The views of ELT student-teachers on initial teacher education programme in Turkey through EPLTE

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Abstract

This paper presents the initial language teacher education policy adopted in Turkey and describes a study that examines English Language Teaching (ELT) student-teachers' perceptions on the main components of initial teacher education and their contribution to the student-teachers' future profession. To achieve these, the present study adopts the four dimensions of the European Profile for Language Teacher Education—A Frame of Reference (Kelly, Grenfell, Allan, Kriza, & McEvoy, 2004), which identifies the 40-item essential elements in foreign language teacher education. The sample includes 123 student-teachers in their second, third, and fourth year of studies for a bachelor's degree in the Department of English Language Teacher Education at the Inonu University of Malatya in Turkey. Findings regarding the student-teachers' perceptions on the main components and features of the ELT curriculum in all its dimensions (i.e., structure, knowledge and understanding, strategies and skills, and values) reveal that the students-teachers believe in the importance of practicum, collaboration with other universities and research institutes, and knowledge about the target culture. They, however, have some doubts regarding the necessity for using the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) (Newby, Allan, Fenner, Jones, Komorowska, & Soghikyan, 2007) and for being subjected to peer evaluation during their preservice education.

Keywords: ELT programme, European Profile for Language Teacher Education—A Frame of Reference, initial teacher education (ITE), student-teachers

1.   Introduction

As human beings move from a period of communication to an era of information, languages still play a major role as 'international channels of communication' in this rapidly changing world (Wallace, 1991). Therefore, the importance of language teaching and training of language teachers is getting more attention from all stakeholders of education. The role and importance of foreign languages have also changed in the school context. While there was no definite place for foreign language teaching in curricula of educational settings in the past, at

present, foreign language teaching has become almost central to all educational programmes (Vez, 2008). As Yiğit (2012) states:

> The development and improvement of teacher education is a global concern and a policy priority for many countries, even though the focus of interest varies … In the developing world, the need for upgrading teacher qualifications, particularly in the primary sector, is also a major issue. (p. 524)

In 2012, Turkey restructured its education system as 4+4+4, and with this new policy, the eight years of compulsory instruction shifted up into 12 years. Likewise, the compulsory English course reduced to 2nd grade from 4th. A preparatory class for secondary schools in 2019 is also in the agenda of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). These recent changes seem to require a further reform on ITE via English Language Teaching Programme (ELTP), once again as in 1997 and 2006. Göktepe (2015) avers: "As the world rapidly changes, so does the program require updating" (p.140). To ensure the quality of education of young children, a deep analysis of the current programme is essential in order to replace it with a more standardised, up-to-date one with a well-defined philosophy. Otherwise, changing numbers of education periods alone cannot help in enhancing the quality of English instruction to the European level. It is clear that, as Almışdört (2016) and Duman & Karagöz (2016) emphasize, "the successes of education system and students mostly depend on the success of teachers and the success of the teachers largely depends on well-qualified curriculum of language teacher education" (p. 2).

To this end, an increasing number of research and attempts have been conducted in order to reveal the failing points of teacher education both at academic and political levels in Turkey in recent decades. Thus, there have been several studies on the quality of teacher education and on the curricula across universities in Turkey. Also, it is a well-known fact that proficiency in English in Turkey is not at the desired level. To become an English language teacher in Turkey, graduation from a four-year education faculty or completion of a total of 240 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is essential. The programme includes several compulsory and some elective courses similar to universities in the European Union (EU) countries. Although the current ELTP (2006) has some strengths in terms of flexibility and autonomy, the weaknesses of the programme are unfortunately far ahead. Recent studies on this programme revealed the following most common weaknesses: (a) lacking of a well-defined philosophy, (b) being outdated, (c) lacking of cultural domain/diversity, (d) the need for integration of theory and practice, and (e) the need for more information and communication technology(ies) (ICT) skills (Altan, 2006; Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010; Karakas, 2012; Kırkgöz, 2009; Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013; Sert, 2010; Uzun, 2015).

Taken together, the aforementioned studies indicate the urgent need for reform of ELTPs. On the other hand, separate studies addressing only one or two dimensions of the curriculum, or studies with limited participant type may prevent relevant institutions and organisations from correctly identifying the problems. In addition, studies examining the programme have mostly based on the objectives of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). As a candidate country to the EU membership, it is important to analyse the English

language teaching (ELT) curricula in every aspect in respect to the Commission of Europe (CoE) norms. Although ELTP has been thoroughly studied, a comprehensive assessment of the programme, which includes the perceptions of preservice and inservice teachers as well as their educators, seems limited. Therefore, it is significant to present a holistic examination of language teacher education that may help with the testimony reliability and better understanding of ELTP in order to inform policy makers and programme designers.

