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A comparison with the competencies of English language teaching program

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Abstract

In this study, the competencies of the Undergraduate English Language Teaching Programmes belonging to the universities selected as samples from seven regions of our country were examined by using the document analysis method. It has been understood that the concepts of 'knowledge', 'skill' and 'competence' which are the components of the 'competency' concept as well as differences in the expression are not fully distinguishable. It was also observed that while the competencies were being written, universities did not adopt the same grammatical rules. In this study, arrangements were made with the focus was on providing a common framework both conceptually and formally, and suggestions were tried to be developed. It is thought that this work will be useful for programmes that have difficulty in expressing their competencies correctly.

Keywords: Bologna process, English language teaching programme, competency.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, the rapidly changing social, economic and political values have increased the demand for knowledge. Therefore, participation in higher education institutions where information is produced has increased, and even new institutions have been added to the institutions with the accumulation in these institutions. Higher education institutions, which have increased in number in Europe, have been forced to look for different financial resources that have started to be inadequate in financing. Moreover, the qualitative nature of these quantitatively increasing institutions was questioned, and it was seen that Europe, with a history of 900 years of higher education, lost its pioneering position towards the end of the 20th century against the United States. In the international competitive environment, the institutions of higher education in Europe, which had to struggle with problems such as limited financing, agglomeration, quality and success, were inevitably subject to radical changes (Akman, 2010, p. 3).

This change is Bologna Process which was mentioned at the meeting organised by the French, Italian, German and British ministers of education in Sorbonne in 1998 after signing the idea of establishing a common European higher education field and initiated in 1999 by the ministers responsible for higher education of 29 European countries by signing the Bologna Declaration in Bologna, Italy (Celik, 2012, p. 100). Turkey's first participation in the Bologna Process, including 48 European countries today, happens in the meeting in Prague. The objectives in the 1999 Bologna Declaration, which are the acceptance of an easily understandable and comparable degree system, the establishment of a system of credits as in ECTS system as the most appropriate way to encourage student mobility, promoting mobility by removing obstacles in front of free movement and encouraging cooperation in the field of quality assurance in order to increase the European competitive power of the European higher education system and employment of European citizens with diploma application, have also been tried to put into process in our country. One of the decisions taken in our country in relation to the Bologna process in Turkey in the coming year is the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF). Turkey HEQF, accepted for implementation in 2010, enforced the establishment of the competencies of the associate degree, bachelor's, master's and doctorate levels. Created competencies were detailed under the titles of knowledge, skill and competence.

In the European Framework of Qualifications, knowledge is the end result of the assimilation by learning knowledge. The whole of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a work or work field is defined as knowledge. Knowledge is dealt with factually or theoretically within it. Skill is the ability to practice knowledge and problem solving. Skill means to use methods or tools in a specific arrangement and in relation to defined tasks. Two types (cognitively and practically) are defined. Competence that has a wider sense of skills is the ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological skills in the case of a professional or personal work. Competence is addressed through the concepts of independent work and taking responsibility, learning competence, communication and social competence, domain specific and vocational competence (<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia>).

Competencies defined by Hartel and Foegeding (2004) as 'a general description of the desired knowledge, skills and behaviour from a student who graduated from a programme' constitute the essence of this work. Some universities' English Language Teaching programme competencies have been examined in this study, and both a conceptual and a formal framework for competencies have been sought to establish a common framework.

2. Method

In this study, the Undergraduate English Language Teaching Programme competencies of a total of seven state universities from every region of Turkey were discussed and competencies were examined under five headings: total number of competencies, distribution of competencies as knowledge, skills and

competences, expressing competencies as headings, expressing competencies in sentence form and distribution of old competencies and regulated situations as knowledge, skills and competence. These headings have been dealt with by adopting a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a type of research that uses qualitative data gathering methods such as observation, interview and document analysis, and examines people and their assets and events in their natural environment and enables them to be exposed in a realistic and holistic manner (Yildirim & Simsek, 2010). In the qualitative research methods, a document analysis method is used, which is defined as ‘a distinctive approach used to answer scientific questions’ (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2017). Documents can be used together with other data sets or as a data set on their own (Yildirim & Simsek, 2010).

The basic data sources of the study constitute the competency lists taken from the official web pages of the universities.

3. Findings

In this part of the study, the competencies of the seven universities are analysed under five headings, and the findings and comments related to this analysis are included.

3.1. The number of competencies

Table 1. Universities and distributions of total competencies

Universities	Total competencies
A	37
B	12
C	20
D	29
E	45
F	13
G	14

As it can be seen from Table 1, the number of competencies of English Language Teaching Undergraduate Programs at different universities differs from each other. In fact, the number of competencies of the E university is almost four times that of the B university. Only the competencies of B, F and G universities are very close to each other and they become the universities having the least competencies in Table 1.

3.2. Distribution of competencies as knowledge, skills and competences

Table 2. Distributions of competencies as knowledge, skills and competences

Universities	Knowledge	Skills	Competences	Total competencies
A	11	9	17	37
B	-	-	-	12
C	-	-	-	20
D	-	-	-	29
E	15	4	26	45
F	-	-	-	13
G	-	-	-	14

As seen in Table 2, only two of the seven universities gave competencies with subheadings of knowledge, skill and competence. It seems that there is not a balanced distribution when the distribution of competencies in these groups is concerned. Both universities have the most competence, then knowledge and at least skill. Especially, in ‘E’ university, the number of skills is very low. The other five universities indicated their competencies without discriminating between knowledge, skills and competence.

