English Language Teacher Education in Turkey: Why Do We Fail and What Policy Reforms Are Needed?

Gökhan ÖZTÜRK[1],   Belgin AYDIN[2]

Abstract

With the changing paradigms in mainstream educational sciences identifying teacher education as a relatively independent area, approaches and policies in second language teacher education have undergone significant reforms throughout the world in the last two decades. Turkey, as a country in the midst of both social and cultural changes due to stream of events around it, has also attempted for such reforms in its English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) policies since the foundation of Higher Education Council leading to a unified model of pre-service teacher education. Teacher education, however, has always been one of the highly debated and criticized issues in the country by all the stakeholders. This paper scrutinizes the current ELTE policies in both pre-service and in-service levels in Turkey. The pre-service ELTE programs and how teachers are trained after graduation are presented focusing on the weaknesses and the drawbacks of the programs addressing to the relevant literature. Finally, the necessary policy reforms at all levels of teacher education are suggested by referring to the implementations of countries with high-quality teacher education systems.

Keywords: English language teacher education, pre-service education, in-service education, policy reforms

---
[1] Anadolu University, e-mail: gokhanozturk250@anadolu.edu.tr
[2] Anadolu University, e-mail: baydin@anadolu.edu.tr

Introduction

Though initially dependent on the trends and approaches in mainstream educational research, English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) has been regarded as a relatively new and independent field of expertise since the early years of this millennium. With the fundamental changes experienced during the period from 90s to 2000s (Crandall, 2000) due to the realization that teacher education programs were not efficient enough to prepare teachers for the realities of classroom contexts, scholars began to think that a more professional view supported by the research agenda should be dominant in teacher preparation programs. With all these significant realizations, the focus in teacher preparation programs turned to how teachers learn what they know rather than what they need to know and teachers began to be regarded as learners within the social and cultural contexts of institutions and their learning was regarded as a developmental process. Informed with these shifting paradigms, Freeman and Johnson (1998) put forward the knowledge base of language teacher education with the following framework:
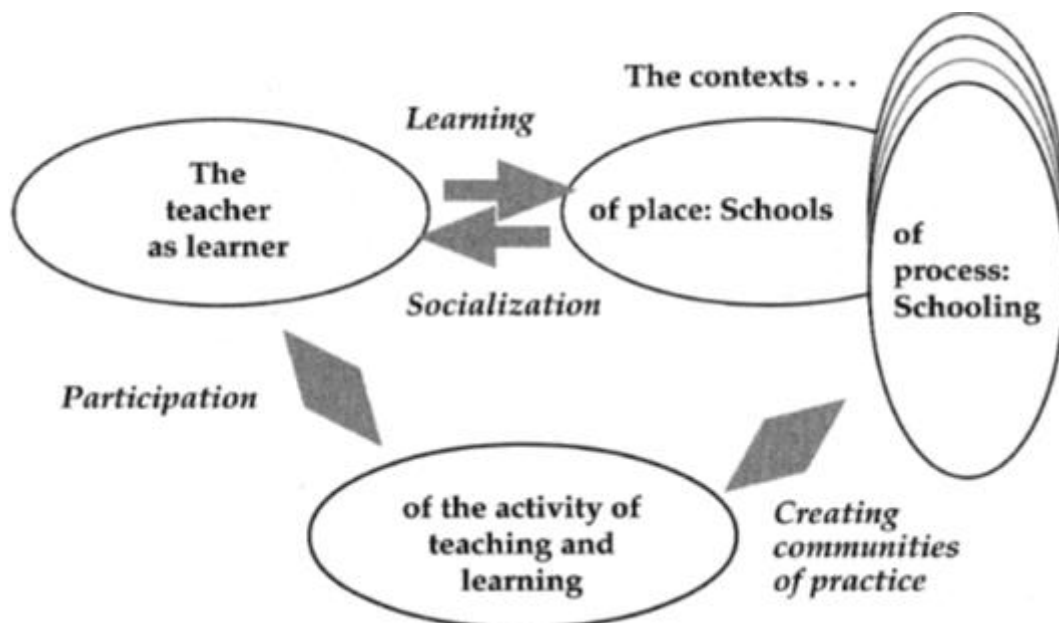

Figure 1. Framework for the knowledge base of language teacher education

Although there have been some calls for urgent need for research to validate the roles of the notions in the model, this framework is still a valid one in ELTE in addition to labelling the nature of teacher learning as a form of socialization into the community of practice (Richards, 2008) and a dialogic process within the socio-cultural paradigm (Johnson, 2009). In this view, teachers are seen as individuals who learn from their own practices through certain reflective elements, are always in constant relationship and collaboration with their community of practice, respond to needs of their social, cultural and institutional contexts and regard their career as a developmental process.

For now, putting teachers into a dynamic circle and expecting them to be alert professionals towards continuous development might seem an ideal perspective, and this ideal perspective, which encourages policy makers to set up policies that deeply link ELTE to practice and research even in early careers of teacher candidates, is strongly embraced by several socio-culturally developed countries which currently have a reputation of qualified teacher education systems. However, as a developing country which has undergone recent socio-cultural and political changes with the impact of large migration streams leading to a multi-cultural society, Turkey has fallen behind in responding to the dynamic nature of ELTE policies throughout the world taking the realized educational reforms in the country into considerations. This paper aims to analyse the possible reasons of this failure by looking at the English language teacher education system in Turkey as a whole, starting with the selection process of the pre-service teachers into university programs, to their appointment to the job and their life-long continuous professional development. Since Turkish students' test scores in international exams are highly criticized, also including their scores in English proficiency tests, and since teachers are pointed out as the major source of this failure, it is time to look at how we train our teachers and where the system fails. What should be done at each step of the teacher training program, considering the successful examples in the world, is

also included as the suggestions for policy makers in order to improve the language teacher education system.

How are English Language Teachers Trained in Turkey?

