

Teacher Education in Iran: System, Review and Criticism

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Abstract

This paper aims to shed light on the system of education in Iran regarding variety of fields and time. Also it emphasizes on the education system in this country for EFL program, As there are three main branches of English in Iran, art, teaching, and translation. And teacher education in Iran can be seen in different types, such as National Educational Program, Five-year Developmental Program, and National Document of Educational Development, This paper discusses the education system in Iran, teacher education in this country, and the review part of those studies conducted in this field in Iran, with the relevant critical points on the system.

Key words: Educational system; Teacher education; EFL; Iran

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INTRODUCTION

Iran is an Islamic republic also known as Persia, a Western Asian country, 47 times the size of the Netherlands with about 80 million populations. Its capital is Tehran. There is a varied mix of ethnic groups in Iran's population. It was a constitutional monarchy until Islamic Revolution in 1979. Hassan Rouhani has been president of Iran since 2013. While, the president answers to the Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei, The system

of education in Iran is classified into different levels: preschool, elementary, lower secondary, higher secondary and higher education. Higher education is provided by 80 public universities (30 of which are medical ones), and by 25 private institutions.

Two ministries are responsible of education in Iran. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for secondary and basic education and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) is responsible for all tertiary education. In addition, the Higher Council of Planning, consisting of fifteen professors and chaired by minister of Higher Education, is responsible for academic outcomes and programs. Generally, education is provided in Farsi (Persian Language). Whereas many establishments and centers offer English as EFL program in numbers of subjects. The education year in Iran is divided into two semesters and runs from September to June.

SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN IRAN

Since 19th century, system of education in Iran has been modeled on French. First governmental polytechnic school was established in 1851. After constitutional revolution in 1906, Ministry of Education MOE is founded in 1910 and Tehran University was established in 1934. Both ministries Higher Education and Education, publish text books, design and make tests, and the system of education is uniform through the all of the county. Konkur (University Entrance Examination) is crucially significant to enter universities in Iran. Students in school (from grades 1 to 12) are required to wear uniform. Schools in Iran are separate schools for boys and girls, and about 75% of the people are literate. More than 50% of the population is under 25 years old. Entrance to post-secondary education is very competitive in Iran. Students of Iran go to school from Saturday to Thursday either morning or evening times, and schools operate for

200 days. They are closed on Fridays and religious and national holidays. Both English and Arabic as foreign

languages are taught in public schools and International or private schools teach French and German.

