

The Evaluation of a Teacher Training System ; A Study on the Efficacy of Teaching Training Policy in the last three decades in the field of English Teaching in Iran

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Abstract: After the establishment of modern style schools and colleges in Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the need for trained and qualified teachers became the concerns of the authorities then. Some professors and teachers from Europe were the first pioneers who came and trained some teachers based on those days' standards. Since then, there have been a lot of changes in the curriculum and the syllabus designs of the academic teaching generally and English teaching specifically. Teaching English academically in Iran has had so many ups and downs during the last three decades. Unfortunately, the outcomes of these alternations do not show hopeful horizons to the usage of English language fruitfully.

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Teacher education has a dynamic and key function in each society, because it is used to train those who are going to teach the next generation. Since teacher education's importance is obvious to everybody it is equally important to plan and implement it correctly. Menashri (1992) believes that the questions as to by whom and how student teachers are trained must be appropriately answered so as to produce an optimum outcome. It is clear that amongst these questions the question of 'who' (which refers to the trainer of the student teachers, either university lecturer or school teacher as trainer) has the greatest role in teacher education is the most important, because the other elements are dependent upon it. The teachers' contribution to developing the abilities of their students is well recognised worldwide. Bottery and Wright (1997:239) also observe the importance of teacher education for society.

The education and training of teachers are crucial to the quality of any society. Teachers are the gatekeepers of its traditions and culture and facilitators of its education. For teachers, above all professionals, must, almost by definition, be intellectually active, authoritative, lively, critical reflective, flexible and ever attentive to the constant and changing demands of the young and the society for which they are being prepared.

So, when teachers are appropriately trained they can change their society, whereas ill-trained teachers are not aware of what is going on in their society and can negatively affect the attitude of their learners, as well as preventing them becoming decent citizens. This is also debated and noted by Bottery and Wright (1997:244):

“Programmes based on the functional analysis of work roles are likely to produce teachers who are competent yet ill-equipped for further professional development, uncritical of educational change and largely ignorant of the wider cultural, social and political context in which the role of the teacher needs to be located. Such teachers will be neither experts nor reflective practitioners and lacking the background provided by education or training approaches based on the concept of professional expertise, will be professionals in name only.”

It is then vital to be concerned with the teacher educators and teachers as trainers if we are looking for a sound teacher education. In other words, if these trainers were under any kind of unnecessary constraints how can we expect them to function appropriately? Trainers have been used to being well treated and respected, otherwise the public's expectations may not be achieved, and the future of the society could be jeopardized. The situation in the UK after the recent education reforms looks like to be of this sort - that is, at risk. The two countries of this study are very different places and their universities and teachers, like their societies, appear dissimilar to foreigners as compared to natives. In other words, the distinct way of life and cultures make for important education differences. For instance, teachers in eastern countries such as Iran are highly respected, whereas in the West they are treated and positioned differently. This thesis will, therefore, deal with teacher education in the UK and Iran, concentrating on a comparison of the teaching/learning process, with particular emphasis on strategies for oral production in English Language

Teaching for teacher education. On some cases of the Iranian experiences, he continues that on the Iranian experience.

Teacher training as an essential factor of education in each society requires expertise with appropriate course content, which meets the needs of the trainees. The usefulness of university-based teacher education is well recognised and supported by many of those who have been involved in it such as Stones, Barton, Gilroy and Whitty, Cashdan, DES, HMIs and even the recent Tory government. However, there have been some practitioners who disagreed with this form of teacher education such as 'the Hillgate Group and the Institute of Economic Affairs' (Gilroy, 1992:11).

