

Reformative Shift on Initial Teacher Education in Turkey: From Authority to Autonomy

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to reveal the opinions and recommendations of the instructors in the field of Curriculum and Instruction regarding the recent reformative shift on initial teacher education in Turkey that is the decision of Turkish Higher Education Council to delegate the authority in developing and updating initial teacher education programs to the teacher education institutions. It is built on the survey design. The participants of the study are the 88 curriculum and instruction specialists from 37 universities in Turkey. The data were collected with an online questionnaire. Results of the study showed that, while the instructors welcome the decision of the Higher Education Council to delegate authority so that autonomy can be given to teacher education institutions within the general framework it has drawn and original contents can be developed, they have concerns that a minimum standard for teacher competencies cannot be achieved through initial teacher education programs with different qualifications. In order to ensure the development and sustainability of authentic initial teacher education programs in the new term, they recommend that the processes be carried out as participatory and transparent as possible, and that curriculum and instruction specialists and departments take an active role as a guide in this journey.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Initial Teacher Education, Initial Teacher Education Programs, Teacher Education Reform, Curriculum and Instruction Specialist.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the importance of teacher quality is well known (Goe, 2007) not only for student success (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), but correspondingly also for a good economy (Hanushek, 2011) and a good life (Chetty, et al., 2014). Training qualified teachers for a qualified education has become the main theme of education policies (Buchberger et al., 2000). Successful education systems spend most of their energies on teachers' professional development, including initial teacher education (ITE) (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

ITE is a dynamic process consisting of various components that affect each other, such as programs, integration of technology, faculty-school cooperation, and performance evaluation (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Studies examining qualified teacher education systems have revealed that the most distinctive components of these systems are qualified ITE programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Çağatay, 2016; Özcan, 2012) and institutional capacities that make it possible to implement these programs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). For this reason, among the studies on teacher education, program-centred studies are on the agenda in every period (Yıldırım, 2013). Accordingly, the criticisms levelled to teacher education systems, which form the basis of education reforms, are mostly directed towards the programs (Yıldırım, 2011).

With the National Education Basic Law (1973, Part 3, Article 43), defining teaching as a "profession of specialization", it requires that "all pre-service teachers should receive higher education" with the construction of a framework including general culture, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge", which are the basic components of the profession. In the ongoing process, the ITE programs were organized to give a bachelor's degree after a four-year education for all the fields of teaching (Kavak et al., 2007) and thus the foundation of the today's teacher education system was set up.

Official reform movements were initiated in teacher education of Turkey, both at the structural and curricular level, in order to eliminate the problems that were the source of criticism and to meet the need for teachers in some fields (Erdem, 2013). While education faculties were restructured on the basis of department and programs through structural reforms, ITE were updated through program-level reforms (Grossman et al., 2007). With the new regulations, all education faculties started to follow the central standard programs developed by Higher Education Council (Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK/HEC]) (Kavcar, 2002). Although central programs were initially welcomed with the conviction that they could prevent quality differences between education faculties, they later turned into a disadvantage due to the lack of flexibility in faculties, which caused the perception of a "standard program" to turn into the perception of a "fixed program".

Continued experiences showed that reforms still had areas for improvement (Simsek & Yıldırım, 2001). In the theory-practice balance, which was disrupted in favor of practice with previous reforms (Üstüner, 2004), a new balance was sought this time with preferences in favor of theory. The theoretical lessons that were abolished before were placed in ITE programs again with the new reform (Karaca, 2008). The main reasons for these regulations are explained by HEC (2006) as follows; the failure of education faculties to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills required by the age and the restructuring initiatives by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, [Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı] (MoNE) including the paradigm change in primary education programs and implementing programs suitable for the learning outcomes determined by the European Higher Education for ITE.

In the following period, the updating of the General Competencies of the Teaching Profession in line with the Framework of Competencies in the European Higher Education (MoNE, 2017) and the European Commission's recommendations for the creation of core programs for ITE and including at least 25.00% of elective courses in the programs triggered a new reform (HEC, 2018). The reasons for the update include training pre-service teachers as versatile and investigative teachers by gathering elective courses with similar content in a common pool, and the re-creation of the program in such a

way as to make content and pedagogy courses dominant in the program in parallel with the developments in the national K-12 curricula and educational sciences (HEC, 2018).

Today, Turkey has come to a new crossroad of reform with the announcement of HEC (2020) that the studies on the development and updating of the ITE programs of the faculties of education/educational sciences would be conducted by the concerned faculties considering the published competencies by official institutions (MoNE, 2017; Turkish Vocational Qualifications Authority, 2015). The HEC will undertake the tasks of monitoring, evaluating and supervising the process. Although the delegation of authority is promising for teacher education with creative and original models, the question of how the transition from a centralized teacher education model to authentic teacher education models will be is still ignored.

The conduct of education policies as planned depends to a great extent on how they are perceived by stakeholders (Aksit, 2007). The success of implementing any reform in the education system largely depends on the engagement (Fullan, 2001) and commitment (McLaughlin, 1987) of key stakeholders at all levels. Perhaps the most important stakeholders in reforms related to education programs are Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) specialists. However, researchers' observations argue that the instructors are not sufficiently capitalized on as specialists in this field. It is fair to say that the scrutiny of how C&I specialists evaluate the serious decision of delegating authority by the Council of Higher Education, their views on the benefits and possible negative effects of this decision on teacher education process and their recommendations on how to manage the following processes may shed light on the sustainability of the reform and thus on the future of teacher education.

In this regard, the purpose of the current study is to reveal the opinions of C&I specialists (teacher educators at the same time) about the recent reformative shift on initial teacher education in Turkey that is the decision of HEC on faculty-autonomy in developing and updating ITE programs, and their complementary recommendations for the forthcoming processes of teacher education. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the opinions of the C&I specialists on the HEC's decision of the delegation of authority of the development and updating of the ITE programs to the faculties of education/educational sciences?
2. What are the recommendations of the C&I specialists for the transition to the new period of authentic programs and its sustainability?
3. What are the opinions and recommendations of the C&I specialists in relation to possible responsibilities of C&I departments during and after the transition to the new period of authentic programs?

METHOD

The current study, which aims to reveal the opinions and recommendations of the C&I specialists about faculty-autonomy in ITE programs, is built on the cross-sectional survey design (Wiersma, 1991). Surveys aims to measure the variables like opinions, attitudes, recommendations etc. in the natural settings (Karasar, 2012;). Surveys mainly deals with the research question of *what is/are* and attempts to explain what is/are (Wiersma, 1991). In this line, this study basically attempted to explain what the opinions and recommendations of C&I specialists on the HEC's decision of the delegation of authority of the development and updating of the ITE programs to the faculties of education/educational sciences are.

