Pre-service teachers' evaluations of practices in teaching English to young learners in terms of 21st century teacher qualifications[*]

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Abstract

This study investigates the 3rd year and 4th year pre-service teachers' evaluations of the practices in teaching English to young learners in terms of 21st century teacher qualifications. Employing a mixed methods design, this study includes the qualitative data that come from semi-structured interviewed questions administered to pre-service teachers in five different English Language Teaching programmes. The quantitative data come from the content analysis of the course "Teaching English to Young Learners" syllabi in these universities. The findings indicate that pre-service teachers have individual learning needs mainly on organizational skills, the use of technology, and characteristics of young learners. The current syllabi for the course are found to be ineffective in preparing pre-service teachers for 21st century teacher qualifications. This study also discusses pre-service teachers' readiness levels as a 21st century teacher to teach young learners English. Suggestions are made for the course content and to promote 21st century teacher qualifications at pre-service level.

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1. Introduction

Recent studies have shown that second language teacher education has undergone considerable change in the 21st century (Crandall, 2000; Farrell, 2015; Freeman, 2009; Wright, 2010). Accordingly, reflective practice, teacher thinking, school-based teacher learning, and supervision for pre-service teachers have captured the attention of the practitioners. Learning experiences, purposes, and evaluation procedures have been affected and required the demand for new considerations at pre-service level as a result of those changes. How the demands resulting from the changes are met in pre-service teacher education (PSTE) programmes, in which important components of teacher education courses such as teaching strategies, course design, assessment and evaluation procedures, and materials evaluation have been offered, has gained huge importance (Mann, 2005; Richards, 2008).

Pre-service teachers (PSTs) will be tomorrow's teacher leaders and must have the necessary skills to accept the responsibility required in decision making about unexpected situations, diverse learning

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and teaching contexts, classroom management or material selection as part of a team or committee member (Johnson & Templeton, 2011; Pradhan, 2011). They will grow learners being educated in the 21st century; therefore, they need to meet their needs and develop their teaching skills. Accordingly, they should be able to think critically, solve problems effectively, perform creatively, and adapt into new situations by formulating their previous knowledge in the rapidly changing world. With regard to this importance, the suggested key elements for PSTs in the 21st century are to use information to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and construct new knowledge (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008); learn via real world samples, applications and experiences (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008); 21st century content integrating career and business skills with a specific focus on problem solving, collaboration, and decision making skills; and 21st century assessments in which PSTs can understand different kinds of assessment to improve their teaching and students' learning (Johnson & Templeton, 2011; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004).

Previous studies have focused only on the effectiveness of the PSTE programmes or courses from various stakeholders' views like the perspectives of teacher educators (Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013) and different stakeholders like pre-service and in-service teachers (Çelik & Arıkan, 2012; Hişmanoğlu, 2012; Özkan & Arıkan, 2010). In this regard, there seems to be a need for understanding and evaluating these programmes from the 21st century teacher requirements in Turkey. Therefore, this study aims to investigate pre-service teachers' evaluations of the practices in the course 'Teaching English to Young Learners I-II' (TEYL) in PSTE programmes based on the 21st century teacher qualifications as stated in Partnership for 21st century skills by Johnson and Templeton (2011) and Pradhan (2011).

1.1. Literature review

The curricular reform movements by the Council of Higher Education in 1998 and 2006 resulted in great changes in PSTE programmes in Turkey (Seferoğlu, 2007). Accordingly, 50 per cent of the courses focus on the subject matter, 30 per cent of the courses are about pedagogical practices and information, and 20 per cent include general knowledge courses in English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes. While some courses like 'Advanced reading skills' and 'advanced writing skills' were united in a single course as 'Advanced reading and writing I, II', some were extended to two terms in the third year of the programme such as TEYL. The course 'School experience I' was replaced in the fourth year of the ELT programme as 'School experience' in fall term and 'Teaching practice' in the spring term.

Among those courses, TEYL has been an evolving field in the world as a result of the globalization and the need for English as a language of international trade and communication (Graddol, 2006; Richards, 2008; Shin & Crandall, 2014). In line with the skills stated in Partnership for 21st century skills (2004), it is vital for PSTs to understand the ways young learners (YLs) learn; child pedagogy; diversity of cultures, languages and individual learning needs; YLs' developmental stages; communication and collaboration; the use of technology; parental corporation; organizational skills; and the importance of reflective practice in the context of TEYL (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Johnson, Greer & Harrison, 1995; National Education Association, 2002–2009; Shin & Crandall, 2014; Whitaker, 2004). The teachers need to know their learners and the ways they develop within social contexts, understand the subject matter and skills to be taught. Then, the knowledge should be transformed into classroom based experiences like in practicum classes, which requires the involvement of modelling, reflecting, practising and collaborating throughout the teacher education programme (Pradhan, 2011). This necessitates intensive collaboration between educators, PSTs and in-service teachers in which they share, exchange and discuss their experiences and practices (Darling-Hammond 2006; Johnson & Templeton, 2011).

