



Development and Validation of an EFL Teachers' Quality Assurance Questionnaire

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Article info

Abstract

Article type:
Research
article

Received:
2023/12/7

Accepted:
2024/3/29

There is a consensus among researchers and educators that teachers need to be well prepared to improve the quality of education and students' learning. Nevertheless, little attempt has been made to implement the trends in teachers' quality assurance (TQA) in the field of language education. To overcome this gap, the researchers developed a questionnaire on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' quality assurance to underscore the role of TQA as a valuable part of teachers' professional knowledge. First, the researchers developed 51 items based on a thorough review of the literature on TQA and interviewing 10 TEFL university professors. Next, the 51-item questionnaire was reviewed and revised based on the university professors' comments. Then, 52 EFL teachers, who were selected based on convenient sampling, answered the questionnaire in the piloting phase. Subsequently, after refining the items, 207 EFL teachers chosen through convenient sampling responded to the revised questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis were applied to evaluate the reliability and construct validity of the questionnaire, respectively. The results showed that the items loaded on four components, which were named as "skills and knowledge, students' learning and classroom management, working collaboratively, and students' needs and feelings". The good results of the reliability and construct validity of the questionnaire imply its potential use to evaluate TQA consistently. Moreover, the EFL teachers' high agreement with the questionnaire items showed their awareness of the importance of TQA. The findings of this study can offer insights to second language teachers and teacher educators.

Keywords: EFL teachers, professional knowledge, quality, quality assurance, teachers' quality assurance

Cite this article: Sabadoust, G., Tavassoli, K., & Famil Khalili, G., (2025). Development and validation of an EFL teachers' quality assurance questionnaire. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 12(1), 57-83.

DOI: 10.30479/jmrels.2024.19667.2299



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Publisher: Imam Khomeini International University

1. Introduction

Over the years, professional standards in teaching have been developed in different educational systems, where professional learning and quality assurance are the central goals (Tang et al., 2006). In today's world where the outcome is the focus, it is crucial to understand the teachers' abilities, knowledge, and competencies (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Since teaching is a complex profession, training high quality teachers has also been given a high importance (Khodamoradi & Maghsoudi, 2023). In teacher education programs, this is being called the "teachers' competencies", which refers to a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable teachers to work professionally in different contexts (Koster & Dengerink, 2008).

Accountability, effectiveness, and values are necessary aspects of teachers' professional knowledge which should be established in teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Tütünlü & Yalman, 2020) to meet the students' needs (Chong & Ho, 2009). This involves aspects of teacher education program quality and claims that professional standards can enhance quality if they are included in policies that regulate accreditation and licensure and urge schools to use the related practices to reach success. To achieve this, policies that target teacher education accountability should have efficient incentives to attract, keep, and allocate teachers to the required locations (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Accordingly, quality assurance is vital for improving the quality of teacher education programs, teachers' outcomes, and student teaching (Biqiche et al., 2019). Despite the new improved systems of teacher education and evaluation, the impact of teacher education on the teachers' performance and quality has been largely neglected (Rea-Dickins, 1994). As long as educational effectiveness is concerned, this may be due to the teachers' reluctance to change (Biqiche et al., 2019).

To evaluate the quality of education, examining diverse aspects such as the curricula, learning processes, teachers' qualifications, the use of technology, as well as internal, external, explicit, and implicit standards are crucial (Das, 2019; Komorowska, 2017). In addition, it is necessary to investigate the goodness of fit between the individuals and their educational contexts. It is a consensus that quality is achieved by hiring qualified teachers who are actively involved in the continuous development of their professional skills to improve the students' learning more (Biqiche et al., 2019; Komorowska, 2017). Creative teachers seek new methods for language teaching to enhance their teaching quality (Kashanizadeh et al., 2023). When it comes to the study of foreign languages, all educational providers at various levels have a critical responsibility to assure quality (Popescu-Mitroi et al., 2015); however, this has hardly been investigated in the English language teaching (ELT) literature (Biqiche et al., 2019; Mousavi et al., 2016; White, 1998). For this purpose, it is essential to examine the needs and desires of teachers and offer them

resources that may enable effective involvement in the given programs because teachers learn best from professional development chances that meet their needs (Meissel et al., 2016).

Considering the Iranian EFL context, students are more likely to take part in private language institutes to learn the English language due to the weaknesses they encounter in public schools (Kazemi & Soleimani, 2013; Mousavi et al., 2016). This has led to the improvements in the market of Iranian private language institutes and resulted in increasing the number of both EFL teachers and learners (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). Therefore, institutes need to keep in line with the progressions utilizing professional training of teachers adjusted to the requests of the work market (Kelemen, 2015).

Researchers and educators widely agree that teachers need to be well-trained, especially to improve the quality of education (Biqiche et al., 2019). Since the success of any educational program is dependent on the quality of its teachers, it is crucial to examine the teachers' quality assurance systematically too, which is rarely studied in the ELT literature. Therefore, the findings of this study can offer some implications for stakeholders involved in second language teacher education by enhancing their professional knowledge in different aspects, such as quality assurance, to make their teaching more effective in their classes.

In response to this gap in the literature, this study aimed to develop and validate a questionnaire to assess EFL teachers' quality assurance (TQA). Accordingly, we posed the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the components of an EFL teacher quality assurance instrument?

RQ2. What are the psychometric features (reliability and validity) of the EFL teacher quality assurance instrument?

2. Literature Review

As a new term in education, quality assurance (QA) builds on the traditional checks and balances in systems. Quality assurance can improve the quality and standards in education (Allais, 2009). To assure high quality, educational institutions should consider responding to the cultural and social changes in the society, enhancing the diversity of skills, abilities, and experiences in multicultural and multilingual classes, and making learners autonomous (Komorowska, 2017).

