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## A comparison of ELT teacher education programmes in Europe and Turkey

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### Abstract

Teacher education is an essential part of educational systems all over the world as it has an effect upon the new coming generations. Especially with the rise of modern educational methodologies and approaches, language teaching field has gained priority. Also, considering the arising communication needs with the help of a lingua franca, English Language teacher education has become a controversial issue. Therefore, language education and education of language teachers are significant topics to be debated. Thus, the present study is an attempt to shed light on the differences and similarities between ELT teacher education programmes in European countries and Turkey. The study was designed as a literature review including the comparison between European countries and Turkey in terms of ELT teacher education. The alterations and the adaptations of the programmes with the examples from different countries were also presented in the study.

Keywords: Teacher education; ELT teacher; language education; European countries.

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher education has gained importance all over the world for the last decade with the rise of modern educational methodologies. Teacher education is considered as the fundamental factor underlying teacher and student quality (Hanushek, 2002). Also, teacher education programmes have undergone a lot of changes with the improvement of technological tool which is a cause of changing flow in the social dimensions. Although these changes have resulted in a common framework in teacher education in European countries defining specific competencies for candidate teachers determined by Council of Europe (Common European Framework, 1996; 1998), Turkey has its own standards and teacher competencies are determined by Ministry of National Education (MONE) with the collaboration of Higher Education Council (HEC). However, it is acknowledged by most of the trainer that it is not an easy job to develop new curriculum in teacher education programmes (Richards & Farrel, 2005).

Specifically, in foreign language education, the need for communicative language teaching with the mobility and easy access to foreign languages has led to different perspectives and approaches. Therefore, English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher education programmes have changed in that direction (Kromidha & Tabaku, 2011). Thus, the last change in Turkish context was realized in 2006 and this study is designated in the form of literature review comparing and contrasting the ELT teacher education programmes determined by HEC and MONE in Turkish context and common European Framework for ELT teacher education in European countries.

The question to be studied in this paper is “What are the similarities and differences between Turkish ELT teacher education programme and common European Framework for ELT teacher training?”

## 2. Historical Background of Turkish Context

Although, there is a rich philosophical background underlying language teacher education in Turkey (Akyüz, 2008), the history of foreign language teacher education has not been studied in detail to indicate the political and philosophical aspects (Nergis, 2011).

It is important to note that the history of language teaching in Turkey dates back to Tanzimat Period which is considered as the turning point for modernization and westernization of Turkey (Kirkgoz, 2005). This period is regarded as the beginning of modernization movement in Turkey and this movement have led to some reformations in every part of life including education due to tendency to learn a foreign language, especially French (Saricoban & Saricoban, 2012). This shift was a significant step, because Ottoman Empire followed a procedure towards teaching Arabic rather than western languages owing to religious dominance within the Empire (Bektas & Altioak, 2006).

Following Tanzimat Period, another important era for education is Republican Era in Turkish context. In this era, Darulmuallimin (teachers’ school), which was opened in 1948, was the first milestone in teacher education. Following Darulmuallimin, some institutions offered teacher education along with language teacher education.

Later global development and the rise of modern educational methodologies have led the Ministry of National Education to regulate the teacher education under the roof of governmental standards. However, language teacher education programmes were not strictly and regularly scheduled between 1940 and 1980 (Nergis, 2011). With introduction of a law, regarding the standardization of teacher education with strictly remarked competencies in 1982, teacher education was fully standardized and expected outcomes of teacher education programmes were clearly indicated by the name of teacher competencies by MONE and HEC and teacher education was transferred to the responsibility of universities. The last version of teacher education programmes for undergraduate degree was updated in 2006 for the last time.

From the European perspective, Day (1997) proposes that historically, there has been little attempt to standardized framework among the European countries. Regarding this issue, Sander (1994) examines the European Yearbook of Comparative Studies in Teacher Education stating that “all 21

countries represented the emphasis in resource terms was on initial teacher training.” In the light of these findings, the last standardized version of Common European Framework (CEFR) was designed. In this study, the last version of teacher education programmes will be discussed.

### 3. Significance of ELT Teacher Education

Pre-service teacher education comprises an important part of nationwide educational outcomes. Day (1991) proposes that the pre-service teacher education determines the value of education as well as effecting the upcoming generations.

Another perspective about teachers is their beliefs and ideas about specific teaching methodologies, which affect the process of educational activity. Kunt and Özdemir (2010) show the importance of ELT teacher education by indicating that most of the teachers’ beliefs and practices are affected by the educational background of the teachers. Practically, it is a well-known issue that teacher is the most effective factor in determining the success of an institution (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Thus, it becomes essential to promote the education of teachers, who has a direct effect on the ends of any education programmes, which are namely the students (Er, Ulgu & Sari, 2012).

Furthermore, communicative language teaching has imposed different roles to teacher, which should be introduced to pre-service teachers before the profession. For this purpose, in 2006, HEC reconstructed the curricula of educational faculties to fulfil the changing needs of society (Coskun, 2008). Allen (2009) claims that teacher education programs should be capable of preparing the pre-service teachers for their future roles.

Lastly, teacher education is regarded as one of the key factors for the educational background of the countries all through the world. Along with this importance, globalization and returns of modernization have resulted in a lingua franca which is regarded as English in most of the countries. Therefore, ELT teacher education is getting more important day by day.

