



**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION  
PRACTICES IN TURKEY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The world is quickly turning into a global village due to the advancements that have been made in science and technology. It has therefore become necessary for various cultures to learn languages other than their native ones so that they can integrate with others across the globe. With English being spoken across many cultures around the world, the Turkish education system has given it a place of prominence in its national development. This paper analyzes the current English language teacher education practices in Turkey. The history of its development to the current state is initially discussed and then its efficacy concerning strengths and weaknesses are analyzed by providing some constructive recommendations.

**Key Words:** English language, teacher education, Turkish education system.

**Introduction**

Education plays a crucial role in the development of a country and teachers have a key role in shaping the future of the country. Education aims are both academic and social. Qualified teachers, equipped with the latest pedagogic techniques will encourage the economic development and future welfare of Turkey. By keeping pace with the challenges of globalisation in the competition centred world, and at the same time, preserving Turkish cultural assets, this teaching force must develop by espousing not only Turkish national culture with its values, but also include other cultures. This can be possible only through a well-qualified education progress. The various functions of education have increased by constant advancements in technology and science. In the pursuit of quality education, studies have been conducted to investigate the problems in different fields such as Maths, Sciences, Social Sciences, Art, and Language, and so on. In this paper, foreign language education, particularly English language education is taken into consideration.

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The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze English language teacher education practices in Turkish context. The paper includes some parts to present a meaningful order. It initially discusses the general overview of the education system in Turkey including the foreign language policy. Next, foreign language teachers' education in Turkey is presented, and then a critical analysis of the current practices in terms of strengths and weaknesses is analyzed. Finally, some reformist recommendations for the current situation will be offered to describe how foreign language teacher education would be if teachers were given opportunities.

### **Turkey's Educational System in General**

Turkey, a developing country of approximately seventy million people, acts as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Throughout its history, the country has experienced a variety of civilizations from the first arrival of Turks into Anatolia to the Declaration of the Republic. After the Declaration, Turkish leader Ataturk launched a series of reforms to modernize the country's educational standards. He believed education determined the future of a country and to that end; teachers played a critical role. During his leadership, many incentives were given to successful students, who were further educated in teacher training colleges. Teachers were held in high regard at that time; however, the teaching profession lost its charm and respect in society after Ataturk passed away. By the 1970s, teaching lost its professional status as successful scholars followed other educational pursuits. Although there have been changes in concepts regarding the teaching profession, education for teachers and employment policies have stayed relatively constant since 1950 (Karagozlu, 1991).

In evaluating the historical process of teacher education and teacher employment in Turkey, it is difficult to determine whether qualified teacher staffing needs have been planned and met (Ozoglu, 2010). Since the foundation of the first teacher training institution in 1848 (Darülmualimin-i Rüşdi), hundreds of teacher training and employment models have been implemented in Turkey. Although some of these models implemented successful methods to improve the quality of teachers, the majority have simply repeated the existing model in an effort to cope with the increasing teacher shortage. Such attempts to meet staff shortages have been under the influence of some outdated theories that are contradictory to the profession and its ideals (Akyuz, 2008). These models focused on providing teaching staff to meet the needs of the country rather than improving teacher quality until the years when universities were required to educate teachers. In a general sense, such hurried applications on teachers' education were done to save the day; however, they had negative impacts on the status of the teaching profession, a fact that gained increasing presence in the coming years.

Between the years of 1924 and 1938, twenty-one Village Institutes were opened in several regions of the country with the aim of training teachers for rural areas. The first Higher Village Institute was established in Hasanoglan, a three-year training program to educate headmasters and inspectors for primary schools. The first multi-party election process began in 1946; the government criticized the educational process in the village institutes, claiming these institutes destroyed Turkish traditions and customs, disregarding morality and nationalism (Ustuner, 2004).