Quality assurance is a complicated concept, which covers three areas of control, accountability, and improvement. Control refers to how resources are used and maximized for outcomes; accountability deals with the ways in which stakeholders' needs are met; and improvement refers to the interaction between inputs, processes, and outputs to fulfill goals and objectives (Chong & Ho, 2009).

The significance of QA urges teacher educators to find ways of constantly improving their program design and delivery, and their academic staff (Mok, 2007). “QA in initial teacher preparation covers a wide spectrum from student teachers’ point of entry into the program (inputs), through their course of study in the program (process), and at graduation (outcomes)” (Chong & Ho, 2009, p. 304). QA emphasizes the avoidance of quality issues by using organized and methodical actions. This approach focuses on the beginning of the process – the inputs – and shifts the priority to ensuring that the inputs are suitable to process the needs (Ojo, 2007).

Teacher quality assurance can be improved with some important factors like increasing the autonomy and responsibility of schools as well as changing the role of teachers into active, reflective, and autonomous participants in the process of teaching (Sabirova, 2014). Komorowska (2017) postulated that teacher development programs should ensure teacher quality assurance by supporting less experienced teachers, providing constant skills development, and coordinating various activities.

Due to the importance of QA in education, the National Institute of Education (NIE) ran a complete teacher education program evaluation, which led to the emergence of a TQA framework, known as the Values, Skills, and Knowledge (VSK) model, with a focus on the desired qualities of teachers (Chong & Ho, 2009). The framework aimed at developing a broad spectrum of professional and accountable prototype of QA to highlight processes, developments, and components for basic teacher development. The VSK model was formed based on the parameters of skills and knowledge with the accompanying core values as the main principles of the framework. Skills cover pedagogical, interpersonal, reflective, personal, administrative, and management skills. Knowledge refers to the educational context, content, curriculum, pupils, pedagogy, and self. On the other hand, values deal with the basic assumptions of learning for all students, care and concern for all students, respect for diversity, commitment and dedication to the profession, collaboration and team spirit, and desire for continuous learning and experience. The VSK model can be used as a basic TQA framework in teacher preparation programs. The framework assists teachers to reflect on and develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and values for better practical performance and teaching in different contexts and cultures. Additionally, the VSK framework would make it plausible to design programs to emphasize personal connection, reciprocal respect, innovation, reflection, and collaboration among teachers. Each attribute emphasizes a different part of the professional practice, but it is essential to acknowledge that the attributes are not separate and depend on and relate to each other. This also mirrors the connected aspects of the teacher’s work (Chong & Cheah, 2009).

The VSK framework covers key aspects of program delivery and development, from students' profiles to teachers' competencies. Following the model, a competent teacher is the one who can make choices based on the acquired knowledge, skills, and values. The values are central to the mission of learner-centered and learning-centered classes in the 21st century. The framework serves two main purposes: to develop a wide spectrum of a professional model of QA, which highlights the processes, developments, and components of teacher development, and to recognize quality components of program assessment and translate them into real indicators of processes and performance (Chong & Ho, 2009). The complementary goals of the framework are organizational efficiency and excellent learning and teaching. Because of the significance of the VSK framework of TQA, we used this framework as the basis of developing the TQA questionnaire in this study.

A few studies have also been carried out in the ELT field to understand quality and quality assurance. For example, Mousavi et al. (2016) aimed to investigate the professional competence level of EFL teachers in Iran who taught adults in the private sector. They sought to develop a questionnaire that could effectively assess professional competence of these teachers. According to the findings of the study, the developed questionnaire was not only a valid but also a reliable tool for measuring the professional competence of EFL teachers working in the private sector. Even though, the researchers hoped that the developed standards and the new instrument would be finally applied at the national level to ensure uniformity in EFL teachers' quality assurance in the private sector, the questionnaire did not precisely assess QA.

In another study, Al-Issa (2017) aimed to explore the characteristics of professional ELT teacher educators and the significance of their qualities in attaining accountable and high-quality second language teacher education. The findings of the study are significant and can be seen as a noteworthy advancement in understanding the necessary attributes of effective ELT teacher educators. Moreover, the identified qualities hold implications to prepare proficient English language teachers and enhance their accountability and quality in ELT contexts.

Azkiyah and Mukminin (2017) also examined the teaching quality displayed by student teachers during their instruction and found that the teaching quality observed during the teaching practicum was found to be lacking in some areas. This happened because the student teachers did not fully apply the classroom factors that were described to them.

Finally, in a study by Biqiche et al. (2019), there was an attempt to explore the factors that influence EFL teacher's involvement in teacher professional programs in Moroccan public high schools. Based on the results of their study, several suggestions were made, such as the need to guarantee quality in

planned programs and to assist teachers financially to have access to beneficial professional opportunities.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The data was collected from three groups of participants in this study. Initially, 10 university professors (6 females and 4 males with the age range of 35-50 and teaching experience of 10-20 years) who held a PhD in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) were selected purposefully and interviewed regarding their ideas about TQA (see Appendix A). These professors were from Karaj and Tehran universities and they willingly participated in the study. In addition, we asked the same participants to review the teacher quality assurance questionnaire to ensure the language and content of each item was appropriate for the target teachers, and to provide comments on the face, content, length, clarity, and completeness of each item based on a checklist. The items were then revised based on their comments. Then, a sample of 52 in-service EFL teachers who taught English as a foreign language in private language institutes in Karaj and Tehran were selected based on convenient sampling to pilot the TQA questionnaire. Table 1 provides the demographic information of these participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants in the Piloting Phase of the Questionnaire

