

Does the Latest English Language Teacher Education Curriculum Develop Student Teachers' Professional Competencies?

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Abstract

The fundamental goal of any EFL teacher education curriculum is to equip and prepare student teachers for their teaching career. The present study sought to explore how practicing teachers feel about the effectiveness of the latest English teacher education curriculum in the content, pedagogical content and pedagogical knowledge bases and the university education that the current student teachers go through. The participants of the study were 130 male and female high school EFL teachers who were selected through cluster random sampling. The study utilized a descriptive design to investigate the effectiveness of the curriculum. The data were collected via semi-structured interview and a Likert scale questionnaire which comprised 35 items on the detailed stated objectives and performance tasks for each specific course in the curriculum. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that participants were satisfied with the latest curriculum and perceived it as adequate and effective in stated objectives. Qualitative analysis showed that participants complained that the curriculum is not so successful in providing the student teachers with the opportunity to experience real life teaching during their education, to make them aware of contextual challenges awaiting and strike a balance between ideals and actuals.

Keywords: Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Teacher Education Curriculum, Professional Competencies

1. Introduction

The teachers are one of the most crucial assets of any education system. They have a very vital contributory role in the learner's acquisition of desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Thus, the teacher quality is considered to be significantly important in promoting effective learning at schools. However, it should be acknowledged that the teacher quality is greatly determined by the teacher education courses which a student teacher goes through. There is sufficient empirical research evidence to suggest that if anything is to be regarded as a specific preparation for teaching, priority should be given to the student teacher in the knowledge and skills to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lampert, 2001; Ball & Forzani, 2009). Therefore, central to any discussion of teacher preparation is a judgment about what teachers must be trained and equipped in order to be capable to teach effectively. After all, if teaching helps others learn, then realizing what is to be taught is a vital necessary aspect of teaching. The many tasks of teaching such as selecting learning activities, giving useful explanations, asking productive questions, and evaluating students' learning, all depend on the teachers' understanding of what the students need to learn.

For the most part, the attention in teacher education has traditionally been focused on what teachers need to know and how they can be trained, rather than on what they actually know or how that knowledge is acquired. The perspective, in other words, has been from the outside, external to the teachers who are learning and the processes by which they are educated. Teacher education has been largely based on knowledge transmission which emphasized the idea that knowledge about teaching and learning can be transferred to individual teacher-learners through processes of professional education.

Considering the knowledge transmission, Freeman (2001) states that "in general terms, it is fair to say that teacher education was predicated the idea that knowledge about teaching and learning can be transmitted through processes of organized professional education to form individual teachers" (p. 73). Since the 1980s, this transmission view gradually gave way to construction view in which teacher-learners built their own understanding of language teaching through their experience by integrating theory, research and opinion with empirical and reflective study of their own classroom practices. This "shift to a constructive perspective of teaching and teacher learning make teachers a primary source of knowledge about teaching, reflected in an increasing focus on teacher cognition, the role of reflection in teacher development, and the importance of

teacher inquiry and research through education and development programs" (Crandall 2000, p.35).

In the field of English language teacher education, experts play a key role in developing the kind of knowledge on the part of the student teachers. Such a kind of knowledge of the teacher can be incorporated with the other components such as the subject matter content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge which are prerequisites for teaching practices of the student teachers (Liu, 2013). Further, student teachers must be equipped with sufficient knowledge and effective teaching skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1999). For example, they need to learn effective methods which are helpful to deal with learners' differences, "plan various instructional activities for diverse learners, and assess students' knowledge for the purpose of integrating multiple pathways of instruction. Some categories in this set of knowledge and skills include lesson planning, instructional strategies and classroom management" (Choy, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2013, p. 69).

The analysis of the teacher education curriculum can reveal the curriculum minuses and pluses, teachers and students' needs in the context of teaching and help us to hear their suggestions for improving teacher education to enable future educators to achieve that goal. The results can pave the way for reforms in the current curriculum and modifications of syllabus and teaching approaches. The findings of this study with its focus on examining the latest English language teacher education curriculum can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of it through the eyes of the teachers and provide the bases of improvements for curriculum developers and syllabus designers, teacher educators, EFL teachers, and students.

2. Literature Review

There has been a growing interest in conducting research on the teacher education and knowledge in recent decades. Shulman's framework of the teacher knowledge base (1987) is originated from general teacher education, and it comprehensively covers those elements discussed in language teacher education. One of the pioneering works by Freeman and Johnson (1998) calls for re-conceptualizing the knowledge base of the language teacher education. Freeman and Johnson propose a framework that reflects an emerging view, a socio-cultural constructivist standpoint, and includes three domains: "the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical process" (p. 406).