Until 1953, two types of training policies existed for primary school teachers; after that year teacher education institutes merged the training policies. Two-year higher education institutes were opened to train primary school teachers as of 1974. The number of these institutions rose to 50 in 1976, but then 30 of them closed, they were transformed into the Institution of Higher Education and incorporated into universities. Between 1970 and 1980, these institutions drew heavy criticism for accepting students who could not pass the exam as well as the impact some political groups had on them. According to Kaya (1984), the corruption of student acceptance to these institutions increased public reaction to such an extent that that the President had to address the problem and the Minister of Education declared that the "Institute of Education Exam" was cancelled on November 10, 1976.

All teacher education institutes, teacher training colleges, and academies were affiliated with the Ministry of Education and universities because of the previously issued Higher Education Law 2547 in 1981. These institutions were gathered under the umbrella of the Higher Education Council (HEC) on July 20, 1982. At this point, the HEC changed the educational program for higher school teachers than primary school teacher teachers from four years to two years. Foreign Language Schools and Sports Academies were included in the structure of Education Faculties as separate departments (Higher Education Council, 2007a, as cited in Ozoglu, 2010).

During the period of transferring the authority and responsibility for teacher education to the Education Faculties from the 1980s until today, four major revisions have been developed. The first revision was accomplished between 1988 and 1989 in terms of the teacher training period up to four years according to the decision of HEC on May 23, 1989. This revision resynchronized primary school teacher education at the level of the Faculty of Education. Even though this revision made some improvements in primary school teacher education, some drawbacks appeared in the coming years because of some unplanned arrangements in the practice stage. As a result of this problem, these departments could not graduate teachers for several years, and this caused the emergence of a gap in teacher availability. In order to fill this gap, candidate teachers from different departments were assigned as primary school teachers after completing a training of just 26 weeks at the university in accordance with the demands of the Ministry of Education. However, it was observed that there was no standardized training conducted by the HEC, and teacher candidates were trained for less than 26 weeks in pedagogical courses in some universities (HEC, 2007a).

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The second revision was a restructuring of Education Faculties in 1997 with the help of loans given to Turkey by the World Bank through the educational project “Development of National Education” under the division of “Initial Teacher Training” to minimize the gap in teacher employment in the country. Some distinctive regulations in this period are as follows:

1. A series of materials and books were designed to address the need for branch education and sent to Education Faculties.
2. A protocol was signed between the Faculty of Education and practice schools to increase cooperation and continuum.
3. Technological equipment and tools were provided for the faculties to enhance the quality of education considering the developments in the world.
4. The Turkish National Teacher Training Committee was founded to sustain the continuity and updating of information between the faculties.
5. Pedagogical courses were modified to increase the credit for the courses and offer more practice.
6. A non-thesis Master’s Degree was included in secondary teacher education programs. Thus, prospective teachers in these programs in the education faculties received a five-year education. (HEC, 2007a, as cited in Ozoglu, 2010, p. 8)

Even though these regulations had some positive effects on the reconstruction of teacher education programs in Education Faculties as a necessity to keep up with the times, the application stage fell behind the expectations because of the limited infrastructure available at that time. For instance, the teacher education model with non-thesis Master of Arts program made the relationship between the Faculty of Sciences – Arts and Faculty of Education much more complicated. In this model, field courses were given in the Sciences and Arts Faculty, which increased the workload of teachers in these faculties and affected the quality of education in a negative way.

The third revision was done between the years of 2006 and 2007 to reconsider the failures encountered in 1997. HEC aimed to restructure teacher education programs in line with the current conditions by taking the principle of applicability into account. The fourth revision, which was conducted in 2009 and 2010 by the HEC, was not directly related to Education Faculties, but implicitly affected the whole system. In 2009, it was decided that pedagogical courses in the non-thesis Master of Arts program would be available during the four-year study period only at Ataturk, Uludag, Istanbul, and Marmara Universities at Sciences and Arts Faculties. Some universities argued that it was not fair to give this right to certain universities; therefore, some criteria were defined by the HEC as requirements of offering this program at the university such as having a sufficient number of qualified permanent teaching staff (HEC, 2007a).

The education system today is under the control and supervision of the government through the Ministry of National Education. The Turkish constitution grants each citizen the right to education. Therefore, education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 14 years, where the government provides it for free through state schools.

