The Future of Teacher Education Making: EFL Pre-Service Teachers and Teacher Educators' Perceptions of Professional Preparation

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Abstract

The student's success at school greatly depends on the quality teacher and this has led to the governments' growing focus on the quality of teacher education programs and the production of quality teachers. This study explored the contributory role of the newly revised English Teacher Education Curriculum (ETEC) at Farhangian University in pre-service teachers' professional preparation. The participants were 257 BA students in TEFL and 40 teacher educators. The adapted version of the Survey of Teacher Education Programs (STEP) (Williams-Pettway, 2005) and semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data from the participants. After analyzing the data by employing descriptive and inferential statistics, the findings indicated that the participants positively evaluated the components in the program and found it effective in the preparation of prospective teachers. However, some participants pointed to some drawbacks as the requirement of more input on language proficiency and knowledge of English language learners, more effective use of technology, more teaching practice and field experience, and sufficient support from supervising teachers and teacher educators during teaching practicum courses for student teachers. The findings from this study may help tomorrow's educational leaders to equip themselves with a visionary perspective and begin to form ideas for future change and direction in line with social influences.

1. Introduction

Currently, the kind of teaching and teacher education at the present era is the great concern of many nations in the world. The view that the student achievement is affected by teaching as one of the most important factors has made teacher effectiveness to rapidly rise to the top of the education policy and teacher preparation is one of the key building blocks in producing effective teachers. Darling-Hammond (2000) maintains that teachers' more preparation to understand content knowledge and consider student perspectives can put them on the way to professional success and lead to the students' higher level of achievement. Teaching competencies are developed as student teachers go through initial preparation of teacher education programs and spend a long time receiving knowledge before they commence teaching at schools. As Freeman (2016) suggests, the teacher education is "a bridge that serves to link what is known in the field with what is done in the classroom, and it does so through the individuals whom we educate as teachers" (p. 9). Lingam (2010) argue that the teachers' professional competence is prominently influenced by the large degree of quality teachers' preparation and specifically the courses that they take in the initial teacher education. This is because the initial teacher education program and the type of training given to student teachers must be accorded to their work and responsibilities in real teaching.

Current research in the field of teacher education implies that teaching has become more sophisticated and teachers' knowledge and classroom performance are determining factors in student learning and that a highly competent and qualified teacher must be able to make use of different practices for various purposes, integrate and incorporate various types of knowledge, construct rich pedagogical skills and knowledge, and adapt to learners' diversity in the classroom (Broad & Evans, 2006; Broad, Evans & Gaskell, 2008). These views reveal the significance of quality teachers in classrooms and provoke the growing attention and debate about the crucial elements of a high-quality teacher education program within the broader context of professional learning across the teaching profession.

Farhangian University's special mission is to train teachers in different fields of study including TEFL. Teacher education at this University has expanded very rapidly during the last few years and more and more TEFL courses are held on different campuses. Accordingly, some policies have been adopted by the decision-makers to make some curricular reforms and improve teacher education programs. In 2016, the University restructured the English language teacher education curriculum to meet the teachers' demands and needs under the social, educational, political national and international changes and requirements. As a result of this revision, some new courses in school experience, technology and pedagogy were added to

the curriculum. Although several studies have examined TEFL programs in Iran, it must be noted that their findings are hardly applicable to this specific situation because the TEFL program implemented at Farhangian University somehow differs from what is implemented in other universities. It seems that the outcomes of the newly revised curriculum have remained under researched. To ensure that the new curriculum is relevant to the aims of stakeholders and addresses their concerns, program evaluation needs to be performed. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the success of the new ELTE curriculum in professionally preparing EFL student teachers and developing their competencies and skills from the perceptions of those mostly involved in it.

2. Literature Review

Teacher education and teacher's professional knowledge and competencies have received much attention in the last few decades to re-evaluate the teaching programs and assess the trainees' performance. Darling-Hammond (1999) stresses the importance of teaching knowledge in providing the trainees with skills in 'planning curricula', 'delivering instruction', managing the classroom', and 'diagnosing students' learning needs' while preparation. However, students who are exposed to insufficient preparation may encounter several challenges whenever they decide to practice teaching (p. 30). Freeman (1996) and Richards and Lockhart (1996) maintain that student teachers should commence their teaching practice and/or teaching when they comprehend the ideas of what they teach. In other words, such ideas should be translated into acts of teaching. Various types of knowledge should be presented by student teachers while doing teaching practice. Such types of knowledge reflect the extent to which they are fully prepared for performing teaching practices.

In the field of English language teacher education, experts play a critical role in developing student teachers' professional knowledge base. Such a kind of knowledge base can include the subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and skills and use of instructional technology and strategies which are required of student teachers for teaching practices (Liu, 2013). Further, student teachers must be furnished with sufficient knowledge and effective teaching skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1999). For example, they need to learn effective methods which are helpful to deal with learners' differences, "plan various instructional activities for diverse learners, and assess students' knowledge to integrate multiple pathways of instruction. Some categories in this set of knowledge and skills include lesson planning, instructional strategies and classroom management" (Choy, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2013, p. 69).

