

Teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality standards: Any congruence between local and global standards?

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Abstract

This study examined Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality and determined the similarities and differences between such perceptions and global teacher quality standards. To this aim, 130 Iranian teacher educators were asked to fill a Teacher Quality questionnaire, there was a semi-structured interview with 13 teacher educators, and 10 teacher educators were involved in writing narratives regarding the quality standards they applied in their training sessions. Based on the results, the teacher educators identified some general teacher qualities such as patience, voice quality, and versatility as the most crucial. Besides, there was a significant difference between global teacher quality standards and local ones in Iran. The value of qualities such as personal and professional conduct and knowledge of the disciplines was in line with global standards. From the teacher educators' perspective, these qualities relate to EFL teachers' achievement, performance, motivation, and professional development and should be reflected in salaries as well.

Questo studio ha esaminato le percezioni della qualità degli insegnanti dichiarate da formatori iraniani di insegnanti di inglese come lingua straniera (EFL) e determinato le somiglianze e le differenze tra tali qualità e gli standard globali. A questo scopo, è stato chiesto a 130 formatori di compilare un questionario sulle qualità dell'insegnante; sono state inoltre condotte interviste semi-strutturate con 13 formatori, e ad altri 10 formatori è stato chiesto di descrivere in un testo gli standard di qualità che hanno seguito nelle loro sessioni di formazione. Dai risultati emerge che per i formatori le qualità cruciali dell'insegnante sono la pazienza, la qualità della voce e la versatilità. Inoltre, i risultati mostrano una differenza significativa tra gli standard globali di qualità degli insegnanti e quelli iraniani. Il valore assegnato a qualità come la condotta personale e professionale, e la conoscenza delle discipline è in linea con gli standard globali. Dal punto di vista dei formatori, queste qualità si relazionano

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con i risultati, le prestazioni, la motivazione e lo sviluppo professionale degli insegnanti EFL e dovrebbero avere un riconoscimento anche economico.

Keywords: global standards; teacher educators' perceptions; Teacher Quality (TQ); teaching quality standards

Parole chiave: standard globali; percezioni dei formatori dei docenti; qualità della docenza (TQ); standard di qualità della docenza

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1. Introduction

As the world is changing, teaching and its standards are developing as well. All changes in teaching methods and theories have happened because of variations in people's tastes and choices. Considering all these changes, teachers need to adapt themselves to the new world and its requirements and gain new skills and abilities to promote their own performance and solve the issues arising in their classes. «The pressures and demands of learning new skills of teamwork, thinking on a higher level, and successful use of new information technologies have been a kind of appeal to new teaching styles» (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 151). Teacher quality has a long history in teacher education and language teaching systems since it has a tremendous effect on both teaching and learning processes. Preparing highly qualified teachers is a global concern since all countries expect education to modify social skills and improve nation building (US Department of Education, 2011). In the past, teachers were considered the authorities in the classroom and hardly did they change their pedagogical behaviors and ideas. Today, teachers are observed in their classes, get feedback on their performances, and participate in some pre-service and in-service workshops to improve their skills and knowledge through practice and become qualified teachers. Teacher quality and its standards can be defined in a variety of ways, having to do with the quality of the whole community of teachers, teacher educators, the school manager, the students' performances in their process of language learning, and the level of practicality of the learning programs proposed by teachers or the authorities. The concept of teacher quality has changed from the 1900s until now, as recently some invaluable factors such as diversity of students' population and their real needs and more rigorous and meaningful instructions to engage students completely and attract their full attention have been considered. Moreover, teacher evaluation has been added based on the teacher's real-world activities in the classroom. There have been studies regarding teacher quality (Casey & DiCarlo, 2017; Zein & Haing, 2017); however, there is a dearth of research focusing on EFL teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality and their role in determining local standards in EFL contexts. To deal with the research problems and gaps, this study aimed to examine the EFL teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality standards, and whether or not such teacher qualities in Iran were aligned with the global standards.

2. Literature review

Ducharme (1986) was the first one who highlighted the role of teacher educators in teaching by introducing them as individuals who provide the necessary content and skills for the teachers. EFL teacher educators are in charge of educating teachers in pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development courses so as to meet the demands and requirements of teaching a foreign language. According to González (2000), an ideal teacher educator should have the knowledge of local realities. As she detailed, it is crucial for teacher educators to be aware of their local needs and requirements of teaching and its standards as well as of the global ones. She also believed that working as a teacher educator differs in public schools and private ones, so the setting and situation of the institute or school matter in determining the most suitable coping strategies. Hattie (2003) has proposed five characteristics of a qualified teacher, including the ability to identify essential representations of the subject, guide learning through classroom interactions, monitor learning and provide feedback, attend to