### **Foreign Language Policy in Turkey**

Second and foreign language teaching has been influenced by exterior impetuses such as globalization and the current position of English as an international language for business and communication. Thus, policy makers have reformed their second/foreign language policies in terms of the “standards” and “accountability” for teacher education (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 1). The Common European Framework endeavors to establish criteria and standards for language learning and teaching. It displays the accomplishment of learners based on their proficiency and development in the language through this framework.

Hawkins and Norton (2009) discuss the critical language teacher education from micro to macro paradigms with a critical approach to the second language teacher education (SLTE). Hawkins and Norton (2009) believed that in the globalized world, education itself requires changes and reforms with the changing demands of society. Methods put forth by educators and philosophers attempted to seek better approaches that led to changes in education that included an understanding of the world which is constructed by contextual factors. These factors also shape society, and foreign language teachers are playing key roles in addressing societal issues of values, beliefs, and cultural practices. Thus, it is critical to educate teachers appropriately so they may better educate children of the future. In this sense, these methods should be considered in the design of teacher training programs to keep them the most recently developed ones. Teacher cognition along with self- and professional identity is also important in the design of appropriate teacher training programs. Borg (1999) stresses the positive connection between teacher cognition, which he describes as "the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes about all aspects of their work which teachers have," and grammar teaching (p. 22). As human beings with psychological and cognitive neuroscience elements, teachers may be affected by their prior experiences as learners within contextual conditions. Thanks to these developments in SLTE, pre-service or in-service teacher training can be reconsidered and reconceptualised to seek the optimum way to promote language learning and teaching in a changing world by being an integral part of the local and international community. Self-reflection is also useful for teachers in order to build a relationship between the individual and the social world. For instance, zone of proximal development or ZPD may provide teachers, especially new teachers, with support and guidance from teacher educators or education experts to assist in their professional development.

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In Turkey, as an Expanding Circle country (Kachru, 1992), English is the most commonly spoken foreign language even if it is not an official language. The importance of learning English is increasing day by day; however, it also raises some conflicts in methodology to teach the language. The demand for native-speaker teachers has become popular as Maum (2002, as cited in Miller, 2009, p. 177) states in the TESOL workplace; however, the result has been a measure of incompetence concerning accent and fluency.

Therefore, the need for pre-service and in-service training programs has gained importance to help English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers be ready for recruitment challenges in the global arena when they earn their TESOL/ELT/Applied Linguistics Diploma. Thanks to globalization, EFL teachers can now study in CELTA/DELTA programs via distance learning with the cooperation of the British Council.

Kirkgoz (2007) states that Turkey has made some attempts to gain full membership in the European Union (EU), so many reforms have been made to adapt the country to “EU standards” and meet requirements for being an EU country (p. 217). To improve foreign language instruction, one of these requirements is to promote interaction between global education. In another study, Kirkgoz (2009) believes that examining the “macro-level” language policy for teaching English aids in discovering to what extent this policy works in practice at the “micro-level” of teaching (p. 665). She also explains that due to the increasing popularity of and demand for learning English, many Turkish universities, such as Middle East Technical University (METU) and Bosphorus University, became English-medium universities and began to work collaboratively with American universities. However, HEC has requested the English-medium universities to fulfil three major requirements: having sufficient teachers who can teach in English, establishing a foreign language centre to offer English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for each department, and enough course materials and other resources for the courses.

Kirkgoz (2009) states that a gap was identified in the ideal language policy offered by the Ministry of Education and the process of real classroom practice. Some potential reasons for the emergence of this gap include difficulty of the context to implement a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, not having updated textbooks, over-sized classrooms, and insufficient allocated time for effective teaching.

In Turkey, English was taught as a compulsory course from Grade 4 (age 10) until the end of high school (age 18). As part of the new reform in education, the 4+4+4 model was accepted in 2012. In this model English language learning began at age 7, Grade 2 as of the 2013–2014 Academic Year and children are taught in English for 2 hours per week since Grade 2, increased to 4 hours each week in their last four years of school.

