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# Teacher Educators as Role Models: A Qualitative Examination of Student Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Views towards Their Roles

Mahsa Izadinia

Victoria University of Wellington, [mizadiniya2006@yahoo.com](mailto:mizadiniya2006@yahoo.com)

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## Teacher Educators as Role Models: A Qualitative Examination of Student Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Views towards Their Roles

### Abstract

Teacher Education is considered to be the first and perhaps the most important stage in the professional development of student teachers (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) as teacher educators who work with student teachers during these programs exert significant influence on who students are and will become (Caires, 2007; Chalies, Ria, Bertone, Trohel, & Durand, 2005). This article highlights the impact of language teacher educators' ideas and beliefs with regard to Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and their teaching practices on their student teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their role as language teachers. 20 Iranian language student teachers and ten teacher educators teaching at five universities in Tehran were interviewed. The interviews were coded and analyzed in order to develop themes. Considerable similarities were found between student teachers and their teacher educators in terms of their ideas and beliefs about language teaching.

### Keywords

Qualitative research, teacher education programs, TEFL, thematic analysis

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## **Teacher Educators as Role Models: A Qualitative Examination of Student Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Views towards Their Roles**

Mahsa Izadinia

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

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*Teacher Education is considered to be the first and perhaps the most important stage in the professional development of student teachers (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) as teacher educators who work with student teachers during these programs exert significant influence on who students are and will become (Caires, 2007; Chalies, Ria, Bertone, Trohel, & Durand, 2005). This article highlights the impact of language teacher educators' ideas and beliefs with regard to Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and their teaching practices on their student teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their role as language teachers. 20 Iranian language student teachers and ten teacher educators teaching at five universities in Tehran were interviewed. The interviews were coded and analyzed in order to develop themes. Considerable similarities were found between student teachers and their teacher educators in terms of their ideas and beliefs about language teaching. Key words: Qualitative research, teacher education programs, TEFL, thematic analysis*

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The field of second and foreign language teacher education with its attachment to a mainly linguistic rather than an educational and social orientation (Braxley, 2008; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; May, 2011; Pennycook, 1990) has witnessed gradual changes in its general conceptualization of language teaching. In other words, although the main mission of language teacher education from years ago has been preparing teachers to teach English (Johnson, 2006), language teachers have been encouraged to address sociopolitical issues in their classes since critical theories like critical pedagogy found their ways into the field. Critical pedagogy with its focus on issues like self and social transformation has motivated language teachers to go beyond helping learners with their language communication skills (Crookes & Lehner, 1998) and instead, "take actions which change the world for the improvement of life conditions" (Crawford, 1978, p. 2). For instance, critical pedagogy invites teachers to step beyond classroom concerns for instruction and classroom management, get engaged in critical dialogue with students, and develop students' autonomy necessary for analyzing, criticizing, and questioning the status quo (Moreno-Lopez, 2005).

Despite the positive changes critical pedagogy has brought about in students' and teachers' social and personal lives, it does not seem to have found a comfortable home yet in second language teacher education in some countries such as Iran. Based on my direct observation of language teacher education programs in Iran, they mainly revolve around issues like how to manage the classroom, how to use effective language instruction, and how to engage students in classroom activities, while there seems to be scant attention given to critical pedagogical goals like raising student teachers' (STs)

critical consciousness and awareness of their sociopolitical roles. Too much focus on classroom-bound concerns on the part of teacher educators (TEs) has influenced STs' teaching practices, beliefs, and ideas about teaching and reduced their responsibilities to implementing practical techniques of instruction in classroom (Ben-Peretz, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

This study is an attempt to shed light on the significance of TEs' role in shaping STs' teaching beliefs and ideas about their roles as language teachers. After a brief review of the literature on teacher education, I will report the results of a study done on a sample of STs in Tehran, Iran and discuss the differences found between the participants in terms of their ideas and attitudes toward their roles as language teachers.

