A Historical Overview of English Language Teacher Preparation Programs in Iranian Private Language Institutes

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article Type: **Research Article** **Received:** **26/01/2022** **Accepted:** **29/05/2022**	Given the significant role of studying history in casting light on the past and present of events and providing future insight, the present study aimed to investigate the history of English teacher preparation programs offered in five famous private language institutes established in the second post-revolutionary decade (about thirty years ago) in Iran. Precisely, the study investigated the past and present of the programs in terms of their internal aspects as well as their response to external or sociopolitical associations of English language teaching (ELT) from their establishment. Two administrators, nine TPP (teacher preparation program) designers who were also teacher instructors, and two teachers were purposefully sampled. Data was gathered through conducting semi-structured interviews, in addition to analyzing documents available on the website of the institutes and those provided by the participants. Analyzing data through phronetic iterative approach manifested the related history in terms of five constant features, including methodological directions as content, transmission approach in teacher preparation, providing teachers with external opportunities for professional development, insisting on monolingualism in ELT, and disregard for bringing the inclusion of local culture in ELT to the attention of prospective teachers, as well as three major changes comprising inclusion of teaching practice (TP), the inclusion of technology education for ELT purposes following the outbreak of The COVID-19 pandemic, and enhancement of TPP duration. Specifically, the constant features disclosed a lack of attention to the external association of ELT in designing the programs, while the major changes exhibited their internal development. Findings have implications for developing teacher preparation programs based on postmethod pedagogy. ***Keywords:*** ELT, Postmethod Pedagogy, Sociopolitical Associations of ELT

1. Introduction

Success of English language teaching (ELT), is highly affected by English teachers who develop their knowledge through attending preservice and in-service educational programs (Crandall, 2000). English language teacher education (ELTE), as stated by Richards (2008), is characterized by both internal and external issues. According to him, the internal aspect of the field is concerned with its knowledge base, content, or the conceptual foundation constructed by the efforts of applied linguists and specialists that has undergone a range of alterations. The alterations resulted, on the one hand, from investigating second language learning and second language teacher education (Crandall, 2000; Freeman, 2016; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Richards, 2008), and on the other hand, from focusing on and responding to sociopolitical associations of ELT; what Richards (2008) referred to as external aspects.

With these points in mind, English teacher preparation programs should be investigated to gain a thorough insight that could result in gaining information about status of the programs, as well as tracing their probable shortcomings which can lead to delivering more effective ones. Notwithstanding the fact that extensive research has been conducted in order to examine the issues related to these programs, reviewing the related literature discloses scarcity of comprehensive studies on multiple aspects of the programs over the years. As a response to this gap, the present inquiry attempted to provide a detailed historical analysis of teacher preparation processes practiced in a number of famous language institutes in the context of Iran, and explore internal and external issues of teacher education as addressed by Richards (2008). These institutes have been set up about 30 years ago, and, hence, have a long history in teacher preparation. No doubt, conducting comprehensive historical studies can result in conclusions regarding the past and present of events (Ary et al., 2010), and "helps us…to change things if the 'now' is unacceptable" (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 1526). More specifically, this study explored the following issue:

How have teacher preparation programs been executed in famous language institutes since they were established?

In addition to a brief review of the internal and external aspects of ELTE, the history of ELT in Iran and the relevant research findings about English teacher preparation in Iran are presented below.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internal and External Aspects of ELTE