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### Foreign Language Teachers' Education in Turkey

There have been a number of models of teacher education in the Republic of Turkey since its establishment back in 1923. However, it was not until the middle of the previous century that two major changes in teaching education policies were put into effect. This included the Basic Law of National Education Policy in 1973 that laid down the general framework of the national education system of Turkey, as well as the re-organization of teaching education that the HEC implemented in 1981 that until then had been under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education (Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013).

Another decade passed before rapid changes in teacher education were incorporated in the 1990s. These changes were directly related to issues surrounding the effectiveness of teacher education. For example, during this time the duration for primary teacher education was increased from two years to four years; thereby leading to direct qualification of the program into a graduate status in 1991. This was followed by new national policies that extended the period of compulsory education from five years to eight years in 1997. This profoundly impacted education facilities throughout the Republic of Turkey (Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013; Yigit, 2012).

In turn, these initial reform movements warranted changes in all aspects of teacher education that would basically cover three pertinent areas. This included the unification of the teacher education program at the pre-service level; the creation of a structured partnership between faculties and schools that emphasize the importance of practicum ahead of graduation; and the inclusion of novel courses and perspectives related to content knowledge, pedagogical and teaching skills that are more related to classroom realities (Under, 2008; Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013).

The new program also focused on the teaching practicum through the introduction of three courses: School Experience I, School Experience II, and the Teaching Practice, which required learners to participate in primary and secondary schools so they can observe and acquire a genuine teaching experience (Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013).

Later in 2006, the HEC further restructured the Initial Teacher Training (ITE). This restructuring refined the teacher education program with respect to previously conducted scientific studies; it also explicitly defined undergraduate learning outcomes following criteria created by the European Higher Education Area. More importantly, the restructuring entailed tenets of the constructivist approach whose introduction came during the second program changes in Basic Education in 2003 (Under, 2008; Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013).

Consequently, some other new courses like Listening and Phonetics, Effective Communication, Turkish Educational History, Teaching Language Skills, Drama, Community Service, Special Needs Education, and Comparative Education were added, whereas some courses were altered, such as School Experience I, Reading Skills I and II, and Writing Skills I

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and II. There were also other courses coded such as “General Culture (GC),” “Field Knowledge (FK),” and “Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)” (Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013, p. 66).

Currently, English language teachers acquire their education from universities around the country that have incorporated education faculties. The education of these teacher students takes four years; the program can be extended for another year if the program encompasses additional intensive English preparation. Apart from education faculties, other students from faculties such as science and the arts who also study English and literature are also considered English teachers as long as they hold a pedagogic formation certificate, given that their primary courses are not centred on teacher training courses (Karakas, 2012; Sanli, 2009; Under, 2008).

It is important to note that all education faculties uphold a compulsory standardized curriculum as demanded by the HEC for training students to become English teachers. However, universities are given the independence to determine the manner in which they will carry out their student teaching program. This implies that each university determines the kind of course books to be used, the selection of courses, and the manner in which they will administer their examinations to English student teachers (Yigit, 2012).

In essence, the program consists of a number of obligatory courses with a few selective ones. The program’s components include general knowledge, linguistic competence, teacher education or pedagogical competence in other terms, and teaching practice. The program essentially puts emphasis on teaching methodology and the teaching practice component when compared to the preceding program in effect from 1998 to 2006. In this new program, the total number of hours the student teacher spends in the classroom is 175, out of which 143 hours are apportioned to theory-based deduction, while the remaining 32 hours are scheduled for teaching practice, special teaching methods, and computer skills (Karakas, 2012; Yigit, 2012).

The first year of the program is based on the quest to improve specific language competencies of the student teacher by providing them with courses premised on four key language skills (e.g., Contextual Grammar, Advanced Reading and Writing, Oral Expression, Listening and Pronunciation, and Vocabulary Study). The first year is the period during which student teachers are expected to adjust themselves to the language challenges ahead and help them be more competent in the target language.

In the second year, the courses offered to the student teachers are varied. The courses are also professionally oriented in order to equip them with pedagogical and general knowledge in addition to their linguistic competence.