Along with other teacher education programs, English Language Teacher Education has long been an important focus in Turkey's education policies. Especially, 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. With this ultimate purpose as the background, ELTE in Turkey has undergone several changes in the last two decades (Mahalingappa and Polat, 2013) and a very recent one was introduced in late 2017, presenting the final structure of initial teacher education program. As an overall picture, it is not difficult to distinguish the elements of ELTE in Turkey; that is to say, it includes two major stages, pre-service education and in-service education, each with quite distinct parameters conducted by different stakeholders.

a. Pre-service ELTE in Turkey

Like many other countries, initial ELTE programs in Turkey are carried out by universities. A highly centralized curriculum structure provided by Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC) has to be followed by all 57 ELTE programs in all universities. As the central decision-maker in the unified-model of higher education in Turkish context, HEC has performed several attempts, each of which had the claim that "the existing system is deficient in its goals, accomplishments and responsiveness to global changes" (Kırkgöz, 2017, p. 241). Needless to say, these reforms were mostly based on the curricular or content changes rather

than systemic ones renewing the theoretical basis of these programs. Even the last one which is implemented with the start of 2018-2019 academic year is just composed of several changes in names and credits of the courses, an increase in the number of theory-based pedagogical courses and the inclusion of teaching practice in the first semester of the final year as well. In one hand, HEC's reforms aim to set up a standardized initial teacher education curriculum triggered by the recent developments in the field, but on the other, since the supervision mechanism of HEC does not work as systematic as its decision-making capacity, the implementations of these programs highly vary due to the contextual factors at universities including the physical conditions, academic staff and financial issues. Putting those policy arguments aside, the latest structure of initial ELTE programs which is not significantly different from the previous one is presented in the table below.

Table 1

The Structure of Initial ELTE Programs in Turkey

Content	%
(CK) Content Knowledge	48
(PK) Pedagogical Knowledge	34
(GC) General Culture	18

Turkish initial ELTE program is composed of a four-year training at the faculty of education at universities. Admission to these programs are centralized and performed by Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM in Turkey) based on students' scores in the nationwide university entrance exam. Students take an English language proficiency test which is composed of 80 multiple choice items. Although the students are selected with their knowledge and proficiency of English, the content of the test items is generally limited to reading, grammar and vocabulary knowledge thus, the first year of the programs mainly aims

to improve the language skills of learners with the courses focusing on each skill separately. That is, out of 10 courses, four of them aim increasing pre-service teachers' proficiency in reading, listening, writing and speaking in the foreign language. Two of the courses aim to make them familiar with the pedagogical terms and educational sciences. There is a specific course aiming to increase their awareness and competency in information technologies in the first year program. The new curriculum asks first year students to learn an additional foreign language as well. The aim of remaining two courses is to increase pre-service teachers' consciousness on Turkish language and Turkish history. The second year in the program can be regarded as the transition process in which pre-service teachers begin gaining knowledge in subject-matter courses like linguistics and literature and methodology on language teaching in addition to general education courses. In their third year of the program, in addition to subject-matter courses such as literature, teacher candidates mainly receive the ELT methodology courses focusing on teaching language skills to all age groups and, specifically focus on teaching English to young learners in a 3-hours course. Methodology courses expect teacher candidates to prepare lesson plans and materials accordingly in each skill. Teaching practice is involved in the final year in both semesters during which teacher candidates are required to make classroom observations and perform demo-lessons at schools with the help of a supervisor at their faculty and a mentor teacher at the school. This process provides the only opportunity for teacher candidates to transform theory into practice and apply what they have covered during their initial ELTE program. Overall, the program is composed of 48% content knowledge, 34% pedagogical knowledge and 18% general culture which are presented to teacher candidates, as seen in Figure 1 above (YÖK, 2018).

The current program, like the previous ones, is mandated by HEC in a top-down manner with the aim of ensuring standardization among initial ELTE programs all over the country. Although this format of the program is partly in line with TESOL standards

(Mahalingappa and Polat, 2013) and can be regarded as a unified model of teacher education, the implementations of these programs, the opportunities they present to teacher candidates and their eventual impact on pre-service teachers' professional development have yet to be discovered. A bulk of research in the field (Gürsoy and Damar, 2011; Altan and Sağlamel, 2015; Uzun, 2016; Karabuğa, 2016; İpek and Daloğlu, 2017) focusing on various components of these programs indicates serious problems and claims to be insufficient in preparing teachers for real life, as will be explained below.

b. In-service ELTE in Turkey

After graduation from 4-year undergraduate programs, teacher candidates have to take a nationwide exam called KPSS which is composed of multiple choice questions on social sciences, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge and language proficiency. After the exam results and their rankings are announced, teacher candidates who achieve a certain level of ranking are currently interviewed by officers from Ministry of National Education (MoNE) since 2017. The interviews take about ten minutes and 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. Based on the scores they get from these interviews, they are assigned as teachers by MoNE at state schools all around the country. The following table presents the numbers related with the appointment of English teachers in Turkey in last four years. As seen in the table, while there is an increase in the last two years, not even half of the candidates can have the opportunity of finding a job (TEDMEM, 2014-2017).

Table 2

The Appointment of English Teachers in Turkey in The Last 4 Years

Year	The number of applicants	The number of appointed teachers	%
2017	4.877	2.193	45
2016	6.643	3.098	47
2015	4.963	1.423	29
2014	4.657	997	21

After appointed as teachers in mainstream state schools, in-service teacher education practices for them are mainly conducted by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The main training opportunity provided by MoNE are two-week periods at the beginning and end of each academic year which cover the training of all teachers at schools focusing on various topics ranging from subject matter knowledge to traffic rules. Private sector prefers organizing their own in-service training programs for their teachers generally by inviting experts or supports their teachers to participate into workshops and conferences organized by various institutions. Yet, these in-service training programs provided by both parties are far from meeting the needs of teachers, as can be assumed.

In the last two decades, MoNE has performed serious attempts to improve the quality of teacher education by determining on generic teacher competencies (MoNE, 2006), competency domains and performance indicators (MoNE, 2008) and by publishing the Teacher Strategy document in 2017. However, although goals and outcomes are clearly identified in those written documents, their integration to real life practices and implementation in in-service education are still open to discussion. The following part will focus on the reasons behind the problems both at the pre and in-service English language teacher education in Turkey.

