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ARE PRESERVICE TEACHERS COMPETENT ENOUGH? A CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF ELT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEIVED TEACHER COMPETENCES

İlknur Yuksel[1],
Sercan Saglam[2i]
[i]Osmangazi University, Faculty of Education,
English Language Teaching Department, Turkey
[i]Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages,
Basic Languages Department, Turkey

Abstract:
Teacher quality has gained importance over the years. To ensure the quality of teaching and teachers, the pre-service teacher training programs are of great importance to gain the necessary competencies. In many countries, including Turkey, the 'notion of a graduate who is ready-to-teach is the norm'. Thus, to gain necessary teacher competencies throughout the training programs becomes of great importance. In this study, rather than looking at competency gains of only senior students -which appears to be the case with most recent research into pre-service teachers' teacher competencies in Turkey- ELT pre-service teachers' teacher competencies are examined cross-sectionally with 132 pre-service teachers in different years of study at a ELT department of a state university in Turkey within the framework of the updated teacher competences (MoNE, 2017) presented by the Ministry of Education. A survey method research design is utilized in this study. The data for the study is gathered through an instrument prepared by transforming the teacher competency indicators into Likert-type Can Do statements. The results of the study showed that 2nd year pre-service teachers have the lowest perceived teacher competency and even the 4th year pre-service teachers perceive themselves as not having full competency in all indicators. There is a steady growth in teacher competencies over the years. Professional knowledge related teacher competency domain develop in the 3rd year, whereas professional skill related teacher competency develop steadily over the 2nd and 3rd year and fostered in the 4th year. The results of the study revealed how the students gained and developed teacher competencies throughout teacher training and 4th year students felt more competent just before their teaching career.

[i] Correspondence: email iyuksel79@gmail.com, ilknuryuksel.elt@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of teacher quality has gained great importance so far considering the strong connection between teacher quality and students' academic achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002), effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Barber & Mourshed, 2009), and professional development (Bellibas, Gümüş & Boylan, 2016). Thus, teacher training programs become as cornerstones to ensure teacher quality for pre-service and in-service teachers. In line with this, it is widely underlined that the higher the quality of teacher training programs, the more effective and competent teachers will be (Berry, Daughtrey & Wieder, 2010; Farooq & Shahzadi, 2006). Preservice teacher training programs share the outcome of providing a clear set of measurable, essential, up-to-date and coherent teacher competencies to determine and predict the student teachers' level of 'readiness-for-the-job' and their effective teaching performance as well as teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2012; Yüksel, 2014). To achieve this outcome, teacher training programs should help preservice teachers balance the theoretical and practical knowledge so that they could put the theory into practice during their initial teaching practice and teaching career (Sharbain &Tan, 2012).

Teacher competency is the key unitary concept that encompasses tacit and explicit knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, as well as dispositions; motivation, beliefs, value orientations and emotions (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Thus, to improve and gain teacher competencies become the main mission of teacher training programs to empower preservice teachers to act professionally (Koster & Dengerink, 2008) in return to enhance the quality of education. Thus, in Turkey recent reform movements have focused on the standardization of teacher competencies and adopting a competency-based teacher training model. Started in 1999 by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and then developed and revised by the Higher Education Council (HEC), teacher competencies are defined to strengthen the teacher education and ensure the quality. In line with these standardization studies, different research and projects were conducted on teacher competency ranging from pre-service teachers perceptions on teacher competency (Yüksel, 2014; Kök, Çiftçi & Ayık, 2011; Kızılaslan, 2011; Seferoğlu, 2006); the relationships between teacher competency and teacher identity (Atmaca, 2017), readiness for teaching profession (Balyer, 2017) and teacher competence implemented in learning-teaching process (Koca, 2016).

In line with the developments and on the new emerging demands on teachers, MoNE revised general competencies for teaching profession in 2017 again, reclassified, and restated the competency domains, competencies and competency indicators. Defining teacher competency as "*any knowledge, skill and attitudes to perform teaching profession effectively and efficiently*" (MoNE, 2017; p. 7), three main competency domains and 11 teacher competencies and 65 indicators have been recently launched by the

Ministry of National Education addressing to the need to renew general competencies for teaching profession considering the effects of international and national technological, social and political developments on education and different student needs and characteristics of teaching and learning processes. One point underlined and reported in the renewing process of teacher competencies is to determine and evaluate competencies for teachers and preservice teachers in order to train teachers as equipped with qualities to fulfill the needs of information age (MoNE, 2017).

Although in literature, there are some studies on teacher competency (e.g. Yüksel, 2014; Çubukçu, 2010; Atmaca, 2017) explaining the case of Turkey. They all adopted the older version of teacher competency list and most of them studied on senior pre-service teachers (e.g. Kızılaslan, 2011; Atmaca, 2017). For many related studies, the development of teacher competency throughout teacher training program was ignored. On the other hand, the matter of competency is a matter of *learning;* learning to think, know, feel and act as teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Thus, to investigate how pre-service teachers embody the certain teacher competencies with the scaffolding of teacher training courses as differing year by year can enlighten the quality of teacher training programs and potentials of pre-service teachers as well as the lacking points to be improved. Pre-service teachers' own perceptions can provide better insights about their professional development and quality of education.