There are several studies carried out in the Turkish context as for the evaluation of the ELT programme and TEYL courses. Çelik and Arıkan (2012) conducted their study with 25 in-service English language teachers to examine the effectiveness of the ELT programmes to see whether the programmes prepared them to teach English to young learners. Their results suggested that the participant teachers considered the programme to be effective in preparing PSTs to teach English to young learners on account of the practice based sessions at pre-service level. However, the programme was criticized due to the lack of real teaching experience in young learners' context. Özkan and Arıkan (2010) investigated 40 novice English language teachers' opinions on the effect of the course 'TEYL I- II' in preparing pre-service English language teachers in teaching English to young learners. The findings indicated that there was a strong need felt by those teachers to experience teaching in YLs' real classrooms and to know about their characteristics. Hişmanoğlu (2012) also conducted a study on the perspectives of PSTs on aspects of the ELT programme with special consideration to training techniques, evaluation and assessment procedures. He concluded that higher order thinking skills such as problem solving, and critical and creative thinking, which were emphasized in the 21st century, were not reflected in the programme satisfactorily. Yavuz and Zehir Topkaya (2013), on the other hand, focused on the opinions of 18 teacher educators from five different universities on the evaluation of the ELT programme. As a result of the study, those educators criticized the programme due to the top-down and centralized movement, and for disregarding educators', teachers', and PSTs' experiences and opinions in restructuring the programme. It was highlighted that there had to be mutual communication and collaboration between the Council of Higher Education and the Ministry of National Education throughout the restructuring and educating movement.

1.2. Research questions

The current study aims to investigate PSTs' evaluations of the practices in the course TEYL based on the 21st century teacher qualifications and to analyse the current TEYL syllabi based on the 21st century teacher qualification requirements. The sampling for this study consists of PSTs attending the TEYL course in 2014-2015 fall and spring terms in five major ELT programmes. Successful and problematic parts in the implementation of the course are also discussed in detail from their perspectives and according to the requirements. Accordingly, the following questions guided the study:

1. Does the course "TEYL" prepare PSTs for 21st century teacher qualifications?

2. What are PSTs' perspectives on practices in "TEYL" in terms of 21st century teacher

qualifications?

2. Method

2.1. Research Context

This study was conducted in five different ELT programmes where PSTs are provided with a foundation in theoretical and practical areas via field knowledge courses such as advanced reading and writing skills, contextual grammar, listening and pronunciation skills, linguistics, English literature, language acquisition, and literature and language teaching (Güngör, 2016). The participants are from Gazi, Abant İzzet Baysal, Trakya, Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs, and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Universities. Third-year PSTs were taking the course and 4th year PSTs had already taken the course at the time of this study in the third year of the programme. The TEYL course, in which the research was conducted, required PSTs to follow a certain syllabus. Although there are some differences in the content and

implementation, some features remain the same in the course syllabi. For example, PSTs are equipped with theoretical information on the characteristics, learning styles, and developmental levels of YLs, and the age appropriate teaching techniques (Güngör, 2016). Later on, they are asked to prepare and present microteaching presentations either in pairs or individually in both terms. As for the time spent on the topics and the training techniques, the educators are the responsible for the implementation of the syllabus.

2.2. Participants

The participants are 283 3rd and 4th year PSTs with an age range of 20 to 30 from ELT programmes at Gazi University (N=91; 32%), Ondokuz Mayıs University (N=24; 8%), Abant İzzet Baysal University (N=50; 18%), Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (N=14; 15%), and Trakya University (N=104; 37%). These participants are chosen through convenient sampling based on certain categories (Mackey & Gass, 2005). These categories are the regular attendance at TEYL courses during the academic year, willingness to participate in the research, and the interest in the field. The aim of selecting such a sampling type is to provide the representativeness of the sample precisely. Participants' names from all groups have been obscured in all publicized parts due to the ethical issues.

2.3. Data collection procedures

The survey consisted of three main parts. Part A focused on the demographic characteristics of the participants. Questions in part B were in open-ended response format (B1, 2, 3). Part C included one close-ended and one open-ended question (Qs. 2, 3), while the first one (Q.1) was in the list question type (Table 1). The researcher herself, two assistant professors, one lecturer, and one research assistant in the field were involved in the data collection process. The semi-structured interview questions in the survey were given to participants in written form at the end of the 2015-2016 academic years. The researcher herself joined and observed the data collection process herself throughout the study.

