



Evaluating the Pre-Service EFL Teacher Education Programmes (The Case of Aden University, Yemen)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to evaluate the pre-service EFL teacher education programmes in the Faculty of Education at Aden University, Yemen. The data were gathered by using a questionnaire consisted of 24 items, distributing among three components, academic, including (7) items, professional, including (8) items and general, including (9) items. The sample of the study consists of (32) teacher-educators and (124) fourth year student-teachers who have had experience with those programmes. The findings of this study revealed that there was weak at the level of performance of the general component particular, and at the level of performance of the two components, academic and professional were weak in some aspects.

Keywords: English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) Programme, teacher-educators, Student-teachers.

1. Introduction

It is clear that the English has become the first international language used all over the world. It has become more dominant language in all aspects of human life as it is the primary language that has been widely used in international business, science, medicine, politics, economics, technology, telecommunication, tourism, aviation, education, arts and sports (Kitao, 1996; Crystal, 1997; Al-Issa, 2006, Pannak and Chiramance, 2011). Moreover, increasing number of people using it as an international language, 329 million people who speak English as the first language such as in USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, 422 million people use it as a second language in countries such as Singapore, Philippine, India and Malaysia (Crystal, 2003), and another 100 million people use it as a foreign language in some countries such as Thailand, China and Japan (Ibid), so it has become larger in number than those who speak it as their mother tongue (Salli-Copur, 2008). This importance of English has encouraged the world countries to teach it in schools and universities. Moreover, many reputed universities in the world use English as a medium of instruction in all majors even in non-English speaking countries (Muthanna, 2011). Therefore,

English language teaching (ELT) has spread all around the world and become an educational field that is worthwhile exploring within the general education system; and preparing quality English language teachers has become a matter of great consequence, as “pre-service English teacher education determines the quality of future in-service English teachers,” (Tercanlioqlu, 2008). The foundation of the English language teacher education programmes aims to develop English language teacher competencies in student-teachers before they start the service. In addition to being either pre-service or in-service, have developed through language and education related research to provide language teachers with professional training and qualifications (Richards, 2008).

Accordingly, English in the Arab world is the first foreign language that is taught as a course in schools, and as a medium of instruction in some universities. Therefore, English teacher preparation programmes have been founded and developed in the Arab countries to teach English to the Arab learners.

Correspondingly, Yemen as one of a developing Arab countries is in need of keeping up with these developed countries. Therefore, post-unification of Yemen in 1990, the Yemeni government represented by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Studies and Scientific Research united the educational system and curriculums in basic, secondary and tertiary education and decided to teach English as a foreign language from grade seven in the primary education to grade twelve in secondary education. In addition to being the medium of instruction in some of faculties such as the medicine and engineering, it is also taught as a general English subject up to three semesters in all the departments of the Faculties of Education such as Biology, Chemistry, physics, Mathematics, Geography, History, Islamic Studies, computer, social/psychology and Arabic Language Department. Moreover, it is also taught as a general English subject up to three semesters in Faculties of Law, Commerce, Administration, Agriculture, Arts, and Arabic language. English is also taught as a general English subject up to four semesters in the French language department. Given the growing needs of English language teaching in native and non-native countries, it is very important for pre-service teacher education programmes to have a structured evaluation system so that necessary changes can be made about the programme, (Cosken, 2010). Thus, the findings of this study may help the department members of English in the faculties of education at Aden University to maintain, improve, redesign, modify or combine some of the courses. Besides, the results of this study may work as a source of feedback for all the Departments of Foreign Language Education and newly opened FLE departments in state and private tertiary institutions in Yemen to improve, redesign and restructure their programmes for implementation.

1.1 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of the pre-service English Foreign Language Teacher Education Programmes (EFLTEP) as perceived by both the teacher-educators and their student-teachers?
2. What are the weaknesses of the pre-service English Foreign Language Teacher Education Programmes (EFLTEP) as perceived by both the teacher-educators and their student-teachers?

