

## Evolution of EFL Teacher Education In Iran: An Inquiry into the Ministry of Education's Teacher Education Developmental Trajectories

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### Abstract

This article examines the evolution of teacher education in Iran, with a specific focus on English language teacher training. Utilizing a qualitative analysis of historical documents, the study identifies six distinct periods in this evolution. The first period marks the foundation of teacher education with the establishment of the Dar al-Fonun School. The second period saw the formalization of teacher education through the Central and Higher Teacher Training Colleges. In the third period, teacher training expanded with the creation of Preliminary and Higher Colleges, focusing on multidisciplinary fields, including the French language. The fourth period introduced specialized programs, such as English language teaching, which replaced French. During the fifth period, teacher training centers reached their peak and then declined. Finally, the sixth period marks a shift in the educational system's approach to teacher education, highlighted by the establishment of Farhangian University. Throughout these periods, English language teacher curricula evolved from classical and structural approaches to communicative and interactive methods. This shift not only highlights the changing pedagogical landscape in Iran but also underscores the need for curricula that better prepare teachers for contemporary classroom dynamics. The findings showcase the developmental trajectory of teacher education in Iran, emphasizing the need to address future challenges.

**Keywords:** English language teacher education, communicative approach, history of teacher education, periods of teacher education development, structural approach

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## 1. Introduction

Inasmuch as the role of qualified teachers in the educational system is important, this has brought the characteristics of teacher preparation programs into focus (Cochran-Smith, 2022; Barrett & Hordern, 2024). The main purpose of these programs is to help prospective teachers develop their knowledge, skills, beliefs, and awareness, relate these components to the real practice of teaching, and reflect on their practice (Tarman, 2012; Lysberg, 2023). In essence, teacher preparation is one of the most important and influential areas in the education system of any country, playing a vital role in reforming and strengthening the developmental foundations of nations (Butera et al., 2021).

In the Iranian context, a diverse array of teacher preparation programs is available for English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher candidates. These programs are offered by various institutions, including language institutes, public and private universities governed by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, and Teacher Education Universities under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Specifically, language institutes provide training programs designed to prepare their prospective teachers for instruction in English language classes. Meanwhile, public and private universities offer programs that cater to both language institute teachers and university instructors, thereby providing a broader range of professional development opportunities. Notably, teacher education universities, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, primarily focus on preparing teachers for public schools, thereby contributing to the development of a qualified teaching force in the education sector. This article specifically addresses the training of English language teachers employed by the Ministry of Education to teach language courses that are part of the compulsory units in secondary education.

The need for a comprehensive examination of EFL teacher training evolution within Iran is underscored by the global demand for qualified language instructors (Brown, 2014; Richards & Farrell, 2005) and the unique sociopolitical influences shaping Iran's educational approaches. Understanding this evolution offers insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in adapting global practices to Iran's local context. Despite the vast amount of research on language teacher education worldwide and in Iran that has investigated teacher education in the public and private sectors, comprehensive studies are lacking on how these various programs are administered by universities supervised by the Ministry of Education in Iran. Another issue worthy of attention is that, aside from its current status, the history of language teacher education in these contexts has not been studied in detail. Consequently, we lack awareness of how teacher education programs in these settings have evolved and been administered over the years. To address these gaps, this study aims to provide a detailed account of the teacher preparation processes followed in teacher education universities supervised by the Ministry of Education. These teacher education centers have been active since the pre-revolutionary period and, hence, have a long history of preparing language teachers. In addition to exploring the present status of teacher education programs in

these contexts, this study provides a historical overview of the teacher preparation agenda in these settings. More specifically, this research examines the evolution of teacher training from the beginning of modern education, starting with the establishment of Dar al-Fonun in 1851 (1230 SH) to the present day.

The significance of studying the present and past status of teacher education in the contexts governed by the Ministry of Education in Iran lies in its potential to inform the development of more effective teacher preparation programs. As the initial teacher preparation program serves as the primary route of entry into the teaching profession, it is crucial to examine its structure and content to determine the quality and quantity of teachers produced. Moreover, given the rapidly changing educational landscape and diverse individual demands, it is essential to continually update and reformulate initial teacher training courses to ensure they meet the needs of students and society. Studying the status quo of teacher education programs in Iranian Teacher Education Universities can provide valuable insights into their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This knowledge can inform the development of more comprehensive curricula for future teacher training courses, ultimately leading to improved teacher quality and a more effective education system.

Given the scarcity of research on this topic, particularly in the Iranian context, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of English language teacher preparation programs in teacher education contexts governed by the Ministry of Education, shedding light on their historical development, strengths, and challenges. By examining the past and present of teacher education programs, this study seeks to identify areas for improvement and inform strategies for reformulating these programs to better meet the needs of students and society. Accordingly, the research questions are:

1. What historical trajectory and significant events has modern teacher training in Iran undergone?
2. Considering the changes in the teacher training system in Iran, what important transformations and events have occurred in the training of English language teachers?

## 2. Literature Review

This section brings together the existing knowledge about training ELT teachers within the Iranian context, highlighting common themes and varied facets of such programs.

While Iran's education landscape has evolved with a growing emphasis on foreign language education (Borjian, 2013), teacher education remains underdeveloped despite this increased focus. However, despite this increased attention, the field of teacher education remains underdeveloped. Studies indicate that Iran's foreign language policy has been largely neglected, with minimal involvement of foreign language experts in policy-making (Kiany et al., 2011). This lack of involvement can lead to ineffective policies that do not address the needs of students or teachers (Tohidian & Ghiasi Nodooshan, 2021). Iran's teacher training programs have faced criticism for

various shortcomings. Nezakat-Alhossainia and Ketabi (2013) compared teacher training courses in Iran, Turkey, and Australia, finding similarities in programming and materials between Iranian and Turkish programs. However, they noted that Australian programs were more precise and richer. Khanjani et al. (2016) evaluated the adequacy of the pre-service EFL teacher training program in Iran and found that it had not been adequately laid out.

The current teacher education programs in Iran have also been criticized for their lack of effectiveness. Safari and Rashidi (2015) investigated the applicability of post-transmission perspectives and theories to Iranian teacher education and found that alternative approaches were needed to improve pre-service and in-service ELT teacher education. Naseri et al. (2016) explored English teachers' perceptions on dominant approaches to teacher education in ELT centers in Iran and found that transmission-oriented programs neglected teacher creativity and learner needs. Baniasad et al. (2016) studied EFL teacher education programs' implementation, practicality, and approach to teacher learning and found a gap between macro plans and teachers' practices. They noted that even teacher trainers were not involved in the program development process but simply transmitted materials presented by textbook authors. Findings revealed a disconnect between teachers' perceived developmental needs and the content of training programs.

Some studies have also evaluated the views of key stakeholders regarding the suitability and impact of TEFL teacher education programs. Gholami and Qurbanzada (2016) surveyed 62 pre-service teachers, 48 in-service teachers, and 28 teacher educators using a questionnaire adapted from Peacock (2009) and found that all three groups emphasized the importance of teaching-related courses, particularly teaching methodology. Ranjbar et al. (2020) evaluated the adequacy and effectiveness of the latest EFL pre-service teacher education curriculum through stakeholders' eyes and found a well-structured curriculum with minor flaws.

Seminal works in teacher education and language pedagogy (e.g., Shulman, 1987; Richards & Rodgers, 1986) emphasize content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and methodological adaptability as essential for effective teacher preparation. Shulman's concept of "pedagogical content knowledge" highlights the need for teachers to not only master subject content but also understand how to convey it effectively to learners. Richards and Rodgers' analysis of language teaching methods underscores the need for aligning teaching approaches -such as communicative language teaching- with learners' practical needs. Theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory also provide a lens through which to understand these challenges, particularly the importance of context-sensitive teacher training that addresses the unique sociocultural dimensions of the Iranian educational system. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools in learning, underscoring the need for teacher training programs that equip educators to adapt pedagogies in ways that resonate with local cultural values.

In recent years, several studies have examined English language teacher education practices in Iran, focusing on various aspects of teacher preparation and professional development across different educational contexts. Tajik et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive investigation into

teacher training practices within private language institutes in Iran. Their research centered on the professional development of novice English language teachers, evaluating the effectiveness of current training programs and identifying areas for improvement. The study highlighted key aspects requiring attention, including bridging the theory-practice gap, implementing supervised workshops, developing reflective teaching skills, integrating technology, and emphasizing experiential learning in teacher preparation. Building on this work, Tajik et al. (2022) explored the historical development of English teacher preparation programs in five prominent private language institutes in Iran, established approximately three decades ago. This study employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis to examine both internal aspects of these programs and their responses to external sociopolitical factors. The researchers identified five constant features across the programs: methodological directions as content, transmission approach in teacher preparation, provision of external professional development opportunities, emphasis on monolingualism in English Language Teaching (ELT), and a lack of focus on incorporating local culture in ELT. Further expanding the scope of inquiry, Tajik et al. (2024) investigated the status of English language teaching (ELT) and English language teacher education (ELTE) practices in private bilingual schools (PBSs) in Tehran, Iran. This study aimed to explore previously neglected aspects of ELT and ELTE practices in five PBSs through in-depth semi-structured interviews with principals, English supervisors, and teachers. Thematic analysis of the data revealed perceptions on various topics within teacher education practices, including teaching methods, materials development, religious values, native and foreign cultures, technological literacy, English accents, use of mother tongue, and teacher reflection.

