

## Evaluation of Iranian Teacher Education Programmes for EFL Student-Teachers

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### Abstract

Despite the importance of Iranian teacher education programmes at Teacher Education universities for preparing EFL teachers in terms of effective teaching, no research has surveyed the role of these programmes in preparing effective teachers. This cross-sectional study was conducted to evaluate Iranian Teacher Education universities programmes for EFL student-teachers regarding five areas of teaching knowledge which conform to California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) that are stated in Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2009). This study employed a mixed-method design in which 126 in-service EFL teachers from six cities and 212 EFL student-teachers from six Iranian Teacher Education universities participated in a survey; then interviews were conducted with 12 selected volunteers from participants. The student-teachers' expectations of TEPs at the beginning, their evaluations of the programmes at the end, and in-service teachers' evaluations after years of teaching in terms of their preparation for teaching were compared. The results of Mixed Between-within (Repeated Measures) ANOVA as well as interview analyses and interpretations showed that there was a difference between the first-year group's expectations and the last-year group's evaluations. The difference was significant between female first- and last-year groups, female in-service and last-year groups as well as male in-service and last-year groups. Both male and female in-service teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of their four years of education at Teacher Education universities. Implications for providing more effective teacher education programmes are discussed.

**Keywords:** EFL Student-teachers, Teacher Education, Teacher Education Universities Programmes

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Received 18 March 2019

Accepted 30 June 2019

Available online 01 August 2019

DOI: 10.30479/jmrels.2019.10291.1280

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## 1. Introduction

The nature of education which students received at school is primarily influenced by the work of teachers (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Goodwyn, 1997; Hagger & McIntyre, 2006). Hagger and McIntyre (2006) indicated that novice teachers should be aware of the nature of effective teaching to perform their professional duties based on such awareness. The importance of qualified teachers in educational system has brought the characteristics of preservice teacher education programmes (TEPs) into focus (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). The goal of TEPs is to help learners “to develop their knowledge, awareness, beliefs, and skills” and enable them to relate these components together in real practice of teaching and to think deeply about their practice (Richards, Ho, & Giblin, 1996, p. 242).

Despite the importance of Iranian Teacher Education universities (TEU), Daneshgah-e-Farhangian, programmes for preparing EFL teachers in terms of effective teaching no research has surveyed the role of these programmes in preparing effective teachers. Darling-Hammond (2006) acknowledged that effective evaluation of teacher education (TE) would improve the current situation of TEPs. Accordingly, in the current cross-sectional study, we evaluate these programmes by taking into consideration the student-teachers’ expectations of TEPs at the beginning, their evaluations of the programmes at the end, and in-service teachers’ evaluations after years of teaching in terms of their preparation for teaching. These evaluations are based on series of standards adapted from California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) that are stated in Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2009). California Standards for the Teaching Profession which include knowledge of designing curriculum and instruction, supporting diverse learners, using assessment to guide learning, creating a productive classroom environment, and developing professionally are very similar to the goals of Iranian TEPs that are stated by the Committee on the Unification of Teacher Training Planning (2016) and reflected in Iranian TEU curricula for EFL student-teachers as well.

As Shulman (1987, p. 5) indicated when there is emphasis on improvement of TEPs, high standards, and examination of teaching, it means that there is something to be learned by teachers, that is “knowledge base for teaching”. Therefore, we elaborate on the significant role of TE in preparing student-teachers to teach. We also give an account of standards in TE, in general, and the Iranian TEPs briefly, and afterwards the student-teachers’ and in-service teachers’ evaluations of Iranian TEU programmes are provided.

This evaluation was carried out based on standards for the teaching profession by comparing the expectations of the first-year EFL student-

teachers with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes from the perspectives of the last-year EFL student-teachers as well as in-service English teachers who had attended TEU as student-teachers and have experience of real teaching context as well.

The study answered the following questions:

1. What are the first-year EFL student-teachers' expectations of TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers?
2. What are the last-year EFL teachers' evaluations of TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers?
3. What are the in-service EFL teachers' evaluations of TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers?
4. Are there any differences between these three groups' attitudes concerning the effectiveness of TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers?
5. Are there any differences between males and females' attitudes concerning the effectiveness of TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Teaching Knowledge and Competency**

There are various viewpoints, sometimes completely different, on who is a competent teacher (Goodwin & Oyler, 2008). Shulman (1987, p. 8) noted that teachers should be at least knowledgeable about: 1) "content knowledge", 2) "general pedagogical knowledge", 3) "curriculum knowledge", 4) "pedagogical content knowledge", 5) "knowledge of learners and their characteristics", 6) "knowledge of educational contexts", and 7) "knowledge of educational ends". He argued that pedagogical content knowledge is very important because it enables the teachers to organise their knowledge to be grasped by the learners with diverse abilities. Individuals who do not acquire pedagogical knowledge could not convey their subject matter knowledge to others without difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnick, 1985).

Voss, Kunter, and Baumert (2011, p. 953) added some features to Shulman's (1987) "general pedagogical knowledge" and introduced the concept of "general pedagogical/psychological knowledge" which comprises "knowledge of classroom management, knowledge of teaching methods, knowledge of classroom assessment, knowledge of learning processes, and knowledge of individual student characteristics". While many scholars attempted to make a distinction between different areas of teaching knowledge, Kumaravadivelu (2012) underlined the importance of TE system that enables student-teachers to adopt an integrated approach to their

classroom context which allows them to develop learning and teaching theories from their own actions and apply them in their own classroom.

## **2.2. Teacher Education**

Teachers who are prepared for teaching through preservice TEPs are more qualified than those who enter the profession without preparation (Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnick, 1985; Goodwin & Oyler, 2008). Darling-Hammond (2008, p. 337) pointed out that “teachers learn just as students do: by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see”. She sheds light on the fact that only when TE at universities and real context of classroom teaching work together, is the context for this type of learning appropriate.

Shulman (1998, p. 519) drew attention to six facts about professions and associates them with professional preparation especially TE. First, professionals should be committed members of the society. Second, “theoretical” knowledge which is acquired through academic experiences is highly valued. Third, the knowledge that is acquired in academic context should be employed in the real context of practice. Fourth, mere transmission of knowledge into practice has little or no use and the complexity of real contexts should be evaluated by the professionals. Fifth, professionals should learn “from experience” and then share their experience with other professionals as well as professional educators and challenge the current academic status quo. As the last point Shulman mentioned the importance of professionals’ membership in a “community of practice” in order to learn from each other and develop professionally. Regarding professional development, Gao (2015) acknowledged the significant role of a Chinese TEPs which provided English student-teachers with experience of teaching in different local and global contexts.