### **Literature Review**

Teacher education programs aiming at providing STs with pedagogical strategies, instructional programs, specific teaching methods, and creating stability and security for new teachers (Mann, 2005) have been around for decades. However, different theoretical bases adopted during this period have brought about shifts of focus from one set of ideologies and standards to another. From the late 1950s to the early 1980s, teaching inspired by the behavioral view of learning was viewed as an amalgamation of general principles and specific techniques which was easily teachable and testable through certain techniques and methods (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Teacher education in this era aimed for identification and creation of transportable teaching techniques which produced desired behavior in STs (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This approach viewed good teaching as successful transmission of a fixed and predetermined knowledge base from teacher trainer to STs (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Although this approach to teacher education assumed that STs can be trained to do anything, some critics argued that what were usually transferred were empty techniques rather than knowledge and the power of decision-making (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Between 1980 and 1990, the interpretive paradigm imported from anthropology and sociology affected the roles previously defined for teachers (Freeman, 2002). Teachers in this period were viewed as decision-makers rather than simply doers (Freeman, 2002). It was assumed that as teachers' prior knowledge plays a significant role in their present thinking and practices, they need to develop a professional knowledge base. To this end, attempts were made to codify "not only how and what teachers should know about the subject matter and pedagogy but also how they thought and how they learned in pre-service programs and schools and the multiple conditions and contexts that shape their learning" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 296). However, many believed this approach only focused on teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and skills without considering students' learning. That is, they believed it failed to establish a link between what teachers knew and what their students had learned (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

From 1990 to 2000, the interpretive paradigm moved toward a post-modern perspective wherein nothing was considered fixed or permanent. In this paradigm, "any knowledge depends on a plurality of views, reflects a relativity of position in establishing those views, and can be empowered or silenced depending on how power is used" (Freeman, 2002, p. 8). In educational settings, this paradigm has been realized in increasing focus on issues like power in educational institutions, hearing diverse voices,

giving voice to marginalized and disenfranchised communities, and critiquing previously established assumptions (Johnston, 1999). These issues resulted in the emergence of critical approaches to teacher education (Hawkins & Norton, 2009) which defined new roles and responsibilities for teachers and students. For instance, teachers and TEs were invited to act as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1989) and thereby to consistently and critically reflect on their professional practices, make their own world view through such considerations (Williams & Burden, 1997), become sociopolitically conscious, and strive not only for educational advancement but also for personal and social transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Students and STs were not considered to be passive recipients of guidelines, and they were encouraged to be actively involved in an investigation of their own classroom practices and priorities and their roles (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Therefore, it can be concluded that in this era critical and constructivist theories of education contributed to redefinition of teachers' and learners' roles by highlighting issues like dialog, problem posing, praxis, and conscientization (Freire, 1972). For instance, teachers are encouraged to have dialogs with their students to engage in a dynamic, social, inclusive, participatory and transformative process of serious negotiation of ideas where they stand a chance to speak their minds and develop their ideologies (Fernandez-Balboa & Marshall, 1994). Conscientization as another principle of critical pedagogy has been also given much weight in educational settings as it helps one develop a greater ability to think critically and achieve deep awareness of social realities through a process of self-questioning (Freire, 1972).

Although critical pedagogy has been more or less welcomed throughout the world, it seems it has not found a comfortable home in language teacher education in Iran, as mentioned above. Given that the approaches and practices TEs adopt partly influence STs' understating of their role as language teachers, STs might not stand a chance to become familiar with new approaches toward education if no focus is placed on such practices and approaches during their teacher education. In other words, when TEs only focus on teaching STs how to pass on knowledge, they might only produce good knowledge transmitters. On the contrary, if TEs try to implement critical and transformative practices aimed at heightening ST's awareness of sociopolitical issues, STs might become critical investigators of the problems in their society and become agents of change. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of TEs' beliefs and attitudes toward their roles as language teachers on STs' beliefs. The question addressed in this study is:

To what extent do teacher educators' ideas and beliefs with regard to teaching and their teaching practices and behaviors influence student teachers' attitudes toward their roles as teachers?

### **The Study**

During the years I was working as a language teacher in different language schools in Iran, I had colleagues who, unaware of their agentic roles, felt powerless and obliged to teach the way the authorities had required them to teach. Having no say in their own classrooms, they believed the only thing they could do and should do was to help their students learn English so that they could easily pass the tests. What always

surprised me was their dissatisfaction with authorities and what they sometimes had to teach but their lack of courage to stand up and express their ideas.