affective attributes, and influence the student outcomes. Hattie (2003) also presented four attributes that reflect Glaser and Chi's (1988) view regarding a qualified teacher, namely having deeper representations about teaching and learning, adopting a problem-solving stance to their being able to anticipate, plan, and improvise in their teaching, being better decision-makers, and being able to identify what decisions are important and which ones have less significance. The quality of teacher education and teacher training mostly depends on the skills, knowledge, competence, and professionalism of teacher educators (Buchberger et al., 2000). According to Smith (2005), there is an overlap in the main characteristics of a successful teacher educator when comparing teaching standards of the Netherlands, Australia, Israel, and the US. As he suggested, these requirements of success include constant professional development, scholarship, model teaching, and leadership. Teacher educators need to take advantage of the most recent skills and competencies required for a qualified teacher so as to achieve efficiency in their job. There are criteria determining global teacher quality standards which guide teachers and teacher educators to make more appropriate decisions in the field of teaching. Such criteria present a framework for the evaluation and professional development of all teachers and may vary across nations. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) include some specific standards which are used to discuss the concept of teacher quality. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium provide a tool for states to work together on licensing standards and assessments for beginning teachers (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016). There have been various studies regarding teacher quality and its role in language teaching. In a recent study, Casey and DiCarlo (2017) conducted a research on teacher quality as defined by Early Childhood (EC) teachers in Belize. The researchers of the study searched and analyzed teachers' perceptions of teacher quality, which can shape educational policies and affect the decision-making process. The data collection for this pilot study was done in EC schools in a city in southern Belize. The data were collected from 22 teachers using an open-ended and a Likert-scale questionnaire and the focused group was observed over a two-week period in June 2016. This study could identify the behaviors that were assumed to be important to be implemented and improved or the ones which were necessary to be omitted or stopped, and determine teacher agreement with the needed guiding standards for EC teacher preparation as identified by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Another study which was done in the domain of teacher quality is the one by Goodwin and Kosnik (2013). This study focused on teacher educators and the characteristics that shape their quality as leaders and trainers of the language teaching world. It claimed that for being a qualified teacher educator, one should be open to changes and modifications, adapt himself or herself to the arising challenging conditions, and be eager to learn more and make progress. By possessing these characteristics, a teacher educator can guide and nurture qualified teachers more easily. Moreover, it suggested that becoming a good teacher educator with high qualities is not a one-night job, but it is rather constructed over time. Similarly, Zein and Haing (2017) carried out a study with a specific focus on teacher educators and their English language teaching quality. This study was conducted in the English Department of a university in Cambodia which initially performed under the financial and educational supports of Australian Aid and Australian professionals. Six teacher educators including 1 female and 5 males were voluntarily chosen in total. To inform language-in-education policy-making, this study investigated the teacher

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educators’ teaching quality improvement. The findings showed significant improvement in teacher educators’ qualifications, professional supports, and field experiences.

3. Research Questions

Education systems are dynamic in nature regarding the standards they use and are repeatedly changing and overlapping with one another. Many innovative criteria may be added or the outdated ones can be neglected while designing teacher training courses in divergent countries. To delve into the teacher quality standards adopted in Iran, determine if they conform to the global standards, and examine teacher educators’ perceptions in this regard, this study has concentrated on the following research questions.

1. What are Iranian EFL teacher educators’ perceptions of teacher quality standards?
2. Is there any significant difference between global teacher quality standards and teacher quality standards perceived by EFL teacher educators in Iran?
3. Which teacher quality standards perceived by Iranian EFL teacher educators are aligned with global standards?

4. Methods

4.1 Participants

To carry out this study, 130 Iranian EFL teacher educators (87 males and 43 females) were selected from different English language institutes in Iran. Their ages varied from 20-50 years old ($M=35$), with different years of teaching and training experience ranging from 1-30 ($M=7$). The participants were all chosen based on convenience sampling, which «is the most common non-probability sampling type in L2 research, where an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience to and resources of the researcher» (Dornyei & Csizer, 2012, p. 81). All these teacher educators had different academic backgrounds; some of them were holders of master degrees, some were holders of bachelor degrees, and the rest were PhD holders. Table 1 presents the detailed characteristics of the participants.

Categories	Subcategories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	87	67%
	Female	43	33%
Level of Education	Bachelor	34	26%
	Master	82	63%
	PhD	14	11%
Teaching Experience	0-2 years	5	4%
	3-5 years	47	36%
	More than 6 years	78	60%
Training Experience	0-2 years	18	14%
	3-5 years	69	53%
	More than 6 years	43	33%

Table 1: Participants’ demographic information

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The teacher educators of this study were chosen from well-known English institutes in Tehran and their branches in other provinces. Although these teacher educators had come from different academic backgrounds, they had all participated in some training courses and were certified as teacher educators.

4.2 Instrumentation

To answer the research questions of the study, both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used, whose details are presented in the following sections.

4.2.1 Teacher quality questionnaire

In this study, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire regarding teacher quality standards ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was handed in to the participants. The primary format of the questionnaire was proposed by Park and Lee (2006) and Kim (2002); however, Han's (2016) Teacher Quality questionnaire was used in this study which has been extracted from the two other mentioned questionnaires. The questionnaire included 43 items all together with six categories: (1) Knowledge of theories and practice and linguistic competence; (2) Teaching and management skills; (3) Interaction and social skills; (4) Material use; (5) Assessment; and (6) Professional development.

Each of the categories mentioned above included some subcategories, namely (1) Having competence in English, and having knowledge of language structures or ELT theories; (2) Skills to keep learners' concentration, running learner-centered classes, and being responsive to learners' needs and levels; (3) Being equitable to learners, respecting learners' opinions and activating learners' motivation; (4) Using materials in accordance with learners' needs and levels which increase learners' motivation; (5) Reflecting learning content into tests and explaining assessment criteria; and (6) Learning something new and also learning from other teachers.

