. Just like all the freshmen students in any program in Türkiye, students in the ELTE programs take two-hour Turkish history and Turkish language courses as well. Moreover, an extra foreign language and some pedagogical courses are offered in the first year. In the second year, apart from some elective courses, students learn about English literature, linguistics, approaches to language teaching as well as teaching principles and technologies. The program in the third year focuses on teaching language skills and classroom management. The main element of the final year of the program is the school experience course in which student teachers are required to conduct various classroom observations and practice teaching regularly by receiving continuous feedback from their mentor teachers (Öztürk & Aydın, 2018).

The Process to be Appointed as an English Teacher: The standards to be appointed as an English teacher to a public school are set by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The candidates who meet the basic application requirements, such as being a Turkish citizen or graduating from an ELTE program, can apply to be appointed as teachers of English (MoNE, 2021). However, graduates of ELTE programs need to take a series of written and oral tests before the application process. First, English teacher candidates need to possess a valid KPSSP121 score, which is a combination of the scores the candidates receive from a set of multiple-choice tests (see Table 1). In general, students take these four tests on two different weekends and in three different sessions.

Table 1. Scope, Duration, and Contribution of Tests to Obtain KPSSP121 Score

Duration	Topics/subjects	Approximate weight of questions in the test (%)	Contribution of test to total KPSSP121 score
130 minutes	Test 1: General ability (60 questions)		0.15
	Reasoning skills, grammar, and spelling rules	50	
	Numerical and logical reasoning skills	50	
	Test 2: General Culture (60 questions)		0.15
	History	45	
Geography of Türkiye	30		
Basic civics	15		
100 minutes	General, cultural, and current socioeconomic issues related to Türkiye and the World	10	0.20
	Test 3: Educational Sciences (80 questions)		
	Teaching principles and methods	26	
	Classroom management	6	
	Instructional technologies and material design	6	
	Program development	6	
	Testing and evaluation	15	
	Learning psychology	15	
	Developmental psychology	13	
	Counseling and special education	13	
120 minutes	Test 4: Teacher content knowledge test (75 questions)		0.50
	Language proficiency	34	
	Linguistics	13	
	Literature	13	
	Field training test	40	

Note. The data are from “[2021 Public personnel election exam (KPSS) guide group A and teaching]”, by ÖSYM, 2021b.

Since the weight of 50% is taken, the most important among these tests is the Teacher Content Knowledge Test (TCKT), which has been conducted since 2013. The statistics regarding this test have been shared on the website of MSPC regularly (see Figure 1). Although students' average score over the years has shown some fluctuations, it has been increasing steadily in the past four years.

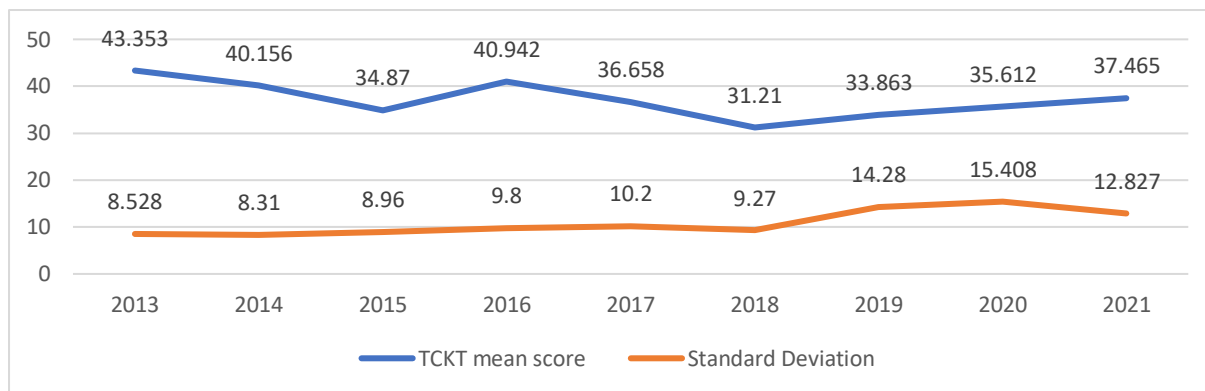


Figure 1. TCKT mean scores and standard deviation between 2013-2021

Note. The data are gathered from the website of ÖSYM (<https://www.osym.gov.tr/TR,20636/2020-kpss-lisans-genel-yetenek-genel-kultur-egitim-bilimleri-alan-bilgisi-ve-oabt-sinav-sonuclarina-iliskin-sayisal-bilgiler.html>)