Coming from a banking background where students are considered passive recipients of knowledge and teachers are deemed to be transmitters of knowledge (Freire, 1972), I can see how students' sense of agency and voice are stifled from the very beginning of their schooling experiences. In the teacher education context, when STs are not encouraged to generate ideas, when their voices are not valued and recognized and when they start believing they are there to only listen and memorize, they cannot act as agents of change when they take on the role of teachers themselves. Therefore, having teachers who think they are simply transmitters of knowledge and cannot contribute to their education system might be the result of their having had teachers themselves with this mentality. In other words, it can be suggested that teachers are like role models; they weave the fabric of who their students are and will become.

This study sheds light on the significance of TEs' roles in STs' professional lives and their beliefs about teaching. This qualitative study was framed within social constructivism, which is assumed to provide a crucial direction for preservice teacher education (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning happens in a social process in which learners gain new skills and knowledge through interaction with significant others such as teachers. Such interactions give social and emotional support to learners and enable them to take risks and acquire ownership of their learning (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). Thus, from a social constructivist perspective, knowledge is co-constructed, and development takes place in an essentially social process. Given that the study was an investigation of the extent to which STs' beliefs were under the influence of their TEs' beliefs and attitudes, it was assumed that a social constructivist approach would adequately guide the study.

Generally due to the open-ended and interpretivist nature of qualitative methods, data collection tools such as interviews and data analysis procedures such as thematic data analyses seemed to be more appropriate choices (Mertens, 2005). Moreover, given that semi-structured interviews allow researchers to elucidate vague answers and seek follow up questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001), I used this data collection tool to delve deeply into the participants' perceptions and beliefs about their roles as language teachers, rather than a questionnaire which might provide a limited understanding of participants' beliefs. (Before beginning data collection, I received approval from my university to conduct this study as part of completing my master's thesis.)

In this study, two groups were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in English. The first group of participants were 20 (nine female and eleven male) MA TEFL STs. These participants were chosen from among five universities in Tehran which usually have two-year teacher education programs for MA candidates. The second group consisted of ten TEs (five female and five male) of the above STs teaching at MA level in the same five universities. The participants, as mentioned, were all from Tehran, the capital city of Iran, same as the researcher. Due to difficulty in approaching STs located in other cities of Iran, only those studying at Tehran's universities were approached for data collection purposes.

I adhered to four ethical guidelines suggested by Christians (2005) for conducting research, namely obtaining informed consent, avoiding deception, protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality of the data, and ensuring accuracy of the data. To this end, for

example, I provided the participants with information about the purposes of the research project, the time required for answering the questions, and their rights as participants. Subsequently, informed oral consent was obtained from both STs and TEs and they were guaranteed anonymity in any report of findings. Some procedures were also used to guarantee trustworthiness of the data in this study. For instance, member checks, which is the most important procedure in establishing credibility (Mertens, 2005), were conducted at the end of interviews by asking the participants to check if the notes accurately reflected their positions. Once the interviews were transcribed, I also asked the participants to check the transcripts for accuracy.

I analyzed the interview data in the next stage to find similarities and differences between the ideas presented by participants in each group. The constant comparison of the data showed two groups among STs and TEs. The first group of STs (G1) was considered critical STs (i.e., the group seemed to develop critical consciousness and was familiar with his/her sociopolitical roles) and the second group of STs (G2) was the group who appeared to regard his/her main responsibilities as teaching English to the students and was unfamiliar with his/her sociopolitical roles. Two groups were also identified among TEs. C1 was identified as TEs of the first group (i.e., G1) and was considered to be the critical TE group. C2 was identified as TEs of the second group (i.e., G2) and was considered to be less critical. The two groups identified in each category appeared to be different in their beliefs and attitudes toward their roles as teachers. In other words, STs in G1 appeared to be similar to TEs in C1 in terms of their ideas and beliefs and STs in G2 were found to be similar to TEs in C2 in their ideas and beliefs. In the next stage, after color coding and conceptual coding of the data, the interviews were analyzed to find the most recurring themes. The results of the thematic analysis done on the interviews are discussed below.