2. Methodology

The current study is a quantitative study to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of pre-service English Foreign Language teacher education programmes in four randomly-selected colleges of education at Aden University (Aden, Zingibar, Saber and Shabwah), Yemen. The sample consisted of (148) student-teachers from the total number of the fourth year student teachers which was (295), and that equals 50% of the whole student-teachers, and (36) teacher-educators from the total number of the university instructors which was (71) teacher-educators, and that equals to 50% of the whole teacher-educators. The reason for conducting this research on the fourth year student-teachers was that they employed microteaching applications many times in the courses in their undergraduate studies in Yemen.

2.1 Data collection

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the researcher used a questionnaire adopted from some previous studies, literature review about English teacher education preparation programmes, student-teachers and teacher-educators of English Departments of the faculty of education at Aden University. Originally, the questionnaire consisted of 24 items, distributed among three components, Academic component included seven items, eight items in Professional component, and nine items in the General component for both the four-year student-teachers and teacher-educators attending the English foreign language teacher preparation programmes in Aden, Zingibar, Saber and Shabwah colleges of education at Aden University. The questionnaire was designed based on a five point Likert scale which measured respondents' interest according to their level of agreement or disagreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The researcher calculated percentages of agreement/disagreement for all student-teacher's questionnaire items and teacher-educators and merged the data into three categories for clearer presentation, for example combining strongly agree/agree and disagree/strongly disagree. Validity of the questionnaire was introduced to a jury consisted of (9) professors of curriculum and methods of teaching English to decide which of items were the most appropriate and belong to which component to evaluate aspects of the pre-service EFL teacher education programmes in the faculty of education at Aden University. The professors thought that all items in the questionnaire were suitable and appropriate. In addition to assessing the level of the reliability by using the Split half reliability for student-teachers was (0.914) and for the teacher-educators was (0.937) and this shows that the questionnaire is highly consistent to reassure the researcher. According to the results, the questionnaire is highly reliable to be applied on the same sample of the study.

At the end of the second semester, 2012 academic year, the questionnaires were distributed to the fourth-year student-teachers and teacher-educators in departments of English of the colleges of education of Aden, Zingibar, Saber and Shabwah in the second semester of academic year 201-2012 during the period (the 2nd of May 2012-14th of May 2012). The researcher made phone calls to four chairmen of English departments and two teacher-educators in four colleges of education at Aden University to inform them and explain what the purpose of the study was. The researcher mailed the questionnaires to them with a covering letter to explain the purpose of the study, instead of travelling due to the distance. As the result, questionnaires mailed to four colleges of education at Aden University, Yemen.

Then, questionnaires administered to the subjects with the help of two of the teacher-educators who one of them is lecture in the English Department in Zingbar College of Education and the second one in the English Department in Shabwah College of Education. The former and the chairmen of English departments in Aden, Zingbar, and Saber colleges of education distributed the questionnaires to (141) student-teachers and (31) teacher-educators, and the later and chairman of English department in Shabwah College of Education distributed the questionnaires to (7) student teachers and (5) teacher-educators attending the English Department in Shabwah College of Education because it is far away from the three colleges mentioned above. Then the questionnaire distributed to student-teachers to complete it at home. 124 out of 148 questionnaires returned, namely 55 out of 62 from Aden college of education. 18 out of 23 from Zingbar college of education. 44 out of 56 from Saber college of education. 7 out of 7 from Shabwah Ccollege of Education. At the same time the teacher-educators' questionnaire distributed to complete it at home and 32 out of 36 questionnaires returned.

