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Language
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**A Survey on Knowledge, Dispositions, and Performances of Pre-service EFL
Teacher Training Programs in Iran**

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Dedicated to

My husband, for his continual encouragement;
My daughter, for her unconditional love; and
My mother, for her endless support

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ABSTRACT

To teach English adequately, qualified teachers are needed. Unfortunately, there are still teachers who are teaching English without an academic degree in TEFL. It is necessary for teachers to have a major in English to have subject knowledge, but it is not sufficient. Teachers need to have an understanding of the social, cultural, moral, ethical, and pedagogical issues of education and practice teaching in real situations. Teachers need to have knowledge, dispositions, and performances to support the learners with the needed skills and competences. This study was taken under the form of survey research that yielded descriptive information about English teachers' knowledge, dispositions, and performances. Three questionnaires of 34 items, 37 items, and 52 items consisting of INTASC model standards for beginning teachers were administered to 147 teachers, consisting of 70 pre-service teachers, 37 beginner teachers, and 40 experienced teachers in three successive sessions, each session lasted an hour. The participants self- evaluated themselves by stating their ideas in a five-level *Likert* scale. Statistical analysis revealed that the means of English teachers' knowledge, disposition, and performance scores were 3.27, 3.68, and 3.73 out of 5. These results demonstrated that pre-service English teacher training programs in Iran train knowledgeable and disposed teachers practically. In order to improve the quality of pre-service English teacher training programs, the existing strong and weak points were analyzed by reviewing the related INTASC model principles and at the end, suggestions were presented correspondingly.

Key words: Iran; pre- service programs; Teacher training; knowledge; dispositions; performances; English teachers; INTASC model standards

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview

All the students around the world deserve qualified teachers. So, "there is a pressing need for education for teachers at all stages in their careers which aims to prepare or upgrade teachers' knowledge and skills" (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008, p.10). Studies, like this one, are vital to measure the English teachers' knowledge, dispositions and performances, in order to investigate and consequently improve the quality of English teacher preparatory programs.

The major issues that are discussed in teacher education according to Townsend and Bates (2007) are:

- Globalization and diversity,
- Standards and accountability,
- Teacher preparation,
- Teacher induction,
- Continuous development of teachers,
- The reflective practitioner, and
- The impact of technology.

1.2 Teacher preparation.

Children make the future of every country and education is a future-oriented business because it aims to prepare the children for the future. So, teacher education is even a more future-oriented business because it aims to prepare teachers for future educational purposes of future citizens (Zhao, 2010). Moreover, it is not just preparing any teacher that is important. It is very important to prepare the right teacher, with the right skills for the right situation (Townsend & Bates, 2007).

The term "teacher education" was traditionally used to mean pre-service teacher preparation before being a teacher and joining the teaching profession (Al-Weher & Abu-Jaber , 2007), but in this study "teacher education" and "pre-service teacher training programs" are used interchangeably.

Darling-Hammond, Wei, and Johnson (2008) demonstrate a relationship between teacher education and teacher effectiveness according to various lines of research. Teacher effectiveness affects student learning, so the importance of teacher preparation and teacher learning would become clear.

Moon, Brown, and Ben-Peretz (2000, p.733) have divided teacher education into three stages:

- initial teacher education (pre-service preparation before entering the classroom as a teacher),
- beginning teacher induction (the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school),
- and continuing professional development (an in-service process for practicing teachers).

In Iran, both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs are used. However, there is no induction, there is no support for new-employed teachers. But as Roth and Swail (2000) claim, the 'induction' programs are considered as one of the most important part of teacher education, considering that the first year is often the most difficult year that a teacher experiences. In-service teacher training programs are not well-organized and most of the time teachers complain about the content of these programs. They believe the trainers do not demonstrate any new idea, there's nothing but repeating the same guidelines presented in pre-service teacher training programs. (F. Bahrami, personal communication, May 7, 2012). Although fortunately, Teachers' University is supposed to be organized for the teachers who do not have a Bachelor's degree in 2012, there is not any continuing professional development program for teachers who have a Bachelor's degree and are interested in continuing their education. In spite of all the present deficiencies in the second and third stage of teacher education in Iran, this study investigates the first stage: pre-service teacher education.