Table 1. Thematic categorization of the pre-service teachers' survey questions

Current practices in TEYL (Part B)	Content of TEYL course (Part C)
B1, B2, B3	C1, C2, C3

2.4. Data analysis

This mixed methods study is exploratory, follows a non-experimental method, requires qualitative data, and provides a descriptive and quantitative analysis of the data. As a widely used descriptive method, a survey that obtains data at a certain time to portray the picture of existing situations and states the standards which can be compared and parallels drawn between particular events is delineated to be a method in this study (Brown, 2014; Cohen & Manion, 1994). Accordingly, first the literature on the 21st century teacher qualifications was reviewed. Second, semi-structured questions in the form of survey were composed after the detailed analysis of the literature review. Semi-structured interview questions in the form of survey were administered to 283 3rd and 4th year PSTs.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the pre-service teachers

PSTs'						
1. University	GU (32%)	AİBU (18%)	SU (8%)	TU (37%)	MU (5%)	
2. Age	25-30 (8%)	23-25 (18%)	20-23 (74%)			
3. Gender	Female (78%)	Male (22%)				
4. Experiences in TEYL	Inexperienced (48%)	Experienced (52%)				
5. Experiences according to levels	Primary & secondary (3%)	pre-school& secondary (1%)	pre-school& primary (3%)	secondary (15%)	primary (15%)	pre-school (15%)

The interview questions in general focused on PSTs' perspectives on practices in TEYL and the content of TEYL course with respect to 21st century teacher qualifications such as YLs' development level, the use of technology, organizational skills, reflective teaching, individual learning needs that address specific problems participants did not feel confident, and 21st century requirements in education (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Greer & Harrison, 1995; National Education Association, 2002–2009; Shin & Crandall, 2014; Whitaker, 2004). Specifically, part A focused on demographic characteristics of the participants (Table 2). Table 2 illustrates that 99 (48%) PSTs have no previous experience in TEYL. Among the remaining 137 PSTs, 41 (15%) of them teach English at pre-school. 41 (15%) of them teach English to primary school learners. The other 41 participants (15%) have previous teaching experience with secondary school learners. Except these groups, 9 (3%) of them have taught English to both pre-school and primary school levels, 4 (1%) of them have previous teaching experience with pre-school and secondary school learners, and 9 (6%) of PSTs have taught English to both primary and secondary school learners.

2.5. Data analysis

After the survey data were collected, thematic coding and quantification techniques were utilized to analyse the qualitative data. First, the data were read iteratively. Then, new categories were identified, linked to broader themes and reasons, and then results were figured out in a conceptual order. As for TEYL syllabi, content analysis and quantification were employed as data analysis methods in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to analyse the content of TEYL syllabi, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) of the TEYL courses were downloaded from the information packages of five ELT programmes in Turkey. The syllabi were, accordingly, analysed in terms of teacher awareness raising activities and experiential practices. To check of the survey findings and to increase the validity and reliability of the findings, five different TEYL syllabi from participant ELT programmes were also analysed separately through the content analysis based on the checklist by Ellis (1996). This checklist focuses on training techniques and data collection ways in teacher education by questioning the percentage of each of these items in the programme.

3. Results

The findings mainly revealed that the TEYL course was found to be ineffective in preparing 21st century teachers. PSTs' perspectives on the TEYL course and the reasons why it was found to be ineffective were presented under four themes respectively with the teacher qualifications stated in Partnership for 21st century skills: (1) the use of teacher qualifications to manage, integrate and construct new knowledge; (2) 21st century learning skills; (3) the use of technology and assessment; (4) reflection. Although few qualifications are thought to include in the course, still there are certain teacher qualifications to be improved in TEYL field from PSTs' perspectives.

The use of 21st century teacher qualifications to manage, integrate and construct new knowledge at PSTE level

Through the survey, it is aimed to explore which 21st century teacher qualifications are offered and used in the TEYL courses from PSTs' perspectives. To start with the first one "critical thinking", seventy-two out of 283 PSTs claim that the content of TEYL enhances their critical thinking skills toward the profession and life whereas 211 think the opposite. Two hundred four of them think that the TEYL content should be revised and should meet these requirements. The least regarded skills are reported to be critical thinking according to the findings of this study. It is stated that after the theoretical knowledge is introduced in the course, sample practices are performed by PSTs. Although this has contributed to the variety and quality of the coming presentations, PSTs claim that there is not enough space for them to analyse real life teaching contexts and improve decision-making skills for the conceivable problems. As for synthesizing the information, 160 PSTs state that the course content and their educators do not provide enough input or activate them to access and synthesize the information based on young learners' learning needs. When they learn the theoretical information, they need to decide whether and how to transform the information into practice in the local teaching contexts by explaining and discussing the underlying educational reasons.