1.1   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate preservice teachers' perceptions of the main components of the initial language teacher education with respect to the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE). In other words, the study observes the key stakeholders' opinions regarding the 40 key elements proposed in the EPLTE—a Frame of Reference (Kelly et al., 2004). Specifically, the following research questions are used to direct the study:

a. What are the preservice teachers' perceptions on the main components of the English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programme with respect to the EPLTE?
b. What qualifications should an ELTE programme involve?
c. Which items in the EPLTE are considered more relevant to the language teacher education and profession?
d. What elements do the preservice teachers perceive as relatively irrelevant to the ELTE programme?

1.2   Literature Review

As a bridge among people, language is the most important activity of human beings, and now, just like any other modernization movements across Europe, foreign language education is at the edge of an interparadigmatic change (Vez, 2008). Naturally, teacher education is changing, too, and the changes are not limited to this area. As Dillon and Maguire (2011) argue:

> All aspects of learning to teach and teaching are influenced, explicitly and implicitly, by policy. Sometimes these policies appear to be driven by coherent and interrelated strategies for reform; at other times, education policy making seems to be chaotic; little more than a set of ad hoc responses to social dilemmas and public concerns. (p. 29)

Lombardi (2013) claims that there is a growing need for multifaceted language teachers who can perform as a tutor, a facilitator, and an educator or a techno-educator. Therefore, to equip these multifaceted teachers with needed competencies and skills for their new roles, Hoxha (2013) points out the necessity for having quality ITE and continuous professional development in order to keep these teachers up-to-date with essential skills in

this new era of knowledge. In Turkey, it is a well-known fact that proficiency in English is not at the desired level. Therefore, it is important to analyze and understand the issues of language teacher education in order to inform education stakeholders as well as to resolve these issues. As Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson (2002) claim:

> It seems reasonable to expect that teachers should be competent on their subject area. This knowledge provides the grounds for their authority, and gives warrant to the idea that they are practising a profession. Without this specialist knowledge, they have no authority, and no profession. (p. 67)

However, as Day (1991) points out, language teacher education when compared with other areas in teacher education is rather a recent development. Thus, to educate competent language teachers, it has become a priority for countries all over the world, especially within the EU member states, to plan their national educational programmes and policies in order to equip teachers with up-to-date skills.

As mentioned above, language policies and the languages of the EU countries are at the centre of the European Commission (EC) projects. The year 2001 was the European Year of Languages when the EC took some serious actions to support and improve foreign language teaching within its member states. In fact, that was not the first attempt of the EC to promote language learning as well as linguistic diversity. To achieve a multilingual Europe, firstly, Lingua, in 1989, came into force to solve problems posed by communication across the EU countries because of free marketing named as the Single Market. Then, several further steps have been taken one by one by organizations such as the European Center for Modern Languages (ECML) and Council of Europe (CoE) for several reasons, particularly for educational requirements to facilitate more effective language teaching and learning. The most known steps of these attempts are documents such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR or CEFRL), the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), and the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE).

CEFR, which was presented in 2001,

> … provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. (Council of Europe, 2001)

A set of six Common Reference Levels is provided in the CEFR as A1-A2, B1-B2, and C1-C2. This set categorizes language learners into three main classes, which can be subcategorized into six levels; and what a language learner should be capable of doing in four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are briefly described in each level. In close relation to the CEFR, the EPOSTL provides a self-assessment system:

> … for students undergoing initial teacher education which encourages them to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps them to assess their own didactic competencies and enables them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education. (p. 83)

The EPOSTL involves three main parts: a personal-statement section, a self-assessment section, and a dossier. As Mirici (2015) explains, this user-friendly document is flexible enough to be used in any educational system; it contains 193 can-do statements for self-assessment of students' basic competencies throughout their initial teacher training.

The EPLTE was developed by some academicians at the University of Southampton, UK in 2004 and supported by the European Commission. Based on an earlier report on language teacher education held over 32 countries, the EPLTE presents a checklist of 40 items divided into four main areas: (a) structure with 13 items, (b) knowledge and understanding with eight items, (c) strategies and skills with 13 items, and (d) values with six items; see Table 1.

The profile is primarily intended to act as guide for the following groups:
- Institutions, policy makers responsible for designing curricula at institutional or national level,
- Lecturers in language departments for language teachers, and
- Language teachers in preservice or inservice education.