1.2.1 Pre-service teacher education.

According to Stover and members of National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2006), English teacher preparation programs are to provide future English teachers with "the confidence in themselves, the knowledge of students, the understanding of their discipline, the awareness of the ways in which context affects education, and the need to make the appropriate choices". The choices are about the goals, objectives, materials, strategies, and assessments. This helps as many students as possible learn and grow in skill, content knowledge, and understanding of self and others. English teacher preparation programs are also going to provide "multiple, diverse, logically sequenced, and well-supervised opportunities" for the future English

teachers to "turn theory into practice and hone these abilities" (p. 4). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) presents six standards for accreditation of teacher preparation programs .The six NCATE standards are:

Standard 1: candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions;

Standard 2: assessment system and unit evaluation;

Standard 3: field experiences and clinical practice;

Standard 4: diversity;

Standard 5: faculty qualifications, performance, and development; and

Standard 6: unit governance and resources (NCATE, 2007, cited in Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008, p. 13).

The first above mentioned standard is surveyed in this study.

There are five conceptual orientations for teacher education:

- the academic orientation,
- the practical orientation,
- technological orientation,
- the personal orientation; and
- the critical/social orientation (Feiman-Nissmer, 1990, as cited in Al-Weher & Abu-Jaber , 2007, pp. 242-243). According to Al-Weher and Abu-Jaber (2007), the academic orientation focuses on developing a strong subject-matter background than on learning pedagogical skills. The Practical orientation focuses on the experience in the classroom as the source of learning to be a teacher. Technological orientation aims at drawing heavily on the results of research on effective teaching and producing teachers that can carry out the tasks of teaching with proficiency. The personal orientation focuses the teacher's own personality as a central part of teacher

preparation. The critical/social orientation aims at preparing teachers to change society. It's not easy and fair to claim that some researchers are, for example, academically oriented or technologically oriented, so here, different researchers' divisions of teachers' knowledge are presented, by which their orientations are clearly obvious.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, as cited in Sharkey, 2004) highlight knowledge for teaching as “inside/outside” in order to draw attention to the ways that teaching does not occur in isolation. Wallace (1991) expresses two kinds of received knowledge and the experiential knowledge through a reflective approach, while Stover, et al. (2006) divide the knowledge into two kinds of knowledge: content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Grossman (2002) refers to teachers' rethinking their subject matter in transforming their content knowledge to pedagogical knowledge and de Courcy (2004) reviews influences of teachers' ways of knowing the world on their pedagogy.

Bigelow and Walker (2004) present two kinds of knowledge, "knowledge -for-practice describes the particular formal knowledge that is characteristic of teacher development: subject matter content, instructional strategies, and effective classroom practices... Knowledge-in-practice refers to a kind of knowledge experienced through actual classroom contact with learners" (p. 2). Bigelow and Walker also present two other kinds of knowledge: "Content and curricular knowledge refers to the grounding of educators in content knowledge and the ways in which knowledge is constructed" (p. 3). Teachers with content and curricular knowledge are able to make the content of the curriculum meaningful to learners. "Pedagogical knowledge is the ability of educators to plan, implement, and evaluate teaching and learning" (p. 3). According to

Berge and Hezewijk (1999), the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge is the distinction between knowing what and knowing how.

Pettis (2002) notes that principles, knowledge, and skills should be integrated to be a professionally competent teacher. Pettis also refers to the critical analysis of the social context in one of the principles: centrality of learner-centeredness in adult ESL instruction; Principles are conceptually the same as dispositions. The teachers need to have subject knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and competences needed to support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education (Donaldson, 2012).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Today we have different universities in Iran. Two common educational systems are State (Government) universities and Azad (Private) universities: In State (Government) universities, 'Teacher Training Centers' (TTCs) were responsible for preparing the teachers several years ago in the form of during two years of simultaneously studying English and the ways of teaching English (Iran-embassy, available at <http://www.iran-embassy-oslo.no/embassy/educat.htm>). TTCs are going to be revived after some years in 2012 with an important change: They are also devoted to teachers who have no college education. Here, I have many questions: Why should the teachers who have no college education major in English? Will they teach English in schools? If the answer is "yes", will they become competent English teachers? If the answer is "No", why should they major in English? What happens to the students who are graduated from different universities in Iran? Who will become English teachers? How are English teachers employed?

Moreover, some of the students enter teaching major just because they are accepted in the entrance exam, without an adequate understanding of the challenges

that the teachers may face including: limited salaries, low prestige, discipline problems, and student apathy (Lasley, 1980, as cited in Bateman, 2004) or without being aware of inherent complexity of English (Grossman, 2002). So, there are many questions about the students' or the would-be teachers' linguistic competences and pedagogic competences: Are they familiar with English grammar, advanced reading/writing, listening and pronunciation, oral communication skills, and vocabulary? If so, are they able to teach English grammar, advanced reading/writing, listening and pronunciation, oral communication skills, and vocabulary? Are they familiar with teaching principles and methods and teaching foreign language to young learners? Are they able to construct tests or analyze the materials?

