

A Closer Look at EFL Teacher Education and the Role of Mentoring in Iran: Teachers' Attitudes in Focus

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IJEAP-1909-1441

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Received: 2019-09-01

Accepted: 2019-11-01

Published: 2019-11-04

Abstract

This survey study aimed to investigate the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers towards EFL teacher education and the role of mentoring in Iran. In so doing, 235 EFL language teachers in public schools (PSs) from 108 cities and 30 EFL teacher educators in various branches of Farhangian University (FUs) from 9 cities were invited to give their attitudes through using two close-ended questionnaires in relation to factors such as (i) employment of EFL teachers and teacher educators, (ii) in-service EFL teacher training programs, (iii) mentoring in EFL teacher education and (iv) the system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education. The study concluded none of the various ways of EFL teacher employment in Iran enjoys the standards of in-service developmental programs offered by the Ministry of Education. Similarly, the employees do not experience any mentoring scheme in their career and hence their teaching is rarely subjected to any feedback or evaluation. Moreover, the respondents believed that even the in-service programs did not gain their objectives as they generally suffered from inefficient planning as well as ineffective tutors. Such ideas were evident in the responses of both PS teachers and teacher educators at various branches of FU. The study, therefore, suggests that serious thoughts need to be put into EFL teacher education programs of the country, and that effective mentoring and evaluation schemes have to be included in them.

Keywords: EFL Teacher Education, Mentoring, In-service Education, Evaluation Scheme

1. Introduction

Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) is central to ensuring the quality of the learning experience of many English language learners (Richards, 2008). Teacher training and teacher professionalism are the two main issues in teacher education. Teacher training is how to make a good teacher (Motallebzadeh, 2012). Teacher training programs should also give an opportunity to observe and experience good models of alternative instructional practices (Yamada, 2018). Further, *Professionalism* in teacher education refers to the overall quality of being a subject matter specialist or educator that helps become an effective teacher (Oder, 2008).

Quality assurance and management in teacher education programs are vital for “the continuous improvement of the content, delivery and development of teacher education programs” (Chong, 2013, p.1). Furthermore, teacher education grounded in practice can also increase teacher retention (Feiman-Nemser, Tamir, & Hammerness, 2014) and enhance teachers' future practical competence in the classroom (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005). However, according to Darling-Hammond, Burns, Campbell, Goodwin, Hammerness, Low, McIntyre, Sato and Zeichner (2017) and Wright (2010), despite the vital position and the importance of SLTE to L2 teaching, it is a somewhat neglected area in the professional literature compared with the continuing professional development of second language teachers.

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EFL mentoring is also “an important developmental shift for new teachers to move away from a focus on self and toward a focus on learners” (Athanasas, 2013); it is a process of socializing, (Lin, Wang, Spalding, Klecka & Odell, 2011) modeling (Baker & Maguire, 2005), challenging (Johnson, 2002) and supporting (Jucovy, 2001c) pre-service and in-service teachers. In Iran, though teacher education which began in 1918 (Mehrmoammadi, 2017) is still *ignored* in practice, “EFL teacher training like other teacher training majors needs even more consideration in Iran, due to the low-quality training systems available to these teachers” (Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013, p. 535). Thus, with the concern of what is happening in EFL teacher education in Iran and whether the stakeholders are satisfied with the situation, the present study was run. The survey reported here aims to shed light on the process of EFL teacher employment, pre/in-service education, and mentoring in Iranian context and to find out if there is any deficiency to consider.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies on Teacher Education World Wide

The worldwide demand for English according to Mahmood (2014) has created enormous demand for *quality* language teaching and teaching materials and resources. Foreign language teaching and learning creates many obstacles and problems in the “structure” (Wright, 2010, p. 271) and “process” (Wright, 2010, p. 273) of SLTE that teachers and learners in second language contexts do not essentially have to deal with. For example, Zhu, Deng and Li (2014) believe that there exist some serious problems concerning the mode of teaching and one of their suggestions is that “the mode of teaching should be conducted on the precondition of quality control or guarantee” (p.163). Another example is quality control which is an important issue in teacher education and has a direct relationship with the effectiveness of teachers (Goker, 2006; Richards, 2008). These concerns have implications for teacher preparation at both pre-service and in-service levels (Russell, Bebell, O'Dwyer & O'Connor, 2003)

Scheeler, Ruhl and McAfee (2004) believe that teachers who try to implement new teaching methods must receive regular *feedback* about the impact of their new practices on student learning; this may be accomplished through feedback provided by *mentors* or *supervisors*. According to Mok (2007), the demand for high-quality teachers cannot be met without high-quality teacher education and teacher education institutes need to seek ways to continually improve academic staff, program design and delivery, administrative procedures and support services.