A minimum KPSSP121 score of 50 is set for the candidates to be able to start their pre-application process. Starting from those who have received the highest KPSSP121 score among those whose preliminary applications to enter the oral test have been approved, candidates up to three times the number of determined quotas are admitted for the oral test. (MoNE, 2021). Some skills of the candidates are evaluated in the oral test, such as their knowledge of educational sciences and general culture, their communication skills, grasping and summarizing a subject, their readiness for scientific and technological developments, and their self-confidence as well as educational qualifications (MoNE, 2021). Those who score 60 and above as a result of the oral test are deemed successful and have the right to choose to be appointed as an English teacher. Appointments of the candidates who are successful in the oral test are made electronically based on their oral test scores taking into account their preferences. In the case of equality of oral test scores, the ones who obtain higher KPSSP121 scores are appointed.

The statistics concerning the number of applicants and the number of appointed English teachers show that of the teacher candidates who applied to be appointed, 44.97% in 2017, 46.69% in 2018, and 30.83% in 2019 could be appointed to work as an English teacher at primary and secondary public schools (TEDMEM, 2018, 2019, 2020).

Method

First, document analysis was employed in the present study, in which both printed and electronically available documents are examined, interpreted, and evaluated to present information and evidence regarding the issue under investigation (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis, as the methodology of the current study, served best for the purposes of the study as the data for the present study were gathered through YÖK Atlas (<https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr/>), which is a website providing all statistics available concerning all undergraduate and associate degree programs in Türkiye. This website, which is launched by the CoHE, presents all the statistics for each department separately, such as the average FLT score of the students in each program, the number and publications of the academics, the preferences of the students, and the KPSSP121 scores of the graduates.

All statistics for the programs are available on this website separately for each program and year. To answer the first research question in this study, the following statistics have been gathered from YÖK Atlas and listed on Microsoft Excel. Statistical analyses, such as percentages and mean scores, were conducted on SPSS for public and private universities:

- FLT mean scores of 93 different ELTE programs (57 public and 36 private university programs) over the past six years (2016-2021)
- The preferences of the students studying in the ELTE program across the country over the past four years (2018-2021). The statistics regarding students' preferences included the average total number of students who preferred each ELTE program, their average order of preference for the

program in their university program preference lists, the average total number of students who preferred each program in the first and the first three places in their university preference lists.

- KPSSP121 scores of the ELTE program graduates (2021)
- The average number of academics per ELTE program including the average number of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and research assistants.
- The average number of publications per academic and program (2021). All publications except for conference papers published by professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and research assistants since 2021 have been listed.

For the second research question, Pearson correlation analyses were run on SPSS to find out the potential correlations among the abovementioned aspects of ELTE programs irrespective of the differences between public and private universities. Furthermore, as this study is based on document analysis and does not involve research participants, ethical approval was not received from any ethical committees.

Findings

The first item of the first research question attempts to find out the differences between ELTE programs at public and private universities regarding the average FLT scores of students. The results show that the average FLT scores of students studying in ELTE programs at public universities have been consistently higher over the last six years than those studying at private universities (see Figure 2). The differences between the mean scores have continuously increased since 2016 and reached the top ($M = 10.25$) in 2019, then showed a sharp decrease in the last two years. Despite the small decrease in 2021, the increase in average FLT scores since 2017 is notable for both public and private university students studying in ELTE programs.

