

Model, Instrument, and Procedure: Do We Need to Have Second Thoughts about the Evaluation Process of English Language Institutes?

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Abstract

To launch an evidence source for successive judgment and decision making, program evaluation of any educational institute is an indispensable process, and language institutes are not the exceptions. In an attempt to propose a solution for a fundamental problem as the lack of a standard evaluation program for English language institutes, this study used a new method to be implemented in the context of 'English language institutes (ELIs)' of Iran. In this country, evaluation of nongovernmental centers, including ELIs, is carried out by the Ministry of Education (ME) using a performance evaluation framework which mainly collects the required data through a survey form (locally known as 'Form 322'). We adopted and applied the survey form 322 into developing a specific questionnaire. Ninety ELIs administrators of Mazandaran were surveyed through an instrument that was piloted and validated through the obtained data. The extracted results from the questionnaire were sorted into the categories of "validation", "improvement", "redesigning", and "researchers' opinion". The results showed that the original form, long used in the country, needs to be redesigned. To cross-validate the obtained data and the emerging results, fifteen volunteers from the participating institutes were interviewed for their ideas through Skype and direct interview. Consistent with the results, not only for Iran are an online platform and a standard evaluation and monitoring process recommended, but also an international integrated performance evaluation standard is strongly suggested for English language institutes.

Keywords: English language Institute; Program evaluation; International Standard; Iran

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Introduction

Evaluation is the systematic approach to gathering, providing, and utilizing information to determine the nature, quality, and efficiency of a program (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Since evaluation is respected as an integral part of educational contexts, academic communities such as language institutes set a plan-do-evaluate-act cycle to warrant high quality, well-targeted teaching and learning opportunities in their contexts. The program evaluation of a language institute is indispensable to ensure continuing relevance, coherence, balance, and progression within the curriculum. More importantly, the process establishes an evidence source for successive judgement and decision making on curriculum development and revision. As said by Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2003), evaluation can scrutinize the curriculum and should be pondered as an advantageous process that accredits the strategic development, implementation, and maintenance of a quality academic course or program.

In Iran, the language institutes which are active at child and teenage range levels are all licensed by the Ministry of Education (ME). ME considers them as helping arms in order to ameliorate the foreign language learning. Even though these institutes are authorized by the Ministry, they are run by private sectors. Unequivocally, the aim of establishing such institutes is both encouraging and promising, and ME has made rational decisions, and designed educational programs to achieve the determined goals. On the word of a report by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, found in the "*Supporting Documents for Iran's Comprehensive Scientific Roadmap* (2008)",

there is evidence of success of foreign language institutes, yet this is insufficient and even more, the available data are limited to a few special institutes. It seems that the initial impetus, major policy, current laws and regulations, existing standards, and qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the institutes' inputs and outputs are all controversial issues which are in need of revision and probably reconstruction. Likewise, in order to access a standard behavior pattern, the organizational behavior of any educational center needs to be dissected. Including core topics such as interpersonal communication, attitude development and perception, change processes, etc. organizational behavior is the study of what people do in an organization and how their behavior affects the organization's performance (Robins & Judge, 2016). To them, organizational behavior is of great importance since there exist robust links between the quality of workplace relationships and member job satisfaction, stress, and throughput. Additionally, the elements of a standard organizational behavior pattern promote social responsibility awareness.

There are more than a few stakeholders that are interested in the process and results of evaluation of language institutes. The first group is the parents. They are interested as they want to be assured that their children are being provided with a sound, effective education. The teaching staff is the second group. They need to know that what they are teaching in the classroom will effectively help them cover the standards and achieve the results, they know, parents and administrators are expecting. The third group could be the language learners. They crave to be sure that their local language institutes are doing their best to provide solid

and effective educational programs for them in the area. The administrators, including institute founders, managers, and supervisors make up another group. They necessitate feedback on the effectiveness of their curricular decisions. They can implement the data and feedback from the evaluation to drive changes and promotes the materials they provide. The last but not the least is ME. The information is required to judge whether or not the English language institutes (ELIs), which are authorized by ME of Iran and which are trusted to meet the needs of school students, adhere to the commitments they have given.

Finally, the target is to make sure that language learners are being supported with the best possible education. Since curriculum is of great consequence, evaluation of ELIs is a means of deciding whether or not the suggested curriculum brings the institutes closer to that goal.

Therefore, what is cogent is to deal with each issue and analyze the potential shortcomings of the ELIs with the aid of appropriate program evaluation tools.

Literature Review

It is of great magnitude to intermittently evaluate and adapt programs and activities to ensure whether they are as effective as they must be. Evaluation can help identify areas of deficiencies and provide solutions to achieve more projected goals (Ellis, 1993). On top, when the results are shared about what is more and less effective, it helps to make progress. According to Posavac (2010), by evaluating, success or progress of a program shows itself. The collected information can increase the impact of programs on others, which is paramount for public relations,

employee morale, and the attraction and support of current and potential investment.

The fact that an educational curriculum ought to regularly develop in response to the needs of the students, staff, institution, as well as society is not irrefutable. As stated by Stabback (2016), evaluation is indispensable to confirm ongoing relevance, coherence, balance, and progression within a curriculum. Such an evaluation gives evidence for future judgement and decision making on the development of curriculum and revision. Evaluation helps to scrutinize the curriculum so it should be viewed a positive process which facilitates the strategic development, implementation, and maintenance of a quality academic course or program (Kawser, 2014).

Curriculum evaluation aims to determine whether or not the developed curriculum is generating the intended results and meeting the objectives that it has set forth (O'Neil, 2015), and it is an essential constituent in the process of adopting and implementing any new curriculum in any educational context. A further purpose of curriculum evaluation is to gather data which facilitates identifying areas in need of change or improvement.

As for other educational centers, research uncovers numerous purposes as well as benefits of evaluating language institutes. To Cunningham et al (2016), evaluation can be conceptualized in terms of curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and policy. Zohrabi (2012) believes that the emphasis for evaluation is every so often targeted on the curriculum, either in its development or maintenance, and teaching and learning. However, evaluation can be utilized to check assessment tools and strategies and ascertain language teaching staff policy in curriculum.

