

A Comparative Analysis of European and Turkish Principles of Teacher Competence and Qualifications

Hale Nur Söyler Böyükbaş^{a1}

^aOstim Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract

In line with the developments and technological innovations, the significance of teachers' qualifications and competences has come under more and more attention in recent years. Many countries published documents that proposed the principles of teacher competence and qualifications from their perspectives. The documents of Europe were generally regarded as the reference documents, while several other countries created their own documents about teacher competences and qualifications at the national level. When the relevant literature on Turkish context was reviewed, it is seen that there is not much research that has compared the principles of European and Turkish teacher competence and qualifications. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to compare European and Turkish principles of teacher training along with their competence and qualifications through documents from European and Turkish contexts, focusing on the similarities and differences between them. Four reports about teacher competencies and qualifications were included in the analysis. Two of them are based on European principles for teacher competencies, while two others show the principles that are accepted in the Turkish context. European reports are "Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications" and "Teacher Education in Europe/An ETUCE Policy Paper". Turkish reports are "General Competences for Teaching Professionals" and "Basic Education Support Program". A descriptive case study based on qualitative research design and document analysis was adopted in this study. To analyze the related document, content analysis was used. The commonly agreed point in the documents was that teachers should have the ability to use Information and Communication Technology in their classroom. Besides, it is emphasized that they should respect different cultures and prepare their lessons by paying attention to the sociocultural aspects of their students. Also, they are thought to gain awareness about the importance of professional development, and they have to be supported to continue their development by following new practices and contemporary innovation in their field via participating in seminars, meetings, and conferences. In addition to similarities, we also found differences in teacher competence descriptions between European and Turkish documents. Teacher mobility is one of the crucial practices in professional development, according to European context. However, Turkish documents do not mention teacher mobility, although they emphasize the importance of professional development. Besides, European documents highlight postgraduate studies as a good way for teachers to develop themselves, although there is no emphasis on professional development through academic degrees or careers in Turkish documents. Lastly, teachers are responsible for raising students to be EU citizens, according to European documents. On the other hand, Turkish documents highlight national and moral values in the educational policy, although there is still an emphasis on European values like child and human rights.

Keywords: Teacher competence, European setting, Turkish setting

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1. Introduction

The skills, knowledge, and characteristics that teachers must have in order to facilitate student learning are referred to as teacher competences and qualifications. Developments and technological innovations require the revision of many elements in the world. One of them is the competence and qualifications of teachers. The significance of teachers' qualifications has come under more and more attention in recent years. Multiple studies have demonstrated that the qualification of teachers is a significant determinant of students' academic performance (Aaronson, I., Barrow, I., & Sander, I.L., 2007; Kola & Sunday, 2015; Rivkin, S. G., Hanushck, E. A., & Kam, J. F, 2005). The academic achievement of students, both presently and in the future, is directly linked to competent teachers (Lee, 2018). Additionally, the quality of instruction has a big impact on students' participation in school (Quin, D., Hemphill, S. A., & Heerde, J. A., 2017).

The significance of teacher competence and qualification prompts many educational systems to implement policies and programs with the goal of improving teacher competence and qualification (Hattie, 2003). Numerous countries

have implemented national standards for teacher education to guarantee that teachers acquire the required skills and qualifications. The European Commission has put up a series of standardized principles for teacher competencies and qualifications in Europe. The aim is to ensure that all teachers possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to provide effective education (European Commission, 2005). The European Commission has released a document titled "Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications." This document is intended to help national and regional policymakers by outlining common European requirements for teacher competence and qualifications (European Commission, 2005).

Many policy drivers, like the "Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications" document, have the potential to influence the development and implementation of national standards for teacher competence (Caena, 2014). One of them is the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE, 2008), which published a document called "Teacher Education in Europe: An ETUCE Policy Paper". This paper highlights the quality of teacher education and lays out specific suggestions for how to make sure that teachers are capable of meeting the important problems that the current education and training systems are currently experiencing (ETUCE, 2008).

At the national level, all countries have started to adapt their education to the new conditions of today. Turkey is undoubtedly one of the countries that has made efforts for the training and development of teachers. Many studies have been conducted in Turkey to develop teacher competence. One study was conducted under the Basic Education Support Program to modify teacher competencies so that they are acceptable in nations that are members of the European Union (MEB, 2017). At the end of the efforts in this program, the Ministry of National Education published "The General Competences of Teaching Professionals" in 2006. After the publication of this document, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe proposed the European Framework of Competencies in 2008. The General Competences of Teaching Professionals were updated in 2017 according to the recommendations of the European Framework of Competencies and the emerging demands in the context of national and international changes (MEB, 2017). This document outlines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all teachers in Turkey are expected to possess. Besides, it is used in determining teacher policies, pre-service and in-service teacher training, evaluation of work performance, and career development (MEB, 2008).