In language education, Grossman's (1990) piece on the six secondary English teachers is an often referenced work in the English discipline. Grossman (1990) investigated the nature of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of six secondary English teachers. All the six teachers had a strong background in English, but only three of them had gone through teacher preparation. The three teachers without teacher training had a high level of content knowledge and little PCK, while the other three teachers with teacher training had a high level of content knowledge and relatively high PCK. Her findings revealed that the teachers with high PCK knew how to ground their teaching decisions in how and why high school students learned to read and write complex English texts.

Richards (1996) traced the preparation process of three novice teachers and illustrated how a practicum provided them with an opportunity to start developing their own teaching styles. Johnson's study (1996) described the tensions faced by a pre-service ESL teacher when she perceived a mismatch between her vision of teaching and the realities of the classroom and how she finally found the means for coping with the emerging contradictions.

Golombek (1998) investigated the pre-service teachers' practicum and examined the characteristics of personal practical knowledge and how it informed the practice of two pre-service ESL teachers. Personal practical knowledge encompasses dimensions such as knowledge of the self, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction, and knowledge of context. The author found that participants' personal practical knowledge served as an interpretive framework for making sense of their classroom practices.

Johnston and Goettsch's (2000) collected data through transcriptions of passages from the four teachers' classes containing grammar explanations and follow-up interviews. Their findings were classified according to Shulman's framework in three main categories: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and the knowledge of learners. For content knowledge, it was reported that the teachers got their knowledge from their education and their experience. For pedagogical content knowledge, they asserted that a class situation in which the teachers gave grammar explanations was evidence of the pedagogical content knowledge. For the knowledge of learners, those teachers encouraged their students to ask questions and devote time to the student-initiated discussions. They found that these three categories of teacher knowledge are melded together in a complex way. And they concluded that the knowledge base of language

teachers “might best be categorized as process-oriented” (p.464) because they are always interacting, in a dialogical approach, with their students’ knowledge and learning.

Peacock (2009), in an evaluation study in Hong-Kong, put forward a new procedure for the evaluation of EFL teacher-training programs. The procedure focused on program strengths and weaknesses and how far the program met the needs of the teacher trainees. The model put forward a list of fifteen questions which covered key features of program philosophy, knowledge base and model of teacher education. The findings revealed that the program had much strength, including the teaching of pedagogic skills and promoting reflection and self-evaluation, but also drawbacks: due attention was not paid to practice teaching and classroom management skills.

Following Peacock's (2009) model, Coskun and Daloglu (2010) tried to reveal the pre-service English teacher training components that were in need of improvement or maintenance both from teachers’ and students’ perspectives. The study was done in the Turkish context. The data collected by means of the questionnaires and interviews revealed that although the participating teachers and student teachers had similar views about some program components, they held different ideas about the balance among linguistic and pedagogic competences in the program. While teachers believe that the program does not suffice to improve student teachers’ linguistic competence, student teachers think that the pedagogic side of the program needs to be improved.

Salihoglu (2012) evaluated a pre-service English Language teacher education program within the Turkish context. The study was aimed at the determination of the effective/non-effective components of the program by exploring the issue from the perspectives of the students and lecturers in the program. In conducting the evaluation, Salihoglu adapted and used Peacock’s 2009 evaluation model in the development of his data collection tools. Using the fifteen sets of questions developed by Peacock, he also conducted a semi-structured interview with some of the lecturers in the program. Adapting Coskun and Daloglu’s (2010) approach, he conducted a focus group discussion with the students to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The findings from his research revealed that there was some measure of satisfaction for the program by students and lecturers. There remained great concern for practice, a strong need for students’ need analysis and the development of students’ proficiency in the English Language.

Kourieos (2014) attempted to explore pre-service and in-service teachers’ perceptions regarding the knowledge and skills required for effective language teaching at primary level. A mixed-method sequential approach was employed to the data collection and analysis and was carried

out in two phases. The data were initially obtained through a questionnaire-based survey and supplemented by individual and focus group interviews. The findings highlighted the primacy of subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, showing evidence that both were necessary in order to avoid fragmented language teaching. The importance of teacher language awareness in forming the bridge between these two types of knowledge was also stressed.

