



ARE GENERIC AND ENGLISH TEACHER COMPETENCIES SUFFICIENT AND REALISTIC ENOUGH?

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Abstract

This study aims to find out and compare the perspectives of both pre-service and in-service English teachers about the generic and field-specific teacher competencies in Turkish EFL context. 213 pre-service and 38 in-service English teachers participated in the study. Qualitative research methods were utilized to gather and analyse the data. The findings indicate that there is uniformity between the pre-service and in-service participants. It was also found that mostly the participant English teachers were uninformed about these competencies and they were found to have contrasting opinions about the related competencies because some of them do not find these competencies sufficient or realistic enough while some of them see these competencies as a way of professionalism. They also make some suggestions about how to integrate these competencies into existing teacher training system.

Keywords: teacher education; teacher induction, teacher competencies; generic teacher competencies; English teacher competencies

1. Introduction

Teaching involves the participation of more than one party. Student teachers who are in-between being a student and a teacher candidate, and in-service teachers need guidance, scaffolding and induction for their professional development. Thus, a multifaceted approach could help us to see how the interaction of a number of factors affect teacher training and direct the route of teacher development (Ajzen, 1991).

Apart from intercultural differences, there are intra-cultural differences within a country in that it is possible to come across various cultural structures and social norms in different parts of a country and it is only natural that newly recruited teachers who

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come from a different culture and part of the country may experience a sense of culture shock (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005) and have certain difficulties in adapting to their new environment. These teachers could be the ones who are new graduates with little or no teaching experience as well as those who are new to the school environment with changing years of experience. Regardless of their experience and age, all teachers need an on-going support and feedback for their professional development throughout their career.

All in all, it would be useful to analyse and compare pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in terms of their perspectives regarding teaching competences in order to see whether English Language Teaching (ELT) programs cover these competences, and what student teachers and in-service teachers reflect about these competences. In light of their views, the effectiveness of ELT programs can be assessed, the problems in teacher training programs felt by the participants can be detected and their solutions and suggestions can be gathered for improving their professional development. In sum, this study sheds light on an overlooked area in English language teacher training by including both generic and English teacher competencies set by Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) with the participation of both pre-service and in-service English teachers.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Teacher Training

Novice teachers arrive at their schools with a certain level of knowledge, skills and experiences but they can improve their existing competency levels with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) with the help of expert colleagues in the form of feedback or guidance (Warford, 2011). The teacher is both an independent individual and a member of the society s/he lives in so it is natural that they will become aware of their own “self” (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986) but at the same time they will need to have a sense of belonging to the society (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003).

To attract attention to what combination of elements could form a better teacher training, Simon (2013) takes different combinations of elements in teacher training programs as tapestry weaving with regard to the four main components namely transformative and informed practice, social justice and inclusion, a future orientation and community capacity building. Here the complex structure of the factors in teacher training programs, their cross-relationship and different results of different combinations are stressed. To respond to the changing needs of society and technology, schools and universities have the responsibility to provide opportunities for teachers to create a better learning atmosphere with appropriate methodology, classroom management skills and assessment knowledge to improve student teachers and help them adapt to the school environment more easily (Choy, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2013).

2.2 Teacher Induction

Teacher induction is described as a systematic process within a school climate to meet new teachers' personal and professional needs. It was found out that the induction programs were appreciated by the participant new teachers, mentors, and principals except for the lack of time which was the criticized aspect. Each participant was found to play a different key role in sustaining the school culture and climate in terms of supporting the personal and professional needs of new teachers. (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Especially pre-service teachers or beginning teachers should be the focus of teacher induction since teacher attrition was found to be at a high level among these groups (Paris, 2010). If not guided appropriately or feel overwhelmed by the requirements and difficulties of teaching, the new teacher may prefer to leave his/her job in the early years of career. To point out this aspect, Joseph (2011) closely associates teacher identity and staying in the job and highlights the role of the participation of various stakeholders such as friends, colleagues or the university lecturers in preventing teachers from leaving their jobs.

Whether newly qualified or experienced, teachers may suffer from similar challenges such as handling discipline problems, working with colleagues, negotiating a new school culture and dealing with classroom management. Looking at teachers with varying experiences could give clues about the features of an effective induction program like unity, supportive management, good communicative mechanism and expected transparent behavior. Otherwise, teachers may not feel themselves as a member of the school community and have difficulties in adapting to the vision of the school (Aitken & Harford, 2011).

Similar to Turkish cooking style which is characterized by eyeball estimate, student teachers in Turkey receive education in line with the university's requirements that determine the type and amount of theoretical and practical courses. Although ELT departments in Turkey have similar courses (Kanat, 2014), their implementation seems to be very different from each other. When student teachers graduate, they are appointed to real schools based on their scores at a high stake national examination called Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavı (KPSS- Public Personnel Selection Exam) and all are treated in the same way regardless of their professional or personal needs and expectations, which could result from the "eyeball estimate" style of teacher training in Turkey.

Like English teachers support their students with clues and visuals when they make a mistake, student teachers need guidance about how to run their future courses with the help of the theoretical knowledge gained in courses and the feedback given after their performances like presentation or micro-teaching. In addition, mentors should support new teachers especially in their first years of teaching. However, a teacher who needs induction does not necessarily have to be a neophyte teacher but s/he can be an experienced teacher who is new to the school atmosphere. When the cycle of becoming an English teacher is considered it is seen that they are first learners of English, then learners of teaching and they finally become teachers. These three

phases remind the fact that teachers are influenced by their previous schooling, pre-service education and experiences during in-service education.

In light of the need of the related literature, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of English teachers about the generic and English teacher competencies?
2. Do English teachers find these competencies sufficient and realistic enough? Why or why not?
3. Are there any similarities of differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in terms of their perspectives about the related teacher competencies?