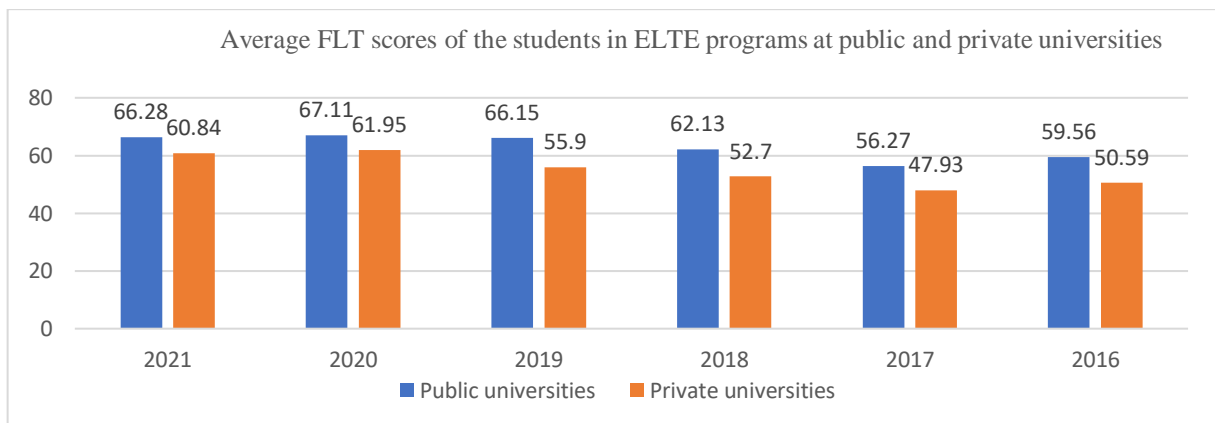


Figure 2. The differences between average FLT scores of the students in ELTE programs at public and private universities (2016-2021)

Students with the highest FLT scores on average prefer Boğaziçi University ($M = 76.5$ in 2021) and Middle East Technical University (METU) ($M = 74.8$ in 2021) from public universities, and Bahçeşehir University ($M = 74$ in 2021) from private universities. The students with the lowest FLT scores on average have preferred Hakkari University ($M = 57.2$ in 2021 and 60.6 in 2020) and Bayburt University ($M = 58.1$ in 2021 and 62.2 in 2020) among the public universities; the paid program of Maltepe University ($M = 36.2$ in 2021 and 39.8 in 2020) and Ufuk University's 25% discount program ($M = 39.8$ in 2021 and 36.2 in 2020) among the private universities in the last two years.

The following four items of the first research question present detailed statistics concerning the ELTE programs at public and private universities, such as the average KPSSP121 scores of graduates as an output of the program which may be indicative of students' declarative knowledge, the average number of publications per academic and program, and the average number of academics per program as the potential determinants of the success of programs or the reasons of students' program choice.

As it is shown in Figure 3, in all statistics ELTE programs at public universities show a prevailing performance over the ones at private universities. As for the average KPSSP121 scores, the ELTE program graduates ($M = 69.83$) slightly overperformed the ones at private universities ($M = 67.9$). Whereas graduates with the best performance among public universities in the average KPSSP121 score category are the graduates of Harran University ($M = 80.08$) and Boğaziçi University ($M = 75.48$); they are İstanbul Medipol University ($M = 66.42$) and İstanbul Kültür University ($M = 64.74$) among private universities. While the public universities with the lowest average in the KPSSP121 score are the universities of Hakkari ($M = 62.45$) and Bayburt ($M = 59.93$); the universities of Okan ($M = 58.42$) and Hasan Kalyoncu ($M = 60.29$) are among the lowest scoring private universities.

Statistics also indicate that academics working in the ELTE programs at public universities ($M = 10.68$) have published more publications than the ones working at private universities ($M = 6.39$). The universities with the highest number of average publications per academic are Dokuz Eylül University and Gaziantep University with 27.1 and 21 publications among the public universities, respectively. The university with the highest average number of publications per academic among private universities is Ufuk University with an average of 15.66.

