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## Evaluation of an English Language Teacher Education Program from Student Teachers' Perspectives: A Case from Turkey\*

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### ABSTRACT

This mixed-design study aims to explore student teachers' views on their own competency as prospective English language teachers and on how successful the teacher education program they are enrolled is in terms of preparing them for these competencies. Thirty-two senior students studying at the Foreign Languages Education Department (FLED) of a state university in Turkey participated in this study. A scale including Likert-type items measuring the perceived competency of student teachers on three subsections and open-ended items which seek to reach a deeper understanding of the choices participants selected in the closed-ended part was used as the data collection instrument. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were employed in order to analyze the questionnaire. The results obtained from descriptive and inferential statistics showed that the order of teacher candidates' perceived competency areas from more competent to less was as follows: 1) monitoring, assessment, and professional development, 2) planning, teaching, and classroom management area, 3) language and subject area. Specifically, using assessment methods relevant to the subject effectively and knowing a variety of assessment methods were discovered to be competencies that student teachers feel the least confident. These results were further discussed in relation to the recent studies conducted in Turkey after the educational reforms of 1997 and 2006 in the pre-service English teacher education departments' curriculums.

**Key Words:** Teacher competency, program evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, pre-service language teacher education

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## Aday Öğretmenlerin Bakış Açısından bir İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programı Değerlendirmesi: Türkiye’den bir Vaka\*

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### ÖZET

Karma tasarımlı bu çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının İngilizce öğretmeni adayları olarak kendi yetkinlikleri hakkındaki görüşlerini ve kayıtlı oldukları öğretmenlik eğitim programının bu yetkinlikler için ne kadar başarılı olduklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırmaya, Türkiye’deki bir devlet üniversitesinin Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü’nde (YDE) okuyan 32 son sınıf öğrencisi katılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak, öğretmen adaylarının algıladıkları yeterliliği ölçen Likert tipi sorular ile katılımcıların seçimlerini daha derinlemesine araştırmayı hedefleyen açık uçlu bölümden oluşan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Anketi analiz etmek için nicel ve nitel veri analizi yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Tanımlayıcı ve çıkarımsal istatistiklerden elde edilen sonuçlar, öğretmen adaylarının kendilerini sırasıyla en fazla 1) izleme, değerlendirme ve mesleki gelişim, 2) planlama, öğretim ve sınıf yönetimi, 3) dil ve konu bilgisi alanlarında yeterli hissettiklerini göstermiştir. Konuyla ilgili değerlendirme yöntemlerinin etkin bir şekilde kullanılması ve çeşitli değerlendirme yöntemlerinin bilinmesi, öğretmen adaylarının en az kendinden emin olduklarını düşündükleri yeterlikler olarak tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, bu sonuçlar hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmeni eğitimi bölümlerinin müfredatlarında 1997 ve 2006 eğitim reformları sonrasında Türkiye’de yapılan son çalışmalarla ilgili olarak da tartışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğretmen yeterlilikleri, program değerlendirme, kullanım odaklı değerlendirme, aday dil öğretmeni eğitimi

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### **Introduction**

English as a global language has been spoken all over the world for more than half a century now. This increasing interest in English has also raised the demand for learning the language. A number of institutions has emerged to meet this demand and to teach English to millions of people each of whom has various purposes in learning it. Language program evaluation evolves at this point to ensure quality management by contributing to the improvement of the programs (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005). To this end, this study aims to explore student teachers' views on their own competency as prospective English language teachers and on how successful their teacher education program is in preparing them for these competencies. The context of this study is the Foreign Languages Education Department (FLED) of a state university in Turkey. The program offers four years of education to prepare students as English language teachers. The curriculum that the program follows is almost the same as the one that is endorsed by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) in 2006. CoHE is a free constitutional state body which directs the organization, planning, supervision, and coordination of all higher education institutions of Turkey. It is also responsible for making the necessary changes in the curricula of various faculties nationwide including the Faculties of Education. In 1982, CoHE underwent a reform movement which enabled it to monitor the activities of all universities in Turkey and which made it possible for Faculties of Education to offer pre-service teacher education to ensure standardization in teacher education. The following years showed that pre-service teacher education in language teaching departments had not yet reached its desired state and it exclusively focused on theoretical issues as it had already been the case in the Faculties of Arts and Sciences. Therefore, CoHE started the Pre-Service Teacher Education project for the 1998-1999 academic year. The curriculum prepared accordingly focused exclusively on teacher competencies and standards following up-to-date and field-based developments in the subjects (Şallı-Çopur, 2008). In 2006, CoHE again altered the English language teacher education programs in order to comply with the requirements of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as well as to pave the way for autonomous language learning and teaching for the professional development of teachers within the framework of European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages. Hence, the English language teacher education program under investigation has been shaped and reshaped in the light of these reforms to conform to the regulations imposed by CoHE, and now it follows exactly the same curriculum set up by CoHE.