In addition, in order to implement teacher education in the right path, it is important not only to *inform* new teachers about the standards in teacher training programs, but also to help them *implement* them within the unique contexts of their schools Delaney (2012). “*Mentors* or *supervisors* can facilitate the implementation of standards by acculturating the new teacher into school policies” (Delaney, 2012, p.185). Mentoring is still an underdeveloped area (Ulvik & Sunde, 2013). What makes mentoring role even more important is that the responsibility of field-based teacher education falls on mentors and supervisors (Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002). Mentoring is also considered as a key strategy in supporting new teachers and in-service teachers (Lai, 2010). Studies such as Delaney (2012) and Wesely (2013) have also shown the importance of technology in supporting and sustaining mentoring relationships; they found that once initial teacher training is over, teachers often continue to improve their practice through participation in online communities (Delaney, 2012; Wesely, 2013).

2.2. Studies on Teacher Education in Iran

In the context of the teacher education in Iran, there are various defects such as low-quality training systems; for example, Alhossaini and Ketabi (2013) believe that “teacher training needs serious changes in terms of the degree of practicality needed for a vocational practice of teaching due to the low-quality training systems available to these teachers” (p.535). In another study Safari and Rashidi (2015) reported that one of the factors which make the educational system of Iran unable to generate proficient learners is “the lack of the pre-service and in-service classes for EFL teachers”

(p. 25). They concluded that “EFL teacher educators have lost the right path and that “the present situation does not let them as the transformative agents to create changes in their classes” (p. 26).

In the context of mentoring EFL teachers in Iran several imperfections have also been announced, for example, Mahdavi and JafarZade (2014) concluded that “instead of one-shot *workshops*, it is better to conduct the training programs throughout a school year and offer EFL teachers’ opportunity to discuss their experiences with a qualified mentor” (p. 224). Soleimani and Zanganeh (2014) believe that “successful strategies for promoting [language teaching] skills include strengthening partnerships; and creating quality mentoring and support programs” (p. 1808), and one of their pedagogical implications is that “a good mentor-mentee *structure* can provide opportunities to learn from experienced teachers” (p. 1809). Studies which were conducted on the employment conditions of EFL teachers and teacher educators such as Sadeghi and Sa’adatpourvahid (2016) emphasize the importance of EFL teacher employment in Iran. Thus the present study aims to address the following research questions:

Research Question One: What is the process of EFL teacher employment in Iran?

Research Question Two: How are pre/in-service programs run in the context of EFL teacher education? Do stakeholders view them positively?

Research Question Three: Does monitoring have any role in the context of EFL teacher education in Iran? If so, how is it implemented?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were invited through convenience sampling. There were 235 EFL teachers in PSs and 30 EFL teacher educators in FUs. All the participants were in-service in their work places. The PS teachers were 60 (26%) males and 175 females (74%). They were selected from 108 cities across the country. FU teacher educators were 23 (77%) males and 7 (23%) females. They were selected from various branches of FUs located in 9 cities. All the participants were Persian native speakers and their age range was 25 to 50+. See the demographic data in table 1.

Table 1: The participants’ Demographic Data

Groups	Jobs	Sex		Age Range
		M	F	
1	EFL School teachers in PSs	60, (26%)	175, (74%)	25 to 50 +
2	EFL teacher educators in FUs	23, (77%)	7, (23%)	36 to 50 +

3.2. Instruments

The study began with a set of semi-structured interviews with fifteen expert participants to inform the development of its questionnaires. Through the interviews, an item pool which comprised 70 items for both questionnaires (One for PS teachers and the other for FU teacher educators) was constructed. Then, ten EFL expert judges and experts with background in language teacher education were requested to express their comments on the clarity and coverage of the items to make sure of its face and content validity (Dörnyei, 2003). The questionnaires were also *piloted* by 18 respondents before they were applied in the main research. Then finally two questionnaires were presented to the participants: (1) A 34-item questionnaire for EFL school teachers which collected data for the research questions in the context of PSs; and (2) A 33-item questionnaire for EFL teacher educators which collected data for the research questions in the context of FUs. The two surveys had acceptable Cronbach’s Alphas greater than 0.70 (*questionnaire 1*: 0.854 & *questionnaire 2*: 0.863) for internal consistency.

The questionnaires used 5-point Likert scale and were in the respondents’ native language. They began with the objectives of the research. The participants were told that the questionnaires

were designed to evaluate the *current* implementation of EFL teacher education and the role of mentoring in EFL teacher education in Iran. The first section of each questionnaire collected respondents' personal information. The second section of each questionnaire focused on the applicants' opinions about issues concerning the implementation of EFL teacher education and the role of mentoring in EFL teacher education in Iran.

The items in the questionnaires were then grouped into clusters using a priori clustering. The four clusters of each questionnaire were selected, grouped, edited and judged separately by the decisions of three expert judges. They had agreement on the names of the clusters and their following items in each questionnaire. The items of each questionnaire were categorized under *four themes* such as employment of EFL teachers and teacher educators, in-service EFL teacher training programs, mentoring in EFL teacher education, and system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education for both school teachers in PSs and teacher educators in FUs (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: The specifications of the clusters of questionnaire 1 for PSs

No	Clusters	Items	Cronbach's Alphas	Descriptions
1	The employment of the teachers	1,2	0.687	The implementation of the provision & the employment of the teachers
2	The in-service EFL teacher training programs	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,17,18	0.696	The implementation of the in-service EFL teacher training programs
3	The EFL Mentoring	15,16,19,21,22,23,24,26	0.761	The implementation & the role EFL Mentoring
4	The Evaluation & Feedback system	20,25,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34	0.862	The implementation of the evaluation & feedback system

Note. Time allocated = 30 minutes

Table 3: The specifications of the clusters of questionnaire 2 for FUs

No	Clusters	Items	Cronbach's Alphas	Descriptions
1	The employment of the teachers	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	0.692	The implementation of the provision & the employment of the teachers
2	The in-service EFL teacher training programs	8,9,10,11,12,13,14,17,19	0.689	The implementation of the in-service EFL teacher training programs
3	The EFL Mentoring	15,16,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,28	0.749	The implementation & the role EFL Mentoring
4	The Evaluation & Feedback system	18,27,29,30,31,32,33	0.856	The implementation of the Evaluation & Feedback system

Note. Time allocated = 30 minutes

3.3. Procedures

Data collection procedure was through using two close-ended questionnaires. Basic ethical principles of data collection issues in survey research were followed based on Dörnyei's (2003, p. 91) discussion of ethical issues in survey research and all stages of data collection procedure. The two main questionnaires were prepared both virtually and in paper. The paper copies were delivered in person and the virtual forms of the two questionnaires were emailed or sent to the participants through social media. The completed questionnaires were delivered in person or virtually sent back to the researcher to be processed.

The same procedures were also written on the virtual questionnaire forms and were sent to the participants through email or social media; the email and cell phone number of the researcher

was also included to reply any questions or inconveniences. The data collection began on May 12 and ended on November 26 in 2017. Finally, many participants completed the surveys; however, only the participants who were EFL school teachers in PSs and EFL teacher educators in FUs were chosen for data analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the close-ended questionnaires were summarized in the form of percentage. The questionnaires used 5-point Likert scale, but here for the sake of space, those teachers and teacher educators who either *agreed strongly* or just *agreed* with the statements fell under the category of *Agree*, and those who either *strongly disagreed* or just *disagreed* fell under the category of *Disagree*. The negative and positive items of the questionnaires were also taken into consideration. In order to answer the research questions an exploratory factor analysis (principal component analysis) was performed. This analysis was undertaken in order to find patterns in the answers, which were shown as factor loadings that have high agreement rates among the learners.

The data obtained through the questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively using version 21.0 of the SPSS. First, a set of descriptive data analyses were conducted to examine the normal distribution of the variables across the research instruments. Secondly, the reliability estimates of the instruments total were calculated in terms of Cronbach's Alpha. Thirdly, the item statistics including the mean, the standard deviation and the number of the applicants and the inter-item correlation matrix were measured. Fourthly, in order to analyze the qualitative data gathered through the descriptive questionnaires, the researcher utilized and calculated descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, SD and range. The results of the qualitative data analysis were presented in the form of tables.