Teacher training in the Iranian EFL context has also been investigated. Mirhassani and Beh-Afarin (2004) in a comprehensive survey-based study tried to evaluate the status of the Iranian EFL teacher training in terms of the adoption of the communicative approach in such programs. To this end, 589 participants took part in the study. The results indicated that the participants were dissatisfied with the present situation of the program; there was a gap between what participants expected from the program and their current situation; the communicative approach could be hardly incorporated into the programs; and a majority of the participants expressed a need for a revision in such programs.

Jadidi and Bagheri (2014) reviewed the major trends and shifts in approaches to the nature of teacher learning and teacher education to come up with a better understanding of English language teaching (ELT) and teacher education in Iran. They found that some kind of traditional transmission model is currently exercised in the pre-service teacher education in Iran. Khanjani, Vahdany and Jafarigohar (2016) investigated the layout of the pre-service EFL teacher training program in Iranian EFL context. The participants of the study were high school EFL teachers ($n = 346$), teacher trainees ($n = 97$) and teacher trainers ($n = 20$) from Guilan Province. This study utilized a concurrent mixed-method design to evaluate the adequacy of the program. Different components of the program, including needs analysis, objectives specification, instructional materials, teaching activities, and assessment procedures were evaluated in this study. The results of the questionnaire and observation checklist were analyzed quantitatively. For interview results, both quantitative (percentages) and qualitative analyses were deployed. The results revealed that the program had not been adequately laid-out. The review of the literature showed that the systematic studies of ELT policy, curriculum planning, knowledge base and pre-service English teacher education in Iran are limited and insufficient and many studies and evaluations focused mostly on the knowledge bases of teachers. Most studies seem to have ignored the crucial knowledge bases and domains in the latest teacher education curriculum. Noticing the little investigated area on the teacher

knowledge bases in language teacher education and regarding the essential role of program evaluation (Peacock, 2009; Robinson, 2003), it is hoped that this study would contribute to our better understanding of the pre-service EFL teacher education and it would provide some practical suggestions for its improvement. The following research question was formulated to address the above-mentioned gap in literature:

1. To what extent do EFL teachers perceive that the latest English language teacher education curriculum develop the student teachers' content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and pedagogical knowledge (PK)?
2. Does the length of service make any difference in the EFL teachers' perception of the latest teacher education curriculum in three bases of knowledge?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study included male and female EFL teachers at high schools in Markazi Province. According to the records of the education board, 363 high school EFL teachers serve in 15 counties of the province. One hundred thirty high school EFL teachers, both male and female, were selected through cluster random sampling to complete the questionnaire. The teachers aged within the range of 22 to 50 (mean age 36). Most teachers (nearly 70%) had B.A degrees and the rest had M.A degrees in TEFL. The teachers' length of service ranged from 2 to 30 years. The majority of the participants were male (53%) and the rest female (47%). Out of these participants, twenty were interviewed.

3.2. Instruments

A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were utilized to explore the EFL school teachers' perceptions and views on the detailed stated objectives and performance tasks for each course in the three bases of knowledge in the latest English language teacher education curriculum (LTEC) at Farhangian University. These three bases of knowledge included CK, PCK and PK. The questionnaire items were derived from the stated objectives and performance tasks for each course in afore-mentioned bases. In the latest curriculum, the three bases of knowledge and their

related courses have been classified and the researchers designed the questionnaire based on this classification and definition. A panel discussion was conducted on the items of the first draft of the questionnaire. Ten EFL teacher trainers judged the relevance and coverage of the items on a Likert scale. A pilot study was, then, conducted on 45 high school teachers. The defective items were repaired and the final revision was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha showed a high reliability index of .89 for the whole questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprised 35 fixed response items in the Likert scale and consisted of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire elicited demographic information of the participants. The second section was concerned with the three bases of knowledge and the related items. The first seventeen items were related to the stated objectives and performance tasks for different courses in CK. The items mostly focused on the language skills and sub-skills, phonetics, linguistics, research theories, teaching, learning and assessment approaches, principles, methods and techniques. The next ten items addressed the stated objectives and performance tasks for the courses in PCK. These items mostly focused on the teaching competency and profession, employing teaching approaches and strategies, planning and analyzing learning units and teaching materials, using information technology in teaching and assessment, doing action research and the teaching practicum. The last eight items mostly dealt with the stated objectives and performance tasks of the courses in PK. These items asked the participants to express their views and perceptions about defining the role and status of a teacher in the educational and social context, in determining the effectiveness of educational decisions at the class and school level, in giving consulting services to the students and providing them with learning opportunities outside the class, in assessing students' performance, in lesson planning and class management. The questionnaire items asked the participants to mark their perceptions regarding the stated objectives and performance tasks for each course on a continuous scale of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