3. Findings and Discussion

1-OPINION OF STUDENT TEACHERS AND TEACHER-EDUCATORS ON ACADEMIC COMPONENT Table 1

Sl. No.	Item	Student Teachers			Teacher-educators			Total of Strongly agree /agree	Total of Undecided	Total of disagree /Strongly disagree
		Strongly agree	Undecided	disagree /Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Undecided	Disagree/ Strongly disagree			
3	The EFLTE Programme met my needs to prepare them for classroom teaching	100(86.6%)	4(3.2%)	20(16.1%)	25(78.1%)	1(3.1%)	26(43.9%)	125(80.1%)	5(3.2%)	26(16.7%)
5	The EFLTE Programme taught me how to use various learning strategies (i.e., self-evaluation, imagery, etc.)	47(37.9%)	16(12.9%)	61(59.2%)	17(53.1%)	4(12.5%)	11(34.4%)	64(41.03%)	20(12.82%)	72(46.15%)
9	The EFLTE Programme boosted the students' confidence of teaching English in the classroom	75(60.48%)	7(5.65%)	42(33.87%)	18(56.24%)	3(9.38%)	11(34.38%)	93(59.62%)	10(6.41%)	53(33.97%)
10	The EFLTE Programme equipped me with adequate training for teaching skills	17(13.7%)	34(27.4%)	73(58.9%)	15(59.42%)	14(43.8%)	13(40.68%)	32(20.51%)	38(4.36%)	86(55.13%)
12	The EFLTE Programme balances teacher-centered and student-centered learning on its course	34(27.4%)	41(33.1%)	49(39.5%)	16(50.05%)	4(12.5%)	12(37.55%)	50(32.05%)	45(8.85%)	61(9.10%)
19	The EFLTE Programme helped me develop awareness of my	61(49.5%)	19(15.3%)	44(35.5%)	23(71.92%)	3(9.385%)	6(18.72%)	84(53.85%)	22(4.10%)	50(32.05%)

	teaching competence	.2%)))))
20	The EFLTE Programme helped me develop the actual teaching skills I'll need later	57(45.8%)	17(13.7%)	50(40.4%)	19(59.38)	4(12.5%)	9(28.12%)	59(37.82%)	21(13.46%)	76(48.72%)

The table 1 shows the items 3, 9, and 19 got the highest levels of the student-teachers and teacher-educators agreement: 80.12% of the sample agreed with 3 “The EFLTE Programme met my needs to prepare them for classroom teaching”. Out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 125 (80.12%) has responded with strongly agree /agree.

Finally, it can be said that the statement “The EFLTE Programme met my needs to prepare them for classroom teaching” was agreed by the large number of respondents, and 59.95% with item 9 “The EFLTE Programme boosted the students’ confidence of teaching English in the classroom)”, and 53% with item19”The EFLTE Programme helped me develop awareness of my teaching competence”. Items 20,5, 12 and 10 got the lowest levels of the sample agreement: only 37.82% of sample agreed with item20: “The EFLTE Programme helped me develop the actual teaching skills I’ll need later”, 41.03% with5: “The EFLTE Programme taught me how to use various learnig strategies (i.e., self- evaluation, imagery, etc.)”, 32.05% of the sample agreed with 12“The EFLTE Programme balances teacher-centered and student-centered learning on its course”, and 20.5% with 10: “with item 10“The EFLTE Programme equipped me with adequate training for teaching skills”.

Finally, it can be said that the item 12 “The EFLTE Programme balances teacher-centered and student-centered learning on its course” was disagreed by the large number of respondents.

2-OPINION OF STUDENT TEACHERS AND TEACHER-EDUCATORS ON PROFESSIONAL COMPONENT Table2

Sl. No.	Item	Student Teachers			Teacher-educators			Total of Strongly agree /agree	Total of Undecided	Total of disagree /Strongly disagree
		Strongly agree /agree	Undecided	disagree /Strongly disagree	Strongly agree /agree	Undecided	Disagree / Strongly disagree			
1	The EFLTE Programme has clearly stated aims	95(76.61%)	4(3.23%)	25(20.16%)	26(81.3%)	2(6.3%)	4(12.3%)	121(77.56%)	6(3.85%)	29(18.59%)
2	The EFLTE Programme taught me how to write good performance objectives	98(79.1%)	13(10.5%)	13(10.5%)	25(78.12%)	3(9.38%)	4(12.39%)	123(78.84%)	16(10.26%)	17(10.9%)
6	The EFLTE Programme taught me about classroom management skills	73(58.8%)	13(10.5%)	38(30.7%)	19(59.38%)	5(15.62%)	8(25%)	92(58.97%)	18(11.53%)	46(82.14%)
15	The EFLTE Programme taught me how to select and use individual, small group and whole class teaching methods appropriate to the	62(49.19%)	13(10.48%)	50(40.32%)	22(68.75%)	3(9.38%)	7(21.78%)	83(53.21%)	16(10.25%)	57(36.54%)