3. Research Methodology

The study has explanatory research design in that it aims to describe the current state of the phenomenon and go one step further to explain the determining factors of it. The participants of the study are pre-service English teachers (seniors) and in-service English teachers at different levels of schools. The in-service participants were chosen among the cities which are labelled as third level cities according to Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (TÜİK-Turkish Statistical Institute) criteria for representing the economic and developmental features of the seven regions in the country. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants since the pre-service participants were chosen among seniors because they were regarded to have mastered theoretical courses, completed their school experience course in which they pay visits to the school and observe a specific situation to do weekly tasks, and are doing their practicum at various state schools. As to the in-service teachers, they were chosen among the third-level cities in Turkey. The questions in the written interview protocol (WIP) were formed in light of the articles related to teacher induction and teacher competencies, and sent to 6 different academicians in ELT department for expert opinion. The researcher made all the revisions required and sent the revised form again. The modifications in the content, structure of the question items, order of the questions and layout went on till there was complete agreement among all the experts.

This study employs qualitative research design since data collection tool is a written interview protocol and the data were analysed with the help of constant comparison method. To secure inter-rater reliability, a second coder apart from the researcher was also consulted for the categorization and interpretation of the qualitative data. Besides, both coders looked and revised their previous analyses and categories about a month for the sake of intra-rater reliability. According to the inter-rater reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 64), the reliability of the two coders in terms of the first quarter of the total qualitative data was found to be 80.1%. Thanks to the on-going meetings and discussions of the two coders after the results of the first quarter of the data, the inter-rater reliability increased up to 90.1% at the end of the analysis of the all qualitative findings of the WIP items. Such repetition of reliability was conducted since the agreement levels of the two coders was expected to

be at least 70% for the analysis procedures to be considered as reliable. However, after the second meeting, the discussions went on till there was complete agreement between the two coders.

Qualitative data is thought to be more subjective due to its analysis procedures since the researcher has to move back and forth in light of the coming data, and follow a zigzag pattern to form emerging themes and categories from the non-numerical data with the coming flow of qualitative findings (Dörnyei, 2007). Such data-driven approach used to get the big picture from emerging themes was coined as grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1980). However, their view of “delaying the literature” was criticized by Thornberg (2012) and it was stated that the related literature should be examined before the categorization of qualitative findings due to the possibility of missing important points or being left with unrelated categories. Consequently, the finally formed theory is expected to have some characteristics like being general, understandable, and easy to practice, flexible and in harmony with social beliefs, everyday life realities and changing facts (Glaser & Strauss, 1980). Additionally, the emerging themes and categories were quantified in that the frequency and percentage of the formed categories are also given so that the numbers and words could accompany and witness each other, and provide sound conclusions for the reader (Cresswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). In other words, the qualitative data were quantified for complementary purposes of words and numbers.

3.1 Participants

The study sample consists of pre-service and in-service English teachers in Turkey. The student teachers who were the last year students in ELT Department at four different state universities participated in the study. There were 213 pre-service participants and the four universities were Gazi University, which was one of the most populous and prestigious ELT programs in Turkey (OSYM, 2011), Middle East Technical University (METU), Hacettepe University and X University. As for the in-service teachers, there were 38 in-service English teachers from 12 cities. All the participant in-service English teachers were purposely chosen from state schools because the study is based on the teacher competencies set by Turkish MoNE specifically designed for teachers teaching at state schools directed by Turkish MoNE. Teachers from different parts of Turkey were involved in the study in order to get a larger perspective on the studied phenomenon, and put forward diverse findings upon the needs and expectations of the English teachers in Turkish EFL context.

4. Results

4.1.1 Replies to the First WIP Question

In this part, participant answers to the first WIP question are exemplified. The first question is: What do you think of the generic and English teacher competencies set by Turkish MoNE?

It should be noted that this study presents one part of a large-scale study. Some participants did not answer some of the questions and they were excluded from the study. In addition, the irrelevant answers were also excluded from the study. That's why the numbers of the following quotations reflect the order of participation regardless of giving answer to the questions.

Table 1: Pre-service Answers to the First WIP Item

Positive	101	53.5%
Negative	48	25.4%
Mixed 1 (+ and -)	34	18%
Mixed 2 (conditional)	6	3.1%
Total	189	100%

Table 1 demonstrates the answers of the pre-service English teachers to the first WIP item which asks the opinions of participants about the generic and English teacher competencies. Various Four different categories emerged upon the opinions about these competencies. The participants who did not answer the question or gave irrelevant answers were excluded from the study. The mixed categorization includes answers where the participants either have both positive and negative views or explain their views with the help of conditional clauses. 101 (53.5%) pre-service participants held positive views about these competencies, while 48 (25.4%) held negative views, 34 (18%) held both positive and negative views, and 6 (3.1%) laid down some criteria as a condition. According to the answer given, majority of the pre-service participants seem to hold positive views about these competencies.

When the answers of the participants who have positive views about these competencies were examined, various definitions and sub-categories were found out. The participants with favourable thoughts describe these competencies as “necessary”, “essential”, “reasonable”, “important”, “needed”, “useful”, “helpful”, and “a must, required”, “well-prepared”, “vital”, “valuable”, “basic and logical. Additionally, these participants think that the related competencies are important in terms of teacher quality, following the improvements, establishing goals, professional improvement, educational success, identifying teaching knowledge, gaining consciousness, regulating student-teacher traits, identifying the characteristic of a good and component English teacher, improving teaching approaches and techniques, and helpful in terms of evaluating teachers, serving better education atmosphere, guiding teachers, serving basic requirements for a fruitful teaching and learning environment, and determining the deficiencies.

Some of the in-service English teachers were found to have unfavourable thoughts about these competencies and these participants describe the related competencies as “too detailed”, “unnecessary”, “useless”, “unrealistic”, “utopic”, “imaginary”, “abstract”, “not enough”, “nonsense”, “demanding”, “ridiculous”, “complicated”, “too much”, “impossible”, “easy to write but hard to behave”, “wrong”, “not suitable”, “unpractical” and “up in the air”. Some of the participants criticized the lack of teachers who have all these competencies and mentioned theory-practice gap.