Participants of the Study

In the selection of the participants, the criterion sampling method was used. The criterion taken into consideration was being a specialist in the field of curriculum and instruction. All the 385

instructors who are members of the Turkish Association of Curriculum and Instruction (EPÖDER) were reached via e-mail, and 88 of them accepted to participate in the study voluntarily. Information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the Participants

Institution	f	%
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	9.00	10.20
Aydın Adnan Menderes University	6.00	6.80
Anadolu University	5.00	5.70
Middle East Technical University	4.00	4.50
Ankara University	4.00	4.50
Ordu University	4.00	4.50
İnönü University	3.00	3.40
Pamukkale University	3.00	3.40
Ege University	3.00	3.40
Çukurova University	3.00	3.40
Foundation Universities	2.00	2.40
Retired	1.00	1.20
Other State Universities	41.00	46.60
Total	88.00	100.00
Title	f	%
Professor	25.00	28.40
Assoc. Professor	33.00	37.50
Ass. Professor	22.00	25.00
Dr.	6.00	6.80
Research assistant (doctoral studies are still in progress)	2.00	2.20
Total	88.00	100.00
Length of Service	f	%
1-5 years	7.00	7.95
6-10 years	15.00	17.04
11-15 years	13.00	14.77
16-20 years	16.00	18.18
20 years and more	37.00	42.04
Total	88.00	100.00
Administrative Duty	f	%
Dean/Deputy Dean	6.00	6.90
Institute Director/Assistant Director	1.00	1.10
Head of Department/Vice President	16.00	18.40
Head of a program	18.00	20.70
Others	8.00	7.80
No administrative duty	50.00	57.30
Total	88.00	100.00

The study group consisted of academicians from 37 different universities and most of them are females (54.50%), associate professors and professors (65.90%), have been working for 11 years or more (74.99%) and have no administrative duties (57.30%). The experiences of participants, who are expected to take part in the development, review and/or evaluation processes of teacher education in line with the new decision, regarding program development and/or evaluation, are important. For this reason, they were asked whether they were involved in any program development/evaluation studies. The findings showed that the majority of the instructors have experience in scientific studies (57.00%) or in the development/evaluation processes of various programs such as ITE (14.00%), but 10.50% of them have not yet been involved in any program development/evaluation process.

Data Collection and Data Collection Instrument

In survey studies, the questionnaire is one of the main data collection tools, and it may comprise open and close-ended questions depending on the purpose of the study (Karasar, 2012; Wiersma, 1991). In this line the data were collected with a questionnaire consisting of open and close-ended questions prepared by the researchers. While developing the questionnaire first, the draft questionnaire was developed on the basis of literature and experiences of the researchers. Then, the

opinions and recommendations of five specialists in the field of curriculum and instruction, measurement and evaluation and teacher education in two universities the researchers are studying, were taken. In line with the recommendations from the specialists reviewed questionnaire piloted with five C&I specialists, then it finalized. In the first part of the questionnaire, there are 5 close-ended questions eliciting the demographic information of the participants; in the second part, 4 close-ended questions about how the information about the delegation of authority was obtained, the state of dissemination of this information throughout the faculty, the current studies carried out and the experiences gained during the program development/evaluation process, and in the last part, there are five open-ended questions collecting data about possible positive/negative scenarios that might have been experienced after the decision was taken, recommendations for the transition and subsequent processes and the responsibilities of C&I instructors. Thus, the questionnaire used as a data collection tool was constructed to be consisted of a total of 14 questions; nine close-ended and five open-ended. The electronic form of the questionnaire was sent to the e-mail addresses of the instructors via EPÖDER in the academic year of 2020-2021 spring semester.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the responses to the close-ended questions. The demographic information in the first part of the questionnaire and the information in the second part are presented as frequency and percentage distributions. The responses to the other open-ended questions in the last part of the questionnaire were subjected to a two-stage inductive content analysis (Creswell, 2003). In the first stage, open coding and in the second stage, axis coding was performed (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). After the participants' responses were read in the open coding process, meaningful codes were determined, and the related codes were brought together under the themes, to make junk of data more understandable. In the axis coding, considering the research questions, relationships between the codes under each theme or where appropriate, the relations with other codes within other themes and the relations among the themes were explained and interpreted. The themes and interpretations were supported with meaningful and remarkable quotations from the responses given by the participants.

Various measures were taken to establish validity and reliability in the study: During the development of the data collection tool, the analysis of the data and the process of making inferences from the results, the opinions of C&I, qualitative research methods and language experts were collaborated. A pilot application of the questionnaire was made with two instructors who are specialists in the field of C&I. The responses given by three randomly selected participants to the open questions were coded by two researchers, and the coding was continued until reaching a consensus on the issues of disagreement. Confirmation of two instructors was sought whether the codes, themes and interpretations obtained represented the data set. In order to increase objectivity and provide the possibility of comparison, the findings are presented with their numerical values. Finally, the findings of the study were supported with direct quotations from the participants coded as P1, P2, ... P88 for ethical issues.

Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and no information that violates personal privacy was requested. In addition, ethics committee approval was obtained for the study from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of first author's University on February 03, 2021 with the decision numbered 50.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained in the study are presented. In this context, first the findings related to preliminary information and then the findings related to the research questions are presented. The findings regarding the channels of the participants through which they have heard about the decision of the delegation of authority are summarized in Table 2.

The Findings Regarding the Preliminary Information

The findings regarding the channels of the participants through which they have heard about the decision of the delegation of authority are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Channels of the Participants Through Which They Have Heard About the Decision of the Delegation of Authority

Channels through which they heard	f	%
Through a message sent by HEC to my institutional e-mail address	40.00	45.50
Through the HEC's institutional website	14.00	15.90
Through the Dean's message on the subject	23.00	26.10
Through the message sent by the head of the department on the subject	9.00	10.20
Through the message sent by the head of the program on the subject	3.00	3.40
Through my colleagues	19.00	21.60
Through media	29.00	33.30
Through social media	17.00	19.30
Through the official letter sent by HEC to faculties	1.00	1.10
Not heard	2.00	2.30
Total	88.00	100.00

As can be seen in Table 2, a significant part of the participants was informed about the delegation of authority mainly through the message sent by HEC to their institutional e-mail addresses (45.50%), media (33.30%) and the Dean's message (26.10%). Despite variety of channels to inform them, there are also instructors (2.30%) who haven't heard about this decision yet.

The responses given by the participants about the extent to which they themselves and other faculty members in their faculties have heard about this decision are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. State of Faculty Members' Having Heard About HEC's Decision of the Delegation of Authority

State of faculty members' having heard	f	%
All the faculty members have heard about it	35.00	39.80
The great majority of the faculty members have heard about it	29.00	33.00
Some of the faculty members have heard about it	11.00	12.50
I have no idea about the subject	13.00	14.80
None of them have heard about it	0.00	0.00
Total	88.00	100.00

From Table 3, it is understood that the faculty members participating in the study are generally aware of HEC's decision of the delegation of authority (39.80% and 33.00%).

The findings regarding the studies initiated and/or completed in faculties after the relevant decision was taken are given in Table 4.