The requirement of restructuring the teacher education programs to satisfy the demands of an increasingly challenging profession in conjunction with the social changes are identified in the literature. Various studies have attempted to examine the effectiveness of teacher education programs. Some of these studies have focused on a through curriculum evaluation whereas some others have examined simply one specific aspect of a curriculum. Rhodes and Torgunrud (1989) conducted one of these first studies in Canada. They attempted to explore how the implementation of new and revised curricula affected teacher and student needs and how effective were the existing publications and procedures in providing the support needed. The analyses of the reviews of the relevant research, interviews with teachers, administrators and consultants involved in curriculum implementation demonstrated that curriculum implementation supports publications and provisions, but they should be augmented in line with the curriculum change or required changes in pedagogical practices and teacher needs and beliefs. McKenna (2000) investigated the effects of newly incorporated field-based experiences into the teacher education courses and found that there were considerable changes in prospective teachers.

In a study, Akar (2009) conducted a research in Poland to explore the extent to which the foreign language teacher training colleges (FLTTC) were effective in preparing student teachers. The analysis of the data collected through a case study and a survey demonstrated that the student teachers used FLTTCs basically to learn a foreign language. Moreover, the participants believed that the training colleges were successful in preparing teachers and expressed their positive perceptions of their teaching in the classroom.

Smith and Hodsons' study (2010) investigated a graduate teacher program in the United Kingdom. They collected data from a group of trainees and concluded that both theoretical and practical components of the program were relevant. The trainees pointed to the positive effect and usefulness of learned theory at the university on their teaching practice. They, also, referred to the advantages of learning from experience such as observing colleagues' teaching, raising questions about others' practice, teaching independently and getting to know the class and the students' reactions to the trainees' teaching.

In an evaluative review, Karakas (2012) analyzed the current English Education Program in Turkey through the related theories, previous empirical research and comparison of the present program with the preceding one and found that the program includes required pedagogical and theory components. Yet, some drawbacks as lack of culture-specific and less practically-oriented courses could be noticed in the program.

The student teaching experience in an early and elementary teacher education program was the subject of an inquiry by Brown, Lee, and Collins

(2015). They attempted to explore the pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness as they were affected by teaching experiences. The analysis of the data collected from seventy-one pre-service teachers at a large public university showed that the pre-service teachers' perceptions of preparedness increased significantly.

Agudo (2017) attempted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an EFL teacher education program implemented in Spain through critical examination. The analyses of quantitative and qualitative data showed the participants' general positive evaluation of the TEFL program. The participants mentioned that the program was strong in developing pedagogic competence and promoted reflection. At the same time, they stated that there should be more input on English language knowledge and the amount of practice teaching should also be increased.

Demir (2017) investigated the effectiveness of the current pre-service English teacher education program from the student teachers and their educators' viewpoints. The researcher used an evaluation questionnaire and semi-structured interview as data collection tools. The analysis of the data revealed that the program was not successful in satisfying the student teachers' needs, failed to give adequate training in English, and needed updating and addressing more practical teaching components.

Özdaş (2018) explored how the pre-service teachers perceived teaching practice course. The researcher employed a case study research design, with semi-structured interviews as data collection instrument. Forty-two pre-service teachers taking teaching training course in 2014-2015 academic year participated in the study. The results of the research indicated some positive and negative points. The positive points were the pre-service teachers' gaining experience in teaching, learning to be patient, using materials and acquiring the importance of communication. The negative points were teachers' inability to manage the classroom, lack of materials and negative attitudes and behaviors of school administrators.

Teacher education programs have been the subject of evaluation in Iran too. Soleimani and Zanganeh (2014) conducted a study to examine the success of the pre-service English teacher training programs in promoting the English teachers' knowledge, dispositions, and performances. The results obtained from three questionnaires administered to 147 teachers revealed that these programs train well-equipped and practically disposed teachers.

Masoumpanah, Tahririan, Alibabaee, and Afzali (2017) attempted to evaluate the undergraduate TEFL program at Farhangian University. The study assessed the program from the perspectives of 220 student teachers, 32 teacher educators, and 12 heads of departments and experts including the

university deans, deputies, and research and teaching staff, through using three instruments, i.e. questionnaires, interviews, and observations in a mixed methods design. The findings indicated that the TEFL program do not address some educational and administrative needs as the participants believed that they were not enriched with the necessary skills, the practice of the learned theories, problem solving, critical thinking, flexibility, and innovation. Furthermore, this study demonstrated several theory-practice gaps in the curriculum.

Aliakbari and Tabatabaei (2019) carried out a study to evaluate Iranian Teacher Education universities programs for EFL student-teachers regarding five areas of teaching knowledge which conform to California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). The data were collected through a survey from 126 in-service EFL teachers from six cities and 212 EFL student-teachers from six Iranian Teacher Education universities and interview with 12 selected volunteers from the participants. The student-teachers' expectations of TEPs at the beginning, their evaluations of the programs at the end, and in-service teachers' evaluations after years of teaching in terms of their preparation for teaching were compared. The results of the survey as well as interview analyses and interpretations indicated 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 male first- and last-year groups. Both male and female in-service teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of their four years of education at Teacher Education universities.

