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WHAT WE LACK? REFLECTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS

HANGİ YÖNLERİMİZ EKSİK? HİZMET ÖNCESİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN GÖRÜŞLERİ

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Abstract

Teachers are expected to possess a variety of skills, knowledge and strategies to meet student needs and cope with uncertainties or problems occurring in educational contexts. New teachers arrive at their real classes with different levels of competencies in different domains regarding their department, which carries the risk to be overwhelmed by the expectations of the related stakeholders. Therefore, this study aims to find out the competency levels of pre-service English teachers at a state university in line with the generic and English teacher competencies set by Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE). This study is based on mixed-method research for complementary purposes of quantitative and qualitative research procedures in that self-assessment forms and Written Interview Protocol (WIP) with 5 questions were used as data collection tools. SPSS 16 and content analysis were employed for the analysis of the gathered data. It was found that high majority of the participant student teachers (N: 114, 93.4%) were uninformed about these competencies. Moreover, mean scores of the participant student teachers were found to be highly competent in respecting student values while they were a little competent in knowing the related regulations about extra-curricular activities compared to all the competencies. In light of the results, it can be said that if student teachers are equipped with these competencies before they graduate and experience the required competencies during their pre-service education, they could serve student needs and cope with educational problems more efficiently.

Keywords:Pre-service teacher education, generic teacher competencies, English teacher competencies.

Öz

Öğrenci ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak ve eğitim kurumlarında oluşan sorunlarla başa çıkması için öğretmenlerin çeşitli bilgi, beceri ve yöntemlere sahip olması beklenir. Yeni öğretmenler gerçek sınıflarına çeşitli yeterlilik seviyesiyle giderler ki bu yeterlilikler kendi bölümlerine özgüdür ve çeşitli alanlarda bulunur ki bu da paydaşların oluşturduğu beklentilerin altında kalma riskini taşır. Bu sebeple bu çalışma bir devlet üniversitesindeki son sınıf İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının Türk Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından oluşturulan genel öğretmen yeterlikleri ve İngilizce öğretmeni yeterlilikleri kapsamındaki yeterlilik düzeylerini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin işe koşulduğu karma yöntem üzerine kurulmuştur. Öyle ki veri toplama araçları olarak öz değerlendirme formları ve 5 sorudan oluşan yazılı mülakat protokolü kullanılmıştır. Toplanan verinin analizi için SPSS 16 ve içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının büyük çoğunluğunun (N: 114, 93.4%) bu yeterlikler hakkındaki bilgi sahibi olmadığı

bulunmuştur. Ayrıca katılımcı öğretmen adaylarının kendilerini en çok öğrencilerin değerlerine saygı gösterme maddesinde yeterli gördüğü fakat müfredat dışı etkinlikler hakkındaki ilgili mevzuatı bilme maddesinde kendilerini en az yeterli gördüğü tespit edilmiştir. Bulgular ışığında denilebilir ki öğretmen adayları mezun olmadan önce bu yeterliklerle donatılırsa ve hizmet öncesi eğitimleri boyunca gerekli yeterlikleri deneyim ederlerse daha etkili bir şekilde öğrenci ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilirler ve eğitimsel sorunlarla başa çıkabilirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitimi, genel öğretmen yeterlikleri, İngilizce öğretmeni yeterlikleri.

Introduction

The importance of teaching profession could be emphasized by comparing it to other jobs in that just as a tailor gives shapes a piece of fabric with his/her magic hands, teachers change his/her students' attitudes, skills and knowledge with his/her instructional strategies as well as professional and pedagogical knowledge (Harding & Parsons, 2011). Therefore, we need to consider teacher competencies, and problems encountered in teacher training in order to improve teacher quality.

Being one of the links of the educational chain, student teachers should be given importance as much as in-service teachers in teacher training studies conducted (Aitken & Harford, 2011) since their reflections, problems or incompetence could reveal important insights into what to focus on more, what to ignore and how to better pre-service teacher programmes. All pre-service teachers may receive the same or similar education in the same institution but it is likely that they will be appointed to different types of schools in different parts of Turkey, which may cause them to have difficulty in dealing with individual student differences studies (Veenman, 1984 cited in Aitken & Harford, 2011).

To serve student needs and actualize educational aims, Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has defined the general and field-specific teacher competencies which cover teaching related knowledge, skills and strategies but do we equip student teachers with these competencies to ensure a good start of their teaching career? Therefore, this study aims to find out the competency levels of pre-service English teachers and their reflections upon their pre-service education in line with the competencies set by MoNE.

Review of Literature

Review of literature is needed to understand the importance of the focus of the study. Therefore, studies conducted on teacher training will be given briefly and then generic and.

field-specific teacher competencies of Turkish MoNE will be explained since they form the essence of the study.