Though the importance of TEPs in preparing student-teachers cannot be denied, Gutierrez Almarza (1996) in a longitudinal study found that student-teachers’ knowledge might be attributed to several sources of knowledge besides TE courses. These sources were the knowledge which student-teachers had acquired before they participated in TE; the combination of the aforementioned knowledge and what they have learned during their TE; and the student-teachers’ application of these knowledge in practice. She claimed that while similar practices might be attributed to TE, in fact these practices were based on different sources of knowledge. Likewise, Borg (2004) stated that the knowledge which student-teachers bring with them to the TE, as a result of teaching experience they had as students, should not be ignored, because many of novice teachers return to their previous experience.

However, TEPs are not always as effective as they are supposed to be. Murray (2008) drew attention to a number of TEPs' shortcomings that stemmed from graduate teachers' inadequate knowledge of subject matter, teachers' lack of necessary pedagogical knowledge, and time-consuming nature of making changes in teachers' knowledge of teaching. Other shortcomings included the lack of enough attention to the students' needs in TE curriculum and the lack of appreciation of teaching licenses among many public and/or private schools. Furthermore, Yan and He (2010) identified a number of shortcomings in a Chinese EFL student-teachers practical teaching course, namely lack of opportunity in classroom teaching for application of a new perspectives on teaching, limited time which was devoted to their preparation for practical teaching, teaching staff's lack of confidence in their teaching abilities, insufficient supervisory system and deficient assessment, and absence of hard work among some students due to lack of motivation.

To evaluate the effectiveness of pre-service programmes, Darling-Hammond (2006) provided an account of different instruments such as surveys, interviews, observations, pretest and posttest, information from teachers' employers, and teachers' observation in real context of teaching. Moreover, she emphasised the use of several instruments to gain a thorough understanding of the matter. In order to maintain high standards of TEPs, due to their important role in student-teachers' professional development, Demir (2015) stressed the continuous evaluation of these programmes. Darling-Hammond, Newton, and Wei (2010) indicated that to enhance the quality of TEPs there should be certain criteria that can be applied to assess the programmes and noted that California Standards for the Teaching Profession provides such criteria.

### **2.3. Standards for the Teaching Profession**

Standards have the potential to define the criteria based on which outcomes can be assessed (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000). Goodwin and Oyler (2008, p. 470) indicated that different TEPs are similar in terms of "general or content knowledge, the foundations of education, professional knowledge and methods, and field experience" that they offer learners. "Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge implies truth. Truth is everywhere the same" (Hutchins, 1936, p. 137). However, Goodwin and Oyler acknowledged that differences exist in what happens in real execution of each programme.

Three American organizations, National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, p. 1992), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 1992), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1994), have made TE and evaluation occurred at a quick pace (Committee on Assessment and

Teacher Quality, 2001). “The INTASC standards describe the knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions of beginning teachers. The NCATE standards ... describe the knowledge and skills of teacher candidates. The NBPTS standards describe accomplished teaching” (Committee on Assessment and Teacher Quality, 2001, p. 24).

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) have been developed from the INTASC standards (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Based on CSTP, good quality of student-teachers’ preparation plays an important role in teachers’ professional growth and achievement. CSTP provide six standards for teaching that are considered as interconnected areas of knowledge and practice in teaching:

1. Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning;
2. Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning;
3. Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning;
4. Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students;
5. Assessing Student Learning; and
6. Developing as a Professional Educator (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, p. 3).

#### **2.4. Iranian TEU Programmes for EFL Preservice Teachers**

Iranian TEU have recently become the only pathways to teaching in public schools. They are administered under the supervision of Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. There are several TEUs around the nation which have separate men’s and women’s branches. Focusing on professional teaching, the Committee on the Unification of Teacher Training Planning (2016) states it is expected that B.A. graduate students of TEFL will be able to

1. Identify educational problems in the teaching process and attempt to use appropriate strategies to solve them,
2. Know the principles of Islamic education in order to strengthen good behavior among students based on these principles,
3. Provide students in the classroom with learning opportunities which suit individual differences, such as differences in ethnicity, culture, and religion,
4. Use the principles of reflective teaching to evaluate their professional practice continuously,

5. Understand the process of cognitive development, enhance problem solving ability among students, and provide students with learning opportunities that develop their critical and creative thinking,
6. Attempt to create or enrich educational/pedagogical opportunities and develop themselves professionally through using information and communication technology, internet, and instructional websites (pp. 6-7).

### **3. Method**

To the best of researchers' knowledge, no study has been found evaluating Iranian TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers especially in a systematic way in terms of necessary standards for the teaching profession. Thus the purpose of the present study is to evaluate these programmes in order to reveal how well they prepare EFL student-teachers to function in the real context of teaching.

This cross-sectional study employed a mixed-method design to supplement the quantitative data that were collected through survey questionnaire with in-depth interviews data.

#### **3.1. Participants**

Participants in this study (excluding those participants with incomplete data on the measure) included 338 persons among them 126 participants were in-service teachers from several high schools that are located in six cities in Iran and 212 were student-teachers from six Iranian TEU (three men's and three women's branches). More details about participants' distribution are presented in Table 1. We employed cluster random sampling technique due to geographical distribution of the universities in order to cover a wide range of geographical areas in our survey. Participants signed a consent form that accompanied the questionnaire which declared the purpose of the study. Twelve in-service and student-teachers were selected from volunteers who accepted our invitation to participate in interviews. In this study, pseudonyms have been used for interviewees to ensure confidentiality.

#### **3.2. Data Collection Methods**

##### *3.2.1. Quantitative Data: A Survey Questionnaire*

Darling-Hammond's (2006) questionnaire was adopted with permission to explore participants' opinions regarding TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers' preparation in terms of five areas of teaching knowledge (as five factors) which are in relation to the CSTP, these areas, as stated by Darling-Hammond (2006), are:

1. Design curriculum and instruction (CSTP, Standards 3, 4)
2. Support diverse learners (CSTP, Standard 1)
3. Use assessment to guide learning and teaching (CSTP, Standard 5)
4. Create a productive classroom environment (CSTP, Standard 2)
5. Develop professionally (CSTP, Standard 6)

It is worth noting that in our evaluation, the concept of curriculum design has been limited to syllabus design because in Iranian educational system teachers are not usually involved in curriculum design.