Considering this, this study is designed to investigate the pre-service teachers' perceived teacher competencies which has been recently released by MoNE (2017) in a cross-sectional way throughout English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher training program. Adopting the new teacher competency framework and cross-sectional analysis, this study aims to address to the research gaps urged in literature and to contribute to the controversies on how to improve teacher education, quality and competency with both macro- and micro-analyses of the renovated teacher competencies of Turkey.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Competency

With the advent of globalization and technology, the roles of schools and teachers are changed and redefined. The expectations from teachers are raised to teach in increasingly multicultural classrooms, integrate students with special needs, use ICT for teaching effectively, engage in evaluation and accountability processes, and involve parents in schools (OECD, 2009). To fulfill these expectations and catch up with the age, teachers need the competencies to constantly innovate in order to be equipped with the necessities of the new age and adapt to varying learning-teaching conditions and processes. (MoNE, 2008; 2017; European Commission, 2013). Thus, teacher competency is the keystone to ensure the quality of teachers and hence education.

Due to the different political, social and cultural structures of nations, it is difficult to agree on a common and global definition of teacher qualities and competencies. However, regardless any philosophical and social bias and constraints,

teacher competency is built on 'a concept of teaching as praxis in which theory, practice and the ability to reflect critically on one's own and others' practice illuminate each other, rather than on a concept of teaching as the acquisition of technical skills' (ETUCE, 2008). In general, teacher competencies are the complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to effective practice in context (MoNE, 2008). In detail, teacher competency encompasses the knowledge and abilities to find, evaluate and deploy learning materials from a wider range of sources', as well as 'critical, evidence based attitudes, enabling them to respond to students' outcomes, new evidence from inside and outside the classroom, and professional dialogue, in order to adapt their own practices' (European Commission, 2013). Richards (2011) put forward that a comprehensive understanding of the nature of teacher competency shapes the way to conceptualize the nature of teacher learning, and in turn, how to design teacher training and teacher development programs.

Since the concept of teacher competence covers a wide range of issues related with teachers, teaching and learning, it has been studied in relation with different concepts. For instance, Drakulic (2013) attempted to develop and validate an instrument to determine the perceived teacher competences of preservice teachers. The results indicated a large range of competence covering classroom instruction, intrapersonal to intercultural. Sultan and Shafi (2014) explored the impact of perceived teachers' competency on students' performance moderated by perceived class environment. The results indicated divergence between these two variables from the teachers' perspectives. With a more comprehensive perspective, Vecaldo (2017) examined the interplay of epistemological beliefs, academic performance and teaching competence of pre-service teachers. The study revealed that the pre-service teachers hold mature epistemological beliefs, have satisfactory academic performance, and are competent in teaching.

Although the content and focus of teacher competency and studies change according to different contexts and perspectives, the four domains of teacher competency are mostly agreed upon as the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

2.2. Renovation Process of Teacher Competence in Turkey

As teaching quality is worldwide high on agenda, the issue of teacher competence is handled in many intercultural commissions and unions and set as the main criteria for the quality of education (e.g. European Commission, 2013; ETUCE, 2008). Likewise, in Turkey, the concept of teacher competence is included in many policy agendas and the urgent needs to renovate teacher competence in accordance with the emerging needs and to base updated teacher competences for teacher training programs are highlighted (MoNE, 2008; 2017).

The necessity to bring uniformity and standardization to teacher training is emphasized (Seferoğlu, 2006) and national commissions studied on teacher competence within the framework of the requirements for full membership of the European Union. In this standardization process, firstly in 1999, Higher Education Commission set the

four competence areas and the performance standards expected from the graduates of education (HEC, 1999): *Content and pedagogic knowledge; Planning, teaching, classroom management and communication; Monitoring, assessment and reporting* and *Other professional requirements (reflectivity, flexibility, objectivity)*. Then, in 2005, MoNE introduced and implemented the Teacher Generic Competencies consisting of 6 main areas of competency, 31 sub-competencies and 233 performance indicators. The six main areas are: *Personal and professional values-professional development; Knowing the student; Learning and teaching process; Monitoring and evaluation of learning and development; School-family and society relationships* and *Knowledge of the curriculum and content*.

The process started in 1999 was finalized in 2017 by the Ministry of National Education and teacher competences with three main competency domains, 11 competencies and 65 competence indicators are introduced. The three main competency domains are *Professional Knowledge*, *Professional Skills* and *Attitudes and Values.* Different from the previous versions, the renovated list compiles the competencies under three main domains while the number of competencies is increased to 11. Instead of presenting subject-specific competencies for each field, professional knowledge and professional skill were introduced as the umbrella title unifying field and subject specific competencies for any teachers (MoNE, 2017). The renovated version shares the most of the content and focus of teacher competencies, but offers more simplified, comprehensive and explanatory competencies and performance indicators.

Thanks to the recent standardization studies conducted by the Higher Education Council and Ministry of Education and global consensus on the significance of teacher competency to ensure the quality of teachers and teacher education, some studies have been conducted in Turkish context as well. Seferoglu (2005) studied on the preservice teachers' perceptions about the competencies of MoNE. The findings indicated that the participants perceived themselves as "good" or "excellent" in most competencies while the significant differences in terms of gender and departments were striking. Balyer's (2017) results confirmed the significant difference of teacher competencies in terms of departments but gender difference was not detected. Through a qualitative study Arslan and Özpınar (2008) investigated the congruence between the teacher competencies determined by MoNE (2007) and competencies provided by the education faculties in Turkey. The results similarly indicated that preservice teachers are reported to have these competencies namely personal and professional development, the process of teaching and learning, testing and evaluation of the learning process, and relationships with the school, parents, society, and colleagues. On the other hand, Kızılaslan (2011) detected a divergence between the determined and perceived competencies. She emphasized that senior students still need to improve subject-specific competencies.

