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Exploring Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs: The Case of In-Service EFL Teachers' Professional Development at Farhangian University

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Abstract

Considering the EFL context, many teachers experience difficulty in incorporating what is learned in their pedagogical practices. This study attempted to discover the perception of in-service EFL teachers with various age groups, teaching experiences, and genders on the efficiency of the program in developing teachers' content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge. The participants were selected from two groups of teachers who passed specific courses at Farhangian University and those who graduated from other universities which offered BA programs in TEFL. To this end, a questionnaire was constructed based on an extensive examination of the stated objectives of the current curriculum and was pilot-tested with 40 EFL teachers in both groups. As many as 160 high school teachers in Farhangian groups and 135 teachers in Non-Farhangian completed the revised questionnaire. A semi-structured interview consisting of ten open-ended questions was conducted with 20 of the participants in Farhangian and 20 teachers in Non-Farhangian groups. Based on MANOVA analysis, the effect of gender in Farhangian groups was statistically significant. The result of MANCOVA specified that there was no statistically significant mean difference between the two groups regarding the efficacy of the program in content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and pedagogical knowledge (PK).

Keywords: teacher education curriculum, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge

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1. Introduction

Teacher education programs have a long history. As it is stated by (Ellis, 2009) teacher education has been considered an interesting subject among researchers for the past few decades. Teacher education is a multifactorial process that encompasses central elements within its body. It is available in every particular field of teacher training (Demir, 2015). Lingam (2010) emphasizes the role of teacher preparation programs and specifically the courses they take in the initial teacher education in the accomplishment of influenced teachers' development and competence. He argued that the initial teacher education program and the type of training given to student teachers must be relevant to their work and actual responsibilities in the real context of teaching.

Evaluating English language teacher education programs has received significant attention during the emergence of the educational field of English teaching. It comes from the need to improve programs' efficacy at higher educational agencies, and the starting point of the professionalization of the ELT field is the evaluation and modification of these programs (Peacock, 2009). Shulman (1987, p.8) categorized L2 teachers' knowledge base into different groups. They were labeled as content knowledge (i.e., subject matter knowledge), pedagogical knowledge (i.e., teaching methodologies), and pedagogical content knowledge (i.e., a combination of content and pedagogical knowledge).

Seyoum (2016) argues that continuing professional development will lead to high-quality teaching and learning. According to Ogilvie and Dunn (2010), a process of transformation from a learner to a teacher will occur for preservice EFL teachers in their professionalization journey. During this conversion process, the teacher trainees "are more amenable to innovation than later in their careers when practical knowledge has become stabilized" (p. 164). Considering the essential role of EFL pre-service teacher education in teacher trainees' professional development (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010), this study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the program in promoting in-service teachers' content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge in the real context of teaching. Few attempts have been made to evaluate the practicality and efficiency of pre-service teacher training courses regarding the perspectives of in-service teachers who passed EFL special courses in Farhangian University over four years and those who entered the profession by recruitment exam and passed one-year courses related to teaching. Through investigating teacher education curriculum, the present paper set out to offer insights into the perception of in-service teachers who passed specific courses at Farhangian University and those who graduated from other universities which offered BA programs in TEFL and entered the profession by recruitment exam.

The significance of Iranian Teacher Education Universities (TEU), Daneshgah-e-Farhangian, programs for educating EFL teachers concerning effective teaching cannot be neglected. Unfortunately, the function of these programs in making competent teachers has not been investigated satisfactorily.

2. Literature Review

Teacher education curricula have played a crucial role in shaping the skills and professional growth of future educators. This section provides a detailed analysis of existing literature on the strengths and weaknesses of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education programs, focusing on curriculum design, implementation, and effectiveness.

2.1. The History of EFL Teacher Education in Farhangian University

As part of curricular reform for higher education, the English language teaching curriculum at Farhangian University (former Teacher Training Center) was first approved in 1969. It was then revised in 1979, 1996 and 2007. The program was approved in 2007 comprising 133 courses (5 general units, 12 units of Islamic education courses, 18 units of training courses, and 98 units of specialized courses). This program was last revised in 2016. The new curriculum of this field includes 150 courses (25 units of general courses, 19 units of Islamic education courses, 18 units of pedagogic courses, and 87 units of specialized courses).

2.2. Studies on EFL Teacher Education

Farrell's (2007) suggestions for how to incorporate discovery-based learning and effective classroom management into teacher education programs provided practical advice for both curriculum creators and educators themselves. By advocating for a more well-rounded approach to training teachers, Farrell highlighted the importance of giving future educators the tools they need to handle the complexities of classrooms. Through collaboration and innovative curriculum design, educators could help develop a new generation of teachers who are ready to succeed in a variety of educational settings.