After the administration of the questionnaires, interviews were used as a second data collection technique aimed at gathering in-depth data regarding English teachers' views on three bases of knowledge in LTEC. The interviews were guided by five general themes as they were related to the three bases of knowledge and their related courses regarding the research questions. The first four focused on the fundamental aspects of curriculum: courses related to developing CK; pedagogical skills, teaching competency and profession; striking a balance between theory and

practice and using technology in language teaching and assessment. The last theme was an overall assessment of the curriculum, asking the participants to express their views about the weaknesses and strengths of the curriculum and their suggestions for improvement.

3.3. Procedure

In this study, the data were collected through administering or sending questionnaire to the participants and conducting follow-up semi-structured interviews with twenty English teachers during three months. The data were collected in two main phases using a sequential process. The quantitative data were collected and analyzed in the first phase and the qualitative data were collected and analyzed in the second phase. The quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews.

After the administration of the questionnaires, the researcher talked with the willing-for interview teachers and asked for their permission for conducting interviews. Before conducting the interviews, an interview protocol was developed based on the three bases of knowledge and their related courses and objectives with five general themes. Also, as suggested by Dornyei (2007), a trial run was conducted. The researcher interviewed three colleagues at universities specialized in TESOL. Many changes were made as suggested by them. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and its usefulness.

This study used descriptive and inferential statistics for the survey instrument and qualitative patterns for the interview data. The data obtained from the sample were coded and fed into SPSS version 25 and were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, means, median, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics. The demographic information including age, gender, length of service, degree, and field of study were gathered and presented in tabular form. After collecting the data using questionnaire, the responses were entered onto the computer and analyzed using SPSS, presenting the percentage and frequency counts of the responses to each item of the questionnaire. All the percentages and frequencies were calculated for each category of the questionnaire and were presented in the form of tables. For the data analysis of the questionnaire, frequency tables are provided to give an overall insight into participants' level of agreement under five headings, strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree for a clearer presentation. In inferential statistics, Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was run.

After analyzing quantitative data, data from semi-structured interviews with participants were analyzed and coded using exploratory content analysis. First, data were transcribed and codified. Next, the categories and themes were organized by comparing, reading and rereading the data. The researcher started reading the transcribed data line by line and coding each idea. This resulted in huge amount of data coded according to the theme they were addressing. The initial categories and themes underwent continuous process of modifications, including adding more categories and deleting non-related ones. The analysis of interview data followed the three flows of activity suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The first step was the reduction of the huge amount of data by cutting it into smaller chunks and labelling to assign the meaning units to the data. Next, the data were displayed by creating thematic charts. These charts were modified by combining similar categories and themes. Finally, the detailed description and insightful views about the participants in relation to teacher education curriculum were given.

4. Results

The present study explored the perceptions and views of English teachers on the stated objectives and performance tasks of the courses in the CK, PCK and PK in the latest English language teacher education curriculum of Farhangian University as the only source of training teachers.

4.1. Content Knowledge

The distribution of the participants' responses to the items in CK was not so different. In general, the findings revealed that in most items around 90% of the participants rated their agreement with the stated objectives and performance tasks for each course in CK. Items 1, 2, 4, 11, 12 and 5 attracted the highest levels of agreement and item 7, 8, 10 and 15 attracted the highest levels of disagreement.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the responses to the items in CK. It indicates that the median for each response equals four. This means that nearly all the participants marked their agreement with the stated objectives. The p value in the last column which is less than 0/05 shows that the Wilcoxon test results were significant for all the responses to the items in this knowledge base. In other words, the teachers agreed significantly with the stated objectives of the courses.

