

Comparing English Language Teacher Education Programs in Turkey and Finland

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ABSTRACT

The quality and qualifications of teachers reflect the quality of education and the success of students accordingly, and particular attention needs to be given to pre-service teacher training as it is the primary step towards professionalization. Keeping this point in mind, English language teacher education programs (ELTEPs) seem to be a worthwhile research area. There is an increasing number of studies addressing ELTEPs in Turkey. Yet, comparative data on Turkey's ELTEPs and those of other countries remain relatively limited. Reasoning from the mentioned reasons, the study aims to analyze ELTEPs in Finland and Turkey based on five criteria; student selection, curriculum, practicum hours, graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers. Comparative in essence, the data were composed of documents indicating ELTEPs in both countries. For this qualitative research, basically, document analysis and content analysis were applied. As for the findings, one can count student selection, pre-service teaching practice and recruitment of teachers different from each other. More significantly, teachers in Finland are highly respected, trusted and have a high degree of autonomy in their work from the start of their profession. In the light of such comparative studies, Turkey needs to establish its unique model and enhance the quality of teacher education by taking the strengths of ELTEPs in different countries.

Keywords: English language teacher, English language teacher education programs, Turkey, Finland

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Türkiye'deki ve Finlandiya'daki İngilizce Öğretmeni Yetiştirme Programlarının Karşılaştırılması

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ÖZET

Öğretmenlerin nitelikleri ve kalitesi, eğitimin kalitesine ve öğrencilerin başarısına yansır ve profesyonelliğe yönelik atılan ilk adım olduğu için de hizmet öncesi öğretmen yetiştirmeye gereken önem verilmelidir. Bu görüşü dikkate alarak, İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programları verimli bir araştırma alanı olarak görülmektedir. İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programlarıyla ilgili çalışmalar giderek artmaktadır. Ancak Türkiye'deki ve diğer ülkelerdeki İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programlarını karşılaştıran çalışmalar nispeten daha azdır. Bahsi geçen bu sebeplerden yola çıkarak, bu çalışmanın amacı, Finlandiya'daki ve Türkiye'deki İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programlarını öğrenci seçimi, müfredat, uygulama dersleri, mezuniyet için gerekli koşullar ve öğretmen istihdamı gibi beş kritere göre incelemektir. Karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma olarak, veriler her iki ülkedeki İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programları ile ilgili dokümanlardan oluşmuştur. Bu nitel çalışma için doküman ve içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Bulgulara göre, öğrenci seçimi, hizmet öncesi uygulama dersleri ve öğretmenlerin istihdamı iki ülkede farklılık göstermektedir. Göze çarpan diğer önemli bir nokta da Finlandiya'daki öğretmenlere toplumda oldukça saygı duyulmaktadır, güvenilmektedir ve mesleklerine başlar başlamaz yüksek derecede bir özerklikleri bulunmaktadır. Bunun gibi karşılaştırmalı çalışmaların ışığında, Türkiye, farklı ülkelerdeki İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programlarının güçlü yanlarını alarak kendine özgü modelini oluşturmalı ve öğretmen eğitiminin kalitesini iyileştirmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce öğretmeni, İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme programları, Türkiye, Finlandiya

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INTRODUCTION

Students between 15 and 16 years of age take the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) exam every three years (available at <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>). It assesses three subject areas; science, mathematics and reading. In 2000, the scores of the PISA exam applied in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries were made public. The world has turned its eyes to top PISA scorer countries since the beginning of the twentieth century. Program planners and curriculum developers are also trying to find the miracle behind their success. Finland is among the top scorer countries which have performed well in internationally standardized tests such as PISA and English Proficiency Index (EF EPI). As a matter of fact, Finland is a small country with a population of 5.47 million. It has borders with three countries; Sweden, Russia and Norway and it has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1995 (https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/living_en#population). It has not achieved this success in education overnight but with the efforts of all the stakeholders taking many decades. In addition to its success in PISA, there is a yearly look at English levels around the world through a study based on data from more than 2.2 million test-takers in 100 countries, and in the English Proficiency Index 2020 (EF EPI), Finland ranked as the third country while Turkey ranked as the 69th country (available at: <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/>). Unfortunately, Turkey is falling behind with very low proficiency level in English, and there can be various reasons for it.