Studies on Teacher Education

As Robert A. Heinlein states "when one teaches, two learn" and teaching involves the participation of more than one party. As to student teachers who are in-between being a student and a teacher candidate, they need guidance and scaffolding in their education for professional development. Thus a multifaceted approach could help us to direct the route of teacher development and to see how the interaction of a number of factors including stakeholders influence the behavioural choices of a teacher as is stressed in the theory of planned behaviour suggested by Ajzen (1991).

The importance of teacher education programmes are stressed for their facilitative role in terms of preparing teacher candidates for the complex realities of their future classroom. Since each person is unique, the change they undergo will also differ from each other based on their experience and worldview. The cumulative aspect of teacher belief changes is also stressed by Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) in that student teachers are said to arrive at a conclusion and synthesis not only with their individual meaning-making but also the learning environment embedded in their teaching circumstances. In a similar vein, when they become new teachers, they form certain expectations from the school to contribute to their professional development, which could be possible with a multifaceted approach with ample sources coming from different people and mechanisms (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Alternatively, new teachers can also involve in dialogic collaboration with more experienced colleagues during their conversations or in communities of practice, which can eradicate their feelings of doubts, hopelessness and failure (Harding & Parsons, 2011). Otherwise, teachers may feel themselves as a member of the school community; have difficulties in getting or adapting to the vision of the school (Aitken & Harford, 2011).

To respond to the changing needs of society and technology, schools and universities have the responsibility to provide opportunities for novice teachers for creating a better learning atmosphere with appropriate methodology, instruction, classroom management and assessment to improve them and adapt to the school environment more easily (Choy, Wong, Lim & Chong, 2013). To attract the attention to what combination of elements could form a better teacher education Simon (2013) takes the different combinations and of elements in teacher training programs as tapestry weaving covering transformative and informed practice,

social justice and inclusion, a future orientation and community capacity building in order to show how the relationship between these different factors play a crucial role in teacher training.

To prevent failure in advance, student teachers should have the necessary professional skills and knowledge and be well-equipped before graduation. Student teachers get the opportunity to practice their theoretical knowledge in their teaching practicum courses where they pay visits to various state schools and deliver courses before they graduate. This practicum could also make a difference in their competencies in different ways like confirmation, realization, disagreement, elaboration, integration, and modification as suggested by Yuan & Lee (2014). However, if there is inadequacy of teaching practice and school experience student teachers may not prepare well for their future classes (Kildan et al., 2013).

Pre-service or in-service teachers may prefer to reflect on their practices in the course of action or after the completion of the related application in order to see the effectiveness of their practices, which is called as reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987). However, the two types of reflection were criticized as not considering contextual differences and not being clear to be differentiated from each other (Eraut, 2004). In addition, Ghaye (2010) further elaborated on these reflection types by adding reflection-for-action and reflection-with-action in that while the former makes planning possible for future actions, the latter stresses working with a team. So what is needed for bettering professional improvement is an open and supportive environment as well as sociocultural factors within school contexts (Yuan & Lee, 2014) because the different nature of schools in rural, suburban and urban schools deeply affects self-efficacy beliefs of the teacher (Knoblauch & Chase, 2015).

When it comes to English teacher candidates in Turkey which is an EFL country, a number factors come into play in pre-service teacher education. Kani (2011) found that student teachers coming from Anatolian Teacher Training high schools were more competent than those from Anatolian high schools according to CEF and ELP competencies because student background could also impact their current and desired teaching competencies. These competencies remind us the issue of teacher qualifications because the qualities of teachers should be considered as much as their quantity (Akyüz, 2003, as cited in Kani, 2011). Moreover, the participant pre-service teachers were found to see themselves more knowledgeable in teaching English rather than using it and in general they agreed on the effectiveness of the training programme (Kanat, 2014). But is it always possible to teach a subject matter without a high level knowledge of it or without mastery? Some teachers may

have difficulty while teaching the points they themselves lack and in turn their students have the possibility to develop lacking skills in those areas due to the fact that teachers differ in their weak points such as improvisational skills, classroom management, assessment, teaching approach or practical ideas (O'Dwyer & Atlı, 2014) so teachers may need different type and amount of feedback in their training.

The Generic and Field-Specific Teacher Competencies Set By MoNE

Because each country sets specific objectives for teacher training, countries differ in the way they educate future teachers. When it comes to teaching foreign languages, contextual differences exist between ESL and EFL countries. As an EFL country, Turkey also faces certain difficulties in reaching high-standard of success in foreign language education due to a number of factors. In EFL context where students have limited interaction and practice opportunities in English, English teachers are charged with more responsibilities to keep their students motivated and participate in class discussions and activities, which requires effective teaching strategies and desire to teach on the part of the teacher (Kanat, 2014).

