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Comparative Analysis of Teacher Education Systems in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

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Abstract

The study covers comparative analysis of teacher education systems of Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey. Russia has a well-established educational system, and both Bulgaria and Poland have made many reforms to their modern teacher educational systems after their European Union membership acceptance and subsequent accession to the EU. Each were selected for this study, and their policies and applications of teacher training, teacher training institutions, conditions of acceptance of students to teacher training institutions, study periods, practicum teaching applications, assignment of teachers to teaching posts, and the status of the teaching profession in these countries were investigated and evaluated by comparing them with Turkey's current day situation. Therefore, descriptive survey model was used and the research data collected by way of a literature review. While collecting the data, printed academic sources such as theses, books, journals, and articles about the teacher training systems in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey have been used. The data attained in this study were evaluated the descriptive analysis approach in terms of the criteria determined in accordance with the aim of the study.

Keywords: teacher, teacher training policies, teacher training problems.



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Introduction

Education has been an indispensable part of human life since the existence of humanity. Each nation has its own unique education system, established and developed on the basis of the social, cultural, political and economic values of the society (Azar, 2011). In other words, each education system has the responsibility for reflecting the norms of the society and accomplishing the society's expectations of education. The most important factor determining the extent to which the society's expectations of education can be satisfied is the teacher. According to Bursalioğlu (1994), the most strategic part of the school social system are the teachers. How well teachers can adapt to the conditions of the developing world, how well they can transmit what they know and how much they can raise their students' awareness, all depend on the training they have received. One of the most important problems of developing countries is to adapt their education to the changing conditions of the globalizing world and to make it more widespread. One of the manifestations of the development is the qualified labor force. Even when economic, social, political and legal reforms have been completed in a country, it may be difficult for these reforms to yield the desired outcomes unless the citizens of this country are trained to offer a qualified labor force (Azar, 2011). Increasing the quality of teachers results in increasing the quality and success of the education system. The success of countries in each area is directly associated with the quality of education, and the quality of education is directly proportional to the quality of its teachers (Bilgin, Aykaç, & Kabaran, 2014). However, the teacher training criteria adopted in Turkey in the past and to the present day seem most of the time to be complicated, contradictory and inadequate.

During the period covering the first 70 years of the Republic of Turkey, the main policy adopted for teacher training was to educate students that had completed their elementary or secondary education in continuously changing teacher training schools in order to meet the country's need for teachers (Ergün, 1987). While the shortage of teachers was deeply felt in rural areas and particularly at the elementary level during the first years of the Republic, from the 1950's towards the 1970's, this shortage was felt at the middle and high school levels (Özoğlu, 2010). In order to meet the increasing demand for teachers, different methods including particularly short-term teacher training applications were applied. Some of these short-term teacher training programs were the appointment of reserve officers as teachers, training teachers through letters, and training teachers in accelerated teacher training programs, which all contributed to the deterioration of the quality of teachers (Akdemir, 2013). Within the context of the Preservice Teacher Training Project, that was initiated in 1994 and completed in 1998 by the Council of Higher Education and the World Bank, education faculties were restructured at universities. The Council of Higher Education explained the reasons for this restructuring as addressing deficiencies and problems in the former teacher training programs and that the restructuring was necessary in order to meet the needs brought about by the age (Üstüner, 2004).

In Turkey, issues with the teacher training system should be addressed as a serious problem. Though many different models have been tried, the teacher training system is still not yet as qualified as desired. It is only possible to improve the quality of teacher training in Turkey by ridding the system of political influence. Attempts are continuously made to increase the quantity but decrease the standards of the teacher training system. Changes to be made on the current teacher training system to keep up with the age should be decided

on the basis of comparative analysis performed both on the teacher training systems of developed countries and those of other developing countries that are experiencing similar problems. Turkey is in process of seeking European Union membership, and as part of this process, Turkey needs to analyze the reforms carried out in European Union countries and the systems of other developed countries. Based on this approach, the current study aims to compare the teacher training model implemented in Turkey with teacher training programs implemented in other countries in terms of student selection and placement process, teacher training policies, and the appointment of teachers to teaching posts. Conditions for the acceptance of students to university, the training they receive and evaluation systems change from country to country.

The current study aimed to comparatively analyze the teacher training processes and applications in Turkey and in two European Union countries, Poland and Bulgaria, and Russia which is a developed country. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought.