We all know that teachers are one of the greatest factors influencing students' academic achievement. Therefore, the quality and qualifications of teachers reflect the quality of education and the success of the students accordingly. Therefore, we should attract and retain effective teachers to the profession. Recruiting such competent teachers is the target of many countries. Keeping this point in mind, English language teacher education programs (ELTEPs) seem to be a worthwhile research area. In Turkey, English has been taught starting from pre-primary/primary education to the end of high school which means that it is offered as a compulsory school subject for learners. Not only is it a school subject but also the key for better future job prospects, salary, social status and understanding of scientific publications in various fields. In line with this thought, for higher education, English is not only a requisite course, but also the medium of instruction, 30% or 100% in many departments. Regarding this growing importance of English language learning, in Turkey, there have been several changes in teacher training programs throughout years. Yet it is still debated whether teacher qualifications have reached the desired level including English language teachers. Particular attention needs to be given to pre-service teacher training as it is the primary step towards professionalization, and to enhance the quality of education, evaluation and reflection can be seen at the heart of teacher training research. There is a growing body of research on ELTEP in Turkey (Nergis, 2011; Karakaş, 2012; Mahalingappa and Polat, 2013; Köksal and Ulum, 2018; Öztürk and Aydın, 2018). Most of the existing research examined the programs from the perspectives of lecturers, teacher candidates and in-service teachers (Seferoğlu, 2006; Coşkun and Daloğlu, 2010; Kömür, 2010; Hismanoğlu, 2012; Salihoglu, 2012; Inal and Büyükyavuz, 2013; Yavuz and Zehir-Topkaya, 2013; Demiroz and Yesilyurt, 2015; Türken, 2017; Kartal and Başol, 2019). In another stream of research, language teacher education curricula of ELTEPs of different institutions within Turkey have been compared (Sanlı, 2009; Ertuğrul-Seçen and Erişen, 2020). Some offered statistical data including the profile of academic staff, students, the number of exchange programs at ELTEPs (Solak, 2018; Asmalı, 2020). Yet, comparative data remain relatively restricted (Aldemir and Er, 2012; Altmisdort, 2016; Solak, 2016; Kic-Drgas and Comoglu, 2017; Karakaş and Yavuz, 2018) on Turkey's ELTEP and those of other countries. For instance, Altmisdort (2016) investigated five countries' ELTEPs (Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Norway) and attributed the high-level proficiency of those countries in EPI index 2014 to teachers' success but also acknowledged that "the factors such as working conditions, salaries, and teaching loads affect teachers' success" (Altmisdort, 2016, p. 221). Another scholar, Solak (2013) compared foreign language teaching at primary school level in Finland with Turkey and described teacher training in both countries briefly and stated that teaching profession's prestige is very high in Finland. Niemi, Nevgi and Akşit (2016) investigated active learning experiences of student teachers in Turkey and Finland, but they did not compare the differences between the two. They have found that the more active student teachers are in their lessons, the better their professional competences are. However, there still needs to be more

research studies putting both ELTEPs in Turkey and Finland under scrutiny in the same study. As Karakaş and Yavuz (2018, p. 289) put it, “comparative studies are useful in respect of determining similarities and differences as well as weaknesses and strengths in ELTEPs of different institutions”. Yavuz and Zehir-Topkaya (2013, p. 64) underpin that ELTEPs “require constant reforming and restructuring to keep up with the demands of a fast-changing world and dynamic individual needs”. Reasoning from above-mentioned views, the aim of this paper is to analyze ELTEP in Finland and Turkey based on five criteria; student selection, curriculum, practicum hours, graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers.

METHOD

This study is based on the comparative analysis of ELTEPs in both countries. Qualitative data collection, analysis procedures and instruments are adopted. For the qualitative research, basically document analysis and content analysis were applied on the documents obtained from trustworthy web-sites (Finland Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Turkey the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education), selection of articles in the field (please see the references) and national university websites related to both countries’ ELTEPs. Documents provide a means of comparison to identify the differences. As Bowen (2009, p. 27) notes, “document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents-both printed and electronic (computer based and Internet-transmitted) material”. For the obtained data, content analysis was done to organize the data into the selected categories. Being descriptive in essence, within the scope of the present study focusing on the evaluation of ELTEPs, the analysis is carried on five basic categories which are; student selection, curriculum, practicum hours, graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers by bringing similarities and differences. It aims to answer the following research question:

1. What are the differences in both programs in terms of student selection, curriculum, practicum, graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings are presented and discussed under the five categories of document analysis which are student selection, curriculum, practicum hours, graduation prerequisites of ELTEPs and recruitment of English language teachers in Finland and Turkey. This kind of comparative education research study “involves stating facts, comparing facts, and making assumptions from these facts” (Tonga et al., 2019, p. 2).

