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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Exploring Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions about Obligatory Teacher Training Programs: Effects on Professional Development

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| ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of obligatory teacher training programs with a particular emphasis on their professional development. For this purpose, the mixed-methods design was used in the research. 165 Iranian English language teachers with different levels of experience teaching English in Iranian private English institutions took part in this study. They were all between the ages of 22 and 55 and had completed the required teacher training programs. They were academically qualified with bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees, and they were both genders (53 men and 112 women). They graduated from four different academic majors, including linguistics, translation, literature, and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The data were collected using Questionnaires which were sent to them via an online link. The data were analyzed using statistical analysis for the Likert questions and a thematic approach for coding the open-ended questions. The results showed that the teachers generally agreed that the obligatory TTC program provided them with sufficient instruction on many facets of TEFL. The teachers believed that they were in an environment conducive to enhancing their teaching skills. Moreover, the findings of the study indicated that teachers believed the amount of theoretical content in the TTC programs was excessive. In this regard, they found teaching skills to be more beneficial and suggested that they should be emphasized more than theoretical concepts.

| KEYWORDS

Perception, EFL teachers, TTC, professional development

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### 1. Introduction

In the last twenty years, scholars have been more interested in teacher preparation and the urgent need for teacher development (Bayrakçı, 2009; Hammadou, 2004; Lee, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, Sandres and Horn (1998) pointed out that the classroom teacher is the single most significant element in determining a student's academic success or failure. Ballantyne et al. (2008) stressed that teachers at all career levels have an urgent need for education that strives to prepare or enhance teachers' knowledge and abilities in order to stay updated. According to Bayrakçı (2009) and Richards and Farrell (2005), there is a constant need for English teachers to refresh their teaching knowledge and abilities due to the dynamic nature of the language teaching profession and the theory-oriented character of pre-service courses. According to Harmer (2002), there are many ways that teachers can further their professional development, including taking part in action research, attending teacher training courses, reviewing literature from publications like journals, books, and magazines, and exchanging ideas with peers through cooperative learning, team teaching, observation, and membership in associations and groups for teachers. Attending Teacher Training Courses (TTCs) seems to be the most popular approach for Iranian English teachers seeking professional development out of all the techniques listed above (Ganji et al., 2016).

The TTC refers to education programs created to improve the pedagogical abilities, knowledge, and skills of people who are already teaching in different educational contexts or who want to become teachers. These programs aim to provide educators with the know-how and abilities they need to instruct students successfully in their disciplines. The main goals of the English TTCs are to help teachers become more proficient in the language and to help them build their teaching strategies for teaching English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) (Zarabi et al., 2023).

In order to hire the English teachers they need, private language institutions in Iran provide TTCs lasting from 10 to 60 hours. In the Iranian context, initial teacher education is crucial since it is the only course instructor in the majority of institutions. There are also very few if any, workshops for teachers to get on-the-job training or after-employment training (Ganji et al., 2018). Every institution holds its own TTC; yet, there is no standard operating method for these programs. Despite having similar goals of preparing English instructors for the Iranian environment, the institutions' curricula vary greatly (Rezaee & Ghanbarpour, 2016). Since none of these language institutions accept certificates from other institutes for teacher training, it is regrettable that there is such a wide range of opinions among the institutions on a matter of such importance. As a result, candidate teachers for teaching positions must complete different obligatory TTCs at different institutions in order to be hired as English teachers.

There is little research on assessing obligatory English teacher training programs in Iranian private language institutions, despite the field of teacher education being considered to be "underresearched" (Peacock, 2009, p. 260). Studying the shortcomings of English TTCs in Iran is important because the caliber of teacher preparation directly influences the caliber of education in the nation (Zarabi et al., 2023). Khezrlou et al. (2017) contend that teacher preparation is the cornerstone of educational advancement and development and that the caliber of teacher preparation directly impacts the caliber of education in any given culture. As a result, figuring out the shortcomings of Iran's English teacher training programs may help raise the standard of education there (Zarabi et al., 2023). In addition, a current investigation is necessary to look at the drawbacks and negative elements of obligatory TTCs in Iran from a variety of angles, particularly from the standpoint of teachers. The current research thus attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the processes used in Iranian obligatory teacher preparation programs. This study's primary goal was to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of obligatory teacher training programs, with a particular emphasis on their professional development.

## **2. Literature Review**

Studies investigating teacher preparation programs in EFL settings have examined participant perceptions about the program's appropriateness (Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; Mirhassani & Beh-Afarin, 2004; Peacock, 2009) or the implementation of novel training plans or instructional methods to produce more self-reflective teachers.