- What are the current teacher training programs?
- What are the institutions responsible for teacher training?
- What are the conditions of acceptance to teacher training institutions?
- What are the durations of teacher training programs?
- What is the time allocated to practicum teaching in teacher training institutions?
- What are the conditions of appointment to teaching posts in Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria and Russia?

When the current state of Turkey is examined, it is seen that it needs a quality labor force and a quality education system to train this human power. What makes education effective is teachers to a great extent; accordingly, a quality teacher training system is needed. In this regard, examination of the education systems and teacher training programs in European Union countries and developed countries can make some important contributions.

In the literature, there have only been a limited number of studies regarding the teacher training systems of Russia, Bulgaria and Poland. The current study is believed to make some contributions to the development Turkey's teacher training system by comparing it with the teacher training systems of some European Union countries and that of Russia, which is a developed country. The data to be collected in the current study are believed to offer guidance to new attempts to develop the teacher training program implemented in Turkey, to offer some information about the teacher training programs in Russia, Bulgaria and Poland and to reveal similarities and differences among the programs. By looking at these programs, insight as to how to develop the teacher training in Turkey may be forthcoming. Moreover, there has been little research on the developing countries of Bulgaria and Poland. In this regard, the current study can also make some contribution to the relevant literature. The current study is limited to the teacher training policies and applications of Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey.

Methodology

The current study used the descriptive model to compare the teacher training policies of each of the countries. The descriptive model refers to a research approach aiming to describe a past or present state as it was or is (Karasar, 2012). In such research, the subject

of interest is investigated in a detailed manner and is usually known as survey research (Erkuş, 2005). In the collection of data in the current study, one of the qualitative data collection methods, the document analysis technique was employed. According to Yıldırım and Simsek (2006), document analysis encapsulates the analysis of written materials including information about the phenomenon or phenomena to be investigated. As the data sources, printed and scientific sources such as theses, books, journals and articles focusing on teacher training systems in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey were used.

In the analysis of the collected data, the descriptive analysis method was employed. On the basis of the research question, a framework was constructed for the analysis of the collected data. According to this framework, the data were selected, organized, and then similarities and differences detected, compared and interpreted. In this regard, the teacher training programs implemented in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey were examined in terms of their objectives, teacher training institutions, conditions of acceptance to teacher training programs, structures of the programs, durations of the programs, conditions of appointment to teaching posts and in-service training. The data were tabulated and interpreted and then some suggestions were put forwards. In light of the analyses and findings of the current study, some possible applications were suggested for the teacher training program in Turkey.

Results

In the current study, the teacher training programs in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey were examined and the findings obtained are presented in this section. It is seen that there are some similarities and differences between the teacher training systems of the examined countries. Bulgaria became a member of the European Union in 2007 and Poland in 2004. As a result of their European Union membership accession process, the two countries instigated certain changes to their investments and programs in education.

Comparison of Teacher Training Programs in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings obtained from the comparison of teacher training programs implemented in Turkey, Russia and two European Union countries, Bulgaria and Poland, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Teacher Training Programs in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey	
Bulgaria	Pedagogy and Psychology Education
	Specific Field Education, Practicum teaching
	Instructional Methods and Techniques, Information & Communication
	Technologies
Poland	Foreign Language Education
	Use of Computer Technologies
	Pedagogy Education
	Special Field Education & Practicum teaching
Russia	Required Theoretical Courses, General Culture
	Preparation for the Profession of Teaching & Practicum
	Pedagogy Education
Turkey	Preparation for the Profession of Teaching & Practicum
	General Culture & Special Field Knowledge

Bulgaria	Pedagogy and Psychology Education
	Specific Field Education, Practicum teaching
	Instructional Methods and Techniques, Information & Communication
	Technologies
Poland Russia	Foreign Language Education
	Use of Computer Technologies
	Pedagogy Education
	Special Field Education & Practicum teaching
	Required Theoretical Courses, General Culture
	Preparation for the Profession of Teaching & Practicum
	Pedagogy Education

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As can be seen in Table 1, with the start of their European Union membership, Bulgaria and Poland incorporated the Computer and Information Technologies course into their teacher training programs (Psifidou, 2010). Foreign language teaching is one of the important aspects of teacher training in Poland. The reforms put into force as a result of European Union membership accession in Bulgaria and Poland have produced positive effects on education. Though Russia and Turkey have similar teacher training programs, the course contents of the practicum are different. Pedagogy education holds an important place in teacher training. In the teacher training programs of each of the countries, there is practicum teaching; although pedagogy education is not given to all preservice teachers in Turkey (Külekçi & Bulut, 2010; Küçükoğlu & Kızıltaş, 2010).