## **Findings**

### **Student Teachers**

Based on the general description STs provided of their everyday teaching practices and their beliefs about teaching, the participants in G1 were found to have a more critical approach to the profession of English language teaching and to be more aware of their sociopolitical roles compared to STs in G2. Having a transformative and critical attitude toward education, they regarded themselves as agents of change who have the power to make decisions and act toward benefiting individuals and society rather than conforming to a value system imposed by authorities and institutions. STs in G2, on the contrary, viewed their main role as solving language problems of their students and helping them improve their English language proficiency. Most of STs in this group believed they were not responsible for raising students' awareness of themselves and their society and improving their critical thinking skills. Some mentioned that they lack adequate practical knowledge for fulfilling such responsibilities, and others considered themselves too powerless to do more than transferring language content to learners. It was also observed that some STs in G2 had external locus of control in that they mainly attributed their neglect of their critical and sociopolitical roles to limitations imposed on them and disregarded their own ownership of this lack of awareness. By the

same token, they tended to ignore their potential to contribute to the improvement of conditions. The themes discussed below clearly show the differences found between the two groups of STs.

**Improving students' critical thinking skills.** STs in both groups appeared to have a sound theoretical understanding of the concept of critical thinking, and all of them provided adequate definitions of a student who is a critical thinker. For instance, the participants in G1 defined a critical student as someone who “always has a question mark in his/her mind”, “is not biased”, “can make a link between what s/he learns and her/his life”, and “challenges everything”. G2 also suggested that a student who “is involved in classroom decisions”, “tries not to accept anything blindly”, and “gives suggestions” is regarded as a critical thinker. However, considerable differences were noticed between the two groups in terms of the extent to which they believed they were responsible for improving students' critical thinking skills. All participants in G1 maintained that it was part of their responsibility to improve students' critical thinking skills, and they referred to some strategies they used to do so such as asking students thought-provoking questions, motivating them to share their ideas about issues discussed in class, and bringing appropriate materials to the class.

The first strategy mentioned above (i.e., asking students thought-provoking questions) has been suggested in critical pedagogy as a way of developing students' critical thinking skills. Posing and exploring challenging questions help students think deeply about issues discussed in class, consider their different aspects, and develop a critical view. The second technique (i.e., asking students to share their ideas) also encourages students to dare to express their ideas so that they can find their voices. It also helps them learn how to establish constructive dialogs with each other.

Compared to STs in G1, only three out of ten in G2 considered themselves responsible for developing critical thinking skills in students. The rest of the STs in this group gave different reasons why they did not:

“We are far too busy. We are dealing with 20 students every term and we cannot just finish the books.”

“Parents should play more roles here.”

“I do not know what critical thinking is so the application of that in my class is low.”

The above statements shed light on lack of attention to sociopolitical roles on the part of most of the STs in G2. The first example shows that the ST has external locus of control (i.e., attributing the outcomes of actions to external phenomena), which function independently of how one behaves (Rotter, 1966), and refers to outside problems which might afflict anyone. The second ST seems to have not stretched her domain of responsibilities beyond classroom boundaries and holds other people responsible for such roles, and the ST in the last example attributes her lack of concern about her sociopolitical roles to a lack of knowledge.



**Raising students' self-awareness and critical consciousness.** Almost all STs in G1 stated that they should help students know themselves, their society, their culture, and the problems they have in their society. As one suggested:

“We have to teach culture. We as Muslims have different culture. Foreigners have bad opinions about us. I try to make students aware of this problem by introducing our culture and the other cultures.”

As the above quote shows, this teacher believes it is her responsibility to make students aware of their own cultural and religious background so that they develop a clearer idea about their place in the world and what others might think of them as Iranian Muslims. Moreover, as other STs in this group mentioned, helping students know who they are, what they are capable of, and what their roles and responsibilities as students and individuals are helps them build their identity and voice in the classroom and in society and grow into responsible and active citizens.

Other participants in this group also considered self-awareness as a prerequisite for being a responsible citizen in the society and argued it is a must for every teacher to encourage students to know themselves and referred to a range of teaching activities they conducted in their classes to raise their students' self-awareness, such as:

“Having students evaluate themselves and find about their own strengths and weaknesses.”