In exploratory research on pre-service teachers in Taiwan, Ogilvie and Dunn (2010), for example, looked at the effect of a task-based course on trainees' perceptions of the concepts of task-based teaching. Based on quantitative and qualitative studies, the researchers conjectured that while the course enhanced the trainees' attitude toward this kind of training, the positive attitude did not convert into real usage or implementation during the practicum.

Peacock (2009) performed assessment research in Hong Kong and suggested a novel approach for assessing EFL teacher-training programs. The procedure focused on the benefits and drawbacks of the program in addition to how well it suited the teacher applicants' requirements. The model suggested a set of fifteen questions that touch on important areas of the knowledge base, program philosophy, and teacher education model. The program's numerous positive features, such as encouraging introspection and self-assessment and imparting pedagogical skills, were shown by the outcomes. However, the program's drawback was that teaching practice and classroom management techniques received insufficient attention. Using Peacock's (2009) model, Coskun and Daloglu (2010) made an effort to pinpoint the components of pre-service English TTCs that, in the eyes of teachers and students, need upkeep or development. The research was carried out in a Turkish setting. Data collected via surveys and interviews indicated that some aspects of the program, such as the pedagogical side and language competency, needed to be improved.

Additionally, programs specifically designed to prepare teachers have been created for the Iranian EFL market. However, the bulk of the research (e.g., Atai & Asadi, 2014; Hashemian & Azadi, 2010) focused on prepping teachers for the classroom. In one of the first studies, Mirhassani and Beh-Afarin (2004) evaluated the communicative language teaching methodology's use in an Iranian preservice EFL teacher training program. They carried out extensive survey-based research to evaluate the communicative approach's integration into Iranian EFL teacher preparation programs. To this end, 589 participants took part in the research. The results indicated that the majority of participants felt that such programs needed to be revised, that there was a disconnect between what participants expected from the program and their present situation, that participants were unhappy with the program's current state, and that it was difficult to incorporate the communicative approach into the programs.

In a different research, Baniasad-Azad et al. (2016) discovered that because the trainers were only distributing the information provided by textbook writers, they were not even engaged in the program's development. Their results also revealed a mismatch between the programs' actual content and what instructors believed would be beneficial for their own development. There is now a gap between macro plans and teachers' practices and preferences because of Iran's centralized educational system, which excludes practical teachers from the decision-making process.

Ganji et al. (2016) assessed an English teacher preparation program for instructors in Iranian private language schools. In order to assess the English TTC offered at an Iranian private language institution, they reported on a mixed-methods research that included questionnaires with open-ended and Likert-scale questions and accessible materials. Information was acquired from 94 English instructors who participated in the TTC as well as 60 teacher aspirants who applied for it. The data was analyzed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. The results show that while language skills and components instruction, general education, and classroom management were the areas where teacher candidates most required training, the institution prioritized the first area above the second and third. It was also discovered that the TTC gave only limited guidance in classroom management techniques, concentrated more on acquired information than on experience learning, and provided few opportunities for teaching practice and classroom observation.

In order to evaluate the goals and substance of English TTCs offered in Iranian private language institutions and identify their advantages and disadvantages, Ganji et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive study. The information on the websites of 34 institutions, narrative observations of 24 sessions, open-ended questionnaires completed by supervisors in 37 institutions, and semi-structured interviews with six English teachers and six teacher trainers were all used in this study to collect qualitative data. Grounded theory analysis (open, axial, and selective coding) was used to examine the data. They discovered that these courses catered to the demands of the institutions, had a highly convenient timetable, and concentrated on effective teaching methods. Unfortunately, the courses had issues with the trainees' poor general English and teaching technique knowledge, the absence of a documented curriculum, the emphasis on received rather than experiential knowledge, the inhibition of the instructors' creativity, and the shortage of qualified and experienced teacher trainers.

Tajik et al. (2019) examined the quality of teacher training in 420 language schools in the nation using the reflections of 12 starting English language instructors, three supervisors, and three private language institutions with headquarters in Tehran. A multitude of data collection techniques were used, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, teacher diaries, unofficial peer interviews, and observation of infrequent sessions between supervisors and instructors. An inductive analysis method was used for the data investigation process. In the context of concern, there are a number of areas where current language teacher training programs might be improved, including the theory-practice gap, supervised in-service workshops, reflective teaching methods, technology usage, and teachers' experiential learning.