The internal aspect of ELTE, according to Richards (2008), is concerned with its knowledgebase, content, or the conceptual foundation constructed by the efforts of applied linguists and specialists. Freeman (2016) noticed that the related knowledgebase has evolved over time and is characterized by four generations. The first generation originated from 1960s focused on disciplinary knowledge, that is, the knowledge of English language at the level of syntax, semantics, phonology, literature, pragmatics and culture (Richards, 1998). Originated from 1970s and 1980s, the second generation of knowledgebase in ELTE – impressed by Chomsky's cognitive revolution – questioned the first generation's structural view of language learning and focused on providing teachers with knowledge of pedagogy or how to follow methodological directions (Freeman, 2016). Later on, in 1980s and 1990s, discussions over sociopolitical associations of ELT referred to as external aspects by Richards (2008) drew scholars' attention (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1990; Phillipson, 1992) and, as Freeman (2016) pointed out, led to the emergence of the third generation of knowledgebase in ELTE. This generation which is characterized by postmethod pedagogy and sociocultural view of teacher education questioned the second generation's concern for methodological consistency, gave primacy to the role of context in ELT, and called for eclecticism and teacher agency; however, this generation gave rise to concerns about idiosyncrasy (variety of approaches) and exemplification (difficulty in organizing the various approaches in the field) (Freeman, 2016). Finally, the fourth generation – originated from the 2000s and 2010s – acknowledged all the preceding conceptualizations and prioritized the kind of teacher agency based on personal practical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge and aims at student learning (Freeman, 2016). In other words, the last generation which is regarded as knowledge-for-teaching by deriving on all the preceding generations tries to bring about "opportunities for… [student] learning to happen" (Freeman, 2016, p. 191).

In a broader sense, addressing sociopolitical issues associated with English effectuated ELTE (Richards, 2008) and led to the emergence of postmethod pedagogy, which is regarded as a response to the "one-size-fits-all" nature of method and theory in ELT (Block, 2004; Freeman, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006), as well as socially-situated orientation towards teaching the language. This orientation, to lessen the perils of colonial and imperialist connections of ELT, on the one hand, gives priority to using the students' first language in English acquisition and putting less emphasis on standard English as the norm, and on the other hand questions

the negative sense of English materials towards other nations' cultural traditions as well as the marginalization of nonnative English teachers (Canagarajah, 1999). Focusing on the external aspects has also resulted in the emergence of indigenization at linguistic level (Baumgardner, 1990) and localization at cultural level (Borjian, 2013) in some parts of the world, for example, Pakistan regarding the former (Mahboob, 2009) and textbooks used in Iranian public schools regarding the latter (Borjian, 2013). In addition to a concise review of the history of English in Iran which is the context of concern in the present study, some research findings about ELTE in the country are presented below.

2.2. ELT and ELTE in Iran

Arrival of English in Iran, according to Borjian (2013), traces back to Gajar Dynasty (1836-1925). The language was expanded under Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979) and has been promoted far further than before in post-revolutionary Iran (1979 to present). As the author pointed out, the language has been offered as the primary foreign language in all the universities throughout the country, has been the fixed member of public school curricula, and has been practiced and promoted by private language institutes that have been increasing in number in post-revolutionary Iran. While the book by Borjian (2013) can be considered as a valuable resource to reveal the status of the English language in Iran, the literature on the area of English teacher preparation programs lacks comprehensive studies about the past and present status of the programs in the country, that is, how they have changed over the years. Notwithstanding this neglect, the current literature on English language teacher preparation in Iran contains various empirical studies addressing the area from various perspectives and many studies have focused on teacher preparation programs offered in private language institutes. For example, the results of a study conducted by Abasifar and Fotavatnia (2015) demonstrated that teachers' perception of language learning did not alter notably after participating in the program. Another study conducted by Ganji et al. (2018) explored the programs in terms of goals and content. The findings of their inquiry manifested that the programs were based on a convenient schedule, technique instruction, and the needs of the institutions. Teaching methodologies used in the institutes were the focus of another study conducted by Razmjoo and Riazi (2006), the findings of which disclosed communicative language teaching as the major approach used by the institutes. What is missing in the available literature on English language teacher preparation in the country, however, is the comprehensive studies on the past and present status of teacher preparation programs in several major language institutes. Addressing this neglect, the present study attempted to explore the history of English teacher preparation programs in five major private language institutes in Iran.

3. Method

To accomplish the purpose of this study, qualitative research was conducted. Among different methods of conducting qualitative research, historical research that tries to gain insights into an event from its beginning to present through analyzing documents and conducting interviews with actual participants (Ary et al., 2010), was used. Considering accountability in research, this study only focused on institutes founded in the second decade after the revolutionary in Iran.