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	12	23
	Female	40	77
Degree	BA	13	25
	MA	30	57.5
	PhD candidate	9	17.5
Major	TEFL	26	50
	English Translation	22	42
	English Literature	2	4
	Others	2	4
Age	<30	7	13.5
	30-40	36	69
	>40	9	17.5
Years of Teaching Experience	<5	10	19
	5-15	34	65.5
	16-25	8	15.5
Total		52	100

Next, another group of 207 EFL teachers who taught English as a foreign language in some other private language institutes in Karaj and Tehran were selected based on convenient sampling and filled out the developed questionnaire to check its construct validity and reliability. The selection of

this number of teachers was because it is stated that having 4 or 5 participants per item in a questionnaire (48 items in this study) is adequate for running the required statistical analyses (Pallant, 2020). Table 2 provides the demographic information of these participants.

Table 2

Demographic Information of the Participants in the Final Phase of the Questionnaire

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	38	18.4
	Female	169	81.6
Degree	BA	74	35.7
	MA	95	45.9
	PhD Candidate	38	18.4
Major	TEFL	120	58.0
	English Translation	67	32.4
	English Literature	15	7.2
	Others	5	2.4
Age	<30	72	34.8
	30-40	107	51.7
	>40	28	13.5
Years of teaching Experience	<5	54	26.1
	5-15	126	60.9
Nationality	16-25	27	13.0
	Iranian	207	100
native language	Persian	207	100
	Elementary	67	32.36
Current level of teaching	Intermediate	100	48.30
	Advanced	40	19.32
Total		207	100

All the professors and teachers were willing and consent to participate in this study, they were informed about the purpose of the study, and they were ensured about their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information they provided.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

3.2.1. *Semistructured Interview*

A semi-structured interview was carried out with 10 university professors who had PhD in TEFL and have done research on second language teacher education. The questions were designed to meet the objectives of the study. To this end, the researchers did a comprehensive review of the literature on TQA and came up with a set of twelve open-ended questions as an interview guide to target EFL teachers' quality assurance. The questions mainly addressed issues related to TQA. The main reason for conducting the semi-structure interview was for the respondents to express their views on TQA in their own words. The semi-structured interview appears in Appendix A.

3.2.2. Teacher Quality Assurance Questionnaire

The other instrument was the newly developed Teacher Quality Assurance (TQA) questionnaire with 47 items, which was developed by the researchers in the current study. The final version of the questionnaire appears in Appendix B. The questionnaire was developed, reviewed by experts, piloted, revised, and validated. The steps through which the questionnaire was developed are explained in the next section.

3.3. Procedure

The TQA questionnaire in this study was developed following certain steps. As the first step, a thorough review of the related literature on TQA was done. Meanwhile, 10 TEFL university professors who taught in Karaj and Tehran universities (6 females and 4 males with the age range of 35-50 and teaching experience of 10-20 years) were selected purposefully and interviewed regarding their ideas about TQA. The interview questions focused primarily on the VSK framework (Chong & Cheah, 2009) of QA. The questionnaire was then developed with 51 items on a 5-point Likert-scale (strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5). The content of the items was based on the information obtained from the literature and the interviews. The questionnaire covered three main domains of *values* (comprising the main values which support the curriculum, including 20 items), *skills* (focusing on achievements and/or behaviors for facilitating learning of students and managing the classroom, including 12 items), and *knowledge* (covering a basic knowledge of standards, theories, and ideals, including 19 items). Next, the researchers asked the same 10 TEFL university professors to review the teacher quality assurance questionnaire to ensure the language and content of each item was appropriate for the target teachers. They provided comments on the face, content, length, clarity, and completeness of each item based on a checklist. The items were then revised based on their comments.

As the next step, to pilot the TQA questionnaire, 52 EFL teachers who taught in private language institutes in Karaj and Tehran were selected based on convenient sampling to answer the questionnaire. Table 1 provided the demographic information of these participants. After the initial frequency analysis of the responses to the items in the questionnaire, three items were deleted.

As the last step, after the questionnaire was refined based on the results of piloting, 207 other EFL teachers from other private language institutes in Karaj and Tehran answered the refined form of the questionnaire with 48 items. These teachers were selected based on convenient sampling. Table 2 provided the demographic information of these participants. One more item was deleted from the refined questionnaire based on the results of data analysis since it did

not load under any of the obtained factors. Therefore, the final version of the TQA questionnaire consisted of 47 items.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data from the 207 EFL teachers were analyzed using SPSS version 23. The reliability and construct validity were checked through Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA), respectively. The reliability index was .93 and above .7, which is an indication of a strong reliability according to Dornyei (2007). To run EFA, we used principal axis factoring as the extraction method and Promax rotation with Kaiser normalization as the rotation method after it was seen that the data was appropriate for EFA based on the values reported for *KMO and Bartlett's Test*. Moreover, according to the related scree plot and the total variance explained, which presented four underlying factors, the most suitable type of EFA was Promax with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Reliability and Validity of the Teachers' Quality Assurance Questionnaire

To ensure the content validity of the TQA questionnaire, the items were designed based on the VSK model. After the questionnaire was developed and refined based on the data obtained from 52 EFL teachers in the piloting phase, where 3 items were deleted, it was administered to 207 other EFL teachers in the final phase. The first step in analyzing the data from the TQA questionnaire was checking its reliability through Cronbach's alpha, which is a common way of calculating the internal validity of an instrument. The result is reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Reliability of the TQA Questionnaire

	α	N of Items
TQA Questionnaire	.93	48

As it is reported in Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha reliability value of the TQA questionnaire was .93, which was an indication of the high reliability of the questionnaire as values higher than .8 show high reliability (Hinton et al., 2014).