If the answers to all the above questions are "yes", have they practiced teaching English or Have they any experience in teaching English in schools? Is it possible for a student to receive training under the responsibility of an experienced practitioner? Knowles and Cole (1996) explore the general question: "How might field experiences in pre-service teacher education better prepare teachers for the multiple roles and contextual complexities of life in schools and for careers as inquiring professionals?" How can we find an answer to this question in our country?

While a major in English does not guarantee a deep understanding of the field required for teaching, the fact that people without English majors are teaching English should be accepted as Ingersoll's 1998 study of out-of-field teaching (as cited in Grossman, 2002) presents that nearly one-fourth of teachers who teach English, don't have any certificate in English major.

Wei and Pecheone (2010) refer to the quest for more valid licensing examinations that has led pre-service teacher credential programs to look toward the

use of performance-based assessments that measure teachers' competencies with more authentic instruments, focusing not only on teaching knowledge but on the application of this knowledge in practice. What about teacher education programs in Iran? Do the teacher education programs in Iran provide any evidence that their graduates have learned to teach? Don't we need any changes in the accreditation processes? Don't we need to assess the program outcomes? What is the responsibility of our teacher educators? How do they guide the students toward personal reflection and growth? How do they train the students emotionally, socially, professionally and spiritually?

All the questions can be summarized in one general question: Are English teacher training colleges in Iran able to train competent and qualified teachers both theoretically and practically or (linguistically and pedagogically)?

It seems that evaluation of pre-service English teacher education programs has not been researched much so far according to Coskun and Daloglu (2010), so this study investigates the 2008 NCATE's first important standard of candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in English pre-service teacher education in Iran.

1.4. Significance of the Study

1.4.1. The theoretical contribution of the study. Mulllock (2006) refers to the broadening of the theoretical base of language teacher development programs, including not only what teachers do in the classroom, but also what they know, and how this knowledge is transferred to their teaching behavior, especially as they gain more experience in the classroom.

"...the tripartite knowledge base of EFL teacher training is built on the partnership between universities and schools to support student teachers' language competence, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching competency."(Rahimi, 2008, p.1) She also refers to the division between theoretical and practical knowledge (Dahlman, 2004; Rahimi, 2008), and equalizes it with the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge. Kilic (2009) synthesizes content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge and defines it as "having four components: knowledge of subject-matter, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of curriculum"(p. 1).

On one hand, in some of the above divisions 'dispositions' and 'performances' are neglected: "When program expectations focus primarily on knowledge and skill acquisition, important dispositions are often ignored."(Ros-Voseles & Haughey, 2007, p.3) Zhang and Fang (2005) also refer to teachers' performance as one of the most important issues in education sector; On the other hand, as Habermas (1971, as cited in de Courcy, 2004) state, our ways of looking at the world are described as the empirical-analytical, the situation-interpretive and the critical-reflective.

Roth and Swail (2000) nicely refer to the standards for licensing teachers, containing ten principles: each principle consists of three subcategories of trainee teachers' knowledge, dispositions, and performances. Hawkins (2004) explains that the field of teacher education experiences a huge shift from a technical endeavor (needing to acquire specific skills and practices) to viewing teaching as a cognitive process, with a focus on shaping teachers' thinking and now shifting to critical teacher education, a view of teachers as transformative agents who engage in thoughtful, and reflective critical practices. Darling- Hammond, Wei, and Johnson (2008) refer to the lack of studies that have examined multiple elements of teacher knowledge, skills, and

abilities at the same time; so this study takes account of trainee teachers' knowledge, dispositions and performances simultaneously to integrate different views in teacher education as a technical, professional, cognitive, empirical, socio-cultural, analytical, reflective, and critical process.

1.4.2. The pedagogical contribution of the study. This study hopes to be able to show the existing strong and weak points in Iran's English teacher preparatory programs by investigating the trainee teachers' knowledge, dispositions and performances to improve the quality of pre-service English teacher programs in Iran. By improving the quality of pre-service English teacher programs in Iran, the quality of teaching English will be improved and more competent and effective English teachers will be prepared; Consequently the teachers can teach the students English more confidently and successfully and the students will use English more communicatively and effectively.

The results would be beneficial for both the Education ministry and the Science, research and technology ministry or any language learning environment such as schools, institutes, universities, etc. The teachers, the trainee-teachers, the students, the school principals, the supervisors, the trainers, and also the textbook and syllabus designers are able to account for the results of this research to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education in Iran.

1.5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study poses some questions about the beginner teachers' knowledge, dispositions and performances:

Question 1:

Do English teacher training colleges in Iran train knowledgeable teachers?

Question 2: