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## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Qualities of the professional English language teacher educator: Implications for achieving quality and accountability

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**Abstract:** There is a growing body of literature about the qualities of professional teacher educators (TEs) and their impact on preparing professional teachers. However, English Language Teaching (ELT) research has fallen behind in this regard, despite the fact that different programs worldwide suffer from different limitations, due to certain aspects related to TEs' qualities. This qualitative study investigates the qualities of the professional ELT TE and what implications such qualities have for achieving accountable and quality Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE). A form comprising a set of closed and open ended questions was distributed to 63 participants representing 23 countries. Findings and discussion have revealed that the professional ELT TEs are empowering educators and holders of strong disciplinary knowledge who pursue achieving social justice ELT education. The findings can be considered a milestone and have important implications for preparing professional English language teachers and achieving quality and accountability in SLTE.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Al-Issa, PhD, has presented and published widely about teaching English in Oman. He is a recipient of several local and international teaching and research awards and recognitions. Al-Issa is currently the most widely cited Omani TESOL researcher. His research interests include, but are not limited to, foreign/s language education policy and planning and teacher training and education.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

English language teacher educators (TEs) have a significant role to play in affecting the quality and accountability of rapidly spreading and evolving English language education teachers at schools provide to millions of children around the world. Based upon data collected from 63 ELT professionals representing 23 nationalities, this study discusses the qualities teaching TEs should have for preparing good and effective English language teachers and the implications such qualities have for achieving quality and accountable ELT education at schools. It was found that TEs are required to have strong knowledge about the English language, teaching methods, and approaches and ways of developing professionally. Clearly these qualities can reflect positively on prospective teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices as social justice ELT education practitioners, who can influence change in the culturally, economically, and politically oriented globalization era. Understanding such qualities can help improve teacher education and training worldwide and assist in designing academic programs that serve graduating better prepared teachers.

**Subjects: Social Sciences; Education; Humanities; Language & Literature**

**Keywords: professional; qualities; social justice education; English language teaching; teacher educators; student teachers**

### **1. English and English language teaching today**

English has become a global lingua franca or a hyper-central language in an ever shrinking world witnessing cultural fusion (Al-Issa, 2016). It has taken on new roles locally and globally (Al-Issa, 2016). People around the world learn it for different purposes (Al-Issa, 2016). It is taught and learnt worldwide by millions of teachers and students, respectively (Al-Issa, 2016). According to Al-Issa (2017), students today bring all kinds of backgrounds, needs, interests, abilities, and expectations to the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. Along with this evolution came a shift in paradigms and beliefs gathering momentum about the multiple theories, approaches, methods, and methodologies that govern an expanding field like ELT (Al-Issa, 2016).

Like English, ELT too, and through the incorporation of “informationalism” (Warschauer, 2000), else known as the “new global” or “post-industrial economic order”, has given rise to the challenging and demanding Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which through using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) specially in developing and newly industrialized countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, emphasizes functional interaction and assists students to develop critical literacy and critical inquiry to impose their voices on the world through using English as a discourse for integration and empowerment. This has important implications for the decisions practicing ELT in different parts of the world make. It further has important implications for the knowledge held and roles played by Teacher Educators (TEs), who in the age of globalization, and according to Warschauer, “spend much of their time analyzing symbol-based (numerical and textual) information” (p. 517) to help “societies compete in the international economy” (p. 517) where a mastery of “highly advanced communication skills in English” (p. 519), was achieved through adopting approaches like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in general and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) in particular to assist learners “to compete for the better jobs in society” (p. 519).

### **2. ELT TEs at present**

TEs have been striving throughout the world to encourage and facilitate their Student Teachers’ (STs) learning “implicitly” and “explicitly” (Boei et al., 2015) through designing and implementing courses and programs and attempting to commit to blending teaching and research in their classes that can help empower their STs and hence prepare them as professional practitioners and informed reform agents in a complex world governed by cultural, economic, political, and social competing agendas shaping educational policies and practices (Apple, 2011). In fact, “the TE stands at the centre of the process of building the profession” (Shagrir, 2010, p. 46) and the work of TEs “... greatly influences the quality of teachers” (Vloet & van Swet, 2010, p. 149). Professional teachers are required to continue learning to cope with the ever evolving, challenging, and demanding world of ELT.