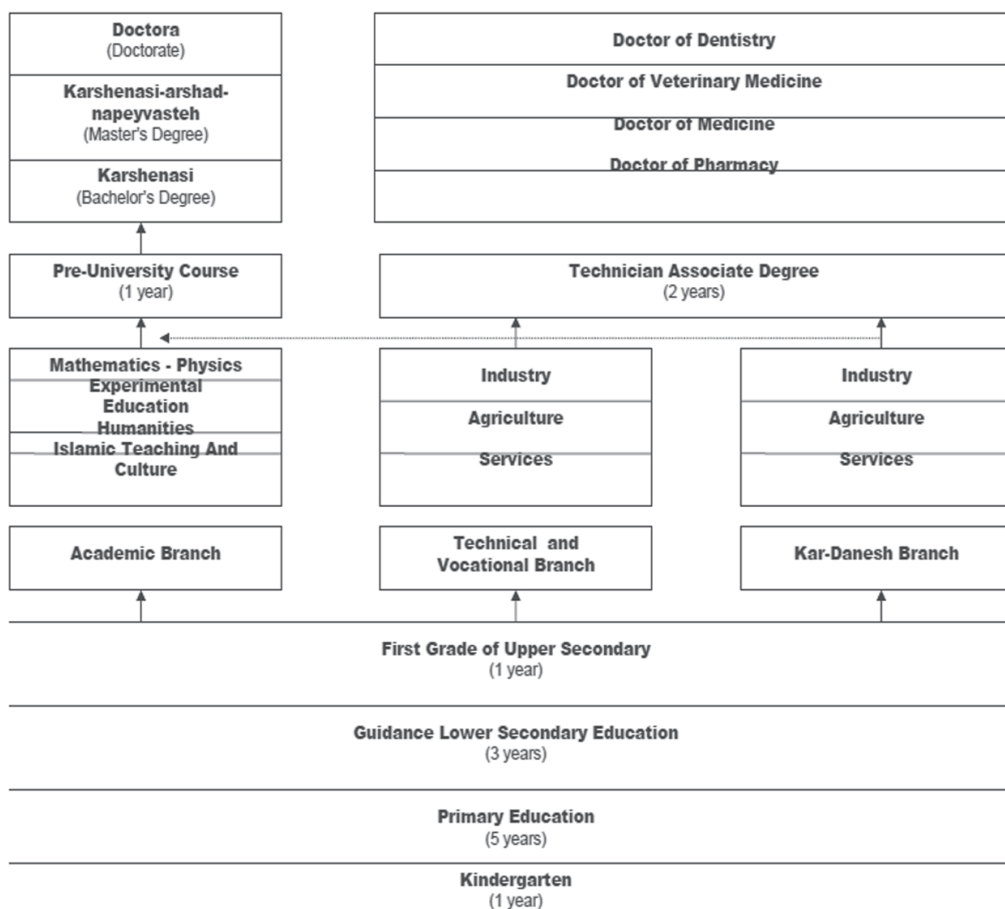


Figure 1
Education Ladder in Iran, from the Study of Kamyab (2008)

Grading System in Iran

As below table illustrates the grading system in Iran is in four levels, pass is from 10 to 20, A and B are higher grades.

Table 1
Grading System in Education in Iran

Grade	From	To
A	17	20
B	14	16.9
C	12	13.9
D	10	11.9
Fail	1	9.9

TEACHER EDUCATION IN IRAN

Moghaddas and Zakeri (2012) outline that “teacher education in Iran can be seen in three programs: National Educational Program, Five-year Developmental Program, and National Document of Educational Development.”

National Educational Program

Teachers are expected:

- To be the sample of morality, spirituality, and science

- To have the responsibility of a guide who leads the learners to learning sources
- To make grounds for learners’ rational, faithful, scientific, practical, and moral growth
- To be an educational and training programmer
- To organize and monitor learning activities
- To be an educational and training researcher
- To act as the engineer and manager of the class and learning environment
- To be the creator/provider of learning motivation among learners
- To teach based on facilities and limitations originating from the learners’ characteristics, the nature of lessons, space, time, etc. and to use various methods and active teaching strategies.

According to my points of view regarding criticism towards this program or model, we can say that there is no official statistics showing how much these courses have been successful to motivate teachers’ proficiency. But what can be inferred from observing classroom practices is that unfortunately many of Iranian EFL teachers suffer from lack of enough proficiency to handle their

own duties perfectly. And still most of EFL teacher in Iran believe that Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is appropriate method and many of English classes are conducted in Farsi (Persian Language).

FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM

The Fifth Bill of right, no. 34 says that the government of Iran must provide and run the comprehensive fundamental and training change, in the first year of the programs, to create a fundamental evolution in the educational system and harmonization of education with the purpose of promotion in knowledge, skill, and training as well as improvement of physical and mental health among students. With the goal of both quantitative and qualitative development and identical to the required software movement, the government also has the duty of taking actions in educating teachers who are expert, undertaking, science-oriented, and creative. (Moghaddas & Zakeri, 2012)

Critically, I noted that in such models, teacher education programs have been successful theoretically in enhancing student teachers' theoretical knowledge; that is, they know about, history of language teaching, various methodologies and their principles. However, the problem arises when as this knowledge is going to be practiced in classes. Meanwhile there is little, if any, opportunity for student-teachers even novice teachers to practice what they have been told in contents. Therefore, they do not know the potential of each methodology and come across a reality shock as they enter the real world of teaching.

NATIONAL DOCUMENT OF EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

In the national document, one sees that the government has the following duties:

- Running the long-term educational periods for teachers to BA level in Teacher Training Centers Identifying and systematizing the manner during which shortages of Ministry of Education, in human resources, should be removed.
- Identifying and systematizing the way in which shortages of Ministry of Education, in human resources, must be removed.
- Allocating 25% of educational capacities in governmental universities for teachers to continue education
- Providing requisite grounds for teachers' welfare with emphasis on removing problems such as housing and treatment.

Critically, it can be seen that, practical courses are so scarce that little opportunity is provided for novice teachers to practice the real exposure of the classroom. Furthermore, usually they do not enjoy the feedback of experienced teachers with respect to their teaching.