Table 1

Descriptive and Test Statistics Results for Each Item

Items	N	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test	P-value
1. Reading skill	130	4.00	4.34	0.536	8001	<0.001
2. Listening skill	130	4.00	4.40	0.722	8282.5	<0.001
3. Applied grammar	130	4.00	4.22	0.816	7193.5	<0.001
4. Speaking skill	130	4.50	4.37	0.789	8125	<0.001
5. Writing skill	130	4.00	4.09	0.698	7230	<0.001
6. Media reading	130	4.00	3.95	0.708	5239	<0.001
7. Literature	130	4.00	3.59	0.946	3820	<0.001
8. Oral communication skills	130	4.00	3.94	0.986	6190	<0.001
9. Phonology	130	4.00	4.06	0.904	6130.5	<0.001
10. Linguistics	130	4.00	3.96	0.960	5608	<0.001
11. Language teaching methods	130	4.00	4.32	0.694	7401	<0.001
12. Learning idioms	130	4.00	4.23	0.641	7302	<0.001
13. Language skills teaching	130	4.00	4.15	0.664	7015.5	<0.001

14. Research methods	130	4.00	3.93	0.891	5632	<0.001
15. Language learning theories	130	4.00	3.98	0.906	6985.5	<0.001
16. Language testing principles	130	4.00	4.15	0.676	6593	<0.001
17. Syllabus design	130	4.00	3.90	0.786	5979.5	<0.001

As far as the content knowledge is concerned, the findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that the participants agreed on the adequacy of the related course objectives in CK. But in reality, lack of confidence expressed by some teachers in their teaching of the English language was an indication of the low level of linguistic and content knowledge. This brought into question the level of preparation of the student teachers in the classes of university education. Most of the teachers interviewed said that the courses for language skills especially speaking and writing courses do not develop the student teachers' speaking and writing skills as it is intended in the curriculum. One of them said, "I think the student teachers need more writing subjects so that they will be able to use the language to express their thoughts and organize their writing". He also emphasized that the student teachers will have difficulty teaching speaking, listening and writing skills after their graduation. In reference to his experience, he said, "When I am teaching English to my students, I feel less equipped with enough knowledge for teaching speaking and writing". Another teacher said, "If the speaking courses are not improved and promoted, the student teachers won't be able to speak well and it will be so challenging in class". In other courses in CK domain, almost all the interviewees agreed on the success of current curriculum in achieving intended objectives. On the whole, most of the interviewees pointed out that their English speaking and writing skills were most in need of improvement.

4.2. Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The findings indicated that most of the responses to the items tended to agreement with the stated objectives and performance tasks for each course in PCK. Items 19, 24, 26, 18 and 21 attracted the highest levels of agreement. Item 25 attracted the lowest level of agreement and items 20, 23 and 22 attracted the highest levels of neutral views.

The statistical significance for the agreement rate of the responses to the items has been shown in Table 2. The findings in the table demonstrate that the median for each response equals four. This means that all the respondents rated their agreement with the stated objectives and performance tasks for each course in PCK. The p value in the last column which is less than 0/05 shows that the Wilcoxon test results were significant for all the responses to the items in this knowledge base. In other words, the participants agreed significantly with the stated objectives of the courses.

Table 2

Descriptive and Test Statistics Results for Each Item

Items	N	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test	P-value
18. Teaching philosophy	130	4.00	4.08	0.774	6324	<0.001
19. Curriculum planning in language teaching	130	4.00	4.20	0.628	6981.5	<0.001
20. Language teaching strategies	130	4.00	3.98	0.772	5380	<0.001
21. Instructional planning in language teaching	130	4.00	4.04	0.709	6164	<0.001

22. Content analysis	130	4.00	3.91	0.830	5860.5	<0.001
23. Learning task design in language teaching	130	4.00	3.82	0.765	5431	<0.001
24. ICT application in teaching language	130	4.00	4.26	0.753	7182.5	<0.001
25. Research and professional development	130	4.00	3.80	0.884	4373.5	<0.001
26. Teaching practicum	130	4.00	4.23	0.793	7254.5	<0.001
27. Teaching report	130	4.00	3.82	0.852	5333.5	<0.001

When the teacher interviewees were asked to express their perceptions and views about the stated objectives in pedagogical domain and about how well the latest LTEC provides student teachers with the level of pedagogical skills they need, about ninety percent of them believed that the current curriculum includes necessary related courses and provides adequate theoretical knowledge in this domain. It means that they agreed that there is theoretical adequacy and that the objectives are in line with pedagogical skills. But they referred to one main problem and it was that the focus of these courses and subjects is mostly on theoretical aspects. Teaching is not a straightforward task and it is multi-dimensional in nature. Although some of the teaching restrictions are predictable, most are not. And the unpredictability needs a skillful problem-solving ability.