Next, to check the construct validity of the TQA questionnaire, which was composed of 48 items under three domains of *values* (19 items), *skills* (11 items), and *knowledge* (18 items), we ran factor analysis on the data collected from 207 EFL teachers.

Prior to running the factor analysis, we checked the data set to see whether it was appropriate for factor analysis. Checking the normality of the data was the first prerequisite of running factor analysis. The skewness and kurtosis values were all between -2 and $+2$ which are the acceptable boundaries of the normal distribution of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The factorability of the data, which is the matter of establishing the plausibility of the data set, was the other prerequisite of factor analysis. This was checked through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of sample adequacy and the Bartlett's sphericity test (Table 4).

Table 4

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO measure of sampling adequacy		.86
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	3883.92
	df	1128
	Sig.	.00*

As it is reported in Table 4, since the KMO value of the data set was .86 (higher than the critical .6 value) and the Bartlett's sphericity test was .00 (smaller than the critical .05 value) (Hinton et al., 2014), the data was considered adequate and suitable for factor analysis.

Next, the data was analyzed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which is one of the most popular ways of checking the construct validity of an instrument. An initial 13-factor solution was obtained with eigenvalues higher than 1 explaining 24.63%, 5.34%, 5.24%, 3.58%, 3.53%, 2.96%, 2.87%, 2.79%, 2.62%, 2.47%, 2.33%, 2.26%, and 2.16% of the variance, respectively. Examining the scree plot in Figure 1, however, a break was observed after the fourth factor. The four-factor solution indicated 38.80% of the total variance (Table 5).

Figure 1

Scree Plot of the Items of the TQA Questionnaire

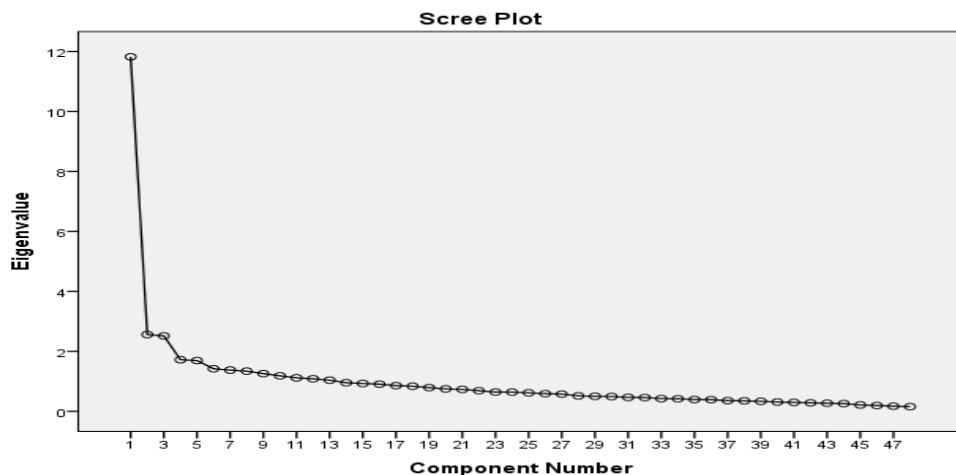


Table 5*Total Variance Explained*

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.82	24.63	24.63	11.18	23.30	23.30
2	2.56	5.34	29.97	2.06	4.29	27.59
3	2.51	5.24	35.21	1.85	3.86	31.46
4	1.72	3.58	38.80	1.07	2.23	33.70

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring

To clearly interpret the four factors/components of the TQA scale along with their related items, we ran a Promax rotation with Kaiser normalization, where items with loadings higher than .3 were kept (Hinton et al., 2014). Table 6 shows the results of the EFA on the TQA items. Based on the results of EFA, one item was deleted from the questionnaire since it did not load under any of the four factors. Therefore, the final version of the TQA questionnaire consisted of 47 items.

Table 6*Structure Matrix of the Factors of the Teachers' Quality Assurance*

Item	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
1	.696			
2	.667			
3	.650			
4	.639			
5	.638			
6	.628			
7	.625			
8	.580			
9	.576			
10	.562			
11	.532			
12	.518			
13	.503			
14	.478			
15	.468			
16	.445			
17	.435			
18	.434			
19	.431			
20	.425			
21	.424			
22	.379			
23	.354			
24		.686		
25		.636		
26		.550		
27		.542		
28		.459		
29		.442		
30		.428		
31		.404		
32		.377		
33		.349		
34			.817	
35			.809	
36			.773	

37	.540	
38	.458	
39	.397	
40		.586
41		.578
42		.494
43		.428
44		.405
45		.405
46		.360
47		.313

Principal Axis Factoring as the extraction method
Promax with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method

Table 7 indicates the factor correlation matrix. The strongest correlation existed between Factors 1 and 4 (.538).

Table 7

Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	1.000	.519	.430	.538
2		1.000	.328	.251
3			1.000	.412
4				1.000

Principal Axis Factoring as the extraction method
Promax with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method

Running EFA on the TQA questionnaire, four factors were extracted. Based on the content of the items under each factor, we named them as: (1) skills and knowledge, (2) students' learning and classroom management, (3) working collaboratively, and (4) students' needs and feelings (Table 8). The items related to the teachers' skills and knowledge as two different components of the VSK model in the initial questionnaire were clustered under one factor, which was named *skills and knowledge*. The other items clustered under three different factors, which were named according to their content. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the items underlying each factor as well as the whole questionnaire were calculated and are reported in Table 8. All the reliability values were high, which showed that the TQA questionnaire had a strong internal consistency.