Problems in Pre-service ELTE

Greenberg, Walsh and McKee (2013) argue that teacher education programs are not producing effective teachers because they reject to equip the future teacher with specific skills or strategies. They aim to inspire "professional mind-set" in the new teachers and avoid any specific training which means shifting all the burden to the novice teachers. Like most of the teacher education programs all over the world, Turkish teacher education shares similar criticisms of not equipping their teachers with the skills 21st century requires in addressing today's learners' needs and guiding them to have a wider vision of shaping the future. The main criticism of teacher education programs centers on its being theory-oriented and not giving pre-service teachers enough real classroom experience. As explained above, not until the last year of the program teachers are given the opportunity of teaching in a real classroom. That is why, the programs are blamed to be theory-oriented and teachers state experiencing difficulties in transferring the theory they receive into real life. Studies evaluating Turkish ELTE program confirm the existence of such a big theory-practice gap problem (Seferoğlu, 2006; Şallı-Çopur, 2008; Coskun and Daloğlu, 2010; Karabuğa, 2016; İpek and Daloğlu, 2017).

A similar drawback is related to the feedback future teachers get on what they do and how they do it. That is, pre-service teachers generally complain about not having enough guidance on how they progress during their limited classroom practice process. With the teaching practice in the last year of the program, they are expected to get feedback both from their mentor teachers and supervisors as they do micro and macro teaching. However, 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. Pre-service teachers complain about not having the necessary support and guidance from the mentor teachers. Unhealthy communication between the academicians and the mentor teachers are referred to as among the main reasons of the problems as well (Valencia, Martin, Place & Grossman, 2009). Pre-service teachers' divided attention between focusing on the KPSS exam and meeting the requirements of the teaching practice process, both of which are quite challenging can also be presented as the other reasons of the problems in candidates' role perceptions. Just like their peers in various parts of the world, Turkish teacher candidates, still holding the perception of being a student, are busy with understanding the basics of teaching and seeking ways to put these into practice and have difficulties in appreciating or perceiving themselves as real teachers. In Aydın, Sağlam and Alan's (2016) study, Turkish practicing teachers who graduated from various undergraduate programs in the country argued that they received more feedback in CELTA, a 4-week-language teacher training program, than their 4-year-undergraduate education. They especially stated benefiting from the observations and reflections during CELTA and claimed that these one-to one sessions helped them realize who they were as a teacher.

While language teacher education curriculum is criticized for being theory-oriented, what this theory covers is another discussed topic. That is, the program includes knowledge transfer on how people learn cognitively and what teachers can do to help their learning in the most efficient way, which is generally done with an approach assuming that the process is the same for everybody and ignoring the differences among individual learners. Although the program includes education courses focusing on education from various aspects such as education sociology, education psychology, education philosophy or the history of Turkish education system, these courses are mostly theory-oriented and they are mainly conducted in Turkish in many universities. Thus, the most important aspect of learning and teaching, the

affective side, does not have much place in the curriculum. Teachers are not equipped with necessary strategies which will enable them to make their learners more autonomous, they, in many cases, do not know how to deal with a student suffering from language anxiety, or they may simply adopt an attitude assuming that students are responsible for being motivated, and teachers just have to teach.

Turkish ELTE program is designed to train future teachers to be able to teach at all levels for all age groups, which can be counted as another problem. Turkish learners start learning English at the second grade and have English lessons until they graduate from the university. This refers to a very wide age group ranging from 8 year-old children to 21 year-old young adults. With this program, English teachers can be assigned to teach at any level for the state schools, without a specific training for the age group they will be teaching. Teachers working at the universities and dealing with young adult groups do not have any specific training either. The curriculum has only one course "Teaching English to Young Learners" which targets learners between 5 to 12 years old. Considering that 8 years is such a big range, especially during the early years of human life, it is obvious that this structure cannot be expected to meet the necessities of the teachers in dealing with the needs of their learners.

Teacher training curriculum mainly aims to equip future teachers with pedagogical knowledge and to help them to be ready for the field. However, literature suggests that some other characteristics are appreciated and even required more in real life. For example, in a study asking administrators' opinions on what they value in choosing teachers to work with at their teams, they stated that personality characteristics of a teacher was the most important factor for them (Akcan, et. al., 2016). Having self-confidence, being enthusiastic and creative, tolerant, patient, kind, sincere, team player, having sense of humour, empathy, problem solving skills, and openness for professional development were all stated to be more valuable for the job than having pedagogical knowledge for the administrators. Not only for the

administrators, but characters like perseverance, empathy, ethics, courage and leadership are referred as the increasing demands of becoming successful individuals in the 21st century. Yet, when we examine the curriculum for pre-service teacher education, we realize that guidance in gaining these soft skills which will highly be demanded in real life is not explicitly included in the program. As stated by Schleciher (2018), only a few education systems have goals for including these skills into their curriculum and leave the rest of the children to their luck, based on their teacher's priorities. The same report, however, also states that in top performing countries teachers invest not just in their students' academic success but also in their well-being and character development. Unfortunately, according to a study conducted in Turkish context, Turkish ELT teachers stated not having adequate concrete knowledge on what affective side of language teaching was, why it was important and how they could deal with it while they were teaching, because it was not a part of their pre-service teacher education system (Aydın, et. al., 2009).

Another problematic area of pre-service teacher education is related to the technology integration. Just like all the others, educational technology is presented as a separate elective course, rather than integrated in the whole curriculum. While teachers are expected to teach with technology in the most efficient way to the digital natives, pre-service education suffers from finding the ways of helping their candidates in gaining these competencies, and the majority of the efforts are constrained by the efforts of individual academicians all over the world in general (Reinders, 2009; Solvie and Sungur, 2012). As can be assumed, the situation is not different for Turkish teachers. A recent study conducted by Uzun (2016) with pre-service EFL teachers indicated that ICT knowledge and skills are not supported in Turkish pre-service ELTE program.

A very important duty of teachers is assessing their students' performance in the most efficient and fair way, aligned with the teaching objectives. In order to be able to considered literate in assessing their students, teachers are expected to have the following seven skills;

1. Choosing Appropriate Assessment Methods;

2. Developing Assessment Methods;

3. Administering, Scoring, and Interpreting Assessment Results;

4. Using Assessment Results for Decision Making;

5. Developing Valid Grading Procedures;

6. Communicating Assessment Results; and

7. Recognising Unethical Assessment Practices (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990).

Assessment literate teachers know what they are measuring and why they are measuring it; they can develop and/or select appropriate assessment tasks, make use of different kinds of assessment methods and interpret accurate assessment data (Popham 2006). Thus, assessment literacy is regarded as "a sine qua non for today's competent educator" (Popham, 2009, p. 4). Volante and Fazio (2007) argue that for improving the quality of the teaching and learning, being competent with appropriate assessment practices is a requisite skill for the teachers; however, pre-service education seems to be insufficient in equipping teachers with language assessment literacy. While various reasons can be listed for this problem, the quantity of courses in the curriculum can be pointed out as the main source. As also stated by Stiggins (2007), teachers' exposure to the concepts and practices of educational assessment is limited to few sessions in their educational psychology classes or, perhaps, a unit in a methods class. In Turkish curriculum, there is only one 3-hours course designed specifically for language assessment which covers assessing language proficiency in all skills. Thus, it is not surprising to have teachers with lack of assessment literacy in the field (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydin, 2018).