Different from teacher competencies launched by MoNE, the competencies presented by HEC has also become the focus of some studies. For example, Şalli-Çopur (2008) investigated the preservice teachers' perceived competencies according to the competence list of HEC. Likewise, the findings indicated while the participants

perceived themselves as competent in most competencies while there is still a room for improvement in some competences. In Yüksel's (2014) study, the preservice teachers specifically reported the need to improve the competency related with classroom management while they perceived themselves as competent with high and positive vision about their future career. Atmaca (2017) adapted the macro perspective and compared the perspectives of pre-service and in-service English teachers about generic and field-specific teacher competencies set by Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) with regard to teacher identity in Turkish EFL context. The results pointed out that half of the participant English teachers have positive opinions about the contribution of the related competencies to their professional identity and the ones with negative opinions suggested about the nature of teacher training such as bettering teacher image, diminishing theory-practice gap, controlling teachers, developing competences, stopping adaptations, reopening teacher training high schools.

To sum up, despite various studies in teacher competences of pre-service teachers, a cross sectional analysis based on the updated competences that can reveal throughout development on the performance-based indicators lack in literature.

3. Method

In this study, survey method is used to collect the necessary data. Survey method as a data collection tool and research design is used when the aim is to question individuals on a topic to reveal their attitudes, perceptions or general point of view (Jackson, 2011). Survey method can be used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, depending on the nature of the expected data from the participants. In this study, questionnaire with Likert-type statements about teacher competencies was choses, rather than interviews or documentary analysis. The questionnaire was chosen since the aim of the study is to reveal the perceived teacher competencies of pre-service ELT teachers, rather than exploring their understanding or conceptualization of related teacher competencies. Therefore, quantitative data as an initial indicator or a possible factor was considered an important step before a further and in depth exploration of the phenomenon through a qualitative inquiry based data collection process.

The research questions posed for this study is as follows:

1. To what extent do the candidate ELT teachers at different years of study perceive themselves competent as a teacher?
2. Are there any significant differences in candidate ELT teachers' perceived teacher competences with reference to year of study?

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study are a total of 132 pre-service ELT teachers studying at a state university in Turkey. Since the aim of the study is to analyze the perceived teacher competencies cross-sectionally the participants were chosen from 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students.

Whole population was included in the study; however, because some students were away for international mobility programs, only pre-service teachers who were actively enrolled in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of the program completed the survey instrument.

3.2. Instrument

The questionnaire used in the study derived from updated General Competencies for Teaching Profession prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2017). Ministry of National Education General Teaching Competencies framework consists of 3 competency domains, 11 competencies and a total of 64 competency indicators under these competencies. These general three competency domains, competencies and competency indicators focus on professional knowledge and skills, as well as general attitudes and values towards teaching profession.

In the questionnaire, competency indicators only from the first two competency domains of professional knowledge and professional skills were included, mainly because the indicators about attitudes and values were considered personal. General attitudes and values about the teaching profession is a result of general belief system, fostered or altered through experience and practice (Vecaldo, 2017), so analyzing attitudes and values cross-sectionally was considered a possible distractor for the study results. A total of 44 competency indicators were transformed into 5-point Likert type statements in the form of Can-do statements. Table 1 below presents the description of the instrument and its reliability analysis.

Table 1: Description of the instrument and its Reliability

Competence Area	**A**	**N**
Professional Knowledge	**,91**	16
Content	,75	5
Pedagogical Content	,85	6
Knowledge of Legislation	,81	5
Professional Skill	**,96**	28
Planning of Education and Teaching	,83	4
Creating learning environment	,89	7
Managing the Teaching-Learning process	,92	12
Assessment and Evaluation		

There are 16 competence indicators under professional knowledge compiled under three competencies, whereas there are 28 competence indicators for professional skills compiled under four competencies. The reliability for the broader teacher competency domain and competencies are relatively high, ranging from ,75-,96. The Cronbach alpha in this range is considered reliable measuring instrument.

3.2. Data Analysis

Survey data from the participants were analyzed using frequencies, descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis with post-hoc tests. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to yield results related to 1st research questions and ANOVA analysis were computed to address the 2nd research question.

For the 1st research question, first the average mean scores for the two competency domains of professional knowledge and professional skill were computed. As the second phase, competencies under each domain were computed. As the final stage of the analysis, each competency indicator was examined individually to reveal the top and bottom competence indicators cross-sectionally over 2nd, 3rd and 4th year.

For the second research question, first the results were analyzed to determine whether the data was normally distributed to determine the type of tests to be computed to compare the groups. For the data that was not normally distributed, Kruskal-Willis was used, whereas for normally distributed data, one-way ANOVA was used. In the case of any significant differences in the analysis, post-hoc tests were computed to identify the group or groups that caused the difference.

4. Results

The results presented below are divided into two parts; results on pre-service teachers' perceived overall and indicator based teacher competence and results on cross-sectional analysis on the differences in perceptions.

A. Results related to the 1st Research Question: To what extent do the candidate ELT teachers at different years of study perceive themselves competent as a teacher?

In order to investigate the perceived teaching competencies of pre-service ELT teachers, first combined mean scores for the indicators related to professional knowledge and skill are computed. The table 2 below shows the results.