“Picking up topics which are related to social issues and discussing them in class.”

“Asking students to challenge and critique each other.”

“Encouraging them to be concerned with their personal concerns and have their own say.”

The abovementioned activities can be found among common practices of critical pedagogy for developing students' self awareness; namely, self-reflection, problem posing, critical thinking, and voice, some of which were discussed above.

However, most of the participants in G2 assumed it was not their responsibility to raise students' awareness of themselves and their society, although a few of them also admitted that they did not know how to do so or they had problems fulfilling this responsibility:

“I practice none of them in my classes due to some limitations. There are not enough time and facilities. I have to cover the materials since students are assessed based on these materials. Also, students are not interested.”

This quotation shows that the ST attributes ignoring the students' sociopolitical roles to some limitations which may exist in every class, such as having some students who are not interested in discussing certain topics. However, this participant ignores the

fact that teachers should get students motivated and make topics interesting for them since critical and transformative teachers seek solutions to overcome limitations rather than escape from them. Yet, most participants in G2 referred to similar problems and limitations for disclaiming their critical responsibilities including “lack of interest in politics”, “having no trust in students”, and “having fear of chaos caused by political discussion”.

**Bringing about positive social changes.** Considering themselves responsible for changes that occur in and outside of the classroom, STs in G1 generally believed they should go beyond classroom boundaries and help students improve their academic as well as personal and social lives so that they can create a better society:

“...that is not all about going to class and starting talking English. Now that I am a teacher I should be able to help students think deeply.”

“Teaching is not a profession. It should be my real life... as a teacher I should change myself. When I try to reflect on myself and change myself, then the society is going to change.”

The selected quotations suggest that these STs are conscious of significant social roles they have which go beyond teaching content. To initiate change in students, they argued, they need to start from themselves. In other words, they acknowledged that they needed to act as change agents and critical thinkers so that they could set an example for their students to fulfill agentive and critical roles. They believed that they were closely looked at by their students at every single moment, which indicates their awareness of the considerable impact their behavior and actions leave on their students.

Based on the interview data gathered from the participants in G2, it was observed that they tended to define their role as mainly identifying and solving learners’ language learning problems. Although some STs in this group thought their responsibilities include bringing about positive social changes too, they explained they constitute a very small percentage of society and, therefore, they are too powerless and immobilized to make that happen. One, for example, said:

“I see myself as a person who is limited as the result of different factors.”

Some others rationalized reducing their role to teaching English by mentioning their lack of knowledge about how to transform the status quo:

“I like to make some changes in the system but I do not know how. I read different books about teaching but I do not know how I can put them into practice.”

### **Teacher Educators**

Based on the data, two groups were also identified among the TEs: C1 (TEs of STs in G1) and C2 (TEs of STs in G2). In line with the differences spotted between the

two groups of STs, similar differences were also noticed between the interviewed TEs. TEs in C1 appeared to value students' critical awareness while TEs in C2 attached more importance to STs' language proficiency and technical expertise. In addition, TEs in C1 and C2 had different perceptions of the objectives of MA TEFL and who can be regarded as successful graduates. TEs in C1 considered MA TEFL programs as mainly meant to help STs link theory to practice and become critical analysts of their own teaching practice and the context in order to bring about positive changes at social and personal levels, while TEs in C2 mainly referred to training language teachers who were experts at using effective language instruction techniques as the main objective of TEFL programs. The themes explained below reflect the differences found between the two groups of TEs.

**Objectives of MA TEFL.** A main difference was observed between TEs in C1 and C2 in terms of their opinions and attitudes toward MA TEFL and its objectives. The participants in C1 expressed their discontent with the general belief that MA TEFL is meant to be a teacher training program and referred to this intended outcome as too small a goal. TEs in this group believed the underlying purposes of MA TEFL should be developing critical thinking skills and establishing a sense of agency in STs so that they see themselves as critical, innovative, and transformative:

“You need to have the philosophy developed in teachers' mind, and make them think and come up with ideas of their own.”

“Teachers should be critical analysts. When you become critical analysts, you go to class and you can see what is wrong.”