One of the in-service English teachers stated that teaching is an innate ability so one simply cannot obtain these competencies with instruction or feedback. These participants stated that there is too much expectation from teachers and too much burden on them, and add that these competencies are utopic due to KPSS preparation. Also, the related competencies were considered to be too detailed to accomplish while one participant defined them as stereotypes and some thought it was wrong to determine teaching standards. In addition, some of the participants complained about the lack of pre-service and in-service teacher training for these competencies and one participant reported that since teachers are not evaluated upon these competencies, the related competencies are not enough to improve quality of teaching.

A number of the participants had both positive and negative views about these competencies. These participants described the related competencies as “nice but not realistic”, “beneficial but not sufficient”, “logical but not applicable”, “well-prepared but not achievable”, “well-prepared but not applicable”, “good but not possible”, “necessary but not applicable”, “fine but not available”, “idealistic but not feasible” and “preconditions but unnecessary items”. The participants in this category stress that these competencies are the needed teacher qualities but theory-practice gap, time limits and social, physical and economic conditions hinder effective application of these competencies. They report that although these competencies are satisfactory, there are few teachers who possess all these competencies. Some of the pre-service participants suggested inclusion of more relevant courses which introduce and enhance these competencies while some of the in-service participants think that these competencies are important at first but then they become useless after a while due to the need of revision in line with changing approaches.

Pre-service English teachers held various opinions about the generic and English language teacher competencies. Some student teachers have positive opinions about these competencies and some have negative opinions while some other have a mix of both positive and negative opinions.

The first WIP item poses a general question about the generic and English teacher competencies. Below are some excerpts taken from both in-service and pre-service English teachers. First, pre-service and then in-service English teacher opinions are given for comparative purposes. STE stands for student teacher (pre-service teacher) and T stands for in-service teacher and the number represents the order of the participant in the study. It should be noted that the first 366 participants were pre-service English teachers and the rest consisted of in-service English teachers. The numbers represent the order of participation regardless of giving answer to the question since this study presents one part of a large-scale study. The quotations are given as they are without correcting any errors in order not to intervene the data. Now opinions of the pre-service teachers will be exemplified.

As previously stated, some pre-service participants hold positive perspectives about these competencies and below are the quotations to exemplify these perspectives. It should be noted that the written statements of the participants are given as they are, without correcting any errors at word, sentence or grammar level. Since it was aimed

not to intervene into the data or ruin the data, the statements are given without any change or correction.

STE 24: *It is essential for all teachers to be aware of their competencies.*

STE 33: *Each teacher must have these competencies in advance level.*

STE 39: *In general, they are reasonable for teachers.*

STE 59: *They are essential to my development in terms of being a qualified teacher. They also establish a goal for a new teacher.*

STE 62: *Each teacher should know these competencies. They have to improve themselves according to these competencies.*

STE 65: *These competencies are definitely essential to be successful on teaching.*

STE 95: *I think a teacher should bear all of these competencies. They are very good.*

STE 136: *They are necessary for a high-qualified education and teacher.*

STE 155: *These competencies are necessary for teaching graduates.*

STE 190: *Every teacher should have these competencies.*

STE 302: *They help to improve our English level, teaching approaches and techniques.*

STE 366: *They are basic requirements for a fruitful teaching and learning environment.*

STE 324: *When wrapped up, all these competencies serve better education atmosphere ranging from the location of the school building to students' success. All of them should be known by all teachers and applied appropriately for a better education future.*

When the extracts above are closely examined, it is seen that the positive opinions form the majority of the participants. These student teachers think that it is essential for teachers to gain consciousness about both types of competencies and every teacher must possess these competencies at advanced level. One student teacher thinks that these competencies are reasonable for teachers and underlines the realistic reflections of the competencies. In addition, some student teachers think that these competencies can act as a framework for teachers and guide them in their professional development because they can adhere to these competencies in order to contribute to their qualifications. The necessity of achieving these competencies is stressed for their role in improving the quality of both teaching and learning because it is stated that English learners, pre-service English teachers and in-service English teachers can benefit from them in the same way. The related competencies are thought to contribute to linguistic proficiency of student teachers as well as their teaching practices. Besides, these competencies are thought to affect classroom environment positively.

Contrary to the comments above, some student teachers came up with opposing ideas upon these competencies. Below are some examples of negative opinions.

STE 61: *Lots of teachers don't have these competencies. They become a teacher but they don't give importance their competencies. They tell their lesson in a same way and the lesson is finished.*

This student teacher seems to be pessimistic about the competency levels of English teachers and thinks that a lot of teachers do not possess the competencies in question. S/he also complains about these teachers' unchanging teaching practices.

STE 73: *There are lots of competencies. I think some of them are not necessary.*

STE 110: *They don't reflect the truth.*

STE 160: *These are sometimes very abstract or utopic when I think the state school in Turkey, they must be more realistic.*

STE 288: *Too much expectation from graduating teachers.*

As for the other pre-service participant comments, it is seen that the high number of competencies are perceived to be negative since it was interpreted as unnecessary. In addition, the competencies are not thought to reflect the realities of educational contexts. Current status of state schools leads one participant to take these competencies as abstract or utopic while another one criticizes them for being overwhelming for pre-service teachers.

The last group of participants was the ones with a mix of both positive and negative opinions. They both appreciate the positive sides of these competencies and criticize some other aspects at the same time. Examples are as in the following:

STE 16: *Beneficial but not sufficient.*

STE 102: *All teachers should have. But I think I am not competent enough.*

STE 235: *Well prepared but it is very detailed. Nobody can achieve these goals.*

STE 336: *A teacher who has all of these competencies will be excellent teacher. But I don't believe that we graduate with all of these competencies.*

While these student teachers find the related competencies beneficial, well-prepared and detailed, they also criticize them for being insufficient or unattainable by teachers. Besides, some make self-evaluation and come up with a negative image because they think that they do not have these competencies when they graduate from pre-service teacher education programs.