Table 1

*Participants' Distribution in the Sample*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Age</i>
Female	First-year student-teachers	55	34.0	18-22
	Last-year student-teachers	54	33.3	21-26
	In-service teachers	53	32.7	24-37
	Total	162	100.0	18-37
Male	First-year student-teachers	56	31.8	18-23
	Last-year student-teachers	58	33.0	21-28
	In-service teachers	62	35.2	24-41
	Total	176	100.0	18-41
Total		338	100.0	18-41

### *3.3.2. Qualitative Data: Semi-structured Interviews*

Eight (four first-year and four last-year) out of 212 surveyed student-teachers and four out of 126 surveyed in-service teachers took part in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. They were selected from the volunteers on the basis of their representativeness to our sample. Five factors of the questionnaire constructed our interview questions and the participants were asked to elaborate on the reasons for their responses to the questions (see the Appendix). The meaning of any ambiguous concepts such as professional development, productive classroom, etc. were clarified using details that are included in Darling-Hammond's (2006) questionnaire as well as Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2009). The purpose of interviews was to gain deeper understanding and validation of the results of the survey.

## **3.3. Data Analysis Procedures**

### *3.3.1. Quantitative Data*

Question 12 of the original questionnaire (Teach in ways that support new English language learners) was irrelevant to Iranian context, so it was deleted. The questionnaire was piloted on 41 (15 in-service teachers, 12 first-year, and 14 last-year student-teachers) to ensure the appropriateness of items. Two experienced teacher trainers from TEU, one of them was a TEFL



Ph.D. holder and the other has a Ph.D. degree in educational psychology, verified that the content of the questionnaire is appropriate for the evaluation of Iranian teacher training objectives. There is also a correspondence between objectives of TEU programmes that are stipulated by the Committee on the Unification of Teacher Training Planning (2016) for EFL student-teachers, and CSTP. In addition, Darling-Hammond (2006) recognised that the factors of questionnaire coincide with CSTP; therefore, the content validity of the questionnaire for our context was established. The 28-item questionnaire administered to 338 participants. Confirmatory factor analysis with Maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation was conducted. The presence of the underlying five-factor model of the questionnaire was verified. The calculated reliability of all factors using Cronbach's alpha were high ( $\alpha > .83$ ). Darling-Hammond (2006) did not mention the internal

Table 2

*Correspondence between Iranian TEU Objectives, Factors of Questionnaire, and CSTP*

Iranian TEU objectives stated by Committee on the Unification of Teacher Training Planning (as they are numbered in this paper)	Number of Corresponding factor of questionnaire	Number of Corresponding standard of CSTP
1	1	3 6
2	5	('demonstrating... ethical conduct' (CSTP 19)
3	2	1 and 4
4	5	6
5	4	1
6	5 and 4	2 and 6
this standard or factor has not been stated explicitly in the list; however, it is emphasised throughout the TEU curriculum.	3	5

consistency of the items or the questionnaire; however, in the current study the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .97, indicating a high estimate of reliability for the questionnaire with our sample. Descriptive statistics concerning the variables of the study are reported in Table 3.

A 2\*3\*5 Mixed Between-within (Repeated Measures) ANOVA and Tukey HSD post-hoc test were used to see whether the six (three male and three female) groups differed in terms of their expectations/evaluations of programmes and also to identify any interaction of gender and group. The SPSS 21.0 was used for the quantitative data analysis.

Table 3

*First-year Student-teachers' Expectations and Last-year Student-teachers' and In-service Teachers' Evaluations of TEU Programmes*

Gender	Group	Group	Descriptive Statistics				Std. Deviation
			N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	
Female	1 <sup>st</sup> -year	Design curriculum and instruction	55	1.56	5.00	4.03	.96
		Support diverse learners	55	1.20	5.00	4.04	.96
		Use assessment	55	1.50	5.00	4.04	.95
		Create a productive classroom environment	55	1.67	5.00	4.06	.95
		Develop professionally	55	1.50	5.00	3.99	1.01
		Overall expectations	55	1.50	5.00	4.03	.94
	Last-year	Design curriculum and instruction	54	1.00	5.00	3.14	.91
		Support diverse learners	54	1.00	5.00	3.41	.94
		Use assessment	54	1.00	5.00	3.25	.90
		Create a productive classroom environment	54	1.00	4.50	3.16	.89
		Develop professionally	54	1.00	5.00	3.31	1.11
		Overall evaluation	54	1.00	4.86	3.23	.89
	in-service	Design curriculum	53	2.89	5.00	4.15	.52
		Support diverse learners	53	2.80	5.00	4.04	.52
		Use assessment	53	2.50	5.00	4.26	.60
		Create a productive classroom environment	53	3.00	5.00	4.13	.52
		Develop professionally	53	2.50	5.00	4.16	.52
		Overall evaluation	53	3.04	5.00	4.14	.49
Male	1 <sup>st</sup> -year	Design curriculum	56	1.56	5.00	3.20	.84
		Support diverse learners	56	1.20	5.00	3.13	.96
		Use assessment	56	1.50	5.00	3.11	.90
		Create a productive classroom environment	56	1.67	5.00	3.08	.80
		Develop professionally	56	1.50	5.00	2.96	.99
		Overall expectations	56	1.50	5.00	3.11	.83
	Last-year	Design curriculum and instruction	58	1.00	4.67	3.02	.80
		Support diverse learners	58	1.00	4.60	2.97	.74
		Use assessment	58	1.00	4.75	3.10	.84
		Create a productive classroom environment	58	1.00	4.50	2.90	.81
		Develop professionally	58	1.00	4.75	2.94	.83
		Overall evaluation	58	1.00	4.43	2.98	.72
	in-service	Design curriculum and instruction	62	2.56	5.00	3.78	.63
		Support diverse learners	62	2.40	5.00	3.71	.68
		Use assessment	62	2.25	5.00	3.66	.76
		Create a productive classroom environment	62	2.33	5.00	3.70	.70
		Develop professionally	62	2.00	4.75	3.57	.71
		Overall evaluation	62	2.36	4.96	3.70	.65

Note: All values have been rounded down to two decimal places.