Another criticism towards the ELTE programs is directed to educators and their teaching methods. Some university teachers' not using contemporary teaching techniques and preferring to transfer information directly from slides which include the summary of the information in the books has been the point of dissatisfaction by pre-service teachers (Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010). Teacher educators are also criticized for being far from the realities of a classroom situation which is claimed to cause the theory-practice gap. Goodwin et. al. (2014) argue that while literature mostly focuses on the competencies teachers should have, what kind of knowledge teacher educators need to obtain and be able to do are generally ignored. Similarly, how they train teachers, what is underlined behind their beliefs and assumptions and how they should be prepared to become educators are questionable. In many cases teacher educators state feeling unprepared to adopt a role in the transition of working as a teacher to training teachers (Conklin, 2015; Shagrir, 2015). In addition to the quality concerns, Aydın (2016) claims that trainers working at many of the Turkish universities are not sufficient in terms of quantity either. The academic staff giving courses in ELTE programs includes professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and instructors whose majors might be language teaching, linguistics/applied linguistics or literature. They usually become academics in these programs after completing their MAs or PhDs without having any teaching experiences. This might not be a problem for field specific courses such as literature and linguistics; however, teacher trainers giving pedagogical courses without any teaching experience or pedagogic background is one of the major problems. Since they do not have any teaching background and experiences that they would share with student-teachers, these trainers do not only increase the theoretical load of the courses because of feeling themselves confident in doing so, they might also remain incapable of preparing teacher candidates for real classroom practices.

The perceptions of cooperating teachers need to be added to the list as another source of the problems experienced during teaching practice. Depending on their own beliefs and attitudes of teaching, how they perceive their roles and how they influence pre-service teachers vary. Besides, the lack of necessary preparation and support in guiding the pre-service teachers and unhealthy communication between the academicians and the mentor teachers are referred as among the core reasons of the problems caused by cooperating teachers (Valencia et. al., 2009). This problem has also been the focus of related studies conducted in Turkish context, and the prominent findings were that most of the cooperating teachers had no proper trainings (Altan and Sağlamel, 2015) and they had limited awareness regarding their actual roles in the practicum process (Gürsoy and Damar, 2011).

As a conclusion, what Turkish ELTE programs offer to pre-service teachers and how they present this information seem to be problematic. As an overall picture, Tezgiden-Cakcak (2015) further claims in her comprehensive dissertation that initial ELTE program in Turkey does not have a specific mission and it prepares teachers to become passive technicians rather than reflective practitioners. She further claims that the dictation of teacher education programs by HEC is the major underlying reason behind teacher candidates' growing up as passive technicians.

Problems in In-service ELTE

The overall quality of pre-service teacher education is not alone in being in the center of criticisms. No matter what the level of quality in initial teacher education programs of leading countries is, the common point regarding the teacher education continuum throughout the world is the insufficiency and unsystematicity of in-service teacher training (OECD, 2005; UNICEF, 2017). Teachers, being ill-equipped in many models in the world continue doing their jobs with more or less similar problems. In many cases, induction programs are given

importance during the transition period for the teachers. Yet, continuing support for the teachers throughout their professional lives does not exist as a healthy sustainable model. Teachers are not supported for their professional development, or for collaborating with their colleagues across the teacher education 'continuum' as reported by Menter et. al. (2010). Although teachers, in one way or another, are equipped with theoretical knowledge and partly practical issues in initial teacher education programs, they are often faced with "go and teach" approach after graduation and little supervision and career assistance are provided for them. Except a few countries which make some contract requirements to encourage teachers to attend CPD activities, the majority of countries leave the teachers alone in their professional career paths. Such a weakness, combined with the drawbacks of initial teacher education programs is currently regarded as one of the biggest problems, in addition to the following issues;

- In-service programs are both qualitatively and quantitatively found inadequate and unsystematic,

- Programs are criticized for not going beyond transferring theoretical knowledge,

- Teachers' opinions, their teaching contexts, their needs and levels are not considered in determining the content of these programs,

- Teachers are unwilling to participate in these programs and they cannot allow time for these activities,

- Trainers are incompetent and unprepared for the courses,

- Influences of such trainings on teachers' actual practices are vague and

- These programs conflict with the teachers' work schedules and their family responsibilities (Uysal, 2012; Uztosun, 2018).

In Turkey, the situation is not different from the other countries regarding in-service teacher education. Turkish MoNE does not currently provide sufficient amount of training

opportunities in a systematic manner for English teachers, which is also supported by an earlier study by Küçüksüleymanğolu (2006) who found that just 122 of 3201 in-service training programs conducted between 1998-2005 were targeting English teachers. Moreover, the efficacy and quality of the existing trainings have also been the focus of several studies conducted in different contexts and with different participant groups. Overall, the findings indicated that English teachers in Turkey needed urgent trainings especially on communicative language teaching practices (Özşevik, 2010) and teaching English to young learners (Gürsoy, et al. 2013).

Arranging both pre and in-service teacher education involving not only the latest pedagogical and technological innovations, but also providing practical knowledge which will be useful in daily lives of the teachers and encouraging them to adapt themselves to the continuously changing demands of the field seem inevitable. As indicated by Keçik and Aydın (2011), the most important aim of any teacher education programs should be to give their teachers the feeling of responsibility and willingness for learning from every opportunity throughout their lives. Teacher development cannot be limited to graduation or completion of a certification (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001), it is a life-long process of "continual, intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers" (Lange, 1990, p. 250). Voluntary and needs-driven activities planned and presented with a specific focus on enhancement of personal and professional growth broadening knowledge, skills and positive attitudes of teachers will have optimum results (Collinson, 2000). Teaching deserves to be a well-respected and intellectually and financially attractive profession, so does more investment in teacher development. Otherwise, as Schleicher (2018) states, there will be "a downward spiral – from lower standards of entry into the teaching profession, leading to lower self-confidence among teachers, resulting in more prescriptive teaching and thus less personalization in instruction, which could drive the most talented teachers out of the profession entirely" (p.57).