In order to learn more about the opinions of instructors on the state and characteristics of this program, Nikoobin (2021) set out to evaluate TTCs at numerous institutions in Isfahan, Iran. She especially solicited feedback from language teachers on the contents (the themes included in the program, teaching the skills, theory) and the program's features (length, intensity, instructors, practicum). For her rationale, a survey was sent to 34 language instructors asking them to share their opinions regarding the elements of the TTC program. The instructors were also invited to take part in an interview to share their opinions on the general value of the teacher preparation programs they had completed. In general, the findings indicated that instructors were satisfied with the different elements of the program. The teachers thought the program's most helpful aspect and subject matter were the "instructors" and "teaching the skills" parts, respectively.

Zarabi et al. (2023) conducted a critical analysis of Iran's TTCs to identify the primary issues and gaps in the program. Twenty English teachers, including six male and twelve female, teaching general English at five private language schools in Tehran and Mashhad took part in the research. All necessary data were gathered and evaluated qualitatively using a semi-structured interviewing technique. To go even further into the issue, it was noteworthy that the researchers examined over 200 hours of teacher preparation programs in Iran. The data were evaluated using inductive content analysis, and the findings and conclusions revealed many issues with Iran's teacher preparation programs. Lack of theory, lack of choice, lack of supervision in the courses, lack of teacher reflection, lack of technology in education, and lack of attention to instructors' prior expertise were the primary issues identified.

The effect of a teacher education course on pre-service teachers' pedagogical ideas was examined by Khodamoradi (2023). Convenience sampling was used to choose 84 Iranian EFL pre-service teachers who had just been admitted to Farhangian University. Their pedagogical ideas were assessed using a sequential mixed-methods methodology, with a researcher-made questionnaire used both before and after an English TTC on educational philosophy. Furthermore, a thematic analysis of the participants' reflective diaries was used to track the changes that they described. Lastly, they discussed the elements that

contributed to the course's effectiveness in altering their pedagogical views in a focus group interview. Quantitative data findings showed how the training program affected the participants' pedagogical views. Two major themes emerged from the examination of the qualitative data gathered from the reflective journals: growing awareness of new assumptions and embracing new educational principles. These were the changes that the participants reported. Furthermore, the examination of the transcripts from the interviews showed that the participants credited the performance of the teacher educator, the course materials, and the use of suitable teaching methodologies for the course's success.

To examine the drawbacks and negative elements of Iran's obligatory TTCs from the perspective of the instructors, additional research is necessary. Thus, the purpose of this research is to increase our understanding of Iranian teacher preparation programs. The goal of the current study is to close the knowledge gap regarding whether or not Iranian EFL teachers have positive perceptions about obligatory teacher training programs with a focus on their professional development. In order to fill the gap in the literature, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1: In terms of content and duration, to what extent does the obligatory TTC program align with the specific needs and challenges English teachers face in private institutes?

RQ2: How effective are the teaching strategies and assessment methods taught in the obligatory TTC program in managing classroom behavior, promoting student learning, and evaluating student progress?

RQ3: What impact does the provision of collaborative opportunities, constructive feedback, and reflective practice have on the professional development of English teachers enrolled in the obligatory TTC program?

RQ4: How does the obligatory TTC program for private institute English teachers affect their professional growth, including resources, career advancement for Iranian EFL teachers, and overall development?

RQ5: What aspects of the obligatory TTC program did the teachers consider to be the main strengths of the course?

RQ6: What drawbacks did the teachers find in the obligatory TTC program based on the content covered in the course?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Design**

The study's purpose as previously stated, is to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of obligatory teacher training programs with an emphasis on their professional development. The mixed-methods design was used in the research. Using their perceptions of the obligatory TTC programs, a questionnaire was utilized to investigate the current state of teacher training courses offered to Iranian EFL teachers.

#### **3.2. Participants**

One hundred sixty-five Iranian English language teachers with different levels of experience teaching English in Iranian private English institutions made up the study's sample. They were all between the ages of 22 and 55 and had completed the required teacher training programs. They were academically qualified with bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees, and they represented both genders (53 men and 112 women). They graduated from four different academic majors, including linguistics, translation, literature, and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Questionnaires were sent to them via an internet link. The goal of the research was explained to the participants, and they were invited to willingly take part. Additionally, they received assurances that their involvement would remain private and anonymous.

#### **3.3. Instrument**

##### **3.3.1. Questionnaire**

I created the questionnaire to measure teachers' perceptions of the required TTC programs. It was a kind of self-report with two sections. The first section asked participants' age, gender, major, degree of education, and number of years of experience as teachers. The second section included 20 items that were created using a five-Likert scale. It had previously been piloted and had a Cronbach alpha rating of .84. Participants must indicate their degree of agreement with each question on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). There are four components to this questionnaire, which are as follows:

- 1) Program Content and Relevance and Duration: items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 and 18.
- 2) Teaching Strategies and Evaluation: items 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15.
- 3) Professional Support and Feedback: items 7, 16, and 19.
- 4) Professional Growth: items 6, 9, 10, 17, and 20.