Comparison of Institutions Responsible for Teacher Training in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings about the institutions responsible for teacher training in Turkey, Russia and the European Union member countries Bulgaria and Poland are presented in Table 2.

	Russia and Turkey
Bulgaria	Teacher Training Colleges (for preschool & elementary school)
	Universities (training teachers for all levels of education)
	Departments of Technology, Economics, plus specialized universities
Poland	Universities
	Teacher Training Colleges
	Institutions of Higher Education (non-universities)
Russia	Pedagogy Schools
	Pedagogy Institutes
	Pedagogy Universities & Education Faculties of Universities
Turkey	Education Faculties of Universities
	Vocational Training Faculties
	Pedagogical Formation Programs for Faculties other than Education
-	

Table 2. Comparison of Institutions Responsible for	[•] Teacher Training in Bulgaria, Poland,

As can be seen in Table 2, universities and teacher training colleges and institutions of higher education outside universities are the institutions responsible for teacher training in Poland. All these institutions are connected to the Senate.

For teacher education there are three different types of institutions in Bulgaria. Teacher training colleges (for preschool & elementary school), universities (training teachers for all levels of education) and departments of technology, economics, specialized universities are the institutions responsible for teacher training in Bulgaria (Psifidou, 2010).

There are three different types of institutions responsible for teacher training in Russia; pedagogic schools, pedagogic institutions, and pedagogy universities. These three types of institution are responsible for training teachers for different levels of schooling and the training periods are different in these universities. It is seen that apart from Turkey, teacher training is also given by institutions aside from universities (Boobekova, 2000).

In Turkey, teacher training is given by education faculties at universities and vocational training faculties. With the fourth amendment made by the Council of Higher Education in 2010, graduates of education faculties as well as graduates of faculties other than education

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who successfully completed a pedagogical formation program can be appointed as teachers in Turkey (Özoğlu, 2010).

Comparison of Conditions of Acceptance to Teacher Training Institutions in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings about the conditions of acceptance to teacher training programs in Turkey, Russia and two European Union countries (Bulgaria and Poland), are given in Table 3. The different education systems and conditions have yielded different conditions of acceptance to their institutions. The conditions of acceptance to university in countries popular for foreign students are more flexible.

Table 3. Comparison of Conditions of Acceptance to Teacher Training Institutions in Bulgaria,

 Poland, Russia and Turkey

	r olana, nassia ana rancey	
Bulgaria	High School Grade Point Average	
	University Entrance Exam (Matriculation)	
	Mother Tongue (Bulgarian) & Foreign Language Proficiency	
	Exams (English, French, Spanish, Russian or German)	
	Universities have differing acceptance selection processes	
Poland	University Entrance Exam (Matura) – (Uniform Magister)	
Russia	Special Talent Exams Organized by Universities	
Turkey	TYT (Basic Proficiency Test)	
	YKS (Higher Education Institutions Exam)	

For acceptance to universities in Bulgaria, the high school grade point average and the university entrance exam (Matriculation) results are evaluated together (Angelova, Dacheva, Vlakova, &Yovka, 2016).

In Poland, students are accepted to universities via a university entrance exam given in two different forms; Matura and Uniform Magister. The stages and organization of the higher education entrance exam are decided by the senate (Kir & Kir, 2011).

In Russia, students directly apply to the university and they are accepted through special talent (entrance) exams organized by each university (Ryzhova, 2012).

For acceptance to universities in Turkey, students must sit a two-staged university entrance exam held by the Center for Evaluation, Selection and Placement (ÖSYM). The first stage of the exam is the Basic Proficiency Test (TYT), which must be taken by all students. The second stage is the Higher Education Institutions Exam (YKS), in which students who want to be teachers can select which department to attend (YÖK, 2018).