Table 2: General perceived teacher competences

	Year of Study	$\bar{x}$	*sd*
Professional Knowledge	2nd	**3,05**	0,47
	3rd	*3,50*	0,33
	4th	**3,77**	0,51
Professional Skill	2nd	**2,98**	0,57
	3rd	*3,53*	0,51
	4th	**3,88**	0,54

Mean scores indicate that the 4th year students have the highest perceived competency, whereas 2nd year students have the lowest. The mean scores also show that the pre-service ELT teachers have moderate to high competency in both professional knowledge and professional skill. There is a steady increase in teaching competency in areas of professional knowledge and professional skills over the years. The mean scores for professional knowledge and professional skill for 3rd year pre-

service teachers are very close; however, for the second year pre-service teachers, they perceive themselves relatively more competent in professional knowledge related competency indicators, whereas forth year students perceive themselves more competent in professional skill related competencies. Since the main difference between the 3rd and 4th students is the practicum, the differences can be attributed to practicum, where senior students realize their strengths in skill related competencies and realize their lacks in knowledge related competency indicators.

As a further analysis into teacher competences, sub-areas of professional knowledge and skill are also examined. Table 3 below shows the results sub-areas of professional knowledge.

Table 3: Perceived teacher competences for sub-areas of professional knowledge

Professional Knowledge	Year of Study	$\bar{x}$	*sd*
Content knowledge	2nd	2,92	0,61
	3rd	3,51	0,42
	4th	**3,76**	0,56
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	2nd	3,12	0,50
	3rd	3,55	0,34
	4th	**3,74**	0,53
Knowledge on Legislation	2nd	3,13	0,55
	3rd	3,45	0,71
	4th	**3,79**	0,70

As for the competencies under professional knowledge, the perceived competency of 2nd year students in areas of pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of legislation is slightly higher that their content knowledge. However, for the 3rd and 4th year students, the mean scores for each competency are quiet similar. Similar to the overall perceived teacher competency in professional knowledge, there is a steady growth in knowledge gains over the years; however, from 2nd to 3rd year, there is a relatively higher loop, compared to the differences in knowledge gains from 3rd to 4th year. The differences can be attributed to the number of courses these students have already completed in areas of language teaching and educational sciences, since the 3rd year program is devoted mainly to courses related to ELT methodology and teaching skills. The standard deviation for the groups shows that there is a wider distribution in the range of responses with reference to content and pedagogical content knowledge among the 2nd and 4th year students. The distribution of responses among the 3rd year students is relatively less. This finding may be interpreted as, in all groups, there are pre-service teachers with higher and lower perceived teacher competency. In other words, although the mean score of 2.92 for the lowest competence area can be analyzed as moderate competence in the respective area, there are pre-service teachers who feel more or less competent than what the mean scores imply.

When the indicators for each competency are examined closely, similar patterns are observed. Table 4 below shows the indicators for content knowledge. The indicators

are listed from lowest to highest mean score with reference to the scores of the 2nd year students.

Table 4: Competence Indicators for Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Pedagogical Content Knowledge	Year of Study	$\bar{x}$	Sd
Explaining the curriculum of an English program with all its elements.	2nd	2,59	0,57
	3rd	3,43	0,53
	4th	3,57	0,82
Comparing and contrasting assessment methods that can be used in teaching of English	2nd	2,75	0,66
	3rd	3,40	0,72
	4th	3,53	0,75
Deciding on how to benefit from national and moral values in teaching English	2nd	2,80	0,67
	3rd	3,47	0,60
	4th	3,66	0,93
Linking the curriculum of English with of other related curricula.	2nd	2,84	0,88
	3rd	3,40	0,73
	4th	3,67	0,83
Using their knowledge of child development and learning styles in teaching-learning processes	2nd	3,16	0,65
	3rd	3,63	0,72
	4th	4,10	0,67
Comparing various teaching strategies, methods and techniques that can be used in teaching English	2nd	3,36	0,84
	3rd	3,73	0,69
	4th	4,05	0,44

The results show that 2nd year students appear to perceive themselves more confident in competence indicators related to basic teaching methodology and learning theories. These two indicators yielded slightly higher mean scores for 3rd and 4th year students, too. Compared to other indicators, these two develop earlier and are fostered over the years. Competence indicators related to explaining components of instructional program and assessment seems to develop later. One reason of this for the testing and assessment related competences may arise from the fact that the courses devoted to testing and assessment are offered in the third and fourth year of the program. As for the instructional program for English, it is not covered in any specific course, but touched upon on different courses; especially methodology and teaching skills related courses and educational sciences courses offered in the third and fourth year of the program, so pre-service teachers may need to learn it on their own time.

Another sub-area of professional knowledge, namely content knowledge yielded similar scores; however, the perceived teacher competence in this area and its indicators are slightly higher. Table 5 shows the indicators with mean scores over the years.