To date, few studies have focused on the English teacher education programs and their impact on teacher professionalism at Farhangian University in Iran. Furthermore, the review of the literature revealed that no study was conducted specifically on the newly revised ETEC at Farhangian University concerning the standards of NCATE. Admitting the vital role of initial teacher training in professional preparation and insufficient research on this issue and exploring the student teachers and teacher educators' perceptions, the researchers conducted this study. Accordingly, the following research questions were posed:

      1. To what extent do student teachers and teacher educators believe that the newly revised ETEC develops the prospective teachers' abilities in five scales of knowledge, skills and dispositions, field experience, diversity, technology, and quality of instruction?

      2. Do student teachers differ from teacher educators in terms of their views on the five above-mentioned scales?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study sample consisted of two groups. The first group included 40 teacher educators (29 males, 11 females with a mean age of 45) who were teaching courses related to TEFL at Farhangian University and other teacher education centers that offered BA programs in TEFL. Eight of them had M.A in TEFL, and the rest held Ph.D. in TEFL. Their length of service ranged from 5 to 30 years. The second group comprised 257 BA students in TEFL at Farhangian University and familiar enough with all the courses in the newly revised curriculum. They were in the age range of 21 to 29 (mean =25). The majority of them were male (70%) and the rest were female (30%). Out of these two groups, 20 willing student teachers and 5 teacher educators participated in semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Instruments

Both questionnaire and semi-structured interview were utilized to explore the participants' views concerning the ETEC for student teachers' preparation. The questionnaire was adapted form Williams-Pettway's (2005) Survey of Teacher Education Programs (STEP). For semi-structured interviews, the interview protocol was developed.

To adapt the questionnaire, the researchers removed demographic information and open-ended questions from the original survey. Also, item 36 was removed because it was not appropriate to Iranian context. The finalized questionnaire contained 38 four-point Likert items in five scales: a) knowledge, skills, and dispositions, b) field experiences and student teaching internship, c) diversity, d) technology and e) quality of instruction. For the five scales, the four-point Likert scale of 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree' was used.

For the validity, it must be mentioned that the components of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE 2002) laid the foundation for the development of the original questionnaire and a panel of NCATE Standard Chairs examined the content validity. Furthermore, the questionnaire was given to ten EFL teacher educators to express their expert opinion. They found the content appropriate. For the reliability, a pilot study was conducted with respondents (N = 45) who were similar in characteristics to participants. The Cronbach's alpha obtained from the pilot study showed a high reliability index of .87 for the whole questionnaire.

The semi-structured interview, the second data collection tool, was used to obtain in-depth data from the participants. The researchers developed a semi-structured interview protocol. Five EFL teacher educators judged its content coverage and relevance. The content of the interview targeted the

linguistic and pedagogical aspects, teaching-learning practices and professional competencies of the current curriculum and the strengths and weaknesses of it. Twenty student teachers and five teacher educators voluntarily participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews, taking approximately 30 minutes each, were recorded, transcribed, and content analyzed.

3.3. Procedure

To collect the data, the researchers administered the questionnaires to the participants and conducted the follow-up semi-structured interviews with twenty student teachers and five teacher educators during three months. The data were collected in two main phases. First, the quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Second, the qualitative data were collected and analyzed.

To analyze the quantitative data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. To analyze the interview data, the qualitative patterns were employed. The data obtained from the questionnaire were coded and fed into SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics such as Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to obtain the results.

After analyzing quantitative data, the data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed and coded. The analysis of interview data followed the three steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The first step was the reduction of the huge amount of data by cutting it into smaller chunks and labeling to assign the meaning units to the data. Next, the categories and themes were created and combined. Finally, the detailed description and insightful views about the participants in relation to teacher education program were given.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

In this section, the data for the responses to the closed-ended items in five scales are shown.

4.1.1. Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

The first scale contains ten items that asked the participants to mark their perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) items. The items measure the participants' ability in demonstration of content, pedagogical and professional knowledge needed for effective teaching.

The data for the responses to these items are reported in Tables 1 and 2. The respondents rated the highest level of agreement with item 6 regarding

"Good knowledge of various teaching strategies." Among the participants, 17.5% strongly agreed that curriculum provides student teachers with " Good foundation in subject area." This item stands second in high agreement rate. The highest mean scores are for these two items. Among the items, item 5 " Stimulated critical thinking/problem solving" attracted the lowest agreement level with the mean score of 2.08. 77.3% of the participants disagreed that the curriculum stimulates critical thinking. A closer look at the data and the high level of agreements with the items in this scale reveal that the participants are generally satisfied with ETEC in providing knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Table 1

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions (KSD)

Items	Distribution of Responses			
	SD	D	A	SA
1. The teacher education program provides student teachers with good foundation in subject area.	0.0	3.1	79.4	17.5
2. The teacher education program provides student teachers with good background knowledge outside the subject area.	0.0	14.4	73.2	12.4
3. The teacher education program provides student teachers with substantial professional education knowledge.	0.0	8.2	87.6	4.1
4. The teacher education program provides student teachers with understanding of readiness level/learning styles.	0.0	9.3	90.7	0.0
5. The teacher education program stimulates critical thinking/problem solving.	0.0	77.3	22.7	0.0
6. The teacher education program provides student teachers with good knowledge of various teaching strategies	0.0	5.2	69.1	25.8
7. The teacher education program prepares student teachers to select, construct and use appropriate assessment tools.	0.0	22.7	52.6	24.7
8. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to participate in professional org. .	0.0	30.9	62.9	6.2
9. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to model and assess dispositions.	0.0	48.5	41.2	10.3
9. The teacher education program equips student teachers to assess the effectiveness of their own teaching.	0.0	9.3	83.5	7.2