As the examples show, TEs in this group valued developing critical thinking skills in STs because, they believed, in this way students are able to recognize problems and solve them effectively. Similarly, they emphasized providing an opportunity for STs to establish their teaching ideology since it helps them create their own ideas and develop a sense of agency.

TEs in C1 also attached particular importance to linking theory to practice as another major objective of this program:

“Our students do not have the chance to merge theory and practice together and come up with a real, solid solution to the problem in our society. We are just taking theories and then because it looks nice and sound nice so we carry it out; we are not really concerned what that product is.”

As the quotation show, most of TEs in C1 expressed their concern about a meaningful link between theory and practice. Some maintained that theory and practice are already linked to each other meaningfully and given equal weight in the program. Others believed a stronger link between theory and practice must be provided.

While TEs in C1 emphasized the importance of creating STs' critical thinking skills and creative and transformative potential as well as establishing a meaningful connection between theoretical issues and practical concerns, TEs in C2 generally

believed that MA TEFL has been designed to merely equip STs with practical techniques of developing learners' language skills:

“Our ultimate goal is to train teachers to teach English.”

“We are trying to develop teachers of English as a foreign language.”

The interview data from TEs in C2 showed no implicit or explicit reference to improving STs' critical thinking skills, creativity, and innovation as the major goals of MA TEFL. Training teachers who can teach language skills effectively, as mentioned above, was considered as the primary goal by TEs in C2 while TEs in C1 attached no primary importance to this objective in the way they prioritized goals of the program.

**Successful MA graduates.** Another considerable difference was found between TEs in two groups in terms of the way they defined MA graduates' success. TEs in C1 generally argued that successful graduates are those who have developed sound theoretical knowledge, gained practical experience of English language teaching, and acquired professional skills such as designing courses and making materials by the end of MA program. TEs in C1 also viewed graduates' ability to recognize and analyze problems in their classes and implement innovative alternatives when necessary as indicative of their success. They also maintained that graduates' high language proficiency should not be considered the only yardstick of their efficacy, but their confidence and competence in developing their own ways of teaching and assessing must have a particular significance attached to it. Considering wider contributions of teachers to language instruction, some of them also criticized the present system for treating teachers as passive technicians and ignoring the importance of giving them an active role in planning lessons and defining objectives:

“They, especially the fresh graduates, are not very much successful since they have mainly bookish knowledge of teaching but lack the experience needed. For instance, you have to teach vocabulary according to so and so method and technique. Students try to stick to that without being able to think of context they are in. You have to manipulate and then teach.”

“They do know the teaching, they go to institute, they are given a syllabus and a book and they do not know why they are teaching it,... they just introduce the lesson and present it in any form they have been taught to without knowing what they are after, so teachers are not conscious of the objectives that they are pursuing and that is one of the reasons the end product is not coming out correctly.”

As the quotations show, TEs in C1 believed STs should be given enough courage, confidence, and responsibility so that they can make decisions independently and create positive changes. They also disagreed with the idea of asking STs to merely teach materials according to prepackaged syllabi while they are not aware of the rationale behind it. This group was of the opinion that success meant creating active and critical

STs who were well aware of why they were teaching the way they did and what they were capable of doing as second language teachers. However, TEs in C2 mainly believed a successful graduate is someone who has a good command of the English language to the point that some of them considered language knowledge as a major criterion for evaluating STs' eligibility to enter the MA program:

“Memorizing theories is not important for some and they stress language ability. I myself believe in this and do not give that much credit to an answer which is based on good knowledge of content but not put in good language.”

“A general problem is that we should give a good and complete language test to those who are going to enter the program through a multiple-choice test. We should screen them based on this test. Then we should invite a few of them to the written test. Then they should be interviewed not to have mispronunciation, stutter, etc.”

“The biggest problem in MA program all over the country is that students are selected wrongly. They have to have, first of all, enough knowledge of English. The placement test is not good enough.”

As the above examples show, having high language proficiency was counted as a determining factor for evaluating STs' success. A few TEs in C2 also attached considerable importance to screening MA applicants based on their language proficiency before evaluating their theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching English. This shows their rigid adherence to language proficiency of STs and their lack of attention to other criteria STs should meet, including critical thinking skills.