4. Results

The results of the research are presented in four parts. They are the beliefs about (1) the process of EFL teacher employment, (2) the in-service EFL teacher training programs, (3) the EFL mentoring programs and (4) the evaluation & feedback system.

Beliefs about the process of EFL teacher employment in Iran: The analysis of responses by school teachers in PSs related to the employment of the school teachers (Mean item score range: 1.99- 2.44; SD range: 1.169 – 1.237, see table 4, survey 1) indicates that only the employment of new civil service teachers is believed to be provided with FU graduates (60.4%) but the employment of the new *contract teachers* is not provided with FU graduates (34.90%).

The analysis of responses by teacher educators in FUs related to the employment of the teacher educators (Mean item score range: 1.77 – 4.50; SD range: 0.69 – 1.38, see table 4, survey 2) reveals that the registration of the new students in FUs is believed to be provided with National Organization of Educational Testing candidates (96.7%) but the registration of the new students in FUs is not through recruiting contract teachers (6.70%); new registered students in FUs do not have a B.A (Bachelors' Degree) before entering FUs (3.30%); this means that new registered students in FUs are the high school graduates (diploma holders) of the society; registered students in FUs are in the employ of the ministry of education (93.3%). FUs have university faculty members (93.3%) and the employment of new university teacher educators in FUs is provided with civil service teachers of schools under the supervision of the ministry of education who hold a masters' degree or a Ph.D. degree (96.7%) but based on the importance of manpower, FUs do not invest on EFL teacher education (26.60%).

Table 4: The employment

Item No.	%*	Mean	SD
Survey 1: School teachers (PSs)			
1	60.40	2.44	1.237
2	34.90	1.99	1.169
Survey 2: Teacher educators (Fus)			
1	96.70	4.50	.682
2	6.70	1.77	.817
3	3.30	1.63	.669
4	93.30	1.77	.898
5	93.30	4.23	.898
6	26.60	2.57	1.382
7	96.70	4.40	.675

*%=Percentage of the teachers who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to the items.

Beliefs about the in-service EFL teacher training programs: The analysis of responses by school teachers in PSs related to the in-service EFL teacher training programs of the school teachers (Mean item score range: 1.74 – 2.77; SD range: 0.89 – 1.28, see table 5, survey 1) shows that new *civil service teachers* are believed to take part in EFL teacher training programs before they start teaching (67.70%) and while teaching (72.8%); *the new contract teachers* also take part in EFL teacher training programs before they start teaching (61.3%) and while teaching (64.6%); the in-service EFL teacher training programs are not regularly held according to the pre-set schedules (44.6%) and they are held according to the one-shot-session schedules (65.5%); the in-service EFL teacher training programs are held according to contents and the number of the hours requested by the educational heads (44.7%), for the same item 43.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue; the final (ultimate) decision makers for the number of in-service EFL teacher training sessions are the finance department officers (48.9%); the teachers still hope to receive a higher degree (B.A, M.A or Ph.D.) after receiving a certain number of in-service EFL teacher training sessions (48.1%) for the same item 42.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue; the contents of in-service EFL teacher training workshops are theoretically presented in speeches (62.1%); the contents of in-service EFL teacher training workshops are practically presented (53.7%) for the same item 41.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue; there is in-service EFL teacher training programs during the school year (46.4%) but 43.4% agreed or strongly agreed with the issue; the in-service EFL teacher training plans are held and implemented only when the books are changed (59.6%); the teachers are not obliged to take part in the in-service EFL teacher training plans (62.9%).

The analysis of responses by teacher educators in Fus related to the in-service EFL teacher training programs of the teacher educators (Mean item score range: 1.47 – 2.97; SD range: 0.56 – 1.15, see table 5, survey 2) indicates that the new university teacher educators in Fus are *not* believed to take part in in-service EFL teacher training programs before teaching (13.30%); the in-service EFL teacher training programs in Fus are *not* regularly held for the university teacher educators according to the pre-set schedules (20.0%); the in-service EFL teacher training programs in Fus are held for the university teacher educators according to the one-shot-session schedules (96.7%); the in-service EFL teacher educators training programs in Fus are held according to the contents and the number of the hours requested by the educational head (70.0%); the results also showed that the final (ultimate) decision makers for the number of in-service EFL teacher educators training sessions in Fus are the finance department officers (46.7%); the contents of in-service EFL teacher educators training workshops in Fus are theoretically presented in speeches (76.7%); they are *not* practically presented (16.60%); the teacher educators are not obliged to take part in the in-service EFL teacher training plans (86.7%); internet is *not* used for EFL teacher education in Fus (80%).