Although Turkish principles of teacher competence and qualifications have been shaped according to the European Qualification Framework, a comparative analysis of the Turkish and European contexts will be beneficial to see their similarities and differences. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to compare the European and Turkish principles of teacher competence and qualifications through documents from the European and Turkish contexts by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities between European and Turkish principles of teacher competences and qualifications?
2. What are the differences between European and Turkish principles of teacher competences and qualifications?

2. Method

In this paper, a descriptive case study from a qualitative research design was adopted to analyze and compare European and Turkish documents. Descriptive case studies are used to describe the natural occurrences found in the sample data. The researcher's intention is to describe the data as they come in (Yin, 1994). In this way, descriptive case studies provide an in-depth and detailed explanation of the case being investigated (Merriam, 2013). The findings part of the case study includes both the case description and the themes or topics that the researcher uncovered in the case study (Cresswell, 2013).

The materials that were examined in the study are four reports about teacher competencies and qualifications. Two of them are based on European principles for teacher competencies, while others show the principles that are accepted in the Turkish context. European reports are "Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications" and "Teacher Education in Europe/An ETUCE Policy Paper". Turkish reports are "General Competences for Teaching Professionals" and "Basic Education Support Program". The following table includes the institutions that published these reports and the year of publication of the reports:

Table 1. Materials

Report Name	Publishing Institutions	Publication Year
1. Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications	European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture	2010
2. Teacher Education in Europe/ An ETUCE Policy Paper	ETUCE-European Trade Union Committee for Education	2008
3. General Competences for Teaching Professional	Ministry of National Education	2017
4. Basic Education Support Program Report	Ministry of National Education	2005

In qualitative research design, there are three data collection methods: interview, observation, and examination of documents and works (Merriam, 2013). In this study, document analysis is used to interpret, comprehend, and build upon the information provided by the related documents and evaluate them in order to understand their significance. The data for this study was collected from online sources. Data analysis was conducted using the method of content analysis. Weber (1990) states that content analysis is a research method that follows a specific methodology, enabling the collection of reliable inferences from the text. This method can be used to assess any written content, including documents and interview transcripts (Cohen et al., 2007). The data analysis in this study was conducted in four steps (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). (1) The data collected in the study were encoded to create a coherent entity. (2) Codes were categorized according to particular criteria. (3) The data were categorized based on the acquired codes and themes. (4) Finally, the researchers analyzed the findings and made specific inferences.

3. Findings and Discussion

Document analysis showed that there are various similarities and differences between the European and Turkish principles of teacher competence and qualifications. The main similarities and differences are presented and discussed under three themes for each category as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes
1. Similarities between European and Turkish competence and qualifications	Theme 1: ICT skills are highlighted in both Turkish and European documents. Theme 2: Intercultural respect is promoted in both European and Turkish contexts. Theme 3: Both European and Turkish documents present the importance of lifelong learning.
2. Similarities between European and Turkish competence and qualifications	Theme 1: Teacher mobility is one of the differences between European and Turkish documents. While European documents express the importance of teacher mobility, there is no emphasis on teacher mobility in Turkish documents. Theme 2: Professional development through career is highlighted by the European documents, whereas Turkish documents do not focus on the professional development through the career of teachers.

Theme 3: While European documents highlight EU values, which are essential for being an EU citizen, Turkish documents emphasize national and moral values.

3.1. Similarities Between European and Turkish Teacher Competence and Qualifications

When the related documents were examined, three themes were found as similarities between European and Turkish competences and qualifications. These themes are ICT skills, intercultural respect, and life-long learning.

Theme 1: ICT skills are highlighted in both Turkish and European documents. The European documents stated that it is crucial to motivate and assist teachers as they develop their professional skills in the use of ICT. The reason is that only highly qualified teachers can choose the most efficient ICT pedagogical strategies for their students by applying their professional expertise and knowledge. Especially, the ETUCE (2008) strongly advises that teachers should receive proper ICT education through basic teacher education, in-service training, and professional development. In addition, teachers must possess confidence when it comes to utilizing ICT in order to effectively incorporate technology into their lessons (European Commission, 2010). Similar to European documents, Turkish documents propose that it is expected that educators will effectively use ICT into their lessons. (Mone, 2007). Besides, they should use ICT to support professional development and increase productivity (Mone, 2005).