Ping's (2015) examination of problems with teacher education programs, especially in terms of managerial abilities, was a wake-up call for those involved in creating curricula and making policies. The study pinpointed specific areas that needed improvement and made a case for targeted efforts to fix them. This laid the foundation for changes in curricula that would make programs more effective overall and better suited to the current needs of education.

Erten (2015) investigated the attitudes of practicing teachers toward the courses they obtained as part of their preparation to become English teachers. In order to accomplish this, 49 practicing English teachers throughout Turkey were given a self-report questionnaire. Participants were generally satisfied with their program, according to descriptive statistical analysis. Qualitative analysis revealed that participants frequently complained that they did not experience real world teaching during their education; that they were unaware of contextual challenges that lay ahead; and that there was a mismatch between expectations and reality.

2.3. Studies on EFL Teacher Education in Iran

A study conducted by Ranjbari et al. (2020) examined the latest EFL pre-service teacher education curriculum and its impact on participants' teaching and language abilities. The findings revealed that specific teacher training courses had a positive effect on enhancing participants' skills, leading to improvements in both teaching methods and language proficiency. However, the study also identified shortcomings in instructional materials and difficulties in applying acquired teaching knowledge in actual classrooms. These findings highlighted the importance of a more comprehensive curriculum framework that not only deepened participants' theoretical knowledge but also equipped them with practical teaching skills.

Another research by Tavazoei and Razmjoo (2021) explored the strengths and weaknesses of TEFL students' curricula at Farhangian University, uncovering areas where improvements could be made. The study identified issues such as course misalignment and lack of collaboration with other teacher training programs, which hindered the overall development of future educators. By emphasizing the significance of a unified and integrated curriculum, the research emphasized the need for targeted changes to enhance curriculum consistency and promote wider adoption of international best practices in teacher education.

In their study on factors that affect how satisfied teachers are with in-service training courses, Eghtesadi and Hassanabadi (2016) found that experience, field of study, and curriculum content all play a role. While these factors didn't have a big impact on teacher attitudes, the study emphasized the need to understand how the context and specific aspects of the curriculum influence teacher perceptions. By digging deeper into why teachers are satisfied or dissatisfied, this research provided valuable insights for those who create curricula and make policies about teacher training programs.

Another study by Saberi (2022) examined how effective knowledge bases are in Iranian teacher education programs. It gave a detailed look at the challenges in designing curricula and the gaps in knowledge that exist among teachers. Saberi highlighted the importance of making sure that what teachers learn is relevant to their specific contexts and can be applied in practical ways. The findings of this study pushed those who create curricula to rethink their current approaches and come up with teacher education programs that are more centered around the needs of learners.

Khanjani et al.'s (2016) research focused on the difficulties that future educators face when it comes to managing classrooms. It identified areas where the content of teacher education programs and the training provided on teaching methods were lacking. The study emphasized the need for targeted efforts to improve practical teaching skills and strategies for managing classrooms. By working together, researchers and educators could use proven methods to address these challenges and better prepare future teachers for what they'll encounter in real classrooms.

Pazhoman & Sarkhosh (2019) looked at how much control teachers have in developing curricula. Their study showed that it's important to empower educators and give them a say in shaping teacher education programs. By arguing for more involvement from teachers in decision-making processes, the study demonstrated the potential benefits of a more collaborative and inclusive approach to creating curricula. If policymakers actively engage with teachers, they can tap into their collective expertise to bring about meaningful changes in curricula and improve outcomes for teacher training.

The existing research provides valuable information about the strengths and weaknesses of EFL teacher education programs. However, more studies are required to address specific gaps in the curriculum and challenges in its implementation.

This study is motivated by the urgent need to evaluate how effective teacher education programs are in supporting the professional growth of EFL teachers. Despite the significant role that these programs play in developing educators' skills, there is a lack of empirical research on how they specifically impact teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. Additionally, little is known about how factors like age, gender, and teaching experience influence teachers' views on curriculum effectiveness, especially in different teacher training institutions.

By investigating these questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current teacher education programs, with a specific focus on their impact on EFL teachers' professional growth. Through a thorough examination of teachers' perspectives and experiences, the study seeks to identify patterns and trends in curriculum effectiveness among various demographic groups and institutional contexts.

Furthermore, by comparing the views of EFL teachers in both Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups, the study aims to uncover any differences in curriculum implementation and outcomes. Understanding these disparities is crucial for informing evidence-based changes to the curriculum and initiatives designed to improve teacher preparation practices and outcomes.

The ultimate goal of this study is to use its findings to guide policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher educators in assessing the effectiveness of current teacher education curricula. This will help them tailor these programs to better meet the needs and expectations of EFL teachers in real-world teaching situations. By identifying both strengths and weaknesses, the study hopes to contribute to ongoing discussions about teacher preparation and professional development, ultimately working towards improving the quality of English language education worldwide. Accordingly, the following research questions were addressed in the current study:

1. To what extent do EFL teachers of different age groups, genders, and teaching experiences in the Farhangian group, assess the efficacy of the latest teacher education curriculum in developing their content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and pedagogical knowledge (PK)?

2. To what extent do EFL teachers of various age groups, genders, and teaching experiences in the Non-Farhangian group, assess the effectiveness of English curriculum in developing their CK, PCK, and PK?
3. Are there any significant differences in the perception of teachers in both groups regarding the effectiveness of curriculum in developing their three domains of knowledge?
4. What are the main strengths and deficiencies of the program in developing CK, PCK, and PK of teachers in the real context of teaching?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Two groups of participants (N=295) participated in this study. They were all selected from different provinces of Iran. Convenience sampling was the sampling method that was utilized in this study. The first group included 160 (101 males and 59 females) high school EFL teachers who graduated from Farhangian University and the second group was 135 (68 males, 67 females) high school teachers who graduated from other universities which offered BA or MA in TEFL and entered the profession by the recruitment exam. The teachers in both groups aged within the range of 22 to 55. For ease of naming, two groups were called as Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups of teachers. Tables A and B present detailed information on teachers of two groups based on their age, gender, and years of EFL teaching experience.

Table A

Description of the Teachers in Farhangian Groups

Gender	No.	Teaching experience	No.	Age	no
Male	101	1_5 years	121	20_25	98
				26_30	31
Female	59	+5 years	39	31_40	24
				+ 40	7
Total	**160**				

Table B

Description of the Teachers in Non-Farhangian Groups

Gender	No.	Teaching experience	No	Age	no
Male	68	1_5 years	44	20_25	5
				26_30	23
Female	67	+5 years	91	31_40	61
				+ 40	46
Total	**135**				

3.2. Instrument

In order to assess the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the curriculum, two instruments (a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) were employed in this study. The development of the questionnaire began with an extensive review of the existing curriculum, focusing on the stated objectives of three domains of knowledge: content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and pedagogical knowledge (PK). This review identified several relevant factors that were essential for evaluating various items and dimensions of the curriculum. Finally, the questionnaire comprised 54 five-point Likert Scale items and was divided into two main parts: a) Demographic Information of the respondents, including gender, age, years of EFL teaching experience, field of study, and the university from which they graduated; and b) Domain-Specific Statements addressing the stated objectives within the three domains of knowledge:

- Content Knowledge (CK): 16 items focused on the courses and objectives related to CK.
- Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK): 12 items examined the courses and objectives pertaining to PCK.
- Pedagogical Knowledge (PK): 26 items were dedicated to the courses and objectives associated with PK.

The responses were measured using a Likert scale, allowing participants to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. This scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.2.1. Validation and Reliability

The initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed and revised multiple times by experts and EFL teacher educators to ensure the relevance, accuracy, and clarity of the items. This iterative process included three rounds of feedback and led to modifications to improve construct validity. The questionnaire was then translated by two instructors to ensure linguistic accuracy.

After that, a pilot test was conducted with 20 high school teachers in Farhangian and 20 EFL teachers in Non-Farhangian groups to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, which was calculated to be 0.75, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. Moreover, since the questionnaire was concerned with three areas of knowledge, the internal consistency of the items in each section was also assessed. The results revealed that the reliability of the CK section was acceptable (α=0.74), indicating that the items consistently measured the underlying construct of content knowledge. Besides, The PCK section demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha value (α=0.85) indicating strong internal consistency among the items. In the same vein, the PK section showed excellent reliability (α=0.79). Additionally, the normality of the distribution

was ensured using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with a result of 0.12, which falls within the acceptable range.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

To complement the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, a set of semi-structured interviews was conducted. The interviews included 10 open-ended questions designed to delve deeper into EFL teachers' perceptions and beliefs about the effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly focusing on the three domains of knowledge (CK, PCK, and PK).

In order to identify the reliability of the interviews two independent researchers coded a sample of the interview transcripts to assess the consistency of the coding process. The inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa, resulting in a value of 0.82, indicating a high level of agreement between the coders. Moreover, after the interviews were transcribed, participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure the accuracy and clarity of their responses. This step helped to confirm the reliability of the data collected.

The open-ended questions allowed for a richer, qualitative understanding of the strengths and deficiencies of the curriculum. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis. The interviews served as a means to support the validity of the questionnaire findings, providing a more nuanced perspective on the curriculum's impact and effectiveness.

3.3. Procedures

In this study, the data were collected by administrating the questionnaire and conducting follow-up semi-structured interviews with thirteen EFL teachers in two groups 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. Upon the completion of the final questionnaire draft, it was distributed among EFL high school teachers who were teaching in various high schools in different cities of Iran like Arak, Tehran, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Yazd, Tabriz, and Hamedan. The distribution of the questionnaire was accomplished either via hard copies or emails. As many as 160 questionnaires were finally collected from teachers in Farhangian, and 135 questionnaires were gathered from Non-Farhangian groups of teachers. When the interview questions were finalized, they were provided to teachers in the academic context. The purpose of the interview protocol was explained to the participant teachers clearly. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of the interview. Totally 30 EFL teachers participated willingly in the interviews over three months.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were run for the survey instrument. After collecting the data from the questionnaire, the data were coded and fed into SPSS. To examine the effect of

various age groups, teaching experiences, and genders on the perception of the participants about CK, PCK, and PK, the MANOVA test was utilized. To explore the existence of any differences in the perception of teachers in two groups on three dependent variables (CK, PCK, and PK), the MANCOVA test was used.

4. Results

The first research question aimed to inspect the effect of age, teaching experience, and gender of teachers in Farhanhian groups on their perception of the effectiveness of curriculum on content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge. Three dependent variables were used: CK, PCK, and PK. The independent variable group was subcategorised as age, teaching experience, and gender in Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups of teachers. Consequently, MANOVA was run as" it 'controls' or adjusts the increased risk of a Type 1 error" due to the number of dependent and independent variables (Pallant, 2016, p. 289). Prior to running the MANOVA, several assumptions were assessed to ensure the appropriateness of the analysis. The normality of the dependent variables (CK, PCK, PK) was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Results indicated that all variables had normal distributions with p-values greater than .05, suggesting no significant deviations from normality. Scatterplots were generated for each pair of dependent variables within each group. The plots indicated linear relationships among the variables, meeting the linearity assumption. Boxplots for each dependent variable were inspected to identify univariate outliers. No extreme values were found, indicating that the data did not contain univariate outliers. Mahalanobis distance was calculated to identify multivariate outliers. The distances were compared against the critical value for the given degrees of freedom (df=3). No cases exceeded the critical value, confirming the absence of multivariate outliers. Box's M test was performed to check for the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. The test was not significant (p>.001), indicating that the assumption was met.

As demonstrated in Table 1, it is evident that a statistically significant difference was not detected regarding the effect of various age groups on three dependent variables: F (3, 154)=0.762, p=0.652 (two-tailed).

Table1

MANOVA for the Role of Age in CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian Participants

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.887	403.646[b]	3.000	154.000	.000	.887
	Wilks' Lambda	.113	403.646[b]	3.000	154.000	.000	.887
	Hotelling's Trace	7.863	403.646[b]	3.000	154.000	.000	.887
	Roy's Largest Root	7.863	403.646[b]	3.000	154.000	.000	.887
Age	Pillai's Trace	.043	.764	9.000	468.000	.650	.014
	Wilks' Lambda	.957	.762	9.000	374.946	.652	.015
	Hotelling's Trace	.045	.760	9.000	458.000	.653	.015
	Roy's Largest Root	.037	1.935[c]	3.000	156.000	.126	.036

To test the effect of experience on teachers' perception of CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian participants, another one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed. Since all the assumptions were met, the results displayed in Table 2 indicated that the effect of experience was not statistically significant: $F(3, 156)=0.570$, $p=0.636$ *(two-tailed)*.

Table 2

MANOVA for the Role of Experience in CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian Participants

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.929	675.535[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.929
	Wilks' Lambda	.071	675.535[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.929
	Hotelling's Trace	12.991	675.535[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.929
	Roy's Largest Root	12.991	675.535[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.929
Experience	Pillai's Trace	.011	.570[b]	3.000	156.000	.636	.011
	Wilks' Lambda	.989	.570[b]	3.000	156.000	.636	.011
	Hotelling's Trace	.011	.570[b]	3.000	156.000	.636	.011
	Roy's Largest Root	.011	.570[b]	3.000	156.000	.636	.011

The result of MANOVA to represent the effect of gender on three dependent variables showed a statistically significant difference in the scores of male and female participants regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum on three domains of knowledge. Table 3 shows the obtained values as follows: F(3, 156),=4,792, p=0.003 (two-tailed). Regarding the result, gender has a statistically significant effect on the perception of Farhangian participants in three domains of knowledge.