Table 5: The in-service EFL teacher training programs

Item No.	% *	Mean	SD
Survey 1: School teachers (PSs)			
3	67.70	2.77	1.188
4	61.30	2.57	1.250
5	72.80	2.75	1.135
6	64.60	2.59	1.142
7	44.60	2.26	1.060
8	65.50	2.14	.907
9	44.70	2.17	1.112
10	48.90	1.74	1.289
11	48.10	2.21	1.239
12	62.10	2.13	.976
13	53.70	2.43	1.033
14	43.40	2.20	1.100
17	59.60	2.16	.894
18	62.90	2.04	.960
Survey 2: Teacher educators (Fus)			
8	13.30	1.63	.890
9	20.00	1.90	.803
10	96.70	1.57	.568
11	70.00	2.97	1.033
12	46.70	1.67	1.155
13	76.70	1.87	.776
14	16.60	1.73	.907
17	86.70	1.83	.834
19	6.70	1.47	.819

*%=Percentage of the teachers who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to the items.

Beliefs about the EFL mentoring programs: The analysis of responses by school teachers in PSs related to the EFL mentoring programs (Mean item score range: 1.66 – 2.46; SD range: 0.88 – 1.29, see table 6, survey 1) indicates that the teacher observation is *not* believed to be conducted (33.20%); the supervision plans of EFL teachers are changed when the politicians of the country change (56.2%); the educational heads or the mentors have no executive power to change the ineffective EFL teachers (76.2%); the EFL teachers *do not* have formal mentors at schools (15.40%); the EFL teachers *do not* have informal mentors at schools (39.20%); the EFL teachers are permitted to create changes in their classes (58.3%); due to lack of mentor's participation there are no limitations in the language teaching methodology of the teachers (65.6%); the EFL teachers are allowed to discuss their experiences with a qualified mentor (36.20%)

The analysis of responses by teacher educators in Fus related to the EFL mentoring programs (Mean item score range: 1.47 – 3.30; SD range: 0.57 – 1.40, see table 6, survey 2) indicates that the supervision of the practice of the EFL teacher educators is *not* believed to be through teacher observation in Fus (3.30%); the supervision plans of EFL teacher educators in Fus are changed when the politicians of the country change (73.4%); the EFL teacher educators *do not* have formal mentors in Fus (10 %); the EFL teacher educators have informal mentors in Fus (63.3%); the EFL student teachers have mentors for EFL teaching in Fus (76.6%); the EFL student teachers have mentors for class observation in Fus (90.0%); the EFL student teachers have informal mentors in Fus (83.3%); in Fus the EFL teacher educators are permitted to create changes in their classes (80.0%); due to lack of mentor's participation there are no limitations in the language teaching methodology of the teacher educators in Fus (86.7%); the EFL teacher educators in Fus are allowed to discuss their experiences with a qualified mentor (66.7%)

Table 6: The EFL Mentoring programs

Item No.	% *	Mean	SD
Survey 1: School teachers (PSs)			
15	33.20	1.94	1.069
16	56.20	1.84	1.158
19	76.20	1.66	.889
21	15.40	1.68	.908
22	39.20	2.02	1.291
23	58.30	2.46	1.106
24	65.60	1.97	.960
26	36.20	2.13	1.054
Survey 2: Teacher educators (Fus)			
15	3.30	1.53	.571
16	73.40	1.47	1.042
20	10.00	1.73	.640
21	63.30	1.77	1.165
22	76.60	2.83	1.262
23	90.00	3.30	.750
24	83.30	1.80	.805
25	80.00	2.83	1.020
26	86.70	1.73	.691
28	66.70	2.53	1.408

*%=Percentage of the teachers who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to the items.