Also, the process of their socialization into the teaching world usually is accompanied by no support from academic communities. Because of this I emphasize that the teaching profession in Iran is a matter of (*sink or swim*).

Avanaki and Sadeghi (2014) highlighted that there are two separate centers for teacher education: "teacher training universities, colleges" and "higher institutions for teachers to teach at schools". These institutions educate teachers in three echelons for:

- i. Elementary level, in which pupils start at age seven as first year school student and study for five years.
- ii. Second level is guidance, which is a three-year course, followed after succeeding the elementary years.
- iii. Level three is high school or secondary education, which is four years (pre-university included).

Currently, there are 20 universities, training colleges, and training institutions located in all big cities and some small ones as well. The certifications of those establishments either Higher Diploma (H & D) or BA/B.Sc. The normal H & D course is two years with some 36 units or 12 courses and BA/B.Sc. four years with about 140 units. Each course normally is 3 and some 2 units (credits). Also, there is only one university, the University of Tarbiat Modarres (Daneshgah Tarbiat Modarres, DTM) for university teacher-training.

The graduates from this university are awarded MA/M.Sc. or Ph.D. All training universities, colleges and other institutions are public and there are no private institutions for this purpose. The students studying in training centers do not have to pay tuition or any other fees, but sign agreements to work as teachers wherever needed after their graduation. The students are also paid an allowance or given loans to help their personal needs during the study. An MA/M.Sc. normally takes three to four years and Ph.D. between three to seven years in DTM.

REVIEW ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN IRAN

There are lots of authors who have done different studies in different fields in Iran, but on Teacher Education in this country, with all of those article and theoretical papers, only numbers of studies can be seen in this field.

Abednia (2012) conducted a study on teacher's professional identity in Iran, the study had twenty four (24) male and female participants, it is a report on contributions of a critical EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher education course to Iranian teachers' professional identity reconstruction. Pre-course and post-course interviews with seven teachers, their reflective journals, class discussions, and the teacher educator's reflective journals were analyzed as guided by grounded theory. And three major shifts were observed in their professional identities: from conformity to and romanticization of dominant

ideologies to critical autonomy, from no orientation or an instrumentalist orientation to a critical/transformational orientation of teaching, and from a linguistic and technical view to an educational view of second language education. Azam, et al. (2014) conducted a comparative study, the main objective of this study is to shed some lights on teacher training education programme in the context of three Muslim countries Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan after reviewing some relevant erstwhile studies. The findings reveal that all countries under the study are under resourced. In the light of findings of this study, it is suggested that the policy makers of all three countries should plan appropriate and right policy in order to promote education. It is further advised that adequate teacher training must be arranged to prepare skilled and proficient teacher which will consequently improve student performances. Sound policies will not only help to achieve the Millennium Development Goal but will certainly play decisive role in the enhanced level of socio and economic conditions of these countries. Shishavan (2010) examined the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' and learners' gender and their perceptions of an effective English Language teacher. In this study English language teachers and learners engaged in teaching and learning of English in Iranian universities, high schools and private language institutes were asked about characteristics of an effective English language teacher. The aim of the study was to investigate whether male and female teachers and learners of English hold different views on characteristics of an effective English language teacher. The results indicated significant difference between the responses of male and female participants in both teacher and learner groups on some characteristics of an effective English Language teacher. From the findings of the study it's clear that, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) with sturdy stress on form-focused and translation activities continues to be pervasively utilized in Iranian English teaching and learning context.

Avanaki and Sadeghi (2014) compared teacher education in Iran and the UK. It briefly compares teacher education in the UK system with that of Iran's and identifies the main differences, basically of policy and practice, in that teacher education has always been centralized in Iran, whereas it had once been more or less de-centralized in the UK. However, teacher education is now being centralized in the UK, despite all the disagreements and dissatisfaction amongst the educators and teacher trainers. It concluded with an intensive of comparison that will clarify the essential different issues regarding teacher education in the two systems which is followed by some experiential suggestions and conclusions. Another most significant issues with teacher education in Iran is that several of its courses area unit still learned in theory therefore the observe facet of it needs longer time and allocations. But, I believe that such