Table 3

MANOVA for the Role of Gender in CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.944	875.276[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.944
	Wilks' Lambda	.056	875.276[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.944
	Hotelling's Trace	16.832	875.276[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.944
	Roy's Largest Root	16.832	875.276[b]	3.000	156.000	.000	.944
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.084	4.792[b]	3.000	156.000	.003	.084
	Wilks' Lambda	.916	4.792[b]	3.000	156.000	.003	.084
	Hotelling's Trace	.092	4.792[b]	3.000	156.000	.003	.084
	Roy's Largest Root	.092	4.792[b]	3.000	156.000	.003	.084

For the purpose of answering the second research question regarding the effect of age, teaching experience, and gender in Non-Farhangian groups on their perception of the effectiveness of curriculum on three domains of knowledge, MANOVA was performed. As shown in Table 4, Wilks' Lambda value of F(3, 129)=0.876, p=0.547) is found, which represents a non-significant difference between the age of Non-Farhangian participants and three domains of knowledge.

Table 4

MANOVA for the Role of Age in CK, PCK, and PK of Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.896	371.334b	3.000	129.000	.000	.896
	Wilks' Lambda	.104	371.334b	3.000	129.000	.000	.896
	Hotelling's Trace	8.636	371.334b	3.000	129.000	.000	.896
	Roy's Largest Root	8.636	371.334b	3.000	129.000	.000	.896
Age	Pillai's Trace	.059	.874	9.000	393.000	.548	.020
	Wilks' Lambda	.941	.876	9.000	314.103	.547	.020
	Hotelling's Trace	.062	.876	9.000	383.000	.547	.020
	Roy's Largest Root	.054	2.378c	3.000	131.000	.073	.052

Another MANOVA was also run to test the effect of experience on content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge of Non-Farhangian participants. Table 5 indicates that teachers' experience had no significant effect on three dependent variables.

Table 5

MANOVA for the Role of Experience in CK, PCK, and PK of Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.948	792.014[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.948
	Wilks' Lambda	.052	792.014[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.948
	Hotelling's Trace	18.138	792.014[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.948
	Roy's Largest Root	18.138	792.014[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.948
	Pillai's Trace	.023	1.042[b]	3.000	131.000	.376	.023
	Wilks' Lambda	.977	1.042[b]	3.000	131.000	.376	.023
	Hotelling's Trace	.024	1.042[b]	3.000	131.000	.376	.023
	Roy's Largest Root	.024	1.042[b]	3.000	131.000	.376	.023

As represented in Table 5, there was no significant difference in the scores of the two experience groups, $F(3, 131)=1.042$, $p=0.376$ *(two-tailed).*

Another MANOVA was also run to test the effect of gender on content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge of Non-Farhangian participants.

Table 6 demonstrates that gender has no statistically significant effect on the perception of the participants in Non-Farhangian group on three domains of knowledge: $F(3, 131)=1.581$; $p=0.197$; *(two-tailed).*

Table 6

MANOVA for the Role of Gender in CK, PCK, and PK of Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.955	923.402[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.955
	Wilks' Lambda	.045	923.402[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.955
	Hotelling's Trace	21.147	923.402[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.955
	Roy's Largest Root	21.147	923.402[b]	3.000	131.000	.000	.955
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.035	1.581[b]	3.000	131.000	.197	.035
	Wilks' Lambda	.965	1.581[b]	3.000	131.000	.197	.035
	Hotelling's Trace	.036	1.581[b]	3.000	131.000	.197	.035
	Roy's Largest Root	.036	1.581[b]	3.000	131.000	.197	.035

The third research question aimed to examine the significant differences in the perception of Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups of teachers with various ages, teaching experiences, and genders regarding three knowledge domains. The third research question aimed to examine the significant differences in the perception of Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups of teachers with various ages, teaching experiences, and genders regarding three knowledge domains. The normality of the dependent variables (CK, PCK, and PK) within each group was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Results indicated that the data met the assumption of normality, as all p-values were above .05. Scatterplots were inspected to assess linearity between each pair of dependent variables. The plots revealed linear relationships among the variables, satisfying the linearity assumption. Box's M test was performed to examine the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices between Farhangian and Non-Farhangian groups. The test was not significant ($p>.001$), indicating that the assumption was met. Levene's test was conducted to verify the homogeneity of error variances across groups. Results showed no significant differences in error variances for all dependent variables ($p>.05$), supporting the assumption. Box's M test was used to test the equality of covariance matrices between groups. The result was not significant ($p>.001$), indicating that the assumption of equal covariance matrices was satisfied.