3.3. Expressing competencies as headings

Table 3. Expressing competencies as headings according to universities

University	Expressions of competencies
A	Learning outcomes
B	Program competencies
C	Learning outcomes
D	Program outcomes
E	Program learning outcomes
F	Learning outcomes
G	Program outcomes

As indicated in Table 3, the seven universities whose competencies were examined used different headings for competencies. The ‘Learning Outcomes’, one of the five different headings used, are preferred by the ‘C’ and ‘F’ universities; The ‘Program Outcomes’ heading was used jointly by the ‘D’ and ‘G’ universities.

3.4. Expressing competencies in sentence form

Table 4. Expressing competencies in sentence form according to universities

University	Expressing competencies
A	..has... may develop... is sensitive
B develops,be able to do
C	...having,.. being able to manage
D	...learns, ...can use
Ehaving the skill of setting
F	...use, ...create
G	...understand, ..be able to write

As seen from Table 4, no common language was used for expressing the competencies among universities. Simple present tense, infinitive and even English phrases have been used in the sentences of competencies. Only A University has used separate sentence patterns for knowledge, skill and competence. In the competencies corrected to use a common formal language, the knowledge group is expressed as ‘knowing’, ‘skill group’, ‘able to use’, ‘able to do, etc. ‘and competence group and gaining’.

3.5. Distribution of old competencies and regulated situations as knowledge, skills and competence

Table 5. Distributions of competencies as knowledge, skill and competence

Universities	Knowledge (old–new)	Skill (old–new)	Competence (old–new)	Total competencies (old–new)
A	11–13	9–14	17–11	37–38
B	0–3	0–10	0–2	12–15

C	0-1	0-4	0-13	20-18
D	0-13	0-5	0-3	29-21
E	15-1	4-7	26-4	45-12
F	0-2	0-12	0-6	13-20
G	0-0	0-9	0-5	14-14

The competencies of the five universities, which do not classify their competencies as knowledge, skills and competence as shown in Table 5, are regulated by taking into account the definitions made in the European Qualifications Framework. The concept definitions are given earlier in the introduction to this study. There is no competency in the knowledge section of the only G university when there is competency in the knowledge, skills and competence groups of each university after the arrangement, because G does not have the competency to be included in the knowledge section of the competency written by the university for the English Language Teaching Bachelor programme. The reason for the change of the total competency numbers is due to the opening of competencies written in duplicate or the removal of similar/exactly the same similarities. For example, since E university uses the same competencies in all of its areas of knowledge, skill and competence, the number of competencies that should be qualified has been set and the number of competencies has decreased from 45 to 12.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

In this study, the competencies of seven state universities' Undergraduate English Language Teaching Programme were examined and the competencies were analysed under five headings, and a document analysis was carried out.

Regarding the number of the universities' competencies, it is seen that universities have different number of competencies from each other, even though they have the same undergraduate program. Even so, as it can be seen from Table 5, the number of competencies of a university is more than three times higher than the others'. This excess or deficiency, may lead to profound differentiation among students who will graduate from the same programme in different places of Turkey. This situation, contrary to the criterion 'similarities between higher education institutions' required in the Bologna process, must be resolved through communication and cooperation between universities.

Considering the distribution of competencies as knowledge, skills and competence, it was seen that only two of the seven universities involved in the study classified competencies as knowledge, skills and competence. All universities, on the other hand, should provide their competencies in these three classifications as they are in the Turkey HEQF level definitions, so that the students can train themselves well with the competencies of the programme.

When looked at the expressions of competencies both in terms of title and sentence, it is seen that there is no conceptual and formal common language among universities. While five different titles were created by seven universities for competency, two different languages Turkish and English were used in the sentence expressions. The use of different structures, such as verb tenses, infinitive adjectives or noun phrases, has given rise to complexity. In order to avoid, this complexity and create a common language, 'program competencies' have been preferred rather than 'output or outcome' as titles for competencies. Because the competency fulfils the exact need by choosing as a title with its definition 'competence in the field of higher education refers to what a person who successfully completes any degree of higher education can know, do and be competent for' (<http://tyyc.yok.gov.tr/>). In the arrangement, competencies are numbered in abbreviations such as PY1 and PY2, and the number of competencies in the list is shown in total. In addition to title editing, it has been attempted to provide a conceptual and formal common language by expressing the knowledge group as 'knowing', skill group as 'be able to use' and competences with different verbs like '...gain, learn and so on'.

As regards the old and regulated status of competencies, it is seen that as only two universities grouped competencies as knowledge, skills and competences, and then competencies of all universities are classified in this way. When this classification is made, the overlapping competencies are corrected, the similar/same qualities repeated are removed and the resulting total number of competencies is stated.

In short, it appears that those who prepare the competencies do not act in a common way. Various meetings, conferences, seminars and events related to this topic can be organised for those who prepare the competencies in order to make this work more accurate. The examples of good practice in writing competency from universities in Europe and Turkey can be taken into consideration.

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