Language Teacher education in Iran

Language teacher education in Iran shows that the development of EFL teacher education in Iran goes back to nearly forty years ago, when more attention was given to higher education and in particular EFL instruction. According to Menashri (1992), the early attempts to use western education were made by sending students to European universities and the establishment of the first institution of higher education, Dar al-fonun in 1851. Gillett (1965), on a report to the Unesco, believes that Iranian teaching methods needs a lot of corrections and training. In 1965 Dickie an instructor from Unesco was sent to Iran. He was in Iran for two years. Dickie (1967) writes that he was associated (a) with the general organization of the scheme, particularly in matters of curriculum time-tables and organization of field studies in neighboring schools and village communities, (b) as a teaching member of the staff (up to 20 hours per week) he was responsible for the subjects "Principles of Teaching" (supervisors' course) and "Evaluation and Guidance" (degree course). In addition, two days per week were spent in village schools. He was assisted in these activities by a very able counterpart, Miss. Abolfotouh whom I would regard as competent to continue the work on the Instructional side as well as in the organization of practical work in village schools and communities. A manual for students has been prepared, entitled "Fundamentals in Primary Education".

At that time for the future plans he writes proposals were being considered for establishing Mamazan (acity in the north of Iran) as an International Centre associated with the training programmes in literacy education in Iran. Plans are also being prepared for establishing correspondence courses for rural teachers. It is significant that formal recognition of Mamazan is an independent institution; operative from the beginning of the next

academic year has been promulgated. This will open the way for further development. He describes everything in details, including different primary and essentials of teaching skills and methods of teaching foreign languages up to that time.

A report consists of an analysis of the teacher education systems in the following ten countries done by UK NARIC / NRP work in partnership with the Refugee Council, West London Graduate Teaching Partnership and Newman College funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) describes the teacher training structure in Iran as Teacher training awards are offered by teacher training colleges (for those who wish to teach at pre-primary, primary or lower secondary level) and university faculties of education (for those who wish to teach at upper secondary or pre-university level). Due to the discrepancy in educational standards between urban and rural areas, special rural teacher training institutes have also been established. These are intended to encourage local students, particularly women, to train as teachers within their community. The institutes offer two year courses to students who have completed their lower secondary (guidance) education. Graduates are qualified to teach at primary level in rural schools.

Those students who wish to train as lower secondary (guidance) school teachers undertake the two-year Associate degree (Kardani) and must specialize in one of the 13 subject areas covered by the secondary school curriculum.

In order to train as an upper secondary school teacher, students must complete a four year Bachelor degree (Karshenasi) at the education faculty of a university or at the Teacher Training University (Tarbiat Moallem), which has branches in several cities. Students must specialize in one of the secondary education curriculum areas listed below and must also complete courses in teaching methods and educational psychology.

About the recent reforms the mentioned study states that traditionally Iranian teachers have practiced a teacher-centered method of education, where lessons are delivered in a lecture style and students receive the information passively. There is little interaction between students and teachers within this system and learning by rote is common. However, following the reform programme instigated by former president Mohammed Khatami, more modern teaching methods have been introduced in Iran with moderate success. Greater interaction has been encouraged in the classroom and student-centered teaching methods have been introduced. Quantitative assessment has given way to qualitative assessment and a more concise curriculum has enabled teachers to concentrate on delivering lessons

rather than preparing for exams. These changes are bringing Iranian classroom culture more into line with that of the UK and teachers who have received training and experience in the new methods are unlikely to face major problems when teaching in the UK. Teachers from disadvantaged rural areas may have more difficulty adjusting, as the reforms are more advanced in urban areas than in the surrounding countryside.

In 1981, the government took control over the education and new policies were adopted. According to Safi (1992) before the establishment of Dar al- moalemin and Dar al- moalemat in 1918, teachers in Maktabs and schools did not receive any education and were usually selected from among the best and the most studious students. Dehghan(1949) stated that without changing the system of education it was impossible to establish a comprehensive cultural program, to bring reform in institutes, and to educate qualified teachers. The development of higher education from the 1970s was closely associated with elementary and secondary education. According to Safi (1992), until 1966 various teacher-training centers were established and different syllabuses were written. From 1970s on the rapid growth of population as well as the segregation of schools by gender led to an acute shortage of teachers (Menasheri, 1992). In the meantime, new syllabuses were written and new educational policies were adopted.