English Language Teacher Education Programs in Finland

Although Finland is a country which is populated by relatively few inhabitants, its success is impressive. Finnish education consists of nine-year basic education with one-year voluntary pre-primary education and upper secondary education which consists of vocational and general education. In most Finnish schools, the only A1 compulsory language beginning in the third grade is English. As a matter of fact, many students only study English and a second national language (Finnish or Swedish). In relation to the success in English language learning, one can observe:

the prevalence of English in the Finnish media: English-language TV shows running in Finland are shown with their original soundtrack and Finnish subtitles, and, for instance, news clips and interviews with people from different countries speaking native and non-native English are never dubbed or translated with voiceovers (although they are always given subtitles) (Ranta, 2010, p.159).

In addition to the daily dominance of English and that kind of supporting environment, the key to students’ success is also believed to be the quality and effectiveness of teachers and teacher education. It is also apparent that teacher education system in Finland has contributed to the country’s success in many ways. Finland changed its education system in 1979 (Jenset et al., 2018). In Finland, the system is based on “equity, flexibility, creativity, teacher professionalism and trust” (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 147). It recruits highly competent teachers who are going to work for many years with excellence. From the reviewed literature, Ostinelli (2009) underlined that the young teachers approach teaching profession as a lifelong learning journey and they show positive and realistic goals towards the future and added that only 10-15% of teachers think of changing their jobs, so they are dedicated to teaching. Also, he

pinpoints that “the teaching profession is very desirable in Finland and students with good academic results choose it (access, however, is not very easy since only 10–15% are accepted)” (Ostinelli, 2009, p. 303). In Finland, teaching programs are more popular than engineering and medical degree programs. In Popa, Laurian and Fitzgerald’s (2015, p. 108) study, it was seen that teachers “have the autonomy, responsibility, respect, training, collegial support, school administration support, and resources to do what they believe they should do”. Taking these factors into consideration, why teaching is so prestigious in Finland is quite understandable. Apparently, teachers in Finland can feel the respect and trust of the public and all the stakeholders towards themselves.

Student selection

Sahlberg (2018) clears up the popular misconception that only the most successful students are admitted to teaching departments in Finland. He exemplifies this admission process by saying that 1 out of 10 candidates have the chance to start their major in teaching. Not only the average grades but also universities’ own aptitude and assessment tests are effective in admission. For instance, at Helsinki University, for 120 student capacity, 60% of the students are chosen based on their high school grade averages while 40% of the students are chosen based on the university’s aptitude test (Sahlberg, 2018). As Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, (2011, p. 41) point out, “in Finland, all universities have Numerus Clausus system”. It means that the universities admit only a limited number of applicants, and this number is determined in negotiation with the Ministry of Education. The aptitude test is a kind of interview in which a text is handed to applicants 20 minutes before the interview and related questions about the text are also directed. In the interview, the following qualities of the applicants are evaluated: “aptitude to the teaching profession, motivation, interaction skills, and abilities to present well-grounded opinions and perspectives on the text the applicant got before the interview” (Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011, p. 43).

Curriculum

In Finland, there are two categories of teachers: classroom teachers and subject teachers. The degree program for both primary school teachers (class teachers teaching students on Grades 1–6 of the comprehensive school) and secondary school teachers (subject teachers teaching Grades 7–9) is given at the master’s level, and the programs are funded by the government. “It takes about five years to complete, and constitutes 300 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), according to the Bologna programme” (Larzén-Östermark, 2009, p. 404). For subject teachers, the course module “Pedagogical studies for teachers” can be taken as part of the degree or taken separately after the Master’s degree (Larzén-Östermark, 2009).

Finland has a reputation for its teacher education based on research (Sahlberg, 2018). Teachers play key roles in gathering small data at schools as they are the ones who know their students the best. They know their students’ characters, needs and potentials (Sahlberg, 2018). Therefore, the curriculum aims to raise teachers who are capable of conducting their own research. Universities are quite autonomous in designing their curricula. In this regard, it does not seem plausible to offer a detailed curriculum of teacher education in Finland. Nevertheless, all institutions of education follow some general outlines recommended partly by the Ministry of Education and Culture and partly by the Deans of the Faculties of Education and the Directors of the Departments of Teacher Education. The Ministry of Education trusts the departments and faculties involved in teacher education (Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011).