### **3.3.2. Open-ended questions**

To discover what teachers think about the different aspects of the TTC, I utilized open-ended questions. To express their views and ideas about the overall usefulness of the teacher training programs they participated in, all participants were obliged to answer the questions. The questions were: 1. How did the obligatory TTC program for English majors impact your teaching skills and knowledge after graduation? 2. What do you consider to be the main strengths of the obligatory TTC program in preparing you for teaching in private institutes? 3. What are the main challenges you faced during the obligatory TTC program? 4. How effective do you believe the obligatory TTC program is in meeting the specific needs of you as an English teacher in private institutes? 5. What are the potential drawbacks or limitations of relying on the obligatory TTC program as the primary qualification for English teachers in private institutes? Teacher opinions on the program's advantages and disadvantages were primarily the subject of open-ended questions.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

As I already mentioned, the study's participants included English teachers who instructed students in English as a foreign language in private English institutions. The approval of the English teachers who took part in the survey was obtained for all processes used in the study. I gave an explanation of the study's objectives and requested that teachers be tentative about the goal of the study so that they would know what sort of information to include on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was sent to the teachers via an online link, with its main goal being to investigate how the teacher participants perceived the teaching training program. The participants were asked to discuss their general views and opinions about the overall usefulness of the required teacher training program via open-ended questions.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in the investigation. The questionnaire's closed-ended questions were used to gather the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to examine the data. The open-ended questions were analyzed by using a thematic approach to coding. Reading the transcripts ample times to identify the major themes and categories was the first step in the analytical process. To aid in the development of the categories connected to the themes, the transcripts were classified line by line. The study questions served as an outline for the categories that emerged using the data.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The first research question aims to explore the extent to which the obligatory TTC program align with the specific needs and challenges English teachers face in private institutes in terms of content and duration. In order to answer this research question, the teachers were invited to fill out a questionnaire in which teachers' perceptions on different characteristics of the program were obtained. Table 1 provides a summary of the frequency and percent of teachers' responses regarding the program content and relevance and duration. The results show that 69.4% of the participants agreed that the obligatory TTC program adequately prepares them for their roles in private institutes. Also, 73.2% of the teachers believe that the content covered in the obligatory TTC program is relevant to the needs of English teachers in private institutes while almost half of the participants (55.6%) think the duration of the obligatory TTC program is sufficient for English teachers to acquire necessary skills and knowledge. 69.2% of the teachers agree that the obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies and techniques for teaching English in private institutes. Furthermore, 61% of the teachers believed that the obligatory TTC program adequately addresses the specific needs of different English proficiency levels among students in private institutes. Finally, 66.4% of the participants think the obligatory TTC program adequately covers the necessary pedagogical theories and methodologies for teaching English as a foreign language. Therefore, it can be concluded from the total score that 65.17% of the participants have a positive perception regarding the program content and relevance and duration in the obligatory TTC program.

**Table 1**

*Participants' Perception Regarding the Program Content, Relevance and Duration in the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Aspect 1: Program Content and Relevance and Duration</b>	<b>SD N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>D N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>N N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>A N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>SA N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Mean (%)</b>
Q1: The obligatory TTC program adequately prepares English teachers for their roles in private institutes.	9 (5.5%)	26 (15.8%)	25 (15.2%)	87 (52.7%)	18 (10.9%)	3.47 69.4%
Q2: The content covered in the obligatory TTC program is relevant to the needs of English teachers in private institutes.	5 (3%)	19 (11.5%)	25 (15.2%)	93 (56.4%)	23 (13.9%)	3.66 73.2%
Q3: The duration of the obligatory TTC program is sufficient for English teachers to acquire necessary skills and knowledge.	27 (16.4%)	50 (30.3%)	27 (16.4%)	53 (32.1%)	8 (4.8%)	2.78 55.6%
Q4: The obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies and techniques for teaching English in private institutes.	10 (6.1%)	31 (18.8%)	26 (15.8%)	69 (41.8%)	29 (17.6%)	3.46 69.2%
Q5: The obligatory TTC program adequately addresses the challenges faced by English teachers in private institutes.	14 (8.5%)	44 (26.7%)	36 (21.8%)	61 (37%)	10 (6.1%)	3.05 61%
Q11: The obligatory TTC program adequately addresses the specific needs of different English proficiency levels among students in private institutes.	13 (7.9%)	42 (25.5%)	37 (22.4%)	65 (39.4%)	8 (4.8%)	3.07 61.4%
Q18: The obligatory TTC program adequately covers the necessary pedagogical theories and methodologies for teaching English as a foreign language.	11 (6.7%)	29 (17.6%)	35 (21.2%)	76 (46.1%)	14 (8.5%)	3.32 66.4%
Total						3.25 65.17%