Two hundred and eight participants state that intercultural communication skills are not encouraged in this course. These participants do not exchange information on educational backgrounds or in-class practices with PSTs from different countries to understand and analyse the differences or similarities of TEYL practices to be more open about teaching. One hundred six participants disagree that they are prepared sufficiently to adapt into the new teaching contexts through this course. Adapting a lesson plan designed for adults or teens or an authentic material to age appropriate level for YLs is reported to be emphasized less, so most of the teaching problems are thought to result from this lack of emphasis. They need more real teaching experiences in YLs' classrooms. One hundred five PSTs state that the entrepreneurship skills are less developed while 98 of them state the opposite. The entrepreneurship depends on leading PSTs to conduct research, look for new ideas and negotiate with experienced teachers to develop more activities, materials and lesson plans with reference to the local context.

Two hundred four participants think that effective communication skills are improved through this course while 69 claim the opposite. The effective communication skills refer to the communication going on among the PSTs themselves during the microteaching presentations and workshops. With the help of microteaching presentations, opportunities are afforded to communicate with peers effectively by integrating the body language, voice and gestures. On one hand, 158 out of 283 PSTs admit that they have difficulties in accessing the information especially for take-home assignments on the language acquisition, language development and different developmental stages of the YLs. They cannot combine theory with practical applications in the classroom. In other words, while preparing their microteaching presentations, PSTs are not aware of the underlying techniques, methods or approaches they are employing. They need clear guidelines for the assignments and microteaching

presentations. They also explain the lack of clear rubrics to be evaluated. Consequently, the final 21st century skill is the creativity. Accordingly, 131 PSTs report that their creative thinking skills are improved in TEYL courses by producing a variety of activities for YLs, whereas 152 think the opposite. From their perspective, creative thinking is claimed to develop within time based on PSTs' experiences, practices and observations of YLs in real atmosphere. Creativity is not only embedded in materials but also in activities, lesson plans and classroom management. To sum, except collaboration, effective communication and creativity, PSTs think that the rest of the 21st century teacher qualifications are not effectively integrated and precisely reflected in TEYL courses.

21st century learning skills

The survey also attempts to understand to what extent PSTs can integrate and fulfil the collaboration, problem solving in classroom management issues, and decision-making skills, which may contribute to teacher learning process. As a result, the alternative classroom management techniques and the variety of organizational skills they have developed in TEYL courses are revealed. Out of 283 PSTs, 36 did not answer this question while 247 did. To start with the problem solving skills in classroom management, twenty-five of the 247 PSTs use their voice effectively through intonation to manage classes. Thirty-five PSTs use interesting materials like videos, posters, flashcards, toys and real objects to raise their interest and to involve them actively in the lesson. Fifteen participants prefer oral warning during the activities while 3 of them address YLs with their names. Five teachers announce the misbehaviour by focusing on the behaviour not on the learner. They reason that when learners' attention is kept throughout the course, teachers may manage the classes easier. Therefore, they develop their own solutions to some problems. Seventy-three PSTs employ mirroring, Total Physical Response (TPR), raising hands up and counting from 5 to 1, and establishing eye-contact or clap, or waiting in silence in case of any classroom problems. TPR is, hereby, used as a teaching technique but utilized in this context as a classroom management technique by the participants. Showing body language by using imperatives is interesting according to the statements of some PSTs. This group mostly prefers to combine body language with the effective use of teacher voice. Once they keep YLs in quiet, they start using materials and activities to keep their attention longer. In case of any noise or violation of rules, teachers warn them orally.

The next category focuses on decision-making skills such as determining which technique to use in inconceivable problems, deciding on the appropriate material or task for the specific age group, or handling with problems effectively in diverse contexts. Among 172 PSTs, three of them use drama and role play, 66 prefer games, 25 teachers use songs, 4 try storytelling, only one uses stirring and calming activities, 6 teachers prefer group and pair work, one uses magic microphone, 2 prefer art and craft activities, and projects when they want to change the activity or assign different responsibilities. Four teachers bring extra activities to keep learners' attention longer because this group thinks that as long as learners enjoy and participate enthusiastically, they do not attempt to break the rules. Some of the teachers from this group think that YLs love such activities and are eager to play games or make dramatization. Hence, these teachers use them as an award on condition that learners keep silence. Furthermore, when YLs lose their attention toward the lesson, the teachers use their favourite songs or activities to increase their motivation again. Another technique they developed against problems in the classroom is establishing classroom rules together with YLs at the beginning of the term because it is claimed that the first impression is vital. Among 42 PSTs, some of them hang classroom rules on the walls, explain results and causes of these rules to YLs, and choose consistent and realistic rules while some prefer "question and answer" technique through negotiation with learners to show respect for their opinions and to make empathy with them. They believe that being fair and open while following these rules is very important to help young learners internalize the rules. From time to time, some teachers prefer awarding them at the end of a successful lesson. Thirty-eight PSTs prefer award and

punishment system to keep students under control. For instance, they bring colourful sticker and give extra points, positive oral feedback, or interesting awards to obedient YLs at the end of the activity. In these ways, PSTs may decide which technique to use once they meet a problem in the classroom. The problem is they need to check the data whether these ways work in real contexts and what other alternatives may be offered in larger and diversified classes.