Ensuring that all the pre-assumptions of conducting the MANCOVA test were met, a multivariate analysis of covariance was performed to discover the differences in the insights held by two groups (Farhangian and Non-Farhangian) about the effectiveness of the curriculum in three domains of knowledge. The MANCOVA analysis indicated that the "university" variable did not have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variables ("CK, PCK, and PK): $F(3, 131)=0.276$, $p=0.843$; partial $\eta^2=0.003$. The assumption of equal covariance matrices and homogeneity of error variances was met. The obtained values shows that the "age" variable does not significantly contribute to exploring the variation in the dependent variables. Pairwise comparisons also suggest that multiple comparisons do not reveal significant differences between the university levels.

Table 7

MANCOVA for the Role of Age in CK, PCK, and PK in Farhangian and Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.686	210.772[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.686
	Wilks' Lambda	.314	210.772[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.686
	Hotelling's Trace	2.180	210.772[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.686
	Roy's Largest Root	2.180	210.772[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.686
Age	Pillai's Trace	.003	.276[b]	3.000	290.000	.843	.003
	Wilks' Lambda	.997	.276[b]	3.000	290.000	.843	.003
	Hotelling's Trace	.003	.276[b]	3.000	290.000	.843	.003
	Roy's Largest Root	.003	.276[b]	3.000	290.000	.843	.003
University	Pillai's Trace	.030	2.991[b]	3.000	290.000	.031	.030
	Wilks' Lambda	.970	2.991[b]	3.000	290.000	.031	.030
	Hotelling's Trace	.031	2.991[b]	3.000	290.000	.031	.030
	Roy's Largest Root	.031	2.991[b]	3.000	290.000	.031	.030

The multivariate tests table indicates the differences between two groups of participants (Farhangian and Non-Farhangian) are not statistically significant on the dependent variables (CK, PCK, and PK): $F(3, 131) = 0.200$, $p = 0.896$; partial $\eta^2 = 0.002$. The "experience" variable does not significantly contribute to explaining the variation in the dependent variables. Additionally, pairwise comparisons confirm no significant differences between the university levels after adjusting for multiple comparisons.

Table 8

MANCOVA for the role of Experience in CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian and Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.611	151.619[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.611
	Wilks' Lambda	.389	151.619[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.611
	Hotelling's Trace	1.568	151.619[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.611
	Roy's Largest Root	1.568	151.619[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.611
Experience	Pillai's Trace	.002	.200[b]	3.000	290.000	.896	.002
	Wilks' Lambda	.998	.200[b]	3.000	290.000	.896	.002
	Hotelling's Trace	.002	.200[b]	3.000	290.000	.896	.002
	Roy's Largest Root	.002	.200[b]	3.000	290.000	.896	.002
University	Pillai's Trace	.033	3.273[b]	3.000	290.000	.022	.033
	Wilks' Lambda	.967	3.273[b]	3.000	290.000	.022	.033
	Hotelling's Trace	.034	3.273[b]	3.000	290.000	.022	.033
	Roy's Largest Root	.034	3.273[b]	3.000	290.000	.022	.033

As obvious from Table 9, Wilks' Lambda value of .976, p=.073 is found, reflecting that the "university" variable does not have a statistically significant effect on three dependent variables.

Table 9

MANCOVA for the Role of Gender in CK, PCK, and PK of Farhangian and Non-Farhangian Participants

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.688	213.222[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.688
	Wilks' Lambda	.312	213.222[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.688
	Hotelling's Trace	2.206	213.222[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.688
	Roy's Largest Root	2.206	213.222[b]	3.000	290.000	.000	.688
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.024	2.346[b]	3.000	290.000	.073	.024
	Wilks' Lambda	.976	2.346[b]	3.000	290.000	.073	.024
	Hotelling's Trace	.024	2.346[b]	3.000	290.000	.073	.024
	Roy's Largest Root	.024	2.346[b]	3.000	290.000	.073	.024
University	Pillai's Trace	.040	4.012[b]	3.000	290.000	.008	.040
	Wilks' Lambda	.960	4.012[b]	3.000	290.000	.008	.040
	Hotelling's Trace	.042	4.012[b]	3.000	290.000	.008	.040
	Roy's Largest Root	.042	4.012[b]	3.000	290.000	.008	.040

The assumption of equal covariance matrices and homogeneity of error variances was met. The "gender" variable does not significantly contribute to explaining the variation in the dependent variables. Pairwise comparisons also suggest no significant differences between the university levels after adjusting for multiple comparisons.