The core components of all teacher education curricula are composed of studies in academic disciplines, research studies consisting of methodological studies, a BA thesis, and a MA thesis, obligatory pedagogical studies (min. 60 ECTS) for all teachers including teaching practice, obligatory communication, language and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) studies. In Rizza’s (2011, p.25) report about OECD countries, it can be seen that Finland has been trying to establish a system in which “all teachers at all levels” have ICT competences since 1986. Since 2005, there has been a new element, a preparation of a personal study plan which targets to encourage students to create their own effective programs and career plans and to help them to reach their targets. In addition to these, there are also optional studies which offer a variety of different courses to meet the needs of students in their studies and qualifications (Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011). In Finland, teachers are

expected to be digital literate, manage multi-cultural classroom environments, cooperate with parents and meet the needs of students with special interests (Aksoy and Gözütok, 2014). During their pre-service teacher training, student teachers are equipped with those qualities.

Practicum

In Finland, language departments and teacher education departments are both responsible in raising foreign language teachers. Practice schools where pre-service teachers can have their teaching practice are attached to these teacher education departments. There are about 13 teacher training schools in Finland. In Finland, there are three effective factors in practicum: the student teacher, supervisor lecturer from the university and the school teacher as a mentor (available at: <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/node/1520>). As Uusiautti and Määttä (2012, p. 343) underline, “in Finland, student teachers have traditionally had several teaching practice periods of varying lengths at different stages in their studies. Teaching practicum has numerous goals that aim at developing good teacherhood”.

Collaboration is at the heart of Finnish practicum making connection between theory and practice, and mentor teachers monitor student teachers and give feedback to them. Student teachers can try their teaching skills in these practice schools and feel themselves in a safe environment where no one is judging them (available at: <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/node/1520>). Finnish system is based on the notion that one cannot become a teacher just by reading, but they should learn by doing instead. While practicing, they reflect on themselves and question their understanding of what teaching is.

Graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers

Studying at ELTEPs in Finland is highly demanding. After 160 weeks of study, subject teachers can have their Master’s degree. Obtaining MA degree not only opens the job market for teachers, but also gives them the opportunity to continue their postgraduate studies (Sahlberg, 2007). Students have their education in two language subjects and pedagogical studies before they graduate. 55 weeks of study are allocated to one school subject, and 35 weeks of study are allocated to the possible other school subject. Students can also apply for admission to teacher education after 2-3 years of studying. When they are accepted, they can complete their pedagogical studies while pursuing their subject studies. In Finland, there is a tendency to adopt CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) interest within subject teaching. Teachers have their initial training as subject rather than language teachers.

In Finland, teachers do not need to take additional exams before recruitment, and municipalities are in charge of recruiting teachers (Tonga et al., 2019). Teachers do not have any probation period, but municipalities arrange training for novice teachers provided by universities’ learning centers, so novice teachers are supported by professional development opportunities.

English Language Teacher Education Programs in Turkey

The importance given to teaching and learning English at all levels of education in Turkey also puts the emphasis on the significance of English language teachers and ELTEPs. For this reason, all the studies conducted on the evaluation of ELTEPs, as well as this present study can be said to contribute to the field of teacher education and the development of teacher education programs. Since the millennium, Turkey has intensified the necessary steps to enhance English language teaching in Turkey and modified ELTEPs throughout years. Despite the efforts, the situation has not improved as much as it is expected. The number of language education departments has risen in parallel to the increase in the number of state and foundation universities, so the quality has become the issue more than ever. ELTEP has been the focus of research as Öztürk and Aydın (2019) underpin:

recent developments in foreign language teaching policies, a highly emphasis on teaching English to young learners starting from the second grade and a rising trend towards intensive English preparatory programs at university level have provided further impetus to educate highly competent and qualified teachers (p. 184).

Student selection

Students are admitted to the departments based on their scores in the nationwide university entrance exam organised by Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM in Turkey). In addition, students' weighted high school grade is added to their exam scores (Asmalı, 2020). It is held in three sessions, taking place in two phases. Students take the first session of the Higher Education Institutions Exam (YKS), which is the Basic Proficiency Test (TYT). Then, the second session, comprising of the Field Proficiency Tests (AYT), is held in the following weekend while students also sit for the Foreign Language Test (YDT) in the afternoon. The language test includes 80 multiple choice items aiming to assess reading, grammar and vocabulary knowledge. The criticism that has been raised against the selection criteria is that students are not only assessed based on their language proficiency test scores, but also on their scores in other tests such as mathematics, and the ones who have had higher scores from other subjects can be placed in language teaching departments. There are also criticisms raised against the content of the language test (Hatipoğlu, 2016). From the reviewed literature, Gunes (2019, p. 602) underlines that foreign language test "is based on reading comprehension". When students take departmental lessons, they can have difficulty due to ignorance of other skills. In Gunes' (2019, p. 608) study, pre-service teachers pointed out that "after the onset of university process, pre-service English teachers become aware of the importance of being able to use a foreign language with all of its skills", and they also think that the test cannot show their exact proficiency level.