To sum up, the review of literature shows that there is a complicated and changing scene of English language teacher education in Iran. Despite increased attention to foreign language education, teacher training programs continue to face significant challenges (Zarrabi & Brown, 2017). Some of these problems are: lack of authority by language specialists in policy formulation, ineffective pre-service and in-service training, and disconnection between program content and practical necessities of teachers. Nonetheless, it has recently been noted that an awareness to these challenges has been growing with attempts made towards solving them especially within privately owned language institutes and bilingual schools. The current literature calls for a teacher education that is more comprehensive, practice-centered, and contextualized. Thereby, this encompasses bridging the theory-practice gap, reflective teaching, integrating technology and taking into consideration various sociocultural factors for English language teaching.

Through a review of the existing literature, it can be concluded that, first, the majority of research on teacher training in the field of language education has been conducted in a fragmented manner, and historical approaches to this field are scarce. Second, the few historical studies on teacher training in language education are primarily focused on private institutions. The need for a historical perspective on ELT teacher training development aligns with Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) call for research on the evolution of teacher education practices within specific sociopolitical

contexts. Understanding the evolution of ELT teacher training in Iran's unique educational and sociopolitical landscape could offer valuable insights into current challenges and guide effective policy and program reforms. The authors argue that historical research is crucial for understanding contemporary challenges in Iranian language teacher education and informing future policies and programs. Specifically, research that explores the evolution of English language teacher training within the broader context of teacher education reforms throughout the history of modern education in Iran is necessary.

### 3. Method

#### *3.1. Design*

This study employed a qualitative research design, with a particular focus on historical research as the most suitable methodology for elucidating the subject matter. Historical research, a type of qualitative inquiry, analyzes documents to trace the development of events or phenomena from their inception to the present (Grazziotin & Pereira, 2022).

#### *3.2. Documents Collection*

Data for this research were drawn from various types of documents. As Gross (2018) states, documents of all kinds can provide valuable insights, contribute to theory development, and enhance understanding of a given topic. According to Gross (2018), documents are categorized into two types: primary and secondary. Primary sources offer first-hand accounts of events or occurrences without interpretation or analysis. These sources, often unpublished, may require extensive research and retrieval from personal, public, or historical archives. In contrast, secondary sources analyze and interpret primary data and are typically published in the public domain. For this study, primary sources included archival documents from the National Archive of Iran, encompassing records from educational institutions, governmental decrees, and historical policies related to teacher training. Additional primary materials were collected from the archives of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, the Islamic Parliament Research Center, and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. Secondary sources comprised scholarly articles, book chapters, dissertations, and policy documents relevant to the development of teacher education in Iran, with a specific focus on language teacher training.

#### *3.3. Document Selection*

Since there was an enormous amount of available documents, the selection of primary and secondary sources was conducted systematically. Gross (2018) presents inclusion and exclusion criteria for document selection and argues that these criteria help ensure the authenticity and representativeness of the document sample. According to him, inclusion criteria are used to filter

out irrelevant data. For this study, the inclusion criteria included: (1) documents dating from the Qajar era to the present, reflecting historical progression; and (2) documents directly or indirectly related to teacher training in Iran, with an emphasis on language teacher education. These criteria aimed to include materials with historical and policy relevance to provide a comprehensive view of the evolution of teacher training approaches. Conversely, exclusion criteria helped refine the selection by eliminating documents that did not meet content and quality standards. The exclusion criteria included: (1) documents not in Persian or English; (2) damaged or illegible documents; and (3) documents focusing solely on provincial or district education policies without national relevance. Through systematic internet searches and in-person visits to archives, over 4,000 pages of documents were collected, of which approximately 2,000 pages met the final inclusion criteria and were selected for analysis.

### *3.4. Data Analysis*

In the present study, after gathering a large volume of data, a content analysis strategy was applied to analyze the findings. The analysis began with a thorough reading of each document to familiarize the researchers with the content and to identify recurring themes and historical patterns. Hsieh and Shannon (2018) describe two distinct approaches to content analysis, which differ in terms of study purpose, sampling decisions, and analytical strategies. These approaches are the inductive approach, also known as conventional qualitative content analysis, and the deductive approach, or directed qualitative content analysis. When existing knowledge about a phenomenon is largely absent and the study aims to generate new insights, an inductive approach is appropriate, as it allows codes and themes to emerge directly from the data. The analysis process included multiple steps: (1) documents were arranged chronologically, from the oldest to the newest, to observe trends over time; (2) a categorization process was applied, grouping documents with similar content and relevance to historical teacher education changes; and (3) historical periods were identified based on key policy shifts and educational reforms noted in the documents. This systematic analysis facilitated the identification of major historical phases in teacher education in Iran. The relationships between codes led to the development of categories and themes, reflecting the evolution of teacher training practices. Throughout this process, peer review of coding was conducted to enhance accuracy and consistency in interpreting historical data, further strengthening the study's rigor.

## **4. Findings**

Due to the scarcity of documents related to English language education and teacher training during certain historical periods—particularly at the inception of modern higher education in Iran—and considering a systemic perspective that views English language teacher training as an

integral component of overall teacher training, this research analyzed all relevant documents on teacher training, with a particular focus on those specific to English language teacher education.

To better understand the history of teacher education in Iran, an effort was made to identify several historical periods based on significant historical features and events. Ultimately, six distinct historical periods were identified. The selection of these periods was based on key events that significantly influenced teacher training programs. For instance, the establishment of *Dar al-Fonun* is recognized as a defining event in the first period, marking the beginning of modern higher education in Iran, while in the most recent period, the founding of Farhangian University is considered a major milestone. To provide a comprehensive yet concise overview of the developments in teacher education in general—and English language teacher education in particular—Table 1 was created based on document analysis and source study. This table presents key years, significant events, teacher education periods, and political periods.

**Table 1**

*Alignment of Years, Significant Events, Political Periods, and Teacher Education Eras*

Year	Important events	Teacher education era	Political era
1851	Establishment of Dar al-Funun by Amir Kabir	The beginning of Higher Education	Qajar dynasty
1888	Establishment of the first modern-style elementary school by Mirza Hassan Roshdieh	and paving the way for teacher training with the establishment of	
1911	Approval of the first law to send students abroad, half of whom were to become teachers	Dar al-fonoun School (1851-1918)	The Qajar Dynasty and the Constitutional System (beginning from 1906)
1918	Establishment of the first teacher training center named “Central Dar al-Moallemin”	From the Central Teachers’ College to the Higher Teachers’ College and	
1927	Establishment of Evening Dar al-Moallemin for Adults and technical education course of Elementary Dar al-Moallemin for provinces and states	the enactment of the teacher training Law (1918-1934)	Pahlavi I (beginning from 1925)
1928	Approval of the second law to send students abroad for study in reputable European universities		
1928	Conversion of Central Dar al-Moallemin to Higher Dar al-Moallemin and foundation of secondary teacher training program		
1932	Teaching of educational sciences courses in Higher Dar al-Moallemin		
1934	Approval of Teacher Education Act		
1934	Establishment of Tehran University, Elementary Teacher Training Colleges and Women’s Higher Teacher Training College	The establishment of the University of Tehran and preliminary and Higher Teachers’ College (1934-1967)	
1934	Renaming of Higher Dar al-Moallemin to Higher Teacher Training College		
1943	Enactment of the Public Education Law		
1946	Approval of the charter for teacher training classes to compensate for teacher shortages		
1955	Independence of the Higher Teachers’ College from the two faculties of Literature and Sciences at the University of Tehran		Pahlavi II (beginning from 1941)
1958	Signing of a cooperation agreement between the Higher Teachers’ College and Brigham Young University of America; cooperation contract between the American higher education institution and the University of Tehran to improve the teacher education program		