Table 2

Mean Scores for Part I

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mean	3.15	2.93	3.03	2.95	2.08	3.25	3.10	2.73	2.83	2.98
SD	0.220	0.526	0.423	0.221	0.267	0.588	0.709	0.599	0.813	0.480

4.1.2. Field Experiences and the Student Teaching Internship

This scale comprises ten items. These items asked student teachers and teacher educators how they perceived the field experiences and clinical practices as they are presented in the curriculum. The data for this scale are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

Items	Distribution of Responses			
	SD	D	A	SA
11. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice provide them opportunities to apply KSDs in various settings.	0.0	73.2	26.8	0.0
12. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice help student teachers develop necessary competencies for teaching.	0.0	24.7	58.8	16.5
13. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice provide various school-based opportunities to observe, instruct and research.	0.0	27.8	59.8	12.4
14. The teacher education program provides opportunities to use technology to support teaching and learning.	0.0	24.7	75.3	0.0
15. Student teachers' clinical practice placement is in a supportive school environment.	0.0	74.2	25.8	0.0
16. Student teachers' cooperative teachers are instrumental in career development.	0.0	23.7	59.8	16.5
17. Student teachers' cooperative teachers model best practices.	0.0	25.8	70.1	4.1
18. Student teachers' university supervisors outline clear objectives for improving their teaching.	0.0	18.6	68.0	13.4
19. Student teachers' university supervisors have realistic expectations of then as student interns.	0.0	7.8	58.8	13.4
20. The clinical faculty and university supervisor collaborate with student teachers to assess their teaching methodologies during clinical practice.	0.0	9.5	34.0	16.5

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Table 4

Mean Scores for Part II

Variables	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Mean	2.35	2.95	2.93	2.83	2.23	3.05	2.88	3.10	3.05	2.83
SD	0.483	0.639	0.572	0.385	0.423	0.552	0.563	0.545	0.597	0.712

The mean score for item 18 " Clear objectives for improvement from university supervisor" is the highest and shows the highest agreement level. About 16.5% of the participants strongly agreed that "Cooperative teacher and collaboration with faculty/supervisor were instrumental in the student teachers' career development" (items 16 and 20). This is reflected in the high mean scores of 3.05 and 2.83. Over 16% of the respondents strongly agreed with "Developed necessary competencies for teaching." The lowest mean scores were for items 15 and 16 (*M*=2.23, 2.35) and when the participants were asked if the "Teachers' clinical practice was in a supportive school environment" and there was the " Opportunity to apply KSDs in various settings", they rated the least agreeable responses. Relatively, the participants had positive perceptions about the items in the second scale except for items 11 and 15 that attracted the highest levels of disagreement.

4.1.3. Diversity

The third scale consisted of eight items relevant to teachers' ability to work in different contexts with different learners. The highest-rated response in this scale was on item 22. The high mean score (*M*= 3.28) indicates a high level of satisfaction with "Acquiring the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for diverse students."

The lowest rated response was on item 26. This item asked the participants to mark their perceptions of "Understanding exceptionalities/identify indicators/meet needs." Compared with mean scores of other items and highly rated agreements, the lower mean score (*M*=2.65) of this item reveals the least agreement level. Only 4.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that the curriculum prepares student teachers to understand exceptionalities and identify indicators. The higher mean scores in this scale suggest that the participants report more favorable responses than those in the two previous scales.

4.1.4. Technology

The fourth scale consisted of five items focusing on the use of technology resources for instructional purposes. The highest mean score (*M*=2.95) in this scale was on the item that asked the participants to mark their perceptions of the program effectiveness in "Using technology to

support lesson plan development." The respondents strongly agreed with this item at a rate of 16.5%.

Table 5

Diversity

Items	Distribution of Responses			
	SD	D	A	SA
21. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand school culture.	0.0	12.4	87.6	0.0
22. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to develop meaningful learning experiences for diverse students.	0.0	13.4	60.8	25.8
23. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand classroom environment.	0.0	9.3	74.2	16.5
24. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to work with students from diverse backgrounds.	0.0	14.4	57.7	27.8
25. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to communicate with parents from diverse backgrounds.	0.0	17.5	76.3	6.2
26. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand exceptionalities, identify indicators, and meet needs.	0.0	53.6	42.3	4.1
27. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand the impact of public education on learning.	0.0 0.0	37 20.6	41 62.9	22 16.5
28. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand gender differences in teaching and learning.	0.0	28.3	48.6	23.1

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Table 6

Mean Scores for Part III

Variables	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Mean	2.83	3.28	3.13	3.18	2.95	2.65	3.9	3.03
SD	0.385	0.554	0.463	0.636	0.389	0.662	0.611	0.577