Professionally prepared teachers are thus central to student success. According to Maley (1992), teachers are always expected and demanded to be committed professionals through “conscientious workmanship” and “application of skilful work to a high standard of performance” (p. 96). This is particularly the case as students today bring all kinds of backgrounds, needs, interests, abilities, and expectations to the ELT classroom (Al-Issa, 2017). Goodwin et al. (2014) established a relationship between students’ learning and the quality of their teachers and consider teachers as the most important factor in student achievement. Goodwin et al. (2014) stressed that “commonsense reasoning tells us that quality teacher education relies on quality TEs” (p. 284).

However, different aspects of the different ELT teacher education and training programs around the world have been reported as failing to support STs’ learning (Al-Darwish, 2006; Al-Issa, 2005, 2010; Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; Jones & Jones, 2013; Kömür, 2010; Kourieos, 2012; Muthanna, 2011;

Ochieng' Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011; Oder, 2014). Conclusions were reached by different authors (Al-Issa, & Al-Bulushi, 2010; Kourieos, 2012) regarding TEs' lack of engagement in academic professional development, which has negatively affected their pedagogical and interpersonal competence and reflected badly on preparing effective and competent teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to influence change.

Richards (2008) thus raises questions about the need for quality and accountability in Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) in the value-laden politically, economically, and culturally driven age of globalization, which has its direct and indirect effect on the practitioners' hidden curriculum and policies and practices. Richards views accountability as complex and looks at it from three different perspectives. First, the standards of SLTE programs, which involve the *what* and *how* knowledge the English teacher should have. Second, the impact of SLTE programs on STs' beliefs, understandings, knowledge, and practices. Third, the evaluation of SLTE programs with respect to the short and long-term impact they can have on the STs' professional development. The role of the professional TEs is obviously highly critical in all three aspects.

### 3. What makes a professional TE?

A review of the non-ELT literature revealed that the professional TEs are those who possess strong disciplinary knowledge, as in pedagogical content knowledge and academic reflective practice knowledge (Goodwin et al., 2014; Shagrir, 2010), and those who can empower their STs' affective/cognitive and academic aspects (Conklin, 2015). As far as the former is concerned, the quality and quantity of TEs' complex knowledge and the modes of delivery powerfully affect the theories and practices STs' adopt (Shagrir, 2010). The professional TE's pedagogical content knowledge thus entails aspects like supporting STs' learning through conscious and unconscious modeling of teaching and the role of teachers (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, & Shimoni, 2010; Goodwin et al., 2014; Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005; McKeon & Harrison, 2010; Shagrir, 2010).

The professional TE's pedagogical content knowledge further includes serving as "brokers" or "gatekeepers" who engage in actively designing and implementing instruction and transforming the array of possible curricula, resources, and instructional strategies in order to provide concrete learning activities for their STs (Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014). Swennen, Jones, and Volman (2010) and Tack and Vanderlinde (2014) argued that while modeling, as an "implicit" means of encouraging and facilitating learning (Boei et al., 2015), is good and important, it is insufficient. They argued for "explicit modelling" or "practical knowledge articulation" to show how innovations work in practice.

Moreover, professional TEs are required to pursue academic professional development (Ben-Peretz et al., 2010; Boei et al., 2015; Dengerink, Lunenberg, & Kools, 2015; Goodwin et al., 2014; Minott, 2010) through engaging in conducting research (Boei et al., 2015; Goodwin et al., 2014; Loughran, 2014; Lunenberg et al., 2014; Shagrir, 2010; Swennen et al., 2010; Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). Thus, academic professional development, where TEs strive to become the best professionals they can be, was divided into three subjects: "institutions, subject domains, and the academic individuals themselves" (Shteiman, Gidron, Eilon, & Katz, 2010, p. 341). It was viewed to include self-directed inquiry as in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, which allowed for "self-analysis of professional practice" of TEs (Dengerink et al., 2015, p. 80) and which primarily referred to addressing and empowering individual professional needs, "... updating and build up work-related knowledge" in a rapidly expanding information era (Minott, 2010, p. 326).

Furthermore, TEs are responsible for empowering their STs and equipping them with the necessary strategies to become "independent professionals" (Leung, 2009) and take responsibility for their professional development in their respective contexts. Conklin (2015) was critical of the limited preparation TEs received prior to becoming TEs. Conklin called for more explicit and systematic preparation of TEs due to the changing social and political contexts so as to allow TEs "to address

diversity and equity in their work preparing teachers” (p. 318). She articulated “a framework to guide coursework focused on the pedagogy of teacher education with a specific emphasis on critical, social-justice pedagogies” (p. 320). The framework took into consideration the learning needs of the STs “in the context of larger social and political forces” (p. 321), which shaped “who is engaged in teacher learning, what they are learning, and how they are learning” (p. 321) to inform and improve TEs’ practices, which suggested that student teaching “is a complex phenomenon that requires attention to many factors and influences” (p. 320).