Table 4. State of the Studies on ITE Programs in Faculties

State of the studies on ITE programs in faculties	f	%
ITE programs for the new term have been prepared in all the departments	4.00	4.50
ITE programs for the new term have been prepared in some departments	2.00	2.30
Studies have been initiated to develop ITE programs in all the departments	16.00	18.20
Studies have been initiated to develop ITE programs in some departments	23.00	26.10
Studies have been initiated to develop ITE programs in none of the departments	30.00	33.00
I have no idea on the subject	13.00	14.80
Total	88.00	100.00

In Table 4, it is seen that some faculties have not started any studies on their ITE programs yet, whereas in a limited number of faculties, all departments or some departments have prepared their ITE programs for the new term. On the other hand, in some faculties studies have been started in some

or all the departments to prepare ITE programs for the new term. A significant number of instructors have no idea about the studies carried out on ITE programs in their faculties.

Findings Regarding the Research Questions

The results of the content analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions are summarized in Figure 1.

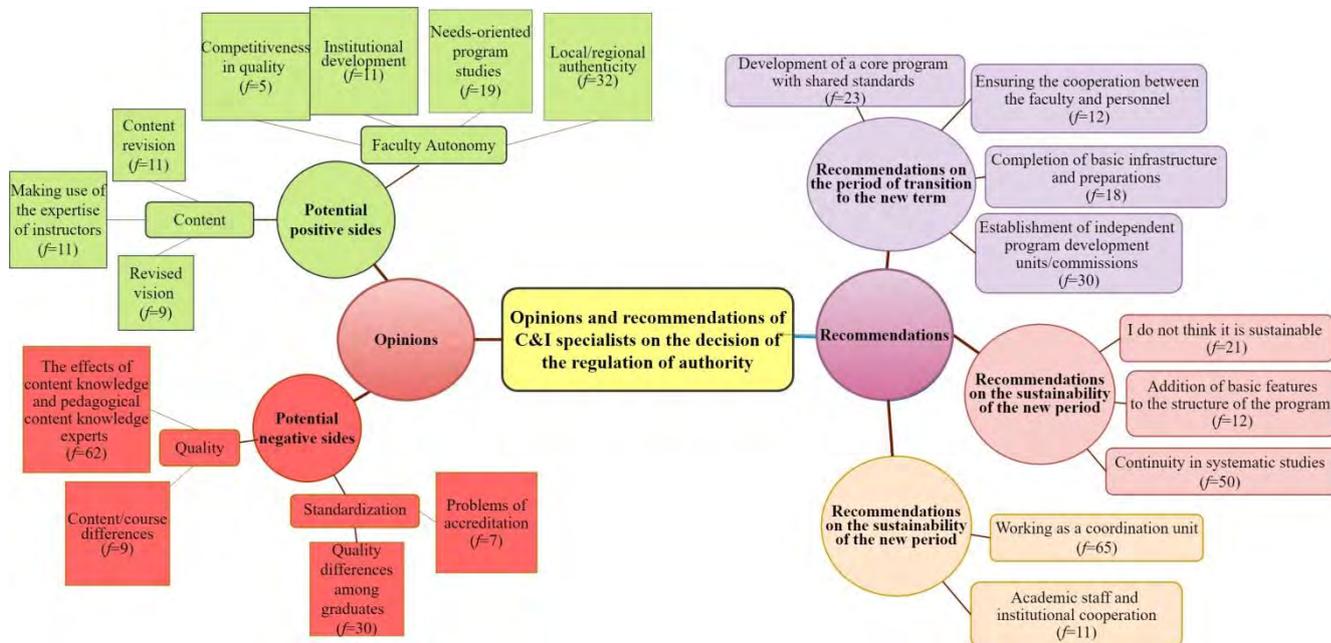


Figure 1. Opinions and Recommendations of the C&I specialists regarding HEC’s Decision of the Delegation of Authority

Figure 1 shows that, the analysis of the C&I specialists’ opinions and recommendations regarding HEC’s Decision of the Delegation of Authority yielded the five main themes. As follows, each main theme is presented separately.

The Findings Regarding the Opinions of the C&I Specialists on the Delegation of the Authority.

The findings regarding the opinions of the C&I specialists on the delegation of the authority are grouped under the titles of potential positive and negative sides of the decision of the delegation of authority.

The Findings of Potential Positive Sides of Delegation of Authority. The opinions of the participants on the potential positive sides of autonomy in developing ITE programs as a result of the decision of the delegation of authority are basically gathered under two main themes presented in Figure 2: faculty autonomy (f=64.00) and content (f=29.00).

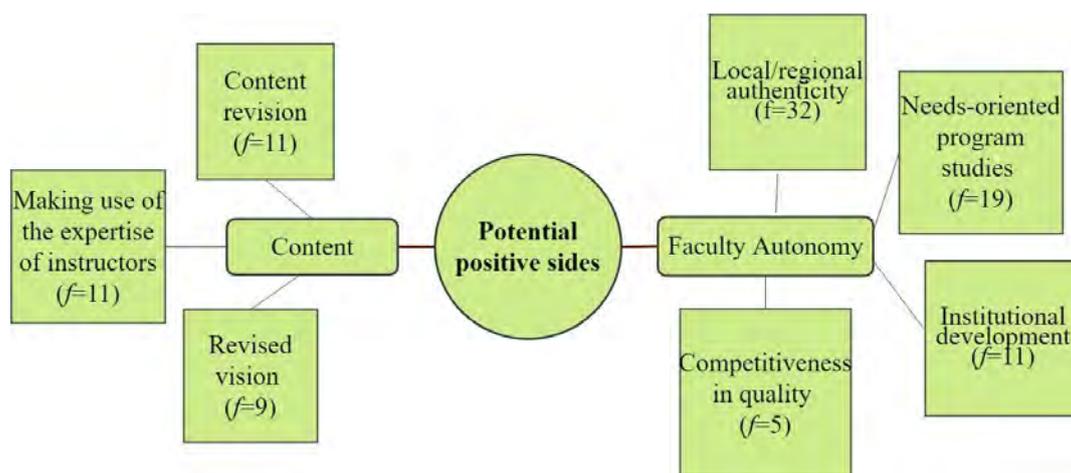


Figure 2. Opinions of the C&I Specialists Regarding Potential Positive Sides of HEC’s Decision of the Delegation of Authority

In Figure 2 it is seen that, the participants placed the greatest emphasis on gaining faculty autonomy and the practices that this autonomy can bring as a potential positive side of the new decision. Under the theme of faculty autonomy, participant responses focused on the themes of *local/regional originality*, *needs-oriented program studies*, *institutional development* and *competitiveness in quality*. When examined in more detail, it is seen that the potential positive side often emphasized in faculty autonomy is *local/regional authenticity*. The participants stated that after shifting autonomy, faculties can make original plans and practices considering different dynamics such as their own human and physical resources, local and regional collaborations, student profile and that program implementations can gain flexibility and these can be seen as the potential positive sides of the decision. The responses given by the participants within the scope of local/regional authenticity are exemplified below:

“It will bring autonomy and flexibility to faculties.” (P29)

“I think that developing their own original programs by making program development studies in faculties can contribute to the creation of models and structures that are tailored to the needs, original and suitable for the institutional background of the faculties. Thus, faculty-specific structures and processes will be developed.” (P47)