Almost all teacher interviewees stated that every teacher encounters a variety of problems during their teaching job including students' behavior, attitudes toward English, and extremely low

learning performance. To handle these, teachers have to possess problem solving knowledge. Some of the teachers said that most of the students do not give enough attention to their tasks and misbehave at times and the teachers have to address these issues, employing appropriate classroom management techniques or changing their teaching strategies. In fact, they expressed that teachers learn mostly by observing colleagues classroom and sharing learning experiences with them.

4.3. Pedagogical Knowledge

The participants' perceptions on the effectiveness of the stated objectives for each course in PK tended to agreement. Items 33, 30, 28 and 31 attracted the highest levels of agreement. Item 34 attracted the lowest agreement level and items 29 and 35 attracted the highest levels of neutral views.

The statistical significance for the agreement rate of the responses to the items has been shown in Table 3. According to the findings, the median for each response equals four. This means that almost all the participants agreed with the stated objectives in PK. The p value in the last column which is less than 0/05 shows that the Wilcoxon test results were significant for all the responses to the items in this knowledge base. In other words, the participants agreed significantly with the stated objectives of the courses.

Table 3

Descriptive and Test Statistics Results for Each Item

Items	N	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test	P-value
28. Pedagogical psychology	130	4.00	3.92	0.733	5893.5	<0.001
29. Pedagogical Sociology	130	4.00	3.93	0.717	5300	<0.001

30. Learning and teaching theories	130	4.00	4.02	0.772	5965.5	<0.001
31. Teaching methods and principles	130	4.00	4.16	0.776	7108	<0.001
32. Counseling principles	130	4.00	4.09	0.720	6103.5	<0.001
33. Learning assessment	130	4.00	4.10	0.746	6775	<0.001
34. Language and pedagogy	130	4.00	3.75	0.975	4843	<0.001
35. School management	130	4.00	3.88	0.774	5442	<0.001

4.4. Relationship between Service Length and Research Variables

In this section, the teachers' perception of the stated objectives for the courses in three bases of knowledge has been investigated with regard to service length. To do this, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The descriptive data of the variables (CK, PCK and PK) for different levels of service length have been separately reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for CK, PCK and PK by Service Length

	Experience	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1 to 5	16	3.29	4.53	3.941	3.904	0.357
	5 to 10	16	2.82	5.00	4.088	4.055	0.554
CK	10 to 15	33	3.35	4.65	4.176	4.128	0.312
	15 to 20	31	3.24	4.76	4.118	4.116	0.315
	20 to 30	34	2.94	4.88	4.176	4.145	0.391

	1 to 5	16	3.10	5.00	3.950	3.863	0.525
	5 to 10	16	2.90	5.00	4.000	3.894	0.531
PCK	10 to 15	33	3.00	4.90	4.000	3.967	0.422
	15 to 20	31	3.20	4.50	4.100	4.023	0.339
	20 to 30	34	3.20	4.80	4.200	4.174	0.377
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	1 to 5	16	2.88	4.50	3.688	3.641	0.418
	5 to 10	16	2.88	5.00	3.813	3.875	0.586
PK	10 to 15	33	3.38	4.88	4.000	3.992	0.388
	15 to 20	31	3.13	4.88	4.000	4.036	0.428
	20 to 30	34	3.25	5.00	4.188	4.136	0.442

Table 4 indicates that the minimum points for CK, PCK and PK variables were for the teachers with the service length between one and five. As the service length increases, the mean of the points in three variables increases so that the mean of the points for the teachers with more than twenty years of service was the highest. It can be concluded that with increase in the service length, the teachers' agreement with the stated objectives for the courses in three bases of knowledge also increased. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test for the comparative analysis of the points for three variables in different levels of service length have been reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Kruskal-Wallis Test Result Comparing CK, PCK and PK by Service Length

	Experience	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	Df	P-value
	1 to 5	16	46.44			
	5 to 10	16	62.28			
CK	10 to 15	33	70.36	5.391	4	0.250
	15 to 20	31	66.37			
	20 to 30	34	70.47			
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PCK	1 to 5	16	52.53	8.698	4	0.069
	5 to 10	16	54.88			

	10 to 15	33	61.03		
	15 to 20	31	66.65		
	20 to 30	34	79.90		
	1 to 5	16	39.31		
	5 to 10	16	57.25		
PK	10 to 15	33	66.18	12.297	4 0.015
	15 to 20	31	69.66		
	20 to 30	34	77.25		

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test in Table 5 show that the only significant difference existed for PK variable ($p < 0.05$) and the difference for the two other variables was not significant ($p > 0.05$). In other words, significant differences between teachers with different levels of service length was related to the courses in PK. Based on the mean of the ranks obtained from the test, it can be said that with a high confidence level teachers with higher level of service length perceived the courses in PK more effective.