Table 2: In-service Answers to the First WIP Item

Positive	19	54.3 %
Negative	7	20 %
Mixed 1 (+ and -)	7	20 %
Mixed 2 (conditional)	2	5.7 %
Total	35	100 %

Table 2 demonstrates the answers of the in-service English teachers to the first WIP item which asks the opinions of participants about the generic and English teacher competencies. Various categories emerged upon the opinions about these competencies. The mixed categorization includes answers where the participants either have positive and negative views or explain their views with the help of conditional clauses. 19 (54.3%) pre-service participants held positive views about these competencies, while 7 (20%) held negative views, 7 (20%) held both positive and negative views, and 2 (5.7%) laid down some criteria as a condition. According to the answer given, majority of the in-service participants seem to hold positive views about these competencies.

Now in-service English teachers' opinions will be given. Again the participant answers will be given without correcting any errors or making changes in the statements in order not to intervene in the data or not to damage the nature of qualitative data analysis. Similar to pre-service participants, in-service English teachers were found to have positive, negative and mixed opinions about the generic and

English language teacher competencies. In order to follow the same pattern throughout the presentation of qualitative findings and provide a smooth transition between the findings of pre-service and in-service participants for the benefit of readers; first positive, then negative and finally mixed opinions will be presented and interpreted.

T 372: *They are necessary.*

T 375: *They are mostly logical.*

T 383: *They are useful.*

T 394: *They are good and necessary deeds.*

T 400: *I think they're quite sufficient.*

T 404: *I think it will help us develop our professional skills.*

T 406: *To be honest, theories in the books don't always work because things can result in different ways in different conditions. So, considering what I have already known about competencies, I am trying to do my own way. However, it is an undeniable fact that these competences are what make a teacher a real teacher. Because, dealing with a group of students with different needs, personalities or characteristics require profession and different skills. So, these competences help us deal with the things and difficulties and make a better learning environment during teaching process.*

T 409: *They are the ones every teacher should have.*

It is seen that the in-service English teachers label these competencies as necessary, logical, useful, good and sufficient. One of them talks about the role of these competencies for improving their professional knowledge and skills while some think that every teacher should have them, which are in parallel with the pre-service English teacher opinions. What is striking is the theory-practice gap pointed out by these teachers and the place of these competencies in removing this gap. In addition, these competencies are thought to contribute to the teaching skills in terms of catering for various needs and expectations of students and forming a multifaceted learning atmosphere for students.

There were some opposing in-service teachers and some of the negative opinions are given below.

T 368: *Turkish Ministry of National Education can think that these competencies are standards for all teacher! But I don't find it true to write down specific qualifications for being teacher.*

T 412: *They are super-unrealistic. Almost none of the teachers can use them.*

T 441: *These competencies are not suitable for our national education system. We still couldn't reach to that level.*

One of the in-service English teachers criticizes these competencies for becoming standards for teacher qualifications and adds that there should be no clear-cut criteria for teachers. Another one finds them not realistic and says teachers cannot make use of them in their lessons practically. The last one thinks they are unsuitable for the national education system and finds the current state of the educational system lower than the desired competency items.

There were a group of in-service English teachers who both approved and criticized these competencies. Some comments with a mix of both positive and negative opinions are as follows:

T 370: *For me, this is the most important part at the beginning but later it become useless and you start improving yourself.*

T 397: *If all teaches had these competencies, there would be no problem. Actually teachers don't have enough time and system to apply all competencies.*

T 414: *Actually, I suppose these competencies are acquired while you teach. because the more you teach the more you are aware of your weak sides.*

The first participant thinks that these competencies could be beneficial for a short period especially in the beginning years of teaching but they lose their importance after a while. Another criticism is the lack of time and systematic approach to gain and sustain these competencies although having the competencies is valued. The owner of the last statement puts forward that these competencies are gained in the course of teaching but not in theoretical ways since teaching experience is thought to contribute to the awareness of teachers in terms of their strong and weak points.

4.1.2 Replies to the Second WIP Question

In this part, participant answers to the second question in the WIP will be exemplified. The second question is: Do you find these competencies sufficient and realistic enough? Why or why not?

The second WIP item questions whether the teachers find the related competencies sufficient and realistic and further asks to give specific examples. The perspectives of pre-service teachers will be exemplified. STE stands for student teacher and the following number shows the order of the participant in the study.

Table 3: Pre-service Answers to the Second WIP Item

Positive	60	26 %
Negative	96	41.6 %
Mixed 1 (+ and -)	69	29.9 %
Mixed 2 (conditional)	6	2.5 %
Total	231	100 %

Table 3 reports the answers of the pre-service English teachers to the second WIP item which asks whether the participants find the generic and English teacher competencies sufficient and realistic. Various categories as positive, negative and mixed emerged upon the sufficiency and reality of these competencies. The mixed categorization includes answers where the participants either have positive and negative views or explain their views with the help of conditional clauses. 60 (26%) pre-service participants held positive views about these competencies, while 96 (41.6%) held negative views, 69 (29.9%) held both positive and negative views, and 6 (2.5%) laid down some criteria as a condition. It can be concluded that the pre-service teachers mostly hold negative views about the sufficiency and reality of these competencies.

The positive answers of the participants to the second WIP item about the sufficiency and reality of the competencies were further sub-categorized with the help of the various definitions of the participants and emerging themes. The participants with favourable thoughts describe the competencies as “sufficient and realistic”, “comprehensive”, “applicable”, “necessary”, “informative”, “covering” and “reasonable”. These participants stated that the related competencies help them notice their good and bad sides, show the stakeholders the pros and cons of the educational system and increase teacher efficiency. They also state that these competencies include the necessary teacher qualities, resemble to real life, and sufficient and realistic to detect teacher’s qualities. Besides, one participant expressed his/her, trust in MoNE professionals.