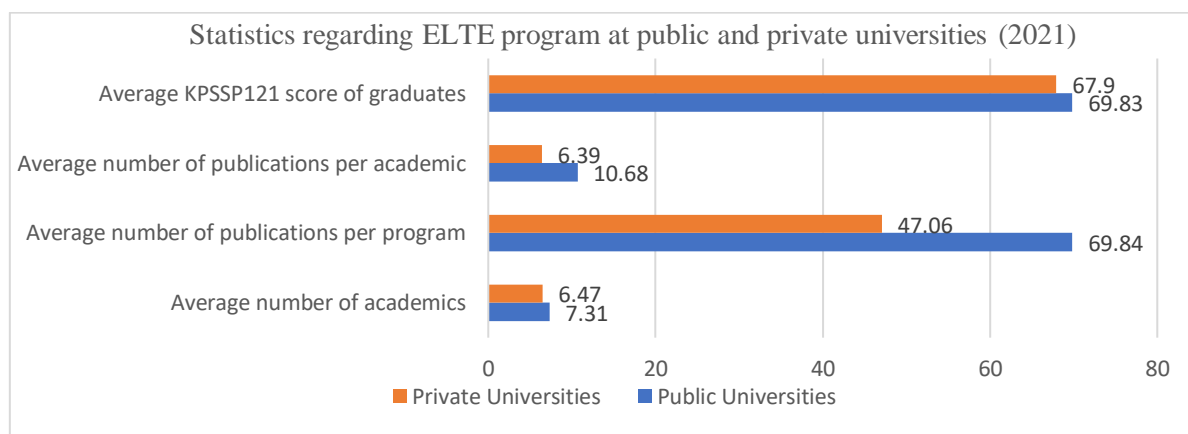


Figure 3. Statistics regarding ELTE programs at public and private universities (2021)

The average number of academics working in ELTE programs is very close at both public ($M = 7.31$) and private universities ($M = 6.47$) as it is illustrated in Figure 3. In both university types, the highest number of staff is assistant professors (total number: public universities = 175, private universities = 51), followed by the number of research assistants (total number: public universities = 103, private universities = 31), professors (total number: public universities = 62, private universities = 12), and associate professors (total number: public universities = 61, private universities = 7), respectively. Despite the needs of the programs, there are seven public universities and only one private university that do not have research assistants in their ELTE programs. While more than half of the public universities' ELTE programs ($n = 30$) do not possess a professor, this ratio is only one-third at private universities.

The last item of the first research question is related to the preferences of the students studying in the ELTE programs across Türkiye. The statistics presented in Figures 4 and 5 regarding students' preferences involve the average total number of students who preferred each program (blue in Figures 4 and 5), students' average order of preference for the program in their university program preference lists (grey in Figures 4 and 5), the average total number of students who preferred each program in the first (orange in Figures 4 and 5) and the first three places in their university preference lists (yellow in Figures 4 and 5).