Comparison of Periods of Training in Teacher Training Institutions in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings about the periods of teacher training in Turkey, Russia and the European Union countries of Bulgaria and Poland are presented in Table 4.

training Poland Four years Five years in some departments Russia Four years in pedagogy schools for 9 th grade graduates Three years in pedagogy schools for 11 th grade graduates Diploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy university		Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey
Seven years (Doctorate) College graduates can gain a Bachelor's degree after two or three year training Poland Four years Five years in some departments Russia Four years in pedagogy schools for 9 th grade graduates Three years in pedagogy schools for 11 th grade graduates Diploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy university Diploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy universit Turkey Four years	Bulgaria	Four years (Bachelor's)
College graduates can gain a Bachelor's degree after two or three yea trainingPolandFour years Five years in some departmentsRussiaFour years in pedagogy schools for 9th grade graduates Three years in pedagogy schools for 11th grade graduates Diploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy university Diploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy universitTurkeyFour years		Five years (Master's)
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Three years in pedagogy schools for 11th grade graduatesDiploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy universityDiploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy universitTurkeyFour years		Five years in some departments
Diploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy universityDiploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy universitTurkeyFour years	Russia	Four years in pedagogy schools for 9 th grade graduates
Diploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy universiTurkeyFour years		Three years in pedagogy schools for 11 th grade graduates
Turkey Four years		Diploma in one field requires four years at a pedagogy university
		Diploma in two different fields requires five years at a pedagogy university
Five years in some departments	Turkey	Four years
		Five years in some departments

 Table 4. Comparison of Periods of Teacher Training in Teacher Training Institutions in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

As can be seen in Table 4, the period of training in teacher training institutions in Bulgaria is four years. Those having completed their four-year training can graduate with a Bachelor's degree (Psifidou, 2010). Students can go on to complete a Master's degree by continuing their training for one additional year. College graduates can gain a Bachelor's degree after receiving two- or three-years training (Angelova et al., 2016).

The period of training in teacher training institutions in Poland is four years, although it is five years for some departments. The period of training for preschool teachers is five years. Poland is one of the countries allocating the greatest length of training for preschool teachers.

There are institutions training different types of teachers in Russia. The periods of training also differ. The period of training is four years for those having graduated from the 9th grade in pedagogy schools, whilst it is three years for those having graduated from the 11th grade. In these schools, elementary school, preschool and physical education teachers are trained (Boobekova, 2000). The period of training in pedagogy institutes is four or five years, and these institutions train branch teachers for middle schools. The period of training for those wanting to receive a diploma in one field is four years, whilst for two fields it is five years, and many teachers receive the two academic fields diploma. The period of training for preschool teachers is five years in Russia. The period of training in the pedagogy universities is four or five years. In the first four years, the required courses are taught. In the 5th year, students specialize for a specific branch, and a university diploma is granted for the related branch. Many of the teachers graduate from these universities (Георгиевич, 2014).

In Turkey, the period of training in the teacher training institutions is four years. Formation teacher training is offered for graduates of non-education four-year undergraduate training, which extends the overall training period to five years (Külekçi & Bulut, 2010).

Comparison of Periods of Practicum Teaching in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings about the periods of practicum teaching in Turkey, Russia and the European Union countries of Bulgaria and Poland are presented in Table 5.

Bulgaria	Practicum teaching is 120 hours
Poland	Practicum teaching is 180 hours, plus internship is required
Russia	From the first year onwards, preservice teachers start practicum teaching, visiting schools one day a week in the first semester, and each week in the second semester. There is internship during summer months at training and other camps. In the 4 th year they teach in schools for a period of ten weeks.
Turkey	In the 4 th year, practicum teaching is performed one day a week for one semester. Preservice teachers must personally deliver lessons for at least 24 class hours during this period.

 Table 5. Comparison of Periods of Practicum Teaching in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

As can be seen in Table 5, in Bulgaria, preservice teachers should be engaged in observations for at least 60 hours at schools and 60 hours are allocated to practicum teaching. This means that students conduct practices for 120 hours in total, independently or monitored by their mentors. During these practices, they can consult their mentors. The practices are evaluated by a committee made up of three members (Angelova, et al., 2016; Psifidou, 2010).

In Poland, a total of 180-hour practicum teaching is required for all preservice teachers. The Ministry of National Education in Poland states the period of practicum teaching for the teaching training institutions. In this regard, though it changes depending on the type of the teacher training program, preservice teachers must be engaged in at least 180-hour practicum teaching (Altıntaş &Yeşiltepe, 2016).

In Russia, while preservice teachers are in their first-year, in their third month of their training, they start their internship. One week is assigned as the "Loaded week." Throughout this week, preservice teachers watch the classes of classroom teachers or branch teachers in elementary schools. In the following weeks, they visit schools one day a week. In summer, they conduct their required internship in child education and resting camps. In their fourth year of training, student teachers go to schools as interns from the first day of school for a period of ten weeks. During this period, the institutions work in cooperation (Boobekova, 2000).