“Delegation of authority to education faculties can enable them to prepare appropriate programs within the context of their region.” (P53)

Another possible positive effect that the participants care about within the scope of practices that can be conducted within faculty autonomy is that the program studies within the faculty can be carried out in line with the needs felt and identified. Some of the participants think that a need-oriented and multilateral participation-based understanding of the processes will make the curriculum development processes more democratic, as well as strengthen the democratization of the internal functioning of the faculty. It was emphasized as an important part of these studies that faculties could determine their program preferences in line with the varying professional needs of pre-service teachers. The responses given by the participants are exemplified below:

“The reduction of intensive central control in teacher training processes and the better meeting of local needs contribute to the democratization of the departments and to the faculty democratization processes and programs.” (P4)

“If it is managed to be objective, it can be useful and if professional needs and professional development, current scientific and technological developments are taken into account, then it can be really useful.” (P11)

Another issue that the participants focused on among the potential positive sides is the institutional development of faculties. The contributions of the autonomous program studies and cooperative and institutional improvements to the institutional identity of faculties and the institutional belongingness of faculty staff are seen among the potential positive sides. The responses given by the participants within the context of supporting institutional development are exemplified below:

“It is a positive development that innovative universities with an academic tradition and institutional identity design and develop their own programs.” (P5)

“This is a delayed decision. I think it paves the way for education faculties to mature, find their identity and institutionalize...” (P20)

“I find it positive in terms of the participation of all stakeholders in program development studies. I think that it can strengthen the sense of commitment and cooperation.” (P75)

Within the framework of faculty autonomy, the participants are of the opinion that the original ITE of faculties can create a competitive environment in increasing the quality at the national level and this competition will support change and development in a positive direction. It is also among the positive sides that different studies and practices could be an example and guide for faculties. In this regard, one participant expressed his/her opinions as follows:

“It can create a positive competitive environment for the emergence of better ITE programs.” (P20)

In addition to the positive developments that can occur within the context of faculty autonomy, there are some positive developments that the participants think can be achieved within the context of content. In the main theme of content, the themes of content revision, making use of the expertise of instructors and updated vision were mentioned.

When the content revision is examined in itself, it is seen that the variety of the courses and their content's being able to meet the needs are the potential positive sides emphasized by the participants. Conducting studies to increase the diversity of the courses, to include up-to-date course contents in the program and to compensate for the weaknesses of the existing programs was also emphasized within the theme of content revision. The participants' responses are exemplified below:

“More up-to-date courses can be included in the program. Elective courses can be chosen according to need. Maybe the number of practical courses can be increased.” (P36)

“Objectives can be created to include knowledge, skills and competences that are not included in current programs and courses can be added accordingly. Levels of existing courses can be adjusted... Decreased credits of pedagogical content knowledge courses can be increased.” (P54)

In connection with the revisions that can be made in course contents, the benefits that can be obtained from the expertise of instructors in the presentation of new and rich contents were also shown among the potential positive sides. According to the participants, instructors working in different faculties will be able to positively affect these studies by taking an active role in determining course contents and types compatible with their fields of expertise. The participants' responses are exemplified below:

“With the delegation of authority, the courses can be diversified according to the expertise of the faculty members.” (P31)

“It will allow the inclusion of the courses that will enable academic staff to make more effective use of their expertise, experience and competences in the program.” (P40)

Based on the participant responses, the last possible positive effect considered within the theme of content is the updating of the vision in the content design. In the sub-theme of updated vision, the participants emphasized that the values, principles and processes that are considered nationally and internationally important should be taken into account in the content selection and organization of the teacher training program studies to be carried out under faculty autonomy, and stated that the vision should be updated in this direction. In this regard, some opinions of the participants are given below:

“It is positive. When the flexibility in the understanding of curriculum development is considered, each institution should consider various factors such as the region where it is located, developments in science and technology and individual differences.” (P17)

“Programs that can keep up with the development of science and technology and focus on developing analytical thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving skills can be prepared.” (P33)

The Findings of Potential Negative Sides of Delegation of Authority. The findings of potential negative sides of delegation of authority are presented in Figure 3.

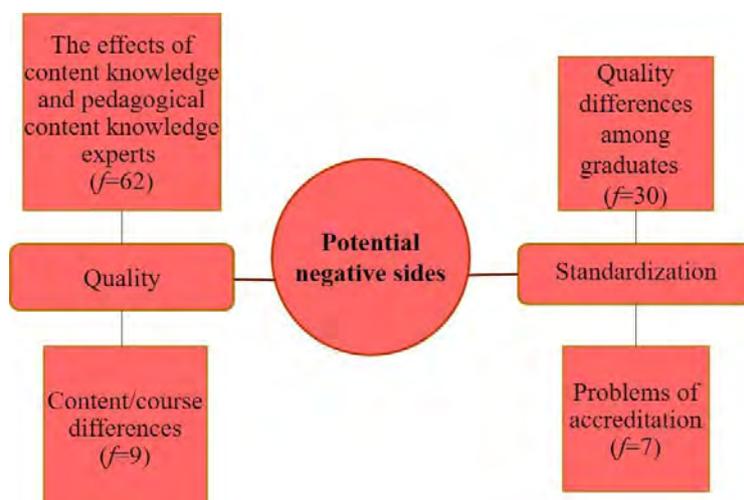


Figure 3. Opinions of the C&I Specialists Regarding Potential Negative Sides of HEC’s Decision of the Delegation of Authority

Figure 3 shows that, the main focus of the participants’ responses regarding the potential negative sides of applying authentic programs after the decision of the delegation of authority is *quality (f=70.00) and standardization (f=37.00)*. The two main issues that are thought to have negative effects on the quality of ITE as a result of the decision of the delegation of authority are *the effects of content/pedagogical content knowledge experts and the differences in content/course selection*. The potential negative sides related to standardization were identified as *differences between graduates and accreditation problems*.

In the sub-theme of the effects of content and pedagogical knowledge specialists working in the faculty on the development of qualified ITE within the context of faculty autonomy, concerns about potential problems such as the failure of the academic staff of both groups to cooperate, the opening of arbitrary courses, the precedence of content knowledge courses to pedagogy courses, the inability to ensure the active participation of all instructors in the process, dominance of some group on the decisions taken and attaching greater importance to political or personal interests than the goals of training qualified teachers were strongly emphasized. In addition to human differences, the participants also drew attention to the possible negative effects of differences in experience and

academic competence of the curriculum development process. It was emphasized that the quality differences of the academic staff that may be encountered in the process in terms of thought and experience will create diversity in the standards and quality of the program to be developed. In this regard, some participants expressed their opinions as follows:

“The people who will develop the program (whether teachers or instructors) must first of all have program development skills. However, given that many faculty members in education faculties do not even have formation education, it can be said that it is a dream to expect efficiency from the programs they will prepare. On the contrary, it may cause harm, not benefit, to pre-service teachers.” (P21)

“When faculties prepare their own programs, the programs preferred by the dominant groups/fields in the faculties will be prepared” (P5)