Some participants had negative views about the sufficiency and reality of these competencies. The participants with unfavourable thoughts describe these competencies as “unrealistic”, “not useful”, “not sufficient”, “too general”, “hard to apply”, “not enough”, “irrelevant”, “too detailed”, “not testable”, “too abstract to apply”, “unsuitable criteria”, “different from real life”, “demanding”, “too detailed”, “challenging”, “utopic”, “inapplicable”, “inefficient”, “less sufficient and “too” realistic”, “exaggerated”, “easy to say but very difficult to perform”, “neither sufficient nor realistic” and “unpractical”. These participants state that there is too much expectation from teachers and there is no room for improvement. Some think that these competencies do not apply to world realities, criticize the national education system for not considering these competencies and complain about the deterioration of the education system, lack of teachers powered with all these competencies, lack of time, awareness and effective application. These participants find the related competencies unrealistic due to the disconnect between university and MoNE, theory-practice gap, the role of KPSS in appointment, and context-bound differences such as crowded classes, complex and poor situations in practice, environmental constraints, social and economic problems and specific conditions of schools. However, one of the in-service participants highlighted the active role of teachers in education but not the competencies. Some others said that there is no focus on personal learning strategies and these competencies do not respond to individual needs of classrooms.

A number of the participants had mixed views about the second WIP item by having both positive and negative opinions. There are various definitions and emerging themes for this category as well. These participants describe the competencies as “sufficient but not realistic”, “sufficient but needs adapting”, “enough but not realistic”, “necessary but unrealistic”, “informative but lacks practicality”, “nice but inapplicable”, “sufficient but not applicable”, and “not realistic but idealistic”. The participants showed partial agreement due to time limits, unequal conditions and lack of assessment of these competencies while some were in favour of extension of these competencies and criticized the effect of KPSS scores in teacher appointment.

Four categories emerged for participant perspectives in that there were positive, negative and mixed. The categories will be exemplified in the light of participant comments. First of all, positive opinions are provided in the following. Some of the pre-

service English teachers find these competencies sufficient and realistic as indicated in the WIP question because they believe that every teacher should have these competencies which are related to the courses taken at university as the following participant states:

STE 33: *Yes, I find these competencies sufficient and realistic enough since it is correlated with our education which we have taken in university. Also, as I mentioned each teacher must have these competencies.*

The next three participants favour the details of these competency items and one defines them as comprehensive. They seem to be content with the inclusion of the role of various stakeholders and educational context, and think that these competencies are based on the real needs of teaching-learning process. One of them stresses the place of technology integration in educational contexts and sees the technology-related items useful.

STE 59: *I think they are comprehensive enough because the competencies take all but every important dimensions of ELT such as parents, school environment into consideration.*

STE 65: *They are absolutely sufficient and realistic. Because they are main needs on teaching process.*

STE 101: *I do because they examine many details such as teacher-parent relationship or using technology.*

The last three participants report the necessity of these competencies for determining qualities expected from teachers. One of them appears to have positive feelings about learning these competencies for the first time and finds them both realistic and sufficient while another one approves the practicality of these competencies in real teaching situations.

STE 155: *Yes, because they include the necessary qualities for a teacher.*

STE 302: *Yes, they are sufficient and realistic enough. Because I have not known some important point so far. I've just learned now.*

STE 366: *Yes, I find all these sufficient and realistic enough to practice in real context.*

Below are the negative views of the participant pre-service English teachers about the generic and English teacher competencies. The first one does not think that these competencies are useful and says that teachers have their own way of teaching and do not modify their teaching practices according to these competencies. The next participant does not find some competency items realistic due to context-bound dynamics of teaching institutions.

STE 24: *I do not think it is useful because all teachers make what they want. They do not perform according to these competencies.*

STE 39: *Some of them are not realistic because they don't take into consideration to the realities of Turkey.*

The next participant is in favour of keeping up with the latest changes in information technology and desires these competencies to be compatible with the changing technology. S/he also adds the lack of information about technological developments.

STE 54: *I think they should be suitable for information-technology advances in our world, but I don't have any certain information.*

The number of competency items is criticized for being too many and detailed nature of these competencies is thought to hinder teachers from gaining all of them. The next participant (STE 62) thinks that not all of these competencies are realistic and adds that teachers in his/her school are not aware of these competencies or are not qualified enough to teach English very well.

STE 55: *I think they are not realistic enough because there are many and detailed competencies. It seems difficult to be able to actualize all of them.*

STE 62: *All of them are not realistic enough, unfortunately. I am a trainee at a primary school, and the teachers do not know these competencies. Also, they don't have any qualities to teach English very well.*

The reason for not favouring these competencies and defining them as unrealistic are explained by the following participants. They state that no teacher can possess these competencies and add that even if they do, they won't apply the competencies in their real classes. One of them (STE 160) stresses the gap between the teacher images created with these competencies and different characteristics of teaching in the real educational settings. Another criticism is made against the detailed nature of the competencies since they were thought to be challenging for teachers to possess. Finally, the lacking aspects of pre-service teacher education programs to improve the related competencies are revealed.

STE 67: *Actually, they are not realistic. Even if teachers are aware of these competencies, they don't apply them in teaching.*

STE 95: *I think sufficient but maybe it is not realistic enough. I've never seen a teacher who bears these competencies.*

STE 110: *No because no one can have all these competencies.*

STE 160: *No, they are not realistic. They are prepared for idealistic students but real world is very different.*

STE 190: *These competencies are sufficient but I think it's impossible that every teacher has these competencies.*

STE 235: *I think they are mostly unrealistic. There are many detailed and challenging competencies.*

STE 288: *No. I think it is not possible for all teacher to have these qualifications regarding the quality of teacher training programs.*

STE 354: *No, they are not realistic.*

There were also the participant pre-service English teachers who had both positive and negative opinions about the generic and English teacher competencies. There are differences among these participants in terms of their opinions regarding the reality and sufficiency of these competencies in that while some of the pre-service participants find these competencies sufficient but not realistic, some other find it not sufficient but realistic as in the following. One reports every teacher should have these competencies while another one finds the related competencies inapplicable by teachers.

STE 16: *Not sufficient but if study more, it can be more realistic.*

STE 61: *They are sufficient but not realistic. Every teacher should have these competencies but they don't have.*

STE 73: *Some of them are sufficient but some of them are not realistic enough. I think they are not applicable by a teacher.*

The following participant thinks that these competencies are beyond being sufficient but adds that teachers are content with their current competencies and won't make any efforts to improve them in such areas as higher thinking skills or school festivals.