In the review process, lack of scientific studies was found in regard with program evaluation of ELIs, specifically in Iran. However, there are various studies e.g. (Tajik& Ranjbar, 2018; Roohani et al, 2017; Sadri & Tahririan, 2017) done in language

institute environments. The topics pertinent to language institutes have been demonstrated in Table 1. In this table, recent studies conducted in relevance to language institutes, during 2009-2018, are reported.

Author	Year	Area	Case	Findings
Saliua and Hajrullaia	2016	The study focuses on ESP. The authors tried to show that there is a positive attitude towards the best practices in ESP course.	Learners who attended in ESP course at the Language Center are interviewed and asked to rate some of the best and common practices in the course.	The results showed that the participants view ESP as a very useful course, which helps them reach higher communicative competence in their field of study and as a result higher job opportunities in the labor market of Macedonia, as a country aspiring for integration in international organizations such as NATO and EU.
Rashidia et al.	2014	It was a nonlinguistic study about humor in language classrooms.	The authors tried to compare the different uses of humor among EFL learners which are employed in public schools with ones enrolled in language learning institutes.	The results of the study indicated that teachers from language learning institutes utilize humor more than the ones employed in public schools. Hence, students use humor to communicate in their class by using the target language too
Moafian and Ghanizadeh	2009	The paper is on teachers' emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy in language institutes.	The present study intends to investigate if there is any relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EI and their sense of efficacy beliefs in Language Institutes.	The results revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between EI and teaching efficacy. Also, there is a moderate association between EI and teacher self-efficacy of primary and secondary school teachers.
Ghobadi and Fahim	2009	The study is about EFL learners' development of various aspects of pragmatic competence.	The authors compared the use of explicit and implicit instruction of English "thanking formulas" on Iranian EFL intermediate level students' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic awareness.	The results showed that instruction had an impressively positive effect on raising students' sociopragmatic awareness as well as their hindrance of L1 pragmalinguistic transfer to L2.

Shoghi Javan and Ghonsooly	2018	This paper is about the complicated cognitive processes involved in natural (primary) bilingualism. This study can be taken as evidence that learning a foreign language improves the brain structurally.	In the present study the normal and non-normal distribution of the data was verified through determining the skewness, standard error of skewness, kurtosis, and standard error of kurtosis.	This study showed that the language learners' effort leads to enhancement in cognitive flexibility and working memory, but not in inhibitory control.
Anthony and Liddicoat	2017	This paper reports on a project of structural and curriculum change in the Languages learning area in three Australian schools that implemented new models of Languages provision over a 3-year period and seeks to examine the ways that school cultures influence processes of change.	The project adopted a qualitative collective case study approach that involved collaboration between teachers, school leadership and the research team on activities related to implementing the models, including a contextual analysis of policies and structures, collaborative curriculum planning and implementation, planning of interventions relevant to each site, monitoring, and ongoing evaluation and annual reporting.	This study has shown that school cultures and the structures they generate have a significant impact on processes of curriculum change, often as hidden or unacknowledged factors shaping what is possible in schools.
Shawer	2013	This study evaluates a language education program and assesses the influence of this program evaluation on program performance and stakeholder professional development.	The research design makes use of mixed paradigms and methods. Positivism is followed to verify the extent to which the program meets predetermined quality standards through quantitative evaluation research, questionnaires and document and record analysis.	The study concludes the program maintains satisfactory overall performance with some components performing better than others. Likewise, evaluation of program evaluation improves program elements and faculty and program administration professional skills.

Gkonou and Miller	2017	The paper is on language teachers and language learner anxiety	They analyze the affective or emotional labor that language teachers often undertake in responding to their students' displays of language anxiety. Drawing on positioning theory, they explored these concepts through analyzing these language teachers' interview accounts, produced in response to questions related to their students' language anxiety.	The results showed that the teachers involved in the study had considerable knowledge of and sensitivity to their students' negative emotions about classroom language learning. They believed that their ongoing efforts to understand their students and their emotional needs, reflect on their practice, and select appropriate strategies for mitigating their students' language anxiety. Also, they seemed particularly eager to discuss their efforts to create caring, friendly, and comfortable classroom environments.
Tragant, Serrano, and	2016	This is a comparative study between two domestic programs for pre-adolescents. It examines the experiences of learners aged 11–13 years who participated in two domestic summer programs.	The two programs examined in this study were carefully selected to facilitate their comparison. Both were organized by two prestigious institutions in two affluent neighborhoods of Barcelona (Spain).	The research seems to suggest that the summer camp may have certain additional benefits in the case of learners' oral skills, though this needs to be investigated further. However, the study highlights the challenges that short intensive programs, especially summer camps, face in creating productive environments of L2 interaction outside the time assigned to foreign language instruction.
Raja	2013	The focus of this research is to highlight the different types of activities and the processes involved in teaching verbal communication skills at ELIs.	The motivation for investigating 'how teaching oral communication skills are accomplished at ELIs' is derived from my past experience of being a student in some of these institutes.	The study shows that a large number of institutes are rendering services in teaching oral communication skills in various areas of the cities in Pakistan. The education provided by these institutes does not encourage thinking of the students and hence students are unable to speak their mind.

As shown in Table 1, no specific evaluation has been internationally conducted on ELIs, nor in the local context of

Iran. As Zakeri (2018a) enunciated, Iranian families have experienced the prominence of language institutes, and in the near future,

this will coax the development of such centers across the country. Hence, ME is required to contribute to the establishment of an effective program for controlling and monitoring language programs in institutes. Accordingly, Zakeri (2018b) investigated the necessity of evaluating the performance of ELIs in Iran and concluded that there is currently no separate or integrated model or standard for evaluating / ranking ELIs in Iran.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the main instrument for the evaluation of the English language institutes (ELIs) in Iran? What are the components of the existing instrument? Do the instrument items evaluate the ELIs appropriately?

2. Given that the existing program evaluation instrument is valid, is the evaluation and monitoring process carried out by the inspectors in accordance with the standard behavioral patterns?