Beliefs about the evaluation & feedback system: The analysis of responses by school teachers in PSs related to the evaluation & feedback system (Mean item score range: 1.82 – 1.91; SD range: 0.87 – 1.02, see table 7, survey 1) indicates that the system of evaluation and feedback is conducted with non-experts (the administrative staff) in EFL teaching (68.1%); there is *not* a supervision system at PSs which present clear and specific information about what the teachers are doing (17.90%); there is *not* a mentoring structure at PSs to provide opportunities to increase the quality of EFL teaching (20.40%); there are *no* structures to inform new teachers about the standards in education and training programs at schools (21.70%); PSs do not have quality mentoring systems to support mentoring programs (20.00%); they do not have supportive programs for mentoring (21.70%); they also do not have a structure for collecting data through the use of teachers structured journals (26.00%); they do not have a structure to collect data for evaluating EFL teachers (21.70%); they do not have a structure for using the computer network for monitoring (26.40%); they do not have a structure for mentors to create opportunities for group mentoring (23.00%).

The analysis of responses by teacher educators in Fus related to the evaluation & feedback system (Mean item score range: 1.57 – 1.97; SD range: 0.86 – 1.15, see table 7, survey 2) indicates that the system of evaluation and feedback is conducted with non-experts (the administrative staff) in EFL teaching in Fus (83.40%); there is *not* a supervision system in Fus, which present clear and specific information about what the teacher educators are doing (16.60%); there is *not* a structure to inform new teacher educators about the standards in education and training programs in Fus (23.30%); Fus do not have a structure for collecting data through the use of teacher educators structured journals (30.0%); they do *not* have a structure to collect data for evaluating EFL teacher educators (30.0%); they do not have a structure for using the computer network for monitoring (20.00%); they do *not* have a structure for mentors to create opportunities for group mentoring (23.40%).

Table 7: The evaluation & feedback system

Item No.	% *	Mean	SD
Survey 1: School teachers (PSs)			
20	68.10	1.87	1.022
25	17.90	1.78	.902
27	20.40	1.87	.908
28	21.70	1.86	.954
29	20.00	1.82	.878
30	21.70	1.90	.898
31	26.00	1.89	.947
32	21.70	1.82	.904
33	26.40	1.91	1.008
34	23.00	1.85	.979
Survey 2: Teacher educators (Fus)			
18	83.40	1.80	.961
27	16.60	1.73	.868
29	23.30	1.73	1.048
30	30.00	1.97	1.159
31	30.00	1.93	1.143
32	20.00	1.57	1.104
33	23.40	1.87	1.042

*%=Percentage of the teachers who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to the items.

5. Discussion

Beliefs about the process of EFL teacher employment in Iran: From the general picture based on the data analysis of the surveys it can be *inferred* that that FUs is not the *only* channel for the employment of new civil service or contract teachers in Iran. This also supports Alhossaini and Ketabi (2013, p.528) and Fallahi and Saberi (2016, p. 721) about the multiple channels for the provision of the employment of new civil service and contract EFL teachers for schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education; the multiple channels of employment are not believed to be in line with (1) in-service EFL teacher training programs, (2) mentoring in EFL teacher education and (3) the system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education; this does not support Sadeghi and Sa'adatpourvahid (2016) who showed the importance of consideration and attention on this issue.

Based on the statements of the leader of the Islamic Revolution who stressed to the officials to regard Fus with seriousness and invest on it as much as they can (Khamenei, 2017), it is *believed* that that the officials invest on Fus *but* based on the importance of manpower, Fus are not believed to invest on EFL teacher education. The attitudes show a controversy. Their attitudes implies that the investment is based more on other issues rather than the EFL teacher education which is the main focus of Fus because according to items of surveys it is believed that the officials have *not* regarded the EFL teacher education in Fus with *seriousness* on *structure* and the *process* and the investment has not been focused on appropriate EFL teacher education yet; this does not support (Soleimani & Zanganeh, 2014, pp. 1808-1809; Langhout, Rhodes and Osborne (2004), pp. 303-304; Garza, 2009, p. 13)

Beliefs about the in-service EFL teacher training programs: Since the EFL teacher trainers or the EFL mentors are not the ultimate decision makers for the in-service EFL teacher training sessions it is implied that the *structure* and the *process* of in-service EFL teacher training programs are *not* seriously well-implemented in PSs; the results support Safari and Rashidi (2015) because of the “the lack of the pre-service and in-service classes for English language teachers” (p. 25), the educational system of Iran is unable to generate proficient learners; the results do not also support (Soleimani & Zanganeh, 2014; Langhout et al., 2004; Garza 2009,); the beliefs also show that the