Table 8

The Four Factors of the Final TQA Questionnaire and their Cronbach's Alpha Reliabilities

Factors	Items	α
Factor 1	Skills and knowledge	Items 1-23 .90
Factor 2	Students' learning and classroom management	Items 24-33 .77
Factor 3	Working collaboratively	Items 34-39 .80
Factor 4	Students' needs and feelings	Items 40-47 .70
The Whole Questionnaire		Items 1-47 .93

4.1.2. The Skills and Knowledge Factor

Based on the information in Table 6 (structure matrix of the factors of the TQA), there were 23 items (items 1-23) that loaded under the first component. Analysis of the content of the items convinced the researchers to name the component as *skills and knowledge*. The main reason for selecting such a name was the nature of items, which loaded under this factor that focused on teachers' diverse skills and knowledge. As it was mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was mainly developed based on the components of the VSK model, which covered aspects related to teachers' values, skills, and knowledge. The corresponding items along with their mean and standard deviation (SD) values are presented in Table 9. The items are arranged from the highest to the lowest mean.

Table 9
Items Corresponding to the Skills and Knowledge Factor

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
1	As an adaptive expert in teaching, I desire continuous learning and innovation.	4.52	.58
2	I am aware of the context of teaching, including to whom I teach, where I teach, and what I teach.	4.49	.63
3	I know that teaching today requires qualified professional and thorough pedagogical information.	4.49	.63
4	I try to promote the full development of students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, abilities, or disabilities.	4.44	.68
5	I have an understanding of what is to be taught, learned, and assessed.	4.43	.62
6	I have a clear understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses, and I can make sense of the problems and issues that arise in the classroom and help resolve curricular problems.	4.35	.67
7	I am aware that teaching is becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices.	4.34	.71
8	I am able to develop and choose tasks that are appropriate and meaningful to ensure that all learners can understand the lesson.	4.31	.62
9	As a teacher not only do I need to know how to find the resources, but also how to critically assess and examine the content and skills included in the materials.	4.27	.70
10	I am aware that knowledge about students is needed for teachers so that they can provide the appropriate teaching and learning that meet the needs of every student as they come from different backgrounds and cultures.	4.26	.65
11	I have the knowledge of curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, and classroom management.	4.26	.66
12	I am good at time management, goal setting, planning, and setting priorities for the well-functioning of the classroom.	4.24	.64
13	I should merge the theory and practice of teaching and learning, as well as all other aspects of these complex issues to ensure quality preparation of all students for life and work.	4.21	.73
14	I should develop the knowledge of child/adolescent development in order to connect students with the subject matter in meaningful ways.	4.14	.69
15	I possess a basic knowledge of the available materials and resources for different levels and abilities.	4.14	.67
16	I possess the knowledge of alternative pedagogical tools such as classroom management, assessment strategies, and instructional techniques to facilitate and motivate student learning.	4.13	.65
17	I need to form a conceptual model of my teaching in order to question my assumptions about learning.	4.12	.72
18	I understand how to blend content and pedagogy for organizing particular topics for learners.	4.10	.66

19	I have the knowledge of the syllabi, the central topics and assessment modes to make curriculum and assessment decisions to impact my students' achievements.	4.08	.68
20	I try to develop a curricular perspective to learn how to evaluate, select, and organize important theoretical concepts and approaches, and apply teaching in order to help different learners.	4.07	.73
21	I seek to promote tolerance, life-long learning, and open-mindedness.	4.07	.71
22	I can simplify topics and concepts in order to make them more accessible and understandable for students.	4.07	.66
23	I continually criticize my beliefs and values on teaching in order to develop possible and desirable conceptions of teaching.	3.92	.72

Checking the mean scores of the items under the first component in Table 9 showed that they ranged from a high value of 4.52, which belonged to item 1, to a high value of 3.92, which belonged to item 23. This indicated that the teachers' agreement with the role of the *skills and knowledge* as part of their quality assurance was very high, which means they considered this factor very important in their quality assurance.

4.1.3. The Students' Learning and Classroom Management Factor

There were 10 items (items 24-33) that clustered under the second component, which was named *students' learning and classroom management* based on the content of the items. The corresponding items along with their mean and SD values are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Items Corresponding to the Students' Learning and Classroom Management Factor

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
24	I should be a continuous learner to maintain my professional effectiveness.	4.64	.63
25	I try to create an environment which is warm and supportive, where students can express their thoughts and feelings freely.	4.60	.58
26	I know that effective communication skills are important for a teacher in transmitting information, managing the classroom, and interacting with students in the class.	4.55	.56
27	I understand my roles and feel responsible as a professional teacher in schools.	4.55	.58
28	As a committed teacher, I perform the roles that my job requires effectively and establish a good teacher-student relationship in accordance with the professional values.	4.54	.53
29	I believe that teachers should be prepared to develop contexts that will support the learning of all students.	4.50	.68
30	I care about my pupils' involvement in purposeful academic learning.	4.43	.63
31	I am concerned about the development of my students and profoundly struggle to keep students' learning.	4.37	.63
32	I try to find ways to understand and use the different strengths that students have.	4.30	.61
33	I believe that the teachers' care and support for all their pupils form an integral part of their success in learning.	4.14	.79

The mean scores of the items under the second component ranged from a high value of 4.64, related to item 24, to 4.14, related to item 33, all very close to 5, which corresponded to strongly agree. Therefore, the conclusion was that the EFL teachers participating in the present research considered the *students' learning and classroom management* as part of their quality assurance to be very important.