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<b>1959</b>	Independence of Higher Teacher Training College from University of Tehran		
<b>1964</b>	Dissolution of Higher Teacher Training College and establishment of Teacher Education and Educational Research Organization		
<b>1967</b>	Re-establishment of Higher Teacher Training College	establishment of specialized	
<b>1968</b>	Establishment of Guidance Schools teacher training College; utilization of American Peace Corps volunteers for teaching English	Secondary Education courses and the founding of a teacher training university (1967-1979)	
<b>1970</b>	Establishment of the first program for English language teacher training; approval of the law for establishing the Teacher Training University		
<b>1972</b>	Establishment of an English language internship program under the supervision of the British Council		
<b>1974</b>	Renaming of the Higher Teachers' College to Teacher Training University		
<b>1976</b>	Revision of the charter and programs of the Preliminary Teachers' College		
<b>1979</b>	Preparation of new statute for Teacher Training Centers, cessation of all old Teacher Training Centers' activities, and establishment of new Teacher Training Centers 1979	The zenith of teacher training centers in the New political era until the closure of teacher training colleges (1979-2002)	Islamic Republic (beginning from 1979)
<b>1980</b>	Suspension of student admission for Teacher Training Centers 1980		
<b>1981</b>	Admission of students to 52 Teacher Training Centers; approval of the policy framework for Teacher Training Centers with emphasis on Islamic and revolutionary ideology		
<b>1983</b>	Approval of the charter for Teacher Training Centers; approval of the charter for Teacher Training Colleges; revival of Teacher Training Colleges		
<b>1985</b>	Formation of Teacher Education Planning Coordination Group		
<b>1990</b>	Approval of Service Commitment Law in Education, Integration of Teacher Training Centers entrance exam with nationwide exam, and implementation of new educational regulations		
<b>1993</b>	The approval of curricula for various associate degree programs in teacher training, the peak of activity for teacher training centers.		
<b>1995</b>	Suspension of student admission in Teacher Training Colleges		
<b>1998</b>	Establishment of continuous associate degree programs in teacher training colleges to educate the required workforce for primary and guidance levels in underprivileged areas.		
<b>2002</b>	Approval of new statute for Teacher Training Centers	The resurgence of teacher training centers until the establishment of	
<b>2007</b>	Establishment of Payambar-e Azam (PBUH) University to upgrade Teacher Training Centers and supply human resources for Education	Farhangian University (2002-2024)	
<b>2011</b>	Approval of the Farhangian University charter		
<b>2012</b>	Commencement of Farhangian University's operations and transformation of teacher training centers into its affiliated units		

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As illustrated in Table 1, the history of modern education and teacher training in Iran can be examined from a political perspective, spanning from the pre-constitutional period of the Qajar era to the post-constitutional period, the Pahlavi I and II eras, and the contemporary period of the Islamic Republic. In the context of teacher training, an analysis of significant and influential events across different periods reveals six distinct historical phases, each with its own defining characteristics. The following section presents an examination of the characteristics of each teacher training period based on the analysis of available documents and studied sources.

#### *4.1. Period I: The Beginning of Higher Education and Paving the Way for Teacher Training with the Establishment of Dar al-fonoun School (1851-1918)*

Dar al-fonoun<sup>1</sup>, a pioneering educational institution in Iran, was established in 1851 by Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, the renowned Grand Vizier of the Qajar dynasty. This institution was founded as a step toward advancing modern sciences and technology in the country (Roozbahani, 2022). Amir Kabir took the initiative to invite the first foreign teachers from Austria to Iran. As noted by Musa Khan Mar'at al-Mamalek, writing about four decades after Dar al-Fonoun's establishment (corrected document by Malekzadeh, 1400), over the course of 40 years, approximately 16 Iranian and 26 foreign teachers from Austria, France, Italy, and Germany taught at this esteemed institution.

According to one available document (NLIA: National Library and Archives of Iran, n.d., a), at the time of its establishment, the fields of study at Dar al-Fonoun included infantry, artillery, medicine and surgery, and pharmacy. Another document (NLIA, 1924) indicates that over time, additional fields such as foreign languages, geometry, and physics were incorporated into the curriculum. French, natural sciences, mathematics, history, and geography were common courses across all fields of study, with English, Russian, painting, and music later added. The duration of the study program ranged from six to seven years. Regarding foreign language instruction, documents suggest that French was the primary foreign language taught at Dar al-Fonoun, with English introduced later as an additional language.

Following the establishment of Dar al-Fonoun in 1229 SH (1851), individuals such as Mirza Hassan Rashidiye began founding modern-style schools. These schools, which gradually increased in number—including Rashidiye Moshiriyeh, Adib Sadat, Islam, Aqdasiyeh, Elmieh, and Kamalieh—were in dire need of trained and competent teachers (Aqazadeh & Armand, 2013; Dorani, 2012). The first official step toward teacher education in Iran was the passage of a law by the Majlis (National Parliament) in May 1911, which authorized the sending of 30 individuals abroad for further studies. Of this group, 15 individuals were selected to study education, while eight pursued military studies and seven specialized in engineering (IPRC: Islamic Parliament

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<sup>1</sup> دارالفنون

Research Center, 1911). According to documents reviewed by Vazirizadeh (2019), in 1290 SH (1872), special classes were established at the Dar al-Fonoun School in Tehran to enhance teachers' literacy levels. These classes incorporated not only science and literature courses but also, for the first time, courses titled "Principles of Education." The addition of these courses aimed to equip teachers with fundamental knowledge of child education.

The historical significance of Dar al-Fonoun in shaping teacher education appears to be twofold. First, a substantial number of its graduates became educators in newly established modern schools, playing a pivotal role in Iran's educational transformation. Second, as Iran's pioneering institution of higher learning, Dar al-Fonoun set a precedent for specialized higher education institutions. Consequently, various organizations and ministries established similar institutions to train their personnel. Among these were the School of Politics (affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, training personnel for diplomatic service), the School of Military (training military officers), and the School of Agriculture (training agricultural specialists). Likewise, as new schools emerged, the demand for specialized and competent teachers grew, necessitating the creation of a dedicated higher education center for teacher training. This eventually led to the establishment of the Central Teachers' College<sup>2</sup> in 1296.

#### *4.2. Period II: From the Central Teachers' College to the Higher Teachers' College<sup>3</sup> and the Enactment of the Teacher Training Law (1918-1934)*

Based on a document (NLIA, 1917), in the year 1297SH (1918), the Law for the Establishment of the Central Teacher Training College (comprising a Teacher Training School for Boys (dār al-mo<sup>c</sup>allemīn) and a Teacher Training School for Girls (dār al-mo<sup>c</sup>allemāt) was passed by the National Consultative Assembly with the aim of training teachers for primary and secondary schools. The Central Teacher Training College consisted of two divisions: Elementary (three years of theoretical studies and one year of practical training; training teachers for the first four years of elementary school) and Higher (four years of theoretical studies and one year of practical training; training teachers for the fifth and sixth years of elementary school and secondary school). The admission requirements for both divisions were a six-year elementary school certificate and an age range of 17 to 21 years for admission to the elementary division and 18 to 22 years for admission to the higher division.

According to an existing document (Tadayon, 1927), during this same period in the history of teacher education, in the year 1306 (1927), the statutes of the Adult Evening Teacher Training School<sup>4</sup> were approved by the Supreme Council of Education<sup>5</sup> with the aim of addressing the

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<sup>2</sup> دارالمعلمین مرکزی

<sup>3</sup> دارالمعلمین عالی

<sup>4</sup> دارالمعلمین شبانه اکابر

<sup>5</sup> شورای عالی معارف

shortcomings of elementary school teacher training through a one-year program. In the same year, a one-year technical education course for primary school teachers in provinces and states was approved by the Supreme Council of Education (Safi, 2019). The aim of this course was to train primary school teachers for the provinces and cities of Iran. The admission requirement was a first-cycle secondary school diploma. Moreover, documents indicate that in 1928, the second law on sending students abroad (IPRC, 1928) was passed for studying in reputable European universities. This law mandated the government to select and send 100 high school graduates to Europe every year for six years. Thirty-five percents of these students were required to study in the field of education and prepare for teaching.

According to the documents, with the expansion of high schools and their need for teachers in 1928, the Central Teachers' College was renamed the higher teachers' college<sup>6</sup>, and its charter was approved by the Supreme Council of Education in 1929 (NLIA, n.d., b). The higher teachers' college comprised two divisions: the literary division, which offered programs in philosophy and literature, history and geography, and the scientific division, which offered programs in physics and chemistry, natural sciences, and mathematics. The duration of study was three years, and the admission requirement was a complete high school diploma (grade 12). Based on a decision by the Ministry of Education (document cited from Yousefi Far, 2019), starting in 1932, students were required to study educational sciences courses (including six courses in educational psychology, philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education, principles of secondary education, and principles of teaching and learning), each for two hours per week, in addition to their chosen major. This decision appears to be the first official decision to mandate that future teachers take educational courses in addition to their subject area, which reflects the importance policymakers placed on developing teaching skills alongside content knowledge.