In the third-year students invariably graduate to the senior level of the training program where they are charged with the responsibility of observing classes in primary or secondary school. At this level, they also experience actual teaching practice whereby they plan and teach lessons each week under the supervision of a mentor or a teacher trainer, as required by the program (Karakas, 2012). The last year of the program is focused on more pedagogical knowledge courses such as Material Development in Language Teaching or Testing and Evaluation in Language Teaching, as well as pedagogical content knowledge courses such as Practice Teaching. However, many teacher educators think one semester of practicum is not adequate to help teacher candidates be ready for full classroom teaching (Yavuz & Topkaya, 2013).

### **Foreign Language Teacher Education Practices in Turkey**

Although teacher training programs have existed for a long time, Foreign Language teacher training is a fairly new development. Under (2008) suggests we can best identify practice and teaching philosophies if we look at the content of teacher education courses and teaching certificate programs in technological innovation. In order to keep up with innovations brought about by globalization, foreign language teacher education focused on English Language Teacher Education (ELTE). Other foreign languages such as German, French, and Spanish are taken as electives by Turkish learners, as they believe learning English is essential to being prepared for opportunities in the future.

English language teachers need to complete a four-year undergraduate program. However, between 1997 and 1998 the Ministry of Education declared that students who were studying ELTE could be assigned as teachers in public schools. The resultant certificate program consisted of a thirty-one hour of study per week (Nergis, 2011).

HEC reformed the ELTE program since its 2006 changes to keep pace with social, economic, political, and technologic advancements in the world. The new ELTE program is mainly focused on general knowledge, discipline knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, and practicum. Seferoglu (2006) reports that this new program includes much more practice opportunities so teacher-students can become familiar with actual teaching. According to Huberman (1989), the first years of teaching are the most difficult and stressful; the reality shock may last between 1 and three years, depending on the pre-service training the teacher received. In this stage, the new teacher's professional identity is reconstructed based on social interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators, each in their contexts.

From 1998 to 2005, the Ministry of Education regulated In-Service Training (INSET) for ELT teachers to assist in their professional development. Kucuksuleymanoglu (2006) conducted a study to investigate these programs based on teachers' and educators' perceptions. She found that teachers believed the number and content of these programs were not satisfactory. Participants of the study also suggested that all ELT teachers should undergo training

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programs on a regular basis, and an analysis should be carried out by organizing these programs. In addition, assessment and evaluation processes of these programs should be reformed. An alternative to INSET programs conducted by the Turkish government since 1857 is sending teachers abroad for study who pass the exam held by the Ministry of Education.

### **Critical Analysis of the Current Foreign Language Teacher Education in Turkey**

In this section, some strengths and weaknesses of the current foreign language teacher education will be discussed. One of the strengths of the current teacher training programs is its inclusion of compulsory courses that were not available in the preceding program. These compulsory courses include Community Service, Listening and Pronunciation, and Second

Foreign Language. The new program also changed the names and content of some courses. For instance, once referred to as an English Grammar course is currently the Contextual Grammar. The new program also split apart some integrated courses from the previous system and added them as distinct courses: Examples of this include Oral Communication Skills, and Listening and Pronunciation. More importantly, the pedagogical dimension was added to the literature course, thereby changing its name into Literature and Language Teaching. These amendments all point to the emphasis put on linguistic and pedagogical elements and make the new program much more robust than the preceding one (Grossman et al., 2008; Peacock, 2009).

Another improvement in the new program is increased student teacher and trainer cooperation within institutions. Notably, this element was absent in the preceding program. This could be the apt explanation for findings reporting the program as being responsive to the expectations of teacher students in terms of the teaching profession, social goals, and general gains. The courses in this program provide opportunities for the student teachers to apply theoretical aspects of the curriculum. These benefits were conspicuously absent in the preceding curriculum (Aksit, 2007; Karakas, 2012; Yigit, 2012).

The new program is also cognizant of the fact that the world is quickly gravitating towards technology in almost all aspects of life. In the previous program, computing coursework was not mandatory, and some university faculties offered them as elective courses. The new program has made Computing course and this is a bid to enable the teacher students to be tech-savvy so they can use information tools and technology to advance not only their pedagogical goals but also their professional and individual goals. This inclusion of an information and technology component in the new curriculum is in recognition of skills identified in the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (Sanli, 2009; Yigit, 2012).