SD=Strongly Disagree  
a=Number (Frequency)

D=Disagree  
%=Percentage

N=Neutral

A=Agree

SA=Strongly Agree

The second research question aims to investigate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and assessment methods taught in the obligatory TTC program in managing classroom behavior, promoting student learning, and evaluating student progress. As table 2 indicates, 62.4% of the participants agree that the assessment methods used in the obligatory TTC program effectively measure the competence of English teachers. Besides, the obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies for managing classroom behavior and ensuring a positive learning environment based on 68.8% of the participants. 63.8% of the teachers believe that the obligatory TTC program equips English teachers with the necessary skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices. In addition, 64% of the participants think that the obligatory TTC program adequately prepares English teachers to assess and evaluate students' progress effectively. Moreover, as 66.4% of the participants agree, the obligatory TTC program provides guidance on adapting teaching materials and methods to suit diverse learning styles and preferences. Overall, the 65.8% participants are satisfied by the different characteristics of the TTC program with respect to teaching strategies and evaluation.

**Table 2***Participants' Perception Regarding the Teaching Strategies and Evaluation Methods Taught in the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Aspect 2: Teaching Strategies and Evaluation</b>	<b>SD N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>D N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>N N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>A N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>SA N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Mean (%)</b>
Q8: The assessment methods used in the obligatory TTC program effectively measure the competence of English teachers.	12 (7.3%)	36 (21.8%)	45 (27.3%)	63 (38.2%)	9 (5.5%)	3.12 62.4%
Q12: The obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies for managing classroom behavior and ensuring a positive learning environment.	8 (4.8%)	28 (17%)	28 (17%)	84 (50.9%)	17 (10.3%)	3.44 68.8%
Q13: The obligatory TTC program equips English teachers with the necessary skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices.	15 (9.1%)	29 (17.6%)	42 (25.5%)	67 (40.6%)	12 (7.3%)	3.19 63.8%
Q14: The obligatory TTC program adequately prepares English teachers to assess and evaluate students' progress effectively.	10 (6.1%)	38 (23%)	34 (20.6%)	74 (44.8%)	9 (5.5%)	3.20 64%
Q15: The obligatory TTC program provides guidance on adapting teaching materials and methods to suit diverse learning styles and preferences.	8 (4.8%)	30 (18.2%)	38 (23%)	79 (47.9%)	10 (6.1%)	3.32 66.4%
Total						3.25 65.08%

SD=Strongly Disagree  
a=Number (Frequency)

D=Disagree  
%=Percentage

N=Neutral

A=Agree

SA=Strongly Agree

The third research question explores the impact that the provision of collaborative opportunities, constructive feedback, and reflective practice has on the professional development of English teachers enrolled in the obligatory TTC program. Table 3 presents the results of descriptive analysis. 73.2 % of the teachers agree that the obligatory TTC program provides opportunities for English teachers to collaborate and share best practices. Also, 72.8% of the respondents think that the obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to receive constructive feedback and support from experienced mentors. In addition, 70.4% of the teachers believe the obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to engage in reflective practice and self-assessment. In sum, the total score shows 72.1% of participants have positive perception regarding their professional support and feedback in the obligatory TTC program.

**Table 3**

*Participants' Perception Regarding Their Professional Support and Feedback in the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Aspect 3: Professional Support and Feedback</b>	<b>SD N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>D N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>N N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>A N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>SA N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Mean (%)</b>
Q7: The obligatory TTC program provides opportunities for English teachers to collaborate and share best practices.	8 (4.8%)	19 (11.5%)	17 (10.3%)	97 (58.8%)	24 (14.5%)	3.66 73.2%
Q16: The obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to receive constructive feedback and support from experienced mentors.	5 (3%)	15 (9.1%)	34 (20.6%)	91 (55.2%)	20 (12.1%)	3.64 72.8%
Q19: The obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to engage in reflective practice and self-assessment.	3 (1.8%)	22 (13.3%)	39 (23.6%)	87 (52.7%)	14 (8.5%)	3.52 70.4%
Total						3.60 72.1%

SD=Strongly Disagree  
a=Number (Frequency)