Table 7

Technology

Items	Distribution of Responses			
	SD	D	A	SA
29. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to develop strategies to identify and evaluate technology resources.	0.0	16.5	83.5	0.0
30. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to manage instruction using technology resources.	0.0	30.9	69.1	0.0
31. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to locate and use online resources.	0.0	9.3	85.6	5.2
32. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to use technology to support lesson plan development.	0.0	32.0	51.5	16.5
33. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to use appropriate technology in their instructional methodologies.	0.0	38.1	54.6	7.2

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Table 8

Mean Scores for Part IV

Variables	30	31	32	33	34
Mean	2.90	2.73	2.93	2.95	2.60
SD	0.304	0.452	0.417	0.639	0.632

The lowest rating was on items 33. The participants were asked to respond to this item: "Use appropriate technology in instructional methodology." In response to this item, they rated the highest level of disagreement. The lowest mean score was for this item ($M= 2.60$), with a standard deviation of .632. This item attracted the least rate of agreement. The mean scores of the responses on this scale are lower than the three previous scales. The lower ratings in this scale might imply that technology has not found its right place in teacher education programs and much more attention must be given to the integration of it into these programs. Nowadays, technological skills seem to be an essential part of teachers' knowledge and profession.

4.1.5. Quality of Instruction

The last scale comprised five items that focused on measuring the extent to which participants agreed with several university supervisor activities in the curriculum regarding their academic as well as personal qualities including material use, teaching, enthusiasm, respect, and communication skills. The participants marked their highest-rated responses on items 36 and 37. These items were related to the university professors' respect for student opinions and enthusiasm in the presentation of content. The mean scores were 3.10 and 92.8% and 84.5%. of the participants rated their agreements with these items.

The item with the lowest agreement rate and mean score ($M=2.85$) was the university professors' modeling of good teaching and helping students use multiple learning strategies. It is suggested that the modelling of various teaching strategies from which all students can benefit might be considered one of the aspects of the curriculum that has the potential for improvement. Tables 9 and 10 present the data of this scale.

4.1.6. Comparative Analysis of Student Teachers and Teacher Educators' Perceptions

In previous sections, it was attempted to elicit the whole sample's responses on the five scales in the curriculum. This section was designed to

explore differences in perceptions in two groups of participants. In order to identify whether the parametric or nonparametric tests should be used, the normal distribution of the data was examined by running the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The p values ($p>.05$) showed that the data were normally distributed. Since the assumption of the normal distribution was satisfied and there were two groups with five dependent variables, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted.

Table 9

Quality of Instruction

Items	Distribution of Responses			
	SD	D	A	SA
34. Professors in teacher education program use appropriate instructional materials.	0.0	18.6	76.3	5.2
35. Professors in teacher education program model good teaching and help student teachers develop multiple teaching strategies.	0.0	34.0	55.7	10.3
36. Professors in teacher education program show enthusiasm in presentation of content.	0.0	15.5	70.1	14.4
37. Professors in teacher education program show respect for student opinions.	0.0	7.2	85.6	7.2
36. Professors in teacher education program model good oral and written communication skills.	0.0	28.9	58.8	12.4

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Table 10

Mean Scores for Part V

Variables	35	36	37	38	39
Mean	2.88	2.85	3.10	3.10	2.93
SD	0.463	0.662	0.632	0.496	0.572

Table 11 summarizes the results of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance for two groups of the participants. The data show that no statistically significant difference was observed [Wilks' lambda = .894, F = 2.55, p = .066].

Table 11

Group Effect on Outcomes Scores

Wilks' Lambda	F-value	DF1	DF2	P	Partial Eta Squared
0.894	2.154	5	91	0.066	0.106

4.1.7 Student Teachers and Teacher Educators' Interviews

Twenty student teachers and five teacher educators voluntarily participated in semi-structured interviews. After transcribing the interviews

and conducting content analysis, the following general themes emerged: English language learners (ELL); flexibility in using different teaching approaches for different situations; theory versus practice and quality of teaching practicum; integration of technology across the program; and content and language knowledge.

Regarding the English language learners, only a few of the student-teacher interviewees believed that their teacher education is somewhat providing them with adequate training in ELL issues they will encounter in their future classrooms. Some had no idea and some said that the curriculum does not prepare them for working with ELLs and they receive little instruction in how to teach English language learners. There was a low level of satisfaction. One of the student teachers said:

> The curriculum lacks classes that deal specifically with ELL issues and this will result in challenging situations for teachers in their future job. Student teachers receive a limited amount of exposure to ELL issues and do not learn how to work with ELLs and meet their needs. In other words, they lack sufficient pedagogic practices with ELLs when they complete their education.

With respect to the promotion of trainees' flexibility in using different teaching approaches for different situations, the teacher educators pointed to courses which deal with different language teaching approaches in ELT and said that in those courses the students learn various approaches to ELT and are given different projects, assignments, and micro-teachings to put the learned knowledge into practice. In general, most of the interviewees expressed their satisfaction with flexibility in using different teaching approaches for different situations. One teacher educator said:

> In my view, there is a great deal degree of flexibility with most courses in which different teaching approaches are used. The basis for effective teaching lies in using a variety of teaching strategies and methods and the instructors are aware of it and make great strides to apply and present them in teaching different courses. Being aware of the fact that effective teaching is contextual, the student teachers learn the teaching approaches for adult learners, young learners, learners with different needs, specific purposes and so on. My opinion is that the curriculum provides sufficient and useful information on theories and knowledge for the students in their profession.