3.1. Research Sites and Participants

In this inquiry, five private English language institutes were selected based on their establishment date, that is, the second post-revolutionary decade in Iran. The institutes have many branches and language learners in Tehran, Alborz, and other parts of the country. The number of their branches and language learners have contributed to their famous and vice versa. More details about the language institutes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Details of Selected Language Institutes

Institute	Establishment date	Headquarter	Branches
Institute A	1378 (1999)	Tehran	102
Institute B	Late 1370s (early 2000s)	Tehran	3
Institute C	1375 (1996)	Alborz	6
Institute D	1379 (2000)	Alborz	11
Institute E	1379 (2000)	Tehran	2

Participants of the study including two administrators, nine teacher instructors who were also designers of the teacher preparation programs (TPP), and two teachers were purposefully sampled based on their working experience, that is, their occupation and years of working only at the institutes of concern so that they can provide us with the most relevant and needed information. Participants from institutes A, B, C, E were administrators, teacher instructors, and TPP designers, and participants from institute D were two teachers; one passed the institute's teacher preparation program when it had been just established and the other participated in the program more recently. Table 2 describes characteristics of the participants (whose names are pseudonyms) in more detail.

Table 2
Details of Participants

Participant	Institute	Degree	Occupation	Work experience at the institute
Parsa	A	MA	Administrator	11
Hasti	A	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	10
Roya	A	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	5
Fariba	A	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	13
Navid	B	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	9
Reza	B	BA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	4
Parham	C	MA	Administrator of the institute	25
Ghazal	C	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	10
Bardia	C	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	5
Bahar	D	MA	Teacher	10
Parimah	D	BA	Teacher	2
Amir	E	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	6
Shaghayegh	E	MA	TPP designer and teacher instructor	4

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Document Analysis

Document analysis involves written text (e.g., textbooks) or non-written records (e.g., websites) (Ary et al., 2010). In this study, all available relevant documents on the websites of the institutes and TPP documents provided by the participants were collected and analyzed.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interview

The present study used a semi-structured interview in which the questions are formulated in advance but the interviewer may revise them during the interview (Ary et al., 2010). Interview sessions were held individually. In this regard, first, we conducted a thorough review of literature, then we composed interview questions all related to the purpose of the research. Next, we asked an expert to read the questions to see whether they are appropriate and enough. After that, we ran a pilot interview and interviewed two TPP designers and teacher instructors to probe problematic areas related to the language of the questions which led to revising some

questions containing specialized language. Finally, the participants took part in the interview sessions individually. They were asked questions about different aspects of the TPPs.

3.3. Procedure

First of all, in an attempt to find institutes established in the second post-revolutionary decade in Iran, websites of different language institutes were explored. Though we found nine institutes that met the criteria, it was possible to gather data from five institutes because the other institutes' administrators, TPP designers, teacher instructors, and teachers were reluctant to participate in the study. Specifically, it was possible to contact two administers, nine TPP designers and teacher instructors, and two teachers working at the five institutes who were willing to participate in the study. Conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants started in April 2021 and ended in July of the same year. All the interview sessions were conducted at times that best suited the participants' schedule. The interview sessions lasted about an hour, and all the sessions were recorded and transcribed later. During the interviews, to ensure the quality of the gathered data, participants were required to provide factual information.

3.4. Data Analysis

For making sense of the raw data, the phronetic iterative approach – a reflexive process in which the researcher attempts to visit and revisit the data according to the objectives and questions of the research (Tracy, 2019) – was used. As Tracy (2019, p. 11) noted, "a phronetic iterative approach alternates between considering existing theories and research questions on the one hand, and emergent qualitative data on the other". This approach starts with organizing the data; next, the researcher engages in initial coding and tries to describe and code the data; then, the researcher attempts to categorize codes from initial phase in a process called axial coding, which includes grouping similar and related codes together under the same category and assigning a theme or a concept to each category (Tracy, 2019). Accordingly, for analyzing the data of the present study, we went through all the processes mentioned earlier and paid continual attention to existing literature to see how emerging themes relate to existing theories. To illustrate the point, in initial coding, the following excerpts were labeled as using Persian as the last resort and not using Persian, respectively; next, because of their similarity to tenets of monolingualism in ELT, they were grouped into the same category labeled as insisting on monolingualism in ELT:

Example (1): "From the establishment of this institute, teachers have not been allowed to use Persian in teaching English except as the last resort."

Example (2): "We are highly restricted about using Persian in English teaching. During TPP, trainers demand future teachers not to use Persian in our classrooms."