Another significant law enacted during this period was the Teacher Education Act of 1933 (NLIA, 1934). This law mandated that the government establish 25 preliminary teacher training schools<sup>7</sup> and one higher teacher training school<sup>8</sup> for girls in Tehran and the provinces within five years. The current titles of "آموزگار" (primary school teacher), "دبیر" (secondary school teacher), "هنرآموز" (vocational school teacher), and "استاد" (university professor) were established by this law. The admission requirement for the two-year preliminary teacher training schools was a three-year secondary education, while the admission requirement for the three-year higher teacher training schools was a complete secondary school diploma. The preliminary teacher training schools trained teachers for elementary schools, while the higher teacher training schools trained teachers for both preliminary teacher training schools and secondary schools. The teacher training schools were boarding schools<sup>9</sup> and were free of charge. Teachers were paid a fixed salary, a marriage allowance,

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<sup>6</sup> دارالمعلمین عالی

<sup>7</sup> دانشسرای مقدماتی

<sup>8</sup> دانشسرای عالی

<sup>9</sup> شبانه روزی

and a housing allowance. With the establishment of the preliminary teacher training schools, the Dar al-Mo'allemin (teacher training school for boys) and Dar al-Mo'allemat (teacher training school for girls) were closed down.

A search of the documents revealed no results regarding the curriculum of the higher teachers' college. However, the curriculum of the higher teachers' college, particularly its philosophy and literature branch<sup>10</sup>, is worth examining and considering, especially in terms of its foreign language instruction content. Table 2 presents the course content for each of the five branches of the Dar al-Mo'allemin. As can be seen in this table, courses in methodology and teaching ethics were included in all branches. Similar to the first period discussed in this article, French remained the primary foreign language taught, but other foreign languages, particularly Arabic, were also taught.

**Table 2**

*Curriculum of Dar al-Mo'allemin Programs (Document No. 10, cited from Navid Adham and Rouhbakhsh, 2020)*

row	Field	Courses
1	Philosophy and Literature	Persian, Arabic and History of Arabic Literature, Foreign Language and History of Foreign Literature, Iranian History, History and Fundamentals of Ancient Philosophy and Wisdom, Teaching Methods and Methodology
2	History and Geography	Persian, History of Iranian Literature, French, Arabic, History of Eastern Nations, General Geography, Medieval History, History of Ancient and Modern Civilizations, Comprehensive History of Iran, Modern and Contemporary History, Human and Economic Geography
3	Physics and Chemistry	Fundamentals of Mathematics, Introduction to Physics, Foreign Language, Persian, Teaching Methods and Methodology
4	Natural Sciences	Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, French, Persian, Earth Science, Teaching Methods and Methodology
5	Mathematics	Fundamentals of Mathematics, Analytical Geometry, French Language, Persian, Arithmetic, Ideal Society, Mechanical Reasoning, Celestial Mechanics, Teaching Methods and Methodology

Table 3 presents the curriculum for the philosophy and literature branch of the Dar al-Mo'allemin.

**Table 3**

*Curriculum of the Philosophy and Literature Program at Dar al-Mo'allemin (Document No. 10, cited from Navid Adham and Rouhbakhsh, 2020)*

<i>First Year curriculum for the Philosophy and Literature Department</i>	
Lesson	Hours per week
Persian (Composition, Reading, and Research on Selected Parts of Persian Poetry and Prose) History of Iranian Literature (From Pre-Islamic Era to the Second Century AH)	4
Arabic - Advanced Grammar, Rhetoric, Translation from Arabic to Persian and vice versa	4
Foreign Language	6
Research in Iranian History	3
Ancient History of Greece and Rome	3
Total	20
<i>Second Year curriculum for the Philosophy and Literature Department</i>	
History of Persian Literature from the 3rd to the early 7th century AH	4

<sup>10</sup> شعبه (شته)

History of Arabic Literature from the Jahiliyyah Period to the Umayyad Era, including Readings of Selected Poetry and Prose	3
Detailed Discussion on the Biographies of Iranian Scholars Who Have Made Significant Contributions to Arabic Literature	-
History of Foreign Literature (Rome and Greece)	3
Logic	2
History of Ancient Civilizations	2
General Philosophy, Psychology, and Ethics	2
Total	17
<i>Third Year curriculum for the Philosophy and Literature Department</i>	
History of Persian Literature from the Early 7th Century to the Early 14th Century	4
History of Foreign Literature: French, English, German, Italian, and Russian	3
History of Modern European Civilization	3
Pedagogy and Methodology	2
History of Philosophy	2
Ancient Wisdom (Theology and Natural Sciences)	2
Total	18

As evident from Table 3, Arabic was included in the curriculum of the Philosophy and Literature program. Other languages were also taught, though this is not explicitly stated in the documents. However, based on a note in the amendment to the curriculum of the Teachers' College (NLIA, 1928), it can be inferred that, in the Philosophy and Literature branch, students could choose one of the following foreign languages—English, French, German, Italian, or Russian—as their main language, in addition to Arabic. Therefore, the only significant change in the second period of teacher training in language education, despite the continued emphasis on French and Arabic, was the introduction of the option to study other foreign languages, including English.

#### ***4.3. Period III: The Establishment of the University of Tehran and Preliminary and Higher Teachers' College<sup>11</sup> (1934-1967)***

In 1934, the University of Tehran was established. According to Dorani (2012), following the establishment of the University of Tehran, the literary section of the higher teachers' college was transformed into the Faculty of Literature, while its scientific section became the Faculty of Sciences. Students with a complete high school diploma were required to first take an entrance exam for the Faculties of Literature and Sciences. Upon admission to one of these two faculties, those who aspired to become teachers then took a special exam at the higher teachers' college. A comprehensive review of the curriculum for the higher teachers' college and the Faculties of Literature and Sciences at the University of Tehran revealed limited documentation.

Table 4 provides an overview of the courses offered at the Faculty of Literature in 1934. Unlike modern credit-based<sup>12</sup> systems, courses were structured under a "certificate"<sup>13</sup> system,

<sup>11</sup> دانشسراهای مقدماتی و عالی

<sup>12</sup> ترمی/واحدی

<sup>13</sup> شهادتنامه

where students selected three courses at the beginning of each academic year and were required to complete them by the end of the year (Yearbook of higher teachers' college, 1934-1935).

**Table 4**

*Courses Taught at the Faculty of Literature, University of Tehran, in the Academic Year 1934-1935 (Yearbook of higher teachers' college, 1934-1935)*

<i>Subjects Taught in the Faculty of Literature Weekly Class Hours</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>
1-Language and Literature of Iran after Islam	8
2-History of Iranian Literature after Islam	7
3-Arabic Language and Literature: Morphology, Syntax, Rhetoric, and Literary History	10
4-Advanced Course in French Language	6
5-French Literature	6
6-Advanced Course in English Language	6
7-English Literature	8
8-History of Iran before Islam, including the Nations of the East, Greece, and Rome	6
9-History of Iran after Islam	6
10-General History	5
11-Archaeology and History of Fine Arts	6
12-Geography of Iran	6
13-General Geography	7
14-Modern Philosophy	5
15-General and History of Philosophy	8
16-Psychology	6
17-Ancient Philosophy	6

As evident from the aforementioned table, French and Arabic languages remained part of the curriculum during this period. English was also offered alongside these two languages, while there is no indication of instruction in other languages such as Russian, German, or Italian.

In 1955, the higher teachers' college was separated from the Faculties of Sciences and Literature but remained affiliated with the University of Tehran. In 1959, a law was passed granting the higher teachers' college independence from the University of Tehran and transforming it into an institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (IPRC, 1959). According to this law, the higher teachers' college was tasked with not only training teachers but also establishing specialized programs for preparing school principals, inspectors, and other personnel within the education system. As per the law, applicants to the higher teachers' college were selected through a competitive entrance exam from among high school graduates or holders of bachelor's degrees in relevant fields. The duration of studies was a minimum of three years for high school graduates and a minimum of one year for holders of bachelor's degrees.

In 1964, the Higher Teachers' College was dissolved and replaced by the Organization for Teacher Training and Educational Research. This new institution offered only one-year training programs for university graduates aspiring to become teachers (LDCICA: Library and Documentation Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, 1964). As will be discussed later, the Higher Teachers' College was re-established in 1967 with a four-year program and later

transformed into the University of Teacher Education in 1974. This period appears to have introduced a new challenge for educational policymakers in the country—one that seemingly persists to this day: Should teacher training institutions focus solely on equipping university graduates with teaching skills, or should they also provide subject-specific knowledge alongside pedagogical expertise?