“If political ideologies and personal interests are given priority in the program preparation process, many negative aspects may emerge. I have concerns.” (P50)

“I also see the possibility that programs can be created in a very unethical way due to personal interests within faculties as a negative aspect.” (P65)

Other possible negative aspects that make the participants feel concerned about authentic programs are related to the courses and contents to be determined in the process. In the sub-theme of *content/course selection differences*, the participants drew attention to the potential of differences that might occur among faculties in many aspects such as course selection, number of courses and credits of courses, the expertise of instructors, content organization and physical environment to negatively affect the quality of ITE. Examples of responses reflecting the participants' concerns are given below:

“Since the course content and credits will be determined by the institution authorities, the courses that are deemed highly necessary for the teaching profession may be replaced by other courses.” (P6)

“In a situation where consistency between universities cannot be achieved... the quality gap between universities may increase even more.” (P8)

“The lack of standards in the courses and their content can make it difficult to assess the teaching competences of pre-service teachers across the country.” (P66)

“I think that the quality of education will decrease, especially in universities that cannot be institutionalized, have insufficient teaching staff, and have insufficient physical facilities and research resources.” (P72)

In connection with quality, under the theme of standardization, the primary concern of the participants about the possible negative aspects of the delegation of authority is that pre-service teachers graduate from different faculty programs with different qualifications. Graduates, who may vary in terms of teacher competencies and program standards, can be negatively affected if each faculty of education implements its own unique teacher training program. In particular, the fact that all pre-service teachers must have standardized exams in order to be appointed further strengthened this concern of the participants. Examples of the responses given by the participants are given below:

“Differences may occur in the qualifications of graduates, existing differences may deepen.” (P25)

“The fact that the programs developed by each faculty focus on different competences, but the graduates will serve the same system can make a difference in terms of competences.” (P26)

“Centralization of assessment and evaluation may be disadvantageous for pre-service teachers when the programs are decentralized. Nevertheless, a core teacher training program can be determined and pre-service teachers can be held responsible for this program. Maybe another alternative or even alternatives can be considered for the exam ...” (P12)

Another issue emphasized by the participants within the context of standardization was the accreditation issue, which is required for transfers among universities. According to the participants, the different course and content organization determined by each faculty within the scope of its own program may adversely affect the accreditation in inter-university transfers. The responses of the participants in relation to accreditation are exemplified below:

“There may be compatibility problems between programs in student movements such as Farabi, double major, minor, lateral transfers.” (P62)

“...In addition, when you change a course, the course accreditation of students coming from other education faculties with lateral transfer etc. becomes a big problem.” (P17)

Findings Regarding Recommendations of C&I Specialists for the Transition Process to the New Period of Authentic Programs

The recommendations of the participants are presented under the titles of *transition to* and *the sustainability of the new term of authentic programs*.

Findings Regarding Recommendations of C&I Specialists for the Transition Process to the New Period of Authentic Programs. Findings regarding recommendations of C&I specialists for the transition process to the new period of authentic programs are presented in Figure 4.

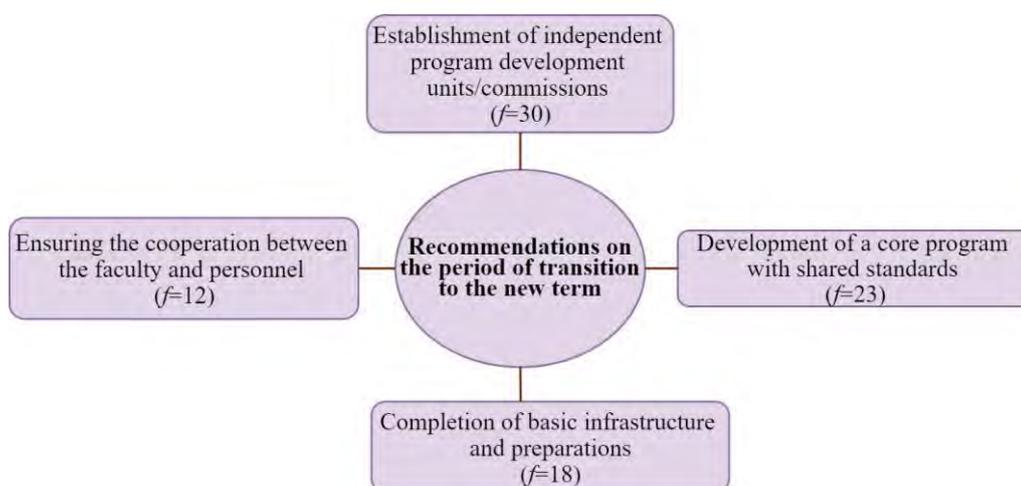


Figure 4. Recommendations of the C&I Specialists for the Transition Process to the New Period of Authentic Programs

Figure 4 shows that, after the decision of the delegation of authority, four main themes emerged from the recommendations received from the participants regarding the process of transition to the period of planning and implementing their own ITE programs by education faculties. According to the participants, during the process of transition to the new period, the establishment of independent program development units/commissions (f=30.00), the development of a core program with shared standards (f=23.00), the completion of basic infrastructure and preparations (f=18.00) and ensuring cooperation between the faculty and personnel (f=12.00) are the most important issues. It was noted that with these recommendations, negative effects can be prevented.

The most important recommendation made by the participants seems to be the establishment of independent program development units/commissions in order to plan, implement and supervise the ITE in the faculties in accordance with a scientific and systematic process. It was considered important to include program development experts in the commissions to be established. It was emphasized that the theoretical structure and operation, which is the basis of program development studies, can be carried out in a scientific framework independently in these commissions. Examples of the responses from the participants are given below:

“Commissions should be established for the evaluation and development of ITE programs in faculties. In particular, these commissions should include faculty members who hold a doctoral degree in the field of curriculum and measurement-evaluation. In this way, ITE programs should be evaluated and developed.” (P31)

“Establishment of the “Program Development Team”, which includes academicians working in this field, under the roof of each Department, as well as the creation of the “Program Development Unit” of the Faculty, which will ensure coordination between ITE programs.” (P40)

“A higher commission should be established at the faculty level and then program development commissions should be established separately for each department including all the stakeholders, needs analysis should be conducted, program objectives/outcomes should be determined based on stakeholders’ opinions and needs analysis, and courses should be determined accordingly.” (P50)

“Plans can be made with the coordination of the Educational Sciences Department. It may be beneficial to establish units composed of competent people in the field of education to inspect whether qualified programs have been created, and to make evaluations in accordance with the criteria presented by HEC.” (P54)

It was recommended that besides independent units and commissions, a basic core program framework could be created in faculties in order to prevent problems that might be experienced in standardization. They stated that in this way unity could be achieved in basic teacher competencies and standards, the problem of accreditation in student transfers between faculties could be resolved and pre-service teachers could gain the common knowledge required to be appointed as a teacher. The responses given by the participants are exemplified below:

“Faculties should jointly prepare a program framework.” (P12)