STE 80: *Sufficient enough?...they are more than sufficient. However, one gets the feeling these "competencies" were proliferated from other places. Most teachers wouldn't bother with the effort of higher thinking skills, school festivals and increasing global awareness. They feel they have enough on their plate as it is.*

The following participants seem to perceive these competencies as characteristics of an ideal teacher and find them unrealistic and inapplicable in Turkey. Another point which is thought be difficult is the testing and improvement of these competencies. The participants seem to have concerns regarding the application of these competencies in real teaching contexts.

STE 102: *These are features of an ideal teacher. Also realistic but I don't think that in our country we have enough ideal teachers, includes me.*

STE 136: *They are sufficient but they can be developed, but in Turkey they don't seem realistic, because testing the competencies is not easy and is not enough, so invalid.*

STE 324: *I think they are sufficient but can be extended if necessary. It may change depending on the needs or necessities. Plus, they are realistic, as well. The thing is that they should be valued and applied appropriately.*

STE 336: *Yes, but difficult to acquire in our system.*

Table 4: In-service Answers to the Second WIP Item

Positive	7	18.4 %
Negative	23	60.5 %
Mixed 1 (+ and -)	8	21.1 %
Total	38	100 %

Table 4 reports the answers of the in-service English teachers to the second WIP item which asks whether the participants find the generic and English teacher competencies sufficient and realistic. Various categories emerged as positive, negative and mixed emerged upon the sufficiency and reality of these competencies. The mixed categorization includes answers where the participants have both positive and negative views. 7 (18.4 %) pre-participants held positive views about these competencies, while 23 (60.5 %) held negative views, and 8 (21.1 %) held both positive and negative views. It can be concluded that the in-service English teachers hold negative views about the sufficiency and reality of these competencies.

The following in-service English teachers find these competencies sufficient and realistic, and think that the competencies can guide them to conduct their classes efficiently since they reflect the real teaching situations.

T 372: *Yes, I do. They help us to do our job in an efficient way.*

T 394: *Yes, they are sufficient and realistic enough I think. Because they are intimate competencies.*

T 400: *Yes, I find them sufficient and realistic. Because they're about the real situations we experience while teaching.*

T 404: *Yes, they are sufficient and realistic enough.*

Aside from in-service English teachers with positive opinions, there are some other in-service English teachers who hold negative opinions about these competencies. They find the related competencies insufficient and unrealistic due to the realities of teaching contexts in Turkey which are thought to be in sharp contrast to the competencies in question. These participants stress the different aspects of learners with different characteristics. One of them states that these competencies do not respond to real needs of teachers who are appointed in teaching contexts with various social and economic problems. Another one complains about losing his/her existing competencies in the course of time and not focusing on improving his/her teaching competencies in line with these competencies.

T 368: *As I said before, these qualifications are inefficient and not realistic yeah! We live in a realistic world and we must to be realistic. Could it be possible to be the so called? Teacher as in MONE?*

T 370: *I think it's less sufficient and "too" realistic. As we are studying children or youngsters, all these are different aspects.*

T 375: *Not realistic enough, because the reason we teach is a place full of social and economic problems. And it doesn't answer to these problems.*

T 383: *Not realistic, because real life is different.*

T 397: *No, I don't think so. We can't apply our competencies so we can't have any practice also we can lose our competencies day by day.*

The following in-service teachers provide different negative aspects of the competencies. One of them complains about the crowd of classes and reports that these competencies cannot be applied in such crowded classrooms while another one points out the formal requirements of these competencies and reflect it as work overload. Another one states that having these competencies does not mean anything in real teaching contexts since teacher competencies are not tested and teachers are not given feedback upon their teaching practices. Finally, expectations of current education system are thought to outnumber these competencies.

T 409: *With crowded classes, they are not so realistic.*

T 412: *Actually, they are not realistic. These competencies are full of paper-work instead of being field-specific.*

T 430: *No, I don't. There are a lot of teachers who are far away of being a teacher and English. But they are still teaching. So after you start teaching no one knows what you are doing*

in the class. Whether you have the competence or not, or during the years what you have lost or gained. If no one pushes you, you don't do anything.

T 441: *These competencies are not sufficient because our educational system requires much more than expected.*

There are also some in-service English teachers who have both positive and negative opinions about the generic and English teacher competencies. For example, the first following participant stresses the changing side of life and education as well as theory-practice gap due to the discrepancy between books and teaching experiences. The same participant approves the usefulness of these competencies, thinks they should be followed as general framework for professional development but adds that these competencies should be rearranged and modified in line with the rapidly changing lifestyle.

T 406: *As I've mentioned above, books are all full of theories. Life is changing fast, as well as the needs of the student and conditions of education. Theories in books are general. However, we may have specific experiences during teaching process. So competences can sometimes feel unrealistic or sufficient. On the other hand, when we take the competences as a whole, they are beneficial and they work well in general.*

The following in-service English teacher finds these competencies realistic but not enough due to the changing dynamics of the classroom and requirements of instant decision-making of teaching profession. S/he also talks about the importance of teaching experience aside from having these competencies and highlights the importance of active stakeholder participation in teaching-learning process. Finally, the last teacher finds these competencies sufficient and realistic but adds that some of the competency items need to be updated.

T 414: *the competencies are not alone enough to make and support a good teaching environment. There are so many unexpected situations in the class that you need to be really experienced and have most of these competencies to handle it. Of course they are realistic but I think they are not enough. The weak sides should be supported. Not only teachers but also everyone in the process should do something.*

T 417: *I think, the competencies set by MoNE are sufficient and realistic. But some parts of it needs to be updated.*

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out and compare the perspectives of pre-service and in-service English teachers about the generic and field-specific teacher competencies. The student teachers who expressed positive opinions about the generic and English teacher competencies state that English learners, pre-service English teachers and in-service English teachers can benefit from it. It can be concluded that effective implementation of these competencies can provide opportunities for various stakeholders. In turn, English learners will benefit from these teachers more in their courses because the qualified teachers will have high competency levels in both theoretical and practical aspects. Consequently, the whole educational system will be positively influenced since

student success is thought to be affected by teacher success and qualifications. Therefore, small changes in the introduction of teacher competencies at pre-service level may result in crucial consequences in educational settings in the long term. Finally, it should be kept in mind that previous experiences of teachers play an important role in their teaching identity and shape their choices greatly.