Concerning theory versus practice and the quality of teaching practicum, most of the interviewees perceived the newly incorporated teaching practicum courses into the curriculum helpful in that they enable the student teachers to put what they have learned during their courses into practice and experience the real world of school. Most of the teacher educators mentioned that the curriculum balances the received knowledge

and experiential knowledge. Some student teachers thought that it partly balances theory and practice. One teacher educator explained:

> The program attempts to balance theory and practice. First, we give the students theoretical knowledge in related courses, and then lay the foundation for them to put this theoretical knowledge into practice in micro teachings, in some projects like making lesson plans and class management and in teaching practice courses. But this balance may not be an ideal one. Some students complain about the inadequate amount of teaching practice.

In his view of the quality of teaching practicum, one student teacher stated:

> Practical teaching courses are highly valued in the curriculum and when the student teachers go through them, they prepare themselves for a teaching career and take the most crucial step toward it. During the teaching practice in school, they get experience in how to face misbehaved students, manage the classroom, design learning activities, ask questions, and give feedback to the students. Also, they learn how to collaborate with colleagues.

For the integration and use of technology, while many student teachers expressed their satisfaction with the newly incorporated technology courses and said that the current teacher education curriculum does as much as it can with the existing technology, they pointed out that the curriculum does not prepare them very well because they do not receive training in using databases for research and incorporating technology in content-related assignments. Besides, they expressed that the majority of the teacher educators do not use technology when they teach courses, they do not teach students how to use information technologies for instruction and they hardly ask the students to use technology for creating lessons or practicing teaching.

In line with considering the level of content and language knowledge required of English teachers, the majority of the interviewees agreed that the current curriculum provides the student teachers with sufficient content and language knowledge. One student teacher stated:

> There are adequate English skill subjects to prepare me to be proficient in using English. When I started my education, I couldn't speak any English. Once I went through language skill courses, I made amazing progress. Now, I feel confident to teach English to students. I can use English as a means of instruction in the classroom.

One of the teacher educators had somehow a different view. He stated that the student teachers are more proficient in speaking and reading skills, but less proficient in writing and listening:

> As talking about student teachers' English skills, I should say that they are good at speaking and reading skills. I can observe that they use English for communication in classrooms with their colleagues. As I teach speaking and

reading courses to them, I know their proficiency in those two skills. However, their proficiency in writing and listening skills is not sufficient and they need more training.

When the interviewees were asked about their overall assessment of the latest curriculum, a majority of them pointed to some drawbacks such as the inadequacy of the instructional materials and effective sources for some courses, insufficient space and time for theory-practice praxis, and the dominant old attitudes and teaching practices among some teacher educators. They believed that the lack of up-to-date textbooks for some courses is evident in the program. To some student teachers, the teaching activities in the program could not develop teachers professionally. To add more, they showed their dissatisfaction with the inadequate assessment procedures applied in the program.

Another drawback mentioned by some student teachers' interviewees was that the teaching mentors and teacher educators do not provide them with sufficient support and guidance during teaching courses and therein they are deprived of gaining satisfactory teaching practice experience. A student-teacher stated:

> Practically, teacher educators should visit regularly the school where student teachers are doing practicum to see the student teachers' progress. What I experienced was not satisfactory. My teacher educator visited me twice, at the beginning and the end of the teaching practicum. I could not see him so much and his role and visit during my teaching practicum were not adequate. To be honest, the role of supervising teacher was more than a teacher educator during my teaching practicum and I went to him for the solutions to my teaching problems.

4.2. Discussion

This study was an endeavor to explore the perceptions of the EFL student teachers and teacher educators of the effectiveness of the five essential scales (knowledge, field experience, diversity, technology, and quality of instruction) in the newly revised English pre-service teacher education curriculum.

In response to the research question one, the overall quantitative findings revealed that the participants expressed a relatively high level of satisfaction with the five scales in the new curriculum although there were some lower ratings of some items in some scales. They marked their positive perception and satisfaction by showing their agreements with most of the items and providing positive ratings. In other words, the higher percentages were in 'agreement' category in most items. Except for a few items, the mean scores ($M=3$) showed the participants' high agreement with the items in the scales. Based on the high level of satisfaction in the results, it could be

deduced that the revisions in the curriculum seem to produce good results in the direction of providing the student teachers with adequate training and preparation on teaching profession. This supports the Bandura's (1977) view that experiences with well-designed teacher education programs result in high levels of satisfaction that can lead to higher levels of effectiveness and preparation in teaching.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the items in the field experience and student internship received the highest level of disagreement. The descriptive results (see Table 3) indicate a higher percentage of the participants' disagreement with the items in this scale. The highest level of disagreement with items 11 and 15 indicate that most of the participants believe that there is little opportunity to apply what they have learned in various teaching contexts and the schools are not so supportive during teaching practicum courses. These results show the crucial role of the field experience in all its aspects and reminds the policy makers of the fact that the student teachers should be given more opportunity to develop practical competencies in field experiences and there must be more collaboration and articulation between universities and schools so that more supportive environment with enhanced learning opportunities is provided for teaching practice courses. This corroborates Darling-Hammond's (2013) view that high-quality teacher education with extensive clinical experience and coursework is a prerequisite for improvement in teaching and learning.