Student teachers are defined by Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007) as “having high expectations, knowledge of current pedagogy, and a heightened desire to meet the needs of their students in addition to meeting the demands of their cooperating teachers and student-teaching supervisors” (p. 916). Still, they believe student teachers have a naïve understanding of pedagogy and child development and are required to work in ambiguous contexts as both students and teachers. Therefore, there should be a consistency and coherence in the curriculum of initial teacher education so as to best prepare pre-service teachers for the demands of “real” teaching environments. Within this line, Roberts (1998) offers a system of concerted learning activities for initial teacher training design. This concerted design consists of a) direct experience in the form of teaching experience and/ or language learning, second-hand experience, that is classroom observation and/ or readings, b) input of new information as in the theories or lectures on the curriculum or language learning theory, c) and activities in order to develop self-awareness, such as journal writing. Furthermore, he suggests that these procedures can be processed either privately, as in reflective journal writing, or collaboratively through dialogues.

Commenting on the inadequacy of “piecemeal approaches” to make evaluations useful, Patton (2008) advances a utilization-focused model to evaluation. He sees utilization-focused evaluation as:

evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses. Utilization-focused evaluation begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration for how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use. Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process. Therefore, the focus in utilization-focused evaluation is on intended use by intended users (p. 37).

Furthermore, he states that utilization-focused evaluation is not bound by any one type of methodology or purpose. As a result, it can utilize any evaluative purpose (formative, summative, and illuminative), any kind of data (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed), any sort of design (naturalistic, experimental), and any sort of focus (processes, products, impacts, costs, and cost-benefit).

Among the studies focusing on ELT programs’ evaluation, Seferoğlu’s (2007) qualitative case study that investigates the reflections of senior ELT students regarding these program components can be given as an example. She collected data from the fourth year students in the spring terms of 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 by asking them to write an extensive evaluative report of all the methodology and practice teaching courses they had taken. The findings revealed that there is not always one-to-one correspondence between the course materials and real classroom teaching situations in the methodology and practice teaching courses of the department. They also indicated that the opportunities for micro teaching and practice teaching are not sufficient. The more recent studies revealed new student needs which were not accounted by the curriculum of CoHE such as the adoption of new materials and techniques to be used in the program that allow creativity, practice and socialization (e.g. Dollar, Tolu & Doyran, 2014; Uzun, 2016). The findings propose that programs should be structured in such a way that they not only meet the needs of the students and society but also provide practical and beneficial contents to the individuals.

In order to ensure that pre-service English language teachers are best prepared for teaching profession, CoHE identified four competency areas that a qualified teacher should possess, and they are:

- 1- Subject and pedagogic knowledge
- 2- Planning, teaching, classroom management and communication
- 3- Monitoring, assessment and reporting
- 4- Other professional requirements (reflectivity, flexibility, objectivity) (CoHE, 2005).

Taking these competencies into account, this study attempts to explore how competent student teachers feel themselves in these areas, and how they evaluate the four-year program in preparing them to gain these competencies.

- 1) To what extent do senior ELT students feel themselves competent in:
  - a. language and subject matter?
  - b. planning, teaching, and classroom management?
  - c. monitoring, assessment, and professional development?
- 2) Which of the teacher competency areas do these student teachers find to be more important than the others?
- 3) What are the perceived causes for their competence or incompetence in these teaching skills under investigation?