Table 5: Competence Indicators for Content Knowledge

Content Knowledge	Year of Study	$\bar{x}$	Sd
Classifying the main research methods and techniques related to foreign language instruction	2nd	2,89	0,78
	3rd	3,43	0,68
	4th	3,50	0,82
Construing with the reflections of national and moral values to	2nd	3,02	0,85

teaching English	3rd	3,47	0,90
	4th	3,79	0,85
Classifying the fundamental essential knowledge and data resources related to teaching English	2nd	3,11	0,72
	3rd	3,53	0,73
	4th	3,67	0,71
Construing with the reflections of fundamental theories and approaches in English Language Teaching	2nd	3,18	0,76
	3rd	3,70	0,60
	4th	3,83	0,65
Analyzing the topics and concepts related to English Language Teaching	2nd	3,41	0,54
	3rd	3,63	0,72
	4th	3,93	0,70

Since most of these indicators are related to teaching of English, pre-service teachers feel slightly more confident. Research methods and techniques yielded the lowest mean score, mainly because the students do not take courses that require research-based inquiry and since they are in the profession, their chances of engaging in research is limited. National and moral values in teaching is another indicator that seems to develop slower than others. Similar to the indicator related to national and moral values under pedagogical content knowledge, the indicator under content knowledge also yielded lower mean scores, with the exception of 4th year students, who may feel more competent due to their experience of practicum. Analyzing topics and concepts related to ELT seems to develop earlier and students in all years feel more competent in analyzing ELT related topics and concepts. Looking at the standard deviation from the mean, it is possible to say that there are variations in the responses, especially in the bottom two competence indicators.

Knowledge of Legislation competence indicators are probably one area in which the results show great variation with reference to different indicators. Even though the overall mean scores is the highest among the three competence areas related to professional knowledge, as it can also be seen from the table 6 below, two indicators, namely accounting for the content of the Constitution law of the Republic of Turkey and accounting for the legislation related to teaching profession, yielded the lowest two mean scores, especially with reference to pre-service teachers in their second year of study.

Table 6: Competence Indicators related to Knowledge of Legislation

Regulations	**Year of Study**	$\bar{x}$	**Sd**
Accounting for the content of the constitutional law of the Republic of Turkey.	2nd	2,48	0,81
	3rd	2,77	1,15
	4th	3,29	0,97
Accounting for the legislation related to teaching profession	2nd	2,64	0,97
	3rd	3,07	1,05
	4th	3,59	1,26
Recognizing the rights and responsibilities of educational stake-holders	2nd	2,80	0,88
	3rd	3,27	0,94

	4th	3,53	0,98
Evaluating Ataturk's contributions to Turkish educational system	2nd	3,86	0,77
	3rd	4,17	0,70
	4th	4,38	0,64
Explaining the individual rights and responsibilities as a citizen	2nd	3,89	0,69
	3rd	3,97	0,89
	4th	4,16	0,81

Third year students, whose mean scores are generally higher in other areas of professional knowledge based competence indicators, also yielded lower mean scores in these two indicators. The fourth year students feel more competent, especially in the second and third indicators, which can be attributed to their practicum experience, where they have a chance to observe and practice the profession. The last two indicators, namely evaluating Atatürk's contributions to Turkish educational system and explaining the individual rights and responsibilities as a citizen, generated higher mean scores, and is probably the reason why the overall mean scores in this competency is higher than the other two competencies. The standard deviation scores for the indicators under legislations are somewhat higher compared to other knowledge related competence indicators, especially among 3rd and 4th year pre-service teachers, which can be interpreted as the presence of individual differences about legislation related knowledge basis, where some perceive themselves more competent than others in the same group, especially with reference first two indicators in the table.

The results from competencies of professional skill domain indicate a loop in the perceived teacher competency in the field of planning of education and teaching and managing teaching-learning process from second year to third year, and it is possible conclude the same for pre-service teachers moving from third year to their final year. In all competencies, expect for assessment and evaluation, there is a similar pattern in perceived competence gains. The findings are presented in the table 7 below.

Table 7: Competencies under Professional Skills

Professional Skills	**Year of Study**	$\bar{x}$	*Sd*
Planning of education and teaching	2nd	2,96	0,58
	3rd	3,64	0,47
	4th	**4,16**	0,63
Assessment and evaluation	2nd	2,99	0,81
	3rd	3,38	0,64
	4th	**3,74**	0,61
Managing teaching-learning process	2nd	3,00	0,54
	3rd	3,55	0,47
	4th	**3,86**	0,55
Creating learning environment	2nd	3,01	0,56
	3rd	3,58	0,46
	4th	**3,93**	0,54

Planning of education and teaching generated the lowest mean score among 2nd year pre-service ELT teachers; however, for the fourth year pre-service teachers, planning of education and teaching yielded the highest mean score, indicating that these students perceived themselves competent with reference to planning of education and teaching. The table also shows that fourth year ELT pre-service teachers feel competent in all competencies of professional skill, except for assessment and evaluation, which appears to be the slowest to develop. Third year ELT pre-service teachers also have high perceived competency in almost all competencies, expect for assessment and evaluation. The mean scores ranging from 3,55-3,64 can be interpreted as a gain of methodology and skill teaching courses, in which more emphasis is put into practice and micro-teachings.

Analysis of the indicators related to planning of education and teaching, the 2nd year pre-service teachers having the least experience in instructional planning have lower mean scores; however, from the 2nd year to 3rd year, the pre-service teachers become more confident, and hence competent, in lesson planning and planning the teaching-learning processes. Compared to knowledge related indicators, skills related indicators develop mainly in the 3rd year and are further nurtured in the fourth year. The 2nd year pre-service teachers are at the very beginning of their journey into lesson planning, whereas the 4th year pre-service teachers are now experienced, which is reflected in the findings. The table 8 below shows the findings related to indicators of planning of education and teaching.