As for the scoring and analysis of the questionnaire, the highest score that the participants could get was 172 and the lowest score was 43. To assure the reliability of the Teacher Quality questionnaire, 30 participants were employed in the piloting phase. Cronbach's Alpha as a measure of internal consistency was .87, which is an acceptable value, showing the high internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire. To assure its content validity, a panel of Applied Linguistics experts including 5 raters examined the language, content, and relevance of each item to the objectives by using a 4-point Likert scale of 1= Not relevant; 2= Somehow relevant; 3= Quite relevant; and 4= Very relevant. Scale-level Content Validity Index Universal (S-CVI/UA) was calculated for all items (.93 in total), which was $\geq .8$ and showed a high content validity.

4.2.2 Follow-up interview

Interviews with the Iranian EFL teacher educators were semi-structured so that the participants could add more relevant information regarding the subject matter. The interviews were carried out in English with the aim of eliciting more comprehensive information regarding teacher educators' responses to the questionnaire and triangulating the data. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and then examined by 3 language experts. The results showed that the language and content of the interview questions were consistent with the purpose of the study. The interview included 12 questions which concentrated on the areas pertaining to

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Iranian EFL teacher educators' perceptions of local and global EFL teacher qualities and teacher quality standards. Among the participants, 13 teacher educators (8 males and 5 females) participated in the interview phase. The interview took around 30-45 minutes for each interviewee and it was recorded using voice recorders, voice messages, and Skype.

4.2.3 Teacher educators' narratives

In this study, personal short story narratives were also used to achieve deeper understanding of the subject matter. Three questions were developed by the researcher, focusing on the degree of alignment of EFL teacher quality standards in Iran with the global ones. Ten teacher educators were asked to write personal short story narratives by considering these 3 questions. They wrote narratives of 10 sessions of their training courses regarding the local and global teacher quality standards they applied, the ones of which EFL teachers were more aware, and the ones about which teachers had insufficient knowledge while interacting with teacher educators in training courses. They were asked to record their own experiences and challenges regarding such training courses. As for the content validity of the narratives, 3 Applied Linguistics experts claimed that the language, content, and framework of the narratives were in accordance with the purpose of the study. The narratives took 3-4 months to be completed and the participants were asked to record soft or hard copies of their narratives.

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data in this study were collected by means of a close-ended questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and personal narratives. In the first phase of the study, to check the reliability of the questionnaire, it was pilot tested with a group of 30 Iranian EFL teacher educators. It was done to evaluate time, feasibility, costs, and the general administration condition of the main research and predict the unexpected problems prior to the full-scale research study. Content validity of the questionnaire was analyzed and it showed the I-CVI value above .7 for each item and SCVI-UA \geq .8 in total, which were acceptable. Then the Teacher Quality questionnaire was developed through Google forms and distributed in both hard and soft copies. Before handing in the questionnaires among the participants, their consents had been taken and then 130 Iranian teacher educators from different cities filled out the questionnaire.

Afterward, those participants who were eager to be involved in an interview were asked to elaborate more on their opinions regarding teacher quality standards. The face-to-face and online interviews were semi-structured, which let the participants talk about their perceptions more precisely. Among the participants, 13 teacher educators (8 males and 5 females) had 30-45 minutes online or face-to-face interviews with the researcher. Finally, the interviews were transcribed, classified, coded, and analyzed.

In the last phase of the study, 10 teacher educators were asked to write 10 narratives on global and local teacher quality standards that had been applied by them in their training courses in various English language institutes in Iran. The narratives included 3 questions regarding teacher quality. This was to achieve a more critical view of teaching, teacher quality, and its standards from teacher educators.

5. Results

5.1 Teacher Educators’ Perceptions of Teacher Quality Standards

To answer the first research question of the study, that is, to examine Iranian EFL teacher educators’ perceptions regarding teacher quality, the interviews were done with 13 Iranian EFL teacher educators. At the outset of the interview, the teacher educators of the study explained their beliefs about teacher quality and its global and local standards and routines and the ideal image of every EFL teacher from their point of view.

As for teacher qualities, the teacher educators referred to patience, voice quality and clarity, active personality (proper use of gestures and postures), versatility, fun and caring personality, enough pedagogical and content knowledge, preparation before the class, familiarity with teaching and learning styles, high English language proficiency (accuracy and fluency), professional teaching skills, the ability to transfer knowledge to students efficiently, classroom management, creativity and self-confidence as the most crucial qualities of an EFL teacher. Table 2 presents these qualities expected from an EFL teacher.

Teacher qualities	Frequency	Percentage
High proficiency in English language (accuracy and fluency)	13	100
Professional teaching skills	13	100
Enough pedagogical and content knowledge	13	100
Familiarity with teaching and learning styles	12	92.30
Fun and caring personality	11	84.61
The ability to transfer knowledge to students efficiently	11	84.61
Class management	11	84.61
Patience	10	76.92
Active personality (proper use of gesture and posture)	10	76.92
Preparation before the class	10	76.92
Creativity	10	76.92
Versatility	8	61.53
Self-confidence	8	61.53
Voice quality and clarity	7	53.84

Table 2: Teacher Qualities identified by EFL teacher educators in Iran

The following bar chart (Figure 1) also displays EFL teacher educators’ perceptions of teacher qualities.