Considering the unique context of Turkish EFL, we need to question how teacher candidates in Turkey are well-equipped and how competent they find themselves in line with the teaching competencies set by Ministry of National Education in Turkey. In this way we can get a clear idea about what is expected at the level of national standards, what is happening in teacher education programmes in Turkey and what needs to be done to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education programmes. What kind of discrepancies exist between the expectations of MoNE and teacher education programmes in Turkey should be investigated deeply in order to better prepare pre-service teachers for the complexities of differing teaching contexts, to keep up with the national expectancies and bring about long-lasting solutions of foreign language education in Turkey. Detecting their current status, student teachers will be aware of their competences, what they lack, and what they need so that they can overcome these difficulties and set more realistic goals.

There are teacher competencies found by different researchers. The teacher qualifications suggested by Karacaoğlu (2008) display differences with the inclusion of such items as having a smiling face, being honest, being analytical, having nice handwriting, being energetic and enthusiastic, and not possessing complex, to name a few. What's more, the items of teacher qualifications seem to be shorter than the items of the generic teacher

competencies. The similarities and differences will not be handled in detail since it does not form the focus of this study but inspire some researchers to conduct a new study in the future.

When we look at the teacher competencies set by Turkish MoNE, it is seen that there are different categories of teacher competencies in that there are both generic teacher competencies which are considered to be possessed by all teachers regardless of their department and field-specific teacher competencies which were formed on the basis of generic teacher competencies but revised according the features of each department. For example there exist teacher competencies for English teachers, maths teachers, Turkish teachers and some other departments of teaching. There was a piloting study about these competencies in 2005 and a national report was published about the content of these competencies as well as their validity and reliability. Document analyses of five countries namely England, USA, Seychelles, Australia and Ireland were employed. There was a workshop in Ankara between 26th April and 7th May in 2004 and the participants were 120 teachers, 25 faculty members, 18 inspectors at primary school, 6 assessment experts and representatives of various ministries. 6 main competencies emerged at the end of these studies as in the following: Personal and Professional Values-Professional Development, Knowing the Student, Learning and Teaching Process, Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning and Development, School-Family and Society Relationships and Knowledge of Curriculum and Content. Besides, there were 31 sub-competencies and 221 performance indicators of these competencies (please visit http://otmg.meb.gov.tr/YetGenel.html).

There has been no study examining the MoNE teacher competencies in Turkey and this study provides original findings which shed light on an overlooked area about how competent pre-service English teachers find themselves in line with the field-specific and generic teacher competences set by MoNE and their reflections upon their training. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1- Are pre-service English teachers informed about the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

2- How competent do pre-service English teachers find themselves according to generic teacher competencies set by MoNE?

3- How competent do pre-service English teachers find themselves according to field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

4- What are pre-service English teachers' opinions regarding the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

Research Methodology

This study aims to find out the competency levels of pre-service teacher at ELT Department at Gazi University with regard to the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by Turkish MoNE as well as their reflection into these competencies in order to provide practical implications to improve the quality of teacher education programmes in Turkey. Thus, this study employs an explanatory research design.

The universe of the study includes pre-service English teachers (seniors) in Turkey and Gazi University was chosen as the sample of the study since it has got the largest number of ELT students in Turkey and has an old and initiative history of faculty of education throughout the country. It is also one of the most populous and prestigious ELT programs in Turkey (OSYM, 2011). Thus, it is considered to represent the universe and provide generalizable results. Gazi University was chosen also due to convenience sampling since it was practical for the researcher to reach the participants and conduct the study.

Since reflection on an issue requires deeper understanding of choices, number may become insufficient to generalize the results. Words, on the other hand, may seem too subjective. In order to combine the strengths of both numbers and words for complementary purposes and present more objective results, this study employed mixed-method research in that both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis tools were utilized. The numeric data came from the self-assessment forms of generic teacher competencies and English teacher competencies determined by MoNE while the non-numeric data came from the written interview protocol (WIP) applied to the participants so that they reflect on these competencies in a more detailed way with the help of their definitions and opinions. The questions in WIP were formed and revised with the help of three field experts who had Ph.D. degree in ELT and were faculty members at different universities in Turkey. There were 5 questions in the WIP.