A notable development during the third phase of teacher education was the collaboration with foreign universities, particularly those in the United States. These partnerships extended into the subsequent period as well. For instance, in 1958, the Higher Teachers' College and Brigham Young University in the United States signed an agreement aimed at training teachers and enhancing the quality of teacher training programs at the Higher Teachers' College. As part of this agreement, seven full-time technical advisors were assigned to the Higher Teachers' College.

These advisors worked across various fields, including general and elementary education, secondary education, audiovisual aids, home economics, library science, physical education, and health (NLIA, 1961). Additionally, in the same year, the American Council on Education and the University of Tehran signed a contract to improve teacher education programs. This agreement involved the assignment of five expert consultants to the University of Tehran, specializing in areas such as general education, teacher training, secondary education, curriculum development, and home economics and family life education (NLIA, 1961).

Amidst the developments and transformations of the higher teachers' college during this historical period, the establishment of preliminary teachers' training colleges also emerges from the records. Notably, in 1943, during the Soheili cabinet and with Dr. Siyasi as Minister of Education, the Compulsory Free Education Act<sup>14</sup> was passed (IPRC, 1943). This act significantly increased the demand for teachers, particularly elementary school teachers, prompting the establishment of preliminary teachers' training colleges. Due to the shortage of teachers, preliminary teachers' training colleges were gradually established in different parts of the country. Based on this law, assistant teacher classes were also formed to address the teacher shortage. These classes were held in two forms: a two-year course: admission to this course required a sixth-grade elementary school diploma<sup>15</sup> and a one-year course: this course was for those who had a third-grade high school diploma<sup>16</sup>. In 1946, in order to compensate for the shortage of elementary school teachers, the bylaws of teacher training classes were approved (NLIA, 1954). According to these bylaws and on an experimental basis, teacher training classes were to be established in Tehran. The admission requirement for these classes was a fifth-grade high school diploma<sup>17</sup> and the duration of study was one year. Graduates of these classes received a sixth-grade high school diploma<sup>18</sup> in educational

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<sup>14</sup> قانون تعلیمات اجباری مجانی

<sup>15</sup> گواهی نامه تحصیلات ششم ابتدایی

<sup>16</sup> گواهی نامه سوم متوسطه

<sup>17</sup> گواهی نامه پنجم متوسطه

<sup>18</sup> گواهی نامه ششم متوسطه

sciences. In terms of English language instruction, it is evident from this period that there were no specialized English language teachers as in the previous period. Instead, the focus remained on training foreign language teachers who were proficient in Persian literature and the Persian, Arabic, and English languages. This is supported by the document presented in Table 5, which outlines the one-year teacher training program at the preliminary teachers' training colleges for teaching foreign languages in the first cycle of high schools.

**Table 5**

*Courses for the One-Year Foreign Language Teacher Training Program at the Preliminary Teacher Training College in 1954 (National Archives of Iran, 297-006902)*

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Duration</i>
Foreign Language (4 hours for education and completion of knowledge, and 2 hours for learning language teaching)	6 hours
Psychology	2 hours
Education	2 hours
Sociology and Ethics	2 hours
Sports, Scouting, and Cooperative Activities	2 hours
Persian Language, History of Literature, and Grammar (4 hours for study and knowledge enhancement, and 2 hours for learning and practicing Persian teaching)	6 hours
Practice Teaching in Arabic	2 hours
Study and Practice Teaching in Islamic Jurisprudence	2 hours
Calligraphy	2 hours
Practical Teaching	2 hours
Teaching Methods for History and Geography	2 hours

#### *4.4. Period IV: Establishment of Specialized Secondary Education Courses<sup>19</sup> and the Founding of a Teacher Training University (1967-1979)*

The introduction of a new education system and a three-year middle school program for students in 1967, during the fourth phase of teacher training, created new demands for teacher preparation. As a result, the charter of the higher teachers' college was revised in 1967 to address the needs of teacher training and educational research (NLIA, 1967). We think that this period is particularly important in terms of the English language teaching program because, according to the document (Supreme Council for Educational Planning, Ministry of Science, 2023), the English Language Teacher Education program (not the Foreign Language Teacher program as in previous periods) was established for the first time in 1970. In 1968, coinciding with the implementation of a new education system in Iran, specific teacher training programs were also introduced. As noted by Roozbahani (2022), under the new scheme, elementary school teachers were trained in preliminary teacher training colleges and one-year teacher training centers<sup>20</sup>, while middle school teachers

<sup>19</sup> دوره های دبیری تخصصی

<sup>20</sup> مراکز تربیت معلم یکساله

(grades 6, 7, and 8) were trained in two-year middle school teacher training centers<sup>21</sup>. According to available documentation (NLIA, 1965-1989a), four types of multi-vocational teachers were trained in two-year middle school teacher training centers (guidance teacher training colleges<sup>22</sup>) in 1968 to teach science, literature and humanities, foreign languages, and vocational education and technology. The admission requirement for these programs was a high school diploma, and graduates received a post-secondary diploma. Another notable aspect of this period was the utilization of soldiers to address the teacher shortage and the establishment of the Literacy Corps<sup>23</sup> based on the sixth principle of the White Revolution (NLIA, 1962) (this system of recruiting temporary teachers continues to this day under the title of “soldier-teacher”).

A notable characteristic of this period (1967-1973) in teacher training in Iran was the continued reliance on international collaboration. Article 9 of the Higher Teachers' College Charter (NLIA, 1976) authorized the Ministry of Education to employ foreign professors and specialists with prior teaching experience in foreign universities to instruct scientific disciplines at the college. Additionally, volunteers from the Peace Corps were utilized during this period. The Peace Corps was established by President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s and 1970s to promote development and education in countries by sending young Americans abroad. In Iran, Peace Corps members were also utilized to teach English in 1968 (NLIA, 1973-1977). Furthermore, an English language training course was conducted in 1972 under the supervision of the British Council with the aim of developing teachers' language skills (NLIA, 1972). The positive attitude of the political system at the time towards international collaboration, particularly with the United States, appears to have been a driving force behind the education system's shift from French to English language instruction during this period. This shift aligns with the broader global trend towards English as the dominant language of international communication and business.

In 1970, the Law for the establishment of the University of Teacher Education was passed (NLIA, 1970). This law transferred all the responsibilities of the higher teachers' college to the university of teacher education. Article 4 of this law allowed for the hiring of foreign professors and specialists with teaching experience in foreign universities to teach at the University of Teacher Education. Additionally, the duration of study for graduates of the bachelor's degree program at the University of Teacher Education was set at four years, and this period was considered their official service<sup>24</sup>. Finally, as Safi (2019) points out, in 1974, this bill was implemented and the University of Teacher Education was established. The objectives of establishing this university were: to train teachers (professors) for all preliminary, secondary, and higher teachers' colleges, to train educational managers and experts, to train teachers in various educational fields, to train guidance and counseling specialists, to develop educational materials (programs, books, and teaching aids),

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<sup>21</sup> مراکز تربیت معلم دو ساله راهنمایی

<sup>22</sup> دانشسرای راهنمایی

<sup>23</sup> سپاه دانش

<sup>24</sup> خدمت رسمی

and to conduct educational research. Another significant event during this period was the passage of a bill in 1972 to establish the Supreme Council of Teacher Education<sup>25</sup> (NLIA, 1972). This council was formed to coordinate the educational programs of teacher training schools and other educational institutions. The council members included ministers and educational officials and had responsibilities such as preparing and revising curricula.

We believe that the fourth period can be considered the golden era for English language education due to the establishment of teacher training colleges for guidance school teachers and the creation of the English language teaching major. For this reason, to familiarize readers with the curriculum of the English language teaching program, the list of general and educational courses, as well as specialized courses for English language teaching in the two-year guidance school teacher training program in 1973, are presented in Tables 6 and 7, respectively.

**Table 6**

*General and Educational Courses at Guidance Teacher Training Colleges in 1973 (Document No. 108, Volume 4, Yousefifar and Mohammadi, 2021)*

Row	Course Name	First Year	Second Year
1	Psychology (General, Educational, and Assessment)	2	2
2	Principles of Education in Iran	2	2
3	History of Education in Iran	2	-
4	Principles of Guidance and Counseling	-	2
5	Overview of Comparative Education	-	1
6	Persian Language and Literature	3	3
7	Religious Education and Training	2	2
8	Foreign Language	2	2
9	Physical Education and Sports	2	2
Total	Total Weekly Class Hours	15	16

In general, this educational program comprised both theoretical and practical courses in various fields including education, psychology, language and literature, and physical education, which were presented in a cohesive manner over a two-year period.