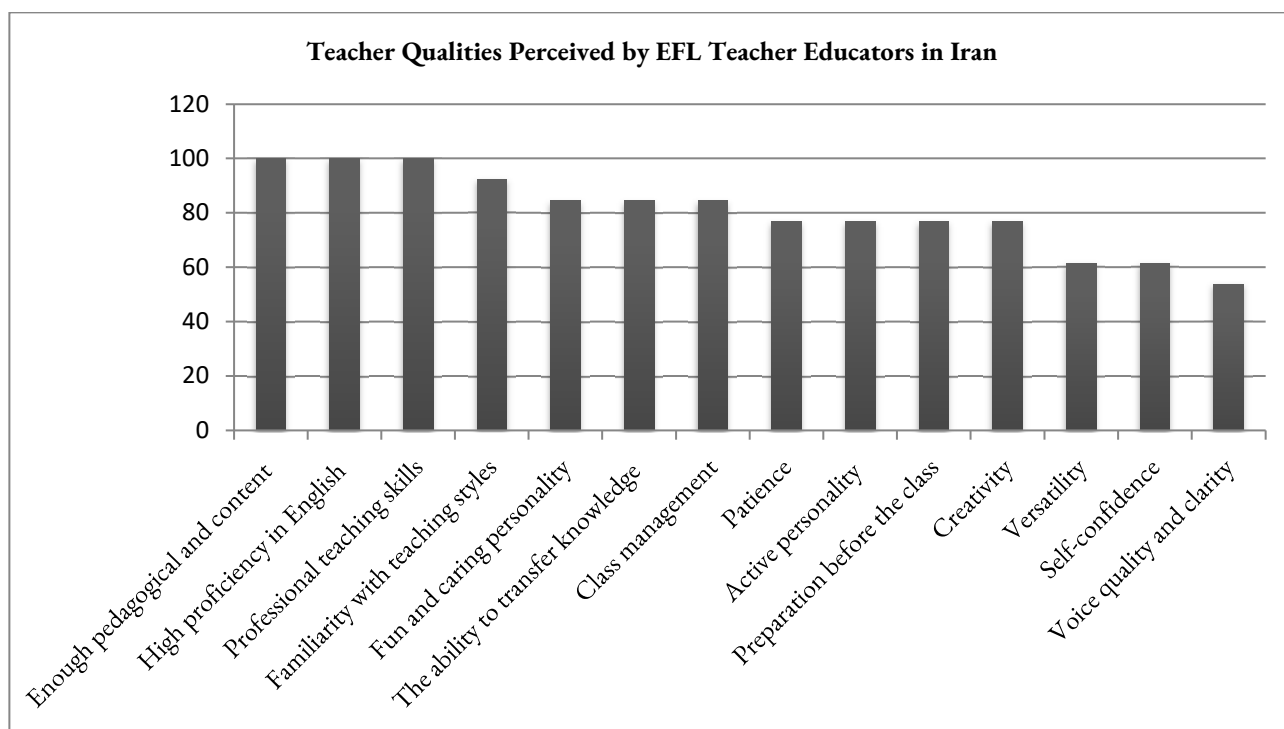


Figure 1: Teacher Qualities perceived by EFL teacher educators in Iran

Some of the teacher educators’ responses to this section are presented as follows:

«Teacher quality standards can be different based on the country and nations. I think, I believe some qualities like versatility, preparation before coming to [the] class and having high proficiency I mean accuracy and fluency or we can say high pedagogical knowledge and content dominance are important. I think teachers must be creative in their job I mean know how to create fun and when to be serious» (Teacher Educator 1).

«There are so many of qualities which should be mastered to make a teacher ideal. Voice quality and its pitch and intonation are considerable. Not very monotonous voice. Or for example skill of teaching and pedagogical and content knowledge maybe» (Teacher educator 10).

Additionally, they mostly mentioned that if a teacher wants to be professionally acceptable, she or he is not required to be a native speaker of English. However, they mostly believed that globally accepted norms proposed by English speaking countries are assumed as the best resources for teaching English. Meanwhile, they mostly believed that lesson planning is necessary but not compulsory for teachers since many things may change during actual teaching in the class and these all need the teachers’ creativity as well as their well-designed lesson plans. Likewise, there should be training workshops monthly or weekly to support teachers in their career, providing the necessary facilities (books, magazines, applications, internet, realia, among others), as practical professional development resources are also required for teachers’ progress. Some of the responses are presented as follows:

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«Some believe teachers should be native. I don't believe it. Teachers who are not native are sometimes even better because they know teaching and they have enough pedagogical knowledge» (Teacher Educator 2).

«Teachers should have lesson plans but creativity is more highlighted in my idea. Also besides their creativity, facilities like books and internet or some applications and magazines...online or paper based or the workshops I have for their progress can help them improve» (Teacher Educator 13).

Moreover, teacher educators identified several standards and routines as qualities which must be followed by EFL teachers in Iran, including speaking no Persian in the class, checking the students' homework and assignments and commenting on them every session, checking the students' learning every session, engaging students before the lesson (warm-up, preliminaries, and engaging part), emphasizing speaking more than the other skills, being punctual, following Concept Checking Question (CCQ) and Instruction Checking Question (ICQ), teaching in a communicative way, use of media and realia to teach (songs, pictures, movies, video clips, online games, TED Talks, and YouTube channels), having a positive attitude toward students and respecting their cultural, ethnic, and traditional beliefs. Some of the excerpts are as follows:

«ICQ and CCQ are the route[s]...the resource. They are expected to be followed. Teaching in a communicative and interactive way is expected from our teachers» (Teacher Educator 10).