Thus, Goodwin et al. noted the worldwide questioning of university-based TE programs and the fading public confidence in schools of education, despite the fact that entry to teacher education is linked to holding a degree in higher education, which facilitates achieving accreditation and quality control and measurement (Snoek, Swennen, & van der Klink, 2011). Goodwin et al. (2014) were critical of the fact that research has given scant attention to “... what TEs should know and be able to do” (p. 284), which makes TEs a “distinct professional group with its own policy measures” (Snoek et al., 2011, p. 661) and has direct bearing on their STs’ underperformance and shifts accountability to TEs as professional and knowledgeable practitioners.

#### 4. What makes a professional ELT TE?

Like the literature on non-ELT teacher education, but notably to a lesser degree, there has been some discussion in the SLTE literature about TEs as being “powerful socialization models” and “influential role models for their prospective teachers” (Al-Issa, 2005, p. 347). However, the literature on SLTE problematized ELT TEs’ knowledge and found it conscious, deep, comprehensive, and consisting of “micro” and “macro” categories (Moradkhani, Akbari, Ghafar Samar, & Kiany, 2013) with knowledge of the target language being rated highest specially by non-native English speaking stakeholders (Moradkhani et al., 2013). Other types of complex and strong disciplinary knowledge such as pedagogical content knowledge and professional development knowledge are acquired through two channels. First, conduct different types of research (Farmer & Nucamendi, 2004; Moradkhani et al., 2013) to raise one’s awareness about the latest findings in the field and “critically examine new ideas and their potential for application” (Moradkhani et al., 2013, p. 135). Second, collaborate with their colleagues (Moradkhani et al., 2013) to critically reflect on one’s own professional knowledge and STs’ learning and experiences through looking at the different artifacts available at their disposal in the different contexts in which they exist (Singh & Richards, 2006). This is bound to help them adjust their teaching and adopt the latest educational and pedagogical processes and practices like “co-operative learning”, “student-centred”, and “reflective inquiry” (Singh & Richards, 2006, p. 14), for example, which according to Farmer and Nucamendi, is a reflection of “ethical commitment” and has the potential to impact STs’ learning (Brookfield, 1995). This way, TEs bridge the gap between theory and practice (Moradkhani et al., 2013), establish new practices, and take new roles (Hawkins, 2004 cited in Singh & Richards, 2006) since training is evolving and is “... closely associated with political, economic, social, and cultural contexts” (Al-Issa, 2005, p. 347).

The ELT literature also discussed the role and impact of TEs as being empowering educators (Moradkhani et al., 2013; Singh & Richards, 2006). Through the sociopolitical and contextual knowledge they possess (Moradkhani et al.) professional TEs are in a position to critically examine the SLTE course room and the complex nature of teaching and learning to shape their STs’ knowledge. Such knowledge, is affected by multiple implicit and explicit factors and can have direct bearing on STs’ affective/cognitive and professional development and help them develop as progressive teachers, informed and dynamic thinkers, critical inquirers and professionals, theory generators and developers and new knowledge and meaning sharers and constructors, autonomous and critical reflective practitioners, and powerful agents of change. Singh and Richards outlined a wide host of suggestions such as collaborative and discovery learning, social active participation, and acquisition and sharing of new professional knowledge and discourse as their points of departure, which redefine the roles and responsibilities of ELT TEs as powerful and significant empowering educators.

Farmer and Nucamendi (2004) thus viewed these qualities as possessed by the professional ELT TE as leading to achieving “Total Quality Management” in ELT and “accountability” to “individual clients” and to the “society as a whole” (p. 7). This is particularly important at a challenging era witnessing a shift in beliefs about ELT (Hawkins, 2004 cited in Singh & Richards, 2006) and characterized as post or anti-method where “principled eclecticism” (Brown, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Mellow, 2002) has become a commonly discussed proposition across the many diverse international contexts and in a world described by Farmer and Nucamendi as “uncertain”.