Table 1
Areas of the EPLTE

Structure This section contains items describing the different constituent parts of language teacher education and indicates how they could be organised.	Strategies ans Skills This section contains items relating to what trainee language teachers should *know how* to do in teaching and learning situations as teaching professionals as a result of their initial and in-service teacher education.
Knowledge and Understanding This section contains items relating to *what* trainee language teachers should know and understand about teaching and learning languages as a result of their initial and in-service teacher education.	Values This section contains items relating to the values that trainee language teachers should be taught to promote in and through their language teaching.

It is also mentioned in the instructions that the profile should be seen as a resource for stakeholders in terms of teacher education within European countries without paying any attention to their specialty in primary, secondary, or adult instruction. With the guidance of the documents mentioned earlier as well as several other movements towards language learning and teaching, the EU countries are in a continual reform of educational policies both at European and national levels.

Foreign language teachers' language competence is one of the key factors contributing to the success of instruction, for it "ensures the provision of a good model of the target language, enables teachers to address the problems learners encounter, and makes teaching more creative" (Pawlak, 2011, p. 21). To this end, as a key factor in securing the quality of instruction, ITE has some common characteristics across the EU member states and in Turkey; one of them is the training model. There are two types of teacher education: the concurrent education model and the consecutive education model. In the former model, individual subject training, pedagogical training, and practical activity are presented in an integrated way throughout the students' educational period. This model is mostly used in Germany, Sweden, Italy, Poland, and Greece. In the latter model, on the other hand, after a certain subject training, the students receive courses on teacher training. Such a model is widely used in France and Portugal. Although both models have advantages and disadvantages, which are not the primary concern of this present study, the concurrent education model seems to be the dominant one among the EU member states, while some countries use both models, e.g., the United Kingdom and Bulgaria. The concurrent education model of teacher education is mostly offered to teachers of low-level schools, while the consecutive education model is essential to upper-secondary teachers. As an exception to the aforementioned two models, some alternative routes to teacher education, which seem to be not very common, are available such as employment-based, shorter or fast-tracked programmes for career changers in several countries (Caena, 2014; Kilimci, 2009; Sederevičiūtė-Pačiauskienė, & Vainorytė, 2015;).

In Europe, education periods tend to be four or five years at the university level, e.g., 3+2 years in France, Poland, Iceland, and Germany; 3+1+1 years in Finland; four years in England and Greece, and the like. After completing ITE, teacher candidates are taken into an induction phase where they are mentored in schools by experienced teachers in some countries such as Sweden, France, and Turkey (Karatsiori, 2016; Kilimci, 2009). To achieve these objectives in language teaching and learning, most of the EU member states have restructured or reformed their national educational programmes within the last decade, e.g., Ireland in 2009, Scotland in 2013, Sweden in 2010, and several others (Caena, 2014). For detailed information, see Table 2.

Table 2
Education periods and credit hours in European education faculties

	Duration	ECTS	Possibility to Work	Other Requirements
England	4 (includes a year spent abroad)	180+ *PGCE credits	Both secondary and primary	**QTS and PGCE
France	3+2	300	Primary	Exams
Germany	3+2	300	Secondary	State exams
Greece	4	240	Both secondary and primary	Exams

Table 2 continued...

	Duration	ECTS	Possibility to Work	Other Requirements
Finland	3+1+1	300	Both secondary and primary	MA degree
Poland	3+2	240	Secondary	PGCE
Sweden	3+1.5+1	364	Secondary	MA degree

*Postgraduate Certificate in Education
**Qualified Teacher Status

Since the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has a long history of teacher education. However, foreign language teacher education started in 1938 when the School of Foreign Languages was established to train language teachers in secondary schools. Following this was the establishing of French (1941), English (1944), and German (1947) departments. After the establishment of the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 1981, Turkey witnessed a second major reform by transferring teacher-training institutions to universities. In doing so, language high schools of three-years were changed into four-year faculties of education. Thus, since 1983, the content of English Language Teaching Programme (ELTP) has entirely changed (Duman & Karagöz, 2016; Salihoğlu, 2012).

At present, as what Yüksel (2012) observes:

> … the recent developments and changes in the field of education has also influenced Turkey so much. Turkey, with the influences of both its social dynamics and various international facts and formations like the EU adaptation process, has started comprehensive regulations regarding the education system and teacher education. (p. 55)

For this reason, like the other EU member states, Turkey also changed its ITE twice, i.e., in 1998 and 2006.