D=Disagree  
%=Percentage

N=Neutral

A=Agree

SA=Strongly Agree

The fourth research question seek to find how the obligatory TTC program for private institute English teachers affects their professional growth, including resources, career advancement for Iranian EFL teachers, and overall development. Table 4 demonstrates the results of the analysis. It is shown that 69.8% of the teachers think that the obligatory TTC program enhances the professional development of English teachers in private institutes. Also, 58.8% believe that the resources and materials provided in the obligatory TTC program are sufficient for English teachers' professional growth which is almost low. In addition, the obligatory TTC program encourages continuous learning and self-improvement among 66.4% of the English teachers in private institutes. Moreover, 67.4% of the participants agree that requiring Iranian EFL teachers to participate in the obligatory TTC program will lead to increased job opportunities and career advancement for them. And in the last item, 74% of the teachers believe the obligatory TTC program for English teachers in private institutes has a positive impact on their professional development. The total score for the professional growth show that 67.2% of the participants have a positive perception regarding their professional growth in the obligatory TTC program.



**Table 4***Participants' Perception Regarding Their Professional Growth in the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Aspect 4: Professional Growth</b>	<b>SD</b> <b>N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>D</b> <b>N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>N</b> <b>N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>A</b> <b>N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>SA</b> <b>N<sup>a</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b> <b>(%)</b>
Q6: The obligatory TTC program enhances the professional development of English teachers in private institutes.	8 (4.8%)	24 (14.5%)	24 (14.5%)	97 (58.8%)	12 (7.3%)	3.49 69.8%
Q9: The resources and materials provided in the obligatory TTC program are sufficient for English teachers' professional growth.	15 (9.1%)	54 (32.7%)	31 (18.8%)	55 (33.3%)	10 (6.1%)	2.94 58.8%
Q10: The obligatory TTC program encourages continuous learning and self-improvement among English teachers in private institutes.	10 (6.1%)	27 (16.4%)	41 (24.8%)	73 (44.2%)	14 (8.5%)	3.32 66.4%
Q17: Requiring Iranian EFL teachers to participate in the obligatory TTC program will lead to increased job opportunities and career advancement for them.	13 (7.9%)	25 (15.2%)	35 (21.2%)	71 (43%)	21 (12.7%)	3.37 67.4%
Q20: Overall, I believe the obligatory TTC program for English teachers in private institutes has a positive impact on their professional development.	17 (7.3%)	17 (10.3)	20 (12.1)	75 (45.5%)	41 (24.8%)	3.70 74%
Total						3.36 67.2%

SD=Strongly Disagree  
a=Number (Frequency)

D=Disagree  
%=Percentage

N=Neutral

A=Agree

SA=Strongly Agree

The last two questions (RQ5 and RQ6) were analyzed based on the teachers' opinions on the program's strengths and drawbacks which were primarily the subject of open-ended questions. Research question five asked about the aspects of the obligatory TTC program in which the teachers consider to be the main strengths of the course. Teachers were asked to respond to the open-ended prompts to address this research question. All participating teachers provided their perspectives on several components of the TTC program, including its duration, relevance, course trainer, and practicum. They gave comments on all of these aspects, as well as on none of them, which is displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5***Participants' Response Regarding the Strengths of the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Duration</b>	16	10.00	10
<b>Relevance</b>	26	16.25	26.25
<b>Course Trainer</b>	42	26.25	52.50
<b>Practicum</b>	28	17.50	70.00
<b>All of them</b>	31	19.37	89.37
<b>None of them</b>	17	10.63	100.00
<b>Total</b>	160	100	

According to the table above, the teachers included in this survey identified Course Trainers as the primary advantage of these programs, with a percentage of 26.25%. Nevertheless, a portion of individuals held the belief that practicum (17.50%), relevance (16.25%), and course duration (10%) were also advantageous in acquiring sufficient teaching abilities. A minority of instructors

(19.37%) found all components of the TTC program to be practical, whereas a smaller percentage (10.63%) believed that none of the aspects were beneficial.

Research question six explores the drawbacks that the teachers find in the obligatory TTC program based on the content covered in the course including topics covered in the program, teaching the skills, and theory. According to Table 6, the main drawback from the perspective of the teachers was the theoretical aspect, which accounted for 35.2%. Twenty-nine and twenty-five teachers chose "none of the contents" and "all of the contents" as the least practical aspects of the program. The second least practical aspect of the program, "Topics covered in the program," was picked by 23.75% of the participants. Additionally, 7.5% of the teachers identified "teaching the skills" as the least beneficial topic in the TTC course.