### **Discussion**

I strongly believe one of the main responsibilities of TEs is to instill a sense of power and agency in STs so that they grow into responsible and caring individuals who resist the fatalist assumption that they are powerless and cannot do anything to improve the status quo. One of the ways through which TEs can achieve this outcome and help STs improve their criticality, sociopolitical awareness, and sense of agency is by setting an example for them. In other words, critical and transformative TEs help create critical and transformative students. Their words, behavior, and teaching styles and practices shape STs' present and future professional lives and influence who they are and who they become. The results of this study showed how TEs' opinions and beliefs about different aspects of second language teaching created an impact on STs' perceptions of language teachers' roles and responsibilities.

As the analysis showed, the STs in G1 who were more conscious of their critical and social roles than the STs in G2 had TEs with more critical and transformative views about education and TEFL than the TEs in C2. Considering education as a social and transformative process necessitates stepping beyond classroom concerns for instruction and striving to develop students' senses of agency and voice. As a result, as the themes

discussed above indicated TEs in C1 particularly valued encouraging STs to be independent, critical thinkers, and creative individuals so that they can bring about positive changes in and outside of classroom. TEs in C1 also referred to the significance of assigning STs' responsibilities, such as designing and developing materials which shows their concern for teachers' roles beyond the operational and implementation level of teaching (Ben-Peretz, 2001). Incorporating this understanding of teachers' roles into teacher education programs helps STs realize that they are not doomed to follow step-by-step guidelines for teaching ready-made materials. Rather, they have the power to make higher-order decisions such as developing and adapting materials according to students' needs. The ultimate outcome of this approach will be developing teachers who regard themselves as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983) and transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988).

TEs in C1 also emphasized providing a strong link between theory and practice which has its origins in the idea of praxis (reflection plus action; Freire, 1972). When a word lacks its dimension of action, Freire argues, it changes into an idle chatter; it becomes an empty word which cannot transform the world since there is no transformation without action. Moreover, in a discipline in which theory and practice are not meaningfully connected to each other teachers are seldom involved in theory building and research, which leads to a wider gap between theory and practice (Clarke, 1994). Therefore, highlighting the significance of linking theory to practice shows TEs' awareness of the importance of reflection and action on the part of teachers who can contribute to theoretical advancements in light of practical considerations.

Likewise, in G2, STs who regarded their main role to be teaching English language skills had TEs who were preoccupied with "how to teach language more effectively" (Crookes & Lehner, 1998, p. 327) and, thus, had a technical and language-bound conceptualization of language education. Exclusive focus on practical and technical aspects of teaching indicates a technical-rational view toward language teaching which promotes adherence to an existing body of technical skills and knowledge developed in an empirical and evidence-based manner. This framework discourages teachers' contributions to those dimensions of education which go beyond classroom-bound concerns such as learning objectives and curricular decisions (Bartell, 2001; Bartolome, 2004).

On the whole, regardless of the content of teacher education programs, STs mainly follow their TEs' ideologies and practices. TEs' interest in focusing on linguistic skills of students leads STs to a similar concern. By the same token, TEs' social and transformative perspectives on education manifest themselves in socially-oriented and transformative ideologies and practices on the part of their STs. Therefore, the way STs look at their professional roles is mostly the way TEs make sense of their responsibilities.

I would like to conclude this article by refereeing to limitations of this study. One limitation was that no observation of STs' and TEs' teaching practices and behavior was done. Observation of the participants' teaching practices could provide concrete evidence of their differences and could help me to triangulate the data. However, since STs were involved in teaching English in different language schools, it was almost impossible to obtain the consent of the managers of all those schools. Therefore, the only data collection tool drawn upon was a semi-structured interview which could only capture the

participants' perceptions and their espoused theories rather than their theories in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

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### Author Note

Mahsa Izadinia is a Ph.D. student of Education in Victoria University. Her areas of interest are Teacher Education, Teacher Identity, Critical Pedagogy, and Critical Literacy. She has presented papers at national and international conferences and published in areas of critical pedagogy and critical literacy in peer-reviewed journals. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed to Mahsa Izadinia, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand; E-mail: [Mizadiniya2006@yahoo.com](mailto:Mizadiniya2006@yahoo.com); and Phone +989126901088.

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