In Turkey, preservice teachers only engage in practicum teaching in their final year. Preservice teachers go to schools one day a week throughout one semester. Preservice teachers must personally deliver lessons for at least 24 class hours during this period (Kabaran & Görgen, 2016).

Comparison of Conditions of Appointment to Teaching Posts in Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Turkey

Findings about the conditions of appointment to teaching posts in Turkey, Russia and the European Union countries of Bulgaria and Poland, are presented in Table 6.

	Russia and Turkey
Bulgaria	Special State Exam
	Application to the related institutions
	Candidate teacher
Poland	Application to the institution
	Working as an intern teacher for two years
	Master's degree and foreign language competence required for some
	branches
Russia	State Completion Exam/Oral Exam
	Appointment to schools for two year period
Turkey	Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS)
	Oral Exam

Table 6. Comparison of Conditions of Appointment to Teaching Posts in Bulgaria, Poland,Russia and Turkey

As can be seen in Table 6, in Bulgaria, for preservice teachers to work as teachers, they have to take the Special State Exam. As a result of this exam, they can apply to the institute of their preference. In the institution, they first start out as intern teachers. Then, they can go on to progress to become teachers, head teachers and expert teachers (Psifidou, 2010).

In Poland, the graduates of formation programs can themselves decide in which educational institution, high school or elementary school they wish to work. They spend their first year in the profession as intern teachers. There are a total of four different stages of career in the teaching profession: Intern teacher, probationary teacher, appointed teacher and tenured teacher. While intern and probationary teachers work on a contractual basis, appointed and tenured teachers are employed as civil servants. One of the criteria for appointment as a preschool or elementary school teacher is a Master's degree. For preservice teachers to be appointed as teachers to all branches, they are required to know a foreign language (Kir & Kir, 2011).

In Russia, preservice teachers have to sit the State Completion Exam. Participants' performances in this exam are evaluated by a commission of academicians from different universities. The candidates also sit an oral exam administered by the commission. If successful in both exams, they can be assigned to an institution of education for a period of two years (Георгиевич, 2014).

In Turkey, there is an exam called the Public Personnel Selection Examination, which is used to determine which of candidates will be appointed and to where. Since an amendment in 2016, candidates now have had to take an oral exam in addition to this exam. According to the results of these two exams, appointments are made to schools as probationary teachers (Kabaran & Görgen, 2016).

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

Studies in the literature suggest that when Bulgaria's accession to European Union membership was granted in 2007, a new national program was put into effect to develop Bulgaria's national education in the period between 2006 and 2015. With this program, the standards of teacher training were also changed. New courses were added to the program to comply with the programs of other European Union countries. Research was undertaken in order to understand how to enhance the quality of the teaching profession in the country.

The main requirement for candidate teachers' appointment to teaching posts is mastery of the Bulgarian language and literature. In addition, pedagogy, psychology, information and communication technologies, together with new instructional methods and techniques are all courses required to be taken during teacher training. Among the elective courses, school problems, health and education management are the most prominent. The periods of schooling and the general structure of education in Bulgaria are similar to those of Turkey, but Bulgaria is a country making the least investment in education and has the lowest wages for its teachers amongst all European Union countries. In the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Bulgaria scored 13th out of the 19 participating countries in the CEE/CIS (Central and Eastern Europe/ Commonwealth of Independent States) region in reading, mathematics and science subjects. Efforts to increase the quality of teachers in Bulgaria have been considerable. As a European Union country, Bulgaria has the highest mean age of teachers, making its teachers among the most experienced in Europe, with an average of 22 years professional experience. This is due to only around 20% of teachers in Bulgaria being younger than 40, whilst approximately 45% of Bulgarian teachers are aged 50 or older.