## 5. Rationale

When it comes to the qualities of the professional ELT TE one can argue that it is generally an under-explored area. The current research conducted on this issue can be described as limited, fragmented, and underdeveloped and there is an urgent need to pursue further studies that can investigate the topic at more depth since there is a need to enrich the existing literature, provide insights into the topic, and expand our understanding about it. Thus, taken together, many of the qualities of the professional ELT TE described above are recognized indirectly, as the reviewed studies and position papers focus on TEs’ qualities and theoretical and practical knowledge. Furthermore, the present study attempts to lay the initial groundwork that will lead to future studies about the qualities of the professional ELT TE. Moreover, the discussion of the professional ELT TE should help us understand what implications the qualities have for preparing professional English language teachers and achieving accountable and quality SLTE.

## 6. Research questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the perceptions of ELT practitioners on the qualities of the professional ELT TE?
- (2) What implications do the qualities of the professional ELT TE have for preparing professional English language teachers?
- (3) What implications do the qualities of the professional ELT TE have for achieving quality and accountability in SLTE?

## 7. Method

### 7.1. Research participants

Sixty-three ELT practitioners, or knowledgeable professionals, from 23 countries participating in three different international ELT conferences held in different parts of the world—Europe, the Middle East and the Far East—were asked to complete a questionnaire about the qualities of the professional ELT TE they were trained by and the qualities of the professional ELT TE (see Table 1).

The study participants, who had variable experience in their areas, were school teachers, TEs, supervisors, and college faculty members, with the last being the majority. They also held different qualifications. While some were holders of a first degree, others were more qualified. Additionally, some of the participants were trained in one country, while others received their training in as many as five countries (see Table 2).

### 7.2. Data sources

This study employs a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis by means of asking the research participants a set of closed and open ended questions to elicit their answers about what makes a professional ELT TE. For the purpose of this study, professional ELT TEs are considered those professionals who teach or coach (student) teachers with an aim of supporting their professional development (Lunenberg et al., 2014).

**Table 1. Research participants' information**

No.	Countries of origin	Number of participants
1	Oman	14
2	Malaysia	5
3	UK	5
4	USA	5
5	Bangladesh	3
6	The Netherlands	3
7	Thailand	3
8	Turkey	3
9	Belgium	2
10	Canada	2
11	Egypt	2
12	Italy	2
13	Poland	2
14	Russia	2
15	South Africa	2
16	Australia	1
17	Cuba	1
18	Finland	1
19	India	1
20	Japan	1
21	Ireland	1
22	Sweden	1
23	Switzerland	1
	Total	63

The questions were largely inspired by Mullock's (2003) experience survey instrument used to investigate the perceptions of postgraduate TESOL students about what constitutes a "good teacher". The aforementioned discussion has shown the great similarities between English teachers and TES in the sense that both parties need to be reflective practitioners, researchers, competent practitioners, and models.

Question Six is closed and attempts to elicit answers about whether the participants have had an ELT TE that they would describe as professional. Questions Seven and Eight are open ended. While the first one is built on Question Five and asks the participants to rely on their past experience about what qualities made their ELT TE professional, the second question is geared more toward participants who have not had formal training in ELT, and hence did not have an educator. Such participants are required to rely on their views about the qualities of the professional ELT TE.

The reason underlying including Question Eight was due to the researcher's knowledge about certain teachers in certain contexts around the world, who do not come from ELT background, but who have practiced teaching for a long time, and hence get hired as teachers of English for their experience. This is the case in the six Gulf countries, for example. It is noteworthy that some participants who answered Question Seven also answered Question Seven and provided different information to what was provided in Question Seven.

**Table 2. Research participants' coding**

No.	Nationality	Countries trained in	Qualification	Current job
1	Russian	Russia	PhD	Language instructor
2	British	UK	MA	ESP instructor
3	Bangladeshi	Bangladesh and K.S.A	MA	Language instructor
4	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
5	Canadian	Japan, UK and USA	MA	ESP instructor
6	Dutch	The Netherlands	MA	CLIL instructor
7	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
8	British	Wales	MA	ESP instructor
9	Omani	Oman	MEd	Regional supervisor
10	Finnish	Finland and Canada	MA	CLIL instructor
11	British	England	MA	ESP instructor
12	Irish	Ireland	MA	Teacher trainer
13	Swedish	Sweden	MA	CLIL instructor
14	Malaysian	Australia	MA	CLIL instructor
15	Polish	Poland	MA	CLIL instructor
16	American	Germany	MA	ESP instructor
17	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
18	Thai	Thailand	MA	Language instructor
19	South African	South Africa	MA	CLIL instructor
20	Turkish	Turkey	MA	Language instructor
21	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
22	American	The Netherlands	MA	ESP instructor
23	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
24	American	UK	MA	ESP instructor
25	Omani	Oman	MEd	Language instructor
26	South African	South Africa	PhD	Professor of applied linguistics
27	American	USA	MA	ESP instructor
28	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
29	Australian	Australia	MA	ESP instructor
30	Malaysian	Malaysia	MA	Language instructor
31	Polish	Poland	MA	CLIL instructor
32	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
33	American	USA	MA	ESP instructor
34	Swiss	Switzerland, Germany and USA	MA	CLIL instructor
35	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher
36	Dutch	The Netherlands	MA	CLIL instructor
37	Egyptian	Egypt, Australia, Britain, Canada and USA	MA	College instructor
38	Italian	Italy	MA	CLIL instructor
39	American	USA	MA	ESP instructor
40	Omani	Oman	BEd	School teacher