**Table 7**

*Specialized Courses for the English Language Program at Guidance Teacher Training Colleges in 1973 (Document No. 108, Volume 4, Yousefifar and Mohammadi, 2021)*

Row	Course Name	First year	Second year	Total
1	Grammatical Points and Patterns	8	2	10
	Reading and Conversing with Simple Texts Along with Instruction			
2	Pronunciation of Sounds, Syllables, and Intonation in Reading and Conversing with Literary Texts	3	4	7
3	Comprehension	3	2	5
	Comprehension and Summarization			
4	Spelling and Composition	2	2	4
5	Review of Textbooks and Teaching Guides, and Practical Teaching	-	6	6
Total	Total Weekly Work Hours	16	16	32

Overall, this educational program included both theoretical and practical courses in grammar, reading and conversation, comprehension, spelling and composition, as well as practical teaching, which were systematically offered over a two-year period.

Finally, it is important to note a key feature of this period—one that began in the third period, peaked in this period, and to some extent extended into the fifth and sixth periods: the pivotal role of teacher training in the establishment of universities across Iran, followed by the subsequent estrangement of these universities from teacher training. In the third period, the University of Tehran was founded through the merger of the scientific and literary sections of the Central Teacher Training College. In the fourth period, the Teacher Training University was established, leading to the creation of universities in various cities, including Kashan, Arak, Tabriz, and Sabzevar, all initially aimed at training teachers. These institutions operated either independently or as branches of the Teacher Training University. However, over time, they deviated from their original mission and became independent universities (for more details, refer to the official websites of Kharazmi University and the aforementioned universities). Regrettably, in 2011, even the Teacher Training University—the original foundation of these institutions—was renamed Kharazmi University and entirely abandoned teacher training. As a result of misguided policies, the national teacher training institution lost the support of the very universities it had helped establish, leaving it solely responsible for the task of teacher training.

#### *4.5. Period V: The Zenith of Teacher Training Centers in the New Political Era until the Closure of Teacher Training Colleges (1979-2002)*

According to available information, at the beginning of this period in 1979, teacher training was entrusted to three types of institutions: high school teachers were trained by universities, middle school teachers by middle school teacher training colleges, and elementary school teachers by preliminary teacher training colleges. After the revolution, changes were made to the teacher training structure, and teacher training colleges<sup>26</sup> were replaced by “teacher training centers.”<sup>27</sup> Under the new charter of 1979 (NLIA, 1987-1988 a), teacher training centers were established to provide teachers for elementary and middle schools. The duration of study in these centers was two years, and the admission requirements were a complete high school diploma and an age between 17 and 22 years. In 1979, the first intake of students for these centers was held with approximately 7,000 students in ten disciplines (NLIA, 1987-1988 b). However, with the start of the Cultural Revolution<sup>28</sup>, student admissions to these centers were suspended. After the Cultural Revolution, from 1981 onwards, more than 52 new teacher training centers began operating, and 19,204 students were admitted. The number of disciplines offered in teacher training centers increased to 12, and

<sup>26</sup> دانشسرا

<sup>27</sup> مراکز تربیت معلم

<sup>28</sup> انقلاب فرهنگی

the duration of study increased from two to three years. During this period, students spent the first year in academic institutions, the second year teaching in schools, and the third year back in teacher training centers (NLIA, 1987-1988 b).

We believe that, based on available evidence, one of the fundamental characteristics of this period was the emphasis on Islamic ideology and revolutionary values in student admissions and curriculum development. In line with this ideology, a proposed plan for the guidelines of the new teacher training centers was presented in 1981 (NLIA, 1928-1988), emphasizing Islamic content and practices while condemning Western culture and ideology. According to this plan, teachers were expected to struggle with their eternal soul<sup>29</sup> and promote divine morality in society. Teacher training programs were to be based on religious principles and ethical values. Teachers were expected to possess moral and spiritual qualities, support the Islamic Revolution, and ensure that curricula aligned with Islamic teachings. With this perspective, one of the fundamental changes in the teacher training curriculum (and other universities) was the inclusion of Islamic studies courses in the program.

In September 1983, the Charter of Teacher Training Centers (Document No. 50, Navid-Adham & Roohbakhsh, 2020) was approved by the Supreme Council of Education. According to this charter, the purpose of teacher training centers was to provide and train teachers required by the Ministry of Education for pre-primary, primary, and middle school levels. These centers were residential, and the duration of study was set at two years. Holders of a complete high school diploma were eligible to enter these centers provided they were between 17 and 22 years of age and passed the entrance exam. Graduates of these centers were awarded a post-secondary diploma. Due to the urgent need for elementary school teachers, especially in deprived areas, teacher training colleges were revived. In December 1983, their charter was approved (NLIA, 1965-1989b). The admission requirements were a certificate of completion of middle school education, an age between 14 and 17 years, success in the entrance exams, approval by the relevant officials, and full physical and mental health. The duration of study in these colleges was four years, and according to Article 6 of this charter, graduates of these colleges were awarded a complete high school diploma in elementary education.

Significant efforts were made to organize teacher training in Iran through legislation. In 1985, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution approved the establishment of the “Teacher Training Planning Coordination Group<sup>30</sup>” headed by the Minister of Education (IPRC, 1985). The purpose of this group was to ensure coordination in teacher training programs and establish general guidelines and regulations for teacher training programs and courses. In June 1990, the “Law on Committed Service in Education<sup>31</sup>” was passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly to attract and

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<sup>29</sup> نفس اماره

<sup>30</sup> گروه هماهنگی برنامه‌ریزی تربیت معلم

<sup>31</sup> قانون متعهدین خدمت در آموزش و پرورش

retain individuals for teaching (IPRC, 1990). This law mandated that students in teacher training colleges, teacher training universities, and secondary education teacher training programs commit to serving the Ministry of Education for twice the duration of their studies upon commencement of their studies. In 1990, the Bill on the Establishment of the “Teacher Training Organization and Human Resource Provision<sup>32</sup>” was approved (NLIA, 1996). The objectives of this bill were to: establish a centralized organization for coordinated planning and policy formulation, establish and develop teacher training centers, conduct fundamental studies and research on the foundations and methods of selecting and training human resources, enhance the professional and academic skills of teachers, develop textbooks and educational and supplementary educational resources. In the same year, the entrance examination for teacher training centers was also integrated into the university entrance examination. The fields of study at teacher training centers were: Elementary Education, Persian Language and Literature Education, Educational Affairs, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Religious and Arabic Education, Vocational and Technical Education, English Language Education, Social Studies Education, Experimental Sciences Education, Mathematics Education, Visual Arts Education, and Special Education for Exceptional Children.

A striking feature of this period is the repeated closure and revival of teacher training colleges<sup>33</sup>. As mentioned, these colleges were closed in 1979, reopened in 1983 for underserved areas, and in 1995, the admission quota for teacher training colleges was reduced to zero. Once again, in 1998, the Supreme Council of Education (Document No. 65/1 of the NavidAdham & Roohbakhsh, 2020) approved the establishment of a continuous associate degree program in teacher training colleges to train the necessary human resources for elementary and middle schools in underserved areas of the country. According to the charter of the continuous associate degree teacher training colleges (Supreme Council of Education, 1998), students who had completed the second year of high school, were between the ages of 15 and 18, and were natives of underserved areas of the same province could receive a continuous associate degree if they successfully passed the entrance exam and completed three years of study at the college.

It appears that the fifth period can be considered the peak and then decline of teacher training in the country. During this period, due to the increasing need for human resources for the primary and secondary education in the country, 4-year and 2-year teacher training colleges and associate degree teacher training centers expanded annually. According to statistics from the Office of Coordination and Integration of Plans and Programs of the Ministry of Education (1997), in the academic year 1992-1993, the number of students in teacher training colleges and centers reached 106,745. From this year onwards, due to changes in human resource recruitment policies and a decrease in the student population, student admissions in teacher training centers also decreased, so that five years later in the academic year 1996- 1997, it decreased to 16,985 students. It seems

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<sup>32</sup> سازمان تربیت معلم و تامین نیروی انسانی

<sup>33</sup> دانشسراها

that one of the distinguishing features of the fifth period can be considered the beginning of the period with the approach of “teacher training by the education system” and reaching the approach of “teacher training by other universities” at the end of the period. As Safi (2019) writes, during this period, with the development of public universities, the establishment of Islamic Azad University and Payame Noor University, the training of some of the required teachers was delegated to these educational centers. Education system policymakers concluded that it would be better to recruit needed teachers from university graduates, provided that graduates of these centers undergo teacher skills training at one of the teacher training centers. As a result, most teacher training centers were closed or used for other educational needs.