Curriculum

In Turkey, universities under the governance, recognition and supervision of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) are responsible for training teachers. CoHE is in charge of planning and revising the content of courses offered at departments in education faculties (Coskun and Daloğlu, 2010). ELTEPs in Turkey take four years provided that students pass the language proficiency exams offered by the universities or submit the necessary scores from nationally/internationally administered exams such as Foreign Language Exam (YDS), Foreign Language Exams for Higher Education Institutions (YÖKDİL) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). If they do not get the required score, they have to attend English preparatory class. ELTEPs used to follow a compulsory program provided by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) during the education process while offering selective courses, materials, course-books and exams till 2020 (Kic-Drgas and Comoglu, 2017; Köksal and Ulum, 2017; Göktürk and Aydın, 2019). The program was based on the European Union teacher education policies since 2006 with bidding autonomy on the determination of coursebooks, course materials and assessment systems (Kic-Drgas and Comoglu, 2017). Also, in 2018, CoHE renewed ELTEP and made some amendments in the content of pedagogical courses and subject-specific courses and increased the time frame of the practicum to two semesters (Kartal and Başol, 2019). The standardized program was composed of field knowledge (linguistic competence), teacher education (pedagogic competence), general knowledge and teaching practice (Türken, 2017). In addition to these courses, there is a community service course and second foreign language course for the students in Turkey. Then, in 2020, the decision of curriculum structure was left to the faculties of education at universities, and top-down regulation was abolished to give teaching departments more autonomy to meet the changing dynamics of education (CoHE, 2020). With this reform, they aim to unveil a structure where the faculties of education can determine their own curriculum and offer their own elective courses by sticking to the division of categories and their ratio in the curriculum. It can be said that the success of this reform will be understood better when it has been applied for some time to see the consequences. Despite the frequent revisions, the effectiveness of ELTEPs is still on the agenda, and they have been evaluated in terms of their weaknesses and strengths in the reviewed literature. For instance, it was argued that ELTEPs in Turkey offer fewer courses related to improving student teachers' linguistic competence (Demir, 2015). Courses related to pedagogic competence outweigh courses related to linguistic competence. Yet this can be understandable as the ELTEPs have been offering one-year compulsory preparatory classes for students with low proficiency in English in recent years. In Uzun's (2016) study that investigates whether educational and technical courses in the ELTEPs contribute to information and communication technologies (ICT) knowledge and skills of the students, it was seen that none of those courses supported ICT skills of the students at a satisfactory level as they were mostly held in traditional ways with printed books or old computers while only some participants mentioned about creating digital

stories or websites. Similarly, in Altmisdort's (2016, p. 221) study, pre-service teachers argued that "the lessons are generally theoretical but not practical", and they further said that the program did not have enough teaching practices. In an earlier study about teacher education in Turkey, Seferoğlu (2007, p.373) had also highlighted that "there should be more opportunities for micro teaching and teaching practices". In recent studies that surveyed teacher candidates, insufficient teaching practice still seems to be an issue (Kic-Drgas and Çomoğlu, 2017; Karakaş and Yavuz, 2018; Öztürk and Aydın, 2019).

Practicum

In their senior year, pre-service teachers are given the chance to teach in a real classroom. Unfortunately, this two-term course (Teaching Practice) is the only course that permits them to observe and experience the possible realities of classroom. Allocated hours to classroom observation and teaching practice remain limited. Moreover, there is only one course about classroom management which causes serious problems for novice teachers (Kic-Drgas and Çomoglu, 2017). This can be considered a serious gap in the program. After attending and observing the experienced teacher, pre-service teachers can teach limited number of hours under the guidance of the class teacher or under the supervision of the lecturer from the university (Kilimci, 2009). The amount of feedback they get throughout this process varies from one teaching context to another. As Öztürk and Aydın (2019) point out:

how this teaching practice takes places in reality depends on many variables; the attitudes of the mentors and supervisors towards teaching practice, and the importance they attach to it, how they perceive their own roles as well as the roles of the other participants can be counted as the main factors. In many cases, the whole process has been reported to be taking place far from the ideal, and mentor teachers are pointed out as the source of the problems (p. 189).