«Teachers are told to check students' learning and assignments. Although it takes time, it is an obligation. Oh, something very important...culture. I believe the cultural and ethnic background of students should be taken into account when teachers teach» (Teacher Educator 12).

In the teacher educators' view, the scope of internationally accepted standards of teacher quality seems a little intimidating for teachers. Besides, following all the rules and norms is a difficult and meticulous job for teachers. To be more detailed, since EFL teachers in Iran mostly choose teaching as their second job, they evidently do not have enough time to concentrate on the standards and the ways of applying them in their classes. However, the teacher educators believed that the lack of financial support and economic problems have forced teachers to consider teaching as their second priority to make ends meet.

They also claimed that such global norms are the most reliable for EFL teachers and teacher educators in Iran, and they are considered as the essential framework in EFL institutes. However, they believed that such standards might be acceptable and applicable in native English-speaking countries; in Iran though, amendments are needed to adapt the standards to Iranian learners' and teachers' culture and preferences. In addition, the teacher educators explained these theoretically designed teacher quality standards may not be applicable and practical in actual language classes. Some of the responses are presented as follows:

«These standards are huge...I mean too many standards and they cause fear. Teachers want to follow but they are scared of the quantity of them. Something else is that these are...these standards should be amended to be used in our teaching system. Culturally and socially» (Teacher Educator 3).

«Financial issues are effective. Teachers need money to live. They mostly complain their financial status. So, they choose teaching not as a [their] first job» (Teacher Educator 8).

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Regarding the first research question of the study, the EFL teacher educators mentioned some teacher qualities including versatility, patience, and enough pedagogical and content knowledge as the most vital ones. They also explained what qualities have been given more attention in Iranian language teaching centers. The teacher educators' perceptions were examined to identify the scope and framework of globally and locally accepted norms, which all indicated the teacher educators' high perception of teacher quality standards.

5.2 Teacher Educators' Perceptions Regarding the Differences Between Global and Local Teacher Quality Standards

To respond to the second and only quantitative question of the study, that is, to examine if there was any significant difference between global teacher quality standards and teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran, the midpoint score of each item (i.e., 3) was considered as the theoretical mean/median of the population (i.e. global norm), and then observed mean/median of each item was compared with the theoretical mean/median to see whether the teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran is significantly lower or higher than the global norm.

To begin with, the observed means related to the items of the questionnaire were computed in descending order (Appendix). Obviously, Item 18 has the maximum observed mean and item 39 has the lowest observed mean; however, all the observed means are above 3, apparently indicating higher teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran than the global norms. To check whether these differences are significant, One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was run. The reason for choosing this non-parametric test was that the items scored on a Likert scale are considered as measures on ordinal scale.

The One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests results in Table 3 show that all the observed means for the items are significantly higher than the theoretical mean ($p < .05$), hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. That is, there is a significant difference between global teacher quality standards and teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran. This means that, all the teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran are significantly higher than the norm global teacher quality standards.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of VAR00001 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The median of VAR00002 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The median of VAR00003 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The median of VAR00004 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The median of VAR00005 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The median of VAR00006 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
7	The median of VAR00007 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The median of VAR00008 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The median of VAR00009 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
10	The median of VAR00010 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
11	The median of VAR00011 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
12	The median of VAR00012 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
13	The median of VAR00013 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
14	The median of VAR00014 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
15	The median of VAR00015 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
16	The median of VAR00016 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
17	The median of VAR00017 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
18	The median of VAR00018 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
19	The median of VAR00019 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
20	The median of VAR00020 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
21	The median of VAR00021 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
22	The median of VAR00022 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
23	The median of VAR00023 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
24	The median of VAR00024 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
25	The median of VAR00025 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
26	The median of VAR00026 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
27	The median of VAR00027 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
28	The median of VAR00028 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
29	The median of VAR00029 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
30	The median of VAR00030 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
31	The median of VAR00031 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
32	The median of VAR00032 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
33	The median of VAR00033 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
34	The median of VAR00034 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
35	The median of VAR00035 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
36	The median of VAR00036 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
37	The median of VAR00037 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
38	The median of VAR00038 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
39	The median of VAR00039 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
40	The median of VAR00040 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
41	The median of VAR00041 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
42	The median of VAR00042 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
43	The median of VAR00043 equals 3.00.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Wilcoxon signed ranks tests results (sample)

Although the above results indicated significantly higher global standards for individual items of the questionnaire, it was decided to do the above comparison for the total score of the questionnaire as well. To do so, first the observed means of all the items were averaged (sum of item scores divided by the total number of items). Then the descriptives of the total score were computed (Table 4). Since the total average score was not ordinal anymore, the normality assumption was first checked for the total score by computing skewness and kurtosis

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ratios. Since the skewness ratio was within $+1.96$, the data met the normality assumption; therefore, this one sample t-test was run to compare the observed total mean of the questionnaire with the theoretical mean.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Total	130	4.78	.07	-.65	.21	1.14	.42
Valid N (listwise)	130						

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the total score of Teacher Quality Questionnaire

Table 5 presents the one sample t-test results demonstrating that the questionnaire’s total score is also significantly higher than the global norm ($p < .05$). That is to say, on the whole the teacher quality standards perceived by teacher educators in Iran are significantly higher than the norm global teacher quality standards.