Regarding the curriculum for English language education during this period, it is noteworthy that in 1994, the Supreme Council of Planning approved the educational program for the associate degree course in English language teaching with the aim of training teachers who have the ability and relative proficiency in teaching English in middle school (Supreme Council of Planning, Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, 1994). The total number of units offered in this course was 72 units (15 general education units, 17 educational units with 4 units of teacher training, and 40 major and specialized units). In 1996, the Council developed the four-year English language teaching curriculum (Supreme Council of Planning, Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, 1996). The curriculum for the bachelor's degree program in English language teaching consisted of 133 units (17 general education units, 72 major units, 18 educational sciences units, and 26 specialized units).

#### *4.6. Period VI: The Resurgence of Teacher Training Centers until the Establishment of Farhangian University (2002-2024)*

In the sixth period, although there still exists a fluctuation between two approaches to teacher training, unlike the fifth period, the fundamental characteristic of this era can be seen as a gradual shift from the approach of “teacher training by other universities” to “teacher training by the Ministry of Education” and, to some extent, the integration of both approaches. The approval of the new statute for teacher training centers by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology in March 2003 can be considered a starting point for changing the educational policy of the previous period and revitalizing teacher training. According to this statute, the goals and responsibilities of teacher training centers included training a portion of the workforce required by the Ministry of Education, providing opportunities for continuing education for educators, and conducting short-term training courses for educators. However, despite the approval of this statute, six years later, in the 2008 entrance exam, no students were admitted to the teacher training centers, and the Ministry of Education attempted to use new methods of teacher recruitment under titles such as soldier

teacher, part-time teacher, and hiring instructors from the Literacy Movement Organization<sup>34</sup> (Safi, 2019). It seems that the reasons for adopting these methods for teacher training were, firstly, financial difficulties in supplying teachers through the traditional teacher training route or boarding teacher training and a preference for using low-cost labor, and secondly, a lack of long-term planning and ad-hoc, subjective, and routine decision-making in teacher training policy during that period.

In 2007, following the revival of teacher training centers and with the aim of training the necessary human resources for the Ministry of Education, the statute of the Payambar-e Azam Higher Education Complex<sup>35</sup> was approved. This complex was established by consolidating teacher training centers and technical colleges. In 2011, the teacher training university<sup>36</sup> officially changed its name to Kharazmi University and ceased its teacher training activities, transferring this responsibility to the Farhangian University. The Farhangian University was established in December 2011, following the approval of its statute by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2011), by merging all teacher training centers under the Payambar-e Azam Complex, and began its operations in 2012. The objectives of establishing the Farhangian University included: establishing a national system for teacher training and launching a specialized university for educators with a focus on specialized and professional education led by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with relevant agencies; designing and enhancing the professional training system for teachers within the Ministry of Education, emphasizing continuous interaction between student-teachers and schools, as well as scientific and research institutions during this period, and providing opportunities for gaining real classroom and educational environment experiences; attracting participation from top universities and seminaries in the specialized-professional and religious training of teachers, experts, and managers in collaboration with the Farhangian University. According to its statute, the Farhangian University possesses legal personality and administrative and financial independence, and is affiliated with the Ministry of Education, managed by a board of trustees.

Despite the establishment of an independent university for teacher training, the approach of “teacher training by other universities” diminished but did not completely disappear during this period. Evidence of this is Article 28 of the Farhangian University’s statute (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 2011), which allows for the recruitment of graduates from other universities into the teaching profession. This article permits, if necessary, a portion of the Ministry of Education’s needs to be met by graduates from outside the university after they undergo a skills training course at the Farhangian University. According to the employment booklets available on the website of the National Organization for Educational Testing and Evaluation from 2012 to the

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<sup>34</sup> نهضت سوادآموزی

<sup>35</sup> مجتمع آموزش عالی پیامبر اعظم

<sup>36</sup> دانشگاه تربیت معلم

present (2024), the Ministry of Education has almost annually held recruitment exams for teachers based on Article 28. For instance, in 2022, 19.3% of all students at this university were Article 28 trainees (Farhangian University Statistical Yearbook, 2022). Overall, it can be stated that currently, the primary responsibility for teacher training in the country rests with the Farhangian University, which faces multiple challenges, including a shortage of educational and welfare facilities and, more importantly, a low faculty-to-student ratio (3 to 111) (Report 18813, IPRC, 2022).

In the following section, the English language teaching curriculum documents for this period will be examined. In 2007, the Higher Education Planning Council of the Ministry of Science approved the curriculum for the Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (Higher Education Planning Office, 2007), which was applicable to all universities under the Ministry of Science (including teacher training universities and other universities). The aim of this program was to train teachers who, with theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired over a four-year period, could develop the ability and proficiency to teach at the high school level. The total number of units for the Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching, including theoretical, practical, and internship components, was 134 units: 18 units of general courses, 40 units of basic and core courses, and 76 units of specialized courses. In 2020, the Ministry of Science approved a revised curriculum for the continuous Bachelor's degree program in English Language Teaching (Council for the Expansion and Planning of Higher Education, Ministry of Science, 2020), which replaced the 2007 curriculum. In this program, students, in addition to their general units, completed 112 course units consisting of 22 basic units, 80 specialized units, and 10 elective units.

During this period, a specialized English language teaching curriculum for the Farhangian University (Deputy of Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies, Farhangian University, 2016) was also approved. In 2016, the Ministry of Science approved this program as a replacement for the 1996 curriculum. The course units for the continuous Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching totaled 150 units. Of these, 24 units were general courses, 19 units were Islamic education courses, 18 units were educational courses, and 87 units were specialized courses. One of the fundamental differences between this program and the previous one was the addition of 19 units of Islamic education courses. Another significant difference was the increase in the number of core and specialized courses while reducing their unit count. A further distinction was the inclusion of courses emphasizing the teacher-researcher model, such as action research, lesson study, and narrative inquiry, which were added to the educational courses in the curriculum. This program was revised again in 2023 (Supreme Council for Educational Planning of the Ministry of Science, 2023). The categorization of units in the new program is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Curriculum for the Integrated Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching at Farhangian University, Approved in 2023*

<i>Type of Course</i>	<i>Number of Units</i>
General knowledge (GK)	23
Approved by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology	5
Islamic Studies	16
Specialized for Farhangian University	2
Pedagogical knowledge (PK)	27
Islamic Education	17
Scientific Education	10
Specialized knowledge (CK) & (PCK)	100
Content knowledge (CK)	66
Pedagogical-Content Knowledge (PCK)	32
Optional	2
Selective	In excess of the credit limit
Total	150

Considering the courses in Table 8, one can briefly observe the prominence of courses related to Islamic studies and Islamic education compared to scientific education courses, which, together with general courses, account for one-third of the total units. Of the 100 specialized units, two-thirds are allocated to subject-specific courses, while one-third is dedicated to pedagogical-content courses.

## 5. Conclusion

This research aimed to examine and analyze significant developments and events in teacher education, with a particular focus on English language teacher education in Iran. An analysis of reliable documents and sources revealed that modern teacher education in Iran began during the Qajar era with the establishment of Dar al-Fonun by Amir Kabir and has since evolved through six distinct historical periods, each with its own unique characteristics. Overall, the findings indicate that teacher education in Iran has undergone numerous reforms, both minor and major. These developments underscore the ongoing need to enhance the teacher education system to improve the quality of education in the country. Moreover, they reflect the continuous efforts of educational policymakers throughout history to address challenges and implement improvements in this critical area.

Despite the efforts of officials throughout the six identified periods, certain recurring challenges persist across these phases. Frequent changes in teacher education policies and structures—such as the recurrent closure and revival of teacher training colleges—highlight a lack of stability in teacher education programs. These frequent shifts, including the closure and merging of teacher training centers, have disrupted the development of human resources, resulting in the

underutilization of both material and human potential. This instability indicates the need for more coherent and consistent policies that prioritize long-term growth and improvement within the teacher education sector. Ensuring such stability could foster an environment conducive to continuous improvement and alignment with both national and international educational standards.

Another challenge is the absence of comprehensive, long-term planning, coupled with the routine nature of teacher education approaches. This mismatch between the country's educational needs and the quality and quantity of trained teachers has been a persistent issue. Financial constraints and budget shortages have been fundamental obstacles in the development of teacher training centers across all six periods. These limitations have contributed to a decline in education quality, reduced student admission capacity, and the employment of inadequately trained teachers with low effectiveness. Additionally, a recurring characteristic across these periods is the decision-makers' tendency to rely more on personal preferences and opinions than on research and evidence. Furthermore, throughout these six periods, there has been a lack of emphasis on maintaining teacher quality through in-service professional development. Addressing this gap, modern teacher education programs should prioritize sustained professional development to enhance teachers' adaptability, skills, and motivation. Routine, evidence-based evaluations of teachers' skills could help improve educational outcomes and ensure that educators remain aligned with evolving pedagogical demands. A significant challenge that emerged in the third period and persists today is the role of teacher training universities and their relationship with other universities in teacher education. Instead of maintaining a bipolar approach to this issue, it seems that intermediate and collaborative methods could be explored as a more effective solution.