Validity and reliability of the competencies in question were ensured with the participation of various shareholders via workshops, meetings and piloting. Since the validity and reliability studies of the competencies were conducted upon a long period of time and officially reported by Turkish MoNE, only general information is given below to avoid plagiarism but you can visit http://otmg.meb.gov.tr/belgeler/otmg/Yeterlikler.pdf to get detailed information about

the validity and reliability of each competency item. The related competencies were piloted in 6 different cities namely in Ankara, Hatay, İzmir, Bolu, Van and Kocaeli between 29.11.2014 – 24.12.2014 with the participation of teachers and directors in 72 different schools. There were 3108 participants in total and 110 of them were English teachers, forming nearly 3.5% of the total participants. Agreement levels of the participants were gathered about the main and sub-competencies. There were also two scales, importance levels and achievability, for the performance indicators. Statistical procedures were employed to analyse and interpret the data. In sum, it was found that, in all cities, more than 85% of the participants completely agreed about the competencies in all main competencies. When we look at sub-competencies, 83% of the participants completely agreed and with the inclusion of «somewhat agree», it reached 99%. As for performance indicators, high majority of the participants found the performance indicators important and achievable in that 83.7% of the participants found them highly important and 83.2% of the participants thought they are achievable by all teachers (Please visit http://otmg.meb.gov.tr/YetGenel.html).

The analyses of the gathered data were actualized with various tools in that SPSS was used to code and analyse the numeric data coming from the self-assessment forms while content analysis was employed to interpret, code and categorize the themes emerging from the WIP questions. The self-assessment forms were applied in Turkish to ease and shorten completion time since there are lots of items and statements and it would be lengthy for the participants but the WIP was conducted in English. This was done thanks to the fact that there exist both Turkish and English versions of these self-assessment forms by Turkish MoNE. To ensure inter-rater reliability and increase objectivity, the inscribed answers of the participants were sent to two field experts who had Ph.D. degree in ELT and were actively working at different universities in Turkey. Each coder, including the researcher coded and categorized the WIP answers on their own and then compared their categories. No big differences were found but there were some minor revisions in some categories due to inappropriate answers given. Besides, the coders coded the categories and then after about three weeks they revised their previous categories to ensure intra-rater reliability.

Demographic Features of The Participants

Demographic features of the participants are given to get a detailed idea about the sample on which the study conducted and demonstrate the context of the research.

The participants were 122 student teachers (seniors) from ELT Department at Gazi University. There were 104 female (85.2%) and 18 male participants (14.8%), which shows the dominance of female student teachers in the study and in the department as well. High majority of them (N: 110, 90.2%) were aged 21-25 while this is followed by the participants aged 26-30 (N: 8, 6.6%), 31-35 (N: 2, 1.6%), 41-45 (N: 1, 0.8%) and 51-55 (N: 1, 0.8%). High majority of them (N: 117, 95.9%) were single and a small number of them (N: 5, 4.1%) were married. When we look at the GPA of the participants, it is seen that their GPA varies in that there were participants with GPA 2.00-2.50 (N: 6, 4.9%), 2.51-3.00 (N: 44, 36.1%), 3.01-3.50 (N: 61, 50%) and finally 3.51-4.00 (N: 11, 9%).

The type of high school the participants graduated may also be important in their professional identity by influencing their English level or with the learning experiences they offer. About half of the participants (N: 56, 45.9%) were graduates of Anatolian High School, and this is closely followed by Anatolian Teacher Training High School (N: 46, 37.7%). The other types of high school were as follows: General High School (N.13, 10.7%), Vocational High School (N: 1, 0.8%), Anatolian Vocational High School (N: 1, 0.8%), Super High School (N: 2, 1.6%) and other types of high schools (N: 3, 2.5%).

Since the participants were pre-service teachers, they were expected to have little teaching experience and this was confirmed in that high majority of the participants (N: 106, 86.9%) had less than 1 year teaching experience while the rest (N: 16, 13.1%) had 1-5 years of teaching experience..

Results

In this part, research questions will be given and answered one by one with the help of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered. The main findings will be given in tables and interpreted accordingly. The participants assessed themselves by ranking their current competencies in line with the generic and English teacher competencies set by MoNE on the continuum from 1 to 5. The students chose highly competent (5), fairly competent (4), somewhat competent (3), a little competent (2) and not competent at all (1). If they thought that the item is not relevant to generic or English teacher competencies, they chose the "explanation" column to show that they don't agree that the item has the potential to reflect generic or English teacher competencies. This "irrelevant" choice was coded as "6" in the statistical procedures.

Knowledge about the Competencies

Research Question 1: Are pre-service English teachers informed about the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

Before starting the complete the self-assessment forms of generic and English teacher competencies, the participants were asked whether they were informed about these competencies.