4.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Curriculum in Farhangian and Non-Farhangian Groups

Considering the results of the interviews, the nature of the curriculum's strength was identical in both groups. However, the nature of the drawbacks and problems in both groups were quite different. Regarding the curriculum strength, the findings from the teachers' interview confirmed that it has been successful in developing their general English knowledge and skills. All the teachers in both groups except two, mentioned that the program helped them improve their general English knowledge. One of the male teachers (Teacher 5) said, "As I mentioned before we had courses precisely related to subject matter issues like translation, literature, vocabulary development or four English skills and sub-skills that improved my general knowledge of English" .Elicited from the comments that were made by the participants of the study in both groups, the curriculum provided valuable opportunities to improve their language skills and equipped them with proper knowledge of English. Therefore, the most common strength of the program is that it provides teachers with a theoretical background in ELT.

The interviewees also indicated factors of deficiencies in the curriculum. The lack of provision of practical knowledge related to teaching experiences, overemphasizing theoretical issues, the existence of overlap among many courses, especially in PK and PCK domain of knowledge, impracticality of many pedagogical and managerial courses in the real context of teaching and the absence of courses deal with improvement critical thinking ability and social skills of teachers were mentioned as the main weak points of the curriculum in Farhangian groups of teachers. Following the above theme, one female teacher (Teacher 12) said "Most of the courses are quite formal and the curriculum obsessed with many theoretical issues and the lack of true spirits of teaching is the biggest weak point of the curriculum". (Teacher 3) as a male participant in Farhangian groups highlighted the impracticality of some courses by this comment "The content of many courses requires some changes to make them more relevant to the daily experience of teaching especially in pedagogical knowledge. Courses must be more related to the actual teaching practices and Persian culture in which the challenges may arise, so the teachers can be familiar with these challenges and crises to find the best solutions". In the same vein, mainly the teachers confirmed that the courses were not successful enough to be adapted to new teaching contexts. The lack of agreement between various courses and the present demands of the prospective EFL teachers were emphasized by almost all the teachers as the weak point of the curriculum.

Teachers-centred instructions, the lack of relevance between theoretical concepts and practical issues, the absence of pedagogical contents and specialized courses related to English teaching, and the lack of adequate and negotiated objectives were mentioned as the most challenging parts of the curriculum in non-Farhangian groups. All the teachers claimed that the program lacked practice opportunities. Considering classroom managerial skills, 100% of the

interviewees assented to the absence of input on classroom management skills as a program weakness. In line with these comments, one female teacher in Non-Farhangian groups (Teacher 3) stated "as you know the curriculum was not based on teacher education. It just improved our translation skills and literature knowledge. I know subject matter issues but not that much successful in transferring them to my students".

Besides, the result of interviews confirmed that teachers' opinions and comments were not considered to make change in teacher education program or curriculum. They complained that their comments regarding changing the textbooks or materials were not accepted by the authorities. As a result, little attempt was made by the authorities to invite the students to hear their voice. One of the male teachers in Farhangian groups (Teacher 1) explicitly pointed out "we usually did not have the opportunity to express our opinions, when we had that chance to express ourselves, it did not make any difference because the authorities did things based on their favors". Another teacher (Teacher 15) as a female participant added, "there are two sides to this issue. First, having the chance to share ideas and our problems with authorities and secondly, the extent that the complaint is welcomed. Although we had the chance to share, there was no sign of liability in response. People in charge behaved in a way they were caring but there was nothing changeable in system".