Table 8: Competence Indicators related to Planning of Education and Teaching

Planning of education and teaching	**Year of Study**	$\bar{x}$	**sd**
Preparing lesson plans in accordance with the English curriculum	2nd	2,84	0,83
	3rd	3,87	0,63
	4th	4,29	0,70
Preparing flexible teaching plans by considering the individual differences and sociocultural characteristics of the students	2nd	2,98	0,85
	3rd	3,53	0,78
	4th	4,07	0,79
Planning the teaching learning processes by taking the environmental conditions, cost and time into account	2nd	3,07	0,63
	3rd	3,53	0,57
	4th	4,10	0,72
Taking into account national and moral values while planning the teaching process	2nd	3,11	0,85
	3rd	3,59	0,63
	4th	4,17	0,67

Another important component of professional skill is creating learning environments. After effective planning of the teaching-learning processes, it is vital to create the learning environment to achieve the desired outcomes of instruction planning. When we analyze the indicators, creating learning environments that foster effective communication and develop higher level cognitive skills created the lowest mean scores for all pre-service teachers. Considering the difficulty of engaging learners and developing higher level cognitive skills, this finding is not surprising, as even

experienced teachers find it difficult to engage students fully in the classroom. Compared to other competence indicators, those related to creating learning environments develop slightly earlier in pre-service teachers' undergraduate studies. However, high mean scores for most of the remaining indicators for the 4th year students can be interpreted as the positive gains of practicum and courses devoted to teaching English in the classroom. The high mean scores can also be interpreted as pre-service teachers' perceived readiness for the profession and their future career. For the competence indicators, in which the mean scores are higher or close to four for the fourth year, pre-service teachers can also be interpreted as a result of positive impact of practicum on pre-service self-realization of their teaching competence. Similarly, the same can also be true for competence indicators with lower mean scores for the fourth year pre-service teachers indicating a realization of a failure or lack of skills arising from their teaching experience. The table 9 below displays the findings.

Table 9: Competence Indicators related to Creating Learning Environments

Creating Learning Environments	**Year of Study**	$\bar{x}$	***sd***
Organizing democratic learning environment where students communicate effectively	2nd	2,68	0,93
	3rd	3,30	0,75
	4th	3,66	0,76
Creating learning environments that support developing high level cognitive skills of students	2nd	2,70	0,90
	3rd	3,17	0,91
	4th	3,48	0,92
Organizing the learning environments by catering for the individual differences and needs of the learners	2nd	2,98	0,63
	3rd	3,63	0,49
	4th	4,09	0,63
Preparing teaching materials suitable to learning outcomes of the curriculum	2nd	3,11	0,85
	3rd	3,67	0,86
	4th	3,93	0,66
Organizing healthy, safe and aesthetic learning environment	2nd	3,16	0,81
	3rd	3,77	0,82
	4th	4,19	0,66
Creating learning environments that help learners internalize national and moral values	2nd	3,20	0,80
	3rd	3,73	0,58
	4th	4,05	0,71
Organizing the learning environment by catering for the learning outcomes of the curriculum	2nd	3,20	0,75
	3rd	3,77	0,23
	4th	4,09	0,77

Managing the learning environment, which can be interpreted as classroom conduct aspect of professional skills deals mainly how the pre-service behave in the classroom. Indicators in this sub-area have the highest number compared to other sub-areas. The table 10 below presents the findings.

Table 10: Competence Indicators related to Managing Teaching-Learning Processes

Managing Teaching-Learning Processes	Year of Study	$\bar{x}$	sd
Taking into account the natural, cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the environment in their practices	2nd	2,43	0,85
	3rd	3,53	0,78
	4th	3,67	0,80
Coping with misbehavior and undesired situations effectively and constructively	2nd	2,75	0,87
	3rd	3,33	0,61
	4th	3,47	0,80
Making effective use of time in teaching and learning process	2nd	2,77	0,89
	3rd	3,47	0,51
	4th	4,03	0,65
Preparing learning activities that helps developing analytical thinking skills of the students	2nd	2,84	0,86
	3rd	3,37	0,89
	4th	3,72	1,10
Performing the skills needed for education and teaching of English	2nd	2,91	0,68
	3rd	3,50	0,82
	4th	3,86	0,87
Making learning relevant to daily lives of the students	2nd	3,07	0,95
	3rd	3,17	0,99
	4th	3,62	0,98
Making use of the information and communication technologies effectively in the teaching-learning process	2nd	3,09	0,74
	3rd	3,73	0,79
	4th	3,95	0,69
Making use of the appropriate tools, equipment and materials in the learning-teaching processes effectively	2nd	3,11	0,99
	3rd	3,27	0,87
	4th	3,59	0,82
Taking into account the students with special needs while carrying out the teaching and learning process	2nd	3,11	0,82
	3rd	3,63	0,67
	4th	3,95	0,78
Ensuring active participation of students in the learning processes	2nd	3,18	0,82
	3rd	3,93	0,79
	4th	4,16	0,75
Ensuring effective learning by using appropriate strategies, methods and techniques in the teaching and learning process	2nd	3,20	0,67
	3rd	3,93	0,64
	4th	4,17	0,68
Collaborating with individuals, institutions and colleagues in teaching and learning activities	2nd	3,52	0,79
	3rd	3,70	0,75
	4th	4,14	0,71