**Table 6**  
*Participants' Response Regarding the Drawbacks of the Obligatory TTC Program*

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Topics</b>	38	23.75	23.75
<b>Teaching the Skills</b>	12	7.50	31.25
<b>Theory</b>	56	35.00	66.25
<b>All of them</b>	25	15.63	81.88
<b>None of them</b>	29	18.12	100.00
<b>Total</b>	160	100.00	

Upon analyzing the questionnaire, it was determined that the teachers generally agreed that the obligatory TTC program provided them with sufficient instruction on many facets of TEFL. The teachers believed that they were in an environment conducive to enhancing their teaching skills. This environment provided guidance on self-evaluation as language teachers, imparted classroom management techniques, encouraged reflection on past experiences, and prepared them for their role as language teachers. Overall, this environment directly addressed their specific needs. The teachers picked some elements of the questionnaire and indicated their strong agreement with them. These items addressed whether the course was updated with regards to methodology, whether the program emphasized flexibility in utilizing various teaching practices for different situations, whether the teachers believed that the TTC program achieved a balance between teacher-centered and student-centered learning, and finally, whether the course effectively taught teachers how to teach English. Overall, the teachers unanimously agreed that the training was beneficial and applicable to their needs.

The findings of this study closely corresponded to the conclusions obtained by Shahmohammadi (2012) about the status, objectives, nature of the curriculum and organization, teaching methods and assessment techniques used, educational agencies involved, and the strengths and limitations of both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in Iran. After conducting many interview sessions, Shahmohammadi determined that recent advancements in the approach to student-centered learning and qualitative evaluation had significantly improved teaching in our specific environment. The findings of this study contradict the conclusions of Birjandi and Derakhshan Hesari (2010). Birjandi and Derakhshan Hesari found that while most teachers were generally satisfied with the TTC program, they believed that these programs were unable to improve their proficiency in listening, reading, and oral skills.

This research also aimed to investigate the overall perceptions of language teachers regarding various components of TTC programs. The main objective of this research was to assess the current state of TTC programs in terms of their length, content, and relevance. The primary discovery of this research component was that teachers regarded instructors as the most valuable elements of the curriculum. Following the teachers' feedback about the study questions, teachers usually held the belief that the program they participated in did not include any elements that were deemed useless. The findings of this section were in line with the findings of Soontornwipast (2008), whose research demonstrated that program stakeholders who participated in pre-service teacher courses had favorable opinions of their language teachers. The findings further demonstrated that the training had a substantial effect on teachers' readiness to become English teachers.

The findings aligned with Abbasian and Imani's (2012) assessment of the modular EFL program in Iran, which examined the viewpoints of teachers and students. An analysis was conducted on the viewpoints of the teachers, focusing on five essential

factors: entrance standards, curriculum, resources, instructional and assessment techniques, and graduation and job requirements. In terms of program content, the teachers generally felt that the pre-requisite courses, training sequence, course goals, credit allocation, and balance between theory and practice were well addressed.

The results also revealed that, according to the teachers' perspectives, the most valuable aspect of the TTC program was "teaching the skills", while the least beneficial aspect was "theory". The teacher participants in the research perceived that the pre-service courses they took were mostly generalized and lacking emphasis, highly abstract, and not immediately applicable to their teaching duties. Consequently, a significant portion of their required knowledge must be acquired after they begin working. Nevertheless, the findings were consistent with Güllü's (2007) study, which aimed to examine the efficacy of an English curriculum. The participants in Güllü's research identified many issues linked to the course, such as the complexity of the course material, the lack of relevance in the course materials, the absence of engaging elements, and insufficient motivation and interest. In stark contrast to the present research, the results also revealed that the program failed to meet the students' expectations and requirements. A proposal was made to provide a significant overhaul and enhancement of the sequence.

## 5. Conclusion

The primary objective of the present research was to ascertain the existing state and attributes of the teacher education programs in Iran. Specifically, the present study sought to investigate teachers' impression of the most pragmatic parts and substance of the teacher preparation course. The current research demonstrated that teachers unanimously acknowledged that the TTC program enhanced their teaching abilities and prepared them to become language instructors. As previously said, teachers had differing perspectives on the most practical features and substance of the curriculum.

Considering the findings of the research and the issues that were addressed, it seems that the program has to be revised to effectively use the available possibilities. The following comments and recommendations may lead to enhancements and modifications in various elements and content of the program. The investigation revealed that the instructor participants voiced discontentment with the length and level of intensity of the program. Specifically, the teachers held the belief that the program's flaws were exacerbated by the allocated time, supplies, and necessary tasks. To address this issue, it is recommended that the duration of TTC courses be extended beyond their existing length.