The new curriculum also provides a mandatory course called Secondary Foreign Language to the teacher students. This offers another educational milestone to teacher students in that they become trained in diverse languages and cultures. This goes a long way to consolidating their value systems as candidate teachers while also inculcating the significance of teaching and learning cultures and languages that are foreign to theirs (Karakas, 2012; Peacock, 2009). The new program has also increased in value by joining the league of curriculum in European countries.

This is evident from the reorientation of the curriculum, which is based on the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages, the Common European Framework of References for Languages, and the ELTE program, all of which are aimed at augmenting the development of prospective teachers both as professionals and individuals and also fostering their vocational growth through self-reflection (Aksit, 2007; Yigit, 2012).

One of the glaring weaknesses of the current foreign language teacher education program in Turkey is how long it lasted in its previous incarnation. During those years, there have been many changes in terms of the direct relevance of teaching English as well as with technological challenges that have come into play. Such programs are supposed to be frequently updated so that students' learning needs keep changing generation after generation (Grossman et al., 2008; Karakas, 2012).

There is a lack of balance between pedagogical competence and linguistics in that the pedagogic facet of the program is rather effete, as it does not offer adequate opportunities for teaching practices. The importance of teaching practice can hardly be overemphasized: for instance, it lends realism to the whole course as it gives prospective teachers the opportunity to experience the efficacy of what they have imbibed in class (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005). In essence, the current system is primarily based on theory as opposed to a being a practice-based one in which student teachers put theoretical aspects and elements of their course into use in the classroom (Karakas, 2012).

Another weakness of the program is that it primarily focuses on pedagogic competence of student teachers without giving enough consideration to linguistic competence. This is critical given that the level of proficiency of non-native student teachers who speak English is a crucial aspect of their education as prospective teachers of English. Language proficiency in the programs of teachers' education should be given utmost attention. The lack of linguistic competence makes student teachers ill-prepared to proceed with their courses in the second year of study. This is verified by the numbers of linguistic competence lessons that must be mastered; thus, the first year does not provide sufficient information to equip potential English teachers with linguistic competence (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; Karakas, 2012).

Altan (1998) describes an overview of significant changes that were made within the Turkish education system in the 1980's and beyond but, this 'unification' effort led to shortages of equipment and faculty; this being partially resolved by the transference of members from

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university science departments to colleges of education to increase available teacher training. However, this change has not necessarily meant an improvement in the quality of teaching, and this is an area that needs to be studied.

Despite efforts made to change and improve it, there are weaknesses in three areas within the Turkish education system. Colleges of education still do not attract the most talented students in Turkey, although these colleges have been graduating teachers who are good at their subjects theoretically but lack practical skills. There has also been an over-production of teachers in some areas of study; similarly, many unemployed graduates apply for secondary school teaching jobs because they cannot find work in their preferred fields. At one point in 1995, the Ministry of Education placed 12,000 graduates, regardless of their subjects, as elementary teachers to fill an identified shortage.

In sum, there is no balance between the importance attached to pedagogical competence and linguistic competence. For example, the number of courses that address pedagogical competence is increasing in comparison to courses related to linguistic competence (Karakas, 2012).

### **Recommendations to Improve Current Foreign Language Teacher Education Practices in Turkey**

A far greater emphasis should be placed on teaching students how to teach, and more attention should be paid to such methodologies. Openness and the practical application of skills should be given higher priority within an inclusive approach that also embraces constructive learning and focuses on how learning is cognitively achieved. It may be more efficient to merge departments that integrate theory and practice, new programs should be developed, and there should be more oversight of the practical teaching elements of training courses. More modern and interactive technology should be introduced, and an accompanying assessment created. The equivalence granted of Master and Ph.D. degrees obtained from overseas should be verified, and a Teacher's Academy founded; research should be rewarded, and the on-going development of teachers encouraged.

According to Isik (2008), in Turkey there is a need for an academic board to conduct effective foreign language teaching and learning and to solve problems through coordination in the field. This board should primarily determine the mission and the foreign language policy for the country. This board can also serve as an advisory committee to assist teachers in teaching methods, course materials, assessment, and evaluation. In this way, a foreign language teacher education model can occur that overlaps with the realities of our country (Isik, 2008, p. 22).