While some participants found the generic and English teacher competencies sufficient and realistic, others found these competencies insufficient and unrealistic. Exposure to these competencies during pre-service teacher training programs can help student teachers to realize and question their feasibility. However, there were some opposing ideas about the content of these competencies in that some described the competencies comprehensive whereas others thought that these detailed items make competencies unrealistic. Besides, some teachers may find these competencies inapplicable due to the bad physical conditions, crowded classes, lack of school facilities and see gaining these competencies as work overload. The number of the competency items may seem overwhelming for some pre-service or in-service English teachers but they can be informed about the studies conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of these items so that the credibility of these competency items can be assured on the part of student teachers and in-service English teachers. If teachers' awareness is increased about teaching competencies and they are invited to participate in decision-making procedures on specifying and evaluating teacher competencies, they can be convinced to evaluate their knowledge and skills continually, and stop adhering to the same teaching practices. Also, these competency items can be explained by associating them with their practical reflections in real classroom settings so that teachers can appreciate the value of the underlying reasons behind each competency item and find them sufficient enough to reflect realities of classroom settings. If teachers are convinced about diminishing the gap between the formal descriptions of these competencies and their implications in practice, teachers are likely to perceive them as achievable, which show us the role of an effective mentoring system in bridging the theory-practice gap (Koc, 2011; Adoniou, 2013). Thus, these competencies can be moved away from being abstract, utopic or too idealistic and determine what qualifications are needed to become a teacher.

In light of the data analyses and participant statements, the components of teacher competencies were identified. The three main components were benefits, constraints and improvements shown in Figure 1 below.

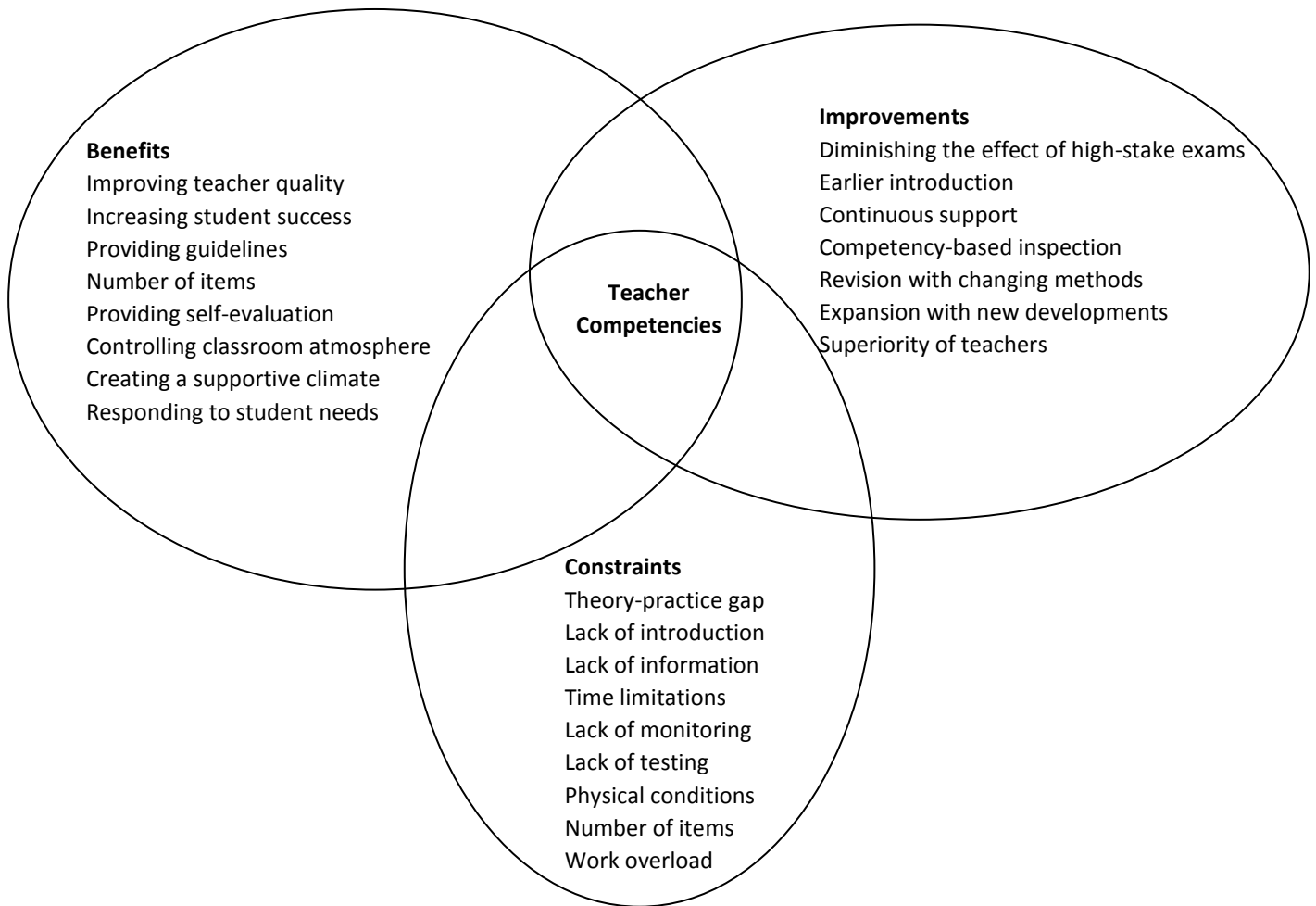


Figure 1: Components of teacher competencies

According to the figure, there exist some sub-categories of the main emerging themes, namely the components of teacher competencies which direct their formation. These sub-categories reflect the commonly cited aspects in the written statements of the participants.