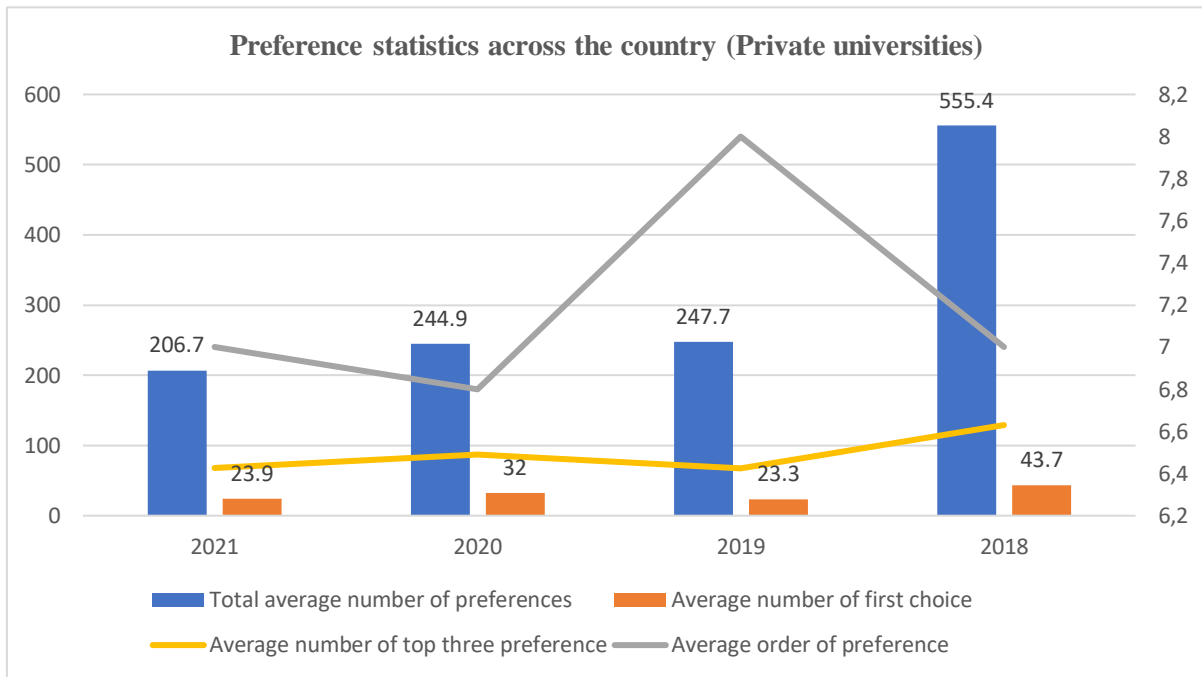


Figure 4. ELTE students’ private university preferences (2018-2021)

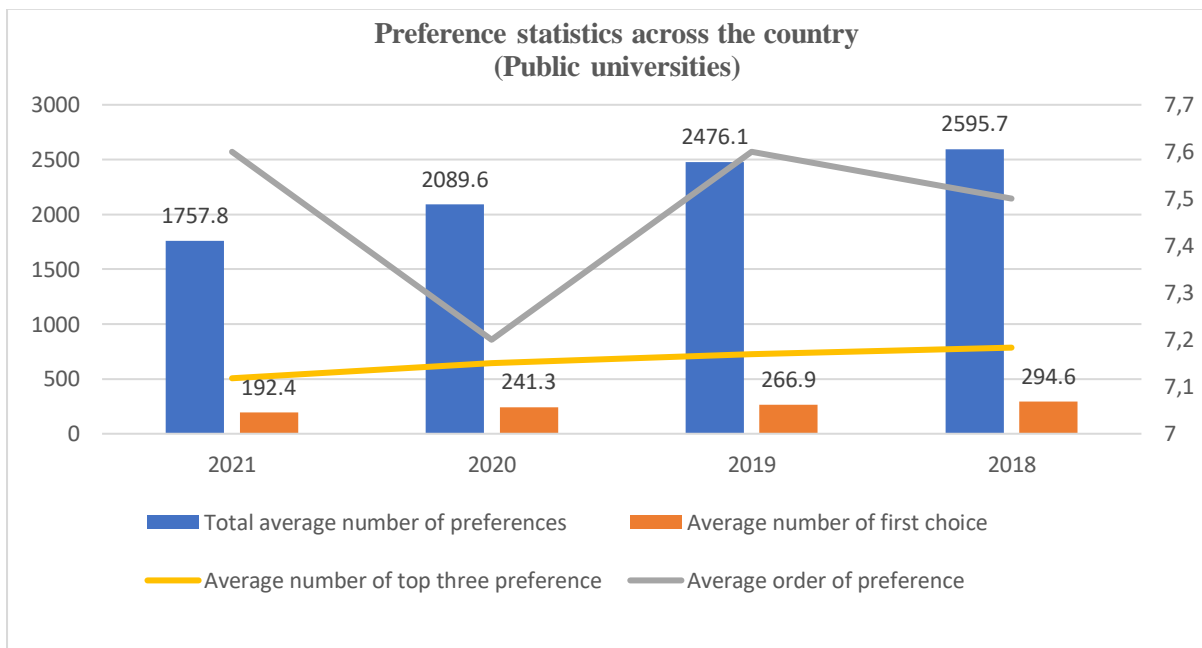


Figure 5. ELTE students’ public university preferences (2018-2021)

First, it can be seen that students’ average order of preference for the ELTE program has not changed remarkably in the past four years, ranging from 6.8 to 8th order at private universities, and 7.2 to 7,6th order at public universities. Second, the statistics indicating the average total number of students who preferred ELTE programs showed a continuous decrease in the last four years both at public and private universities, showing a sharp decline in 2019 at private universities. Third, similarly, the average total number of students who preferred ELTE programs in the first and first three places in their university preference lists has shown a similar continuous descending trend in the past four years. As for the average total number of students who preferred ELTE programs in the first order, the declines between

2018 and 2019 from 294.6 to 266.9 students and between 2020 and 2021 from 241.3 to 192.4 students were dramatic at public universities. The same notable decrease can also be seen at private universities between 2018 and 2019 from 43.7 to 23.3 students. The decreasing trend is immediately apparent in the average total number of students who preferred ELTE programs in the first three places in their university preference lists at both public and private universities. While this number has decreased by almost half in the last four years at private universities (129 in 2018 and 67.6 in 2021), there was no huge drop, but a steady decrease continued at public universities.