For PCK variable, although there was not significant difference at level five, with a ten percent error level the test results were significant ($P < 0.10$). In other words, with a ninety percent confidence level it can be said that the teachers' level of service length caused the significant difference in the teachers' perception of the stated objective for the courses in PCK. Regarding the mean of the ranks, the agreement rate for the teachers with higher level of service length was higher compared to those teachers with lower level of service length.

5. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrated the participants' overall satisfaction with the latest curriculum and indicated that the curriculum is effective and successful in giving adequate knowledge in what and how to teach English regarding the participants' high agreement rate (about 90%). The data analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that the teachers held a positive view towards the stated objectives and performance task for each specific course in the curriculum and confirmed the theoretical adequacy of the curriculum. Except for a few courses in the curriculum, the participants found the curriculum theoretically adequate in three bases of

knowledge and felt that it provides the student teachers with adequate linguistic knowledge as well as the pedagogical and teaching skills. These findings disagree with those by Mirhassani and Beh-Afarin (2004) who found that the participants were dissatisfied with the current status of pre-service EFL teacher training program. The overall results of the study are consistent with what Zorba (2015) found. According to the overall results of Zorba's study, the perceptions of the participants seemed to be positive. Although some drawbacks were mentioned by the participants, they generally had positive attitudes towards the undergraduate ELT program at EMU. Overall findings of the study also indicated that the undergraduate ELT program at EMU met the needs of the students to a great extent.

According to the findings of the study, it can be discussed that the latest curriculum contains what are necessary for preparing and producing well-equipped and well-qualified teachers. As far as the theoretical aspects are concerned, the objective have been well defined for different courses in three bases of knowledge. It means that what the student teachers need to get familiar and learn to become effective teachers in future are included in the curriculum. They can know the language skills and subskills, strategies for developing them, get familiar with language system and so on. Furthermore, they get knowledge about pedagogical skills, language learning and teaching theories and approaches. They get familiar with class managing, lesson planning, giving feedback, adapting teaching methods to students with different ages and learning styles. The increased number of teaching practicum courses in the curriculum assists the student teachers to balance more the theoretical and practical aspects. Here, the content and pedagogy are interwoven and the learned theories are put into practice. This in line with Ongondo and Borg (2011) who believe that the practicum is one that essentially promotes the learning and development of the student teachers' pedagogical reasoning. Also, the findings of this research are somehow in agreement with the findings of the studies by Coskun and Daloglu (2010) and Salihoglu (2012) in which the participants believed that the teacher trainer program teaches how to teach English. Moreover, they agreed that the program prepares the students to teach English in the classroom. For some specific courses that the respondents expressed their neutral or disagreement views, it can be concluded that the objectives for these courses may not well be defined or linked with the needs of student teachers.

The results also revealed that with increase in the length of service, the teachers' agreement with the stated objectives for the courses in three bases of knowledge also increased. These results

demonstrate that teaching experience is of paramount importance and can provide teachers with better perception and much more effective evaluation of the teacher education programs. After years of teaching, teachers have broader concerns outside the classroom and seek new challenges besides the goals related to their teaching practice. They start courses to become coaches for beginning teachers, or they became responsible for curriculum innovation and improvement in their school. This is in line with the study by Feiman-Nemser (2001), who found that after sufficient experience with instructional methods, teachers can focus on their active role in the broader school community and look beyond the classroom for new roles and responsibilities. It seems that from the experienced teachers' viewpoint it is this type of knowledge (PCK) that could result in increasing student subject understanding which is regarded an important learning goal for constant professional learning and development.

The data analysis of the semi-structured interview revealed the interviewees' positive view towards the stated objectives and performance tasks for the courses and the theoretical adequacy of the curriculum. They stated that if the objectives are thoroughly followed and implemented, it will lead to the production of effective and competent teachers. The positive issues discussed by the interviewees were grouped under four major categories: the modified and new courses; the convergence of the courses; the content of the courses and the increase in the teaching hours and credit of some courses and more practical teaching courses.