### 3.3.2. *Qualitative Data*

Content analysis technique was used in order to find repeated patterns or themes in interview data. We followed Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's (2007) guideline for content analysis. They stated that content analysis can be conducted for different purposes, one of them is analysis of "interview transcriptions". The guideline has eleven steps: 1) the research questions were stated, 2) interview transcripts from 12 participants were selected as our corpus, 3) the sample texts which were related to our research questions were selected for analysis, 4) the context of text generation was defined as follows: the interviews were conducted in Persian and the answers were audio-recorded (by permission) and then transcribed and translated into English. Each interview lasted between 25 to 40 minutes, 5) sentences became the units of our analysis, 6) the texts were analysed sentence by sentence to extract codes (e.g., school teachers' feedback), 7) the texts were coded and recoded several times by authors; 8) those codes with common features were grouped into same categories (e.g., insufficient feedback from school teachers, 9) the data were analysed based on the decided codes and categories, 10) main codes/categories were summarized, 11) finally, inferences were made from analyses. In this study there was a high rate of agreement of .92 between the first and second author as two coders. In what follows, quantitative findings as well as the results of content analysis of interviews' transcriptions are presented and discussed.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. *Quantitative Findings Results*

Descriptive statistics provides an overview of student-teachers' and in-service teachers' expectations and evaluations of TEU programmes in terms of the five areas of teaching knowledge (see Table 3). Overall evaluations' mean scores of the groups suggested that female in-service teachers had the highest evaluation of the programmes, female first-year student-teachers ranked the second group, it means that they had higher expectations than their male counterparts. Male in-service teachers, female last-year student-teachers, male first-year student-teachers, and male last-year student-teachers ranked third, fourth, fifth, and sixth, respectively.

A 2\*3\*5 Mixed Between-within (Repeated Measures) ANOVA was conducted to see whether there were differences among three groups on their evaluations (or expectations for the first-year student-teachers) of five areas of teaching knowledge which were covered in TEU programmes. We also examined the difference between males and females in this regard.

The multivariate results simultaneously compared the mean differences among three groups as well as males and females on the five factors of the measure. It showed that there was a significant interaction effect between areas of knowledge, group, and gender [Wilks' lambda = .94,  $F(8, 332) = 2.55$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ] and significant differences were found for student-teachers' and in-service teachers' evaluations based on five areas of knowledge [Wilks' lambda = .96,  $F(4, 332) = 3.42$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ], however the effect sizes for both variables were small.

Follow-up univariate analyses showed that there were statistically significant main effects for group [ $F(2, 332) = 30.51$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .15$ ] and gender [ $F(1, 332) = 43.84$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ ] and the effect sizes were high. There was also statistically significant interaction effect between group and gender [ $F(2, 332) = 5.6$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ] with low effect size. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first-year group ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) was significantly different from the last-year group ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) and in-service group ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .62$ ), there was also statistically significant difference between the last-year and in-service group mean scores.

We split up the data based on gender to examine the differences between groups separately. Separate gender analyses revealed that the mean score for the female first-year group ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) was statistically different from the mean score for the female last-year group ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .89$ ), but it is not statistically different from the mean score for the female in-service group ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = .49$ ), there was also significant difference between the female last-year and female in-service groups.

For males there were statistically significant differences between first-year ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) and in-service groups ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = .65$ ) and between last-year ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and in-service groups. There was not statistically significant difference between first-year and last-year groups.

Further analyses while splitting up the data based on groups showed that there was statistically significant main effect for gender for the first-year [ $F(1, 109) = 30.95$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .22$ ] and in-service [ $F(1, 113) = 18.02$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ] groups and the effect sizes were high. For the last-year group, the main effect for gender [ $F(1, 110) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .08$ ] did not reach statistical significance (see Figures 1 to 3).