Taking all these facts into consideration, it seems clear that teacher education policies at both pre and in-service levels do not correspond to the requirements brought by the changing roles of teachers in 21st century learning environments. Furthermore, As Burns (2011:133) indicates, rather than identifying and analyzing the problems related to poor education, it is high time to start developing and implementing systems that will contribute to good teachers and good teaching.

Suggestions for Turkish Pre-service and In-service ELTE Programs

The current situation in Turkey's teacher education policies and a bulk of research on ELTE in Turkish context indicate that although there have been several reforms to restructure ELTE system, it still seems that there is a long way to go. With the appointment of a professor in educational science as the minister of Turkish education, all Turkish people, even if they were not involved in education have had the hope that the problems in Turkish education system and in teacher training would soon be solved. Everybody has been expecting a series of reforms in the education system, including ELTE policies in both pre-service and in-service levels. In order to set up a stable and systematic ELTE policy that will meet the current standards throughout the world, the system needs to be handled as a whole, starting with the admission of future language teachers to their pre-service education and their appointment to the job and their lifelong professional development.

The evaluation of the current teacher training programs can be the first and the most important step to begin reconsidering the whole process. While there are studies evaluating different components of the programs from various stakeholders, a complete picture involving everybody has never been taken. Starting with the selection process of the future teachers till their development throughout their professional lives language teacher education should be evaluated from multiple perspectives by all the stakeholders. Such a process will enable

identifying the problems and the strengths and the possible solutions with a comprehensive perspective, involving everybody in the process.

The selection process of future language teachers needs to be reconsidered and instead of selecting teachers with an 80- question multiple choice test consisting of only knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and reading components of the foreign language, different criteria should be considered. Since language does not consist of only grammar, vocabulary and reading, an integrative approach involving all the skills needs to be used for measuring language proficiency of the future teachers. Having such an approach on testing will definitely have a positive washback effect on teaching during teachers' previous educational background as well. Besides, when we look at the countries with high-quality teacher education systems, we can see that they embrace several criteria in addition to testing during the admission process. In Singapore, for instance, admission to teacher education programs is composed of a two-stage process which includes an initial shortlisting and interviewing in which qualified candidates are assessed in terms of their communicative skills, goals, willingness and interest in teaching. In Finland, the admission process at the very beginning includes an aptitude test and an interview in addition to a written test. For these reasons, similar to the ones in those countries, some other criteria such as measuring candidates' attitude, aptitude and willingness for becoming a teacher or their academic success might also be integrated into the admission process of Turkish pre-service teachers to ELTE programs.

Most importantly, the centralized curriculum, which has been claimed not to be addressing the needs of the teachers should be reconsidered as well. Rather than forcing all 57 teacher education departments all over the country to follow a curriculum determined with a top down approach, allowing departments to be more flexible in addressing the needs of the local contexts seems more feasible, as stated quite previously in OECD report (2005). More importantly, departments at different universities can be encouraged to be differentiated for

encouraging future teachers for teaching different age groups. That is, while a program is specialized to train language teachers for primary school students, another program can focus on high school students. Similarly, teacher candidates can be provided with the option of choosing the age group they would like to work with appropriate to their own personality characteristics. Also, as suggested by Şendağ and Gedik (2015), local needs of the country need to be considered in designing these flexible curriculums.

The main criticism of pre-service teacher education is its focus on theory. Unless these programs are turned "upside down" putting practice into center for learning, being able to teach in the 21st- century classrooms seems an unrealistic dream. Thus, a new curricular perspective that integrates academic study and the practical experience of teaching is urgently needed. Every single course can be reconsidered with this perspective and instead of trainers transmitting the knowledge to future teachers, they can be the models in putting learners into the center of the learning process, exactly as they expect their trainees to be doing in their future lessons. For instance, instead of getting the course of "Teaching English to Young Learners" in the university classroom context, student teachers should have the opportunity to spend time with young learners within the scope of this course and observe the learning process in its authentic environment. Providing practice opportunities for future teachers at various contexts will help them understand teaching and learning process from various perspectives and be more prepared for the job. Increasing 4-year undergraduate teacher training programs to 5 years and devoting the last year to practice only might also worth considering as suggested in the report written by Araştıran Okul Akreditasyon ve Değerlendirme Merkezi Raporu (2018). The report also suggests providing legal rights and financial support to the teacher trainers throughout their education.

Another important issue to be covered is the quality of teacher trainers in these programs. Considering the current arguments regarding the role of teacher educators'

competencies on pre-service teachers' professional development in ELTE programs (Yuan and Hu, 2018) and the scarcity of teacher educator standards in those programs in Turkey (Çelik, 2011), an urgent act on determining standards and planning professional development opportunities for teacher trainers in ELTE programs will be a useful attempt for the betterment of the programs. Especially the academicians who have different educational backgrounds might be encouraged to look at events with an educational and pedagogical perspective. This also requires decision makers to reconsider the requirements for academic promotion for teacher trainers. Today's requirements consider only academic competencies of the trainers which mainly include having research skills and publishing academic research papers. According to a very recent report evaluating Turkish Education System by Araştıran Okul Akreditasyon ve Değerlendirme (2018), it is suggested that having worked as a teacher should be a requirement of being an academician at education faculties, and their need to have a continuous relation with the schools.