“Although faculties are let free to develop their own programs, some common courses on the competences of the teaching profession must be given in every faculty. It would be beneficial to establish a higher committee to decide on these courses.” (P15)

“Within the framework of a core program, a flexible program consisting of elective courses should be created in which each department and faculty can reflect their own characteristics.” (P25)

“Working around a core program in the process, some policy decisions made by HEC and universities and managing it under the coordination of program development experts working in faculties.” (P74)

In the recommendations of the participants, the need to complete the basic infrastructure and preparations by taking into account the possible problems that might be encountered in the development of autonomous ITE programs was also emphasized. In this regard, the participants expressed their concerns about creating a framework for the qualifications and standards of the core program, reducing the differences between students graduating from different faculties and carrying

out the scientific program development process and emphasized the necessity of examining national and international literature and practices, creating national appointment criteria and supporting scientific meetings and conferences. They pointed out the need for planning to determine how to use time and human resources. Some sample responses of the participants are given below:

“I think it is necessary to carry out scientific research in cooperation with associations in the field of educational sciences and to create a data/knowledge base on teacher education. Cooperation can be established with HEC-Teacher Training Working Group and Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs (Öğretmenlik Eğitim Programları Değerlendirme ve Akreditasyon Derneği [EPDAD]). An association that deals only with teacher education can be established and continuous research can be conducted on ITE programs.” (P20)

“Rather than deciding which courses to offer on the basis of the staff we have, an original model can be created by seeking answers to these questions “What kind of teacher do we want?”, “What competences should our teachers have for now and in the future?” (P23)

“Preparing the theoretical infrastructure, preparing the physical and academic infrastructure and testing the program. Actually following a complete program development process. This is a process that takes time and patience. Therefore, at least 1 year should be allocated.” (P59)

Another recommendation of the participants regarding the efficient progression of this whole process is the establishment of cooperation between faculties and within faculties. While the faculties are planning their own ITE programs, it is considered very important to cooperate with other faculties and each faculty with their own departments:

“Education faculty deans can cooperate in the program development process ... Each faculty of education can carry out program studies in cooperation with their internal and external stakeholders.” (P72)

Findings Regarding Recommendations of C&I Specialists for the Sustainability of the New Period of Authentic Programs. Findings regarding recommendations of C&I specialists for the sustainability of the new period of authentic programs are presented in Figure 5.

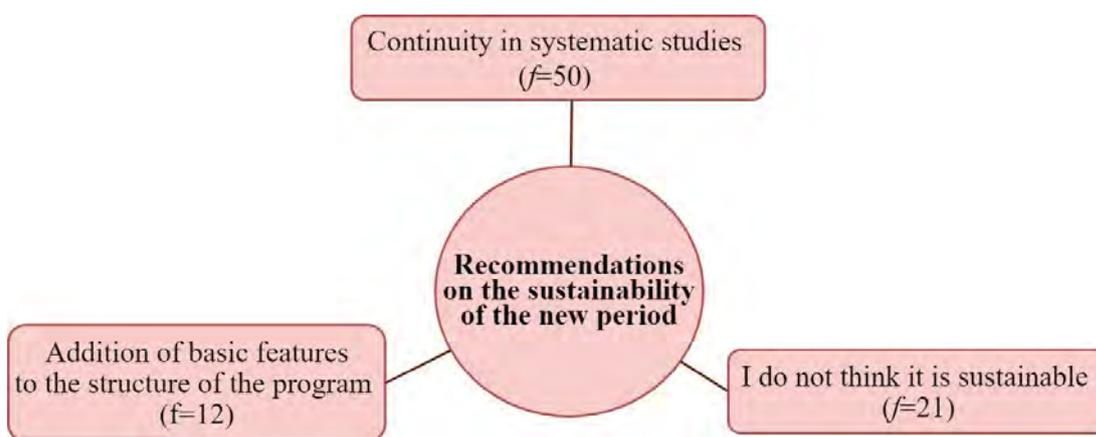


Figure 5. Recommendations of the C&I Specialists for the Sustainability of the New Period of Authentic Programs

When the recommendations for the sustainability of the planning and implementation period of teacher training institutions’ own ITE programs after the decision of the delegation of authority in Figure 5 were examined, it was seen that the majority of the participants ($f=50.00$) emphasized *continuity in systematic studies*. In addition to these studies, it was stated that *basic features should be added to the program structure* ($f=12.00$). Although there are different recommendations regarding the transition process, there are also participants ($f=21.00$) who think that this process is *not sustainable*.

Particularly emphasized in the sustainability of the planning and implementation period of authentic ITE programs of teacher education institutions, is the continuity of systematic follow-up studies. Within the scope of these studies, it was considered important to take steps such as establishing cooperation with different institutions and organizations and functional control mechanisms, making use of feedback and the program evaluation cycle, but there is no agreement among the participants on which institutions/persons would carry out the inspections. Examples of the participants' responses are given below:

“A scientific committee should be established for the development, evaluation and revision of ITE programs at HEC and universities. In this process, accreditation works should be accelerated. Since it will be difficult for HEC to monitor all programs due to its central status, monitoring and accreditation works can be carried out regionally. Both national and international accreditation seems to be an important issue.” (P5)

“Evaluations should be made at specified intervals regarding the programs developed under the leadership of faculty administration and necessary revisions should be made in line with the evaluations.” (P41)

“Efforts should be made to increase the number of institutionalized independent associations that will accredit faculties. These associations should evaluate the competences of faculties every 2 years. Emphasis should be placed on efforts to improve the quality of postgraduate education programs in education faculties so that new academicians can be trained.” (P67)

Another issue that the participants drew attention to in terms of sustainability was the addition of basic features and standards to the program structure. The creation of guidelines and standards in a written or unwritten framework regarding the organization and evaluation criteria of the programs to be developed/having been developed is considered important in terms of sustainability. In this connection, there is an opinion as follows:

“In cases where it can be guaranteed that certain criteria and minimum standards are met, the sustainability of the program can be possible. Otherwise, it would be sustainable, but the issue of quality can lead to serious discussions.” (P54)

Although explicit statements were limited, based on the country's history of rapid and frequent changes in education policies, the participants had some suspicions about the sustainability of the steps to be taken after the decision of the delegation of authority. In this regard, they expressed their opinions as follows:

“Since nothing is sustainable in our country, this new period will not be sustainable, either. As a result of unjustified, unfounded and arbitrary practices, it will be terminated.” (P29)

“Everything is done to save the day without meticulous long-term plans. Sustainability is impossible.” (P19)

“It will continue to be a problem in terms of sustainability as it is not an autonomous structure and the MoNE provides employment for newly graduated teachers.” (P25)

Findings of Possible Responsibilities of C&I Departments During and After the Transition to the New Period of Authentic Programs.

Findings of possible responsibilities of C&I departments during and after the transition to the new period of authentic programs are presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Findings Regarding Possible Responsibilities of C&I Departments During and After the Transition to the New Period of Authentic Programs

The recommendations of the participants regarding the responsibilities of C&I departments in the development of ITE programs in the new period were gathered under two main themes seen in Figure 6: *department's working as a coordination unit (f=65.00)* and *academic staff and institutional cooperation (f=11.00)*.