The third category emerging as a result of the data analysis is collaboration skills. With the help of pair or group microteaching presentations, 242 of the participants think that collaborative working skills are improved in the TEYL course. Similar to Gut's study (2011), in which she concluded that PSTs incorporated mainly collaboration and communication skills into their teacher education programme, and then creativity, PSTs in this study state that the planning, rehearsal, and performance stages during the microteaching process help them follow group rules and work collaboratively with peers with different working habits. The collaboration they refer to is the communication and group working skills with their peers. Although some problems may rise in the preparation of microteaching presentations and lesson plans, they think that collaboration has benefits for them such as learning new ideas, being objective, and tolerating each other. As for the communication between colleagues and peers at international level, they state that they cannot get the opportunity to realize this due to the lack of guiding at PSTE level.

The use of technology and assessment in TEYL

Technology use is reported to be a problematic issue by PSTs. Due to the problems about technical background or the technological material itself, most PSTs state that they avoid employing technology in microteaching presentations. Hence, most of them avoid them in microteaching presentations. Nevertheless, it is a significant point not to be missed in the classroom with YLs since it has plenty of benefits both for classroom management and motivation, and for teaching skills in the 21st century (Shin & Crandall, 2014). The aim of integrating a question related to technology and the use of technology is to analyse participants' frequency and ways of employing it at pre-service level.

It is revealed that 18 participants never use technology with YLs since they think that it may cause extra classroom management problems as well as other reasons. The remaining reasons vary in terms of skills, appropriate devices, and websites. Those who prefer to use technology in teaching language skills and components are found to be 103 out of 283. Visuals and videos including cartoons, movies with subtitles, pictures, puppets, online games downloaded from websites are preferred (N=88) to employ as teaching materials. Songs are considered to be essential in teaching integrated language skills to YLs, so they are preferred more (N=100). Also, games are chosen by 8 PSTs while 4 participants in total use audio dictionaries, digital stories, and puzzles. Forty-two of the overall participants use different technological devices. To illustrate, 41 PSTs bring own laptop to the classroom for microteaching presentations. Ten of them make use of the smart board in the classrooms, while 4 prefer to use CDs and desktop computers in the classroom. Finally, 88 PSTs use various websites to download sample lesson plans, songs, stories, art and craft activities, games, and other interesting activities. The main concern here is how these activities and materials are transferred to teaching and learning contexts for YLs. In order to be motivated and inspired, 79 of 88 participants use various educational websites, 4 use social media, 2 use blogs, 3 use podcasts, edmodo and forums. The mostly used educational websites are British Council learnenglishkids.org, youtube.com, dreamenglish.com, onestopenglish.com, magiccryon.com, esldrama.com, bbclearning.com, esllab.com, busyteacher.com, eslgames.com, eslteaching.com, eslprintables.com, kidspage.com, storybird.com, and storyjumper.com. As for the social media, Facebook is found to be the source of ideas and communication between participants. It is crystal clear that techniques for the use of technology need be integrated into the TEYL so that more teachers can inspire and find more alternative ways to employ in presentations and professional lives.

The ways to assess young learners and prepare them for skill-based exams are found to be another neglected point in TEYL lessons (N=99). They express the need to analyze sample exams including international skills-based young learners exams such as Cambridge Starters, Movers, and Flyers, portfolio assessment, and other alternative assessment types as suggested in the national curriculum. When the TEYL syllabi are analyzed, it is obvious that different kinds of assessment tools are neither mentioned nor demonstrated with PSTs. Overall, assessment component is regarded to be one of the least emphasized part in TEYL courses.

Reflection: The effectiveness of TEYL courses in preparing 21st century English language teachers

The effectiveness of TEYL courses in preparing 21st century pre-service teachers comprehensively and sufficiently to teach English to YLs is investigated from PSTs' perspectives. Participants provide concrete examples by reflecting on course experiences.