### 4. Comparison of Europe and Turkey

Both teacher education programmes attempt to end up with skilful teachers with the different knowledge bases listed by Schulman (1990): “Content Knowledge, General Pedagogic Knowledge, Curriculum Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Knowledge of Learners and their Characteristics, Knowledge of Educational Contexts, Knowledge of Educational Ends.” These skills are the main focus of any teacher education programmes focusing on cultural and contextual differences. Thus, the differences and similarities between ELT teacher education programmes are covered in this section.

In European context, the ELT teacher competencies are specialized and cited in Grenfel, Kelly and Jones (2003):

1. “If you are a language specialist, you are competent at least to level C1 in one foreign language, and level B1 in another. If you are a semi-specialist teacher, you are competent at least to level B2 in a foreign language. If you are a non-specialist you are competent at least to level B1 in a foreign language. You have a European Language Portfolio to demonstrate this. You have a personal programme of maintaining and enhancing your language competence.
2. You have undertaken a period of work or study in countries where the foreign language(s) you teach is/are spoken as native. You have taught in more than one country, and you are comfortable working within a bilingual context where necessary.
3. You have undertaken teacher training with a clear balance of theory and practice, including a framework for teaching practice. You have worked with a mentor and you recognise that you may in due course have the opportunity act as a mentor yourself.

4. You have an ongoing programme of methodological enhancement, and undertake in-service training that is accredited and recognised at a European level.”

Another document describing teacher competencies in European Context described by Professional standards for teachers to gain qualified teacher status (QTS) (2008) in England, ELT teacher competencies are divided into three domains: Professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding and professional skills. These domains cover some basic competencies which are demonstrated in Table 1.

Differently in Turkish context, the competencies published by MONE include five domains consisting of Planning and Arranging English Teaching Process, Developing Language Skills, Monitoring and Assessing Language Development Process, Collaborating with School, Family and Society, Professional Development in ELT. These domains have special competencies as subheadings and there are performance indicators as A1, A2 and A3 level in accordance with the success level.

**Table 1. Professional Competencies/Standards for Teachers in England**

Domain : Professional Attributes	Domain: Professional Knowledge and Understanding	Domain: Professional Skills
<b>Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships with children and young people</li> <li>• Frameworks</li> <li>• Communicating and working with others</li> <li>• Personal professional development</li> </ul>	<b>Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning</li> <li>• Assessment and monitoring</li> <li>• Subjects and curriculum</li> <li>• Literacy, numeracy and ICT</li> <li>• Achievement and diversity</li> <li>• Health and well-being</li> </ul>	<b>Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Assessing, monitoring and giving feedback</li> <li>• Reviewing teaching and learning</li> <li>• Learning environment</li> <li>• Team working and collaboration</li> </ul>

In addition to these differences in competencies, it is possible to talk about two main differences in the programmes. First of all, European countries have a common framework which is named as “Common European Framework” for language education and language teacher training. This common framework is rationalized by Evans (1988) by defining a person type as “language people”. He advocates that in spite of various differences across European culture, people in Europe have something in common. So, training these people as teachers may start with the common core. However, Turkey has its unique design of programme developed by MONE and HEC. While the expected outcomes are defined in Common European Framework for European English teachers, the expected competencies for Turkish ELT teachers are elaborated by MONE.

Secondly, while the cultural background of the families and the institutions take an important place in Turkish programme, European programme does not have such an emphasis and the common framework does not let the countries to adopt the teacher education programmes responding to their local and cultural needs (Enever, 2004).

However, there exist some similarities between these two programmes. Firstly, planning and assessment stages constitute the important domains of teacher competencies in both of the programmes.

Secondly, the programmes do not have a domain about intercultural communication competence training, which is one of the most important parts of language education (Robotjazi, 2008). For ELT teacher education, it is regarded that the cultural competence as one of the qualified and effective ELT teacher competencies (Cetinavci & Yavuz, 2010). In addition to cultural awareness, some researchers (Altan, 2006; Peyton, 1997) put forth the fact that ELT teachers should have the technological competences and they should be able to utilize the technological tools adopting in their teaching environments (Seferoglu, 2004).

The last similarity between the programmes is that professional development including not only pre-service training but also in-service training is very crucial feature of effective language teachers according to these domains.

Lastly, there are, of course, some differences along with the similarities of the ELT teacher training programmes of Europe and Turkey since the expected competencies and the students' profiles with different cultural backgrounds and learning styles are very distinct in each context.

## 5. Conclusion

As a conclusion, teacher education all over the world has a significant and valuable place. Especially, with the rise of communication between the nations and arising need for a lingua franca, ELT teaching has become one of the most debated issues in research areas (Farooq, 2016; Richards, 2011). Therefore, the differences and similarities between ELT teacher education programs in Europe and Turkey have been compared in this paper.

The similarities between these two programs might be listed as importance of professional development and the significance attributed to assessment and planning stages of teaching in teacher competencies and the lack of training for intercultural communication competence development.

The differences between the programs are listed as the existence of a common framework for Europe -while in Turkey one special program for Turkish context is utilized- and the importance attributed to the cultural backgrounds of students and families.

All in all, in spite of the differences, ELT teacher education is a very important part of educational systems in all countries and from policy makers to politicians are in a struggle to provide the best in terms of English language education in both contexts compared in this study.

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