To address the weaknesses in the present foreign language teacher education program, the programs should be crafted to encompass more classroom experience by offering opportunities to practice earlier in the program, thereby considerably increasing the number of hours in the field for prospective teachers. This could come in earlier in the curricula to help ensure the program is balanced between practical and theoretical components that are complementary to each another. This could be achievable by structuring the course in such a manner that the time for theoretical study is balanced with that of the practical teaching practice.

The content of the program should be updated to inculcate the ever-changing face of English as a global world language. This will also make Turkish teachers' career paths and professional development relevant beyond the borders of the Turkish education system. Each classroom and coursework environment is unique, so media-specific foreign language program development is required. The success of a foreign language program is dependent upon the society's willingness to remain up-to-date. Therefore, the success of foreign language education is closely related to considering that society's capacity to advance on a global plane through better education.

As an integral component of the updated curricula, a framework should be devised through which prospective teachers can make a direct contribution to the program's evaluation process. This has never been done before, and it is arguably one of the factors that cause dissatisfaction amongst student teachers about the prevailing program.

Aydogan and Cilsal (2007) propose that foreign language teachers should be educated according to the level (primary or secondary school) at which they are going to teach. However, both primary and secondary school teachers of foreign languages in our country are educated in the same way.

Karakas (2012) puts forward some suggestions to be considered to improve ELT Programs in Turkey as follows:

- The program should continually be updated regarding the demands of the society and clearly define the educational philosophy
- Some cultural courses should be introduced to help teacher candidates obtaining knowledge about the culture of the target language
- More practicum opportunities should be offered to student-teachers, for example, micro-teaching, classroom observations, and putting theoretical knowledge into practice
- Reflective teaching model should be taken into consideration for teacher education
- Teacher trainees and teacher educators should be integrated into the evaluation system of the program and the revision of the ELTE program and curriculum. (pp. 9-10).
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To improve the ELTE curriculum, Demirel (1995) suggests a pragmatic model for its development which includes some crucial steps: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The preparation stage consists of three major factors: “cognitive entry behaviors,” “affective characteristics,” and “psychomotor skills” of input based on the detection (p. 91). The second item is the application of subject matter of the profession and general culture-related courses. The implementation process should be developed by years of the teaching experience. Ultimately, the final element of the model is the evaluation which aims to measure the efficacy of training programs.

In summary, it has been agreed that ELTE programs are insufficient in language instruction based on studies previously mentioned in this paper. English teachers should be aware of recent teaching methods in the field and know how to integrate them into their classrooms. In this respect, teacher training courses help teachers gain knowledge. The Ministry of Education should organize regular in-service courses according to the needs of teachers. The regulation of these courses should be with the cooperation of universities and teacher educators. Teacher autonomy and teacher identity should also be included in the programs. Most importantly, the notion of “becomes a teacher if you do not have any skills” should disappear from our culture. To do this, not everyone should be allowed to become a teacher. Those who love the profession, who have subject matter and pedagogic competence, need to be teachers. Finally, the teachers should be subject to performance testing in their field at regular intervals.

## Conclusion

There is a lack of attention to the training of teachers, including foreign language teachers, and this lack is a common problem across the country. Proper teacher training is vital for Turkey’s future prosperity and economic growth. These issues, while complex, can be resolved. No country has yet given the political commitment or the funds necessary to raise the status of teachers to that of comparable professions. This paper has critically discussed the current English teacher training program in Turkey. It has established that the current curriculum is a major improvement when compared to the preceding programs in a number of significant ways. However, although the current system is rated better than the preceding ones, it is not sufficient to address on-going challenges in the English teacher training program and, therefore, calls for an urgent revision. In revising the current curriculum, it will be important to pay heed to the views of teacher students and existing teachers and act upon them accordingly. It will also be important to look back at the preceding curricula for elements that could be borrowed, such as the emphasis on teaching practice in the 1998–2006 curricula. As the world rapidly changes, so does the program require updating.

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