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

This section starts with providing a background to the origin of English teacher preparation programs in the five institutes and moves on to discussing their history in terms of constant features and major changes over the years.

4.1.1. Background to the Origin of Teacher Preparation Programs in the Institutes

The data analysis showed that, although some of the institutes had a short course to familiarize prospective teachers with how to teach books of the institutes in the past, they have been offering organized TPPs since the mid-1380s (the mid-2000s). The organized TPP of institute A, for example, originates from 1389 (2010) when a contract was signed with CELTA center in 1389 (2010), and all TPP designers, teacher instructors, administrators, and supervisors of the institute were given an opportunity for passing CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). An administrator from another institute noted:

> "We did not have any kind of teacher preparation program until 1385 when it was decided to establish a TPP. So, a program was designed based on CELTA that has been developed over the years. The most recent redesigning was done by a CELTA holder who passed the program in Turkey." (Parham, Institute C)

A teacher instructor and TPP designer from another institute also said:

> "Previous TPP of the institute originated from the late 1380s was based on CELTA. The program is still based on CELTA, but some parts of TKT have been also added to the program since 1396." (Amir, Institute E)

Since the mid-1380s (the mid-2000s), as the above excerpts show, the institutes have turned their attention to international English teacher preparation programs such as CELTA or TKT (Teacher Knowledge Test) for

designing a TPP based on their content and curriculum. In so doing, they have relied on the knowledge of experts passing those programs. One point worth mentioning is that, to design the TPPs, except TPP designers of institute A who were given the opportunity of taking part in CELTA in Iran, the other institutes have recruited experts who have passed the program in other countries.

4.1.2. Constant Features of the TPPs

Methodological Directions as Content. Analyzing the data gathered from documents and semi-structured interviews showed that the explored TPPs have been offering prospective teachers a knowledgebase comprising different language teaching approaches such as grammar translation and communicative language teaching; ELT concepts and acronyms related to classroom activities such as freer/controlled practice, peer/group work, monitoring, contextualization, PPP (present, practice, produce), ESA (engage, study, activate), or MFP (meaning before form and pronunciation); how of teaching receptive/productive skills, grammar and vocabulary; classroom management; and different ways of error correction over the years. Although there exists a wide range of terms referring to these categories of knowledge, such as pedagogical knowledge, teaching strategies and techniques, the categories, as Freeman (2016) noted, come from the second generation of knowledgebase in ELTE with the main focus on providing teachers with "methodological directions" (p. 185). An administrator from one of the institutes called this knowledge required knowledge for teaching and asserted:

> "Since the establishment of TPP at this institute, the trainees have been provided with…different ELT approaches, steps of teaching, and how to teach the four skills…concepts such as peer/group work, task, ESA techniques, classroom management and error correction. The main aim of the program is to familiarize trainees with the best ways of teaching the four skills, grammar, and vocabulary." (Parsa, Institute A)

Similarly, a TPP designer maintained:

> "In TPP of this institute, the trainees learn how to teach the four skills and the subskills including vocabulary and grammar step by step. The initial sessions are devoted to familiarizing student teachers with different teaching approaches, ELT-related concepts such as controlled practice or freer practice, and acronyms like MFP standing for meaning before form and pronunciation that they should learn

before entering the phase of how to teach receptive and productive skills." (Navid, Institute B)

A teacher also noted:

"First, the trainer familiarized us with concepts of English teaching such as monitoring, CP [controlled practice], error correction, setting context, and peer/group work. Then, the program entered the phase of how to teach receptive and productive skills and how to apply the concepts introduced in the first phase while teaching each skill." (Parimah, Institute D)

Additionally, analyzing the TPP documents manifested institutes' adherence to communicative language teaching (CLT), as well as their focus on acquainting prospective teachers with how to follow the related methodological directions. In fact, characteristics such as task, role play, pair/group work, and meaningful communication aiming at providing learners with speaking opportunities emerged in data analysis. All these features were characterized in Dörnyei (2009) and Savignon (1991) as features of CLT approach in language teaching.