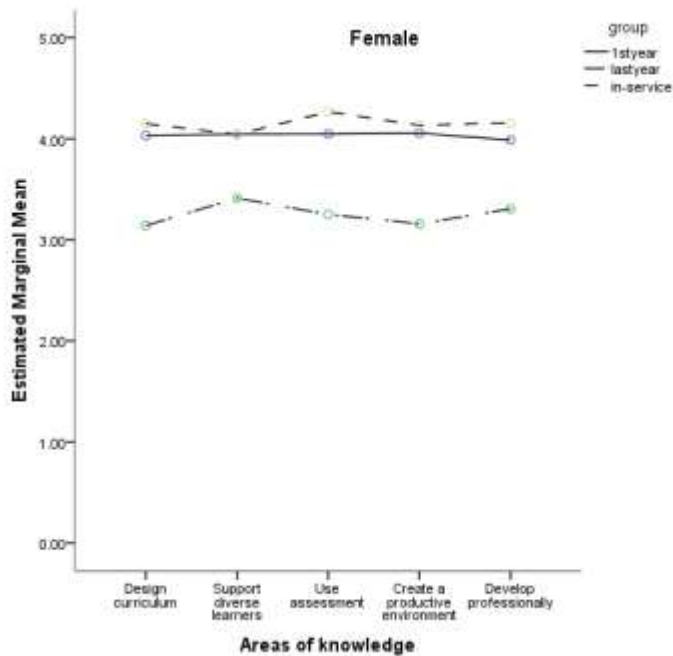


Figure 1. The Interaction Plots between Areas of Knowledge and Group for Females

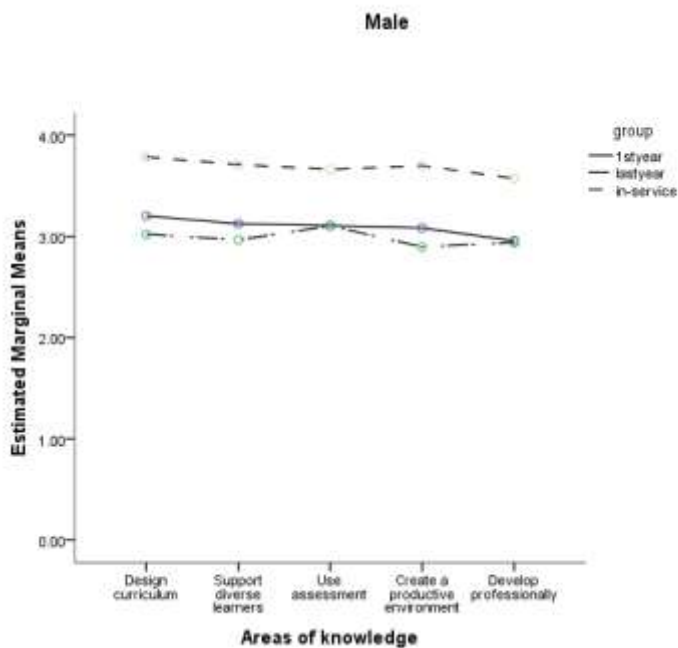


Figure 2. The Interaction Plots between Areas of Knowledge and Group for Males

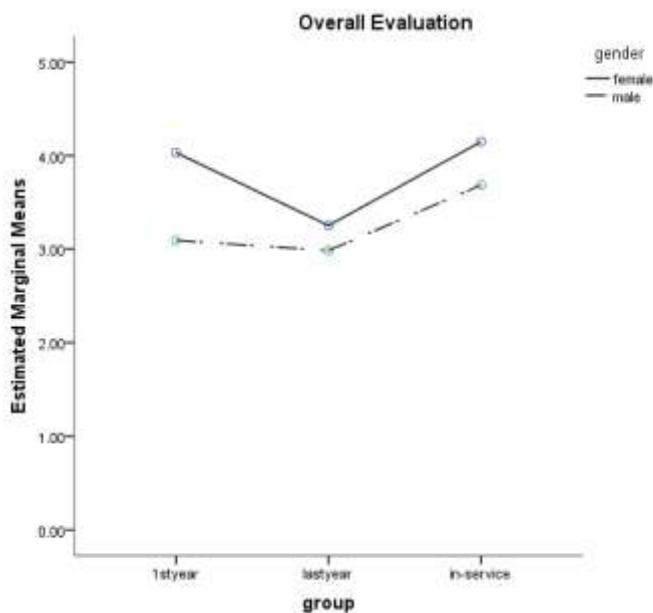


Figure 3. The Interaction Plots of Overall Evaluation between Gender and Group

#### 4.1.2. Qualitative Findings Results

The interviewees were asked to answer five questions in line with five factors of Darling-Hammond's (2006) questionnaire: How well do you think TEU programmes (will/have) prepare(d) you to...

- 1) Design curriculum and instruction?
- 2) Support diverse learners?
- 3) Use assessment to guide learning and teaching?
- 4) Create a productive classroom environment?
- 5) Develop professionally?

After analysing the interviewees' responses, we found that coding and categorizing the responses based on genders and groups would reveal more information than categorizing based on questions; moreover, the questionnaire results showed significant differences among three groups and between genders; however, the number of corresponding questions are mentioned in parentheses.

**Female First-year Student-teachers' Expectations of TEU Programmes.** Sepideh (in question 1) had a positive image of her previous teachers and expected the programmes to help her to become similar to them. She was also very optimistic about herself as a future teacher, her background knowledge, and her personal characteristics. Fatemeh had high expectations of the programmes and fieldworks. In question five she appeared not to have a clear idea of professional development.

**Male First-year Student-teachers' Expectations of TEU Programmes.** Saeed (in question 1) and Ali (in question 4) believed that regardless of the quality of programmes, successful teaching depends on personal efforts and abilities, they did not have high expectations of the programmes.

Ali (in question 1) and Saeed (in questions 2, 3, and 4) indicated that real teaching experience is more important than theories which might be taught at TEU. Ali's response to question five shows that he had no clear idea of professional development in teaching. He also was doubtful about the probable effects of programmes on supporting diverse learners and creating productive classrooms. Saeed was not optimistic about the future outcomes of programmes. Accordingly, the first-year student-teachers' responses had two sources: the interviewees' ideas about teaching practice and their ideas about the programmes.

Table 4

*Sources of First-year Student-teachers' Expectations of TEU Education Programmes*

Interviewees	Ideas about teaching practice	Ideas about TEU programmes
Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience has a more important role in teaching than theories</li> <li>- Successful teaching depends on the personal efforts and abilities rather than the programme outcomes</li> <li>- No clear idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doubt about the outcomes of the programme</li> <li>- Pessimism about the effectiveness of the programme.</li> </ul>
Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Successful teaching will be an outcome of their positive personal characteristics which was linked to the programme outcomes</li> <li>- Incomplete image of teaching (teaching similar to her teachers)</li> <li>- No clear idea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full of hope; high expectations</li> <li>- Optimism about the future outcomes of the programme.</li> <li>- Positive image of fieldworks</li> </ul>

**Female Last-year Student-teachers' Evaluations of TEU Programmes.** Bahar constantly expressed that she was not prepared for teaching. These worries were caused by her dissatisfaction with her experience of fieldworks (in question 1), feeling of uncertainty about her teaching context (in questions 3) and lack of confidence in her abilities (in question 1). She complained about her limited responsibilities during fieldworks besides insufficient feedback from school teachers and supervisors (in question 2). She admitted, in responses to questions two to five, that she became knowledgeable about some issues in teaching; however, she did not sound sure whether this knowledge would help her in teaching practice. She indicated that the programmes failed to match her expectations (in question 5).

Maryam, on the other hand, showed more self-confidence than Bahar in terms of theoretical knowledge she had acquired from different courses; however, similar to Bahar, she was anxious about her preparedness and ability to apply her knowledge appropriately (in questions 1, 2, and 3). She stated that for more effective programmes, more time and fieldworks were needed (in question 5).

**Male Last-year Student-teachers' Evaluations of TEU Programmes.** Hamid (in questions 1, 2, 3, and 5) recognised that he acquired theoretical knowledge in all areas of teaching knowledge; however, he expressed his dissatisfaction with teacher trainers' qualification (in question 5) as well as fieldworks in terms of time and supervisors' and school teachers' supports (in questions 1, 2, and 3). In response to question four he blamed the programmes for not teaching how to encourage creativity. In responses to questions two and three he showed worries about future application of theories to teaching practice.