An additional source of data leading to triangulation is the selective literature about the qualities of the ELT TE. Much has been written and published about the role of TEs in affecting their STs' theoretical and practical knowledge. This work will be synthesized and used here as a significant source of data leading to expanding our knowledge about the qualities of the professional ELT TE.

### **7.3. Data collection**

The data were collected at three international ELT conferences—the Far East, Europe, and the Middle East. A hard copy of the form that contains the questions (see Appendix B) and a cover letter (see Appendix A), which includes information about the nature and purpose of the research, were shown to the members of the three conference organizing committees, who all thanked the researcher for his initiative and gave their informed consent.

While the conference in the Far East was organized by a private organization, the other two conferences were held in Europe and the Middle East and were organized by universities. In the former case, the researcher needed to gain ethical clearance from the conference organizing committee, which was granted to him verbally after showing the members of the conference organizing committee a copy of the form and information letter. The same procedures applied to the conference held in Europe, where the researcher asked the conference organizing committee about his interest in conducting the study and showed them a copy of the necessary documents and received their verbal consent. As far as the conference in the Middle East was concerned, the researcher was familiar with the university departments and procedures, as he was one of its faculty members. He approached the Deanship of Research and requested an ethical clearance, which was granted to him in writing and which he then submitted to the conference organizing committee.

Hard copies of the form and the letter were then printed and distributed to 66 participants using a non-random haphazard sampling approach, taking into account certain practical criteria such as subjects' availability and accessibility, their geographical proximity, availability of subjects at the data collection time and the subjects' willingness to participate in the study. The participants were selected on face-to-face basis. They gave their informed consent to participate in the study. A special file was used to store the completed forms, which were chronologically numbered from 1 to 63. In order to avoid confusion, and since teacher education can mean different things to different people depending on their respective contexts, a definition of TE was provided in the information letter.

The participants had their name tags on, which indicated their affiliations too. It was important for the researcher to target participants representing different nationalities, backgrounds, and experiences to be able to draw on data from various contexts and multiple dimensions of the professional ELT TE. Sixty-one participants completed the form and returned it either at the same time or on the same day. Two participants scanned and e-mailed their forms to the researcher after the conference. Three participants took copies of the questionnaire but did not return them for unknown reasons.

A very small number of the participants did not undergo any formal ELT training, and hence did not have an educator they considered particularly excellent. However, they managed to answer Question Seven, which asked them to mention the qualities that make a professional ELT TE. While some participants listed individual words, others wrote short sentences and a third category wrote paragraphs of variable lengths and corroborated their answers with examples.

### **7.4. Data analysis**

Data analysis in this study follows a “realist/essentialist” approach/paradigm to thematic analysis. Additionally, it follows a “semantic/explicit” process of thematic identification to allow progression from description to interpretation in “an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13).

To answer the first research question, the researcher followed an inductive or bottom up way to identifying the study themes, where thematic analysis is data-driven and theory is grounded in the data. He first immersed himself in the data and read and re-read it for familiarization purposes and noted down initial ideas in the margins. Different highlighting colors were used to highlight recurring terms and statements that are descriptively linked by a common idea to manually generate initial codes. Using file cards, individual extracts were then copied from the texts and collated each code separately. The different codes were sorted out theoretically or analytically.

Two themes emerged from the data. Each of those themes was given a short and compelling name that conveyed an immediate essence of the theme. One of the two overarching themes, which ran across the data and described the essence of the professional ELT TEs, was empowering educator while the other one was strong disciplinary knowledge. In fact, both overarching themes captured the meaning of a professional ELT TE. Each theme included three sub-themes. After having identified and named the two overarching themes, the sub-themes were revisited and checked for their properties and names to make sure that they fit as parts of a whole.