Transmission Approach in Teacher Preparation. Analyzing the data gathered from semi-structured interviews also revealed that the institutes have chosen transmission approach as their teacher preparation philosophy. Transmission approach provides teachers with practices to imitate in their teaching, confines teaching to an ideal framework with no attention to the role of context in teaching (Crandall, 2000; Roessingh & Chambers, 2011), and, above all, ignores the vital role of teacher cognition, motivation, cognitive development and responsibility for learning by perceiving teachers as passive receivers of knowledge (Borg, 2003; Crandall, 2000; Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016). Some excerpts from semi-structured interviews manifesting characteristics of transmission approach in the explored TPPs follow:

"One of the traditional policies of this institute relates to keeping methodological uniformity. Teachers are provided with an ideal model for teaching in classrooms and they need to adapt themselves to the model to a great extent." (Parsa, Institute A)

"We require teachers to follow our teaching model… we need to have uniformity mainly for observation purposes and hindering educational problems." (Navid, Institute B)

"We have always insisted on teaching speaking, reading, or vocabulary based on the framework offered in our TPP. Teachers are not allowed to detach from the model" (Parham, Institute C)

"At this institute, teachers are observed each term and the observation sheet is based on teaching framework of the institute." (Parimah, Institute D)

As the above excerpts disclose, the main reason behind relying on transmission approach pertained, by and large, to institutes' concern for methodological uniformity contributing to running the institutes smoothly. Regarding how of methodological uniformity, a participant described teachers as pilots, a language classroom as an airplane, and students as passengers and believed that, for observation purposes and preventing educational problems, language classrooms should be similar to sitting in an airplane so that the passengers do not understand who is piloting the plane when the pilot is replaced by the co-pilot because they both operate in the same way. He further reasoned:

"If learners adapted to a teacher's method go to other classes with different methods, they would become confused and stressed. So, we need to keep methodological uniformity to prevent such problems." (Navid, Institute B)

Providing Teachers with External Opportunities for Professional Development. Analyzing the data gathered from semi-structured interviews manifested that the institutes have provided teachers with external opportunities for professional development that, as introduced by Borg (2014), Diaz-Maggioli (2003), and Richards and Farrell (2005), take the form of workshops, lectures, conferences, courses, and transmission of knowledge from supervisors to teachers. Some of the excerpts revealing institutes' orientation towards teacher professional development follow:

"TPP of the institute has enjoyed article reading sessions for each module…. Our supervisors provide teachers with ways of becoming a professional teacher when they observe them" (Fariba, Institute A)

"Supervisors of the institute have been in charge of making teachers professional through observation and giving the teachers feedback about their strength and weaknesses, and how to overcome their weaknesses." (Ghazal, Institute C)

"Teachers may face problems such as time management that force them to diminish stages of teaching. Such problems are revealed during observation and supervisors who have a great deal of

experience patiently help them overcome the problems." (Shaghayegh, Institute E)

"When teachers start teaching, based on the results of observation made by supervisors, they are provided with OGTs that are similar to workshops and help them in their development and overcoming their weaknesses" (Fariba, institute A)

As the above excerpts reveal, the institutes have mostly relied on engaging teachers in their professional development through workshops, as well as transmission of knowledge from supervisors to teachers. Such chances for professional development are external chances in that they do not originate from teachers, but from others like supervisors (Borg, 2014).

Insisting on Monolingualism in ELT. The data gathered from semi-structured interviews manifested that the institutes, since the establishment of their TPPs, have been insisting on monolingualism that means English should be taught totally through English. Although influential role of mother tongue in English instruction has been endorsed in many studies (e.g., Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Sharma, 2010; Tonio & Ella, 2019), the data of the present study revealed that during TPP, teachers have been told not to use Persian in classrooms, but as the last resort. In this regard, participants mentioned:

"From the establishment of this institute, teachers have not been allowed to use Persian in teaching English except as the last resort such as when teaching in English takes a lot of time. For example, while teaching spices…we warn teachers not to use Persian so that learners are provided with more opportunities to speak in English." (Parsa, Institute A)

"This institute has been always restricted about using Persian in classrooms because it deprives learners from lots of learning opportunities. When sessions are held thoroughly in English, speaking opportunities are created inevitably. So, during TPP trainees learn some techniques that help them to teach and manage the class thoroughly in English." (Amir, Institute E)

"I passed TPP of the institute in 1387…and I do remember that the trainer was restricted about using Persian while teaching, so I have been teaching and managing the class thoroughly in English since I started working." (Bahar, Institute D)