3. Method

The present study was undertaken in two different phases, each phase is described in terms of participants, instruments, and procedure as follows:

3.1 Phase 1

3.1.1 Participants

Ninety participants, including 44 females and 46 males, were selected among the 410 managers of the ELIs in Mazandaran. Of them, 7 (7.8%) had PhD, 35 (38.9%) had MA, and 48 (53.3%) had BA degrees. 76 (84.5%) of the participants majored in the English language related fields such as Teaching English (46.6%), English Translation (17.78%), English Literature (16.7%), and

Linguistics (3.3%). About 75% of the respondents had the age range of 40 to 45. Almost all of them described their profession as pertaining to education or training. 70% (N=63) of the participants were ME teachers (full-time staff), whereas 30% (N=27) were freelance instructors.

3.1.2 Instrument

This section consists of two parts: the ELIs evaluation form, henceforth called 'Form 322', and the questionnaire.

Form 322

The 4-page 'Form 322' (in Persian), developed by Department of Performance Evaluation in ME, is used to evaluate nongovernmental educational centers that are institutionalized and authorized by ME. The form has been used by ME's inspectors and evaluators as the main tool for monitoring and inspecting each center. Although this form was not originally developed for the evaluation of the ELIs, it has been used for such a purpose. The form has two subscales: a) *general features*, including indicators of physical space, equipment, and administrative affairs, and b) *specific features*, including indicators of evaluation and monitoring, educational content, cultural content, financial system, and contract reviews.

The indicator of physical space holds 11 items. In truth, this factor seeks to identify and check out the educational environment, including the suitability of the location, the capacity of the classes, the cleanliness standards, etc. *The index of equipment* has 6 items. This index evaluates the category of educational facilities and aids. *The index of administrative affairs* has 11 items. This index is utilized to determine the validity of

license, statistics, information about learners, and so forth. *The assessment and monitoring index* has 7 items to analyze issues such as academic achievement, specialized training, etc. *The educational content index* has 3 items to evaluate the educational calendar and compatibility of the content with the age of the learners. *The training and cultural index* with 7 items is aimed at evaluating categories such as consulting services and cultural spatial planning. *The financial system index* with 4 items is applied to appraise financial statements, balance sheets, and so on. *The index of contracts review*, including 5 items, examines items such as contract terms, payroll taxes, 4% of ME contributions, etc.

Predominantly, all indicators have two noticeable features: 1) their items are all backed by legal documentation; 2) all of their items have weight. Each inspector and evaluator should rate the items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (4=very good, 3=good, 2=moderate, 1=weak, and 0=no-performance). At the end of the form, there is a section titled "suggestions, recommendations and comments" in which the inspectors propose their ideas or comments. All inspectors must sign the form and write the exact date of evaluation in the provided spaces.

Regarding the queries of this study, the first research question, as mentioned above, concerns with the existence and nature of the ELIs evaluation tool. Form 322, prepared by ME, has 4 pages with general and specialized divisions. As mentioned above, the inspectors employ this tool to evaluate the English language institutes. The evaluation is carried out face to face, using interviews and personal conferences, and observational inspections. During the process, the inspectors interview the language institute

directors to complete the evaluation form. The form, thus, is completed through the documented information and evidence which, in turn, are judged and appraised by the inspectors.

Questionnaire

To assess the Form appropriacy and effectiveness for evaluation of the ELIs performance, a one-page questionnaire was designed including 6 main sections comprising 30 items. Demographic data including the respondents' gender, university degree, field of study, and years of management experience were also solicited through a separate section included in the instrument.

Section 1 included specific items assessing the ELIs in terms of their 'appearance'. Relevantly, six statements/items were designed to be used for an external evaluation of Form 322. Section 2, with four statements/items seeks to evaluate Form 322 indicators in the terms of physical space, equipment, administrative affairs, etc. Section 3 is dedicated to the specified division. This section focuses mainly on evaluation, monitoring, and educational content. This section contains six items. The issue of law is an essential section of any activity. Section 4 deals with the legal documentation category and comprises 4 items. Section 5 is about guiding points of evaluation and their "weight of importance". In Form 322, each item of each index is given a weight. Section 6 is called conclusion. In this section of the questionnaire, the "general opinion" of the language institute directors is asked about Form 322. Moreover, the fundamental question is 'whether the inspectors will ask teachers and students for their opinions about the institute'. The last statement asks 'whether or not a part of the

form makes the inspectors attend classrooms in which teachers are teaching’.

The questionnaire was set in a way that allows the respondents to choose one of the three choices provided as "yes", "somewhat", and "no" to the comment on each item. There are six key questions in the questionnaire (questions 6, 10, 19, 20, 21, and 30 (see appendix A) that, as tailor-made questions, directly target the context and mission of language institutes.

3.1.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was designed through the ‘decision-making group’ process. The group consisted of three English Language

Teaching (ELT) experts. The process has been done through five meetings and the extracted questions were validated by two external ELT experts. Furthermore, as mentioned in the instrument section, in the designing process of the questionnaire, six key questions were included based on the experts’ decisions. They are included to be compared with the result of other questions (in their own parts). In the third section of the questionnaire, all questions are as the key questions. An interpretation has been determined for each answer of the key question in all parts. The interpretation has been shown in the following table.

Table 2. Pairwise comparison table of the answer of the key question and the overall answer

The overall answer	Interpretation		
	Yes	No	Somewhat
The answer of the key question			
Yes	Validated	Redesigning the questionnaire	Validated
No	Improvement	Redesigning the questionnaire	Redesigning the questionnaire
Somewhat	Researchers’ opinion	Improvement	Improvement

3.1.4 Data Collection

The required data were collected by means of the designed questionnaire, soliciting for both general perception of the Form 322 quality and appropriacy as well as demographic information, as described above. All respondents were asked to answer the questions arranged in the 6 categories: *appearance of the form* (6 questions), *general points* (4 questions), *specific points* (6 questions), *legal documents* (4 questions), *guidelines of evaluations and their coefficient of importance* (6 questions), and *conclusion* (4 questions). As mentioned before, the

respondents were required to choose one of the three "yes", "somewhat", and "no" options provided after to the comment on each item.