supervision plans of EFL teachers are changed when the politicians of the country change; it can be implied that these changes *affect* the stability of the supervision plans, processes and structures; therefore, because of the lack of formal mentors and teacher observations, school teachers' EFL teaching and teacher educators' mentoring practices are *not* modified in the same direction which obviously impedes the creation of quality mentoring and support programs; this belief implies that a good mentor-mentee structure will *not* clearly be provided to create opportunities to learn from experienced teachers; this also does not support Zhu et al. (2014) who believe that "the mode of teaching should be conducted on the precondition of quality control or guarantee" (p.163). Finally, it is believed that due to *lack* of mentor's participation on the one hand, there are no limitations in the language teaching methodology of the EFL teachers, on the other hand, the in-service EFL teacher training programs are *not* regularly held according to the pre-set schedules and the EFL teachers are not obliged to take part in the in-service EFL teacher training plans; this does not support Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002). A typical example of such ill-implemented structure of in-service EFL teacher training programs is that a plan is introduced to school teachers but is never practiced or implemented in the system, for example, teachers still hope to receive a higher degree (B.A, M.A or Ph.D.) after receiving a certain number of in-service EFL teacher training sessions. It is also believed that the contents of in-service EFL teacher training workshops are theoretically presented in speeches and they are implemented mainly when the *books* are changed. Data analysis based on the attitudes about in-service programs for *teacher educators* in Fus revealed that in-service EFL teacher educators training programs have *no* formal serious *structure, process* and role in Fus.

Beliefs about the EFL mentoring programs: Based on data analysis on attitudes about the EFL mentoring programs in PSs it is believed that due to lack of formal or informal mentor's participation, teacher observation is *not* conducted in PSs, therefore there cannot be any defined EFL mentoring programs and *no* feedbacks are received from the teachers to create EFL mentoring programs to mentor PS teachers; the situation is exacerbated where administratively, the educational heads or the mentors have *no* executive power to change ineffective EFL teachers and EFL teachers are permitted to create [any] changes in their classes consequently and there are no limitations in the language teaching methodology of the teachers; such EFL mentoring programs do not support Delaney (2012) who believe "mentors or supervisors can facilitate the implementation of standards by acculturating new teachers into school policies and identifying contextual factors that foster or hinder standards' implementation" (p.185).

Fus are believed to have a mentoring structure (both formal & informal) for *student teachers* just because it is part of the formal curriculum of the universities but from the data analysis based on the EFL mentoring programs in Fus, it can be inferred that due to lack of formal mentor's role and participation, teacher educators' observation is *not* believed to be conducted in Fus. Since there is no defined structure to observe teacher educators, no feedback is received or given to them and no EFL mentoring programs are implemented to mentor Fus' teacher educators. They are permitted to create [any] changes in their classes consequently there are *no* limitations in their language teaching methodology and they are allowed to receive any information from any sources; this does not support Delaney (2012), Mok (2007), Wang and Odell (2002) and Wedell (2003) who assert that mentoring is considered as a good way to introduce positive change into educational programs.

Beliefs about the evaluation & feedback system: According to data analysis on attitudes about the system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education for school teachers in PSs and teacher educators in Fus, there are *no* formal or informal evaluations & feedback *processes, structures* or *systems* for EFL language school teachers in PSs and teacher educators in Fus; this does not support Chong (2013). The main reason is due to lack of mentoring role, *no* formal processes and structures for mentoring and supervision systems have been assigned in both PSs and Fus for EFL teaching in Iran; this also does not support Athanases, 2013; Lemke and Fadel, 2006; O'Dwyer, Russell, and Bebell, 2004; Penuel, 2006 who believe the system of evaluation and feedback provides a route for teaching and it presents a framework for regulating the quality of language teaching practices (Smith, 2000), which in the simplest form involves the policies of an

education system, curriculum, and aims and a key challenge in improving the quality of our education system by ensuring that teachers are well prepared (Chong, 2013).

6. Conclusion and Implications

The present study was performed to explore the *attitudes* of EFL teachers towards the implementation of EFL teacher education including the process of EFL teacher employment and the pre/in-service programs. It also explored the role of mentoring in Iran. The findings of the study showed that (1) the process of employment of EFL teachers and teacher educators, (2) pre/in-service EFL teacher training programs, (3) mentoring in EFL teacher education and (4) system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education are believed to be ill-implemented and that mentoring has no formal roles among EFL school teachers in *PSs* and teacher educators in *FUs*. Putting all obtained data together, it can be inferred the EFL teachers and teacher educators believe EFL mentoring and pre/in-service programs in EFL teacher education context in Iran are not *still* in the right path; they believe EFL teacher education and EFL mentoring in Iran are not planned, organized, implemented, communicated, maintained and evaluated well enough to improve the quality of EFL teacher education and mentoring.