As it is evident in the above excerpts, the main reasons behind requiring teachers to follow monolingualism involved the concerns for learners' competency, enhancing learning opportunities, and the belief that

monolingualism brings about inevitable speaking opportunities. These reasons are similar to those mentioned in many other studies including the effects of communicative language teaching, association of using mother tongue with grammar translation method, appearance of direct method (that hampered use of mother tongue in language learning), British-based teacher preparation in colonial days (that required banishment of mother tongue in ELT), the belief that English is learned only by speaking in English, the argument that relying on mother tongue reduces the quantity of comprehensible input, and the issue that L1 use is an indicator of an unqualified teacher (Atkinson, 1987; Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Harbord, 1992; McMillan & Rivers, 2011).

Disregard for Bringing the Inclusion of Local Culture in ELT to the Attention of Prospective Teachers. Incorporation of culture in language learning has been emphasized since 1970s with the appearance of communicative competence approach which gives primacy to the awareness of target culture as a sine qua non of language competence (Kramsch & Hua, 2016). This emphasis has been criticized regarding English as a lingua franca, however. On the ground that today most English users are speakers whose first languages and cultures differ (Seidlhofer, 2005) and that the language no longer associates with a specific culture (Grant & Wong, 2018), it has been suggested that ELT should be built around the pedagogy of your language my culture (Yahya et al., 2017), and addressing culture should be sensitive to the context of teaching (Grant & Wong, 2018). Moreover, it has been argued that ELT should move away from the issue of authentic input to appropriate input based on the norms of language learning context rather than target context (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). In the present study, the data analysis showed that all the institutes have been using textbooks published by BANA (Britain, Australia and North America) countries (Kabir, 2011). These textbooks, as stated in other studies (e.g., Grant & Wong, 2018; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020), adhere more to the cultural aspects of inner circle countries. Although representation of the cultural aspects of these countries ties with promoting ideological dimension of linguistic imperialism (Grant & Wong, 2018; Phillipson, 1992), all the explored institutes have required their teachers to teach the culture represented in international textbooks.

The administrator of one of the institutes, for example, noted that international ELT textbooks have been used at their institute since its establishment and, during TPP, teachers are told that content of the textbooks determine what teachers should discuss in classrooms. A TPP designer and teacher instructor from another institute not only referred to using international textbooks, but also a book exclusive to topics related to the international culture designed by the institute itself to be taught along with

the main book. A teacher with about ten years working experience in another institute stated:

> "This institute, like all other institutes throughout the country, has used international material…to provide learners with authentic material." (Bahar, Institute D)

Another administrator asserted:

> "We do not want teachers to skip topics such as Halloween, because learners will learn about such topics at some points in their lives, for example, from Instagram." (Parsa, Institute A)

As the above excerpts reveal, teachers are required to focus on the culture represented in international textbooks. Not surprisingly, such policy has left no space for the inclusion of local culture and bringing it to the attention of prospective teachers during their preparation that, indeed, has been put forward as a matter of importance (Mahboob, 2009; Yahya et al., 2017). Additionally, as it is evident in the above excerpts, providing learners with authentic input, along with the belief that social media is increasingly blurring the cultural borders among nations, has intensified uncritical reliance on the content of international ELT material.

4.1.3. Major Changes of the TPPs

Trying to Reduce the Gap Between Theory and Practice by Inclusion of Teaching Practice. Providing prospective teachers with opportunities for teaching practice has been emphasized over the last three decades (Caires & Almeida, 2005), and different studies have supported its advantages (e.g., Draling-Hammond, 2006; Gebhard, 2009; Yin, 2019). In this study, it became clear that the investigated TPPs shared a more recent major change that involved trying to reduce the gap between theory and practice by inclusion of teaching practice (TP), referred to as making the programs more practical by TPP designers and teacher instructors who participated in the study. They explained:

> "The previous TPP only comprised of theories. Now the program has two parts. In fact, when the theoretical part is finished, trainees enter the practical part; every session, one of the trainees is required to prepare a lesson plan for the assigned part and teach it in front of other trainees who play the role of language learners. At the end, the teacher is provided with feedback from other trainees and me." (Bardia, Institute C)

"In the past we did not focus on TP in our TPP…But in 1397, we decided to include TP to make the program more practical." (Navid, Institute B)

"All the student teachers are required to present TP that provides them with feedback from me and other trainees…This feature was added to the program four years ago." (Amir, institute E)

Thus, as the above excerpts manifest, unlike TPPs of past decades, which were confined to providing prospective teachers only with theory, today's TPPs begin with a theoretical part that familiarizes prospective teachers with selected ELT concepts and theories, and then move on to a practical part that engages them in practicing those theories through teaching practice.