Another point that needs to be taken into consideration in policy directions is the issue of clinical partnership and research-oriented practice during the practicum process, as this process is stated to be an important component of teacher preparation programs (Gebhard, 2009). The literature on teacher education currently informs the rising recognition and prominence of clinical practices during the practicum in teacher preparation (NCATE, 2010; Davies, 2015; Williamson and George, 2017). It is maintained that a clinical perspective, in which teacher candidates and other stakeholders working with them, namely supervisors, mentors, administrators etc. get closer to each other by reflecting and negotiating on the practices of each other, has a significant impact on the learning processes of teacher candidates. Especially the role of cooperating teachers in preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness is highly emphasized. As Matsko et. al. (2018) confirmed in their recent study, by working with 44 teacher preparation institutions in the States, when cooperating teachers

are good models of instruction and when they are facilitative coaches, when they give more frequent and adequate feedback and create collaboration opportunities balancing autonomy and encouragement, preservice teachers feel more prepared for the job. For this reason, this model of clinical teacher preparation used by countries with a reputation of high quality teacher education systems like Finland and Australia might be analyzed deeply and considered by Turkish higher education in pre-service ELTE programs. This model also requires each stakeholder to appreciate the practicum process with the same view. In order to be able to have the stakeholders to hold such a perspective, a continuous lifelong learning is essential for each participant. A very carefully designed selection criteria should be followed in choosing the cooperating teachers to involve in the system; their attitudes towards the occupation and teacher training, reflections of their own students, directors and colleagues, in-service training programs they have attended can be considered.

After graduation, the selection process for being appointed as a teacher at the state schools goes through a similar process of having a multiple choice test at the initial stage. This test includes questions on general culture (Turkish language, history and geography), general pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge (English language teaching, English linguistics and English literature) and English language proficiency. In addition to the test, an interview, which has been claimed to be far from being objective is used to choose graduates to become teachers (Eğitim-Sen, 2017). Instead of such a product-oriented approach, an approach focusing on the overall process of teacher candidates' development throughout their education, what s/he has produced, what s/he reflected on and what s/he is planning to do should be included as components of the selection process, allowing the most appropriate candidates to do this important job. In addition to self assessment of the future teachers, assessment of their mentors and supervisors as well as the students during the teaching practise process would give important implications about the teachers' performance and

professional development. An e-portfolio system including samples of all these products of teaching practice in addition to pre-service teachers' other products during all four years education might be a good indicator for selecting teachers for the system.

The challenges faced by novice teachers during their initial years in the profession have important effect on the formation of their professional identity (Farrell, 2009; Kang and Cheng, 2014), and for this reason, designing of a well-planned induction program should have a priority in Turkey's ELTE policies. Currently, there is a dominant "go-and-teach" perspective for novice teachers even though they have been facing a number of challenges in their first year such as adaptation to the school culture, familiarity with real classroom context, relationship with parents and students etc. At this point, a well-designed induction program in which novice teachers will be mentored and supervised in a collaborative atmosphere and their growth as a professional teacher will be followed is urgently needed.

The last but probably the most important drawback of the current ELTE programs in Turkey is the lack of a specific in-service training program for English language teachers. Considering the fact that the content of the current scarce trainings is regarded insufficient and sometimes irrelevant (Uysal, 2012; Uztosun, 2018), an initial needs analysis to determine the professional development needs of teachers will be a right step to take for improvement. Based on this analysis, instead of one-shot workshops organized by trainers who are not familiar with the contexts of the teachers and who cannot address to their needs, ongoing professional development opportunities which will focus on more hands-on activities creating collaborative opportunities and practices among teachers should be provided for the teachers in a timely basis throughout the year. Teachers should also be encouraged to learn from each other in a collaborative working environment. Planning the lesson together and teaching in teams, observing each other with different aims, reflective teaching, reading and discussing professional literature are examples to other types of professional development activities.

Besides, English language teachers should also be encouraged for teacher research to learn from their own practices through professional development tools such as reflective practice, action research and self study. For this reason, designing in-service trainings that will make them more aware about the role of such practices and encouraging them to carry out such practices should also be a part of in-service ELTE programs. As stated by most of the international reports (Kelly and Grenfell, 2004; OECD, 2005; UNICEF, 2017) teacher development should be viewed as a continuum in today's standards and Turkey needs to take those urgent steps to meet the standards in in-service ELTE. The following figure presents a conceptualized model of the suggestions for those urgent steps.
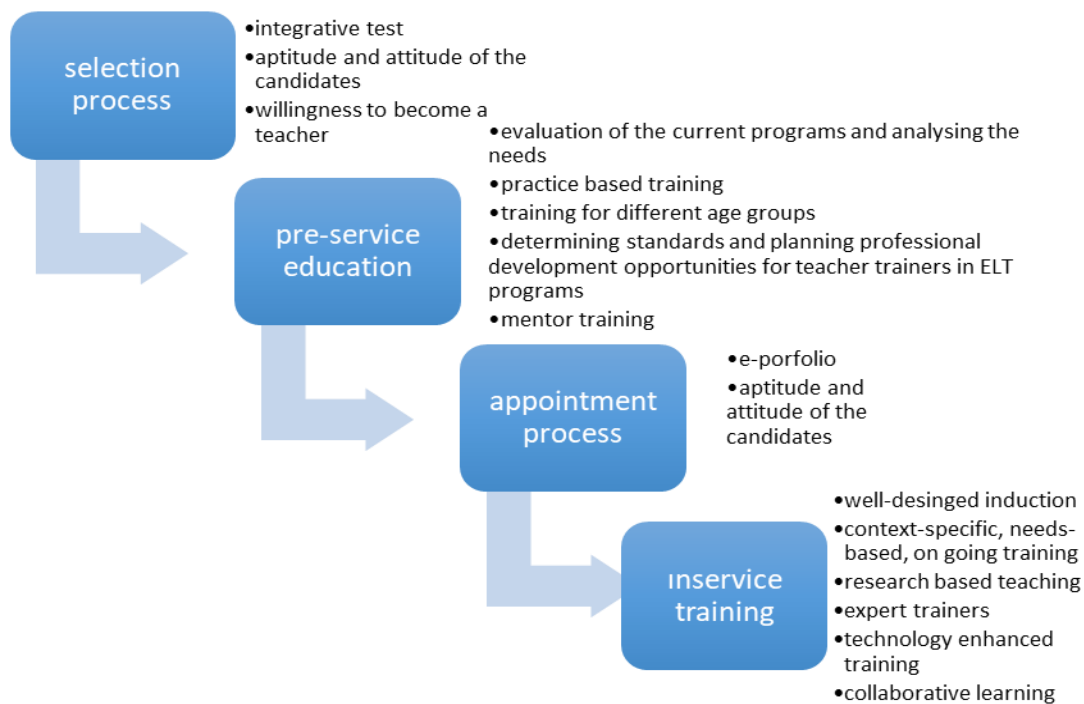

Figure 2. The suggested model for ELTE in Turkey

Conclusion

In his 2018-2019 academic year opening speech Ziya Selçuk, Minister of Turkish Education stated that teachers are the most important components of Turkish education system and their quality determines the overall quality of education. He continued his speech with his determination of a comprehensive teacher training project all over the country. Teacher training, being the hearth of any education system, has been pointed out as the main focus of Turkish Ministry. As a member of the education context, the new Minister's familiarity with the problems Turkey has been living for decades has increased the expectations and the hopes of Turkish people.