As the language of UK and USA–the two great economies of the world, English as the language of diplomacy and international trade across the globe has also positioned itself into the heart of almost all education contexts in most countries. With the recent changes, known as 4+4+4, compulsory language teaching starts at the second year of primary education. That being the case, the training of effective English language teachers once again becomes a crucial consideration (Karakas, 2012; Vez, 2002).

In Turkey, HEC is responsible for all universities and institutions for planning, organizing, supervising, and the like, including training of language teachers. In 2006, HEC presented the new ELTP that was based on CEFR, with focus on content knowledge, general knowledge, pedagogy, and practicum. This programme requires a prospective language teacher to complete a four-year degree unless there is an intensive preparatory year. Besides education faculties, students who graduated from the departments of English philology and English or American language and literature can work as English language teachers after completing a certificate on pedagogic formation (Göktepe, 2015; Kahraman, 2015;

Karakas, 2012). The curricula of all ELTE departments in Turkish universities have similar characteristics shaped by HEC. The programme comprises an extremely large number of compulsory and some elective courses (Karakas, 2012; Ulum, 2015). The courses and the ECTS credits are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
The current ELTE programme since 2006*

1st Semester			2nd Semester	
COURSE TITLE	ECTS		COURSE TITLE	ECTS
Contextual Grammar I	4		Contextual Grammar II	4
Adv. Reading and Writing I	4		Adv. Reading and Writing II	4
Listening and Pronunciation I	3		Listening and Pronunciation II	3
Oral Communication Skills I	5		Oral Communication Skills II	5
Introduction to Teaching	3		Lexical Competence	3
Computer I	5		Educational Psychology	3
Turkish I: Composition	3		Computer II	3
Effective Communication	3		Turkish II: Oral Communication	5
TOTAL	30		TOTAL	30
3rd Semester			4th Semester	
COURSE TITLE	ECTS		COURSE TITLE	ECTS
English Literature I	4		English Literature II	4
Linguistics I	5		Linguistics II	5
Approaches to ELT I	5		Approaches to ELT II	3
Translation: English to Turkish	5		Translation: Turkish to English	5
Writing Skills	3		Second Foreign Language	5
Principles & Methods of Teach.	4		Teach. Technology & Mat.	4
History of Turkish Education	4		Drama	4
TOTAL	30		TOTAL	30

Table 3 continued...

5th Semester			6th Semester	
COURSE TITLE	ECTS		COURSE TITLE	ECTS
Teaching Eng. to Young	4		Teaching Eng. to Young	4
Methodology I	4		Methodology II	4
Teaching Language Skills I	4		Teaching Language Skills II	4
Lit. & Language Teaching I	4		Lit. & Language Teaching II	4
Classroom Management	4		Testing & Evaluation	4
Research Techniques	4		Community Services	6
Second Foreign Language I	3		Language Acquisition	4
Elective I	3			
TOTAL	30		TOTAL	30
7th Semester			8th Semester	
COURSE TITLE	ECTS		COURSE TITLE	ECTS
Lang. Teach. Materials Ada. & Dev.	6		English Lang. Testing & Evaluation	4
School Experience	6		Turkish Edu. Systems & Sch. Man.	4
Guidance	5		Comparative Education	4
Special Education	4		Practice Teaching	12
Ataturk Principles	3		Ataturk Principles	3
Second Foreign Language III	3		Elective III	3
Elective II	3			
TOTAL	30		TOTAL	30

*Total ECTS: 240

Table 3 presents a total of 240 ECTS credits of four-year education in most countries in Europe. The assessment on these courses is a combination of oral examinations, written examinations and assignments, reports, portfolios, presentations, and the like by teacher educators. As the last step to become teachers in public primary or secondary schools, preservice teachers are required to get a high grade in a national exam known as the Teacher Field Knowledge Test (Öğretmenlik Alan Bilgisi Testi or ÖABT, in Turkish). An interview follows this national exam, which is the second part of the ÖABT. The combined score of these two parts of the ÖABT counts as the final grade of a teacher candidate in order to be eligible for the teaching profession. As can be seen, the ITE programme in Turkey is much similar to those in the EU countries. Nevertheless, EFL teaching and learning will be unsatisfactory in Turkey.

2.   Method

2.1   Data Collection

The sample was determined through convenience sampling and was consisted of 123 student-teachers from the ELT Department of Inonu University in Malatya, Turkey. The student-teachers answered the questionnaire in their respective classes. The questionnaire was distributed to these student-teachers toward the end of the second semester of their second, third, and fourth year of studies in the academic year 2016-2017. Since these students were required to take their one-year obligatory preparatory English education, they had at least three years of experience in the department, which could have encouraged them to appreciate the knowledge and skills a language teacher needs in carrying out the profession.