Keyvan, except in his response to question four, did not mention whether he acquired useful knowledge or not; he mostly expressed his dissatisfaction. He complained about a large number of unnecessary general courses (in questions 1 and 4), incompetent teacher trainers (in questions 1 and 3), and fieldworks (in question 4) which did not reach good standards. In response to question five he indicated that he had different expectations of the programmes which were not fulfilled. Similar to Hamid, Keyvan worried about how to use his knowledge in real context of teaching (in questions 2 and 3). Table 5 shows the last-year student-teachers' sources of (dis)satisfaction. As it can be seen, males ascribed their unpreparedness to the programmes, but females mostly expressed their anxiety about their not being prepared for the transition to the real context of teaching.

**Female In-service Teachers' Evaluations of TEU Programmes.** Mahnaz, with two years of experience, was satisfied with the knowledge she has acquired as outcomes of the programmes in terms of both theory (in questions 1 to 5) and fieldworks (in questions 4). She considered herself a successful teacher (in question 1) as a result of what she has learned at university. However, she found control of diverse learners as a difficult task at the early years of her teaching (in question 2). She emphasised that if during fieldworks, school teachers provided student-teachers with the reasons behind their actions, they would be able to use their knowledge even at the first year of their teaching experience.

Likewise, Zahra, with four years of experience, was well satisfied with the theoretical knowledge she has acquired (in questions 1 to 5) as well as the fieldworks she has experienced (in question 5) at university. Similar to



Mahnaz, she thought teacher training programmes helped her to be a successful teacher.

Table 5

*Last-year Student-teachers' Sources of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with TEU Programmes*

Interviewees	Sources of satisfaction	Sources of dissatisfaction
Male	- They acquired theoretical knowledge of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ineffective fieldworks in terms of time and supervisors</li> <li>- incompetent teacher trainers</li> <li>- worries about application of theories to teaching practice</li> <li>- unnecessary general courses</li> <li>- programmes' failure to fulfil the student-teachers' expectations</li> </ul>
Female	- They acquired theoretical knowledge of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uncertainty about teaching context they may encounter</li> <li>- insufficient feedback from school teachers and supervisors and the limited responsibilities in fieldworks which they put on the student-teachers' shoulders.</li> <li>- anxious about her preparedness and ability</li> <li>- programmes' failure to fulfil the student-teachers' expectations</li> </ul>

**Male In-service Teachers' Evaluations of TEU Programmes.** Reza with three years of teaching experience acknowledged the usefulness of theoretical knowledge he acquired at teacher university (in questions 1 to 5). He expressed that as he gained more experience the theoretical knowledge became more useful for him (in questions 1 and 2); however, he indicated that at the beginning of his teaching experience he encountered difficulties (in question 1). He stressed that limitations always exist in the application of theories to actual practice of teaching (in question 4) and sometimes he failed to put his knowledge to good use in practice (in question 5).

Similarly, Mahdi with two years of teaching experience indicated that his job gave him the chance to apply the knowledge he has acquired at teacher university (in questions 1 to 5). He considered his knowledge as a main factor in his successful teaching (in question 3). He also mentioned that there were contextual limitations on teaching (in question 1 and 4); however, he pointed out that he could transcend many limitations and improve his teaching quality with the help of knowledge and skills he has gained through education (in question 4). In response to question two, he was proud of himself for identifying two students with reading and writing difficulties, based on what he has learned at university. Table 6 presents a summary of in-service teachers' sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Table 6

*In-service Teachers' Sources of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with TEU Programmes*

Interviewees	Sources of satisfaction	Sources of dissatisfaction
Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- useful theoretical knowledge</li> <li>- considering themselves successful EFL teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limitations which are imposed on real context of teaching</li> <li>- difficulties in the first year of teaching</li> <li>- failure to put their knowledge into practice</li> </ul>
Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- useful theoretical knowledge</li> <li>- fieldworks experience</li> <li>- considering themselves successful EFL teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school teachers didn't give adequate explanations for their actions</li> <li>- classroom management in the first year of teaching</li> </ul>

**4.2. Discussion**

The aim of the current cross-sectional study was to evaluate Iranian TEU programmes for EFL student-teachers in terms of five areas of teaching knowledge including designing curriculum and instruction, supporting diverse learners, using assessment to guide learning, creating a productive classroom environment, and developing professionally. Exploring the first- and last-year EFL student-teachers' and in-service teachers' attitudes towards these programmes provided insights into their effectiveness. In the following sections inferences from the results will be provided that is the eleventh step of Cohen et al. (2007) guideline.

The results revealed that female first-year student-teachers had higher expectations than males. As results indicated both males and females thought that their abilities would be an important factor in their learning outcomes; however, females were more optimistic about the outcomes of the programmes than males, they believed they could learn many things from the courses. This result is in line with Kalaian and Freeman (1994) who found that females began their teaching preparation programme with higher and more positive expectations regarding what they would learn from university courses than men. It appears that they had an image of teaching before they enter TEU and they were not aware of teaching complexities (Hong, 2010). For example, they had a model of their previous teachers in their mind and believed that they would be successful when they become similar to their school teachers. Gutierrez Almarza (1996) also indicated that student-teachers have some knowledge of teaching before they begin their education for teaching. This prior knowledge has been gained from their previous experience of schooling, from their teachers, or from their classmates or other people around them. This knowledge may give the student-teachers an incomplete image of teaching (Borg, 2004).

It is worth mentioning that the results may also be affected by the specific characteristic of these student-teachers. Mostly because of job security as well as 24 weekly working hours, many high school students especially females wish to be accepted at TEU. Therefore, those who entered TEU ranked among top students in Iranian National University Entrance Examination. These students often have idealist views of their own life including their studies and their jobs.

In addition, the results showed that females last-year student-teachers had slightly higher evaluations than males. It was revealed that males attributed their dissatisfaction mainly to the programmes, but females' dissatisfaction were generally caused by their lack of confidence about their own abilities. Similarly, Kalaian and Freeman (1994) found that female student-teachers had less self-confidence in their abilities than males, however they learned more than men from the TE programme. Nevertheless, in our study, females first-year student-teachers expressed more confidence in their abilities than men in interviews, but it seemed that this confidence decreased among last-year females dramatically. The reason might be their high levels of expectations and incomplete image of teaching at the beginning of the programme. Another probable reason as they mentioned, is that they did not receive enough feedback from their supervisors and school teachers during their fieldworks.