4.1.4. The Working Collaboratively Factor

Table 11 presents 6 items (items 34-39) that loaded under the third component, which was named *working collaboratively* based on the content of the items. The table also presents the mean and SD values of the corresponding items.

Table 11

Items Corresponding to the Working Collaboratively Factor

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
34	I believe collaboration is an essential element for effective change.	4.28	.70
35	I believe collaboration promotes teacher reflection, promotes teacher learning, and leads to continuous development.	4.25	.66
36	I collaborate with parents, colleagues, and others in the ELT community in planning the instructional program.	4.24	.72
37	I believe collaboration improves moral support, promotes efficiency, and reduces overload.	4.17	.68
38	I believe in collaboration between colleagues since it leads to mutual feedback and induce innovation in teaching.	4.17	.69
39	I try to collaborate with children's parents and engage them in productive school activities.	3.68	.86

Looking at the mean scores reported in Table 11 revealed that the mean scores of the items underlying *working collaboratively* ranged from a high value of 4.28 (for item 34) to a moderate value of 3.68 (for item 39). Once again, the conclusion was that the EFL teachers considered *working collaboratively* an important part of their quality assurance.

4.1.5. The Students' Needs and Feelings Factor

Lastly, there were 8 items (items 40-47) that loaded under the fourth component, which was named *students' needs and feelings* based on the content of the items comprising this component. The items along with their mean and SD values are reported in Table 12.

Table 12

Items Corresponding to the Students' Needs and Feelings Factor

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
40	I believe it is vital for me to know the students' needs, their learning strategies and styles, personality, motivation, attitude, abilities, and even their background to be able to help them.	4.34	.70
41	I am able to adjust the pacing of my instruction based on the students' needs, form appropriate instructional groups, and assess students' understanding in the moment.	4.16	.66
42	I manage and organize the classroom according to the students' needs and preferences at the beginning of the semester.	4.14	.79
43	I am able to recognize emotions and tune into other people's feelings while still managing my own.	4.14	.78
44	I am responsible to ensure that all students develop to their fullest potential.	4.14	.77
45	I consider the socio-cultural and socio-political contexts of my students.	3.98	.80
46	I possess administrative and management skills in carrying out my roles outside the classroom, like facilitating team work between colleagues, collaborating with the wider learning community, and planning and managing activities.	3.84	.81
47	I am interested in the students' lives out of the classroom.	3.73	.92

The mean scores of the items in Table 12 had a range from a high value of 4.34 (for item 40) to a moderate value of 3.73 (for item 47). Once again, it was concluded that the EFL teachers considered the *students' needs and feelings* as part of their quality assurance as important.

4.2. Discussion

In this study, the researchers aimed to develop and validate a questionnaire to measure EFL teachers' quality assurance. Based on a comprehensive literature review on TQA and the data obtained from semi-structured interviews, a 51-item questionnaire was developed. Then, the questionnaire was piloted with 52 EFL teachers. Next, to validate the 48-item questionnaire, it was administered to 207 other EFL teachers. Based on the outcomes from exploratory factor analysis, one more item was also removed. Thus, the final questionnaire included 47 items. The results of EFA showed that the TQA consisted of four factors: (1) skills and knowledge, (2) students' learning and classroom management, (3) working collaboratively, and (4) students' needs and feelings. Based on the findings, the developed questionnaire seems to be a trustworthy and dependable instrument to gauge the quality assurance of EFL teachers, which can be utilized for their professional development purposes, too.

Similarly, Mousavi et al. (2016) developed a questionnaire on EFL teachers' professional competence and declared that the developed standards and the new tool should be applied at the national level to ensure uniformity among EFL teachers' quality assurance. Likewise, Biqiche et al. (2019) declared that there is a need to guarantee quality in planned programs and to assist teachers financially to have access to beneficial professional opportunities easier.

To overcome the gap in the literature to develop a questionnaire on EFL teachers' quality assurance, the current study used the QA framework by Chong and Ho (2009) who emphasized the importance of values, skills, and knowledge to ensure TQA.

Regarding the first factor based on the results of EFA, that is, *skills and knowledge*, the findings showed that the participants' mean scores were all high, which revealed the participants' agreement on the significance of the *skills and knowledge* as a part of EFL teachers' quality assurance. This indicated that EFL teachers were well aware of the significance of having the necessary knowledge and skills of teaching as part of their TQA. These findings corroborate with the studies on teachers' pedagogical knowledge (e.g., DeLuca et al., 2016) which state that effective teachers should have a high literacy not only in the knowledge of language, teaching, and learning, but also in the knowledge of assessment (Tajeddin et al., 2022; Tavassoli, &

Farhady, 2018). Various studies have indicated that teacher educators should equip teachers with higher levels of professional knowledge including teacher quality assurance and keep them more up-to-date about such new topics in the field (Farhady & Tavassoli, 2021; Kong & Lai, 2023; Kumaravadivelu, 2014).