In contrast, the analysis of the data revealed that the highest ratings were for items in knowledge, skills, and dispositions. A dominant majority of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the items in this scale. The participants' positive ratings of the items indicate that the new curriculum provides the opportunity for the student teachers to demonstrate content, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills in teaching English to their students. This finding is similar to the findings by Akar's (2009) who found that the teacher training colleges were successful in preparing teachers and they used them basically to learn English. As it was found among the five scales, the lowest mean scores belonged to the technology items and the respondents felt less positive about the new teacher preparation curriculum for using technology. This might imply that the new curriculum has proved less successful in developing the teachers' technological knowledge and this area of the curriculum requires more focus. It seems that it is important for those responsible for the content of teacher education programs to give more attention to it so that the teachers can develop the knowledge and skills of technology for professional purposes. It is essential that technology should be an inseparable part of all sides of the pre-service teachers' curriculum to satisfy the teachers' needs, preferences and the requirements of the challenging digital societies (Altun, 2007; Smith & Kelley, 2007). As the

results of the questionnaire indicated, the participants had positive ratings of the quality of instruction. The respondents' positive perceptions suggest that the teacher educators model good professional teaching and practices and assist the student teachers to develop multiple teaching strategies to provide effective learning for all students.

The overall quantitative findings of the study parallel the findings of the studies by Smith and Hodsons (2010) and Soleimani and Zanganeh (2014). The findings of the first study revealed that both theoretical and practical components of the program were relevant. The trainees pointed to the positive effect and usefulness of learned theory at the university on their teaching practice. They, also, referred to the advantages of learning from experience such as observing colleagues' teaching, raising questions about others' practice, teaching independently and getting to know the class and the students' reactions to the trainees' teaching. The findings of the second study indicated that pre-service English teacher training programs in Iran train well-equipped and practically disposed teachers. These findings are not so compatible with Masoumpanah, Tahririan, Alibabaee and Afzali (2017) who found that the TEFL program did not address some educational and administrative needs as the participants believed that they were not enriched with the necessary skills, the practice of the learned theories, problem-solving, critical thinking, flexibility, and innovation.

The qualitative data revealed somehow mixed results. On the one hand, almost all the interviewees expressed their relatively overall satisfaction with the new curriculum by saying that it is enriched with more specialized, technical and practical courses in pedagogy and language teaching skills and provides the student teachers with necessary language knowledge and proficiency to confidently teach English to students compared to the preceding teacher education programs. These findings somehow align with the findings by Agudo (2017) who carried out a study in the Spanish context and found that the TEFL program was strong in developing pedagogic competence and promoted reflection. Also, the findings of this study are compatible with the findings by Brown, Lee, and Collins (2015) who found that the pre-service teachers' perceptions of preparedness increased significantly during teaching practices.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees pointed to some negative features in the new curriculum. They argued that the inadequacy of instructional materials and effective sources for some courses, the dominant old attitudes and teaching practices among some teacher educators, and insufficient space and time for practical courses could lead to the failure of the new curriculum to fully prepare the student teachers for real various educational contexts. Some of the interviewees stated that the student

teachers should be exposed more to real teaching at schools, proper attention should be given to their practical knowledge, more instruction should be provided in how to teach diverse language learners, and the teacher educators should use technology for teaching courses and ask their students to use technology for doing performance and other tasks. Considering the role of the teacher educators, some student teachers highlighted the lack of support, guidance and constructive feedback from some teacher educators during teaching practices and pointed out that this could result in inadequate abilities for the real experience of working at schools. These findings resonate with the findings by Demir (2017) and Özdaş (2018) studies. The results of the first study indicated that the program was not successful in meeting the student teachers' needs, failed to give adequate training in English, and needed updating and addressing more practical teaching components. The results of the second study revealed the teachers' inability to manage the classroom, lack of materials, and the school administrators' negative attitudes and behaviors.

In line with the second research question, which was to report the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the five scales in the curriculum, the findings demonstrated that the student teachers and teacher educators were not different in their ratings of the scales as a whole. The p values showed that there were no statistically significant differences $(p > .05)$. The high overall mean scores revealed the participants' positive perceptions of the five scales in the new curriculum. This finding could reflect the fact that the knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession, the instructional practices through which these are conveyed to student teachers, and how these knowledge and skills are used in the field seem to be working efficiently in the program.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Keeping in mind that the critical examination of teacher education programs could lead to promoting the quality of education, this study explored the extent to which the newly revised teacher education curriculum in Farhangian University provides the student teachers with the professional preparation and competencies required of them as effective teachers through the eyes of student teachers and teacher educators and shed light on those aspects of it that need to be improved or the elements that require more revision. In general, the curriculum was evaluated positively by the participants in five scales of professional preparation. They rated their agreement with most items and showed their overall satisfaction with the curriculum and believed that it contains effective components to equip the student teachers with linguistic, pedagogic and professional competencies. This was reflected in the high mean scores given by the participants.

At the same time, some interviewees pointed to the inadequacy of the instructional materials and effective sources for some courses, dominant old attitudes and teaching practices among some teacher educators, and insufficient space and time for theory-practice praxis. They emphasized on the need for the program to present more courses on dealing with diverse language learners, effective integration of technology across the program, and the provision of more teaching practices and longer field experiences with more supportive supervising teachers, teacher educators and schools.