Inclusion of Technology Education for ELT Purposes. Different studies have provided evidence for the effectiveness of using technology in ELT, including facilitating teacher-student communication, accomplishing projects collaboratively, sharing information, providing learners with authentic material, facilitating access to linguistic data, increasing opportunities for autonomous learning, and enhancing chances for conversation with other English speakers (Chapelle, 2003; Garrett, 2009; Golonka et al., 2014). Additionally, other studies have supported its effective role in ELTE, namely, its positive impact on teacher professional development through providing them with opportunities for learning from each other as a result of sharing experience, information, and knowledge (e.g., Adsit, 2004; McAleavy et al., 2018). In this study, it was found that since the beginning of covid-19 pandemic – "leading to the rapid transition of learning to online mode" (Ahadi et al., 2021, p. 1) – and moving to online teaching a part related to how to teach online has been added to the TPPs. In this regard, the participants stated:

"When the pandemic broke out, we started to prepare platforms and content for online teaching. We revised our TPP and added a section devoted to how to teach online." (Roya, Institute A)

"Since the beginning of the corona pandemic, we have focused on familiarizing trainees with how to use online teaching platform and how to prepare online teaching content." (Navid, Institute B)

"The trainer insisted on using the most updated material for language learning…he familiarized us with using some websites and programs for online teaching." (Parimah, Institute D)

> "Because of the need for online teaching following the Covid-19 pandemic, I have included a section related to conducting flipped classrooms that reduces amount of face-to-face instruction." (Amir, Institute E)

Since the outset of the pandemic, as the above excerpts show, institutes have moved on to online teaching leading to the inclusion of technology education in their TPPs with the main focus on flipped classrooms, online teaching platforms, and online content.

Enhancement of TPP Duration. All administrators, TPP designers, and teacher instructors who participated in this study, asserted that enhancing duration of the TPPs is one of their notable changes over the years. Based on the data gathered from semi-structured interviews, it can be argued that the TPPs lasted about three weeks in the past, and now they last about three months. In this regard, an administrator mentioned:

> "Our TPP lasted about three weeks in the past, but now it lasts about 52 hours offered in six weeks. In fact, the program became longer by including varied and more comprehensive content." (Parsa, Institute A)

TPP designers also stated:

> "The previous TPP lasted about one month, but six years ago, I redesigned the program to make it more enriched, and it became longer; now it lasts from 40 to 50 hours offered in about three months." (Amir, Institute E)

> "A few years ago, I decided to make the program longer. That happened because trainees' background knowledge and learning speed differ from each other, and most of them require a longer program that lets them review the content and solve their problems. The new TPP lasts about 50 hours offered in three months." (Navid, Institute B)

In sum, as the above excerpts manifest, there were two main reasons behind enhancing the duration of the TPPs including content enrichment, as well as taking into account differences in prospective teachers' background knowledge about ELT.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. *Constant Features of the TPPs: Revealing Lack of Attention to External Associations of ELT in Teacher Preparation*

The first constant feature of the TPPs involved focusing on methodological directions as content. Compared with major theories regarding content and knowledgebase in ELTE (e.g., Freeman, 2016; Richards, 1998), the TPPs have focused on the second generation of knowledgebase in ELTE since their establishment. The main gap of the second generation, that is, ignoring the important role of context in pedagogy, became the impetus behind turning to the third generation of knowledgebase in ELTE (Freeman, 2016) which is characterized by introducing postmethod pedagogy to scholarly circles as a response to external associations of ELT, namely, linguistic imperialism (Block, 2004; Freeman, 2016; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006). Postmethod pedagogy, according to Kumaravadivelu (2001, p. 544), bases pedagogy on the local exigencies of the context of teaching rather than "predetermined set of generic principles and procedures aimed at realizing a predetermined set of generic aims and objectives"; it assists teachers in becoming autonomous individuals in practicing and producing context-sensitive pedagogy; rejects the narrow view of language limited to linguistic features; and seeks to view sociopolitical realities that directly and indirectly affect ELT (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006). The TPPs lagged far behind these features, however.