The competence indicators show that 2nd year pre-service teachers have the least teaching experience, so their responses to the indicators can be interpreted as their beliefs, rather than a perception developed through actual practice or hands-on teaching experience. As for the 3rd year students, their perceived competence comes mainly from their experience in demo or micro teachings that they demonstrate in the classroom with their peers as pretenders playing the role of the learner. The fourth year pre-service teachers, on the other hand, experienced teaching in the real world in their

practicum with real students, so their perceived competence in these indicators is a result of experience. When we look at the responses from the pre-service ELT teachers, classroom management related competence indicators develop relatively slowly. As pre-service teachers have more teaching experience, their perceived competence in indicators related to classroom conduct develops comparatively fast. For example, the indicators of encouraging active participation of learners, taking into account learners with special needs, utilizing information and communication technologies effectively or utilizing appropriate strategy, method and techniques However, teaching experience may also lead pre-service teachers realize their weaknesses as in the example of utilizing appropriate tools and materials in the learning teaching processes, which is relatively high among 2nd year pre-service teachers, but does not develop as rapidly as other indicators over the years. All in all, managing the learning-teaching processes, despite some indicators with moderately high mean scores, still an area that needs to be developed, especially with reference to material choice and coping with disruptive learner behavior. High standard deviation in some indicators for the 4th year pre-service teachers can also be a result of their practicum experience. For some who felt satisfaction and a sense of achievement may feel more competent than those whose experience were rather disappointing or discouraging.

The last, but not the least step of teaching process is evaluation and assessment. It seems to be the final step of teaching; however, due to its recurring feature, it is in all stages of teaching-learning processes. Overall, it is the sub-area of professional skills that generated the lowest mean scores for all groups of pre-service ELT teachers. The table 11 below shows the findings about competence indicators related to assessment and evaluation.

Table 11: Competence Indicators related to Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and Evaluation	**Year of Study**	$\bar{x}$	**sd**
Preparing and using assessment and evaluation tools suitable to English and stages of growth and development of the students	2nd	2,61	0,97
	3rd	3,13	0,97
	4th	3,33	0,97
Providing accurate and constructive feedback to students and other stakeholders in accordance with the results of assessment and evaluation	2nd	2,70	0,90
	3rd	3,17	0,79
	4th	3,62	0,81
Re-arranging the teaching and learning processes in accordance with the results from assessment and evaluation	2nd	2,70	0,90
	3rd	3,17	0,79
	4th	3,62	0,81
Carrying out objective and fair assessment and evaluation	2nd	3,16	0,98
	3rd	3,40	0,62
	4th	3,78	0,70
Making use of both summative and formative methods in testing and assessment	2nd	3,48	1,09
	3rd	3,83	0,91
	4th	4,22	0,70

Assessment and evaluation related competence indicators generated the lowest mean scores, mainly because pre-service teachers have the least experience and knowledge in testing and assessment. Preparing and using assessment and evaluation tools appropriate to the cognitive and social development of the learner generated the lowest mean score for all groups, whereas making use of both summative and formative assessment methods yielded the highest mean score. Feedback on test results and organizing remedial teaching seems to develop in the 4th year, where pre-service ELT teachers have a chance to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of different testing techniques. 3rd year pre-service teachers perceive themselves moderately competent in all areas of assessment and evaluation, except for utilizing summative and formative methods. The 4th year students are developing competence in assessment; however, compared to competencies, competence in this area develops rather slowly. Standard deviation observed in the results can be considered as a further support for pre-service ELT teachers' uncertainty about assessment and evaluation. Standard deviation in the 2nd and 3rd year pre-service teachers is very close to 1.00, which means that there is a wider range in the responses and individual differences or confidence is probably the reason for the deviation. Standard deviation in 4th year pre-service teachers is considerably lower, which can be considered as a sign of more reliable interpretation of their competence.

In a nutshell, teaching competency develops over the years. The 2nd year pre-service teachers have lower mean scores in all competencies and their indicators. Some indicators develop rather fast and foster over the years. Similarly, professional skill related competence develop through teaching experience and lead to a realization of weaknesses and strengths in teaching. The practicum deserves a special attention, because with some indicators, the responses of 4th year pre-service teachers produce unanticipated results.

B. 2nd Research Question: Are there any significant differences in pre-service ELT teachers' perceived teacher competencies with reference to year of study?

In order to investigate whether there are any significant differences in pre-service ELT teachers' perceived teacher competencies with reference to year of study, first normality tests were computed for overall mean scores for the two broad competence domains of professional knowledge and skill, followed by an analysis into sub-areas under each category and finally an indicator based analysis was conducted. Normality tests showed, except for the competencies related with knowledge of legislation normal distribution, so ANOVA analyses were computed. For knowledge of legislation related competence indicators, Kruskal-Willis was computed. In all competencies, significant differences were observed. Post-hoc analysis was conducted to find out which group caused the difference. Table 12 shows the group differences with reference to professional knowledge and its sub-areas.

Table 12: Cross-sectional comparison of professional knowledge

	Differences Between Groups
Professional Knowledge	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year 3rd Year & 4th Year
Content Knowledge	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year
Knowledge of Legislation	2nd Year & 4th Year

The results showed that in terms of professional knowledge, there are significant differences between all groups. It is possible to say that the pre-service teachers perceived competence in professional knowledge grow over the years. Although overall mean scores for professional knowledge generated significant differences between all groups, competencies yielded different results. With regards to competencies under professional knowledge, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge develops mainly in the 3rd year, since there are no significant differences between 3rd and 4th pre-service teachers. At the end of the 3rd year, since most methodology and ELT related courses are completed, the findings are not surprising. With regards to knowledge on legislation, there is only significant difference between the 2nd year and 4th year pre-service ELT teachers, which can be interpreted as knowledge of legislation develops in the final year of the studies, especially when the pre-service teachers experience teaching at schools during the practicum. Referring back to differences in indicators under legislation, it is probably knowledge of legislation about the profession that causes the difference.