Table 1

Information about Generic Teacher Competencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	8	6.6	6.6
	No	114	93.4	93.4
	Total	122	100.0	100.0

When we look at Table 1, it is seen only a small number of the participants (N: 8, 6.6%) were informed about the generic teacher competencies while a high majority of them (N: 114, 93.4%) did not know anything about these competencies.

Table 2

Information about English Teacher Competencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	8	6.6	6.6
	No	114	93.4	93.4
	Total	122	100.0	100.0

Similarly, when Table 2 is analysed, again it is seen only a small number of the participants (N: 8, 6.6%) were informed about the English teacher competencies while a high majority of them (N: 114, 93.4%) did not know anything about these competencies.

In sum, high majority of the participant student teachers (N: 114, 93.4%) were uninformed about the generic and English teacher competencies which are set by MoNE and expected to be mastered by teachers.

Competency Levels in Generic Teacher Competencies

Research Question 2: How competent do pre-service English teachers find themselves according to generic teacher competencies set by MoNE?

Since generic teacher competencies are divided into 6 sections with a large number of performance indicators, only the major findings will be given in 3 sub-parts of these

competencies to narrow down the focus of the study. Below are the tables summarizing the frequency and percentage values of the items. Each table will be interpreted in line with the items with highest and lowest frequency and percentage scores.

Table 3

GENA20 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	106	29.0	29.0
	A Little Competent	116	31.7	31.7
	Somewhat Competent	67	18.3	18.3
	Fairly Competent	48	13.1	13.1
	Highly Competent	20	5.5	5.5
	Not Relevant	9	2.5	2.5
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 3 shows GENA20 results for pre-service participants. GENA20 stands for the twentieth item in part A Personal Development-Personal Values included in the generic teacher competencies. This is the sixth item of the second sub-category of Contribution to School Development.

The GENA20 item is: *Planning and conducting action research to solve problems at schools.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 106 (29%) find themselves not competent at all, 116 (31.7%) find themselves a little competent, 67 (18.3%) somewhat competent, 48 (13.1%) fairly competent and 20 (5.5%) highly competent in planning and conducting action research to solve problems at schools. Finally 9 (2.5%) think that this item is not relevant to teaching.

Table 4

GENA32 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	3	.8	.8
	A Little Competent	6	1.6	1.6
	Somewhat Competent	31	8.5	8.5
	Fairly Competent	141	38.5	38.5
	Highly Competent	185	50.5	50.5
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 4 gives GENA32 results for pre-service participants. GENA32 stands for the thirty-second item in part A Professional Development-Professional Values included in the generic teacher competencies. This is the second item of the fourth sub-category of Valuing Students.

The GENA32 item is: *Respecting students' values*.

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 3 (0.8%) find themselves not competent at all and 6 (1.6%) a little competent while 31 (8.5%) somewhat competent, 141 (38.5%) fairly competent and 185 (50.5%) highly competent in respecting students' values. There are no pre-service participants who think that this item is not relevant to teaching.

It can be said that the student teachers find themselves quite respectful to students' values but a little competent at applying action research to solve problems related to school.

Table 5

GENB3 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	12	3.3	3.3
	A Little Competent	38	10.4	10.4
	Somewhat Competent	77	21.0	21.0
	Fairly Competent	151	41.3	41.3
	Highly Competent	88	24.0	24.0
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 5 reports GENB3 results for pre-service participants. GENB3 stands for the third item in part B Knowing the Student included in the generic teacher competencies.

The GENB3 item is: *Considering students' characteristics of development in indoor and outdoor activities.* Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 12 (3.3%) find themselves not competent at all and 38 (10.4%) a little competent while 77 (21%) somewhat competent, 151 (41.3%) fairly competent and 88 (24%) highly competent.

Table 6

GENB9 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	83	22.7	22.7
	A Little Competent	82	22.4	22.4
	Somewhat Competent	72	19.7	19.7
	Fairly Competent	83	22.7	22.7
	Highly Competent	42	11.5	11.5
	Not Relevant	4	1.1	1.1
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 6 presents GENB9 results for pre-service participants. GENB9 stands for the ninth item in part B Knowing the Student included in the generic teacher competencies.

The GENB9 item is: *Sharing personal development of the student with his/her family*.

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 83 (22.7%) find themselves not competent at all and 82 (22.4%) a little competent while 72 (19.7%) somewhat competent, 83 (22.7%) fairly competent and 42 (11.5%) highly competent. Finally 4 (1.1%) think that this item is not relevant to teaching.

We can say that the student teachers think that they can organize indoor or outdoor activities according to the student profile but they can share the student's development with his/her family to some extent.