Poland formalized their accession to the European Union in 2004. Poland's education system had to be considerably modernized and certain steps have been taken over the past few years to this effect. The reasons behind these steps are to meet the new requirements of the rapidly developing globalization and information-based economy in order to provide the current youth with an education in the most effective way (Parmaksız & Yavuz, 2015). Poland, has made some reforms both in the field of education and in its teacher training system. These reforms include attempts to enhance the quality of its teacher training system. The required courses to be taken in Polish teacher training are ethics, language, culture, history, and supplementary courses focusing on local culture. New arrangements have been made by the National Accreditation Commission, particularly concerning the process and quality of practicum teaching (Kir & Kir, 2011). At university level, preservice teachers are required to take courses in order to develop both their professional and pedagogical competence. After completion of undergraduate training, graduate education and in-service teacher training are considered to be important. Foreign language competence is among the prominent criteria of selecting master teachers. More importance is attached to preschool and elementary school teacher training. The reforms applied to the Polish education system have manifested yields in subsequent PISA exam results. While the mean score of the Polish students from the PISA exam was considerably low in 2000, the country improved to be among the top 15 countries by 2009. Poland has since achieved above-average scores in mathematics, reading and science in PISA 2012. Performance in reading, mathematics and science has risen across PISA cycles, indicating that Poland has made considerable progress with their education system (OECD, 2015).

The Turkish education system cannot receive the education support that is afforded to Poland from the European Union. However, some works have been carried out in Turkey in order to enhance the quality of education through support projects and the analysis of other education systems to identify good practices (Parmaksız & Yavuz, 2015). Turkey was ranked 50th among the 72 OECD states in PISA 2015, which represented a drop in performance compared to previous PISA cycles (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Ministry of National Education], 2015). Considering these results, it is clear that the Turkish education system needs to be revised; looking towards the gains made in the example of Poland's system.

In Russia, which is classified as a developed country, there are different institutions responsible for providing teacher training. Some changes have been made to the teacher training system since 2000, yet the training is still highly dominated by the policies of the former Soviet Union period (Ergün, 2009). The state and non-governmental organizations work in cooperation for teacher training, with authority shared by federal and local administrations. Russia's education system is experiencing problems not usually seen in developed economies. The most prominent being a shortage of teachers to work in rural areas due to low wages (Ryzhova, 2012). Then average monthly salary of a federal official is about 100,000 Rubles, and for an official it is 35-37,000 Rubles. School teachers in rural areas earn 9-12,000 Rubles a month. The lowest level is 20-22,000 Rubles. Over the years, prices in Russia have increased by 50-60%; however, teachers' salaries have stayed the same. The main difference seen in the teacher training system of Turkey is that graduates of faculties other than education can also be appointed as teachers if have complete a Pedagogical Formation Certificate Program, an application specific to the Turkish teacher training system. Acceptance to teacher training institutions and appointments to teaching posts are made through centralized examinations.

When the results of the current study are subjected to general evaluation, it can be argued that when compared to other countries, Poland has longer periods of practicum teaching. The period of teacher training is similar across each of the countries, ranging from three to five years. In some of the teacher training institutions in Russia, the teacher training period is three years, whereas in Poland, teacher training for preschool teachers lasts five years. Teacher training institutions in Bulgaria and Poland are similar. In Russia, candidate teachers graduating from Pedagogy Institutes are granted diplomas in two different academic fields. Also in Russia, preservice teachers undertake school practicum teaching from the first year of their training onwards, which seems a significant advantage in being introduced to the profession much earlier than in other countries. Across all the countries examined, the initial appointment of teachers is made on contract; a practice initiated in Turkey in 2016.

In light of the findings of the current study, the following suggestions are made:

- As in Bulgaria, while accepting students into teacher training programs, students can be obliged to take mother tongue and foreign language tests. Mastery of the mother tongue can be taken as one of the criteria of acceptance to university.
- For the acceptance of students to teacher training programs, applicants can sit oral exams to test their inclination, willingness and competence towards the teaching profession. Altintaş and Yeşiltepe (2016) also suggested such oral exams could be useful to evaluate many other student skills such as communication.
- Given that more time is allocated to teacher training for preschool education in Poland and Russia, more time could also be allocated to prospective classroom and preschool teacher training in Turkey.
- As in Bulgaria, Poland and Russia, greater importance can be attached to pedagogy training in Turkey's teacher training institutions.

- As in the teacher training systems of Bulgaria and Poland, Information and Communication Technologies courses could be incorporated into teacher training programs in Turkey.
- As in Russia, students could start practicum teaching as from their first year of training.
- Greater emphasis could be placed on practice within education faculties, as well as on active teaching methods and techniques.
- As in Poland, arrangements can be made to increase the wages and status of teachers holding Master's or Doctoral degrees. This change was also suggested by Aydoğan and Çilsal (2007).
- Teacher wages should be equalized according to the countries' development level.

Notes

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