The findings from the study provide some helpful suggestions for promoting the EFL teacher education programs and help teacher trainers, syllabus designers and policy makers at universities develop teacher education programs in line with the student teachers' needs and diverse teaching practices and contexts. Understanding of the student teachers' perceptions of becoming a well-qualified teacher can provide the possibility to monitor current EFL teacher education programs to investigate how student teachers adopt professional knowledge about teaching and the extent to which a teacher education program professionally develops the EFL student teachers. Studies such as the current one, provide the foundation for comparing the student teachers' perspectives with the perspectives of the other stakeholders and experts in the field and this will provide the opportunity for the examination of the success of teacher education programs in achieving their objectives and the identification of the shortcomings of such programs in professional preparation of the student teachers. (Freeman, 1996). As a result, the EFL students   should be provided with more opportunity to experience and reflect on their professional learning throughout their initial professional learning process (Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2010). In fact, changes in behavior, even in the planning and application stages, will motivate them to maintain such changes (Girvan, Conneely, & Tangney, 2016).

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Appendix A

Survey of Teacher Education Programs (Adapted from Pettway,2005)

This questionnaire is designed to examine the newly revised teacher education program at Farhangian University in terms of five scales. It contains 38 closed- ended items in four-point Likert scale. Mark your perception of the items in each scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. I express my deepest thanks for taking part in this survey.

Part I: Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions:
"Dispositions- The values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues and communities and affect student learning, motivation and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. (NCATE 2002)
1. The teacher education program provides student teachers with a good foundation in subject area.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d. Strongly agree
2. The teacher education program provides student teachers with a good background of general knowledge outside my subject area.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
3. The teacher education program provides student teachers with substantial knowledge related to professional education.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
4. The teacher education program prepares student teachers to understand student levels of readiness and different learning styles.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
5. The teacher education program stimulates critical thinking and problem solving.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
6. The teacher education program provides student teachers with substantial knowledge of using various teaching strategies to adjust lessons.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
7. The teacher education program prepares student teachers to select, construct and use a variety of appropriate assessment techniques.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
8. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to participate in professional organizations.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
9. The teacher education program provides student teachers' opportunities to model dispositions expected of educators, and prepares them to recognize when their dispositions may need to be adjusted.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
10. The teacher education program equips student teachers to assess the effectiveness of their own teaching.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
Part II: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice
11. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice provide them opportunities to apply knowledge, skills and dispositions in various settings appropriate to content and grade level.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
12. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice help them develop competencies necessary for a career in teaching.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree
13. Student teachers' field experiences and clinical practice provide a variety of school-based opportunities in which they observe, tutor, instruct, or conduct action research.
a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

14. The teacher education program provides opportunities to use technology to support student teachers' teaching and learning.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

15. Student teachers' clinical practice placement is in a supportive school environment.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

16. Student teachers' cooperating teachers are instrumental in developing their career as a teacher.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

17. Student teachers' cooperating teachers model best practices.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

18. Student teachers' university supervisors outline clear objectives for improving their teaching.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

19. Student teachers' university supervisors have realistic expectations of them as student interns.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

20. The clinical faculty and university supervisor collaborate with student teachers to assess their teaching methodologies during clinical practice.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

Part III: Diversity

21. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand school culture.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

22. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to acquire the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for diverse students.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

23. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand the classroom environment.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

24. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to work with students from diverse backgrounds.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

25. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to communicate with parents from diverse backgrounds.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

26. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand the areas of exceptionalities in learning and ability to identify specific indicators to meet students' needs.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

27. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand the impact of inclusion on learning.

28. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to understand gender differences in teaching and learning.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

Part IV: Technology

29. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to develop strategies to identify and evaluate technology resources.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

30. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to manage instruction using technology resources.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

31. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to locate and use online resources.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

32. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to use technology to support the development of lesson plans.

a. Strongly disagree　　　b. Disagree　　　c. Agree　　　d.Strongly agree

33. The teacher education program provides student teachers opportunities to use appropriate technology skills in their instructional methodologies.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

Part V: Quality of Instruction

34. Professors in teacher education program use appropriate instructional materials.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

35. Professors in teacher education program model good teaching and help student teachers to develop multiple teaching strategies to help all students learn.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

36. Professors in teacher education program show enthusiasm in their presentation of course content.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

37. Professors in teacher education program show respect for students' options.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

38. Professors in teacher education program model good oral and written communication skills.

a. Strongly disagree   b. Disagree   c. Agree   d.Strongly agree

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How do you feel that the current curriculum improves student teachers' ability to meet the individual learning needs of English language learners?

2. How do you feel that the current curriculum improves student teachers' ability to utilize technology in the classroom as a tool to meet their students' individual learning needs?

3. Do you feel that the field experience and teaching courses influence the student teachers' development as EFL teachers?

4. How well does the current curriculum prepare the student teachers to teach subject matter concepts, knowledge, and skills in ways that enable students to learn?

5. How well does the current curriculum prepare the student teachers to be effective EFL teachers as far as teaching competencies are concerned?

6. What is your overall evaluation of the latest curriculum?

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