In addition, the pertinent literature was used to answer the second and third research questions. Relevant knowledge was found in the different texts about ELT and general education regarding the implications of the qualities of the professional ELT TE for preparing professional English teachers and achieving accountability and quality in SLTE.

The participants quoted in Section 8 were coded and will be referred to by their numbers in Table 2. Information about their nationalities, the countries in which they trained, and their current jobs were provided in order to show the variation in perceptions about what makes a professional ELT TE across as many parts of the world as possible and highlight the universality of the phenomenon.

### **7.5. Methodological rigor**

To ensure methodological rigor and credibility and trustworthiness of results, and in addition to the different forms of triangulation pursued in this study, the thick descriptions of the phenomenon under scrutiny and examination of previous research findings, I kept an open mind and used his almost 15 year experience as a TE, observations, reading, research, and scholarship to analyze the participants' statements. I also sought peer scrutiny to help bring fresh perspective. I asked two colleagues from the ELT teacher education field and outside it to act as independent reviewers and check the data coding and read the entire article after completing the first draft for corroborative reliability purposes, which helped improve the quality of the analysis and article as a whole.

## **8. Findings**

### **8.1. Empowering educator**

#### **8.1.1. Empowering STs' affection/cognition**

Different professional TEs were found to be those who would empower the diverse affective/cognitive aspects of their STs through attending to their diverse needs as an important dimension of social justice ELT education leading to successful implicit teaching modeling. They achieved this through being *aware of and sensitive to the student teachers' needs* (Participants No. 14 and 36), catering for their STs' *various learning styles* (Participant No. 12), and *not imposing a particular dialect of English*, but rather *tapping into the multi-lingual resources available in the classroom and assisting students in negotiating the varieties of English in the classroom* (Participant No. 26).

Additionally, other professional TEs effectively implemented a different aspect of social justice ELT education, modeled implicit teaching differently, and addressed a different dimension of qualities and cultural diversity in relation to who is engaged in learning, what they are learning, and how they are learning. They achieved this by playing the role of a *motivator* (Participants No. 3, and 30), having *good rapport with the student teachers* (Participant No. 14), adopting *flexibility* (Participants No. 1, 2,

and 38), being *humorous* (Participant No. 20), *funny* (Participant No. 18), *an entertaining lecturer* (Participant No. 29), *friendly* (Participants No. 2, 18 and 35), *patient* (Participants No. 1, 2, 4, 8, 19, 22 and 39), *encouraging* (Participants No. 6, 8, 23, and 30), *very helpful* (Participant No. 23), *approachable* (Participant No. 7), *dedicated and determined to help the trainees* (Participant No. 20), *a good listener* (Participant No. 2), *a guide, supportive, considerate* (Participant No. 40), and *caring* (Participants No. 23 and 33).

Professional TEs were also viewed as those who were explicitly and systematically prepared to conduct their job leading to unconscious modeling of teaching and positively impacting their STs' beliefs about social justice ELT education. Important qualities that reflected this concept were being *passionate about doing the job* (Participant No. 38), *always prepared* (Participant No. 3) *well-organized* (Participants No. 19 and 40), *open-minded* (Participants No. 20, 32 and 39), *energetic* (Participants No. 16 and 37), *inspiring* (Participant No. 11), and *confident* (Participants No. 32 and 35).

#### 8.1.2. Empowering STs' academic knowledge

Some of the professional ELT TEs successfully implemented social justice ELT education and addressed diversity and impartiality in their classrooms by adopting principled eclecticism. This emerged in some of the statements about having *the willingness to push the boundaries* and being *innovative* (Participant No. 29), *having the ability to engage student teachers in activities and/or the ability to prepare activities that are engaging* (Participant No. 13), *encourage independent learning through the use of iPad and computer websites* (Participant No. 14), *challenge the trainees to think outside the box* (Participant No. 15).

Other professional ELT TEs promoted cooperative and collaborative learning to facilitate knowledge sharing and active social participation. This occurred best through *encouraging trainee teachers to exchange experiences with each other* (Participant No. 17), *exposing student teachers to different teaching scenarios through collaborative training* (Participant No. 16), *stimulating discussions and problem-solving tasks through using thinking, pair work, knowledge sharing, mind mapping, etc.* (Participant No. 15), and *facilitating communicative classes and engaging trainee teachers in relevant materials and practice about language issues* (Participant No. 38), and *developing Communities of Learning* in order to help promote STs' *learning in both the ELT program and with their students* (Participant No. 5).