2.2   Instrument

The quantitative data were gathered from the preservice teachers of the ELT Department of Inonu University through triangulation, i.e., from the perspectives of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. To this end, the single instrument of data collection is a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part refers to the personal information of the student-teachers; the second part, which is divided into four sections, includes the EPLTE or European Profile for Language Teacher Education—A Frame of Reference (Kelly et al., 2004), which identifies the 40-item important elements in foreign language teacher education. In order for the student-teachers to evaluate the academic curriculum, a four-point Likert scale was utilized to appraise the 40 key elements of EPLTE. This four-point Likert scale classified the student-teachers' opinions by type, i.e., 1. Not Important, 2. Slightly Important, 3. Moderately Important, and 4. Important; through this, the student-teachers were able to express their positive or negative views regarding the integration of the 40 key elements into the curriculum. It should be noted that the four-point Likert scale was chosen for the present study because it is quick and economical to administer and is easily adaptable to most attitude measurement situations (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998; Charles, 1995). As a limitation of using a single instrument, it may argued that this kind of self-report questionnaire could not provide in-depth insights regarding the issue at hand.

2.3   Data Analysis

The first phase of the present study was mainly descriptive. Therefore, the data obtained from the survey questionnaire were computed and analyzed in frequencies and percentages using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences or SPSS. In the second phase, a one-way ANOVA analysis between the responses of the three groups of students was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between the sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

3. Results

As mentioned earlier, 123 student-teachers participated in this study; 90 or 73% of the participants were female, and 33 or 27% were male. They were 20 to 22 years old and were attending the eighth (i.e., final) semester of their studies. Tables 4 to 7 present the responses of the participants regarding the items in the four sections of the profile.

Table 4 includes 13 items concerning the structure of language teacher education programs, and records the opinions of the student-teachers as regards the importance that the academic curriculum gave in 13 key elements via an evaluation scale. Although partly or as a whole they do not refer to the quality of the curriculum content, items 2, 9, 11, and 12 were also included because they concern the overall organization of language teacher education and refer to policies adopted by either the University itself or by other educational authorities.

Table 4
Evaluation: Structure

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
1. A curriculum that integrates academic study and the practical experience of teaching	-	6.5	24.4	69.1
2. The flexible and modular delivery of initial and in-service education	4.9	15.4	43.1	36.6
3. An explicit framework for teaching practice (stage/practicum)	1.6	13.8	30.1	54.5
4. Working with a mentor and understanding the value of mentoring	0.8	12.2	29.3	57.7
5. Experience of an intercultural and multicultural environment	1.6	7.3	20.3	70.0
6. Participation in links with partners abroad, including visits, exchanges or ICT links	4.1	7.3	28.5	60.2
7. A period of work or study in a country or countries where the trainee's foreign language is spoken as native	0.8	6.5	26	66.7
8. The opportunity to observe or participate in teaching in more than one country	4.1	18.7	26	51.2

Table 4 continued …

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
9. A European-level evaluation framework for initial and in-service teacher education programmes, enabling accreditation and mobility	2.4	19.5	49.6	28.5
10. Continuous improvement of teaching skills as part of in-service education	1.6	8.9	37.4	52
11. Ongoing education for teacher educators	0.8	10.6	38.2	50.4
12. Training for school-based mentors in how to mentor	3.3	9.8	33.3	53.7
13. Close links between trainees who are being educated to teach different languages	9.8	16.3	43.1	30.9

As seen in Table 4, the 13 items in the structure section were evaluated as moderately important or important by over 80% of the participants. This shows a strong affirmation for the items in this section. What seems remarkable is the fact that the ELT Department of Inonu University is the only foreign language teaching department in the institution and that the student-teachers are aware of the benefits of 'Close links between trainees who are being educated to teach different languages.' The next section of the profile includes items regarding the practical and the theoretical training of the student-teachers.