## **Methodology**

### **Sample and Population**

Thirty-two senior ELT students of a state university in Istanbul, Turkey participated in this study. Five of the student-teachers were males, while the rest of them were females. The average age was 22 for the participant group. All of the students rated themselves as highly proficient in terms of English language competency.

### **Data Collection Tools**

A questionnaire consisting of four different parts was used as the data collection instrument of this study. The questionnaire was taken and adapted from Şallı-Çopur (2008) in order to serve the purposes of the current study. The first part of the questionnaire targeted to tap demographic information of the participants which are presented above. The second part consisted of 50 items which were distributed across three separate subsections and to which participants would respond on a four-point Likert-type scale (i.e. 1= Incompetent, 2= Somewhat competent, 3= Competent, 4= Highly competent). Accordingly, in the first subsection there were 17 items on the perceived competency of student teachers on language and subject area. The 19 items in the second subsection aimed at revealing the self-perceptions of student teachers on their competency in planning, teaching, and classroom management. Lastly, the remaining 14 items in this part investigated the participants' self-perceptions on their competency in monitoring, assessment, and professional development.

The third part of the questionnaire included 4 open-ended questions elaborating more on the items of the previous part in order to have a deeper understanding of the choices participants had selected and to see their reasoning on them. There was a rating scale in the last part of the questionnaire that made student teachers rate each component of the program (i.e. language, literature, linguistics, ELT methodology, general education, and educational technologies component) in terms of their effectiveness in promoting those three competency areas (i.e. language and subject area, planning, teaching and classroom management area, and monitoring, assessment and professional development competencies). The Educational Technologies component was added to this questionnaire by the researcher in order to see the contribution of the program to the TPCK. The rating scale for this part also had four points ranging from 1= ineffective to 4= highly effective.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were employed for the analyses. The first two parts were analyzed quantitatively by running descriptive statistics on SPSS version 22. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were drawn out for the items in the first part. For the analysis of the second part which involved three subsections and Likert scale items, the mean scores for each individual item and for 50 items in total were calculated in addition to the calculations of the frequencies and percentages of each option of every item. Furthermore, one-way repeated measures of ANOVA were run for this part to see whether there is any difference among the mean scores of three sections and whether this difference is significant. The mean scores were also extracted for the last part of the questionnaire to reveal the component with the highest and lowest means. Qualitative data analysis was run for interpreting the open-ended questions in the third part of the questionnaire by entering the responses in NVIVO 8 software package. Namely, all answers given by the respondents for each item were typed and coded accordingly. After the frequency calculations, the emergent themes were extracted for presenting them in the results (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Findings**

The overall mean score for the second part of the questionnaire was computed by taking all 50 items in consideration. The overall mean score for the total of three sections in part 2 was found to be 3.11 which corresponds to the "competent" option of our four-points

Likert-type scale. As a relatively high value, this suggests that in general teacher candidates feel themselves competent in a) language and subject area, b) planning, teaching, and classroom management area, c) monitoring, assessment, and professional development area. The results of the one-way repeated measures of ANOVA revealed an effect of different competency areas ( $F(2, 50) = 89.22, p < .0001$ ) by meeting the sphericity assumption ( $p > .05$ ). Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed that all conditions were significantly different from each other ( $p = .0001$ ). When taken separately, it was realized that section C had the highest mean among these three sections of this part ( $\mu = 3.22$ ), and this mean difference is statistically significant ( $p = .0001$ ). Consequent analyses of the second part was conducted by computing the mean scores, frequencies and percentages of each item under three different sections. The results of the analysis for Section A are duly given in Table 1.