Table 7

GENC17 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	7	1.9	1.9
	A Little Competent	19	5.2	5.2
	Somewhat Competent	67	18.3	18.3
	Fairly Competent	132	36.1	36.1
	Highly Competent	139	38.0	38.0
	Not Relevant	2	.5	.5
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 7 demonstrates GENC17 results for pre-service participants. GENC17 stands for the seventeenth item in part C Learning and Teaching Process included in the generic teacher competencies.

The GENC17 item is: *Identifying sources and materials to be used in the lesson plan.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 7 (1.9%) find themselves not competent at all and 19 (5.2%) a little competent while 67 (18.3%) somewhat competent, 132 (36.1%) fairly competent and 139 (38%) highly competent. Finally 2 (0.5%) think that this item is not relevant to teaching.

Table 8

GENC30 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	101	27.6	27.6
	A Little Competent	133	36.3	36.3
	Somewhat Competent	70	19.1	19.1
	Fairly Competent	36	9.8	9.8
	Highly Competent	20	5.5	5.5
	Not Relevant	6	1.6	1.6
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 8 shows GENC30 results for pre-service participants. GENC30 stands for the thirtieth item in part C Learning and Teaching Process included in the generic teacher competencies.

The GENC30 item is: *Knowing the related regulations about extra-curricular activities" has the lowest mean score.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 101 (27.6%) find themselves not competent at all and 133 (36.3%) a little competent while 70 (19.1%) somewhat competent, 36 (9.8%) fairly competent and 20 (5.5%) highly competent. Finally 6 (1.6%) think that this item is not relevant to teaching.

It can be inferred that the student teachers find themselves fairly competent at forming lesson plans while they are a little informed about the related regulations.

Competency Level in English Teacher Competencies

Research Question 3: How competent do pre-service English teachers find themselves according to field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

Similar to the generic teacher competencies, English teacher competencies are divided into 5 categories. Again, only the major findings will be given in 2 sub-parts of these competencies to narrow down the focus of the study. Below are the tables summarizing the frequency and percentage values of the items. Each table will be interpreted in line with the items with highest and lowest frequency and percentage scores.

Table 9

ENG1.11 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	4	1.1	1.1
	A Little Competent	20	5.5	5.5
	Somewhat Competent	36	9.8	9.8
	Fairly Competent	141	38.5	38.5
	Highly Competent	165	45.1	45.1
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 9 summarizes ENG1.11 results for pre-service English teachers. ENG1.11 stands for the eleventh item of the main part 1 Planning and Organizing English Teaching Process included in the English teacher competencies. This is also the second item of the third sub-category of Being Able to Use Proper Materials and Sources in English Teaching Process.

The ENG1.11 item is: *Knowing that materials should be proper for the content, students' language development and levels.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 4 (1.1%) find themselves not competent at all and 20 (5.5%) find themselves a little competent while 36 (9.8%) somewhat competent, 141 (38.5%) fairly competent and 165 (45.1%) highly competent in knowing that materials should be proper for the content, students' language development and levels.

Table 10

ENG1.22 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	41	11.2	11.2
	A Little Competent	89	24.3	24.3
	Somewhat Competent	77	21.0	21.0
	Fairly Competent	88	24.0	24.0
	Highly Competent	69	18.9	18.9
	Not Relevant	2	.5	.5
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 10 reports ENG1.22 results for pre-service English teachers.ENG1.22 stands for the twenty-second item of the main part 1 Planning and Organizing English Teaching Process included in the English teacher competencies. This is also the sixth and last item of the fourth sub-category of Being Able to Use Proper Approaches and Methods in English Teaching Process.

The ENG1.22 item is: *Creating original activities to promote colloquial English by collaborating with colleagues and teachers from other disciplines.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 41 (11.2%) find themselves not competent at all and 89 (24.3%) find themselves a little competent while 77 (21%) somewhat competent, 88 (24%) fairly competent and 69 (18.9%) highly competent in creating original activities to promote colloquial English by collaborating with colleagues and teachers from other disciplines. 2 participants (0.5%) think that this item is not relevant to English teaching.

It can be said that the student teachers find themselves fairly aware of the materials' necessary characteristics while they are least competent at promoting English use in everyday life with the help of original activities

Table 11

ENG2.33 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	7	1.9	1.9
	A Little Competent	19	5.2	5.2
	Somewhat Competent	58	15.8	15.8
	Fairly Competent	173	47.3	47.3
	Highly Competent	109	29.8	29.8
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 11 shows ENG2.33 results for pre-service English teachers. ENG2.33 stands for the thirty-third item of the main part 2 Improving Language Skills included in the English teacher competencies. The ENG2.33 item is: *Benefiting from available resources and materials in reading activities.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 7 (1.9%) find themselves not competent at all and 19 (5.2%) find themselves a little competent while 58 (15.8%) somewhat competent, 173 (47.3%) fairly competent and 109 (29.8%) highly competent.