These results also suggest that serious thoughts need to be put into teacher education programs in Iran and that effective mentoring and evaluation scheme has to be a vital part of them, the officials should seriously plan, organize, implement and maintain the administrative and educational *structures* and *processes* for (i) the employment of EFL teachers and teacher educators, (ii) the in-service EFL teacher training programs, (iii) mentoring EFL teacher education and (iv) the system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education of EFL teachers and teacher educators in both *PSs* and *FUs*. The findings of this article may bring about certain implications regarding the aforementioned factors.

The results indicated that the employment of new contract teachers is not provided with *FU* graduates and the registration of new students in *FUs* is not through recruiting contract teachers. This does not provide contract teachers with the mentoring and teacher education strategies and techniques based on the policies of the *FUs*. The priority of registration of students in *FUs* should be with B.A (Bachelors' Degree) holders rather than the high school graduates (diploma holders) of the society. Now there appears a controversy, the employment of new university teacher educators in *FUs* is provided with civil service teachers of schools under the supervision of the ministry of education who hold a masters' degree or a Ph.D. degree, but the employment of B.A (Bachelors' Degree) holders are not provided with *FUs*. If registered students in *FUs* are in the employ of the ministry of education from the beginning of their teacher education why the employment of B.A (Bachelors' Degree) holders' degrees are not provided with *FUs*; they already are more familiar with their educational EFL course contents curriculums than the high school graduates (diploma holders) of the society. Therefore, it is strongly recommended not to ignore the employment of the B.A (Bachelors' Degree) holders' for EFL teacher training purposes in *FUs*.

Currently, there is a vague implementation of in-service EFL teacher training programs, EFL mentoring programs and the evaluation and feedback system for EFL school teachers in *PSs* and teacher educators in *FUs*. There are also many controversies and mismanagements in planning, organizing, implementing, communicating, maintaining and the evaluating of the four factors mentioned in *PSs* and *FUs* in Iran. EFL teacher education and mentoring in Iran deserve successful quality control which has been formally neglected and *not* appropriately established and *not* nationally implemented yet. These deficiencies and imperfections in EFL teacher education and mentoring in Iran can be easily and gradually avoided, removed and resolved by implementing computerized and internet-based structures and processes for the four the aforementioned factors.

The results may be beneficial to the top decision makers, officials, politicians and the teacher educators in *FUs* and *PSs* as by providing information concerning (1) the reality of current beliefs about implementation, deficiencies and imperfections of EFL teacher education and mentoring programs in Iran (2) the decisions on employment of EFL teachers and teacher educators, in-service EFL teacher training programs, mentoring in EFL teacher education and system of evaluation and

feedback in Iranian teacher education and therefore identifying and controlling the items or factors that may unfairly work to the advantage or disadvantage of the EFL teachers and teacher educators. Therefore, identifying and controlling the factors which work to the advantage or disadvantage of EFL learners, teachers and teacher educators could be one of the objectives obtained.

Due to the lack of successful evaluation, feedback and quality control studies in an Iranian context, the present research could be insightful to the researchers, practitioners and decision makers in this field. It could function as a platform for further studies in this regard. Finally, considering the great impact that teacher education and mentoring programs have on EFL teachers, teacher educators and their teaching, the findings of the present research could be helpful especially to Iranian EFL mentors, supervisors, teacher educators and decision makers.

This study made use of quite a small number of participants in relation to *only four* factors, consequently, the results cannot be generalized to other factors and participants in other cities in Iran therefore they can be the limitations of this study. EFL teacher education and mentoring studies in Iran so far have basically paid attention to the detection and description of deficiencies and imperfections in structures, processes and procedures (Mahdavi & JafarZade, 2014; Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016). More studies are needed to specifically focus on the appropriate establishment and national implementation of successful quality control for EFL teacher education and mentoring programs in PSs and FUs by employing different qualitative techniques in line with the quantitative ones. We also need to search, plan, develop and implement digital computer program networks that work well with Iranian EFL teacher education and mentoring programs in line with quality control and feedback procedures to increase the quality of in-service EFL teacher training programs, mentoring in EFL teacher education and the system of evaluation and feedback in Iranian teacher education.

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