It should be noted that uniformity between the perspectives of pre-service and in-service teachers has been identified. For instance, more than half of the participants in both groups displayed positive thoughts about the generic and English teacher competencies while a large number of the pre-service (N: 96, 41.6%) and in-service participants (N: 23, 60.5%) reflected negative perspectives for the practicality and sufficiency of these competencies.

The participant English teachers reported that the generic and English teacher competencies in question improve teacher qualities, contribute to student success, provide a kind of guidelines or framework to be followed for standardization purposes, help teachers evaluate themselves according to specific criteria, facilitate classroom management skills and create a supportive climate in classrooms. They also add that the large number of the competencies make them comprehensive and make it easier to serve student needs. However, there were also objections about the practicality and

sufficiency of the competencies. Theory-practice gap comes first as the most commonly cited problem in the implementation of these competencies in real classroom settings, which attracts the attention to the necessity of university-school collaboration. Since teachers are not introduced to the desired teacher competencies at national and international level during their pre-service teacher education, they arrive at their school with a lack of information. Because they are not empowered with these competencies, not monitored or tested accordingly by inspectors or local authorities, they naturally tend to disregard the improvement of these competencies. Context-bound differences count in practice because the actualization of the same competency item may come true in different ways in different schools located in different socio-economic environment. Systematic improvement of teacher competencies necessitates sufficient amount of time and effort but time limitations can hinder effective delivery. Crowded classes, insufficiency of technological tools and physical conditions of schools and classrooms were found to be the other hindering factors. While some participants found the detailed nature of the competencies comprehensive, some oppose the idea saying that too many competency items are unrealistic and leaves no room for their personal development. Finally, improvement of teacher competencies might mean work overload for teachers or teacher educators. To eradicate the negative aspects or problems of the related teacher competencies, the participant teachers made some suggestions. They propose that the effect of high-stake examinations held nationwide should be lessened, the competencies should be introduced earlier in pre-service education and go on during in-service education, teachers should be supported continuously to improve their competencies, teachers should be evaluated according to these competencies and the competencies should be revised in line with changing methods, educational moves and technological advances. As the last point, they stress the superiority of the teacher and advocate participation of teacher in decision-making for forming and revising teacher competencies.

6. Implications

When educational success is considered to be a chain, pre-service and in-service teachers are among the links which form the chain and create the balance in the chain so their perspectives, competencies and suggestions count a lot for improving teacher qualities.

Therefore, the following suggestions are presented:

- Desired teacher competencies at national and international level should be introduced at pre-service teacher education programs so that student Teachers can gain awareness about what are expected from them. These competencies could be offered as a separate course or integrated across the curriculum.
- In-service teachers should be informed about the rationale of these competencies and guided how to implement them effectively in their classes. Teachers can be provided with theoretical and practical knowledge via workshops, seminars and regular meetings held at schools. In this way, teachers could share their

knowledge and experiences, and get feedback from mentors, experienced colleagues and/or teacher educators.

- Only the introduction of teacher competencies may not create the desired effect on teaching practices. Thus, the competencies can be used by inspectors as guidelines for monitoring the progress of teachers. In others words, the competencies can function as a self-assessment form to show strong and weak points. In this way, teachers will be equipped with clues about what to capitalize on or what to ignore.
- Testing the possession of the competencies is another overlooked area because only offering a long list of competencies may not be meaningful. Teachers can be assessed with the help of these forms. For instance, micro-teaching presentations of student teachers can be evaluated with the related part in the competencies. Alternatively, inspectors or mentors evaluate the performance of a teacher according to the competency items.
- Participation of all stakeholders in decision-making process is an important issue because when involved in decision-making, pre-service and in-service Teachers will feel more valued and there will be a democratic environment. In sum, pre-service and in-service teachers should have a say in deciding about the content of teacher competencies.
- Teacher competencies are dynamic, not static so the available teacher competencies will go through modifications in line with the demands of the era and requirements of trendy educational moves. What is more, different applications of these competencies should be exemplified considering context-bound differences of educational contexts to serve student needs better.
- This could be an international network where countries share their own teacher competencies for comparative purposes. Attempts like EPOSTL can be expanded and adapted to be compatible with context-bound differences.

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Appendix A: Written Interview Questions**

**It should be noted that only the answers to the third and fourth questions are covered in this study.

1. Are you informed about both the generic teacher competencies and English teacher competencies set by Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE)?
2. When and how were you informed about the above-mentioned MoNE competencies?
3. What do you think of the generic and English teacher competencies set by Turkish MoNE?
4. Do you find these competencies sufficient and realistic enough? Why or why not?
5. How do you think these competencies contribute to your professional identity?
6. Do you think there should be support from other stakeholders like experienced colleagues, administrators, inspectors, and parents for improving these competencies? If yes, in what forms do you think it will take place?
7. Do you think contextual factors like administrative support, physical conditions, and crowd of classes hinder you from doing what you actually would like to do in your classes?
8. Do you think you find enough opportunities, time and encouragement to conduct research in your classes?
9. Do you agree that it is worth doing extra-curricular activities in your English classes? How do they contribute to your teaching career?
10. Were you provided with autonomy-increasing teaching techniques in your B.A. courses? Do you think it is enough for your professional development?
11. Are you content with in-service training provided by mentors, teacher educators and authorities in your school if you have had any?
12. What are the indicators of a good mentor in your in-service training?
13. Do you follow or participate in academic events in your field? Do you think research results are applicable in your classes?
14. Why did you choose the teaching profession? Do you think it is a lifelong career?
15. What should be an English teacher's role?
16. What do you think of the role of inspection in the teaching profession in Turkey? How does inspection affect your teaching competencies?
17. Do you think psychological tests should be used to choose teacher candidates?
18. How would the closure of education faculties affect the teaching profession in terms of teacher competencies?
19. Please indicate if you have any other comments regarding teacher competencies set by MoNE?

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