Saadat (1995) says that there is no record available as to when exactly the training of English teachers first started in Iran. However, based on a historical review of teacher training in Iran ,Safi (1994) indicates that teachers attended special classes to learn educational principles and to promote their knowledge for the first time in Dar-ul-Fonun as early as 1910-11. From 1911, students were also dispatched to English-speaking countries to be trained as teachers. In 1918, Dar-ul-Mo'alemin— an institute for training male teachers— and Dar-ul-Mo'alemat— an institute for training female teachers— were established. After the establishment of Dar-ul-Mo'alemin-e-A:li or the Higher Institute for Teacher Training in 1927, the training of male highschool teachers was assigned to this institute. In 1933, another institute was founded for training female high school teachers. In the same year, the institute advanced to an academic standing and was called Daneshsaray-e-A:li, and after the establishment of the University of Tehran in 1934, the institute lost its independence and continued to work under the supervision of the University of Tehran.

Gharabaghi(1991) and Zangeneh (1995) tried to evaluate one of the programs of the Ministry

of Education of Iran which was designed to alleviate the problem of shortage of teachers by lowering the employment standards. He presented a historical analysis of the educational system of Iran, with specific references to the quantity of the teachers of English and the preparation of such teachers in Iran. It offered a better understanding of the issues regarding teacher training and provided clues that might aid in training better teachers.

The last word

Comparing what we have all over the world at the moment , we can see close relationship between the syllabus designed for the academic purposes in Iranian teaching training centers and up to dated EFL discussions. Most of the new books which are published in different famous publications around the world are available in Iran (I do not say legally or illegally offset !). Iran is also one of the top article generators worldwide, and due to this Iranian scholars have always tried to be familiar with the latest innovations in ESL and EFL. Even among Iranian universities, we can see a hidden competition to show high levels of understanding of foreign language learning and teaching discussions.

However, what we have as the output of the educational system of high school says something else. Under the pressure of the non-communicative goals of English language usage policies, the teachers and students in Iran seem to be on the wrong track.

Studying three decades of foreign language learning and teaching in Iran and reviewing the charts and tables of the analysis of the final exams among high school students in different levels, Nargesy (2011) states that the general policies of writing academic books, designing curriculum, preparing and giving tests and other aspects of the process of EFL in Iran cannot show any traces of English language usage communicatively. Most of the students who can use English are those who have attended non-governmental English Institutes. It seems that, not having suitable textbooks based on the last changes we have had in developing English textbooks worldwide, we are limited to teach just some groups of vocabulary and some grammar. The same study reveals that while a lot of countries begin learning a foreign language at low ages in elementary schools, we start this process in our secondary education syllabus.

What seems to be the most essential need nowadays in Iran is trying to look differently and to make a balance between what we teach in our teaching training centers and what and how we teach in our schools as an overall applicable English knowledge.

Table 1: Iranian Teaching Awards and their comparability

Primary	Rural Teacher Training Certificate - Gavaahinaameh-ye moallem roostayi	VGCSE A*-C/BTEC First Diploma/SQA Intermediate 2 standard
Primary/ Guidance level	Teacher Training Certificate - Kardani Tarbiat Moallem (Associate Degree in Education)	Certificate of Higher Education standard
Senior	Bachelor degree in Education - Karshenasi Tarbiat Moallem	Bachelor degree standard

Secondary Education		
Entry to Higher Education	Pre-University Certificate- Peeshdaneshgahi	Overall GCE Advanced / Scottish Advanced Higher standard (with the exception of English Language and to be considered with the High School Diploma)
Entry to Higher Education	National Entrance Exam - Kunkur	Overall GCE Advanced / Scottish Advanced Higher standard (with the exception of English Language)
Secondary	High School Diploma (3 years) (Theoretical, Technical, Vocational) - Nazari, Fani Herfei, Kar Danesh	A standard between GCSE and GCE AS level (with the exception of English Language), requires foundation year for entry to Higher Education
Secondary	High School Diploma (4 years) (Theoretical, Technical, Vocational) - Nazari, Fani Herfei, Kar Danesh	Overall GCE Advanced / Scottish Advanced Higher standard (with the exception of English Language)

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