One hundred and nine participants who claim that the course prepares them to be an effective English teacher for primary grades comprehensively are glad with the practical applications and theoretical information they gain. The other side of the coin is that 154 PSTs claim the opposite. To find vivid examples of this, these PSTs report that they need practice teaching experience to observe YLs in real atmosphere, experience teaching in actual classrooms, observe the differences between real and simulated classroom atmospheres, analyse how classroom management problems are handled, prepare actual lesson plans, activities, assessment tools, and experience the techniques to give feedback, instructions and to manage the classes, to motivate YLs, and to see differences between young and very young learners (Çelik & Arıkan, 2012; Özkan & Arıkan, 2010). This reflection carries out huge importance as they are considered to be the keystones of 21st century teacher qualifications as for learning via real world samples, applications and practices in practicum (Johnson & Templeton, 2009). They may not estimate conceivable problems in microteaching presentations because of the peer support or pressure, limited time, and ineffective feedback by educators. In some programmes the emphasis is on the theory rather than the practice, which results in PSTs' frustration over the lack of practical ideas and teaching skills.

The syllabus from the ELT programme in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University introduces new topics like parental co-operation, evaluation of child pictures, and materials evaluation and adaptation compared to syllabi in other programmes. Also, in terms of teacher awareness raising activities, PSTs have the chance of observing YLs in real settings at schools or their peers in simulated contexts in order to gain more insight on classroom management, their learning styles, language teaching skills, and developmental stages, which has not been come across in the following syllabi. The mainly emphasized training techniques are video recordings, peer and micro teaching sessions, readings and textbooks, and lesson plans while lectures outweigh group discussions, workshops, assignments and demonstrations. However, the content of the syllabus has not completely covered some recent topics like technology, intercultural communication, multilingualism or critical thinking strategies for YLs in the TEYL course.

Compared to others, the TEYL syllabus at Gazi University ELT programme places utmost importance on microteaching practices through storytelling, language skills, games, songs, art & craft activities, and structures with vocabulary. Nevertheless, the course content is not satisfactory in terms of the 21st century requirements for PSTs at international level. Among the data collection ways, peer teaching embedded in microteaching sessions is the primarily preferred technique. Also, educators employ different ways of data like readings, textbooks, lesson-plans and student-samples to certain extent. As with training procedures, lectures and assignments are the mostly preferred technique. Besides, group discussions, workshops, demonstrations, and elicitation are preferred to a considerable extent.

Different from the previous syllabi, TEYL course at Samsun 19 Mayıs University ELT programme requires PSTs to prepare a poster that is full of visuals and a specific language component suitable for teaching the specific young learner group. Reading assignments are officially integrated into the syllabus, which proves that PSTs' active participation in class discussions is essential. Mostly emphasized teacher training procedures are lecturing, workshops, assignments and group discussions whereas peer- and micro-teaching, textbooks, and student samples are the mainly highlighted ways of data collection in the course.

The syllabus at Trakya University ELT programme owns various data collection ways and training procedures. Lesson plans and microteaching presentations are the mostly employed data collection ways. Also, video recordings are provided for PSTs to allow them gain more insight into very young and young learners' learning styles and strategies. Student samples cover preparation of activities and materials for YLs and are graded as assignments in the syllabus. A wide variety of textbooks are provided for PSTs to refer during the course terms. As for training procedures, lecturing is the primarily used technique. Subsequent to this, workshops, demonstrations, group discussions, and assignments are used in both terms.

The final syllabus from Abant İzzet Baysal University ELT programme is akin to the procedures at Gazi University with regards to the emphasis it places on microteaching presentations and themes. Among the data collection ways, microteaching presentations in pairs cover 30 per cent of the overall syllabus in a term. Lesson plans are regarded as vital because they are proofs of assignments and students' written work. The training procedures, on the other hand, focus on lectures, workshops and demonstrations. Assignments are based on PSTs' microteaching performances and samples. Also, they are expected to join group discussions throughout the term.

PSTs are not assigned to attend practicum to observe real classroom atmospheres and deliver their performances in actual classroom settings, so they have problems in estimating and detecting conceivable problems with regard to classroom management, feedback and error correction, instruction giving, using technology, rich and appropriate activity types, interaction, characteristics and learning styles of YLs. Two syllabi include video recording technique to introduce PSTs to real teaching settings. The demonstration also is of limited use in all syllabi. The lecturing technique, on the contrary, is preferred mostly in all syllabi. It is evident that activities engaging PSTs' critical thinking, problem solving, organizing, creating and adapting skills are not emphasized sufficiently. Moreover, technology, intercultural themes, parental cooperation, the use of the target language, and assessment ways should be actively integrated into the TEYL syllabi as these are the needs clearly felt by PSTs.