The findings concerning the second research question, which is about the potential correlations among various elements of all ELTE programs available in Türkiye irrespective of the differences between public and private universities, indicate notable statistically significant correlations as it is illustrated in Table 2. First, there was a significant fairly strong positive correlation between the number of professors and the total number of publications per program ($r(73) = .81, p < .001$). Although the correlations found were not that strong, this construct was also found to be statistically positively correlated with the number of other academics, such as associate professors ($r(73) = .62, p < .001$), assistant professors ($r(73) = .39, p < .001$), and research assistants ($r(72) = .39, p < .001$). In general, it suggests that the total number of publications per program tends to increase as the number of academics increases, the correlation being the highest with the number of professors.

Similarly, the total number of publications per program has a strong positive correlation with the average number of academics per program ($r(73) = .81, p < .001$), indicating that an increase in the number of academics in the ELTE programs results an increase in the number of publications in the programs. However, the number of publications per academic in the ELTE programs is positively correlated only with the number of professors ($r(73) = .37, p < .001$) and associate professors ($r(73) = .42, p < .001$). This finding reveals that the major academic group that increases the number of publications in ELTE programs is professors and associate professors.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations among ELTE Program Elements

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. NPROF	-	.45**	.34**	.49**	.81**	.84**	.37**	.23	.31*	.13
2. NASCPRF	.45**	-	-.02	.36**	.62**	.61**	.42**	.18	.11	.27*
3. NASTPRF	.34**	-.02	-	.13	.39**	.55**	-.01	.09	.17	-.02
4. NRAST	.49**	.36**	.13	-	.39**	.72**	-.05	.04	.16	.03
5. NPPP	.81**	.62**	.39**	.39**	-	.81**	.72**	.25	.28	.23
6. ANAPP	.84**	.61**	.55**	.72**	.81**	-	.26*	.21	.28	.13
7. NPPA	.37**	.42**	-.01	-.05	.72**	.26*	-	.27*	.13	.30*
8. KPSSP121	.23	.18	.09	.04	.25	.21	.27*	-	.47**	.44**
9. AFLTS	.31*	.11	.17	.16	.28	.28	.13	.47**	-	.35*
10. ATNP	.13	.27*	-.02	.03	.23	.13	.30*	.44**	.35*	-

Note. NPROF = Number of Professors; NASCPRF = Number of Associate Professors; NASTPRF = Number of Assistant Professors; NRAST = Number of Research Assistants; NPPP = Number of Publications Per Program; ANAPP = Average Number of Academics Per program; NPPA = Number of Publications Per Academic; KPSSP121 = (see Table 1); ATFLTS = Average Foreign Language Test Score; ATNP = Average Total Number of Preferences; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Average KPSSP121 scores of the graduates has been found to be positively correlated with average FLT scores ($r(55) = .47, p < .001$) and the average total number of preferences ($r(46) = .44, p < .005$). It shows that as the number of students preferring the program and their success in the FLT, which is one of the university entrance tests, increase, the KPSSP121 score, which is a requirement to be appointed as a teacher to a public school when graduating from the department, also increases.