5. Discussion

The central purpose of this study was to explore the effect of age, teaching experience, and gender of teachers on their perception of the effectiveness of curriculum on content, pedagogical content, and pedagogical knowledge in Farhangian and Non-Farhangioan participants in the real context of teaching. Relating to the first research question, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that the effect of age and experience was not statistically significant in Farhangian participants. Additionally, the result of the study represented a statistically significant difference in the scores of male and female participants regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum on three domains of knowledge in Farhangian groups. Moreover, concerning the second research question, the findings of MANOVA tests discovered that there was no statistically significant mean difference in the score of Non-Farhangian participants with various age groups, teaching experiences, and genders regarding three domains of knowledge. The findings of this study about the effect of experience on teachers' beliefs about the efficacy of the program are compatible with the results of Eghtesadi and Hassanabadi (2016), who maintained that teachers' experience and field of study did not have significant effects on their satisfaction with and attitudes towards the in-service training courses. Saberi (2022) concluded that the biggest weakness of the English program in Iran is that a pre-specified body of teaching knowledge is conveyed from the trainers to the teachers and, many

essential components like teachers' creativity, former knowledge and experience of teachers, the social context of teaching activities were overlooked in program development.

About the third research question the effectiveness of the curriculum in three domains of knowledge was not statistically significant between two groups of participants (Farhangian and Non-Farhangian) according to the findings of the MANCOVA test. Although it was expected that teachers in Farhangian groups would show their positive views regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum, the results of the study are not in line with the study of Ranjbari et al. (2020), which demonstrated the efficacy of the teacher education program in Farhangian University in developing linguistic and the pedagogical knowledge of teachers. The findings of the study are in accord with the results of the study by Khanjani et al. (2016) which indicated that classroom management skills were not satisfactorily addressed in teacher education programs and that future teachers had many challenges with theoretical or practical issues regarding recent classroom management techniques.

Regarding the pedagogical domain of knowledge, Ping (2015) mentioned some program weaknesses due to the inefficacy of managerial competence. Farrell (2007) suggests that teacher education programs should assist teachers in discovering alternative classroom management strategies.

The result obtained from the content analysis of the interview showed that considering the strength of the curriculum, most of the participant in both groups confirmed that the current curriculum was almost successful in developing their general English knowledge and skills.

Factors such as the lack of provision of practical knowledge related to teaching experiences, overemphasizing theoretical issues, the existence of overlap among many courses, especially in the PK and PCK domain of knowledge, and the impracticality of many pedagogical and managerial courses in the real context of teaching and the absence of courses deal with improvement critical thinking ability and social skills of teachers were commented as the main weak points of the curriculum in Farhangian groups. Erten (2015) pointed out that the majority of participants mentioned the lack of real-life teaching experiences, lack of knowledge about contextual challenges, and the existence of a mismatch between ideals and actual were challenging components of their teacher education program.

In addition, the analysis of the comments made by teachers in Non-Farhangian groups regarding the weak points of the curriculum showed various factors. Teachers-centered instructions, the absence of pedagogical knowledge and specialized courses related to English teaching, and the lack of adequate and negotiated objectives were also mentioned as the most challenging parts of the curriculum (Salehizadeh et al., 2020). According to the study of Tavazoie and Razmjoo (2021), participants repeatedly mentioned that the arrangement of the courses was incorrect, with no regard for the required subject matter and content knowledge. They argued that links should be established with other teacher training centers in Iran and around the world.

Furthermore, the result of interviews discovered that a host of teachers were ignored for sharing their views with authorities to make changes in the curriculum or program. EFL teachers should be given more freedom to make essential decisions like curriculum changes and modification, selection of teaching materials and courses and teaching practice (Pazhoman & Sarkhosh, 2019).

6. Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that learner autonomy should be important in Iranian high schools since it can influence students' academic performance and personal development significantly. This research shows how learner autonomy can empower students to take ownership of their education thereby motivating them, and increasing their commitment levels as well as their ability to think critically. As a result, instructors can help develop independent self-regulated learners through more student-centered teaching that prepares them adequately for higher education and professional careers.

Adopting learner autonomy in the school systems is a paradigm shift towards creating a generation that values continuous learning and innovation. The approach does not only enhance individual learning outcomes and personal growth but also addresses wider educational objectives such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability – skills that are increasingly significant within the rapidly changing global context of today.

The findings of this study have significant implications for understanding policies and practices in education systems and how the concept of learner autonomy should be adopted at a systemic level. It is advisable for the policymakers and leaders in the field of education to come up with appropriate development programs which aim at training various teachers on how they can make appropriate learning self-directed. This includes training on pedagogically advanced techniques, differentiation between the curriculum to encourage students' empowerment, and the use of assessment tools that enhance student-centered learning among others.

In addition, this work recommends others considering a change in how the role of schools and culture is defined where the traditional teacher-centric model is replaced by one that involves and empowers students to make choices. If Iranian schools incorporate more of an educational culture that embraces autonomy, this creates a classroom setting that encourages students to voice their opinions, inquire further into what they are interested in, or learn more about their learning styles and skills.

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