4. Discussion

To start with the PSTs' fundamental needs in TEYL, classroom management is found to be one of the biggest problematic areas, which is also found in other studies (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008; Eröz-Tuğa, 2012; Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011; Güngör, 2016; Neal, 2010). The mostly used technique for classroom management problems is finding interesting and age appropriate activities for YLs. They are not fully aware of the sources of discipline problems since they are not entirely familiar with very young and young learners' characteristics, learning styles, and needs. As they have little or no experience in an actual classroom setting at the time of this course, they can only make guesses or implementations about imaginary situations and prepare their microteaching presentations accordingly. Although the answers reveal eight different techniques, PSTs are not completely sure of themselves about whether these techniques are effective or not as also found out in Shinde and

Karekatti (2012). The obviously explained needs in classroom management are to take educators as role models while these educators are demonstrating the effective use of classroom management techniques. In this sense, they may also have the opportunity to observe different types of YLs, classrooms, schools, teachers and contexts. Similar to the expressed needs in various research studies (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008; Shinde & Karekatti, 2012), PSTs point to the lack of demonstrations by the educators on management problems.

Obviously, although the existing TEYL syllabi contribute to PSTE to some extent, they need revision to raise competent 21st century teachers. They should be redesigned based on 21st century qualifications because these are the requirements for a teacher to be more competent and confident to teach at international level (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008; Hişmanoğlu, 2012; Newman, Samimy, & Romstedt, 2010). Teachers may lead PSTs to appropriate and alternative ways to develop as an individual in the society aside from being solely a learner. Hence, teachers initially need to be educated for these skills in order to develop themselves as a facilitator and a guide in the classroom, which may then contribute to their critical, creative, collaborative and cultural development (Johnson & Templeton, 2009; Pradhan, 2011). Furthermore, they need to adapt technology to classes appropriately for YLs with various learning styles. Teachers should be open to innovations especially in their own field to boost their teaching skills more competently (Seferoğlu, 2007; Shin & Crandall, 2014).

Edwards (2013), in her study which aims to investigate opportunities for and barriers to PSTs' growth as practitioners of developmentally appropriate practice for YLs aged 5-11, concludes that PSTs need to activate their critical thinking skills as future teachers and question the knowledge in TEYL programmes instead of absorbing them uncritically, which highlights the importance of 21st century teacher qualifications. Likewise, Seferoğlu (2007) concludes that PSTs should be educated for change and innovation, which implies that novice teachers in their first few years of teaching should be able to think critically and adapt their practicum and teaching practices into the real atmosphere through synthesis and creativity. Kızıldağ (2009), for example, concludes in her study with 20 English language teachers from public primary schools through interviews that these teachers are negatively affected from the large classes, and that the effective use of the newly developed curriculum is minimized, resulting from the lack of understanding the nature of the language teaching and the lack of prior support. Third-year PSTs are not sent to practicum to observe and experience teaching skills with YLs nor are they introduced various classroom contexts from different parts of Turkey to analyse the practices for YLs from various backgrounds and cultures (Özkan & Arıkan, 2010). Therefore, it is also educators' responsibility to raise them critically questioning the nature of YLs and of the teaching processes (Bezzina & Michalak, 2008; Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011). Educators are expected to be experienced in TEYL field and share own experiences in every aspect, which serves as an eye opener for PSTs as well. In this way, they may be able to develop themselves as critical and reflective teachers who make decisions thoughtfully and professionally about fruitful and practical applications and analyse their roles in the classroom (Richards, 2008).

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the evaluation of the practices in teaching English to young learners from the perspectives of 3rd year and 4th year PSTs. Findings uncover the successful and less successful parts of the TEYL syllabi, and teaching and learning practices in the TEYL courses based on the 21st century teacher qualifications. Results focus on the participants' use of 21st century skills such as managing, integrating and constructing new knowledge and using technology, their learning

skills, and reflection on the effectiveness of TEYL courses in preparing 21st century English language teachers.

In TEYL microteaching presentations the authenticity of YLs' classrooms cannot be provided due to the simulated teaching contexts. The source of discipline and classroom management problems should be analysed and understood first by the teacher. Depending on the cause of the problem, necessary precautions should be taken by the teacher. To overcome these problems and broaden PSTs' perspectives, video recordings of young learner classes from different parts of the country may be introduced in TEYL classes. After such a training session, PSTs may be required to note down the techniques with steps and transform them into their presentations through discussions. In this way, they may develop their critical eye to alter, adapt, and manage different situations in the classroom. TEYL courses should encourage PSTs to adapt technology to young learners' lesson plans and syllabus via activities and materials and receive better results in learning English. The problems in organizational skills and the use of technology are reported to be due to the lack of skills in combining theory with practical knowledge. Although they state that the early starting age is necessary, they need to understand and analyse child psychology very well to combine their creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills with adaptation skills.