**Table 1. The results of the analysis of Section A**

Section A	1		2		3		4		
Competence in Language and Subject Area	Mean	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1. Having advanced knowledge of English	2.97	0	0	3	9.4	27	84.4	2	6.3
2. Using (and understanding) the English language communicatively	2.97	0	0	6	18.8	21	65.6	5	15.6
3. Being an adequate model of the English language for students	3.06	0	0	6	18.8	18	56.3	8	25.0
4. Understanding and using the English language appropriate to the situation and level	3.00	0	0	5	15.6	22	68.8	5	15.6
5. Integrating form, function and meaning for grammar teaching	3.19	0	0	3	9.4	20	62.5	9	28.1
6. Presenting knowledge of language in a clear, simple and stimulating manner	2.91	0	0	8	25.0	19	59.4	5	15.6
7. Developing learners' vocabulary knowledge	3.19	0	0	4	12.5	18	56.3	10	31.3
8. Developing learners' subskills (i.e.: inference) that assist reading comprehension in English	2.78	0	0	11	34.4	17	53.1	4	12.5
9. Developing learners' subskills (i.e.: note taking) that assist listening comprehension in English	2.63	1	3.1	15	46.9	11	34.4	5	15.6
10. Developing learners' subskills (i.e.: drafting) that assist written production in English	2.81	0	0	11	34.4	16	50.0	5	15.6
11. Developing learners' subskills (i.e.: intonation) that assist spoken production in English	2.61	0	0	15	46.9	13	40.6	3	9.4
12. Integrating macro language skills (Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking)	3.03	0	0	4	12.5	23	71.9	5	15.6
13. Having knowledge of general linguistic theory (i.e.: description of languages)	2.94	0	0	10	31.3	14	43.8	8	25.0

14. Having knowledge of foreign language teaching theories and methods	3.19	0	0	5	15.6	16	50.0	11	34.4
15. Selecting and using suitable approaches, procedures and techniques appropriate to the foreign language point	3.22	0	0	3	9.4	19	59.4	10	31.3
16. Employing a range of teaching strategies suited to learner age (young learners, teenagers, adults)	3.19	0	0	4	12.5	18	56.3	10	31.3
17. Employing a range of teaching strategies suited to learner ability and proficiency level (beginner to advanced)	3.19	0	0	3	9.7	19	61.3	9	29.0

The overall mean score for section A was 2.99 ( $p < .0001$ ) which yielded the lowest value among all three sections suggesting that the area that teacher candidates feel themselves the least competent is language and subject-matter. The results of descriptive analyses regarding the second subsection of Part II are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. The results of the analysis of Section B**

Section B	1		2		3		4		
Competence in Planning, Teaching and Classroom Management	Mean	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
		1. Knowing the foreign language teaching curriculum of the school you'll teach	3.00	0	0	4	12.5	24	75.0
2. Making appropriate plans concerning students' needs	2.97	0	0	7	21.9	19	59.4	6	18.8
3. Expressing objectives the students will achieve clearly	3.13	0	0	1	3.1	26	81.3	5	15.6
4. Preparing structural and coherent lesson plans to achieve course objectives	2.91	2	6.3	6	18.8	17	53.1	7	21.9
5. Establishing good connections with previous and following topics	3.25	0	0	3	9.4	18	56.3	11	34.4
6. Preparing and using a variety of teaching-learning activities related to the aims of the lesson and students' needs	3.34	0	0	2	6.3	17	53.1	13	40.6
7. Selecting and using appropriate and available sources related to aims of the lesson and students' needs	3.34	0	0	1	3.1	19	59.4	12	37.5
8. Selecting and using examples relating the topic to real life	3.31	0	0	3	9.4	16	50.0	13	40.6
9. Using teaching learning facilities effectively (i.e.: language lab, library)	2.81	2	6.3	10	31.3	12	37.5	8	25.0
10. Making use of information technology (i.e.: audio-visuales, electronic devices, computer, and internet)	3.38	0	0	3	9.4	14	43.8	15	46.9
11. Adjusting instructions and explanations to students' needs, age and level	3.19	0	0	4	12.5	17	53.1	10	31.3
12. Asking students timely and effective questions	3.09	0	0	6	18.8	17	53.1	9	28.1
13. Responding to students' questions	3.41	0	0	2	6.3	15	46.9	15	46.9

14. Developing students' interest in the lesson (i.e.: motivating students towards the course)	3.19	0	0	5	15.6	16	50.0	11	34.4
15. Using class time effectively	2.75	0	0	12	37.5	16	50.0	4	12.5
16. Using voice effectively and varying it to attract students' attention during the lesson	3.06	2	6.3	7	21.9	10	31.3	13	40.6
17. Responding to student feedback (i.e.: students' opinion about an activity)	3.34	0	0	4	12.5	13	40.6	15	46.9
18. Selecting and using individual, small group and whole class teaching methods appropriate to the class	3.06	2	6.3	4	12.5	15	46.9	10	31.3
19. Establishing rapport with learners (i.e.: building positive relationship)	3.28	0	0	4	12.5	15	46.9	13	40.6