To collect the data, the questionnaires were sent to all 90 managers via E-mail. It lasted between 10 and 14 days to receive their feedback. the collected data were analyzed using SPSS (version 19.0) and MS Excel.

3.2 Phase 2

3.2.1 Participants

There were 15 participants in this phase. They were among those who participated in phase 1, showing their consent and voluntary

participation in phase 2, too. Of them, 7 were females, whereas 8 were males, with a range of 7-22 years of experience in their job.

3.2.2 Instrument

In this phase, the tool which is employed is a questionnaire. Over five meetings, the questionnaire was designed via the decision-making group process. The group consisted of five institute managers who are not involved in the second phase. It is so due to decrease of the deviation in the answers.

3.2.3 Procedure

The core of this section was a structured interview i.e. each interview was presented with just the very questions in the same order.

3.2.4. Designing the Interview Questionnaire

Through the aforementioned group decision-making process (see instrument), twelve interview questions were developed. These questions were clustered in the two groups of "inspection" and "content" in accordance with the similar factors of questions (see Appendix B).

3.2.5. The Interview

Of the 90 participants in Phase 1, fifteen were volunteers for Phase 2. They were from six cities of Mazandaran Province. The interview, lasted for 6 days, was done 3 days

after Phase 1. It was through Skype and direct interview in their offices. Each session lasted about 30 minutes. Just because the participants' major was English, the interview was done in English. It was recorded as the participants permitted. All the interview sessions were held in the morning since most of the participants expressed that they were free and could answer patiently.

3.2.6. Data Collection

As the final section of the process, to collect the data, the audio tracks were transcribed and the responses were sorted, and a content analysis report was prepared.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of the two phases are shown and discussed.

4.1. Phase 1

To ascertain what instrument ME utilizes to evaluate language institutes, and what components the instrument owns, Phase 1 of this study has been proposed. This phase was designed in three sections of participants, instruments, and procedure. The extracted questionnaire from Form 322 was designed via a group decision-making process and given to the 90 participants who were selected randomly.

The results of their responses to the questions have been illustrated in Fig.1.

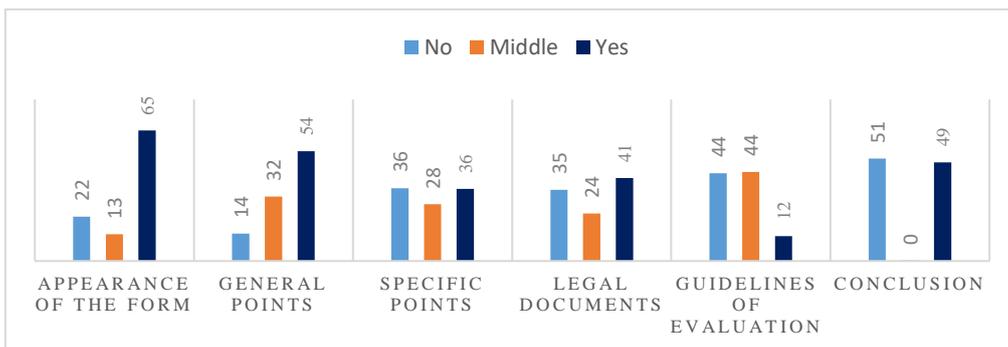


Fig 1. The analysis of the participants’ overall response to the designed questionnaire. The numbers are representative of percent.

The above graph illustrates the participants’ viewpoints to the questionnaire in the six sections of appearance of the form (as the first section), general points, specific points, legal documents, guidelines of evaluations and their coefficient of importance, and conclusion (as the last section).

As displayed in the first section, 22.033, 13.33, and 64.637 are the corresponding

percent to “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes” respectively. As the results revealed, the participants were satisfied with the appearance of Form 322. Apparently, the form is considered appropriate in terms of standard official structure. The analysis of answers to the key question is displayed in Fig 2, where 98% of the answers were “No”, and the remained was 2% for “Yes”.

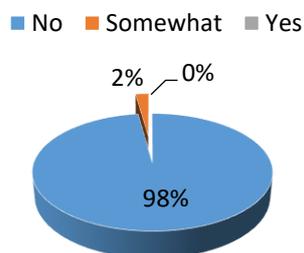


Fig 2. The answer analysis of the key question

According to Table 2, and figures 1 and 2, the section needs to be revised. To our standpoint, even though the questions of this section could possibly evaluate educational institutes in general, they do not necessarily

meet the needs of ELIs evaluation process. The overall answer was derived from the six questions, where the analysis of each section question by question has been portrayed in Fig 3 as well.

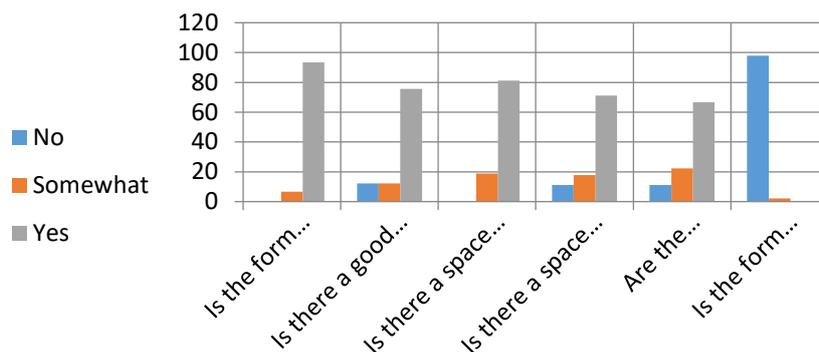


Fig 3. The answers' analysis of the first section

For the second section, according to Fig 1, 13.6, 31.95, and 54.45 percent are assigned as the analysis of “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes”

respectively. The analysis of the answer to the key question has been displayed in Fig 4.