In Estonia and Singapore, where students' academic achievements are high according to international assessments, teachers are at the center of educational reforms, and teachers' problems in these countries are still seen as a priority (OECD, 2016c; OECD, 2011). In that sense, the most crucial point for Turkey is perceiving teacher education as a whole which requires all the policy makers, starting with the Student Selection and Placement Center (OSYM), Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC), Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Education Faculties to act in collaboration with one another. With the help of such a collaboration among all stakeholders, the best candidates selected through a careful process need to be equipped with the necessary skills and strategies to design future generations with a wisely designed curriculum, putting practice into center. The curriculum should help future teachers to become literate in essentially in teaching, testing, technology, management and research. The appointment process considering future teachers' characteristics and progress throughout their education will place the most appropriate candidates to the most appropriate places. Finally, teacher trainers might be reminded that professional development includes not only academic development for ourselves, but a more practice-oriented approach is necessary for all.

Schleicher (2018) states in the OECD supported study that the purpose of education at schools should be helping learners to gain the ways of thinking involving creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and judgment in a collaborative way which will help them to become active and responsible citizens. If we desire our teachers to guide future generations, they need to be able to create such school environments. Since the best way of learning is experiencing first hand, future teachers need to be given freedom in determining their own ways by experiencing an autonomous learning experience themselves. Since autonomy is a concept which is not transferred in theory, this also means acting autonomously in training future teachers. If "autonomous learners deserve autonomous teachers" (2001, p. 548) as Kumaravadivelu claims, autonomous teachers definitely deserve autonomous trainers.

We should keep in mind that if we want to equip our students to be able to compete with the rest of the world, we should start by enabling our teachers to be able to compete with the rest of the world in their profession as well. The framework, created in order to design teacher education policies in the country should go much beyond to looking promising to being realised. Creating collaborative learning environments and sharing best practices need to be the policy that should be adopted rather than training the teachers. There are many good examples we can learn and get inspired in the world, but it is only us who can find the solution that will work best in our own context. We should always keep in mind that countries that make progress in education which welcome alternative ways of thinking and which are open to learn will differ from the others who feel threatened by change.

The recently launched vision document (MEB, 2018), focusing on education policies to be followed between 2019-2023 in Turkey seems very promising. Well-intentioned suggestions focusing on increasing language teachers' competencies are included in the vision document. We hope that the ideas proposed in the document as well as the ideas we are offering here can be realized for establishing a healthy language teacher education system.

References

Akcan, S., Aydın, B., Karaman, A. C., Seferoğlu, G., Korkmazgil, S., Özbilgin, A. & Selvi, A. F. (2016). Qualities and Qualifications of EFL Professionals: What Do Intensive English Program Administrators Think? *TESOL Journal, 8* (3), 675-699.

Altan, M. Z. & Sağlamel, H. (2015). : Student teaching from the perspectives of cooperating teachers and pupils. Cogent Education, 2, 1-16. Doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2015.1086291

Araştıran Okul Akreditasyon ve Değerlendirme Merkezi Raporu (2018). Türk Eğitim Sistemi Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri. http://arastiranokul.org/rapor.pdf

Aydın, B., Bayram, F., Canıdar, B., Çetin, G., Ergünay, O., Özdem, Z., Tunç, B. (2009).Views of English Language Teachers on the Affective Domain of Language Teaching in Turkey. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 9 (1), 263-281.

Aydın, S. (2016). Türkiye'de yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştirme: Bir öneri. *The 4th National Conference on Foreign Language Education*, May 10-11. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Çanakkale, Turkey.

Aydın, B., Sağlam, S. & Alan, B. (2016). Can CELTA qualification be the new bridge between pre-service and inservice education?: Perceptions of in-service teachers. *ELT Research Journal, 5* (2), 155-176.

Conklin, H. G. (2015). Preparing Novice Teacher Educators in the Pedagogy of Teacher Education. *Action in Teacher Education, 37* (4), 317-333.

Coskun, A., & Daloglu, A. (2010). Evaluating an English language teacher education program through Peacock's model. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *35*(6). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2010v35n6.2

Crandall, J-A. (2000). Language teacher education. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 20*, 34–55.

Çelik, S. (2011). Characteristics and Competencies for Teacher Educators: Addressing the Need for Improved Professional Standards in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education. 36* (4), 73-87.

Davies, L. M. (2015). Teaching as a clinical profession: translational practices in initial teacher education – an international perspective. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 41 (5), 514-528.

Eğitim-Sen (2017, 24 Nisan). Eğitim yöneticilerinin 'sözlü sınav'la belirlenmesi, torpil ve siyasal kadrolaşma demektir! Temmuz 2017, http://egitimsen.org.tr/egitimyoneticilerinin-sozlu-sinavla-belirlenmesi-torpil-ve-siyasal-kadrolasma-demektir/

Farrell, T. S. C. (2009). The novice teacher experience. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *A Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 182-189). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, D. & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualising the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly,* 32 (3), 397–417.

Gebhard, J. G. (2009). The practicum. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *A Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 250-258). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin, A.L., Smith, L. Souto-Manning, M., Cheruvu, R., Tan, M. Y., Reed, R. & Taveras, L. (2014). What should teacher educators know and be able to do? Perspectives from practicing teacher educators. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*(4) 284–302.

Greenberg, J., McKee, A., Walsh, K. (2013). Teacher prep review: A review of the nation's teacher preparation programs. Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality. Retrieved from http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep Google Scholar

Gürsoy, E. & Damar, E. A. (2011). Cooperating teachers' awareness about their role during the teaching practice course: The Turkish context. *E-Journal of New World Sciences Academy, 6* (1), 54-65.