The overall mean score for the second section (Section B) is 3.14 again showing that in general student teachers feel themselves competent in planning, teaching, and classroom management areas. That the mean score of this section is higher compared to the previous section is also supported by analyzing that the mean scores of the individual items in this section are high in general. Hence, it is safe to argue that student teachers participating in this study feel themselves more competent in planning, teaching, and classroom management areas than the language and subject-matter areas. In Table 3, the results for the last subsection of this part are provided.

**Table 3. The results of the analysis of Section C**

Section C	1		2		3		4		
Competence in Monitoring, Assessment and Professional Development	Mean	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
		1. Knowing a variety of assessment methods	2.84	0	0	10	31.3	17	53.1
2. Using assessment methods relevant to the subject effectively	2.72	0	0	11	34.4	19	59.4	2	6.3
3. Planning assessment in parallel with course objectives	3.06	0	0	4	12.5	22	68.5	6	18.8
4. Monitoring student learning in different classroom activities	3.31	0	0	2	6.3	18	56.3	12	37.5
5. Evaluating students' progress in relation to the aims of the lesson consistently	3.29	0	0	3	9.4	16	50.0	12	37.5
6. Keeping careful records of students' progress	3.31	0	0	4	12.5	14	43.8	14	43.8
7. Diagnosing students' failure and difficulties	3.41	0	0	3	9.4	13	40.6	16	50.0
8. Giving necessary and useful feedback to the students	3.32	0	0	4	12.9	13	41.9	14	45.2
9. Working cooperatively with professional colleagues and/or parents in forwarding observation and evaluation results	2.88	2	6.3	6	18.8	18	56.3	6	18.8



10. Fulfilling the legal, social and administrative responsibilities at school	3.25	0	0	4	12.5	16	50.0	12	37.5
11. Carrying out responsibilities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students	3.32	0	0	2	6.5	17	54.8	12	38.7
12. Contributing to school activities such as meetings, in-service teacher training and materials preparation sessions	3.26	0	0	3	9.7	17	54.8	11	35.5
13. Being open to consistent professional development	3.63	0	0	0	0	12	37.5	20	62.5
14. Reflecting on your performance for self development	3.50	0	0	0	0	16	50.0	16	50.0

The last section of the second part of the questionnaire has the highest mean score among the three ( $\mu = 3.22, p < .0001$ ) as it is revealed by the analysis of one-way repeated measures of ANOVA. Therefore, among these three groups of teacher competency areas as determined by CoHE the participant pre-service teachers feel themselves the most competent in monitoring, assessment, and professional development areas.

In the third part of the questionnaire, there were four open-ended questions leading the participants to elaborate more specifically on teacher competencies and to extract the rationale behind their answers for the previous part. Unfortunately, not all of the participants filled out this part (N=22), so providing percentages for this part seemed more reasonable. The qualitative analysis of this part allowed recurring themes to be collected under the same codes, and the top emergent categories for each of the four items were provided in Table 4.

**Table 3. The results of the analysis of Part III**

Items	Responses	Percentage
1) What might be the reasons for your being competent in the competencies above?	Education at school/ theoretical lectures at school/ language courses at the university	59.1
2) What are the competencies you need to further develop?	Speaking skills/ pronunciation	31.8
3) What might be the reasons for an English language teacher's being weak in some of the competencies in Part II?	The quality of education at university	45.4
4) Please indicate at most three competencies that were NOT mentioned in Part II but you think important for an English language teacher to have.	Maintaining good communication with students	33.3

In the last part of the questionnaire (Part IV), the respondents were asked to rate each of the six ELT program components that make up the general skeleton of the program of this institution in terms of their effectiveness in helping students gain competencies in the three areas defined in the second part of the questionnaire. The results of the analysis for this part are summarized in Table 5 below:

**Table 5. The mean scores for the rating scale (Part IV)**

Program Components	Competence in Language and Subject Area	Competence in Planning, Teaching & Classroom Management	Competence in Monitoring, Assessment & Development
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1. Language Component	3.35	2.58	2.61
2. Literature Component	3.03	2.55	2.61
3. Linguistics Component	3.35	2.71	2.71
4. ELT Methodology Component	3.23	3.06	2.94
5. General Education Component	3.13	3.10	2.90
6. Educational Technologies Component	2.87	3.06	2.81

A repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined for Part IV that the mean scores for these three competency areas differed significantly ( $F(1.51, 45.34) = 10.14, p < 0.005$ ) revealing the first competency area with the highest mean score. Pairwise comparisons revealed that only the first competency area in Table 5 was meaningfully different from the second competency area ( $p < .005$ ) and from the third competency area ( $p = .005$ ). Therefore, for this last part of the questionnaire, teacher candidates indicated that the six components of the program they are enrolled contributed to the development of the competence in language and subject area most although they reported themselves feeling the least competent in this area as it was revealed by results of the second part of the questionnaire. This inconsistency between the second and the last parts of the questionnaire might have stemmed from the insufficient number of participants in this study. Since the total number of participants is 32, this might have resulted in contradictory findings which prevent us from safely making claims about this mismatch.

### Result and Discussion

In general, teacher candidates feel themselves rather competent in all of the three competency areas investigated in this study. Specifically, they feel themselves the most competent in monitoring, assessment, and professional development area out of the three general teacher competency areas specified by CoHE whereas they feel the least competent in language and subject matter areas. Within language and subject area competency, they feel themselves the most competent in selecting and using suitable approaches, procedures and techniques appropriate to the foreign language point while they feel the least competent in developing learners' subskills (i.e. intonation) that assist spoken production in English which is also detected to be the area that student teachers feel the least competent in the whole questionnaire. For the planning, teaching, and classroom management competencies, the area that pre-service teachers feel the most competent is responding to students' questions followed by utilizing information technology (i.e.: audio-visuals, electronic devices, computer, and internet). Within this area, they reported not feeling confident in using class time effectively, making appropriate plans concerning students' needs, and preparing structural and coherent lesson plans to achieve course objectives. Being open to consistent professional development and reflecting on performance for self-development were found to be the areas in which student teachers feel themselves the most competent in the whole questionnaire. Using assessment methods relevant to the subject effectively and knowing a variety of assessment methods were discovered to be competencies that student teachers feel the least confident in the competence area of monitoring, assessment, and professional development. The student teachers think that the education they receive at school (i.e. language courses, theoretical lectures, and practicum experience) is mainly responsible for their feeling strong in some of the competencies. Similarly, they believe the lack of these can

be the reasons for the failure of an English language teacher in the profession. They pointed at speaking and pronunciation as the competencies that they need to further develop. They reported that language and subject matter competency is the area in whose development each single program component is highly effective whereas in the development of competence in monitoring, assessment, and professional development these components are the least effective. Specifically, they believe Language and Linguistics components contribute most to the development of competence in language and subject matter, General Education component contributes most to the development of competence in planning, teaching, and classroom management, ELT methodology component contributes most to the development of competence in monitoring, assessment, and professional development.

In the light of the general conclusions drawn above, it can be maintained that teacher candidates feel themselves fairly competent in the three competency areas covered in this study and put forward by CoHE like the participants in Kömür's (2010) study who held an above average perception of their capabilities. So the answer to the first research question would be that student teachers feel themselves "competent" on average in each of the competency areas similar to the participants in Şallı-Çopur's (2008) large-scale study. In a similar vein, both groups indicated a need for improvement in the competencies of language knowledge, spoken use of English, classroom management, and assessment.

As an answer to the second research question, they think that language and subject matter areas are the most vital components of the program. This competency area makes up the Content Knowledge which has a very central role in Shulman's (1987) framework of teacher knowledge base. Furthermore, they hold the program they have been studying at as the responsible party for the lack or inadequacy of this competency. Particularly, they felt themselves the most incompetent in fostering the development of speaking skills (including pronunciation, intonation, etc.) in learners, and they emphasized it in their answers to open-ended questions as well. Like the student-teachers participating in Şallı-Çopur's (2008) study, the participants in the current study believed in the importance of being able to communicate accurately and fluently in the foreign language for an English language teacher. At the same time, they stated the need to improve this skill of using English for everyday classroom contexts. In line with Erozan's (2005) evaluation study, ELT students participating in the present study articulate the importance of practice for language improvement courses, and they indicated lack of practice opportunities at school causes the failure of an English language teacher as a professional.