Table 5
Evaluation: Knowledge and understanding

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
14. Training in language teaching methodologies, and in state-of-the-art classroom techniques and activities	1.6	11.4	34.1	52.8
15. Training in the development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning	0.8	11.4	38.2	49.6

Table 5 continued …

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
16. Initial teacher education that includes a course in language proficiency and assesses trainees' linguistic competence	2.4	12.2	39.8	45.5
17. Training in information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom	1.6	12.2	29.3	56.9
18. Training in information and communication technology for personal planning, organisation and resource discovery	2.4	12.2	36.6	48.8
19. Training in the application of various assessment procedures and ways of recording learners' progress.	4.1	11.4	35	49.6
20. Training in the critical evaluation of nationally or regionally adopted curricula in terms of aims, objectives and outcomes.	2.4	12.2	39	46.3
21. Training in the theory and practice of internal and external programme evaluation.	3.3	13.8	41.5	41.5

Table 5 shows that the eight items in the knowledge and understanding section were evaluated as moderately important or important by over 85% of the participants. This shows a stronger affirmation for the items in this section than the previous one. The third section of the profile includes items regarding the strategies and skills a teacher needs in the classroom. In a sense, while the previous section is related to the preservice process (i.e., the preparation a teacher makes preceding his or her professional teaching career), this section deals with the inservice process.

Table 6
Evaluation: Strategies and skills

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
22. Training in ways of adapting teaching approaches to the educational context and individual needs of learners	0.8	6.5	33.3	59.3
23. Training in the critical evaluation, development and practical application of teaching materials and resources	1.6	11.4	39.8	47.2
24. Training in methods of learning to learn	1.6	8.1	20.3	69.9
25. Training in the development of reflective practice and self-evaluation	-	5.7	36.6	57.7
26. Training in the development of independent language learning strategies	0.8	16.3	30.1	52.8
27. Training in ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language competence	3.3	8.1	35.8	52.8
28. Training in the practical application of curricula and syllabuses	3.3	14.6	44.7	37.4
29. **Training in peer observation and peer review**	**3.3**	**22.8**	**39.8**	**34.1**
30. Training in developing relationships with educational institutions in appropriate countries	1.6	12.2	34.1	52
31. Training in action research	3.3	16.3	45.5	35
32. Training in incorporating research into teaching	0.8	15.4	53.7	30.1
33. Training in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)	8.1	13	39	39.8

Table 6 continued...

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
34. **Training in the use of the European Language Portfolio for self-evaluation**	**4.9**	**17.9**	**45.5**	**31.7**

Table 6 shows that the 13 items in the strategies and skills section were also evaluated as moderately important or important by over 85% of the participants, with the exception of items 29 and 34 that were evaluated as highly or very important by less than 80% of the participants. This may imply some scepticism over certain issues such as peer observation and peer review and the use of European Language portfolio for self-evaluation. The student-teachers seem to be doubtful as to how to implement peer review and self-evaluation in assessing their prospective students' performance. The last section of the profile includes items about social and cultural values.

Table 7
Evaluation: Values

How do you characterize the importance that the curriculum gave on the following elements?	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Moderately Important %	Important %
35. Training in social and cultural values	2.4	14.6	32.5	50.4
36. Training in the diversity of languages and cultures	-	9.8	30.1	60.2
37. Training in the importance of teaching and learning about foreign languages and cultures	3.3	9.8	29.3	57.7
38. **Training in teaching European citizenship**	**21.1**	**26.8**	**31.7**	**20.3**
39. Training in team-working, collaboration and networking, inside and outside the immediate school context	1.6	11.4	30.9	56.1
40. Training in the importance of life-long learning	0.8	6.5	22.8	69.9

As seen in Table 7, while most of the participants are in favor of training in cultural and social aspects of languages and in the diversity of languages and cultures, only half of the participants gave a positive response regarding the issue on training in teaching European

citizenship. Again, over 80% percent of them, however, believe in the importance of and learning about foreign languages and cultures and 'in team-working, collaboration and networking, inside and outside the immediate school context.'

In the second phase of the present study, an ANOVA analysis was conducted for the four dimensions on the scale. The findings of such analysis are presented in Tables 8 to 11. Table 8 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis of responses given to the 13 items in the first dimension of the scale, i.e., structure.

Table 8
One way analysis of responses given to the items in the structure dimension

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	.205	.102	.814	.445
Within Groups	120	15.097	.126		
Total	122	15.302			

First, the Levene's Test was employed to assess whether there was homogeneity between the groups, and the result (p=0.647) showed that there was homogeneity between the variances of these groups. In the second step, the results of the one-way ANOVA test did not yield a significant difference between the participants' responses given to the items in the structure dimension (p=0.445). The mean scores of 48 sophomores, 38 juniors, and 38 seniors were 3.30, 3.40, and 3.37, respectively. Table 9 presents the one-way ANOVA results of the responses given to the items in the knowledge and understanding dimension.