The second factor of TQA dealt with the *students' learning and classroom management*, which reflected the core values that underpin the curriculum. Once again, the mean scores for all items under this factor were very high indicating that Iranian EFL teachers agreed on the prominent role of the *students' learning and classroom management* as a part of their TQA. It is obvious that to ensure quality, EFL teachers should pay attention to their students' learning and their classroom management skills. In line with these results, Chong & Cheah (2009) believed that the teachers' support contributes to their students' success in learning. Establishing a good rapport as well as creating a warm and supportive classroom environment can also contribute to better student learning. Similarly, according to Popescu-Mitroi et al. (2015), classroom management, which refers to a set of actions taken for creating a supportive and facilitating environment for academic and social learning, should be considered a part of teachers' quality assurance. Therefore, teachers should consider the importance of developing supportive relationships with students, facilitate students' learning, use group management techniques, which engage students in academic tasks, maximize the development of students' social skills, and use proper interventions to help students with behavior problems (Popescu-Mitroi et al., 2015). These studies have claims in line with the findings of this research. Therefore, the awareness of the significance of *students' learning and classroom management* as part of TQA among Iranian EFL teachers highlights its importance in training teachers in teacher education programs to enhance their quality assurance.

The third factor of TQA was related to *working collaboratively* between teachers, colleagues, parents, and students. Looking at the mean scores of the items under this factor, the conclusion was that the Iranian EFL teachers considered *working collaboratively* to have an important role on TQA. The review of the related literature showed similar results. According to Chong and Cheah (2009), collaboration not only enables teachers to receive feedback but also promotes reflection, teacher learning, and continuous development. Additionally, collaboration is an important factor in the professional development of EFL teachers (Hargreaves, 2019; Mousavi et al., 2016; Tavassoli & Farhady, 2018). Positive outcomes have also been reported in using collaboration between teachers and teacher educators in teaching and problem solving (Bennett et al., 1992). Collaboration can inspire and energize teachers to have more professional development and to become a part of a community of practice (Lassonde & Israel, 2009). In the same vein, these

studies show the significance of collaboration in TQA, which cannot be ignored by any means.

The fourth underlying factor of TQA was related to the *students' needs and feelings*. This encompasses values that are relevant to the students' lives both within and beyond the classroom. The findings indicated that the Iranian EFL teachers had high agreements regarding the importance of the *students' needs and feelings* on their TQA. This was in line with the idea that teaching is a personal challenge where practice, personality, and emotions are as important as intellect (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007). Concepts such as the learners' needs, experiences, emotions, and confidence to learn are among the ones which teachers should have positive attitudes toward if they want to be effective (Chong & Cheah, 2009).

The findings in this study showed that Iranian EFL teachers were well aware of the factors contributing to EFL teachers' quality assurance. This might be because of the importance of the topic of TQA and the fact that fortunately, EFL teachers are aware of its underlying factors and their significance in their teaching. Another reason might be that Iranian EFL teachers became familiar with quality assurance in their pre-service and in-service training courses. Therefore, they possess the proper knowledge of the concept. Similarly, Kong and Lai (2023) declared that it is crucial to provide situations where EFL teachers can ensure the implementation of teacher quality in their classes.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Improving EFL teachers' quality assurance, as a necessary part of their continuous professional development, empowers them to improve the teaching and learning quality. Enhancing teachers' expertise and students' learning can be fulfilled through responsive and democratic models of quality assurance (Blake, 1994).

Despite the thriving need of public schools and private language institutes, there is no national standard for EFL teachers' quality assurance in Iran. The present study was an initial step in this direction by developing and validating an EFL TQA questionnaire, which included the following factors: (1) skills and knowledge, (2) students' learning and classroom management, (3) working collaboratively, and (4) students' needs and feelings.

The results of the present study have some implications for EFL policy makers and teacher educators to work toward raising the Iranian EFL teachers' quality assurance to help them have appropriate professional development as well as to provide conditions for teachers to implement teacher quality in their classes. The other implication of the study is for teachers to enhance different aspects of their professional knowledge such as quality assurance to make their teaching more effective. The EFL TQA questionnaire developed in this study

can provide useful information to teacher educators and teachers about teachers' quality assurance. Although it is complex and problematic to evaluate the nature of teaching, accountability and quality assurance in the real working environment are what EFL learners have always expected (Thaine, 2004). Thereby, the TQA questionnaire can be a step in identifying the teachers' level of TQA and improving it through diverse training programs.

The present study was delimited to the VSK model as the theoretical underpinning in developing the TQA questionnaire. Using other models and frameworks, researchers may pay attention to other important aspects of TQA, which escaped our attention, in developing similar questionnaires. Another delimitation of the study was the EFL context of Iran with its unique features. Future researchers are recommended to consider diverse contexts to check different groups of teachers' quality assurance in various parts of the world. More studies are needed on TQA to identify what factors influence it and/or are influenced by it. The relationship between TQA and other teacher variables such as teacher reflection are also necessary. Furthermore, other researchers can focus on more qualitative studies to investigate the nature of TQA, the factors influencing it or being influenced by it, and the teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward TQA.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to all the professors and teachers who participated in this study.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for University Professors on TQA

- 1) What is your idea about TQA?
- 2) What are the quality assurance standards?
- 3) How is it possible to ensure the quality of teachers?
- 4) How can a supervisor ensure the quality of teachers?
- 5) How can a teacher ensure the quality of his/her classroom?
- 6) Which aspect of teacher knowledge is important in TQA?
- 7) What are the components of TQA?
- 8) Do professional development programs of institutions contribute to TQA? How? Why?
- 9) What aspect of teachers' professional skills is important in TQA?
- 10) Are teachers' abilities such as planning, managing, and implementing important in TQA? Why?
- 11) Is the institutions' monitoring and supervision important in TQA? How? Why?
- 12) What factors can help improve TQA?

Appendix B

Teachers' Quality Assurance Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure EFL teachers' quality assurance in their teaching context. There are no right or wrong answers. The information will be kept confidential and will be used just for research purposes.