The study of questionnaire answers indicated that teachers had mostly negative sentiments toward the inclusion theory in TTC programs. While acknowledging the importance of theory in language education, some expressed dissatisfaction with the course's excessive focus on theoretical aspects. Hence, it is advisable to reduce and restrict the theoretical components of the curriculum to the core topics. In addition, it would be beneficial to provide teacher participants with both electronic and non-electronic resources to enhance their understanding of the theoretical components of TEFL.

## 6. Study Limitations and Future Research

This study had some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, it focused only on graduate Iranian EFL teachers with English majors, which reduces the representativeness of the findings to a broader population from other majors. Furthermore, some participants answered open-ended questions with short phrases or sentences that did not include precise information effectively. While close-ended questions are appropriate for data collection, gathering detailed answers for open-ended questions can help to reach a saturation point more efficiently. Lastly, although 165 Iranian EFL teachers participated in this study, a larger sample size could have provided more comprehensive data, thereby increasing the generalizability of the findings.

For future research, several suggestions could be explored. First, it would be beneficial to explore why graduates with academic degrees in English majors still require training in teaching skills, especially in TEFL majors, despite completing numerous related courses during their schooling. Furthermore, researchers can conduct a new study to explore EFL teachers who graduated from various majors or hold English teaching certificates. Additionally, researchers could explore the relationships between the degree of usefulness of TTC programs and variables such as age, proficiency level, and years of experience. Finally, another potential area of inquiry is whether Iranian EFL students are satisfied with those teachers who participate in TTC programs. To this end, this could be evaluated by assessing students' progress before, during, and after the course.

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**Appendix**

## Questionnaire of the Obligatory Teacher Training Course programs

	Statement Likert questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The obligatory TTC program adequately prepares English teachers for their roles in private institutes.					
2	The content covered in the obligatory TTC program is relevant to the needs of English teachers in private institutes.					
3	The duration of the obligatory TTC program is sufficient for English teachers to acquire necessary skills and knowledge.					
4	The obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies and techniques for teaching English in private institutes.					
5	The obligatory TTC program adequately addresses the challenges faced by English teachers in private institutes.					
6	The obligatory TTC program enhances the professional development of English teachers in private institutes.					
7	The obligatory TTC program provides opportunities for English teachers to collaborate and share best practices.					
8	The assessment methods used in the obligatory TTC program effectively measure the competence of English teachers.					
9	The resources and materials provided in the obligatory TTC program are sufficient for English teachers' professional growth.					
10	The obligatory TTC program encourages continuous learning and self-improvement among English teachers in private institutes.					
11	The obligatory TTC program adequately addresses the specific needs of different English proficiency levels among students in private institutes.					
12	The obligatory TTC program provides effective strategies for managing classroom behavior and ensuring a positive learning environment.					
13	The obligatory TTC program equips English teachers with the necessary skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices.					
14	The obligatory TTC program adequately prepares English teachers to assess and evaluate students' progress effectively.					
15	The obligatory TTC program provides guidance on adapting teaching materials and methods to suit diverse learning styles and preferences.					
16	The obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to receive constructive feedback and support from experienced mentors.					
17	Requiring Iranian EFL teachers to participate in the obligatory TTC program will lead to increased job opportunities and career advancement for them.					
18	The obligatory TTC program adequately covers the necessary pedagogical theories and methodologies for teaching English as a foreign language.					

19	The obligatory TTC program offers opportunities for English teachers to engage in reflective practice and self-assessment.					
20	Overall, I believe the obligatory TTC program for English teachers in private institutes has a positive impact on their professional development.					

**Open-ended questions:**

1. How did the obligatory TTC program for English majors impact your teaching skills and knowledge after graduation?

*Please describe any changes or improvements you noticed in your teaching abilities as a result of completing the TTC program.*

2. What do you consider to be the main strengths of the obligatory TTC program in preparing you for teaching in private institutes (Duration, Relevance, Course Trainer, Practicum)?

*Please provide specific examples or aspects of the program that you found valuable for your teaching practice.*

3. What are the main challenges you faced during the obligatory TTC program?

*Please elaborate on any difficulties or obstacles you encountered while completing the TTC program and how they may have affected your teaching.*

4. How effective do you believe the obligatory TTC program is in meeting the specific needs of you as an English teacher in private institutes?

*Please provide your assessment of how well the TTC program caters to the unique requirements and demands of teaching English in Iranian private institutes.*

5. What are the potential drawbacks or limitations of relying on the obligatory TTC program as the primary qualification for English teachers in private institutes?