Gürsoy, E., Korkmaz, S.Ç., & Damar, A. E. (2013). Foreign language teaching within 4+4+4 education system in Turkey: Language teachers' voice. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *53*, 59-74.

İpek, Ö. F. & Daloğlu, A. (2017). The effectiveness of special teaching methods I course in preparing students to special teaching methods II course: A case study. Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 17 (1), 231-249.

Johnson, K. E. (2009). Trends in second language teacher education. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *A Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 20-30). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kang, Y. & Cheng, X. (2014). Teacher learning in the workplace: A study of the relationship between a novice EFL teacher's classroom practices and cognition development. *Language Teaching Research, 18* (2), 169-186.

Karabuğa, F. (2016). The perspectives of both pre-service teachers and their educators on EFL teacher education programs in Turkey. *International Journal of Language Academy, 4* (1), 331-347.

Kelly, M. & Grenfell, M. (2004). European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference. Retrieved from http://www.lang.soton.ac .uk/profile/report/index.htm.

Kırkgöz, Y. (2017). English Education Policy in Turkey. In R. Kirkpatrcik (Ed.), *English Language Education Policy in Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 235-256). Springer International Publishing.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a Postmethod Pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly, 35*(4), 537–557.

Küçüksüleymanoğlu, R. (2006). In-service training of ELT teachers in Turkey between 1998-2005. *Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 19 (2), 359–369.

Mahalingappa, L. J. & Polat, N. (2013). English language teacher education in Turkey: policy vs academic standards. *European Journal of Higher Education, 3* (4), 371-383.

Matsko, K. K., Ronfeldt, M., Nolan, H. G., Klugman, J., Reininger, M., & Brockman, S., L., (2018). Cooperating Teacher as Model and Coach: What Leads to Student Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118791992

MEB (2018). Güçlü Yarınlar İçin 2023 Eğitim Vizyonu, MEB, Ankara.

Menter, I., Hulme, M., Elliot, D. & Lewin, J. (2010). Literature review on teacher education in the 21st century: Scottish Government Social Research. Retrieved from https://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/325663/0105011.pdf

MoNE – Turkish Ministry of National Education [Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı] (2006). Generic teacher competencies [Genel öğretmen yeterlikleri] Retrieved from http://otmg.meb.gov.tr/belgeler/otmg/Generic_Teacher_ Competencies.pdf.

MoNE – Turkish Ministry of National Education [Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı] (2008). İngilizce öğretmeni özel alan yeterlikleri [Subject-area teacher competencies of English language teachers]. Retrieved from http://otmg.meb.gov.tr/alaningilizce.html.

NCATE (2010). *Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers. Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning*. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED512807.

OECD (2005). *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers - Final Report: Teachers Matter.* OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/school/attractingdevelopingandretainingeffectiveteach ers-finalreportteachersmatter.htm#EO.

Ölmezer-Öztürk, E., & Aydın, B. (2018). Investigating language assessment knowledge of EFL teachers. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.16986/HUJE.2018043465

Özşevik, Z. (2010). *The use of communicative language teaching (CLT): Turkish EFL teachers' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT in Turkey* (Published MA thesis). University of Illinois, The USA.

Popham, W. J. (2006). All about accountability / Needed: A dose of assessment literacy. Educational Leadership, 63(6), 84-85.

Popham, J. W. (2009). Assessment literacy for teachers: Faddish or fundamental? Theory Into Practice, 48, 4-11.

Reinders, H. (2009). Technology and Second Language Teacher Education. In Burns, A. & Richards, J.C. (Eds.). *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 230-237). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC Journal,* 39 (2), 158– 177.

Şallı-Çopur, D. S. (2008). *Teacher effectiveness in initial years of service: A case study on the graduates of METU language education program* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

Schleicher, A (2018), World Class: How to build a 21st-century school system, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/4789264300002

Seferoğlu, G. (2006). Teacher candidates' reflections on some components of a pre-service English teacher education programme in Turkey. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy, 32* (4), 369-378.

Shagrir, L. (2015). Professional development of novice teacher educators: professional self, interpersonal relations and teaching skills. *Professional Development in Education, 36* (1-2), 45-60.

Solvie, P. & Sungur, E. (2012). Teaching for Success: Technology and Learning Styles in Preservice Teacher Education. Contemporary *Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 12*(1), 6-40.

Stiggins, R. J. (2007). Conquering the formative assessment frontier. In J. H. McMillan (Ed.). *Formative classroom assessment*: *Theory into Practice* (pp. 8-28). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Şendağ, S. & Gedik, N. (2015). Teacher Training Problems of Turkey on the Threshold of Higher Education Transformation and a Support Model. Eğitim Teknolojisi Kuram ve Uygulama, 5 (1), 72- 91.

TEDMEM. (2014-2018). 2017 Eğitim Değerlendirme Raporu (TEDMEM Değerlendirme Dizisi 4). Ankara: Türk Eğitim Derneği Yayınları.

Tezgiden-Cakcak, S. Y. (2015). *Preparing teacher candidates as passive technicians, reflective practitioners or transformative intellectuals* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

The American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association (1990). The standards for teacher competence in the educational assessment of students. Retrieved from http://buros.org/standards-teacher-competence-educational-assessment-students

UNESCO (2017). Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2017/accountability-education

Uysal, H. H. (2012). Evaluation of an in-service training program for primary-school language teachers in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education 37*(7), 14–29.

Uzun, L. (2016). The educational and technical courses in the ELT program in Turkey: Do they contribute to ICT skills? 3, 1-12. Doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2016.1141454.

Uztosun, M. S. (2018). In-service teacher education in Turkey: English language teachers' perspectives. *Professional Development in Education, 44 (*4), 557-569.

Williamson, P. & George, M. A. (2017). Toward clinically rich English and literacy teacher preparation: A tale of two programs. *Innovations in English Language Arts Teacher Education, 27*, 185-202.

Valencia, S. W., Martin, S. D., Place, N. A., & Grossman, P. (2009). Complex interactions in student teaching: Lost opportunities for learning. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(3), 304-322. doi: 10.1177/0022487109336543

Volante, L., and Fazio, X. (2007). Exploring teacher candidates' assessment literacy: Implications for teacher education reform and Professional development. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30* (3), 749-770.

Yuan, R. & Hu, Y. (2018). Teachers' views on the qualities of effective EFL teacher educators. *ELT Journal, 72* (2), 141-150.