Table 9
One way analysis of responses given to the items in the knowledge and understanding dimension

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	.520	.260	1.206	.303
Within Groups	120	25.858	.215		
Total	122	26.378			

This dimension includes such items as 'training in the development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning,' 'language proficiency and linguistic competence' of the student-teachers, and 'training in program evaluation.' The Levene homogeneity figure was higher for this dimension (p=0.915). Once again, no significant difference was found between the responses of the three groups (p=0.303), with mean scores 3.33, 3.40, and 3.23 for the sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively. Table 10 presents the results as regards the third dimension of the scale, i.e., strategies and skills.

Table 10
One way analysis of responses given to the items in the strategies and skills dimension

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	.322	.161	.989	.375
Within Groups	120	19.559	.163		
Total	122	19.881			

This third dimension includes such items as 'training in the development of reflective practice and self-evaluation,' 'training in ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language,' and 'training in developing relationships with educational institutions in appropriate countries.' The Levene homogeneity figure was found to be 0.472 for this dimension. As with the previous two dimensions, there was no significant difference between the responses of the three groups (p=0.375), with mean scores 3.32, 3.31, and 3.20 for the sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively. Table 11 indicates the results of the last dimension of the scale, i.e., values.

Table 11
One way analysis of responses given to the items in values dimension

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2	.043	.021	.097	.907
Within Groups	120	26.447	.220		
Total	122	26.490			

This last dimension includes items that relate with trainings in social and cultural values, diversity of languages and cultures, and the importance of teaching and learning about foreign languages and cultures. The Levene homogeneity figure was found to be the least in this dimension with 0.232. Yet, there was no significant difference between the responses of the three groups (p=0.907), with mean scores 3.32, 3.28, and 3.28 for the sophomores, juniors, and seniors, respectively. This shows that the three groups of students who participated in this study shared similar views regarding the language teacher education they should receive in their department. Hence, the EPLTE may be regarded as a helpful tool in evaluating language teacher education programs all around the world. Furthermore, the fact that the second-, third-, and fourth-year student-teachers arrived at a consensus regarding the basic competencies of a language teacher implies that they are well-aware of what they are expected to achieve and how they should perform when they become inservice teachers. With an understanding of the necessities of their future career, they can become more autonomous learners and thus improve themselves both professionally and personally before entering the actual teaching profession.

4.   Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The implications of the present study are threefold. First, the research findings could help examine what preservice language teachers perceive as effective in their ITE and in their preparation to teach English as a foreign language (EFL). The study could give people working in teacher-preparation programs substantial data to make adjustments, renovations, and reforms in areas that indicate the prospective EFL teachers' learning needs, particularly structure, knowledge and understanding, strategies and skills, and values. Foreign or second language teachers are expected to be masters of the target language with a considerable level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition to these skills, these teachers are supposed to create an environment for students to learn effectively, which means that they should be proficient enough to 'adapt teaching approaches to the educational context and individual needs of learners' and integrate 'information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom.' Second, the findings of the study could help the MoNE and policy makers to make informed decisions regarding EFL teacher development in line with global norms, most of which are exemplified in the EPTLE. These norms include the selection and sequencing of target-language features (or language components such as phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse) for language teaching and learning. Third, the present study could help educators become more cognizant of EFL teachers' perceptions of their own professional readiness, which, in turn, could help relevant institutions and organisations better understand EFL teaching and learning outcomes in primary and secondary schools in Turkey.

This study likewise attempted to examine the perceptions of the student-teachers of the ELT program of Inonu University through the use of the 40-item EPLTE. Within these items, those that cover practicing and teaching methods were rated as 'important' by more than 50% of the students. This is because methods, techniques, and evaluation are the most relevant issues associated with the teaching profession, and the participants also believed in the importance of 'Training in language teaching methodologies, and in state-of-the-art classroom techniques and activities'; 'Training in information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom,' and 'Training in the application of various assessment procedures and ways of recording learners' progress.' This corroborates the findings of Karatsiori's (2015) study, which emphasized the importance of school-based teaching-practice courses. Also, the finding that students give importance to item 6 of the EPLTE (i.e., 'participation in links with partners abroad, including visits, exchanges or ICT links') confirms those of Karatsiori's. To this end, these results suggest that a careful attention should be paid to 'practicing and links with partners' as key elements in developing an education programme for teaching foreign languages. In addition, development studies should be undertaken by a variety of stakeholders with expertise in their fields such as students, educators, policy makers, and the like.