Discussion

The present study investigated various statistics presented on YÖK Atlas regarding the ELTE programs in Türkiye. The first research question was related to the potential differences between the ELTE programs at public and private universities. One of the major findings concerning these statistics indicated the superiority of the public university ELTE students' FLT performance over the ones studying at private universities over the past six years. This also means that more successful students prefer ELTE programs at public universities which require no tuition fees. Despite the general finding

claiming that the students with higher incomes are more likely to study at private universities (Caner & Ökten, 2013), it is not the only criterion. Apart from the career expectations of the students and the facilities provided by the universities, the quality and popularity of the education given by the universities play a major role in determining students' university choices (Ilgan et al., 2018). Therefore, this result may be because ELTE programs at public universities, such as Boğaziçi University, which is famous for its high-quality education and prestige and attracts students with the highest FLT score, welcome more successful students than private universities. Supporting this finding, the detailed analysis of Caner and Ökten (2013) regarding Turkish higher education indicated that the students with higher income that are placed at public universities are likely to study at the ones receiving higher per-student subsidies from the government, such as METU or Boğaziçi University in the major of English education. Therefore, several factors, such as the cost and quality of education, may be listed for the fact that students with higher average FLT scores prefer ELTE programs at public universities.

However, an increase in average FLT scores ranging from 8% (public universities) to 10% (private universities) from 2016 to 2021 is also remarkable. At this point, what needs to be discussed is not the adequate or insufficient average FLT scores of the students studying in ELTE programs in a multiple-choice test consisting of 80 questions, but rather the success of this exam in determining the students who will study in this program as the major entry requirement. This fact has been made clear in the related literature that newcomers to the ELTE programs should have high test scores (Köksal & Ulum, 2018), and more importantly, the current entry requirements should be changed by involving an integrative approach consisting of all the skills for language proficiency measurement of the future language teachers (Asmalı, 2020; Asmalı & Çelik, 2021; Öztürk & Aydın, 2018).

The statistics that help us to gain insights about the differences between the ELTE programs at public and private universities also indicated that, despite not being markedly different, the average number of academics working at public universities outnumbers that of private universities. There may be various factors determining the preference of academics to work at public or private universities. Although it is claimed that all academic positions at private universities have higher income compared to the ones at public universities which is almost the same for all academics (Ucal et al., 2015), low job security and the high turnover rate at private universities may be the reason of the lower number of academics at private universities (Erguvan, 2013).

However, more than half of ELTE programs at public universities do not have a professor, while this rate drops to one-third at private universities. The lack of academics is also evident in the number of research assistants, especially at public universities. First, the lack of academics in the ELTE programs of both public and private universities may be linked to the recent dramatic increase in the number of ELTE programs which rose from 52 to 57 at public and from 13 to 15 different private universities from 2019 to 2021 based on the statistics of CoHE (<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>). It is debatable whether the increase in the number of ELTE programs increases the quality of students' future teaching skills and publications of academics, but one thing is certain that this causes a lack of academics. This eventually increases the workload of the academics and decreases their productivity. Akçığit and Özcan-Top (2020) also mentioned the negative impact of the increased number of universities in Türkiye especially after 2006, on academics' productivity in their comprehensive Turkish science report. In a similar context, the average number of publications per academic and program is also higher at public universities' ELTE programs. In this regard, first, it should be known that Türkiye lagged behind the leading countries in terms of its scientific publications and lost its good performance in catching them after 2006 (Akçığit & Özcan-Top, 2020). This year coincides with the opening of many universities and also ELTE programs, especially with the idea of opening a university in each province. This led to relatively lower academic productivity (Akçığit & Özcan-Top, 2020). Despite not being based on specifically ELTE programs' data, the supremacy of public universities in terms of scientific publication performance over private universities can be seen at all universities and programs in Türkiye as they cover a greater majority in scale. The problems listed as the lack of institutionalization, inadequacy of infrastructure, and the inability of the academics to meet the needs in terms of quality and quantity at universities (Akçığit & Özcan-Top, 2020) may be also claimed to be the leading problems of ELTE programs hindering better performance in publications as well.