In general, the pre-service teachers were found to be competent in lesson planning, teaching, and classroom management areas. Still, contrary to the results of Gürbüz's (2006) investigation where student teachers were detected to have strengths in creating pleasant, structured lectures and preparing materials that are coherent and attractive to the learners, the participants in the present study listed them as the competencies in which they feel less competent. Moreover, again in line with Gürbüz's (2006) findings, they indicated a weakness in adjusting and using their voice effectively for instructional purposes.

This study also integrated Educational Technologies Component into the investigation of the program's effectiveness in preparing student teachers as competent practitioners. It was realized that the fourth grade students feel themselves very competent in utilizing information technologies, such as audio-visuals, electronic devices, computer, and internet in their instruction. Still, Educational Technology component was not found to be making a significant contribution to development of any of the three competencies. Moreover, open-ended items made it apparent that the participants need to improve their skills of using technology for instructional and assessment purposes and some of them thought it should be an integral part of pre-service English teacher training programs.

The third research question was related to the evaluation of program components in terms of their effectiveness in developing these teacher competencies, the results indicated that student-teachers believe that Language and Linguistics components are highly effective in developing their competencies in language and subject matter. General Education courses were found to be very effective in the development of teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management competencies whereas they think ELT methodology courses and practices prepared them the best for the development of competencies in monitoring, assessment, and professional development.

### **Recommendations**

First of all, since it was seen that student-teachers did not feel themselves very competent in language and subject matter both of which are crucial to initial teacher education (Richards, 1998), the program should improve the content, syllabus, materials, application, and assessment of language development courses. Especially, oral communication and writing courses should be revised so as to address the needs of pre-service teachers to use these skills in the classroom environment effectively and to promote the development of these subskills in their learners.

Secondly, more opportunities should be created for student teachers to feel like real classroom teachers in practice teaching experience since they pointed out some problems in time management, designing structured and coherent lessons, and using their voice efficiently for instruction. They pointed at the limited freedom they experience as student teachers as the reason for their feeling insufficient in these competencies. Allowing student teachers to have the class to themselves at least for once during practicum without supervisors or cooperating teachers can give them the chance to see how much prepared they are for the real-life teaching situations and to improve the areas in which they need development.

As these prospective teachers feel themselves inadequate in finding appropriate assessment techniques parallel with lesson objectives and course materials, testing course can be revisited to supplement them in this respect. Throughout their four-year education period, these pre-service teachers take only one course on testing and assessment as determined by CoHE, and it is given in the last semester of their college education again as determined by CoHE. Increasing the number of testing and assessment courses and introducing the students with them at an earlier time period can better prepare these future teachers to implement a variety of and proper assessment techniques. Additionally, through making a connection between assessment and other ELT methodology courses (Fives et al., 2007; Roberts, 1998), they can make a gradual progression toward managing a whole course with its lesson plans, tests, and all the other elements. Lastly, they can be asked to help in preparing and evaluating the assessment procedures in their practicum classroom. Via this, they can gain insights into the real life testing and assessment situations.

As it was emphasized by teacher candidates, personal characteristics and openness to professional development are also effective in determining teacher competencies. To this end, the department should organize meetings or encourage students to attend to conferences, seminars for the personal and professional development of them who already exhibit willingness for change and development for the sake of their profession to which most of them are intrinsically dedicated.

Finally, to improve Mishra and Koehler's (2006) TPCK, Educational Technology component of the program should be revised as being an important element in current teacher knowledge and competencies since it was not considered to be highly contributing to any of the competencies as revealed through the evaluation of this program. Although pre-service teachers perceive themselves capable in employing appropriate information technology tools

for conducting their lessons, they do not think that this program component led to this competency. In this information and technology age, students can find every way to integrate technology into their lessons; however, it is the teacher education program's responsibility to inform and guide them in the process of learning and applying the latest educational technologies so that they can benefit from them in the most fruitful way.

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