This is consistent with Yayli (2012) who found that student-teachers' confidence in their teaching abilities decreased after fieldworks experiences. According to Tang (2003), if student-teachers encounter challenging context in their fieldworks and receive little support from supervisors and school teachers, they will lose their confidence in their abilities. Likewise, Hagger, and McIntyre (2006) found that student-teachers' observations of teachers' teaching or supervisors' observations of student-teachers' teaching without feedback would cause their dissatisfaction.

Although both males and females acknowledged the adequacy of theoretical knowledge, they might not have clear ideas about the usefulness of this type of knowledge. As it was indicated by interviewees they considered fieldworks more effective than general courses or theoretical knowledge. This is consistent with Shulman's (1998) indication that student-teachers could understand the value of practical knowledge but they would not be able to ascribe similar value to theoretical one. Similar findings were reported by Kömür (2010) and Tang, Wong, and Cheng (2016).

Based on the results, male in-service teachers' evaluations of the programmes were significantly higher than male student-teachers. Females in-service teachers had higher evaluations compared with female last-year student-teachers. Their evaluations were even slightly higher than the

expectations of their first-year counterparts. The results also revealed that in-service teachers did not complain about courses anymore. These teachers believed they were successful in their job as a result of their attendance at TEU as student-teachers. This result is in line with Darling-Hammond (2006) as well as Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, and Kerr (2007) that indicated as teacher training graduates entered the teaching practice, their satisfaction with the programme increased gradually. One source of dissatisfaction that in-service and last-year student-teachers had in common was that, during fieldworks, the school teachers' explanations of the reasons behind their actions in the classroom were inadequate. In this regard, Akbari (2007, p. 200) indicated that teachers need to teach "based on authority and accepted practice (or routines) for a while to feel secure and to be able to move to the next stages of development and professional growth".

Another source of their dissatisfactions was related to their limited knowledge of real context of teaching (Namaghi, 2009), including constraints and management problems, when they enter that context. This is reflected in the findings of Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, and Thornberg (2017) in which beginning teachers thought they should learn more from TEPs regarding class management.

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

This project was designed to contribute an insight into the effectiveness of the Iranian TEU programmes based on the comparison between first-year EFL student-teachers' expectations and the last-year student-teachers' and in-service EFL teachers' evaluations of the programmes in terms of necessary standards for the teaching profession. Based on the results, on the one hand there was a gap between the first-year EFL student-teachers' desired TEPs and the last-year EFL student-teachers' evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes. This gap was conspicuous between female first-year and last-year EFL student-teachers, but on the other, in-service English teachers acknowledged that development of teaching competence was followed from their enrollment in a four-year TEPs as in-service teachers.

This study has several limitations. First, a longitudinal study instead of cross-sectional one might give a more realistic picture of the programmes. Second, we relied on the self-reported survey and interviews data; however, observations of teachers' actual performance of teaching might reveal different results regarding the effectiveness of the programmes. Third, we only evaluated the effectiveness of TEU programmes on teachers' preparation in terms of five areas of knowledge. Further research into other

factors which might have effects on the usefulness of student-teachers' preparation is recommended.

In spite of its limitations, the study has some implications for TE. Fortunately, in recent years, TEU in Iran raise their standards for both acceptance of teacher students for teacher training programmes as well as their certifications. This is one step toward enhancement of TE (Shulman, 1987) which reasonably result in improvement in teaching and learning practice. It is also suggested that TE programmes provide student-teachers with experiments in real context of teaching to demonstrate the limitations and reality of educational context (Kömür, 2010; Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, & Thornberg, 2017; Namaghi, 2009).

EFL Teacher educators must continue to emphasise theoretical knowledge (Shulman, 1998), however they should be connected to the practice of teaching (Bråten & Ferguson 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Kömür, 2010). Furthermore, they should have a good knowledge of research methodology and are able to apply their knowledge in teacher training practice (Tryggvason, 2009). In addition, school teachers and supervisors should provide considerable amount of feedback regarding classroom management and practical application of different theories in order to support the student-teachers and increase their confidence in their abilities (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006; Tang, 2003). It is also strongly recommended that TEU administrators set high standards for TEPs and assess the programmes continuously based on those standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2010; Demir, 2015).

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors extend special thanks to Emeritus Professor Darling-Hammond for her kind permission to use her questionnaire for this study. The authors also would like to thank the enthusiastic participants in this study who gave their time and energy for the survey and interviews.

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## Appendix: First year student-teachers and in-service teachers' answers to interview questions.

### *First-year EFL Student-teachers' Expectations*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
<i>Q1: Design curriculum and instruction</i>	<p><i>Saeed: I think this programme will be helpful to some extent but my success mostly will depend on myself and my effort in this regard.</i></p> <p><i>Ali: this task is very difficult and needs a lot of experience and knowledge which may be acquired somewhat through participating in these teacher training courses</i></p> <p><i>Sepideh: I think the programmes will teach us how to do that and I will become similar to my previous good teachers.</i></p> <p><i>Fatemeh: I feel hopeful that we will gain this knowledge from being taught.</i></p>
<i>Q2: Support diverse learners</i>	<p><i>Saeed: The programmes might teach us theoretically how to behave toward students, but to be effective, it must be experienced in the classroom.</i></p> <p><i>Ali: The programmes may be helpful but I am not sure whether it might work for me.</i></p> <p><i>Sepideh: I think we will be taught how to manage a classroom with different learners. I think I will be a good teacher after taking part in this preparation programme.</i></p> <p><i>Fatemeh: I think we will learn many things especially during fieldworks how to do my best in difficult situations such as teaching in undeveloped villages.</i></p>
<i>Q3: Use assessment to guide learning and teaching</i>	<p><i>Saeed: It is not an easy task, so it could not be learned from books but from the experience in real contexts.</i></p> <p><i>Ali: It depends! For example the teacher trainers' knowledge, application of theories in practice, etc. are important factors in teaching of assessment strategies.</i></p> <p><i>Sepideh: I think assessment skill is very crucial for a teacher and of course the programmes will focus on it.</i></p> <p><i>Fatemeh: I am sure that we will be taught how to assess students and how to use the results of our assessment and we will learn more during the practical courses as well.</i></p>
<i>Q4: Create a productive classroom environment</i>	<p><i>Saeed: To be creative needs a lot of experience and I don't think it can be learned from theories in the textbooks.</i></p> <p><i>Ali: I think the programme may teach us theoretically how to bring innovation to our classrooms but our success depends on our ability to apply the theories.</i></p> <p><i>Sepideh: I am familiar with this issue because I have read about it, and I believe I will learn the right way to be successful at creating creative classroom.</i></p> <p><i>Fatemeh: We as English teachers might encounter problematic situations and of course it will be explained in this programme that how we will be able to deal with unanticipated situations.</i></p>
<i>Q5: Develop professionally</i>	<p><i>Saeed: I think the programme might only introduce us to concepts such as 'professional development', 'cooperation', etc. most of them will be forgotten later!</i></p> <p><i>Ali: I have no idea how we learn to be professional but I hope to learn something from teacher trainers.</i></p> <p><i>Sepideh: I think the programme will be effective because I am very interesting to be successful in, for example, cooperation with my colleagues, or having leadership responsibilities.</i></p> <p><i>Fatemeh: I looked at our curriculum in the university website and I found some courses that are related to professional development. Thus I hope to learn about this throughout the programme.</i></p>