The statistics concerning the preferences of the students studying in the ELTE programs across Türkiye indicated that not only the total number of students who preferred each ELTE program but also the average total number of students who preferred each ELTE program in the first and the first three places in their university preference lists has declined sharply in the last four years. This may not be considered a serious problem at first sight considering the high quota occupancy rates (98.5% in 2020) in ELTE programs based on the statistics of YÖK Atlas. The decrease may be directly related to the decline in the number of total applicants who take FLT in English in recent years (106,363 in 2019; 99,356 in 2020; 98,641 in 2021) (ÖSYM, 2021a). Moreover, it may also be linked to increasing the quota with the recently initiated ELTE programs at both public and private universities. However, considering the 63% and 32% decrease in the total number of preferences from 2018 to 2021 in ELTE programs at private and public universities respectively, the future of these programs may be at risk. Furthermore, despite teaching being a secure job listed as a major factor influencing student teachers' teaching choice in Türkiye (Kılınç et al., 2012), the decreasing ratio of appointed teachers of English to public schools in recent years (TEDMEM, 2018, 2019, 2020) may play a role in the decrease mentioned above as well.

Another notable finding of the present study is the positive correlation between the students' average FLT scores and their KPSSP121 scores. Although it is not a requirement for all graduates to take the tests that make up the KPSSP121 score (see Table 1), it is a must for those who want to be appointed as English teachers in public schools. Considering the nature of these tests, the KPSSP121 score may be regarded as an output indicating ELTE program students' declarative knowledge. Similarly, FLT, as the main determinant of the university entrance test for ELTE students, may be considered as an input of the program. In this regard, first, the positive correlation between the average FLT scores of the students and their KPSSP121 scores shows that the higher the average FLT scores are, the higher the KPSSP121 scores are for ELTE students. In other words, ELTE programs with more successful students in FLT graduate students with higher KPSSP121 scores. Therefore, better inputs produce better outputs in this context. Despite contradictory findings in the literature indicating a strong correlation between students' pre-university success and university performance (Danilowicz-Gösele et al., 2017) or a low correlation between the two (Rençber, 2012), it would not be too extraordinary to claim that students' pre-university English proficiency plays a key role in determining their KPSSP121 scores.

Implications

Some implications are provided for the ELTE programs considering the findings of the present study.

- Considering the workload of the academic staff of the ELTE programs, more research assistants and professors should be employed in these programs, since these two academic positions are the staff that is most lacking.
- As the major academic group that increases the number of publications in ELTE programs is professors, employing more professors may eventually increase the number of publications which may ultimately help the university to be ranked higher in international indices.
- Although ELTE programs still have high quota occupancy rates compared to many programs in Türkiye, based on the declining average total number of students who preferred ELTE programs both at public and private universities and the declining number of students taking FLT every year, these programs should try different methods of attracting students that may range from using social media to present their distinctive aspects to high school visits.
- Regarding the implication mentioned above, keeping the image of the teaching job high would be also one of the key factors to attract more students to ELTE programs.
- The increase in the number of ELTE programs in Türkiye results in the lack of academics in these programs of both public and private universities which also increases the workload of the ones currently working. Therefore, a better foresight should be employed in the course of opening new programs.

Conclusions

A variety of statistics presented on YÖK Atlas concerning the ELTE programs at Turkish public and private universities have been investigated in the present study. The findings revealed that ELTE programs at public universities were preferred by students with higher FLT scores compared to those at

private universities, but there has been an increase in the average FLT scores of students from both university types in recent years. The findings also indicated that the average number of studies per academic and per program in ELTE programs at public universities is higher than that at private universities. ELTE students' preferences, as one of the major components of the findings of this study, have been found to be decreasing in numbers in recent years. In this regard, ELTE students studying at public and private universities both prefer this department less often and give this department less place in their first or top three preferences in their university preferences. The findings also showed that the total number of studies in the ELTE programs increased with the rise in the number of all academics in the program, but also showed that associate professors and professors contributed the most to this number. However, a brief overview of the statistics concerning the number of academics shows the lack of professors and research assistants, especially at public universities' ELTE programs. Finally, it is also among the findings that the KPSSP121 score, which consists of the results of different tests, is positively correlated with the average FLT scores of the ELTE students at the entrance to the program, and that the departments are preferred more by the increase in the KPSSP121 score.

It should be accentuated that the data of the present study are limited to the statistics presented on YÖK Atlas. Further studies may investigate causal relationships and predictive roles of the constructs, such as average FLT scores, KPSSP121 scores, number of academics, the average number of publications per academic and program, and the average number of preferences of the students. Additionally, data that can be obtained through interviews with the members of the ELTE programs may help future researchers to elaborate on the potential causal relationships.

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