studies cannot show the significant outcomes as there is no any rational point to compare education system in Iran and UK. Also Khany and Boghayeri (2014) argued that creativity has been of great interest to educationalists in general and language teaching practitioners in particular. With all these, very little if any has been reported on the issue in Iranian EFL context. Having this in mind and drawing on the latest profile of creativity, effort was made to see how creative Iranian EFL teachers are. In so doing, a total of 36 English language teachers filled a checklist designed based on EFL Teachers' Creativity Profile (EFLTCP). The outcomes indicated that the participants' perception did not match the way they performed their activities in the classroom. The main discrepancies were seen in teachers' Expertise and Management perceptions with their real practice in the classroom. Another study of this field is conducted by Mahboudil and Javdani (2012). They attempt to reveal the attitudes of the Iranian high school and university learners towards the way culture is addressed in ELT (English language teaching) in Iran. Their study complements others by following 300 university and high school learners and it provides another avenue for examining the language situation in Iran. They suggest that the current ELT in Iran is a proper, a cultural or neutral one. And the obtained results of their study indicate that all students had an overall negative attitude towards the way culture is addressed in ELT in Iran. They conclude by highlighting some key points that will help educators accommodate the modern needs of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners at the university and high school level and to replace proper approach in a beneficial manner in the future. The study was carried out in Rubbi Rashidi Higher Education College in Tabriz with 300 English Translation students (90 male and 210 female) between the ages of 19 and 24. But, it must be stressed that this article is indeed a personal reaction to some ideas in ELT in Iran.

Sabzian and Ismail (2013) examined the effectiveness of teachers' professional development (TPD) in Iran. The aim of their study is conducting a comprehensive review of this professional development system of teachers and recognizing the challenges, and inadequacies, and suggesting effective strategies for re redesigning of professional enhancement system of elementary schools. The aims of their study are to define evaluation, elaborate educational system in Iran, clarify teacher education, describe effectiveness teachers' professional development, explain teaching, state the necessity of evaluation, discuss the necessity of teachers' training and describe of ten components of Akker Model. They concluded that the examination grade shows an improvement. Various subjects have been enlarged according to the effectiveness of all shapes of professional development in education. And the speed of changes and the explosion of knowledge necessitate people to learn a fresh period of time through their life. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2012), examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' sense of

self-efficacy and their pedagogical success in language institutes), participants of the study are, the first group of participants consisted of 89 Iranian EFL teachers The second group of participants use comprised of 779 Iranian EFL learners (students of the above-mentioned teachers). They examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' sense of self –efficacy and their pedagogical success in Language Institutes. Also the subsequent data analysis and statistical calculations via correlation revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' success and their self-efficacy. Furthermore, significant correlations were found between teachers' self-efficacy, their teaching experience, and age. They concluded and implications of the research are further discussed with reference to earlier findings.

CONCLUSION, CRITICAL VIEWS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN IRAN

Shahmohammadi (2012) investigated that one of the important concerns in the field of teacher's education was efficiency of teacher's education. He suggested some recommendations that academic degree of recruited teachers and educators employed in elementary schools could be upgraded by relevant training programme. Alhossaini and Ketabi (2013) recommended that teacher training in Iran needs serious changes in terms of planning for study hours, course content, employment reconsiderations, and the degree of practicality needed for such a vocational practice of teaching. As much as it is true about all teacher training majors, EFL teacher training needs even more consideration in Iran, due to the low quality training systems available to these teachers.

Recommendations and suggestions:

The generalization or centralization ought to be balanced with localization in deciding relating to the teacher education and necessities in Persia.

It appears that presently at intervals the ministry of education, 3 additional departments are accountable of teacher education in Iran, that results in confusion in practices and duties within the method of education.

Teachers' economic issues should be resolved thus on think about improvement and development in teaching.

Lack of technology instruments in colleges is another drawback for teachers.

Still EFL teaching method in Iran is on ancient approaches, and crucial modification should be done.

Academic degree of recruited teachers and educators working in elementary schools could be promoted to B.S by training courses

Academic degree of recruited teachers and educators working in Guidance and high schools could be promoted to M.S by continuous training courses It is necessary to establish an official agency to study teachers' needs;

building of more higher education institution; recruitment of more teachers and payment of better salaries.

In selecting and admitting students for teacher training universities should be placed more on the intangible traits.

The teacher training colleges for training of the teachers in Iran should offer wider range of courses in general and professional education.

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