The answers indicate that PSTs' needs are centred on practical issues rather than theoretical ones, and vary according to the fields in TEYL. For instance, a highly felt need is the lack of practicum. It is acknowledged that comprehensive and satisfactory practicum and school experience opportunities need to be integrated into the TEYL syllabus throughout a year to observe and gain real life experiences with YLs. The previous findings reveal that the efficiency of communication skills, problem solving skills in different classroom contexts, the frequency of using intercultural elements for YLs should be analysed more and integrated into the TEYL syllabus to grow more qualified teachers. Then, they may handle classroom problems more effectively in different school settings with various age groups of YLs when they start their careers. The least regarded skill is intercultural communication skills while the most reinforced skill is found to be the collaborative work due to group and pair presentations. However, the important point is to develop collaboration among colleagues and peers from different contexts and countries to benefit more from the activities and ideas for YLs. As for the creativity, the same or similar activities and materials are usually developed for presentations. Critical thinking, adapting into new situations, problem solving, entrepreneurship, and synthesizing the information are the skills to be encouraged more in the TEYL course. These teachers may be introduced with new situations and different problems in various settings and asked to produce their own solutions toward these problems. Rather than focusing on the correct or incorrect solutions, effective and less effective techniques may be discussed and analysed in detail at PSTE. Regarding these findings, 21st century skills should be integrated into the TEYL syllabus both to brighten up their skills as a teacher and to assist them to be a life-long learner.

Overall, it is crystal clear that PSTs have specific training needs in TEYL field. They need more detailed, critical inquiry- and observation- based, and technology- and practice-oriented education in teaching YLs and managing YLs' classrooms. Besides, the necessary elements for teachers to transfer the new knowledge and behaviour into the classroom successfully are the presentation of research and theory, extensive modelling and teaching strategies, analysis and discussion of adaptation and modification of teaching, extensive observation and practice, guided practice with peer coaching, feedback, mentoring, and videotaping, adapting lesson plans, reflective activities that promote analysis of own teaching performance and decisions, and self-directed collaborative study groups where colleagues continue to refine their practice. Teacher qualifications determined by the Ministry of National Education may be revised in line with the 21st century conditions. This may require a revision and analysis in re-determining the course contents at tertiary level, especially in teacher education

faculties. In this way, assignments, syllabi, educators' preferences of teaching may be affected and updated parallel to PSTs' needs.

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Appendix A. Survey Questions

Part A. Demographic Information	
1. University	
2. Age	
3. Gender	Female / Male
4. How long did you teach English to young learners in…? preschool: primary school: secondary school:	
Part B. Current Practices in TEYL	
1. In what ways and how often do you use technology in TEYL microteaching presentations?	
2. What assessment types should be preferred for young learners?	
3. How do you maintain classroom management in TEYL microteaching presentations?	

Part C. Content of TEYL Courses	
1. List 5 successful and less successful parts of the TEYL course in the ELT programme.	
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
d.	d.
e.	e.

2. Which of the following 21st century skills is the TEYL course you have taken based on?

Critical thinking	Problem solving	Collaborative working	Synthesizing the information	Intercultural communication
Adapting into new situations	Decision-making	Effective communication	Accessing the information	Creative thinking

3. Does the TEYL course in the ELT programme prepare you to teach English to young learners comprehensively? Why?

Çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamalarının öğretmen adayları tarafından 21. yüzyıl öğretmen yeterliklerine göre değerlendirilmesi

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamalarının hizmet öncesi öğretmenlerin bakış açısıyla 21.yüzyıl öğretmen yeterliklerine göre değerlendirilmesidir. Karma desen çalışmasının temel alındığı bu çalışmada, nitel veri beş farklı üniversitede öğrenim görmekte olan öğretmen adaylarına uygulanan görüşme sorularından elde edilmiştir. Nicel veri ise, bu üniversitelerin mevcut "Çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi" dersinin içeriklerinin analizinden oluşmaktadır. Bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının öğrenme becerilerinin altında ele alınan karar verme, problem çözme gibi becerilerde, teknolojiyi bu alanda uygulama ve çocuk psikolojisini uygulamaya aktarabilme becerilerinde sorun yaşadıklarını göstermektedir. Mevcut ders içerikleri ise 21. Yüzyıl öğretmen yeterlikleri bakımından öğretmen yetiştirme konusunda yeterince işlevsel bulunmamıştır. Çalışmada, öğretmen adaylarının çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi konusunda yeterliklerini geliştirmelerine yönelik ders içeriğine ve temel ihtiyaçlarına yönelik önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi, hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitimi, 21. Yüzyıl öğretmen yeterlikleri

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