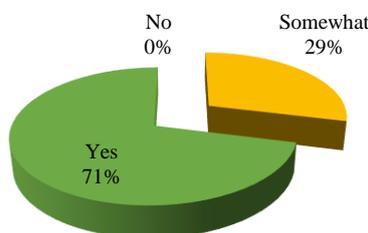


Fig 4. The key question's answer analysis

In the above Fig, the respondents' answer was 71% for “Yes”, and 29% was “Somewhat”. Respecting Table 2, and Fig 1,4, the results showed that more than half of the participants were satisfied with this part in

Form 322 i.e. they accept it as true that the indexes in the “General Points” are in line with the evaluation. The analysis of each answer of this section is represented in Fig 5.

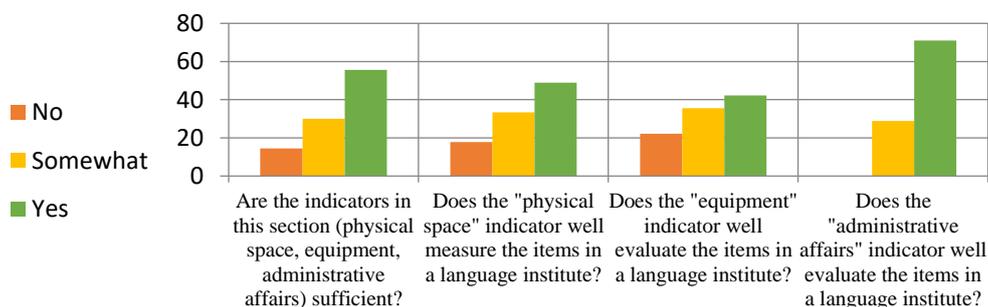


Fig 5. The analysis of each answer of section 2

For the third section, as shown in Fig 1, 36.11, 28.15, and 35.74 percent are defined as “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes” respectively. As discussed in (Phase 1-the procedure

section), regarding the nature of this section, the interpretation is based on the overall answer. Hence, the overall results indicated that much less than half of the participants

were not satisfied with this part of Form 322. Thus, it gives the impression that the form does not support evaluation of language institutes.

As indicated in the fourth section of Fig 1, 35.27 standing for “No”; 23.62% standing for “Somewhat”; and 41.1 standing for “Yes”

represent the overall answers of this section. As mentioned in Phase 1 procedure section, there are two key questions in the fourth section that directly impact on the final interpretation. The analysis of the questions is illustrated in Fig 6.

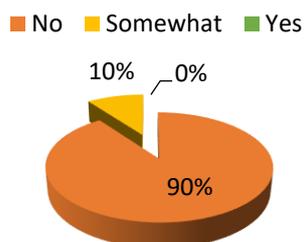


Fig 6. The analysis of the key questions of the fourth section

In respect of Table 2, and figures 1 and 6, the questions of this section must be redesigned. For interpretation of this section, two key questions have been designed as: 1) Are the legal documents for "Teaching and Learning Foreign Language" in institutes? and 2) Do the legal documents refer to the duties of each staff (manager, teacher, secretary, etc.) of a language institute? Despite it is mandatory to provide required legal document, the reason for designing these questions was the gap of

emphasis on the circumstance of language institutes. To cover whether there are not the related legal documents in the document of "The Collection of Rules and Regulations for Private Schools and Centers¹", (abbreviated to The Document) the specific rules need to be designated, or if they exist, they must be extracted from The Document to support the mandatory requirements. The analysis of answers to the questions is shown in Fig 7.

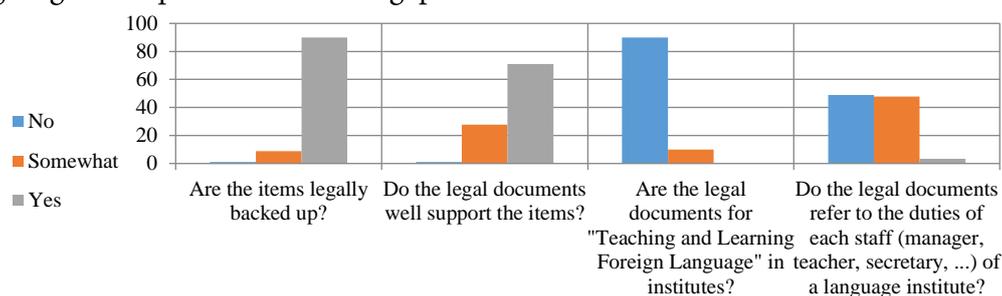


Fig 7. The answer analysis of the fourth section

As portrayed in Fig 1, the respondents' answers were 43.53, 44.08, and 12.39 percent for “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes” for the fifth

section. The analysis of answer to the one key question has been illustrated in Fig 8.

¹ It is a collection of all rules related to private schools and centers which is given by ME.

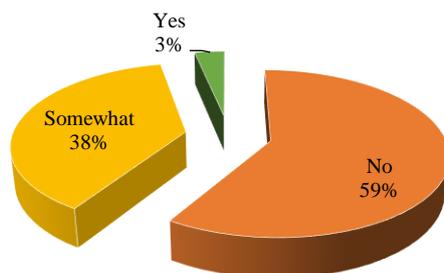


Fig 8. The analysis of the key question's answer in section five

As revealed in Table 2, and figures 1 and 8, the overall answer was “No”, along with the answer to the key question. Thus, the questions need to be redesigned, due to the various effective items of educational and

official procedures of language institutes, and the different corresponding coefficient impacts. The analysis of answer to the questions is shown in Fig 9.

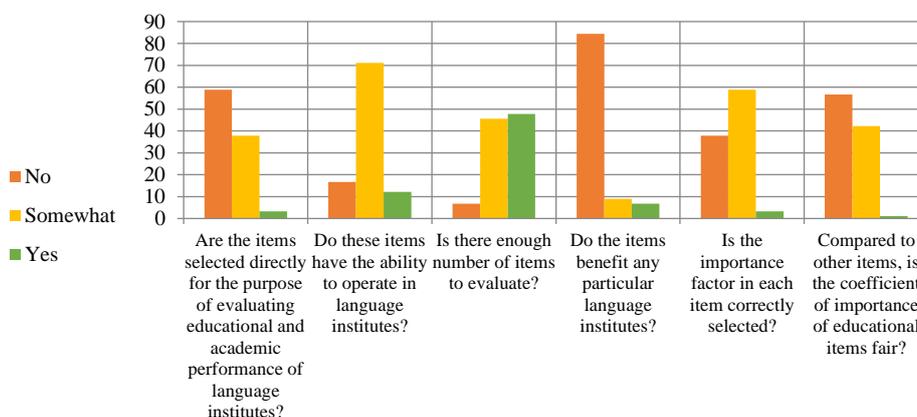


Fig 9. The analysis of overall answers to the section five questions

And finally, the results of answers to the key question of section 6 have been illustrated in Fig 10, where the overall answers were 50.82,

0.27, and 48.9 percent for “No”, “Somewhat”, and “Yes” correspondingly.