Table 12

ENG2.58 Competency Levels of Pre-service English Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Not Competent At All	95	26.0	26.0
	A Little Competent	99	27.0	27.0
	Somewhat Competent	70	19.1	19.1
	Fairly Competent	62	16.9	16.9
	Highly Competent	37	10.1	10.1
	Not Relevant	3	.8	.8
	Total	366	100.0	100.0

Table 12 demonstrates ENG2.58 results for pre-service English teachers. ENG2.58 stands for the fifty-eighth item of the main part 2 Improving Language Skills included in the English teacher competencies.

The ENG2.58 item is: *Collaborating with the families, special education teacher and/or the related experts in order to detect the level, speed and type for the students with special needs or who need special education in special education domain.*

Out of 366 (100%) pre-service English teachers; 95 (26%) find themselves not competent at all and 99 (27%) find themselves a little competent while 70 (19.1%) somewhat competent, 62 (16.9%) fairly competent and 37 (10.1%) highly competent. 3 participants (0.8%) think that this item is not relevant to English teaching.

We can say that the student teachers find themselves fairly competent at employing various resources and materials in listening and reading activities while they are a little competent at collaborating with the stakeholders in special education.

Reflection on Teacher Competencies

Research Question 4: What are pre-service English teachers' opinions regarding the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE?

The participant student teachers shared their opinions regarding these competencies but due to lengthy nature of the study, only a small sample of their reflections will be given here in order to support the numerical data given above. Each participant was given a code (STE XX, STE standing for the student teacher and the XX standing for the order of the participation) to ensure anonymity and obtain rich amount of data with more detailed and varied answers.

> STE 83 reports that: No, I haven't heard these competencies before. I was informed just before this research was done. This is a good idea but the important thing is to what degree the teachers are appropriate for these competencies. I think the items are sufficient and realistic, but the question is whether the teachers have them or not. If a teacher has these competencies, it means the teacher is good at his/her job, but most of the teachers don't have them.

The student teacher is uninformed about the qualities s/he is expected to possess as a teacher candidate after graduation. S/he finds these teacher competencies sufficient and realistic but s/he is doubtful whether in-service teachers who are actively involved in teaching settings have them or not. S/he also gives value to these competencies as a way of self-assessment of the teacher but s/he is pessimistic about the competencies of in-service English teachers.

> STE 84 indicates that: Thanks to this research, I am informed about these competencies. In theory, they are good and every teacher should be capable of doing but in reality it doesn't match the competencies of the teacher. They are sufficient but not realistic. To make it realistic each competency should be explained in a detailed way. This makes it understandable and applicable. If it is explained in a detailed way for us to internalize the competencies, it may help us to improve our teaching skills and communication skills.

This student teacher also thinks that the competencies seem theoretically possible but in practice they may fail. S/he doesn't find them sufficient or realistic, either. S/he points out that the description of these competencies should be given in a clear and detailed way so that it becomes understandable and feasible for the teacher. Detailed explanation of these

competencies is considered to contribute to the teaching and communication skills of the teacher.

> STE 92 states that: I was just informed about the above mentioned competencies by the researcher. I don't think that these are real reflection of teachers' competencies. I don't find them sufficient or realistic but I take them into consideration for my teaching competency.

This student teacher is also uninformed about these competencies. S/he does not think that these competencies were formed with the participation of real teacher and doesn't find them sufficient or realistic. However, s/he thinks that they could be a way of evaluating teacher competencies.

> STE 98 says that: No. there was nothing to inform us about these competencies. I was informed just before this academic survey was given to me. They represent the ideal teacher profile. However, I don't perceive it as realistic. These competencies are really great but the pre-service teachers don't have all of these competencies. As a prospective teacher, I strongly agree that these competencies will help my professional identity.

This participant seems surprised to learn about these competencies. S/he thinks that they were formed for the image of ideal teacher but not for the real teacher. S/he does not find them realistic, either. Another point which draws attention is that pre-service English teachers may not have these competencies which could help improve their professional identity.

> STE 99 remarks that: No. this is the first time I've heard about these competencies. I am informed just now, thanks to this research. Many of them are necessary for teachers. However, I don't think current teachers have them. They are relatively sufficient but they are not realistic for today's teachers. Education and application is not enough. However, they are necessary for all teachers.

This participant is uninformed about these competencies as well and thinks that they are necessary for teachers. However, s/he adds that current teachers do not have them and they are not realistic. S/he also stresses the gap between the theory and practice by explaining the lack of enough opportunities for them to actualize what they learn from books in their education.