From the reviewed literature, another scholar, Yavuz (2011) underlines that mentor teachers are not selected or trained like their counterparts in European countries. Faculty course lecturers pay visits to schools to observe pre-service teachers, but these visits are not systematic but are determined based on the availability of faculty lecturer's time in their intensive timetables, so the absence of collaboration prevents students from making most of their teaching practice.

Graduation prerequisites and recruitment of teachers

Each course teacher is effective in determining their own evaluation and assessment criteria (Kilimci, 2009). They can opt to have two midterm exams and a final exam or a midterm exam and a final exam or different assessment components. In their senior year, students are obliged to submit a project with their peers as an indication of their independent research ability and focus. The teacher candidates, who successfully attend a four-year initial teacher training program and complete 240 credits, get a teaching diploma. In their senior year, pre-service teachers are getting prepared for the Examination for the Selection and Placement of Candidates for Professional Posts in Public Organizations (KPSS) and at the same time meeting the requirements of the courses, which are both quite challenging. The pressure on senior students may lead them to lose their interest in their lessons. KPSS includes "multiple choice questions on social sciences, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge and language proficiency" (Öztürk and Aydın, 2019, p. 187).

After students get their diploma, they have to pass and get a certain score from KPSS. Then, they need to get a high score from the interviews held by the officers from the Ministry of National Education in order to be appointed since 2017. As Öztürk and Aydın (2019, p. 187) argue, in the interviews which last about ten minutes, "teacher candidates are exposed to some general open-ended questions about education, psychology or technology, not specifically about their educational background or subject matter knowledge". According to their interview scores, they are appointed as contracted teachers by MoNE (Ministry of National Education) at state schools all around the country. Those schools are generally in disadvantaged regions of Turkey and to prevent teacher circulation, teachers who are appointed for the first time have to complete minimum four-year time in the same districts. As Topsakal (2019, p. 671) notes, "being appointed as a tenured teacher takes time. Contracted teachers are subjected to candidacy training. Those who have completed their four years of employment and become successful in the candidacy process are appointed to the tenured positions".

After four-year working time, tenured teachers can be appointed to different districts upon their requests based on their service scores. Graduates can also work for private schools and courses.

Differences and Similarities between ELTEPs in Turkey and Finland

There are various differences but very few similarities between ELTEPs in Turkey and Finland. The first difference can be seen in student selection procedure. In Turkey, university entrance exam score is the main factor in student selection, but this brings along some issues with it. The fact that students' only cognitive abilities are evaluated with a university entrance exam can be considered as one of the weakest sides (Aksoy and Gözütok, 2014). Hatipoğlu (2016, p.142) investigated the impact of the university entrance exam on pre-service teachers and put that "the students unfortunately ignore skills (i.e., speaking, listening and writing) and types of knowledge not included in the exam". This format impedes their writing, speaking and listening skills. On the other side of the coin, when the subdivision of scores used in the admission to language teaching departments is analyzed, it is seen that the source of the problem lies in the fact that a student who has given more correct answers in mathematics, science, etc. but less correct answers in foreign language test can rank higher and increase their chance for admission to language teaching departments. However, students with higher scores in foreign language test of the university entrance exam but lower scores in mathematics, science test do not guarantee their admission to language teaching departments, but they find themselves in a less favorable situation, instead. In Finland, students' high school weighted grades of the lessons including mathematics and science are also important as they need to complete their high school education successfully, but their aptitude, passion and willingness to become teachers are of utmost significance. According to EF EPI (English Proficiency Index) results, they are also highly successful in learning a second language. On the other hand, in Turkey, some students prefer to enroll in teacher education programs based on their university entrance exam scores though they are not proficient in English or they do not aim a career in teaching.