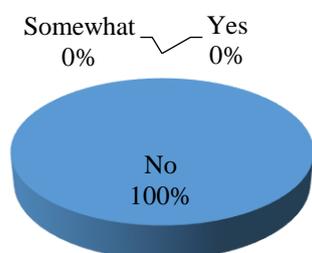


Fig 10. The key question's answers analysis

With respect to Table 2, and figures 1 and 10, in spite of the approximate balance between

“Yes” and “No” in the overall answer, the respondents intensely replied “No” to the key

question. Hence, the questions need to be redesigned due to the lack of effective factors of the teachers' and learners' opinions, and the inspectors' direct observation of the

educational processes. The analysis results of answers to the questions of the sixth section have been indicated in the following figure.

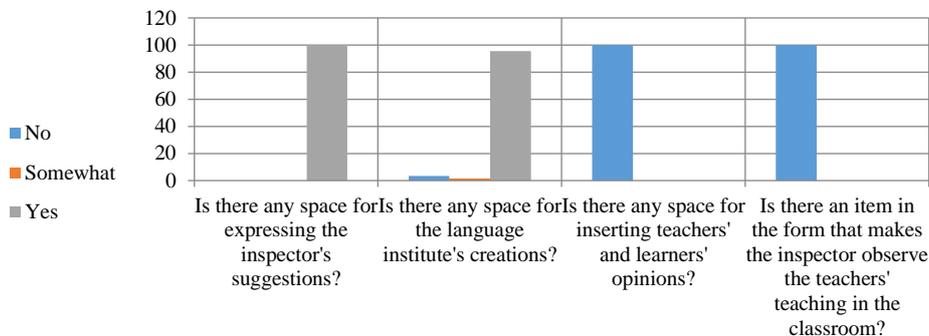


Fig 11. The analysis of the sixth section questions' answers

The overall analysis of the proposed questionnaire is demonstrated in Table 2, in

correspondence with Figures 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

Table 3. The overall analysis of the proposed questionnaire

	Validated	Improvement	Redesigning the questionnaire	Researchers' opinion
Section 1		•		
Section 2	•			
Section 3			•	
Section 4			•	
Section 5			•	
Section 6			•	

The above table has been analyzed in accordance with the "number of the key questions" of each section, which were discussed earlier. The analysis process is based on the following process, where (N^K) is the number of the key question, (S_i) stands for the i th section ("section 1, ..., section m" abbreviated to i th section), (N_{AS_i}) expresses the number of j th action (Validated as the first action and the Researchers' opinions is the fourth action, which are demonstrated as j th action) performed on i th section, and (A_j)

shows the value of j th action, which must be performed on the questionnaire. The new proposed equation provides a math-platform to analyze each interpretation based on the number of key questions which directly have the most impact on the interpretation. Often, these types of equations are used as the algorithms to analyze the decision making matrices which includes a number of alternatives, analyzed against a number of criteria (Zakeri and Keramati., 2015). Eventually, the final interpretation is in respect of value (A_j).

$$A_j = \sum_{i=1}^m N^K N_{AS_i} \times \left(\sum_{j=1}^n \sum_{i=1}^m N^K N_{AS_i} \right)^{-1} \times 100. \quad i = 1. \dots m; \quad j = 1. \dots n; \quad (1)$$

The above equation expresses the result of analysis of each section according to the interpretation in percent. The higher value of (A_j) indicates the favorable action. According to (Eq.1), the following results have been obtained, where (A_1), (A_2), (A_3), and (A_4) stand for validation, improvement, redesigning, and the Researchers' opinion.

- $A_1 = 9.01 \%$
- $A_2 = 9.01 \%$
- $A_3 = 81.81 \%$
- $A_4 = 0$

In respect of the aforementioned results, validation and improvement received the same value. While redesigning the questionnaire has the big chunk of the overall actions' value. No value was referred to the researchers' opinion. On that account, on the one hand the questionnaire needs to be redesigned and on the other hand the questionnaire is adopted from Form 322. Hence, Form 322 needs to be redesigned according to our research output.

4.2. Phase 2

As discussed earlier, the performance evaluation of ELIs is one of the most appreciated proceedings of ME in achieving the predefined objectives, underscoring the strengths, removing obstacles, and improving the weaknesses. To do so, ME utilizes Form 322 as a key tool.

As a matter of fact, Phase 2 of the research was conducted to answer the two general questions: 1) Is the inspection carried out meticulously, in principle, and in accordance with organizational standards? 2) Along with the questionnaire of Form 322, do institute

administrators have untold comments about the inspections and the feedback in particular? To this end, 15 volunteers from Phase 1 were invited to answer the interview questions in Phase 2. The interview questions were arranged in two clusters. The following depicts the whys and wherefores and philosophy of the existence of each question in this phase.

The first two questions in Phase 2 procedure as "1) Is the time/date of inspection announced in advance? and 2) How often is the inspection usually done?" focused on timing and scheduling of inspection. Scheduling is a substantial item for a plan in any professional center of education. Even though a plan holds many components, the most imperative part is plan scheduling. There is no doubt that 'time and schedule' management has many benefits such as negligence of the duties and responsibilities, assigning duty respondents, project planning, and resource allocation e.g. determining the amount of work required at start and end, assigning deadline for performing tasks, preventing waste of resources, incorporating metrics to measure and evaluate project progress, predicting the suitable time for evaluation, documentation, and probable revision.