> STE 104 points out that: No. I am not informed about these competencies. I think these competencies can be a good way to determine the quality of a good teacher but they are a bit demanding. I think these competencies are a little unrealistic because education system in Turkey isn't sufficient to develop these competencies. If I try to develop these competencies, I can be a sufficient teacher.

This participant supports the use of these competencies as a method of identifying the criteria for being a good teacher but s/he points out their demanding side due to the large number of performance indicators. S/he also criticizes the Turkish educational system and adds that improving these competencies could be unrealistic because of the country's educational

policies. However, s/he thinks she can become a competent teacher if s/he tries to improve them.

> STE 113 notes that: No. I was not informed about these competencies from this test. I think I have the capacity of to achieve them. Most of them are sufficient and realistic but the technological ones seem unrealistic. They can develop my level of teaching.

The student teacher finds himself/herself capable of achieving the related competencies, which shows that s/he has the necessary basis and confidence to enlarge his/her professional skills. S/he think most of the competencies are sufficient and realistic except for the technological ones but s/he still thinks that s/he can refer to them as a reference point to improve teaching skills.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out the competency levels of pre-service English teachers and it was found that high majority of them are uninformed about these competencies. In other words, the student teachers do not know what they are expected to have at national level since they do not know that such teacher competencies exist while some think that they are utopic or difficult to possess. It must be noted that these competencies are not a luxury for them but rather they form a part of their professional identity by informing them what to possess as a teacher. Therefore, these competencies are a must rather than a luxury.

This study has no parallel in the literature since self-assessment forms of the generic and English teacher competencies were employed for the first time in Turkish EFL context together with WIP. However, the results of the study share some similar points emphasized by some previous research in that these competencies could function as a framework or criteria for both pre-service and in-service teachers to assess their professional skills and detect their strong and weak points so that they can capitalize on their strengths and search for new routes to diminish their weaknesses (O'Dwyer & Atlı, 2014). In other words, these competencies could be the harbour for English teachers where they start and reshape their professional identity and teaching skills throughout their career since teaching is seen as a long journey.

The large number of performance indicators, the education delivered at pre-service teacher education and foreign language instruction policies in Turkey were among the factors that were considered to prevent the improvement of the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE. For some teacher candidates, the competencies may seem theoretically perfect but practically impossible due to the high standards of teaching qualities and expectations (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010) but if they are introduced to them during

their pre-service and given feedback on how to accomplish tasks in line with these competencies, their perceptions regarding the difficulty of these competencies could be diminished. These results showed that student teachers are not familiar with the teacher competencies expected by the MoNE and when they face certain troubles due to dynamic structure of real classes they may find themselves unequipped.

If pre-service English teachers think that their previous English teachers or their practicum teachers do not have these competencies, they may tend to believe that if they can do their job without possessing these competencies, they can do the same as well, that is they can also teach English without having these competencies (Knoblauch & Chase, 2015), which could damage their professional identity and skills.

If what is learnt at universities is not put into practice in teaching practicum or school experience courses, the student teacher will feel the negative consequences of theory-practice gap (Yuan & Lee, 2014) when they teach or try to teach English in their real future classes. Therefore, introduction to these competencies during their pre-service education may help them to gain awareness about the necessary knowledge, skills and strategies they need to cope with various practical problems.

Another point which draws attention is the reflection of a student teacher regarding the teacher's technology competencies that are of great importance since we live in a digital era and it is likely that today's pre-service teachers will meet digital natives in their future classes. However, some of the participants seemed to have negative image regarding the teacher competencies about technology. Negative opinion about the technological competences may be, in part, due to lack of technological knowledge or limited exposure to integration of technology in pre-service teacher education programmes.

Student teachers should receive education in line with the generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by MoNE so that student teachers in ELT programmes could be well-prepared before stepping into their real classes and increase their perceived self-efficacy levels in teaching competencies. Besides, there are important questions that deserve considerable attention from stakeholders involved in the preparation of student teachers. Some student teachers expressed incompetency relationships with the related stakeholders (Ajzen, 1991). Since student teachers may encounter context-bound differences in different regions of Anatolia, it seems of great importance for student teachers to be engaged in various

activities in their pre-service education programmes maybe via school experience courses to improve their relationship with the school environment and cope with parental issues.

All in all, teacher educators need to focus on teacher qualities and empower pre-service English teachers to prevent the possible problems they may encounter in their real classes or keep these problems at minimal level as much as possible. If teacher educators design their courses in line with these competencies and make them a part of their assessment, pre-service teachers will value these competencies and put them in their teaching agenda. For this purpose, it seems crucial that pre-service English teachers be familiar with the generic and English teacher competencies throughout their training and get feedback from their lecturers or supervisors to improve their weak points.

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