Theme 2: Intercultural respect is promoted in both European and Turkish contexts. European documents propose that teachers must possess the capacity to demonstrate respect for many cultures and effectively manage the delicate balance between respecting and recognizing the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds while also recognizing common values. Furthermore, teachers need to understand the social dynamics that cause social inclusion and exclusion and be aware of society's ethical implications (European Commission, 2010; ETUCE, 2008). Similarly, according to Turkish documents, teachers should value diversity in the classroom, and they should work with students to develop personalized lesson plans that address their unique sociocultural backgrounds (Mone, 2005; 2017).

Theme 3: Another significant theme that both European and Turkish documents highlight is lifelong learning. It was stated in European documents that teachers should be made aware of the significance of expanding their knowledge and encouraged to maintain their professional development throughout their teaching careers. In addition, it is essential to motivate teachers to investigate innovative methodologies, cutting-edge developments, and academic studies to stay up with the evolving knowledge society (European Commission, 2010; ETUCE, 2008). Similarly, Turkish documents highlight the importance of teachers participating in in-service training, workshops, and seminars to enhance their professional knowledge, skills, and competences. Further, academic publications are great resources for teachers looking for ways to grow their careers. Teachers should be encouraged to take charge of their own professional development and provided with professional development support that is personalized to their specific needs (Mone, 2005; 2017).

3.2. Differences Between European and Turkish Teacher Competences and Qualifications

From the related documents, three themes were determined as differences between European and Turkish competences and qualifications. They are teacher mobility, professional development through a career, and values.

Theme 1: Teacher mobility is one of the differences between European and Turkish documents. European documents highlight the importance of teacher mobility in initial and continuing teacher education programs. Teachers should be supported to take part in European projects and gain experience by working with partners from other European countries in order to maintain their professional development (European Commission, 2010). On the other hand, there is no emphasis on teacher mobility in Turkish documents, although Turkish documents highlight the importance of in-service training, meetings, and seminars.

Theme 2: Professional development through career is highlighted by the European documents. In these documents, it is stated that teachers should obtain a degree from a higher educational institution, and teacher education programs need to be structured into three stages (bachelor's, master's, and PhD) to facilitate the professional growth of teachers. (European Commission, 2010). In addition, it is recommended that teachers get a master's degree to acquire comprehensive expertise in all relevant areas, covering pedagogical methods and the ability to teach across different disciplines (ETUCE, 2008). On the other hand, Turkish documents do not focus on the professional development through the career of teachers, although they highlight the crucial role of the professional development of teachers in a well-qualified education.

Theme 3: Values is the last theme that was determined as a difference between European and Turkish documents. Being an EU citizen means being globally responsible for the issues in the world, having intercultural respect and understanding, and identifying common values. Thus, helping learners gain the role of EU citizens is important for European settings, and it is teachers' responsibility to educate their students to become EU citizens (European Commission, 2010). However, Turkish documents emphasize different values that teachers need to focus on while educating students. These documents highlight national and moral values in educational policy, although there is still an emphasis on universal values like child and human rights (Mone, 2005; 2007).

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This study investigated the similarities and differences between European and Turkish principles of teacher competence and qualifications. The findings revealed that both European and Turkish documents share similarities and distinctions. Both emphasize the importance of teachers being proficient in using ICT in the classroom, respecting diverse cultures, and planning classes with the sociocultural needs of their students in mind. Additionally, teachers must recognize the significance of professional development, and they need to be encouraged to continue their growth by adopting new methods and staying abreast of cutting-edge developments in their field, as well as attending conferences, meetings, and seminars.

These similarities are not unexpected as Turkish documents were updated based on the recommendations of the European Framework of Competences (2018). The differences between these documents provide insights into the perspectives of European and Turkish settings. In the European context, teacher mobility stands out as one of the most crucial practices in professional development. While Turkish documents emphasize the importance of professional development, they do not discuss teacher mobility. Furthermore, while professional development through careers is not emphasized in Turkish documents, postgraduate degrees are highlighted in European documents as an effective means for teachers to enhance their skills.

Lastly, teachers have a duty, according to European documents, to nurture their students as EU citizens. In contrast, Turkish documents underscore moral and national values in educational policy, although there remains a strong focus on European values such as child and human rights. This study suggests that these differences should be examined within the Turkish context to refine Turkish principles of teacher competence and qualification. Teacher mobility and postgraduate studies can also be promoted in the Turkish educational landscape.

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