	class									
18	The EFLTE Programme taught me how to use teaching learning facilitates effectively (i.e., language laboratory)	0	14(11.29%)	110(88.71%)	0	0	32(9.10%)	0	14(8.97%)	142(91.03%)
21	The EFLTE Programme gave me a valuable opportunity to apply my teaching skills	36(29%)	10(8.1%)	78(62.9%)	21(65.18%)	2(6.25%)	9(28.12%)	57(36.545)	12(7.69%)	87(55.77%)
22	The EFLTE Programme helped me learn to use information technology tools (i.e., audiovisuals, electronic devices and computer)	4(3.2%)	26(21%)	94(75.8%)	0	4(12.5%)	28(87.5%)	4(25.65)	30(19.23%)	122(78.21%)
23	The EFLTE Programme gave me a practical opportunity to teach a lesson	62(50%)	15(12.1%)	47(37.9%)	24(68.74%)	1(3.12%)	7(19.88%)	86(55.13%)	16(10.25%)	54(36.62%)

The Table2 shows items 1, 2, 6, 23 and 15 got the highest levels of the sample agreement: 77.59% with the item 1 **“The EFLTE Programme has clearly stated aims”**

Out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 121 (77.56%) has responded with strongly agree /agree, and followed by response disagree /strongly disagree 29 (18.59%), undecided 6 (3.85%).

Finally, it can be said that the statement **“The EFLTE Programme has clearly stated aims”** was agreed by the large number of respondents.

While the item2: **“The EFLTE Programme taught me how to write good performance objectives”** got 123 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 123 (78.85%) has responded with strongly agree / agree, and followed by response disagree / strongly disagree 17 (10.9%), undecided16 (10.26%).

Finally, it can be said that the statement **“The EFLTE Programme taught me how to write good performance objectives”** was agreed by the large number of respondents.

And items 6: **“The EFLTE Programme taught me about classroom management skills”**, got 92 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 92(58.97%) has responded with strongly agree / agree, and followed by response disagree/ strongly disagree 46 (82.14%), undecided18 (11.53%).

Finally, it can be said that the statement **“The EFLTE Programme taught me about classroom management skills”** was agreed by the large number of respondents. statement23: **“The EFLTE Programme gave me a practical opportunity to teach a lesson”** got 86 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 86 (55.13%) has responded with strongly agree/agree.

Finally, it can be said that the statement **“The EFLTE Programme gave me a practical opportunity to teach a lesson”** was agreed by the large number of respondents.

The item 15 **“The EFLTE Programme taught me how to select and use individual, small group and whole class teaching methods appropriate to the class”** got 83out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 83 (53.21%) has responded with strongly agree/agree.

Finally, it can be said that the statement “**The EFLTE Programme taught me how to select and use individual, small group and whole class teaching methods appropriate to the class**” was agreed by the large number of respondents.

items 18, 22 and 21 got the lowest level of the sample agreement: the item 18: “**The EFLTE Programme taught me how to use teaching learning facilitates effectively (i.e., language laboratory)**” got (0) out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 142 (91.03%) has responded with disagree/strongly disagree, and followed by response undecided 14 (8.97%), agree/strongly agree 0.

Finally, it can be said that the statement “**The EFLTE Programme taught me how to use teaching learning facilitates effectively (i.e., language laboratory)**” was strongly disagreed by the large number of respondents.

While the item 21: “**The EFLTE Programme gave me a valuable opportunity to apply his teaching skills**” got 87 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 87 (55.77%) has responded with strongly disagree / disagree, and followed by response strongly agree/agree 57 (36.54%), undecided 12 (7.69%), and the item 22: “**The EFLTE Programme helped me learn to use information technology tools (i.e., audiovisuals, electronic devices and computer)**” got 122 out of the total 156 respondents’ a majority number 122 (78.21%) has responded with disagree /strongly disagree. Finally, it can be said that the item “**The EFLTE Programme helped me learn to use information technology tools (i.e., audiovisuals, electronic devices and computer)**” was disagreed by the large number of respondents.