	Test Value = 3					
	T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Total	280.204	129	.00	1.78	1.76	1.79

Table 5: One-sample test

5.3 Alignment of Teacher Educators’ Perceived Teacher Quality Standards in Iran with Global Standards

To answer the third research question, data from several interviews and narratives were collected. The teacher educators were asked to compare globally accepted standards presented by organizations like British Council and their scope with the norms used in Iranian EFL institutes to determine the degree of correspondence. According to the interviews, it was believed that lesson planning seemed necessary but not obligatory for EFL teachers from the teacher educators’ point of view.

The teacher educator participants of the study also elaborated on the weaknesses and strengths of most EFL teachers in Iran regarding their language teaching based on global standards. Hereupon, they contended that EFL teachers in Iran need more support in improving their English language proficiency, teaching knowledge and skills, accent and intonation, planning and teaching well-structured lessons, analyzing the students’ needs and their learning styles, and their assessment skills. They also believed that teachers mostly focus on their personal and professional conduct in the classroom, their interactions with the students, rather than their teaching skills.

When the teacher educators were asked to express their ideas about the degree of correspondence of teacher quality standards in Iran with globally accepted norms, they clearly mentioned that language institutes, their

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managers and teacher trainers should put in much effort to apply globally accepted standards such as the ones produced by associations such as Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), British Council, or Cambridge Assessment Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).

They believed that in Iran, Standard English (SE) and its teacher quality standards are preferred to any other norms. However, in their opinions, as mentioned before, practically most of these standards are not applicable in real language classes and most teachers partially follow these standards based on their students' needs. In their view, personal and professional conduct, high content and subject knowledge, behavioural routines and norms have been mostly focused as standards by teachers. Some of the responses are presented here:

«Teachers' personal and professional conduct is much more important to them than their skills to teach. Maybe because of our culture and face-saving acts. Their behavioural routines do matter to them the most» (Teacher Educator 9).

«I believe that all language institutes must follow these universal rules and standards presented by TESOL or CELTA or... I don't know other places like British Council. They are the main resource for us» (Teacher Educator 13).

Additionally, ten teacher educators were asked to write narratives with regard to the degree of alignment of EFL teacher quality standards in Iran with global ones. Likewise, they were asked to compare teacher qualities on which they focus in their training sessions the most with the ones which have been accepted globally to see their degree of correspondence. These teacher trainers kept the records of 10 sessions of their teacher training workshops. In their narratives, they mostly believed that in Iran, language institutes and their teacher trainers set frameworks and standards which are in accordance with globally accepted norms presented by associations and organizations like the British Council, CELTA, DELTA, TESOL, and TEFL. However, such standards should be reformed and changed, considering the local educational needs, religious and cultural views, cross-cultural communicative strategies, and the use of non-native varieties of English among others, to be more applicable to Iranian EFL classes.

Moreover, they believed that such norms and quality standards have been made internationally and need to be amended in every country based on their traditions, cultures, and beliefs to fulfil the learners' needs, learning styles, expectations, and requirements. Likewise, the teacher educators were of the belief that teachers do not mostly set high expectations for learners, do not know how to manage time and space effectively, and cannot adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all learners mainly in heterogeneous English classes. The excerpts of these narratives are presented as follow:

«Teachers mostly have problems with time and space management. They mostly ask questions about the best strategies in managing these two main criterion [criteria] in language teaching. Interestingly, in today's session, the topic was classroom management about which teachers had little information» (Teacher Educator 5).

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«The rules and routines are according to the most well-known organizations such as DELTA or CELTA or TESOL or TEFL but in my sessions, generally I try to tell my teachers how to reform and restructure some specific sections to be aligned with our own culture and taste» (Teacher Educator 13).

The qualitative data collected from the interviews and narratives were used to respond to the second question of the study regarding the degree of alignment of globally accepted teacher quality standards with local ones. In particular, teacher educators believed that there was a framework of standards for EFL teaching in Iran which was inferred from well-known associations like DELTA, CELTA, British Council, TESOL, and TEFL. However, in their opinion, these standards need to be amended, according to the Iranian ELT culture, to be used practically in EFL classrooms.

6. Discussion

Based on the first research question of the study in regard to teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality standards, several qualities have been considered more significant comparing to the others. According to the interview results, teacher educators believed that the most important qualities that every EFL teacher should possess included patience, voice quality and clarity, active personality (proper use of gesture and posture), versatility, fun and caring personality, enough pedagogical and content knowledge, preparation before the class, familiarity with teaching and learning styles, high proficiency in English language (accuracy and fluency), professional teaching skills, the ability to transfer knowledge to students efficiently, class management, creativity and self-confidence.

They also believed that these standards have been taken from globally accepted norms (according to the British Council Teacher Quality Standards' sheet that had been handed to them) to be used as the training framework of EFL institutes. However, they mentioned that these standards are not practically used and applied in actual language classes by EFL teachers. To be more precise, they believed that such standards need to be amended, reinforced, and sometimes smoothed, considering the local educational needs, to be used in Iranian EFL classes. Other qualities – such as possessing an active, caring, and fun personality, having pedagogical content knowledge, and preparation before the class – were amongst the ones which were aligned with global standards (UK Department for Education, 2013).