Of 15, twelve participants gave negative answers to the first question. The result revealed that ME does not follow ordered timing and schedule for the inspections. To evaluate license holder performance, a standard inspection schedule defines the minimum level of inspections. The inspections are scheduled well in advance and follow a standard inspection process.

Therefore, it is suggested that ME announce its inspections schedule beforehand.

The obtained results from the second question showed that only half of the participants said that the inspections were done four times a year (once for a semester). In line with The Document, ME must follow regular inspections as once for a semester.

Question three is about the inspection verdict (see appendix B). Along with our observation, mostly the inspection documents are not presented to the administrators of the language institutes for various reasons for instance the administrators' and inspectors' lack of knowledge of the inspection legal circumstances which are defined in The Document. Another part of our observation indicated that some of inspectors, at the start or during the inspections, take advantages of their official positions and do not show the relevant documents. As the result of the interview, most of volunteers answered 'No' to this question. Thus, it is recommended that the institute administrators know their legal rights and the inspectors must execute the regulations in line with The Document.

Question four is about the qualification of the inspectors or the quality of the inspection where all the answers were negative. With respect to the answers, the dramatic paradox was detected: despite the fact that the inspectors must be qualified In proportion to ME prospects (shown in The Document), the inspection process lacks standards of The Document in the standpoints of the participants. Therefore, an online platform is recommended to display the inspectors' professional information unambiguously to be available for the administrators of the language institutes.

The fifth question concerning "What is your opinion about Form 322?", was asked as a complementary for the output of Phase 1. As 'Redesigning' was the result of Phase 1 (see Table 3), this question was proposed due to a scrutiny of the hidden details and untold facts which might be neglected in the first phase process, and optimize the redesigning process. In line with the answers, the solutions of the problems, which are shown in the following list, cover the details and untold facts.

1. Successful development and management entails a road map. Roadmapping is known as a useful planning tool for all the areas that contribute to organizations in general and to educational centers in particular.

2. A comprehensive chart is required for transparency of the learners' learning process and educational planning.

3. 'Teaching Materials' is a generic term to describe the resources teachers use to set instruction. They can support student learning and increase student success. Teaching materials help to create a successful teacher and provide a high degree of interest for a learner.

4. Employing the right people for teaching is the most life-and-death part of any language institute. It is highly crucial to build a positive image to learners, parents, and ME authorities. Thus, a steadfast recruitment process which minimizes the time involved in the searching, interviewing, hiring, and training seems essential.

4. A teaching method encompasses the principles and methods applied by teachers to encourage and enable student learning and enhance initiatives. Furthermore, a good choice of teaching method aids the teachers

by facilitating both procedures of classroom management and teaching.

5. Exams, class presentations, and projects are forms of assessment. Assessment (both formative and summative) is a key factor of learning in that it assists learners to learn meritoriously. It uncovers whether or not the course learning objectives have been met. Assessment touches numerous components of education e.g. learner grades, placement, and advancement over and above curriculum and instructional needs.

6. The magnitude of authenticity, along with the quality of graduation, has always supported scores of aspects of education; this is noticeably true in the area of language learning where most of the graduates might admit to universities and business, or in workforce development programs.

7. Although young in language institutes, caring program in education has always attracted a lot of attentions. Such a program benefits both the teachers, in how to develop their knowledge and skills, and the language learners in how and how much they need to practice.

The answers of the sixth questions show that inspectors request an irregular wide range of documents during inspections, while the inspections do not follow a clear pattern. Hence, it is suggested that ME design a standard checklist for documents for the inspection process.

As to the question 7 asking “Do the inspectors ask special questions about learning and language learning?”, it should be mentioned that the specific evaluation of educational process is inevitably an integral part of the institutes’ inspection. However, according to the answers, the educational process is fundamentally neglected in the inspection process. What is expected is that not only must the inspection include the

official inspection process, but it must also involve the educational process inspection exclusively. Moreover, to this end it is recommended that educational details need to be defined. Then, a corresponding process must be proposed and implemented.

Here are some answers to questions 8 and 9:

“...Typically, the inspectors have respectful organizational behaviors. However, they seem eager to find bugs, weaknesses, defects, secrets, gender segregation, etc.Some emphasize paper evidence, though unrealistic. ... They do not focus on the mission of the language institute. ... Some like to fill in the form only. ... They do the paperwork. For a few, outstation allowance (mission money) is more important...”

The answers indicate that the inspectors do not follow the standard behavioral pattern and the regulations of the standard inspection process (In line with The Document). As discussed earlier, the inspection process must be respected to The Document. The standard inspectors’ professional behavioral pattern and the related educational course must be defined and executed. Furthermore, an evaluation program based on the inspection processes and the new-defined behavioral pattern indicators is suggested for the inspectors by ME.

As the tenth question “Does ME have and give you any feedback from the inspections?”, the interviews indicated the lack of a structured framework with details for the feedbacks. As discussed in the 4th question, a comprehensive platform including information transaction between the institutes and ME is suggested. The advantages could be the optimization of the

bilateral processes such as cooperation process, feedbacks, etc.

The answer to the eleventh question “Do they have any suggestions for fixing defects, bugs, problems, and so on?” can be sorted in the two general categories of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. The suggestions have been on the administrative and structural environment of the institutes, whereas the educational issues have not been dealt. Such a lack has been discussed and suggestions have been offered. The negative answers were in the three subcategories of “Failure in the pattern of professional behavior”, “Objections to the inspectors' information”, and “pitfall in the inspection process” which have been discussed in the previous questions.

The last question was asked for the hidden details or untold facts during the interview session by the interviewees. Here are some responses:

“...ME should take a constructive step in improving the quality of language learning. ... The inspections need to be specific to the mission of language institutes. ... The inspectors must be TEFL graduates. ... ME should hold meetings for administrators of language institutes.... ME's approach should convert a hostile approach to a friendship approach. ME must arrange to shut down unauthorized language institutes...”

The answers stipulate the dissatisfaction of the interviewees. The administrators of language institutes demand for a modification of the status quo of inspections. They require ME to take the inspection process seriously and adopt a purely administrative approach with a specialized approach.