3-OPINION OF STUDENT TEACHERS AND TEACHER-EDUCATORS ON GENERAL COMPONENT

Table3

Sl. No.	Item	Student Teachers			Teacher-educators			Total of Strongly agree /agree	Total of Undecided	Total of disagree /Strongly disagree
		Strongly agree /agree	Undecided	disagree /Strongly disagree	Strongly agree /agree	Undecided	Disagree/ Strongly disagree			
4	The EFLTE Programme provided me with adequate information about English secondary school education	98(79%)	0	26(20.9%)	24(75%)	0	8(25%)	122(78.21%)	0	34(21.79%)
7	The EFLTE Programme provided me with learning references for each course	60(48.14%)	17(13.7%)	47(37.9%)	18(56.13%)	4(12.5%)	10(31.2%)	78(0.5%)	21(13.46%)	57(36.54%)
8	The EFLTE Programme has a good linkage between theoretical background and application in English language teaching	43(34.7%)	17(13.7%)	64(51.6%)	21(65.6%)	5(15.6%)	6(18.75%)	64(41.03%)	22(14.10%)	70(44.87%)
11	The EFLTE Programme has	45(36)	17(13)	62(50)	19(59)	2(6.2)	11(3)	64(41)	19(1)	53(33)

	a good correlation between English teaching skills and classroom management skills	.2%)	.7%)	%)	4%)	%)	4.4%)	03%)	2.18%)	.97%)
13	The EFLTE Programme taught me to be flexible in using different teaching practices for different situations	56(45.2%)	11(8.8%)	57(46%)	19(59.4%)	8(25%)	5(15.6%)	75(48.08)	19(12.18%)	62(39.74%)
14	The EFLTE Programme has equipped me with adequate skills to be aware of the needs of the local context (Yemen)	19(15.3%)	35(28.2%)	70(56.5%)	35(50.1%)	14(43.8%)	10(31.2%)	35(22.44%)	41(25.5)	80(51.28%)
16	The EFLTE Programme taught me how to prepare good lesson plans	103(83%)	5(4%)	16(12.9%)	26(71.25)	0	6(18.8%)	129(82.69%)	5(3.20%)	22(14.105)
17	The EFLTE Programme provided me with learning references for each course	54(43.55%)	32(25.815)	38(30.64%)	16(50%)	6(18.8%)	10(31.2%)	70(44.87%)	38(24.36%)	48(30.775)
24	The EFLTE Programme met the needs/incorporate new learning aspects of the modern developments for EFLTE programmes in the world	54(43.55%)	32(25.81%)	38(30.64%)	0	9(28.12%)	23(22.8%)	54(34.62%)	41(26.28%)	61(39.10%)

The Table 3 shows the items 14, 7 16 and 13 got the highest levels of sample agreement: the item16:“The EFLTE Programme taught me how to prepare good lesson plans” got 129(82.69%) out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 129 (82.69%) has responded with strongly agree / agree and the item 4: “The EFLTE Programme provided me with adequate information about English secondary school education” got 122 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 122 (78.21%) has responded with strongly agree / agree

Finally, it can be said that the statement “The EFLTE Programme provided me with adequate information about English secondary school education” was agreed by the large number of respondents.

While the item 7: “The EFLTE Programme provided me with learning references for each course “got 78 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 78 (0.5%) has responded with strongly agree / agree. Finally, it can be said that the statement “The EFLTE Programme provided me with learning references for each course” was agreed by the large number of respondents. But the item13: “The EFLTE Programme taught me to be flexible in using different teaching practices for different situations” got 75 out of the total 156 respondents, a majority number 75 (48.08%) has responded with strongly agree / agree, and followed by response disagree / strongly disagree 62 (39.74%), undecided 19 (12.18%).

Finally, it can be said that the statement “The EFLTE Programme taught me to be flexible in using different teaching practices for different situations” was agreed by the large number of respondents.