Considering these challenges, historical trends in teacher education reveal that although reforms were numerous, they often lacked continuity and coherence. Lessons from these trends suggest that policy stability, financial investment, and commitment to professional development are essential for effective teacher training. Policymakers today might benefit from reviewing these historical patterns to create more durable reforms and ensure resources are allocated in a way that supports continuous, rather than cyclical, progress. Given the aforementioned challenges, the following recommendations can be proposed for the country's teacher education system. To address structural issues, it is necessary to develop and implement long-term and sustainable programs focused on the educational needs of the country. These programs must possess stability and continuity to effectively meet educational and training requirements. To achieve this goal, it is recommended to conduct exploratory research to gather insights from practitioners and teachers of teacher training programs and to perform educational evaluations to assess the quality and effectiveness of these programs on students and, ultimately, on pupils. Increasing the budget and investing in the education and teacher training sector will lead to improved quality of education and educational facilities, and will attract capable and motivated personnel. This increase can be achieved through government funding or by attracting public participation. Establishing serious

continuous education and in-service training programs for teachers can help improve their skills and knowledge. Maintaining continuous and effective communication with domestic and international universities and research centers can enhance the quality of education and research in teacher training centers. Additionally, exchanging knowledge and experiences with other countries can be beneficial in this regard.

Detailed information on English language teacher education before 1967 is unavailable. However, what can be inferred from existing documents is that prior to 1967, across three historical periods, only foreign language teachers with an emphasis on French were trained, and the status of English language education in previous periods was either non-existent or very minimal. As Borjjan (2013) writes, the reason for this was the superiority of French over other languages during the Qajar era. Factors contributing to this dominance include the substantial number of Iranian students sent to France for higher education, the use of French as the medium of instruction at Darolfonoon (Dahmardeh & Nemati, 2017), and France's concerted efforts to exert cultural influence on other countries, contrasting with Britain's focus on economic and political dominance. Consequently, Iranian politicians viewed France more favorably compared to Britain (Siasi, 2015).

Apparently, from 1967 onwards, two significant changes occurred: firstly, a more specialized approach to foreign language teaching was adopted, with the task being assigned to specialized teachers; secondly, from 1970 the training of French language teachers was completely discontinued, replaced by English language education, and an official specialized English teacher training program was established. It appears that the creation of the English teacher training program was a result of the general dominance of English over French during Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's era in Iran. Dahmardeh and Nemati (2017) attribute the dominance of English in Iran to several factors: After World War II, the English-speaking United States was recognized as one of the world's two superpowers. The Iranian government was largely subservient to the U.S. government, especially after the U.S.-led coup d'état of August 19, 1953, and became even more closely aligned with America in terms of political, economic, and trade relations. Additionally, the increased dispatch of students to the United States, the activities of American scientific and cultural associations in Iran, and the development of universities based on the American model, including Pahlavi University in Shiraz, are among the reasons for the prevalence of English over French in Iran.

Based on the analysis of teacher education curricula, particularly for foreign language/English teachers across six periods, several key observations can be made regarding the dominant teacher discourses in Iran as identified by Mohammadi (2021): In the first period, the discourse of the literate and knowledgeable teacher was predominant, as evidenced by the focus on subject knowledge in teaching courses. From the mid-second period, especially after 1932, education and training courses emphasizing teaching expertise and artistry in addition to subject knowledge became more prominent. Although Mohammadi (2021) suggests that the nationalist teacher discourse was dominant during the Pahlavi political era, the third and fourth periods of

teacher education curricula show little evidence of this content, except for Persian literature courses. In the last two periods, the revolutionary and Islamic-oriented teacher discourse (alongside the expert and skilled teacher discourse) becomes dominant, manifesting prominently in the curricula of the fifth and sixth periods. This is evident when comparing the 2023 teacher education curriculum with earlier years like 1973 and even 1996. The 2023 curriculum allocates approximately one-third of courses to Islamic studies and Islamic education, while about two-thirds focus on pedagogical knowledge (PK), content knowledge (CK), and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). This distribution emphasizes the development of professional teachers with a strong Islamic foundation. This evolution in teacher education curricula reflects the changing sociopolitical context in Iran and its impact on the conceptualization of the ideal teacher. The shift from a primarily knowledge-based approach to one that incorporates professional skills, and later, strong ideological components, demonstrates the dynamic nature of teacher education in response to broader societal changes.

The second notable point in the English/foreign language teacher education curriculum can be inferred from comparing the characteristics of each teacher education period in Iran with the features of language education periods in Europe, in terms of curriculum approach and language teaching. Howatt and Smith (2014), in reviewing the history of English as a foreign language teaching in Europe, identify four time periods: The Classical Period (1750-1880), primarily characterized by emulating classical language teaching; The Reform Period (1880-1920), mainly focused on teaching spoken language; The Scientific Period (1920-1970), primarily aimed at finding a scientific basis for teaching; The Communicative Period (1970 onwards), mainly targeting real-world communication. A review of the courses in Philosophy and Literature at Dar al-Moallemin in 1933 (Table 4) and the Faculty of Literature at the University of Tehran in 1934 (Table 5) reveals units mostly related to grammar, translation, and foreign language literature, primarily reflecting the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) or Classical Method (equivalent to Europe's first language teaching period). However, during this time, Europe was already in its third period, the scientific approach to language teaching. The curriculum for foreign language teachers at the Preliminary Teacher Training College in 1954 (Table 5) does not directly mention teaching grammar, translation, or literary history. It appears that the dominant methods in Iran during that period were the Direct Method or Natural Method, corresponding to Europe's second period (Reform Period), while Europe was in its third period (Scientific Approach) at this time. Examination of the English teaching courses in 1973 (Table 7) clearly shows emphasis on grammar, comprehension, pronunciation, intonation, and conversation, which are characteristic features of Europe's Scientific Period (third period). However, at this time, Europe was already in its fourth period, the Communicative Approach to language teaching. It seems that in terms of language teaching methods, under the influence of the pre-Revolutionary governments, Iran became inclined to follow the West, yet they did so at a pace which did not always correspond with the changes as they took place in the West. Nevertheless, reviewing the language teaching curriculum in 1996 and

2022 (Table 7) indicates the dominance of the communicative approach in teacher language education.

Despite efforts to present a comprehensive picture of teacher education developments in Iran, this research faced limitations that could impact its results, with the scarcity of resources and documents being the most significant constraint. Access to all historical documents and sources was not feasible due to temporal and spatial limitations. A potential limitation of relying on historical documents as primary sources is that they may contain inherent biases, reflecting the perspectives, agendas, or omissions of the individuals or institutions that created or preserved them. Such biases can result in an incomplete or skewed representation of events, as certain aspects of teacher education may have been either emphasized or neglected based on prevailing sociopolitical factors of the time. Despite the researchers' efforts and searches, for reasons including multiple authorities responsible for teacher education (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Science, Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, Supreme Council of Education, etc.) or the division of the ministry responsible for teacher education (Ministry of Culture into several ministries including Science and Education), as well as the storage of documents in various locations such as the Parliament Library, National Library, Ministry of Science, etc., access to all necessary documents was not possible. These biases and document access limitations could have influenced the findings, possibly restricting the analysis to more readily available sources while overlooking lesser-known, potentially insightful historical records. Additionally, in terms of quality and accuracy, some information in historical documents may be incorrect or incomplete. Furthermore, differences in interpretation and analysis among various researchers may lead to disparities in results.

Given these limitations, as well as the experience and analysis of the authors of the present article regarding the research needs in this field, the following suggestions can be offered to improve and expand research on teacher education in Iran. Conducting international comparisons with teacher education systems in other countries can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of Iran's teacher education system and provide practical recommendations for its improvement.

Focusing on recent developments and reforms in the teacher education system and analyzing their impacts on the quality of teacher education can aid in enhancing educational policies and programs. Examining and evaluating existing educational programs for teacher education and offering practical suggestions for their improvement based on the current needs of society can lead to the enhancement of the quality of teacher education and training. Future studies could also explore several specific research questions to deepen our understanding of the field. For instance, how have the political shifts in Iran influenced the pedagogical approaches in teacher education curricula? What role does teacher training play in shaping societal ideologies? Furthermore, research might explore the relationship between teacher education and student outcomes in more depth, addressing questions such as: How does teacher education quality correlate with student academic success and overall development? Addressing these questions through methodologies

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like longitudinal studies, qualitative interviews with educators, and comparative case studies would provide valuable insights. The adoption of mixed-methods approaches could enrich the analysis by integrating quantitative data with in-depth qualitative perspectives.

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