On the other hand, among the 40 items in the scale, items 2, 8, 9, and 13 in the first dimension; items 29, 31, 33, and 34 in the third dimension; and item 38 in the last dimension were considered 'not important' or 'slightly important' by almost 20% or more of the participants in the present study. These results suggest that the participants either did not fully understand nor approve of what is meant by 'flexible or modular initial service and

in-service education' (item 2), 'observing and participating in teaching in more than one countries' (item 8), 'a European level evaluation framework for initial and in-service teacher education programs' (item 9), 'close links between trainees' (item 13), 'training in peer observation and peer review' (item 29), 'training in action research' (item 31), 'training in CLIL' (item 33), 'training in the use of ELP' (item 34), and 'training in teaching European citizenship' (item 38). If this is the case, then it is important to ensure that students understand what those features of programme mean before they become sophomores.

The findings above suggest that a further study is in place to determine the validity and reliability of EPLTE as a scale to measure the weak and strong aspects of English Language Teacher Education programs across the globe. This new study would also help researchers see whether the dimensions in the scale are justified and whether some items, if any, should be eliminated from the scale. Moreover, as in all other countries of the world, teachers in Turkey are expected to be main contributors to the economic, social, and scientific development of the nation. Thus, teacher-education programs are one of the relevant topics both for the MoNE and people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, one should consider all institutional documents, reports, tools, and frameworks; and any other kinds of quality standards should be examined with a critical point of view besides framework of references such as the EPLTE.

In conclusion, this paper is yet another study with focus on EPLTE's quality standards of a foreign language teacher education program. Although EPLTE is open to criticisms in various aspects, the findings of this study can help policy makers structure language teacher education programs. One, however, should not forget that language teacher education programs, despite their excellence, may not be able to equip teachers with all the competencies they need in their profession. Teachers are supposed to be primarily responsible for considering their own learning needs, for being versatile and knowledgeable, for responding to the new demands of the teaching-learning milieu, and for becoming resourceful to foster a culture of knowledge generation and sharing in schools (Karatsiori, 2015).

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Appendix A
European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE) questionnaire

EPLTE QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender: ☐Male ☐Female   Class: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for your cooperation with the researcher to complete its mission in the completion of this research; please be accurate in your responses in order to help the researcher to produce accurate results. Please be advised that the all data of this study are confidential, and will be only used in scientific research purposes.

Thank you, Researcher

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important
1. A curriculum that integrates academic study and the practical experience of teaching.				
2. The flexible and modular delivery of initial and in-service education.				
3. An explicit framework for teaching practice (stage/practicum).				
4. Working with a mentor and understanding the value of mentoring.				
5. Experience of an intercultural and multicultural environment.				
6. Participation in links with partners abroad, including visits, exchanges or ICT links.				
7. A period of work or study in a country or countries where the trainee's foreign language is spoken as native.				
8. The opportunity to observe or participate in teaching in more than one country.				
9. A European-level evaluation framework for initial and in-service teacher education programmes, enabling accreditation and mobility.				
10. Continuous improvement of teaching skills as part of in-service education.				
11. Ongoing education for teacher educators.				
12. Training for school-based mentors in how to mentor.				
13. Close links between trainees who are being educated to teach different languages.				
14. Training in language teaching methodologies, and in state-of-the-art classroom techniques and activities.				
15. Training in the development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning.				
16. Initial teacher education that includes a course in language proficiency and assesses trainees' linguistic competence.				
17. Training in information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom.				
18. Training in information and communication technology for personal planning, organisation and resource discovery.				
19. Training in the application of various assessment procedures and ways of recording learners' progress.				
20. Training in the critical evaluation of nationally or regionally adopted curricula in terms of aims, objectives and outcomes.				

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important
21. Training in the theory and practice of internal and external programme evaluation.				
22. Training in ways of adapting teaching approaches to the educational context and individual needs of learners.				
23. Training in the critical evaluation, development and practical application of teaching materials and resources.				
24. Training in methods of learning to learn.				
25. Training in the development of reflective practice and self-evaluation.				
26. Training in the development of independent language learning strategies.				
27. Training in ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language competence.				
28. Training in the practical application of curricula and syllabuses.				
29. Training in peer observation and peer review.				
30. Training in developing relationships with educational institutions in appropriate countries.				
31. Training in action research.				
32. Training in incorporating research into teaching.				
33. Training in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).				
34. Training in the use of the European Language Portfolio for self-evaluation.				
35. Training in social and cultural values.				
36. Training in the diversity of languages and cultures.				
37. Training in the importance of teaching and learning about foreign languages and cultures.				
38. Training in teaching European citizenship.				
39. Training in team-working, collaboration and networking, inside and outside the immediate school context.				
40. Training in the importance of life-long learning.				