Transmission approach as the second constant feature of the programs also reveals lack of attention to external associations of ELT. The findings of the study disclosed the concern for methodological uniformity as the main reason behind the selection of transmission approach, which contributes to running the institutes smoothly. Methodological uniformity, as Freeman (2016) noted, is a tenet of the second generation of knowledgebase in ELTE that disregards context sensitive pedagogy. Similarly, providing teachers with external opportunities for professional development as the third constant feature of the TPPs reveals lack of attention to the external associations of ELT because the need for development originates from supervisors who are mostly in charge of keeping methodological uniformity of the language institutes and helping teachers in applying methodological directions successfully. Nevertheless, research on teacher professional development has come to realize that teachers should be both the subject and object of their development process and that a wide range of factors including background knowledge, learning needs and traditions, cultural norms and policies of different countries do affect the process (Avalos, 2011).

The explored TPPs shared other constant features including insisting on monolingualism, as well as disregard for bringing the inclusion of local culture in ELT to the attention of prospective teachers that also reveal lack of

enough attention to the external associations of ELT. The former is a fallacy since it implicitly suggests banishment of mother tongue in English classrooms which is a tenet of colonial and neocolonial associations of ELT (Pennycook, 2007; Phillipson, 1992). As Phillipson (1992) believed, banishment of mother tongue in education pushes learners towards a sense of alienation from their own cultural identity. Auerbach (1993) also reasoned that though monolingualism "has come to be justified in pedagogical terms, it rests, [on] the one hand, on unexamined assumptions, originates in the political agenda of the dominant groups, and serves to reinforce existing relations of power" (p. 3), and "impede language acquisition precisely because it mirrors disempowering relations" (p. 5), on the other hand. Regarding the latter, the findings manifested that the institutes have concentrated on teaching the content of international ELT textbooks and have overlooked bringing the inclusion of local culture to the attention of prospective teachers that has been proffered as a necessity (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Mahboob, 2009; Yahya et al., 2017). In fact, focusing on local culture along with relying on learners' first language in an organized manner (Butzkamm, 2003) is a core requirement of teaching within postmethod pedagogy (Akbari, 2008) that, as mentioned repeatedly, has been thought of as a response to external associations of ELT (Block, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006).

4.2.2. Major Changes of the TPPs: Resembling Development in Internal Aspects of the Programs

Major changes of the TPPs lend themselves to be discussed as positive internal aspects. Although in the past teachers' involvement in teaching during preparation was limited to demonstration for assessment purposes, now student teachers engage in teaching practice during preparation that, as Darling-Hammond (2006) pointed out, can contribute to establishing a link between theory and practice. Additionally, inclusion of technology education; familiarizing student teachers with online teaching platforms and flipped classrooms; enhancement of TPP duration following content enrichment and designing more inclusive programs manifest improvement in the TPPs.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Although the field of English language teacher education has recognized the importance of incorporating critical vision in teacher preparation and working within postmethod pedagogy (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006; Pennycook, 1990), constant features of the explored TPPs resembled lack of attention to sociopolitical associations of ELT in English teacher preparation in Iranian language institutes over the

last three decades. Advantages of working within postmethod pedagogy in contexts such as Iran where the language is used as a foreign language involve resisting linguistic imperialism, helping teachers give rise to a pedagogy sensitive to learners' needs and focusing on their cultural values and heritage so that there is a balance between exposure to local culture and international culture.

The findings of this study are helpful for those interested in designing and developing English teacher preparation programs as they provide information regarding their past and present status and reveal how their constant features over the years have impeded entering postmethod. Additionally, the findings of the study suggest that the actualization of the sociocultural view of teacher preparation and working within postmethod pedagogy demand familiarizing teachers with teacher research which gives primacy to the context of teaching, require enhancing teachers' critical literacy, and necessitate investment on local culture in ELT.

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