Another difference can be the teaching philosophy in the faculties of education. In Finland, ELTEPs are based on research, and this means that "teachers can diagnose problems in their classrooms and schools, apply evidence-based and often alternative solutions to them and evaluate and analyze the impact of implemented procedures" (Sahlberg, 2007, p.155). Through this way, teachers can become active agents in their profession. Supporting this point of view, in the reviewed literature, Niemi and Isopahkala-Bauret (2015, p.135) pointed out that "in the Finnish educational system, teachers are expected to be autonomous, pedagogically thinking, and critically oriented professionals". In a similar stream of research, Westbury et al., (2005, p.477) have underpinned that ELTEPs in Finland aim to "prepare teachers who are aware of the effects of their actions and factors around their work, thus equipping them to control their own activity". On the other hand, in Turkey, as Öztürk and Aydın (2019, p.190) have argued, ELTEPs transfer knowledge about how people learn and assume that the learning process "is the same for everybody and ignoring the differences among individual learners". Therefore, teachers in Turkey can have problems in real-world schooling. Another notable difference in teacher training programs is that secondary school English language teachers in Finland have their initial education as subject teachers. In their context, this is quite understandable as subject teachers also use CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) within subject teaching, and students learn a subject and a second language at the same time. This may bring along its own advantages. To name a few, language teachers with knowledge in subjects can be of great help in the successful implementation of curricular practices. As the language is integrated into a broad curriculum, learning another language becomes a relatively natural process. From the literature, Heras and Lasagabaster (2015, p.72) have highlighted some of the possible advantages of CLIL as the following: "triggering high levels of communication between teachers and learners, and among learners themselves as well as improving overall language competence in the target language, particularly oral skills". Yet, this issue needs further research to see the differences between two different implementations.

As for another difference between two countries, one can count the recruitment of teachers. While it is a requirement for teachers of English in Finland to have an MA degree, it is not obligatory for teachers of English working for the Ministry of National Education in Turkey to have it. With the current situation, it is only compulsory for language instructors who work at higher education level. However,

in 2020, MoNE has put a regulation into practice for tenure teachers who would like to change their schools or districts (available at: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2020/06/20200619-8.htm>). By the regulation, teachers who have MA degrees in related fields will be given 50 points and teachers who have PhD will be given 90 points to be added to their total service score while selecting their new schools, and they will be in a more favorable position than those who do not have MA or PhD degrees. However, each MA and PhD program has certain admission quotas and this may cause some problems among in-service teachers. To meet the increasing demands, there can be a rise in the number of graduate programs offered by foundation universities, but it does not seem plausible to expect all these universities to offer high-quality MA programs with full-fledged academics. Also, some teachers sued MoNE for this regulation, and this regulation has been suspended. As for another difference in the recruitment process, teachers in Turkey need to pass the exam and interview to be employed as teachers while in Finland, there is no additional exam for recruitment. This kind of recruitment in Turkey may result from the increasing number of teacher candidates due to the growing number of graduates from faculties of education and teacher training certificate programs.

As for the curriculum, the low ratio of ICT courses in ELTEPs in Turkey can be considered as another difference from ELTEPs in Finland. In ELTEPs in Turkey, there is only one course that attempts to equip pre-service teachers with technological pedagogical content knowledge. Likewise, Uzun (2016) underlined that ICT knowledge and skills are not scaffolded in Turkish pre-service ELTEPs while ICT knowledge is infused in the whole program in Finland. In ELTEPs in Turkey, there is a community service course to foster voluntary work among pre-service teachers, and this can be considered as a positive side of the program. More significantly, in Finland, teachers have high respect and status in the society while teachers in Turkey are harshly criticized and attacked with bad remarks in the media and society. In Polat and Ünişen's (2016) study, it was seen that 57.6% out of teacher news in the national printed press was observed to be unfavourable. They underlined that "this type of teacher image does not correspond to the teacher model desired to be trained in existing Education faculties, or to the teacher stereotype of the society" (Polat and Ünişen, 2016, p. 20).

Among the few similarities between Finland and Turkey, the autonomy of education faculties can be counted. With the new decision, CoHE in Turkey has devolved curriculum planning to the faculties of education recently, and this reform will help faculties to be more flexible in creating their programs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Comparative data provide us with valuable information about other countries and their strengths in education as Turkey will continue to follow global trends and take the initiatives to reach the desirable level of teaching and learning practices. If we want our students to compete with the high-ranking countries in the world, our teachers should be able to compete with the quality of teachers and teaching practices in the world. Some suggestions can be derived from the findings to make language teachers in Turkey well-equipped and competent to bridge the gap between policies and teaching practices.