However, some interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited and inadequate time, hours and credit for some courses; the dominant old attitudes and teaching practices among some teacher educators and insufficient space, time and base for balancing theory and practice. They, also, pointed to the inadequacy of the instructional materials, lack of effective sources and materials for some courses, lack of facilities, inadequate assessment procedures, insufficient attention to the practical knowledge of the student teachers and insufficient organization of academic events in the curriculum. The majority of the interviewees expressed that some materials are outdated and do not help student teachers put the pedagogical content knowledge into practice and the activities utilized in the curriculum could not give rise to teachers' professional development. In some cases, there is overemphasis on the theoretical aspects of teaching. In content knowledge domain, they emphasized that English conversation courses, oral communication skills and writing courses must be considered more seriously.

As far as the theoretical adequacy is concerned, the results obtained from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview agree. This indicates that the latest curriculum has tried to incorporate courses that can develop the student teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and the objectives and performance tasks are in line with training qualified teachers. The contradictions found in some interviews with the results of the questionnaire reflect the fact that there is a mismatch between the theory and practice. In other words, the difference is between ideals and actuals. The curriculum is greatly theory-based and little attention is given to microteaching and school-led education. When it comes to the practical aspect of the curriculum, the problems surface and we take a notice of shortcomings. This view is supported by He and Yan (2010) in their investigation of microteaching. They found that the most commonly perceived deficiency of the experience was artificiality, which appeared to have to some extent limited the student teachers' development of real-life classroom teaching competence. Lange (1991) suggests a theory-and-practice-from-the-start approach. It maintains that theory and practice combined with each other must be experienced right from the outset of the program instead of taking academic and theoretical courses first, and only then proceeding towards the schoolrooms. In a different context, Peacock (2009) also insisted that the amount of practice teaching should be reconsidered and increased.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Teaching English as a foreign language requires a teacher with strong capacities in language proficiency, language knowledge, and language teaching and pedagogical skills. An EFL teacher education program has a responsibility to provide schools with qualified teachers to teach English to students. The aims of EFL teacher education curriculum are to produce well equipped graduates who have adequate language knowledge and language teaching skills, who have ability to conduct research in English teaching, and graduates who have ICT skills that can be used in their teaching activities. The findings of the study demonstrated that the stated objectives and performance tasks for the courses in the latest curriculum along with the newly added related special courses not found in the previous curriculums provide adequate linguistic and pedagogical knowledge for the student teachers and if these objectives are fully implemented, it will produce effective and well-trained teachers. At the same time, the results of the semi-

structured interviews revealed that the latest curriculum is not free of drawbacks and it requires reforms in some parts.

One point is worth mentioning here. There are some factors which contribute to the success of teacher education programs. The curriculum is just one of them and factors such as teacher educators, effective instructional materials and sources, facilities for objectives implementation, effective assessment procedures and activities must be taken into account. It is necessary that the instructional materials and practices should be updated, teacher trainers' old dominant attitudes and teaching practices be changed, practical aspects of the courses be emphasized and teaching activities be directed to the student teachers' needs. Furthermore, it is required that the teachers be familiar with how learners learn foreign languages and have an awareness of what aspects to be emphasized, modified or further practiced according to their learners' needs and the requirements of the English curriculum. Andrews (2001) stresses the importance of teacher language awareness which he views as a major sub-component of teachers' PCK, forming the bridge between subject-matter knowledge and the teachers' ability to make effective use of this knowledge. He posits that, in its absence, the teacher is more likely to show insufficient engagement with the language content and be more concerned with the affective dimension of her teaching, that is, with engaging the interest of her pupils. If these factors are regarded to play crucial role in any teacher education curriculum, the result will be the rise in the teachers' professional development.

In view of the findings derived from this study and the conclusions arising from them, it should be stated that listening to EFL school teachers and student teachers voices is a very important issue which is required to be taken into consideration in any teacher education curriculum. Disregarding these voices could have many consequences for the student teachers during their teacher education. Thus, it is recommended that both teacher educators and decision makers in teacher education programs give the chance to the student teachers to evaluate and express their views on different elements and components of their program such as teaching practices and methods, content, assessment procedures, performance tasks and instructional materials. In order to establish a strong teacher education curriculum, positive attitudes and views are required from all determining stakeholders, especially teachers, teacher educators and students. The current study contributes to the knowledge of language program evaluation. It can inform the educational authorities of the student teachers' needs and preferences which are significant in

designing new programs or making reforms to the existing ones. Indeed, different stakeholders provide opinions about different aspects of programs. This emphasizes the importance of including all the voices of users, from designers to students, in program evaluation and change.

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