#### 8.1.3. Empowering STs' professional development

Professional ELT TEs were found to be those who could adopt a third perspective of social justice pedagogy to facilitate their STs' independent professional development through implementing discovery learning to help them grow as informed change agents, who can construct and share meaning and stimulate their STs' critical thinking and inquiry to generate knowledge relevant to their respective contexts. This was best found in TEs as being *knowledgeable about a variety of methodologies and theories, but does not prescribe a single one* (Participant No. 24), *helping the ST to be independent and to develop and teach what they preach* (Participant No. 2), *allowing flexibility and encouraging creativity and allowing opportunity to trainees to try out some of their ideas in their teaching and let students' personalities and styles as teachers to show, rather than impose his own thinking* (Participant No. 25), *helping student teachers see the link between the theories they take in their classes and the real classroom* (Participant No. 27), *involving trainees in discovering their strengths and weaknesses in each situation and how they can approach heterogeneous and multicultural groups of students* (Participant No. 10), and *untapping the creativity of the student teachers by encouraging them to explore a range of methodologies appropriate to their contexts* (Participant No. 26).

## 8.2. Strong disciplinary knowledge

### 8.2.1. English language knowledge

In the demanding and challenging informationalism era and CLT-based revolution, *proficiency in the English language* (Participant No. 32), *having good knowledge of the foreign language s/he teaches and being a model of the foreign language user* (Participant No. 31), *having good communicative skills and good knowledge of the English language* (Participant No. 15), and *being linguistically proficient and linguistically excellent, especially in Standard English pronunciation* (Participant No. 30), was emphasized and received considerable attention from various participants as an important quality that helped implicit modeling of teaching and gave confidence to STs about their respective TEs' target language abilities.

### 8.2.2. Pedagogical content knowledge

The professional ELT TE was found to have the ability to actively design and implement instruction and transform the array of possible curricula, resources, and instructional strategies in order to provide concrete learning activities for his/her STs. This appeared evident in the TE's *having rich and updated teaching and methodological knowledge* (Participant No. 9) and the ability to *draw on highly organized theoretical and practical knowledge to deliver knowledge to their STs and have a well-structured delivery of a blend of theory and practical experience* (Participant No. 8).

Other equally important types of pedagogical content knowledge, and hence, qualities of the professional ELT TE, were found to be explicit modeling of how an innovation like CLT, for example, works. This was found in the statement made by Participant No. 11, who described his professional ELT TE as one who *taught through examples. In other words, I was taught CLT by a teacher who used that method to teach the students.*

More qualities were associated with practical knowledge articulation, where the professional ELT TE *had profound understanding of the challenges, which will be raised by aspiring teachers in the ELT context* (Participant No. 22) and *had extensive experience in different parts of the world, which he always drew upon and shared with the student teachers* (Participant No. 7). Such knowledge would then lead TEs to being *dedicated to providing feedback* (Participant No. 13), *offering constructive criticism* (Participant No. 5), *answering any questions the trainees may have* (Participant No. 21), *having clear practical suggestions for dealing with particular situations* (Participant No. 13), and *providing comments that can be used to improve our level and teaching abilities* (Participant No. 28).

### 8.2.3. Professional development knowledge

The professional ELT TE was found to critically reflect on his/her actions to update and build up work-related knowledge and take on new roles as a result of having *awareness of the paradigm shift in ELT* (Participant No. 3) and the ability to establish new practices through *looking at an idea through multiple perspectives* (Participant No. 2) and *being aware of the latest ELT developments* (Participant No. 1), but having *her own strong ideas about ELT and critical thinking skills to be able to apply them to evaluate the latest ELT trends* (Participant No. 1).

Professional development was further viewed as reflecting-on-action to help achieve self-analysis of professional practices through being *an established researcher* (Participant No. 5), *conducting research on language teaching as a second language* (Participant No. 9), and *participating and presenting in many conferences* (Participant No. 4) for continuous self-development purposes.

In addition, the professional ELT TE's reflection-on-action practice was viewed as pursuing professional development to help establish new practices and advance expanding the field of ELT through demonstrating the ability and skill to *relate individual fields to the wider field of ELT (i.e. how psycholinguistics relates to classroom teaching, for example)* (Participant No. 11), *have up to date, practical hands-on incorporating multisensory approaches* (Participant No. 12), and *how ESP/EAP should be*

*taught in higher education and what technical knowledge one needs to understand the scope of such teaching and the best practices involved* (Participant No. 10).