As for the possible suggestions, first of all, the number of students who are admitted to English Language Teaching Programs should be decreased from high numbers to reasonable numbers so that each candidate will be the focus of attention throughout the program. Likewise, in the reviewed literature, Ertuğrul-Seçer and Erişen (2020) focuses on the need to have smaller class size in order to improve the efficiency of ELTEPs. With a good human resource planning, it must be determined how many prospective teachers Turkey needs and plan the admission quotas to the faculties of education accordingly. Also, selection procedure needs to be reconsidered. As suggested by Tonga et al. (2019, p. 8), "the teacher training program might include student candidates with not only academic success but also the skills that support teaching abilities". Similarly, Göktürk and Aydın (2019, p.199) recommended that "an integrative approach involving all the skills needs to be used for measuring language proficiency of the future teachers". This kind of suggestions sound reasonable, but in Turkey, since there is a growing number of students who are willing to study at university, the steps of this admission procedure need to be determined fairly and clearly. In the current recruitment regulation, teacher candidates who have graduated from programs on language and culture can receive pedagogical formation training

certificate and also become eligible for recruitment, and this makes the prevailing situation more complex. Thus, there are many teacher candidates waiting to be appointed as teachers for many years.

In addition, there can be two different undergraduate programs for candidate teachers who would like to work in primary schools and high schools. Students can choose their specialization after two years of study. Courses that are appropriate for each level of education should be given priority in each program. For example, the number of courses such as “Teaching English to Children” can be increased and this will equip candidate teachers with problem solving strategies when they start teaching. Likewise, Advanced Reading, Advanced Writing, Advanced Speaking and Advanced Listening Courses can be offered in High School English Language Teaching Programs (Aldemir and Er, 2012). Furthermore, teachers who have their MA degrees should be given priority in the recruitment process in order to enhance the qualities of the teachers (Aldemir and Er, 2012). ELTEPs should also provide information about sociocultural context and provide student teachers with sufficient training to be able to teach diverse learner groups. When teacher candidates are appointed to rural areas, they might suffer from cultural shock and adaptation problems (Demir, 2015), so it would be better for them to get acquainted with the context beforehand. In line with this thought, apart from their courses in the curriculum, seminars/webinars can be offered to student teachers with the contribution of expert teachers in the field. Moreover, they should know how to hold teacher-parent conferences as parental support is critical in fostering students’ interest and motivation towards learning English. In line with Sanlı’s (2009) suggestion, the number of elective courses in the ELTEPs should be increased. More significantly, teachers should feel that they are trusted and have a high degree of individual autonomy in their work from the start of their profession.

Collaboration between MoNE and universities should be strengthened. Pre-service teachers should be equipped to cope with the real-world schooling. It would be better for pre-service teachers to observe different teachers at various schools teaching different levels of proficiency. School experience course should be offered in early years with active teaching and reflection opportunities. In Finland, students can get acquainted with on-going practices at schools as “there is practice teaching in every year and every study period, and every practice teaching period is combined with theoretical and research studies related to the topic of the practice period” (Westbury et al., 2005, p.478). Yet, school practice is not enough on its own, but reflection, feedback and self-evaluation should also be important components of ELTEPs. Yet now, to what extent teacher candidates reflect upon themselves or receive reflection is based on their mentor teacher and course lecturer. In Ertuğrul-Seçer and Erişen’s (2020) study, it has been underlined that in the current state of the program, during practicum period, the number of student teachers per practicum supervisor at state universities is too high, so supervisors have difficulty in giving feedback to micro- and macro-teaching practices of student teachers. Equally important thing is to increase the quality of in-service teachers’ professional development and ELTEPs should be in touch with teachers in their life-long learning journey. It should be noted that more measures than raising teacher education standards would be necessary. One of the driving forces to recruit competent and qualified teachers is the status and respect of teachers in the society. The more they are respected and trusted in the society, the more successful they will become. When teachers feel respected, valued and supported, their morale and job satisfaction soar accordingly, and they become more effective in their profession.

This study does not attempt to offer a comprehensive evaluation of each component of ELTEPs in Turkey and Finland, but map a general picture of them. Future research can compare the content of certain courses offered in both countries with each other, and further research can be carried out by comparing different countries that have not been under scrutiny yet. Not only the content and quality of ELTEPs but also the qualifications and teaching experiences of lecturers who give courses at the faculties of education can be the focus of another research as most of the lecturers seem to lack hands-on experience in real classrooms as most of them have started their careers immediately at undergraduate level after having worked as a research assistant in related departments. Their academic competences are being considered, but their teaching experience has not been a requirement. There are apparently points which should be taken as an example of ELTEPs in Finland. Yet it should not be taken for granted that simply modelling Finnish practices in Turkey would automatically enhance the quality of teacher

education as change requires long-term vision. By taking the strengths of ELTEPs in different countries, Turkey needs to establish its unique model and enhance the quality of teacher education.

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