### *In-service EFL teachers' evaluations:*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
<i>Q1: Design curriculum</i>	<i>Reza (with 3 years of experience): We had several courses related to syllabus designing, lesson planning, etc., they have been helpful in many occasions. In the</i>

*and instruction* first year of my teaching, lack of practical experience was a disadvantage, I had to spend too much time preparing my lesson plan, however now after gaining more experience, I spend less time and achieve better results.

*Mahdi (with 2 years of experience):* on the basis of what I have learned from teacher university courses I know that how it is possible to modify materials to maximise learning, in spite of the fact that sometimes there are limitations on the real context, because materials and schedules are determined in advance.

*Mahnaz (with 2 years of experience):* actually what I have learned at teacher university help me to design effective syllabus and instructions for myself in a way that I become a successful English teacher and even sometimes my experienced colleagues consult me.

*Zahra (with 4 years of experience):* at the end of my university studies I thought that so many theoretical courses, research projects, as well as fieldworks are waste of time and energy; however, during my four years of teaching experience I understood that they are not only helpful but also necessary, for example how to pay attention to L2 learners abilities when designing syllabus or in my instructions, or what supplementary materials are appropriate for my students.

*Q2: Support diverse learners*

*Reza:* This issue was well addressed during the training programmes; however at first I was confused about all the different theories which I knew, but over years of experience I have gained a valuable knowledge regarding this issue and I have taken advantage of theories which I didn't know their uses at first.

*Mahdi:* We had to study general and educational psychology books as well as L2 teaching methodology in our training programmes, therefore I became sensitised to many situations which might be ignored if I did not have enough background knowledge which I have gained from textbooks, teachers, and fieldworks. For example, in the first year of my teaching, based on what I have learned from different theories, I could identify two students with reading and writing difficulties who have high IQs. I informed their parents and this event change their life dramatically.

*Mahnaz:* Sometimes I felt hopeless at controlling some of my students, however after gaining more experience in managing my classroom, I find times to think about what I have learned before during the programme and I use them. They were very helpful.

*Zahra:* I have learned many things from the training programmes about L2 learners and different strategies which they have in their learning process, and also different levels of language proficiency which they are in, so I always try different teaching strategies to engage all students in learning and it really works.

*Q3: Use assessment to guide learning and teaching*

*Reza:* there were courses on language testing and assessment which help me for example, to learn how to conduct different types of language assessment, including formative and summative assessment; however there are some occasions which these are not practical.

*Mahdi:* I have learned from university courses how to modify my teaching strategies based on the continuous assessment of the learners and it became the key factor in my successful teaching.

*Mahnaz:* I always try several techniques of language assessment, which I was taught before, to see which one is appropriate for my classroom. Most of the times I reach a desirable conclusions and sometimes do not reach.

*Zahra:* I have taken courses in L2 assessment and I have acquired such a knowledge which is difficult, if not impossible to acquire appropriately and adequately in any other ways. This knowledge often guides my teaching and testing practices.

*Q4: Create a productive classroom environment*

*Reza:* it was not very easy task to be creative because most of the educational programmes were determined in advance; however, I do my best and sometimes the theories related to creativity are useful. I have tried a number of them to know which worked in my context.

*Mahdi: students, parents, and principals may express opposition to the introduction of change to traditional teaching methods which mostly hinder creativity, but I have learned from university courses that a good teacher could be creative even within such limitations, it encourages me to try new ways of teaching which is not in direct opposition to the commonly used and accepted methods.*

*Mahnaz: many of our specialised courses were related to productive classroom and creativity. We also have experienced them in our fieldworks which I did not noticed them at that time. These theoretical and fieldworks experiences help me in applying my knowledge in actual classroom. I think if school teachers explained more the reasons behind their actions to student-teachers, it would help them to use this valuable knowledge as soon as they enter the teaching profession.*

*Zahra: I often remember principles of cooperation which I have been taught by teacher trainers and I attempt to engage all my students in class activities to encourage their creativity and I believe that until now I have been successful.*

*Q5: Develop professionally*

*Reza: there were courses on educational technology. They help me not to be alien to technology and also how to use it in service of my teaching. Cooperation and collaboration were emphasised during the teacher training programme as well, but they were not very tangible in fieldworks and, as I have experienced, they have not work in many contexts.*

*Mahdi: group works, research projects, and other practices which we conducted during the teacher training programmes help me not to separate myself from decision making and managing responsibilities at my school.*

*Mahnaz: I test most of the strategies which I learned in my teacher training. In this way I could solve some of my problems which I encountered in and out of the classroom concerning teaching and learning. They were helpful especially throughout the first year of my teaching in which I encountered many unanticipated situations.*

*Zahra: I have learned many things especially from participating in fieldworks. Throughout the university courses and fieldworks I had to analyse what happened in the classroom in order to submit my reports to the supervisors, thus I had to reflect upon the teacher's practices as well as learners' behaviors. My reflective skills, which is very crucial in my job, has been developed in this way.*

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### ***Bibliographic information of this paper for citing:***

Aliakbari, M., & Tabatabaei, F. (2019). Evaluation of Iranian teacher education programmes for EFL student-teachers. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 6(1), 105-131.