The participants seeing the C&I department as a unit of organization stated that the most basic authority should be in this department. They stated that this department should take important responsibilities in guiding every stage of the work to be carried out in the process, making job descriptions, organizing, determining the criteria, managing the evaluation processes and holding scientific meetings. The participants' opinions are exemplified below:

"As C&I academics, we should take part in the management and coordination of this process. If we stay away or are kept away from the process, we will not be able to participate in the studies required by our field and we will not be able to fulfil our responsibility to train qualified teachers." (P2)

"C&I is at the heart of this issue due to its area of expertise and is expected to play a key role ..." (P29)

"I think they have the most fundamental role. They will be effective in making this process the most effective and sustainable by structuring the process, conducting the necessary research and sharing experiences through inter-institutional cooperation." (P28)

In addition to their opinions on the responsibilities of C&I specialists, the participants stated that in order to ensure the efficiency of the process, C&I specialists should be involved in the cooperation processes and that they should also take part in the studies conducted by different departments to prepare their own programs. The recommendations of the participants are exemplified in the following excerpts:

"C&I specialists should lead the curriculum development process, work in cooperation with measurement and evaluation experts and field experts in this process, take responsibility for the curriculum development process and direct the programs." (P47)

"Faculty members of C&I departments of different education faculties can cooperate for program studies and research in this process. EPÖDER can contribute to this." (P72)

DISCUSSION

Teacher education is among Turkey's primary education policies (MoNE, 2018). The undergoing reforms for ITE programs are important milestones in Turkey's teacher education history. This very present decision to transfer the authority to education faculties to develop their own programs in 2020, we have arrived in a new crossroad of teacher education. Subsequently, in this study, opinions and recommendations of C&I instructors about the new policy and their own responsibilities in this process were valued.

The study group stated that they heard about the decision of the delegation of authority through e-mails sent by HEC, media, and the deans of faculties. Given the existence of a limited group who stated that they were not aware of the subject at the time the study data were collected, it can be said that more channels should be used to inform instructors on such issues. In addition, although it has been about a year since the announcement of the transfer of authority, more than half of the instructors stated that no department had started to develop their own ITE programs, and some of the instructors stated that in some of the departments, studies to develop their own programs had been started. While studies have been started in all departments in some faculties, it is understood that all departments of a limited number of education faculties and some departments of some faculties have their programs for the new term ready. In addition, one of Turkey's long-established education faculties has completed its program development studies for all the departments and announced to all universities in an official letter that it can share its new programs with the education faculties in need or guide other faculties in the process of developing their own programs. This might indicate that education faculties are at different stages of the preparation process after the delegation of authority; while some are preparing for the role of guiding other faculties, some do not want to act hastily on this issue. In addition, this might indicate that education faculties need time to determine a roadmap on how they can develop their own programs in the new period. The fact that 129 ITE programs have been accredited within a period ranging from two to five years as of 2021 (EPDAD, 2021) and that they are waiting for the expiration of the accreditation period may also affect the process, which may be one of the reasons behind the failure of education faculties to act quickly.

The C&I specialists expressed the possible positive and negative effects of the new decision on the teacher education process. According to them, the two main positive aspects of the decision are that it gives autonomy to faculties and correspondingly, more freedom in the selection of content. According to Güven (2015), it would not be wrong to say that the decision is perceived by C&I specialists as the return of the autonomy taken from teacher education institutions with the past reform initiated in 1997. The C&I specialists think that the given autonomy will have positive effects on education faculties in four main points:

Local/regional authenticity: In this context, education faculties will have the flexibility to develop and implement their own programs, taking into account their regional dynamics and opportunities such as physical and human resources, student profile, and their own internal, local and regional collaborations and thus they can be converted into entrepreneurial faculties that take charge of their own programs rather than being technician faculties in the position of the implementer of the central programs presented by HEC. At this point, the original programs to be developed by faculties have the potential to yield good examples that could not be presented in the literature (Yıldırım, 2013) because of the “fixed program” used in teacher education after the 1997 reform (HEC, 2007). On the other side, an important issue is that the decision should be understood well while developing authentic ITE programs. In the announcement, HEC defined its role for the new term as making high-level regulations, monitoring, evaluating and supervising the process after drawing the general framework on higher education issues. Therefore, when these explanations are taken into consideration, it is understood that education faculties can develop “original programs” to the extent permitted by the general framework and that concerns about quality differences will be tried to be resolved by HEC's monitoring and inspections, however, no explanation has been received yet regarding the functioning of the process.

Needs-oriented program studies: The C&I specialists think that faculties will focus on the professional needs of pre-service teachers in order to develop original programs, and faculties that can understand well the opportunities of the faculty and the region they are located in can develop original programs. Some of the participants think that a need-oriented and multilateral participation-based understanding of the processes will make the curriculum development processes more democratic, as well as strengthen the democratization of the internal functioning of the faculty. Needs-oriented programs are also considered as selection criterion of students for the education faculty. Thus, education faculty student candidates will pursue their own teacher model and teaching ideals. It is a known fact that one of the dilemmas in teacher education in Turkey is the profile of pre-service

teachers who prefer teaching for reasons other than the ideals of the profession (Aksu et al., 2010; Tican-Başaran & Aksu, 2005).

Institutional development: The C&I specialists believe that the process of developing their own programs with the participation of the faculties' stakeholders will strengthen their cooperation, their sense of commitment, and develop their institutional identity by creating the academic traditions of faculties. Therefore, it may be possible for education faculties to institutionalize in line with their own dynamics.

Competition in quality: According to the C&I specialists, the original ITE programs after the delegation of authority will not only increase the number of good practices, but also lead to a positive competition among education faculties in order to train better teachers, and this will positively affect the teacher quality. There will be a transformation from the understanding of training "technician teachers" (Güven, 2008) towards training "teachers who solve problems and teach learning" (HEC, 2007, p.10).

The C&I specialists predict that the decision of the delegation of authority may have positive effects on ITE in terms of content, and their predictions are grouped under three themes:

Content revision: The C&I specialists think that with the new decision, faculties of education can include courses that meet the needs in their programs. In this sense, they think that the limited number of class hours allocated to teaching practice courses can be increased, the number of elective courses can be increased, elective courses that are out of date or similar to each other can be removed from the program, more emphasis can be put on the interdisciplinary structure of the program and inadequacies related to inclusive education can be compensated. However, new programs to be created without relying on research findings will not differ from previous programs that have been subjected to criticism (Yıldırım, 2013).

Making use of the expertise of instructors: The C&I specialists think that while the teacher education institutions create their own programs in the new period, the content of the courses in the programs can be matched with the expertise of instructors, thus the efficiency of the program can be increased. Moreover, they think that the shortage of teaching staff to teach some courses at education faculties can be overcome and some expertise of instructors remaining idle in the central teaching training programs can be utilized more effectively (Özoğlu, 2010).

Updated vision: The C&I specialists think that they should act parallel with national and international standards during the development of their own programs, and so, it is necessary to start with a change in vision.