The quality of content knowledge and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) found in this study was in accordance with one of Hattie's proposed characteristics of a qualified teacher, referring to the ability of teachers to identify the essential representations of their subject, and with Shulman's view of PCK as "subject matter knowledge for teaching" (Hattie, 2003; Shulman, 1986). Although Wayne and Youngs (2003) believed that pedagogical training in language teaching can affect students' achievements and performance negatively, Brophy (1986) and Darling-Hammond (1999) found teacher training, versatility, and patience among the necessary teacher qualities.

With regard to knowledge transferring and creativity, this study showed the same results as those concluded by Ruhnaar (2008), and Geijsel et al. (2009). The two qualities of preparation before the class and familiarity with teaching and learning styles were in accordance with Glaser and Chi's (1988) idea of qualified teachers having

deeper representations about teaching and learning and being able to anticipate, plan, and improvise work as required by the situation. Moreover, several standards like speaking no Persian in the classroom which was in contrast with Galante's idea of Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence (PPC), checking the students' homework and assignments and commenting on them every session, and checking the students' learning every session (Galante, 2020) were among the most fundamental qualities of EFL teachers in Iran.

To answer the second question of the study, the questionnaires were filled by teacher educators to investigate their perceptions and ideas of teacher quality standards in Iran and to see if there was any difference between globally accepted norms and locally accepted ones. The most successful countries, mostly Anglo-Saxon countries, have established some specific learning and teaching standards for themselves to monitor their achievements (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). As it was shown in the results part of the study, teacher quality standards perceived by Iranian EFL teacher educators are higher than the global norms presented in the extant literature (Darling-Hammond, 2001; UK Department for Education, 2013).

These results were in conflict with the qualities within the draft version of teacher quality in Mexico as this country's educational system mainly concentrates on classroom teaching practices and disregards the other underlying features of teaching which cannot be observed directly in the classroom (Secretaria de educacion Publica, 2010). Moreover, according to Kleinhenz and Ingvarson (2007), establishing local teacher quality norms seem advantageous for the whole educational system but it is plausible just in case of hard work, opinions, and views based on reliable research.

These standards can be discussed by considering three main stakeholders namely teachers, students, and principals who include teacher educators. In particular in this study, the content and domains of such standards, the way they were developed, assessed, and implemented were discussed. Notably, the researcher's sole focus was on teacher educators (CEPPE, 2013). The results provided by CEPPE (2013) demonstrated that nine out of seventeen national and sub-national educational systems worldwide involved in that study including Australia, British Colombia, Quebec, Chile, England, Germany, New Zealand, The United States, California, and Texas had considered national teacher quality standards for teachers. Such standards are used as a benchmark to evaluate, if teachers can teach properly in real classrooms, certify them, and assess their performances.

As mentioned in interviews and narratives, although in EFL teachers' ideas, globally accepted norms may seem practically weak to be applied in some cases, EFL teacher educators, EFL institutes, and their managers endeavor to utilize and implement all these norms in their institutional frameworks. This may be due to the attachment of EFL institutes to Standard English and its norms. Such norms are assumed as the main resource for learning English. The more popular the institute, the more reliant it is on globally accepted standards.

Regarding the third question of the study which was focused on the degree of alignment of teacher quality standards in Iran with globally accepted norms, the majority of teacher educators believed that most of the standards focusing on teacher training courses in Iran are aligned with the global ones. However, they mentioned that some of these standards need to be restructured to fulfil Iranian EFL learners' needs. However, in their narratives, they stated that in their opinions, planning everything a teacher should do in her or his classes is not practically possible and applicable. In other words, lesson planning is not an obligation for teachers but a

necessity since many things may change during their real classes. As a result, lesson planning must be supplemented by creativity and high-quality teaching ability in the class to improve the final outcome.

Besides, they believed that despite much focus on setting high expectations for teachers and their students in teacher training courses, EFL teachers do not usually apply it in their classes. The cause is that many EFL teachers do not seek for professional development due to lack of time and financial problems. They also mentioned that teachers in Iran do not focus on learners' autonomy as much as needed and lack the ability to challenge pupils or motivate them to reflect on their progress. Additionally, they hardly ever use self-reflection to improve their own skills and knowledge of teaching. In addition, they explained that, since EFL teachers are not paid reasonably in Iran, they mostly have financial problems, and as a result choose teaching as their second job. Consequently, they do not concentrate on globally accepted standards to which they have been exposed in training courses and workshops. They do follow the rules and standards while being observed by teacher educators, but in any other situations, they prefer not to apply them all.

As a consequence, they believed that most EFL teachers lack the ability to respect all learners' needs, learning styles and preferences in language learning. This mostly comes from demotivation in their teaching process due to financial problems. Needs analysis was among the most frequent qualities that teacher educators mentioned to be significant but unfortunately, in most cases, it is not mostly followed by EFL teachers in Iranian EFL classes. Moreover, as mentioned by teacher educators, the EFL classes in Iran are mostly heterogeneous and learners have huge differences and gaps in their language knowledge. This is due to economic problems which force EFL institutes and their managers to focus on financial issues more than educational ones. As a result, EFL teachers usually cannot manage learners' needs and outcomes properly in their classes. In such conditions, they lack enough resources and find it difficult to maintain motivation and interest in all the learners.