Name (optional): _____

Age: _____

Gender: male female

Years of teaching experience: _____

Degree: _____

Major: _____

Please read each item carefully and indicate the extent of your agreement with each one.

SA: Strongly agree (5) A: Agree (4) N: Neutral (3)

D: Disagree (2) SD: Strongly disagree (1)

Item	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
<i>Items Corresponding to the Skills and Knowledge Factor</i>						
1	As an adaptive expert in teaching, I desire continuous learning and innovation.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I am aware of the context of teaching, including to whom I teach, where I teach, and what I teach.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I know that teaching today requires qualified professional and thorough pedagogical information.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I try to promote the full development of students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, abilities, or disabilities.	5	4	3	2	1
5	I have an understanding of what is to be taught, learned, and assessed.	5	4	3	2	1
6	I have a clear understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses, and I can make sense of the problems and issues that arise in the classroom and help resolve curricular problems.	5	4	3	2	1
7	I am aware that teaching is becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I am able to develop and choose tasks that are appropriate and meaningful to ensure that all learners can understand the lesson.	5	4	3	2	1
9	As a teacher not only do I need to know how to find the resources, but also how to critically assess and examine the content and skills included in the materials.	5	4	3	2	1
10	I am aware that knowledge about students is needed for teachers so that they can provide the appropriate teaching and learning that meet the needs of every student as they come from different backgrounds and cultures.	5	4	3	2	1
11	I have the knowledge of curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, and classroom management.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I am good at time management, goal setting, planning, and setting priorities for the well-functioning of the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
13	I should merge the theory and practice of teaching and learning, as well as all other aspects of these complex issues to ensure quality preparation of all students for life and work.	5	4	3	2	1
14	I should develop the knowledge of child/adolescent development in order to connect students with the subject matter in meaningful ways.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I possess a basic knowledge of the available materials and resources for different levels and abilities.	5	4	3	2	1

16	I possess the knowledge of alternative pedagogical tools such as classroom management, assessment strategies, and instructional techniques to facilitate and motivate student learning.	5	4	3	2	1
17	I need to form a conceptual model of my teaching in order to question my assumptions about learning.	5	4	3	2	1
18	I understand how to blend content and pedagogy for organizing particular topics for learners.	5	4	3	2	1
19	I have the knowledge of the syllabi, the central topics and assessment modes to make curriculum and assessment decisions to impact my students' achievements.	5	4	3	2	1
20	I try to develop a curricular perspective to learn how to evaluate, select, and organize important theoretical concepts and approaches, and apply teaching in order to help different learners.	5	4	3	2	1
21	I seek to promote tolerance, life-long learning, and open-mindedness.	5	4	3	2	1
22	I can simplify topics and concepts in order to make them more accessible and understandable for students.	5	4	3	2	1
23	I continually criticize my beliefs and values on teaching in order to develop possible and desirable conceptions of teaching.	5	4	3	2	1
Items Corresponding to the Students' Learning and Classroom Management Factor						
24	I should be a continuous learner to maintain my professional effectiveness.	5	4	3	2	1
25	I try to create an environment which is warm and supportive, where students can express their thoughts and feelings freely.	5	4	3	2	1
26	I know that effective communication skills are important for a teacher in transmitting information, managing the classroom, and interacting with students in the class.	5	4	3	2	1
27	I understand my roles and feel responsible as a professional teacher in schools.	5	4	3	2	1
28	As a committed teacher, I perform the roles that my job requires effectively and establish a good teacher-student relationship in accordance with the professional values.	5	4	3	2	1
29	I believe that teachers should be prepared to develop contexts that will support the learning of all students.	5	4	3	2	1
30	I care about my pupils' involvement in purposeful academic learning.	5	4	3	2	1
31	I am concerned about the development of my students and profoundly struggle to keep students' learning.	5	4	3	2	1
32	I try to find ways to understand and use the different strengths that students have.	5	4	3	2	1
33	I believe that the teachers' care and support for all their pupils form an integral part of their success in learning.	5	4	3	2	1
Items Corresponding to the Working Collaboratively Factor						
34	I believe collaboration is an essential element for effective change.	5	4	3	2	1
35	I believe collaboration promotes teacher reflection, promotes teacher learning, and leads to continuous development.	5	4	3	2	1
36	I collaborate with parents, colleagues, and others in the ELT community in planning the instructional program.	5	4	3	2	1
37	I believe collaboration improves moral support, promotes efficiency, and reduces overload.	5	4	3	2	1
38	I believe in collaboration between colleagues since it leads to mutual feedback and induce innovation in teaching.	5	4	3	2	1
39	I try to collaborate with children's parents and engage them in productive school activities.	5	4	3	2	1
Items Corresponding to the Students' Needs and Feelings Factor						
40	I believe it is vital for me to know the students' needs, their learning strategies and styles, personality, motivation, attitude, abilities, and even their background to be able to help them.	5	4	3	2	1
41	I am able to adjust the pacing of my instruction based on the students' needs, form appropriate instructional groups, and assess students' understanding in the moment.	5	4	3	2	1

42	I manage and organize the classroom according to the students' needs and preferences at the beginning of the semester.	5	4	3	2	1
43	I am able to recognize emotions and tune into other people's feelings while still managing my own.	5	4	3	2	1
44	I am responsible to ensure that all students develop to their fullest potential.	5	4	3	2	1
45	I consider the socio-cultural and socio-political contexts of my students.	5	4	3	2	1
46	I possess administrative and management skills in carrying out my roles outside the classroom, like facilitating team work between colleagues, collaborating with the wider learning community, and planning and managing activities.	5	4	3	2	1
47	I am interested in the students' lives out of the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1