



## Teacher Trainer And Syllabus; A Case Study

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### Abstract

Due to the overwhelming desire in the field of English language teaching and learning all across the world; therefore, considering teacher education, and training some qualified and professional teachers are paramount. In order to have a good teacher, a qualified teacher trainer is required. This study reports a qualitative case study to find out how the participant became a teacher trainer and is there any differences between the technical terms of teacher trainer and teacher educator or not. Besides, there is an attempt to figure out the syllabus covered in teacher training courses in private English language institutes in Iran. Hence, the researcher applied a semi-structured online interview to collect data. Data analysis disclosed that there is a standard test in order to become a teacher trainer and there is a difference between mentioned technical terms as well. Further, the most part of teacher training course syllabus is designed to just teach the language and very little attention is given to the psychological aspects of teaching.

**Key words:** teacher training; teacher education; syllabus; case study; teacher trainer



## Introduction

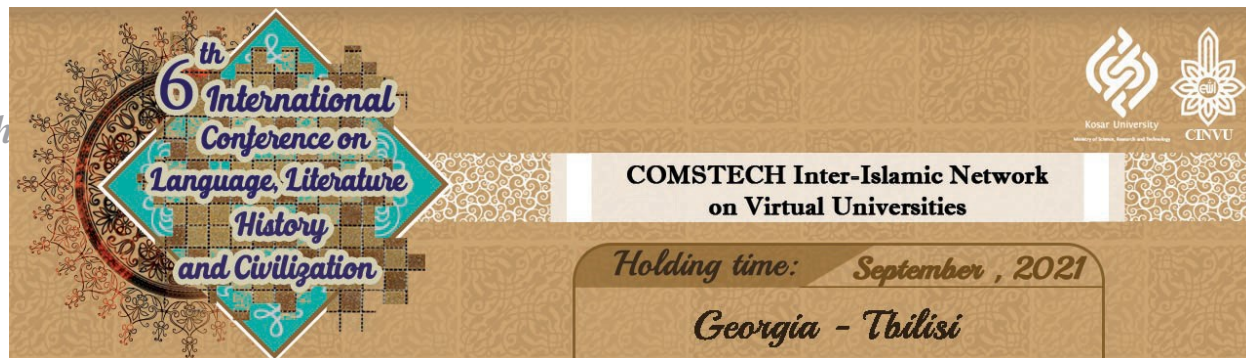
Often the transition from teacher to teacher educator is problematic (Trent, 2013). The challenges faced by teacher educators, teacher trainers or mentor teachers may include tensions between the value of abstract knowledge and work-based practice, uncertainty about what a teacher educator should be, the challenges of developing a new pedagogy, personal and professional isolation, and the stress associated with participating in a research culture (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Martinez, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Swennen, Shagrir, and Cooper, 2008). Reflecting on such difficulties, “Wood and Borg (2010) conclude that the journey from teacher to teacher educator represents “a rocky road”” (Trent, 2013, p. 1). Mentor teachers, also known as cooperating teachers, field-based teacher educators or related teacher educators, are often found to play the most influential role in the learning of preservice teachers to be trained in their programs (Clarke et al., 2014; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2020; Wang & Odell, 2002). None of the studies in their review discusses the professional development of educators in this position (Blaise & Elsdon-Clifton, 2007; Carroll, 2005; Willemse, Lunenberg, and Korthagen, 2005; Kosnick & Beck, 2008; M. Bouckaert & Q. kools, 2017); moreover, the teacher trainer role in preparing new teachers was somehow in a shadow in Iran. The important fact about this study is that it is aiming to investigate the teacher educator selection in the private English language institutes that has a direct effect on prospective teachers who will be trained by the educator and future students’ performance gains, while most of the previous studies are concerned about school process of preparing teacher educators. In addition, lack of literature and attention to this fundamental issue in Iran makes this study paramount as well. Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide qualitative data about how someone can become a teacher educator in private English language institute and what materials and concepts are being covered during a teacher-training course in these private institutes. This article starts with a literature review in the teacher training, teacher trainers/educators and teacher training course syllabus. Then, an overview of the research method will be given, afterward the result and discussion is presented.

## Literature review

### Teacher training course

In the early 1980s, teacher training emerged as a priority in the work of the Council of Europe (see Trim 2007 for a historical account of modern language teaching in Europe). “It is not clear how the work on LTE (language teacher education) being done in continental Europe and that in the UK and USA interfaced. As a field of inquiry (i.e. one which is systematically researched and theorized), it is only in the last twenty years that LTE has emerged” (Borg, 2009, p. 1).

### Teacher training or teacher education?



There is some ongoing debate about the use of the terms teacher education and teacher training (Allwright, 2001; Johnston, 2008). According to one interpretation of this debate, teacher training is a narrower method involving mainly skills learning, while researcher education often explores information and arrangements more broadly (to use a common framework), i.e., it "educates" the teacher in a broader and more comprehensive way (Johnston, 2008).

#### Teacher educator/ trainer

The educator is teacher of teachers (Murray, 2002; Murray & Male, 2005; Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen, 2007). Teacher creation in North America is generally seen as something that teacher educators and teacher trainers do with working teachers (Johnston, 2008, p108). Besides, identity emphasis was seen as one means of improving comprehension of the perspectives of early teacher educators (Boyd & Harris, 2010; McKeon & Harrison, 2010; Trent, 2013). Since it is believed the transition from teacher to teacher educator can effect on identity of the person to understand who s/he is and who s/he thinks other people are (Danielewicz, 2001). Trajectory identity draws emphasis on boundaries, which describes "different enterprises, different ways of engaging with one another, different histories, repertoires, ways of communicating, and capabilities" (Wenger, 2003, p. 84) that present through communities (Trent, 2013). Besides, there is a research by Murray and Male (2005) that concluded it took up to 3 years to develop an identity as a teacher of teachers (Loughran, 2014). Furthermore, Davey (2013) explained how the "academization" of teacher education as a discipline was significant in shaping teacher education (Loughran, 2014).

#### Syllabus

In specific, the curriculum may refer to a general framework or program, a course assessment that outlines learning goals and objectives for each session, or the actual teaching and learning materials used in the classroom (M. Bouckaert & Q. kools, 2017). According to Graves (1996), whose study involved language teachers as curriculum developers, the Terms course, curriculum, and syllabus have been assigned definitions by their users that often overlap (M. Bouckaert & Q. kools, 2017).

In the study conducted by Adu-Yeboah and Kwaah (2018) about an on-campus teacher training, it was mentioned that "while observing the trainees' lessons, the areas of interest to the study were the aspects the questionnaire sought information on, which were the stages of the lesson, mastery of subject matter, methods/strategies employed, well prepared teaching and learning materials, their appropriateness and use, classroom management, and lesson evaluation" (p. 7). Besides, most teacher training courses contain 'practicum' in their course syllabus which is very influential on student-teacher experience and improvement, however, preparing prospective teachers for practicum seems crucial in the first place. As Adu-Yeboah and Kwaah (2018) mentioned "as part of the preparation for practicum, we suggest that teacher educators should conduct demonstration lessons for trainees to observe firsthand, and from experienced professionals how theories for





teaching specific subjects are applied in real/contrived situations” (p. 12). Moreover, it is based on the idea that the curriculum is a central aspect of teacher education programs and that teaching curriculum content for student teachers was a major concern for teacher educators (Hwang, 2014; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014). In an extensive review study of the literature on the professional roles of educators Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen (2013) concluded that little research has been conducted to discover the role of curriculum developer. M. Bouckaert and Q. kools (2017) carried out a research in Netherlands to explore how educators themselves perceive their role as curriculum developers, which is a proof to consider teacher educators as curriculum developers. “The educator must not only *tell* students how to teach well but must *show* them how” (Johnston, 2008, p. 110).

## Method

The aim of this case study was to explore the teacher training course syllabus and the way someone is selected as teacher educator/trainer in private English language institutes of Tehran. The online semi-structure interview was conducted to gather related qualitative data. Digital recordings of the interview as well as interview notes, the transcriptions were transferred to a computer in order to be reviewed by the researcher. Afterward, gathered data were analyzed via ‘grounded theory’ practice (Charmaz, 2006) and a coding scheme was developed after the researcher’s initial review of the data by means of an approach informed by grounded theory, which consists of “simultaneous data collection and analysis, with each informing and focusing the other” (Charmaz, 2014: 508). Since, “the advantages of semi-structured interviews are that they allow for more emic, emergent understandings to blossom, and for the interviewees’ complex viewpoints to be heard without the constraints of scripted questions” (Tracy, 2020, p. 158), it gave me more ground to interpret the data based on my own understanding and knowledge.

## Results & discussions

The finding and discussion section are presented under the main areas mentioned in literature of current study.

### Teacher trainer/educator

To become a teacher trainer in private English language institutes of Tehran, the participant of the current study earned her IELTS in Iran, CELTA, DELTA and the specific certificate for teacher training, KELT, out of Iran that took her about two years to become a certified teacher trainer. As she said in the explanation of the difference between teacher trainer and teacher educator:



*Actually, when it comes to CELTA and you earn it, so this is completely a kind of education but when it comes to DELTA you can be a trainer for CELTA trainees, so you can be both educator and trainer at the same time. But as for the foreign universities, you will be considered an educator when you earn your PHD and work as an assistant professor at university for 3 years and then you can be name as educator.*

Therefore, she knows herself as a teacher trainer not educator at least in Iran. To answer the questions of ‘how did you become a trainer? And is there any standard test for that?’ she replied:

*Of course, so as far as DELTA is concerned, you must have IELTS with band score of 8.5 with speaking and writing of 9 and then you have to go through all the courses of DELTA and then you have to teach under the requirement of CELTA and DELTA for 120 hours. So then, you will be qualified enough to be a trainer for CELTA seekers. And then if you want to be a trainer in the Middle East you must ace the KELT which is an exam and again you have some boundaries for your IELTS score and you must have DELTA with scoring of B, A or A candidate. So, just pass cannot be accepted.*

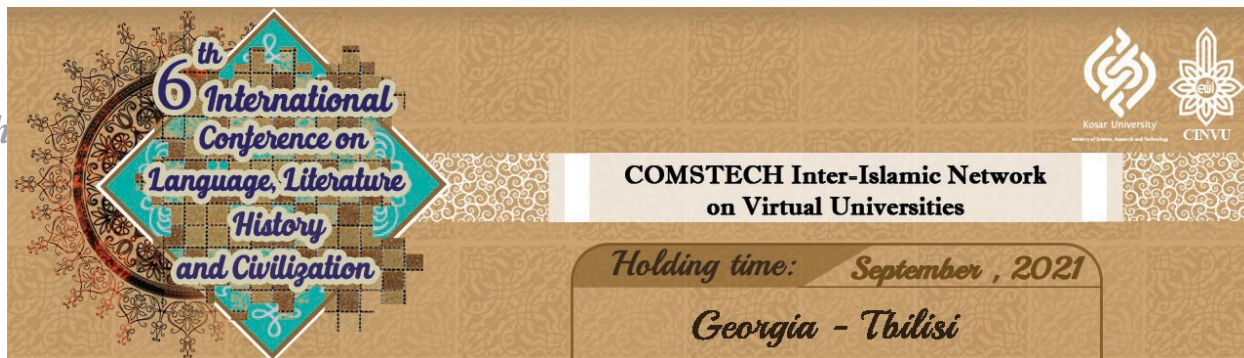
In addition, in answer of ‘for becoming a teacher trainer in Tehran, did ‘institutes’ considered these qualifications, too or there were some other qualifications to become a trainer in Tehran?’, she explained that just having a good score in IELTS exam and some years of experience would be enough for most of the private English language institutes in Tehran. Moreover, based on analyzed data, in Tehran private English language institutes, the ‘training’ is happening for prospective teachers instead of educating; besides, the teacher-training course for novice teachers will take at least a month, but in some cases, it will last for 2 months; it depends on their performance and their demo sessions, as she explained. Comparing to the current literature it was explored that at least three years were needed for a pre-service teacher to become a teacher, by considering the fact that this estimated time was for school teachers, yet one or two month seems pretty low for private English language teacher while most of them are even uncertified in the field of English language.

## Syllabus

The teacher trainer in private English language institutes has not a complete authority over course syllabus and its development and the private institutes has their own policies for teacher training courses.

*Some institutes, they have their own policies and because they follow special footsteps and then you have to trace them as well and you have to pass on the same education to the future teachers, so definitely they provide you with some session on how to be unified in terms of training the teachers.*

As Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen (2013) notified, teacher educators are curriculum developers but in Tehran, it appears not to be like that.



The psychological issues such as ‘teacher cognition’ based on Borg (2003) definition, ‘it refers to the teaching and learning which continue to exert what teachers know, believe, and think’, is not considered in teacher training courses in private English language institutes in Tehran and as mentioned earlier the courses are just about training the teaching tips and some skills:

*For the cognition, no, we provided the teachers with some OJTs (on the job training) revolving their cognition. Because that was a very difficult topic for the new teachers.*

She also continued by explaining about the most of course syllabus in private English language institutes in Tehran:

*When it comes to the syllabus, so definitely there were class management, time management, creativity, how to teach videos, how teach reading, how to teach listening, how to teach writing, how to teach receptive skills, you know, how to teach different ways of that, error correction, delayed error correction, so they were all part of the syllabus. And we had something like contextualization and stuff like that and the ‘ESA’ so engagement, study and activation. Further, for the more advanced level, we teach them with freer practice and stuff like that but ESA was the main core of the syllabus.*

Besides, some ‘observation’ sessions, to take part in other teacher’s classroom as observer, are involved in some syllabus but most importantly, no ‘practicum’ was included to put the prospective teachers in a real teaching environment under the supervision of a mentor that can probably be so helpful to increase their job quality. As previous studies suggests the practicum would be somehow necessary:

*Woodward (1991), echoing the work of Argyris and Schön (1974), offered the notion of “loop input,” in other words, using the teacher education classroom itself to demonstrate the kinds of techniques to which one is referring. If, for example, as a teacher educator you recommend to your students that they use pairwork, or journals, or process writing, instead of simply describing these things you can use them in your own classroom as a demonstration and to allow students to experience them first-hand.*

(Johnston, 2008, p110)

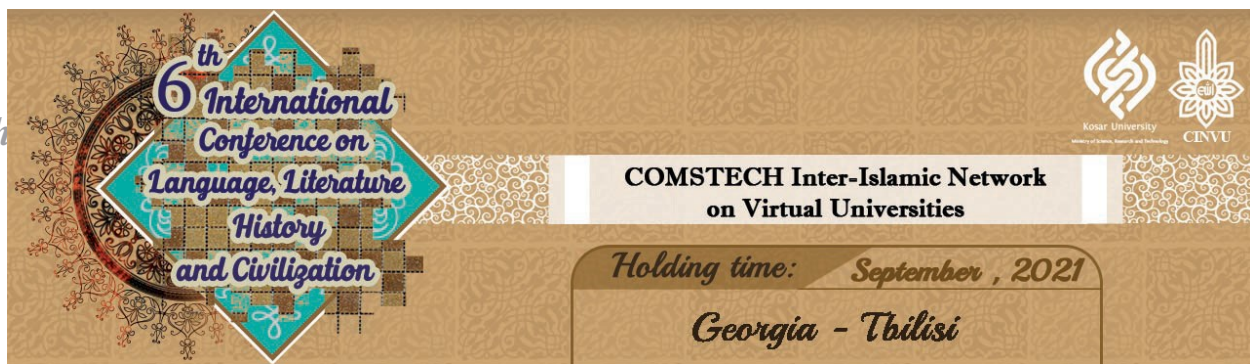
To see if there are any teacher educator courses in Iran, she replied that as far as she is concerned there are not any courses independently in private English language institutes and it is possible that some Institutes take the endorsement of some universities or some Institutes from other countries in order to hold the teacher educator course in Iran, but due to the sanctions and other difficulties like traveling, it seems that there is no longer any teacher educator courses in Iran at the moment.





## Conclusion

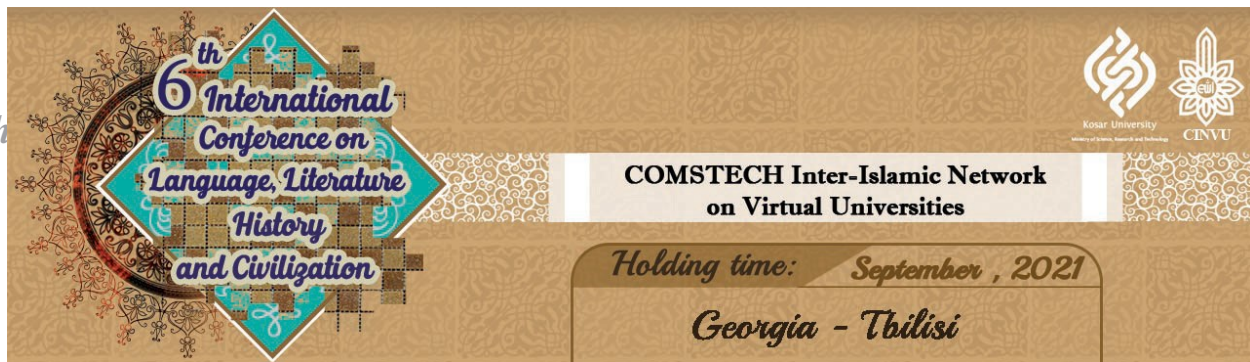
The aim of this study was to become aware of the process that someone can become a teacher trainer/educator in private English language institutes of Tehran and to know what issues are mostly covered in teacher training courses in these private language institutes. After data analysis and literature review, some interesting points were discovered. Firstly, it seems that the teacher education courses in private English language institutes of Tehran are way behind the global standard of teacher preparation and training. Secondly, the course duration is definitely not enough for most of candidates that maybe are not qualified enough to be a teacher so soon. Thirdly, it is known that psychological aspect of teaching is undeniable and it may result in identity change in a positive manner, but it appears that it has been ignored in the teacher training courses of private English language institutes of Tehran that this ignorance can cause serious consequences in the prospective teachers' future job related experience. Most importantly, there is not any practicum sessions involved in most of private institutes' syllabus, which is significantly recommended, since all of the theories taught in these courses need to be put in practice to become valuable. At the end, the fact that there is not any teacher trainer courses in Tehran at the moment is somehow shocking, since there are a lot of rich resources such as universities that can provide institutes with incredible teacher trainer courses and syllabus that consequently will affect the prospective teachers' training and change the status que of the private English language in Iran for better.



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