With reference to professional skill, there are significant differences between all groups in the overall mean scores and in competencies, except for evaluation and assessment. Table 13 presents the findings.

Table 13: Cross-sectional comparison of professional skill

Competence Area	**Differences Between Groups**
Professional Skill	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year 3rd Year & 4th Year
Planning of Education and Teaching	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year 3rd Year & 4th Year
Creating learning environment	2nd Year & 3rd Year 2nd Year & 4th Year 3rd Year & 4th Year
Managing teaching-learning process	2nd Year & 3rd Year

	2nd Year & 4th Year 3rd Year & 4th Year
Evaluation and assessment	2nd Year & 4th Year

The findings show that competence related to professional skill develops steadily over the years. As pre-service teachers engage in teaching practice, they become aware of their competencies related to different phases of lesson planning and conduct. Since there are also significant differences between the 3rd and 4th year pre-service teachers, practicum appears to be the cause of the differences. In terms of courses offered to 3rd and 4th year pre-service teachers, both groups have completed courses related to instructional planning, creating learning environment and managing teaching-learning process, so in a way, the senior year of their undergraduate studies is a self-actualization and realization of their competences.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The overall results of the study comply with the similar studies on the perceived preservice teachers' competencies (Yüksel, 2014; Kızılarsalan, 2011) as most of the participants perceived themselves as competent in most of the competence areas. The differences between pre-service teachers in different years also indicate that competencies develop over the years which are in line with the contemporary definition and understanding of teaching competency. Professional knowledge, which can be considered as the theory about teaching develops fast in the third year, whereas professional skill develops steadily over the years and fostered in the senior year in which teaching practice experience help pre-service teachers to evaluate their competence in different phases of instructional planning and implementation. Third year seems to be important in helping pre-service teachers develop professional knowledge; however, the overall mean scores yielded for the 3rd and 4th year pre-service teachers ($\bar{x}$=3.50, $\bar{x}$=3, 77 respectively) also reveal that pre-service teachers do not feel themselves as possessing full competency in professional knowledge.

Teaching practice both in the form of micro and macro teachings as part of course requirements and senior year practicum appears to be vital in developing competence in professional skill. Practicing teaching not only helps pre-service teachers to realize their potentials as future teachers, but also to understand their lacks in knowledge basis and skills. The 2nd year pre-service teachers, who are just at the beginning of their journey into teaching practice have rather lower perceived teacher competency in professional skill, compared to 3rd and 4th year students and it can be anticipated that through practice, they may gain more competency in professional skill. Looking from an angle of teacher competency development, knowledge and skill or theory and practice should go hand in hand and from very early years of pre-service education, pre-service teachers should be engaged in teaching practice.

Similar to Kömür (2010) the effects of practicum on the preservice teachers' perceptions is also observed in the study that 4th year students' perceived teaching competency is raised and they become more aware about their competencies in both professional knowledge and skills. The senior year of pre-service teacher education can best be summarized as self-realization and actualization as a teacher and should be explored in detail.

The fluctuation among the years in terms of perceptions on the competency domains also reflects the preservice teachers' ongoing professional and personal development throughout their education. As Vecaldo (2017) and Richards (2011) underline the preservice teachers shape their beliefs, attributes and self-perceptions throughout teacher training and they get professionally mature enough to blend theory and practice, which means they gain and develop teacher competences. That's why; 4th year students come to forefront as the most competent group.

The findings of this study suggest that teaching competency is developmental and it is important to investigate gains in competency over years as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education and pinpoint areas that needs adjustments and improvements. The study also revealed that certain indicators yielded lower mean scores across the years, so these competence indicators can be implemented into the courses or new dimensions can be added to the program to address these competence indicators.

Since pre-service teachers do not feel that they possess full competence in some of the competence indicators and competencies in both professional knowledge and skill domains, in-service teacher training programs can focus more on these indicators and plan their induction and in-service teacher education programs taking into account the perceived lacks of pre-service teachers.

Teaching practice comes forefront as an important component of pre-service teacher education programs, so in all stages of pre-service education, emphasis should be put on teaching practice and pre-service teachers should experience teaching practice in very early years of their training. In this study, it was found that senior year of pre-service teacher education programs function in a way a realization of teacher competencies. 3rd year pre-service teachers, who have little contact with real teaching environments, may have overexaggerated their competences. Likewise, 2nd year pre-service teachers may have underestimated their teacher competence, so a longitudinal study focusing on the gains of a group of pre-service teachers over the years can reveal insights into loops and drops in perceived teacher competencies.

This study also showed that there is a need to investigate the impact of different courses on pre-service teacher competence gains, as some indicators related to knowledge of legislations and some indicators under managing the learning-teaching processes yielded low mean scores across the years, which may arise from the fact that they are not covered in the teacher training programs. Therefore, as a further study, the courses offered in the program can be cross-matched with the competencies and their competence indicators to evaluate the success and failure of course content in covering

different teaching competence indicators, as well as an analysis of the impact of different courses on the perceived gains of pre-service teachers.

As a final remark, the findings of the study should not be generalized to all pre-service ELT teacher training programs in Turkey, but considered with care as a possible area of investigation to both evaluate the impact of different teacher training programs and identify the readiness of pre-service teachers to the profession.

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