The items 8, 11, and 24 got the lowest level of the sample agreement:(41.03%) with 8 and 11: “The EFLTE Programme has a good linkage between theoretical background and application in English language teaching” and “The EFLTE Programme has a good correlation between English teaching skills and classroom management skills” While the item 24: “The EFLTE Programme met the needs/incorporate new learning aspects of the modern developments for EFLTE programmes in the world” got 61 out of the total 156 respondents, a

majority number 61 (39.10%) has responded with strongly agree / agree, and followed by response disagree / strongly disagree 54 (34.62%), undecided 41 (25.28%).

Finally, it can be said that the statement “The EFLTE Programme met the needs/incorporate new learning aspects of the modern developments for EFLTE programmes in the world” was strongly disagree / disagreed by the large number of respondents.

In general, the findings showed many major weaknesses of the English Foreign Language teacher education programmes in the faculty of education at Aden University in some of the aspects of the components.

4. Conclusion

Although the current study was conducted as a quantitative study, the findings are worthy of note for all pre-service English language teacher education programmes. First of all, the results pointed out that the importance of foreign language competencies in order to be effective English language teachers.

The results of this study were based on the perception of the student-teachers and their teacher-educators attending EFLE departments in the faculties of education in Aden University, and for a data collection method was a questionnaire.

The results showed the importance of both theoretical and practical components of the English foreign language teacher education programmes. Since the theoretical component develops the student teachers’ professional knowledge, and awareness, and the practical component prepares them for actual teaching. The findings of this study led to following recommendations for the improvement of the English Foreign Language Teacher Education Programmes in the faculty of education at Aden University.

Recommendations

1. Given the unavailability of language lab, audiovisual aids, electronic devices for EFL teacher education programmes in the faculty of education at Aden University, there is an urgent need to make them available to improve the quality of training for the student-teachers.
2. As it is noticed that four skills language courses relevant to the academic component are taught for two semesters (one year) Speaking, Listening, and Writing and three semesters for Reading only. Therefore, EFL teacher education programmes should be greatly focused in the first two years on teaching four skills language courses relevant to the Academic component.
3. The theory and the professional component of the English foreign language teacher education programmes in the faculty of education at Aden University should be balanced to be putting more emphasis on the practice rather than the theory. A teacher education programmes should only be neither (received knowledge) theoretical nor practical (experiential knowledge) and the components of a teacher education programme reflect on the harmony of both knowledge and application (Ur, 1992).

4. The preparation to teach in more than one level (stage), such as the elementary and secondary levels is a necessity because most of the student-teachers do not know where they will be teaching.
5. The professional courses should provide the student teachers more chances of experience through watching the video recordings of real classroom situations/ environments and examining case studies.
6. The professional component of the programmes should also be revisited for three reasons according the study results.
7. Teacher-educators should keep the student teachers interested by going beyond the old chalk-and-talk method through presenting more communicative, challenging, suited the student teachers' needs activities, and by using most modern teaching techniques.
8. The schools which the EFL student-teachers visit for School Experience and Practice Teaching should be carefully chosen and the cooperating teachers in those schools should be informed about the aims and requirements of these courses. In order to teacher candidates see different school environments, they can be taken to different schools for each of these practicum courses, and/or they can visit different classes of different cooperating teachers.
9. Faculty requirements courses under the professional component can be strengthened through providing more input written about or reflecting on the classrooms in the local context. It is also recommended that the existing assessment methods used in the courses under this component should be reviewed, and should also be taught in English language.
10. Alternative testing types, such as portfolios can be used rather than the traditional opened tests. Alternative assessment includes test types like self- and peer-assessment, conferencing, diaries, portfolios, learning logs and teacher checklists and observations.
11. As it also is recommended that the English language departments in the faculty of education at Aden University should provide more chances for its student-teachers to attend conferences, seminars, workshops, and should arrange meetings each year to bring undergraduate student teachers, which may help the student-teachers, become more familiar with their future teaching environments and to develop a positive attitude towards the profession. Therefore, the content and instruction of the programmes' components and the courses under these components can still be revised in the light of the research findings.

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