Although HEC (2020) points to the Turkish Competencies Framework and the MoNE's (2017) General Competencies for the Teaching Profession in its decision, the general competencies and the framework have been changed over time. Therefore, it cannot be predicted to what extent teacher competencies, which are determined very generally for all teaching fields, will guide teacher education institutions in the process of developing their own programs. For this reason, it is clearly seen that there is a need for reliable references to guide teacher education institutions in this specific process.

It will not be difficult to create an innovative vision based on the results of existing research and with the expertise of 9023.00 faculty members working in 91.00 Education Faculties and 231.00 academic personnel working in four Faculties of Educational Sciences in the 2020-2021 academic year (HEC, 2021). However, although there are tried models (Erdem, 2015) and rich experiences (Saylan, 2013) regarding teacher education in the country, the research on them is limited (Yıldırım, 2013), investigation of the successful teacher education systems abroad (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010) will be inevitable. As our previous experiences show, rather than importing the models considered to be successful, it would be a rational choice to make use of these models by

adapting them to our own needs and goals (Kavcar, 2002), because in the information age where the competition among education systems is getting fiercer, there is no luxury to reach the truth by trial and error.

Overall, it can be said that the C&I specialists welcomed the decision of the delegation of authority in terms of providing the faculties with the opportunity to develop their own programs and accordingly to create and update the content on the basis of global and local needs.

On the other hand, the C&I specialists have concerns about some problems related to the new decision gathered under two main headings: quality and standardization. While the C&I specialists basically see the effects of content/pedagogical content knowledge experts and content/course selection differences as possible main problems in the quality theme, they basically see the differences among graduates and accreditation as possible problems in the standardization theme.

Effects of content/pedagogical content knowledge experts: Concerns such as not including all lecturers from the fields of content and pedagogy in the process of developing new programs, acting according to the decisions of some dominant groups, not being able to establish cooperation between both groups of lecturers and opening courses in an uncoordinated manner, which may result in a content structure dominated by content knowledge courses, were strongly emphasized by the participants. They also emphasized the problem of attaching greater importance to political or personal interests than the goals of training qualified teachers.

These concerns may be due to the scarcity of studies on the structure of teaching staff in institutions that train teachers (Yıldırım, 2013). Studies stating that with the previous structuring, 64.00% of the faculty members from almost every field in education faculties had their doctoral dissertations on subjects other than education (Gençdoğan, 2004), that while transferring the courses of their own fields to ITE programs, very few of them turned to field of education (Saylan, 2013), that they continued to work on their fields in their teacher education programs (Yüksel, 2015), that this situation made ITE programs similar to the programs of the faculties of science and letters over time (HEC, 1998) and that all these were effective in paving the way to the 1997 restructuring might have caused these concerns to be experienced by the participants. This dual structure of education faculties in terms of academic human resources may have caused hesitation about where and how to start the work.

Content/course selection differences: The continued concerns are about the preclusion from the expertise of the instructors, the differences in selection and crediting of courses according to the fields, and consequent reflections on the quality of graduates. These concerns show similarities with the negativities caused by the mission confusion previously experienced by teacher education institutions (HEC, 1998; Kavak et al., 2007). In particular, the critical attitudes of the instructors in matters such as the number of courses, crediting or content organization of each institution were also pointed out in the study of Dönmez-Yapucuoğlu and Gündoğdu (2020). The C&I specialists are particularly concerned that institutions that train teachers, which lack academic human resources and physical facilities, will be disadvantaged.

Standardization: The C&I specialists emphasized that the implementation of authentic programs might cause differences in the competencies of graduates. This situation, which can be seen as an opportunity for the selection of the best in teacher appointments, is seen as a possible negativity when viewed from the perspective of pre-service teachers who can be appointed by passing standard exams. At this point, although it seems that this negativity can be overcome to some extent with solutions such as matching the content validity of national exams with the general competencies of the teaching profession, it seems difficult to compensate for the wasted effort, time and dreams of pre-service teachers (Saylan, 2013). This situation has the potential to exacerbate the “issue of unappointed teachers” (Çinkır, & Kurum, 2017), one of Turkey’s hottest education topics. On the other hand, it is known that the standard in terms of teacher quality cannot be achieved with standard programs in Turkey, but the institutional capacities and the wisdom that will implement those

programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Therefore, the standing of teacher education institutions will determine their own future. In brief, the C&I specialists assume that education faculties' implementing different ITE programs with different qualifications and competencies may fail to achieve a standard in teacher education and quality.

With the new reformative shift from authority to autonomy, it is expected for C&I departments in faculties to take responsibility as the basic unit ensuring coordination in the operation of the process. Thus, it is thought that coordination within academicians and institutions can be established. The C&I specialists recommend the establishment of independent units, the development of a "core program" in order to enact standards among faculties, the completion of the necessary infrastructure and preparations and the coordination of faculty/personnel in the transition to the new period after the decision of the delegation of authority. As for the sustainability of the new autonomy, they suggest that basic criteria should be determined in the program structure and systematic monitoring studies should be carried out in line with these criteria, but the monitoring should be done by independent accreditation institutions. In this context, as far as our country's education system is concerned, although it does not seem easy to move from a centralized structure to a creative, unique and autonomous system (Doğan, 1999; Kavak, 1999), it should not be seen as impossible.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the study shows possible outcomes of the new decision announced by the HEC, which were justified with different references. While the C&I specialists welcome the decision of the HEC in delegating authority to teacher education institutions with an outlined framework for developing authentic contents, they have concerns that a minimum standard for teacher competences cannot be achieved through ITE programs with different qualifications. Particularly, the idea of meeting local needs of teacher education programs through necessary contents is favored by the C&I specialists. On the other hand, lack of collaboration among teacher educators, disregarding the curriculum specialists in the re-designing procedure, and regarding certain groups' benefits still continue to bother C&I specialists.

To conclude, although there are promising intentions in the declared reformative move of the HEC, many teacher educators and curriculum specialists indicate the existing drawbacks of this new decision. Referring to the study results, we believe that there is a new starting point to discuss fundamental needs of teacher education programs. In such a discussion, it is fair to argue that all responsible partners should collaborate following a consented roadmap. There can be discrepancies among teacher education programs of different regions due to locality, yet standards and competencies should be common for each and every teacher-to-be. Finally, in order to ensure sustainability of ITE programs in the new term, the processes should be carried out as participatory and As a conclusion, while the C&I specialists welcome the decision of the HEC to delegate authority so that autonomy can be given to teacher education institutions within the general framework it has drawn and original contents can be developed, they have concerns that a minimum standard for teacher competences cannot be achieved through ITE programs with different qualifications. In order to ensure the development and sustainability of ITE programs in the new term, the processes should be carried out as participatory and transparent as possible, and that C&I experts take an active role as a guide in this sense.

This study is limited to the data collected by online survey from EPÖDER member C&I specialists, and conducting further studies in which the in-depth opinions and recommendations of other C&I experts working in teacher training institutions and other instructors are elicited can be recommended to researchers.

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