As for the assessment skills of EFL teachers, they believed that EFL teachers must be pushed by teacher educators to assess students' learning repeatedly. They usually forget to do it every session, or sometimes, due to the lack of time management ability, they do not have enough time to finish the new lesson nor review and assess the previous ones. Additionally, they believed that Teacher Talking Time (TTT) is more than the standard amount in many classes which leads to lack of time. Besides, through their class observations, teacher educators believed that EFL teachers do not give enough feedback to their students. They mentioned the fact that teachers as the only feedback strategies in their classes mostly resort to nodding and confirming, and uttering words like "Yes" and "Go on", and consequently they do not correct students as much as they should, which is a vital quality for every EFL teacher. The reason can be the lack of accessible and affordable teacher training programs which work as a good springboard for all EFL teachers.

However, they believed that caring about personal and professional conduct has been the first priority and setting behavioral rules and standards in the class is central and implemented as the second priority of EFL teachers. Due to the traditional and religious background of Iranian culture, respecting peoples' beliefs, ethnic backgrounds and customs is valued a lot. So, this is considered as the red-line of many people that has resulted in respecting all students' religious and cultural beliefs. In particular, they were of the belief that the teachers' teaching skills and the way they teach are more effective in their professional development than their personal and professional conduct or their personalities and behavioral characteristics (UK Department for Education,

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2013). They also mentioned that in young learners' or teenagers' classes, teachers focus on both the learners' and their parents' preferences. In most language institutes, such teachers have a deep relationship with their students' parents and communicate effectively with regard to students' achievements and well-being.

Finally, teacher educators mentioned that they put much effort to explain these standards in their training courses to push and motivate teachers to apply them in their classes. Unfortunately, in their reports and based on their observations, not all these standards are applied in teachers' classes. As a result, these standards are theoretically and practically followed and accepted by teacher educators, but EFL teachers follow them only partially in a practical way.

7. Conclusions and Implications

All in all, Iranian EFL teacher educators believed that global teacher quality norms were implemented in English language classes and formed the framework of language teaching in Iranian education system. They also relied on global teacher quality standards and employed them in teacher training courses and workshops. However, they assumed that such standards would be more practical if they were adapted locally based on Iranian learners' and teachers' preferences. Meanwhile, as found in the analysis of the questionnaire data, the level of global teacher quality standards utilization was found higher compared to the global norm. It was concluded that Iranian EFL teacher educators have covered more of the global quality norms in comparison with the global mean. This study suggests several implications for teacher education programs, EFL teacher educators, and EFL teachers. By considering the research findings, teacher educators can improve their knowledge and skills and become familiar with the most reliable teacher qualities such as the ones proposed in this study based on Iranian cultural, traditional, and social background. Likewise, by referring to these more locally-designed standards, Training of Trainers (TOT) courses can be better directed as teacher educators can further familiarize with locally established teacher quality standards. Such courses raise teacher educators' awareness and knowledge regarding training skills and effective pedagogical practices, and they can contribute to their professional development, mainly when some locally-designed standards are introduced and implemented.

In this study, factors such as the participants' fatigue because of working overtime, their lack of time because of being busy mostly with training activities and requirements, and self-flattery while filling the questionnaires were considered as limitations. Besides, as the researcher is an EFL teacher, her biases toward global and local teacher quality standards and her beliefs and ideas in teaching could subsequently affect the results of the study. Hence, this study can be replicated by considering native and non-native, experienced and novice teacher educators' perceptions of teacher quality. Other types of mixed methods research methodologies and sampling methods can be also applied in further studies. Besides, teacher quality can be studied by considering gender differences, teachers' experience, personality types, qualifications, preferred teaching styles and strategies.

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Appendix

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Items of Teacher Quality Questionnaire

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 18	130	4.98	.12
Item 35	130	4.98	.12
Item 01	130	4.97	.15
Item 04	130	4.97	.15
Item 03	130	4.96	.17
Item 23	130	4.96	.17
Item 27	130	4.96	.22
Item 14	130	4.95	.21
Item 17	130	4.95	.21
Item 24	130	4.94	.22
Item 15	130	4.94	.22
Item 02	130	4.93	.24
Item 10	130	4.93	.25
Item 22	130	4.92	.26
Item 12	130	4.92	.26
Item 13	130	4.92	.26
Item 08	130	4.92	.26
Item 16	130	4.91	.27
Item 07	130	4.90	.30
Item 26	130	4.88	.32
Item 32	130	4.87	.32
Item 33	130	4.87	.39
Item 30	130	4.86	.40
Item 38	130	4.86	.38
Item 37	130	4.86	.40
Item 11	130	4.84	.36
Item 41	130	4.83	.36
Item 19	130	4.83	.46
Item 09	130	4.83	.37
Item 20	130	4.82	.43
Item 28	130	4.81	.42
Item 34	130	4.80	.48
Item 29	130	4.75	.49
Item 06	130	4.66	.61
Item 36	130	4.62	.69
Item 21	130	4.62	.63
Item 31	130	4.60	.57
Item 42	130	4.54	.57
Item 43	130	4.44	.63
Item 25	130	4.36	.55
Item 40	130	4.30	.56
Item 05	130	4.26	.51
Item 39	130	3.36	.72
Valid N (listwise)	130		

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