5. Conclusion

With two divisions of general and specialized, Form 322, developed by Department of Performance Evaluation of ME, is employed to measure the nongovernmental centers which are licensed by ME. The general division includes indicators of physical space (with 11 items), equipment (with 6 items), and administrative affairs (11 items). Also, the specialized division comprises indicators of evaluation and monitoring (with 7 items), educational content (with 3 items), cultural content (with 7 items), financial system (4 items), and contract reviews (with 5 items).

To answer the second question, a two-phase procedure was designed including Form 322 analysis as the first phase, and the corresponding actions to support phase 1 outputs as the second phase applied in Mazandaran Province ELIs to generalize the application results to the whole country. Phase 1 consists of three sections as participants including 90 administrators of language institutes of Mazandaran Province; instruments consists of the Form 322, and the questionnaire which are surveyed among the participants; and the procedure which is arranged in the two sections as the questionnaire designing, and data collection. The second phase includes participants who were fifteen volunteers from the ninety participants in Phase 1; the instrument section i.e. the interview; and the procedure.

In Phase 1 of this study, the validity of Form 322 has been scrutinized. A questionnaire of 30 items was coached under the supervision of ELT experts, and 90 language institute administrators in 6 cities of Mazandaran were surveyed. With the proposition of a systematic interpretation of survey results in the four categories of the validation, improvement, redesigning the

questionnaire, and the researchers' opinions, and an analysis procedure of interpretation, the results were 9.01% as validation; 9.01% as improvement; 81.81% as redesigning; and 0 as researchers' opinion.

As the phase 1 output indicates the questionnaire needs to be redesigned. To reach that, fifteen volunteers from phase 1, were interviewed to reveal the untold facts and hidden details of phase 1 to help to redesign the questionnaire. Also, in this phase, ten indicators were proposed to support the redesigning procedure.

As the results revealed, not only are the participants dissatisfied with the inspectors and the monitoring process, but also they suggest redesigning the process and new professional standards must be defined for inspectors' behavioral pattern. Moreover, to clarify the monitoring procedure and for optimizing the information transaction process between the institutes and ME, an integrated online platform is suggested.

This framework can be applied in other parts of the world. In the globe, despite the fact that the ELIs vary from region to region and follow their own policies, they share some common elements: the language learners wish to experience the international English exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, etc. The teaching process in a wide range of ELIs over the world is based on the common educational curriculum. Also, the benchmarking process from the international best practices is so prevalent.

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And the English language as a field of study is practiced in almost all countries. In the one hand based on the common elements in ELIs all over the world, each proposed evaluation framework can be applied in every institute with a little change. On the other hand, there is no International specific standard for performance measurement of ELIs in the world. Hence, our proposed framework can be as a pattern to be employed in performance evaluation of the institutes. Parts of the output of Phase 2 such as the road map, the chart, the systematic teacher recruitment, the teaching method, etc. have already been executed in the ELIs of Tasnim¹ and Sanjesh² for the last two semesters (six months).

Researching and designing an international standard and corresponding indices for the evaluation of ELIs all over the world would be interesting for future work. Studying on the construction of an online platform for information transaction between language institutes to share ideas, experiences, achievements, etc. could be considered as the future work. Studying and designing a new standard of Iran's ME for inspection process and the inspectors professional behavioral pattern is suggested for the future work. Also, our last suggestion for the future work would research on the designing a novel monitoring process of the ELIs based on Iran's diverse local cultural features and characteristics.

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مدل، ابزار و روش:

آیا در روند ارزیابی آموزشگاه‌های زبان انگلیسی نیازی به تجدید نظر نیست؟

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چکیده

جهت ایجاد منبع مؤثر قضاوت و تصمیم‌گیری متواتر، ارزیابی برنامه هر مؤسسه آموزشی فرایندی ضروری است و یقیناً آموزشگاه‌های زبان در این زمینه مستثنی نیستند. در تلاش برای ارائه راه حل مشکل اساسی یعنی عدم وجود برنامه ارزیابی استاندارد برای مؤسسات زبان انگلیسی، در این پژوهش از روش جدیدی در زمینه «آموزشگاه‌های زبان انگلیس (ELIS)» ایران استفاده شد. در ایران، ارزیابی مراکز غیر دولتی از جمله آموزشگاه‌های زبان انگلیسی، توسط وزارت آموزش و پرورش (آپ) با استفاده از چارچوب ارزیابی عملکرد انجام می‌شود که این وزارتخانه اطلاعات مورد نیاز را عمدتاً از طریق یک فرم نظرسنجی (به اصطلاح معروف به «فرم ۳۲۲») جمع‌آوری می‌کند. ما فرم نظرسنجی ۳۲۲ را برای ایجاد پرسشنامه‌ای خاص به کار گرفتیم. ۹۰ نفر از مدیران مؤسسات زبان در مازندران از طریق ابزار پژوهشی متقن و معتبر مورد نظرسنجی قرار گرفتند. نتایج استخراج شده از پرسشنامه به دسته‌های «اعتبارسنجی»، «بهبود»، «طراحی مجدد» و «نظر محققان» طبقه‌بندی شدند. نتایج نشان داد که شکل اولیه، که سال‌هاست در کشور استفاده می‌شود، باید دوباره طراحی شود. برای برآورد داده‌ها و نتایجی که در این گام به دست آوردیم، ۱۵ داوطلب از مؤسسات شرکت‌کننده - از طریق اسکایپ و مصاحبه مستقیم - برای بیان ایده‌های خود دعوت به مصاحبه شدند. براساس نتایج حاصله از این پژوهش نه تنها پلت‌فرم آنلاین و فرآیند ارزیابی و نظارت استاندارد برای آموزشگاه‌های زبان در ایران را ضروری می‌دانیم بلکه استاندارد ارزیابی عملکرد یکپارچه بین‌المللی برای تمامی مراکز آموزش زبان انگلیسی دنیا را پیشنهاد می‌کنیم.

واژه‌های کلیدی: آموزشگاه زبان انگلیسی، ارزیابی برنامه، استاندارد بین‌المللی، ایران.

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