A different perspective of the professional ELT TE's professional development was viewed as pursuing reflection-on-action for institutional developmental and implicit STs' professional development modeling purposes. That was evident in the case of the TE quoted by Participant No. 5, who described his professional ELT TE by saying *she embraced reflective practice and had observers evaluate her, making it reasonable to ask us to do evaluations and observations. Her understanding of second language acquisition was extensive.*

## 9. Discussion and conclusion

This study inquires into perceptions about the qualities of the professional ELT TE and what implications such qualities have for preparing professional English language teachers and achieving quality and accountability in SLTE. The findings indicate that the participants hold perceptions about the professional ELT TE as an empowering educator and one who has strong disciplinary knowledge, with each of these two qualities having sub-qualities, which delineates a complex picture about the topic.

In addition, the findings point in the direction of the qualities of the professional ELT TE as grounded in social justice education to help flourish lives through engaging in critical and deep self-reflection, critical questioning of knowledge and its sources and ways of its delivery, understanding and practicing democratic education, taking organized individual and collective social action to influence change, and empowering STs to pursue social justice education (Grant, 2012). Social justice SLTE is thus "a moral and political undertaking" (Kaur, 2012, p. 486), which is difficult and complex and which involves different ideological positions held by TEs with a transformation and change agenda with "multicultural social reconstructionist" (Martin, 1993) and "multicultural awareness for social justice" (Banks, 2008; Banks & Banks, 2009) awareness grounded in the theoretical and practical knowledge held by the TEs about ELT education.

The ELT TEs within the context of this study can be described as "Democratic Student Development" educators, who "... see the student and their personal development as the focal point of education" and "... have a student centered approach in their classrooms characterized by high levels of interaction and activities" (Boudon, 2015, p. 134) to empower their STs' affective/cognitive aspects, academic knowledge, and professional development. Such TEs represent "ethical reasoning" to face an "ethical dilemma" through embracing a blend of "morality of justice" and "morality of care" approaches to social justice ELT education (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2016). Morality of justice within the context of this study is associated with TEs' obligation to provide their STs with quality education through drawing on their strong disciplinary knowledge leading to implicit and explicit modeling of quality teaching. On the other hand, Shapira-Lishchinsky sees morality of care as involving emotions and cognition and reflected in teachers' discourse about the professional TE. Spalding, Klecka, Lin, Odell, and Wang (2010) thus hold that teaching is a caring profession. They problematize caring and describe it as "multidimensional", which includes "pedagogical", "moral", and "cultural" aspects. TEs are hence required "... to display respect and responsiveness to students' needs and capabilities, encourage discussion and self-reflection, and engage students in meaningful learning situations" (p. 193) to help impact their STs' beliefs, knowledge, and practices.

Social justice SLTE is hence one of the challenges ELT TEs are bound to face to empower their STs through catering for their cultural diversity (Cumming-Potvin, 2009). Boudon (2015) describes TEs who care about providing their STs with "... the tools to develop consciousness and engage in action to improve all education" and strive to provide "... input on topics and assignments in an egalitarian classroom" as "Critical Action Perspective" educators (p. 134). In their review of literature on social justice education, Spalding et al. found that "a predisposition to care may serve as a foundation for building a commitment to teaching for social justice" (p. 193).

Another kind of challenge ELT TEs are bound to face is related to adopting pedagogies that “develop teachers for social justice” (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015, p. 64). Boylan and Woolsey suggest that social justice education is best achieved through pursuing critical inquiry into one’s pedagogical content knowledge as a result of “discomfort” with the status quo, as in the shift in beliefs and the expansion the ELT field is experiencing due to global competing and contesting cultural, economic, and political forces, and the implications all this has for helping underprivileged societies and individuals advance and compete in the international community and global village.

Within this vein, Spalding et al. (2010) argue for the role of TEs as explicators of theories relevant to the context in which they exist in, implicit and explicit models of innovations, and articulators of practices compatible with the respective contexts in which they work so as to help prepare their STs as informed agents of change in their diverse and ideologically driven ELT contexts, where educational standards transform into contextual constraints and interfere with STs’ commitment to introduce and pursue creativity and innovation in ELT education. Put differently, some TEs described in this study, and through their strong disciplinary knowledge, used social justice as a “goal and process” (Bell, 2007). They not only drew on their knowledge as acquired from their explicit and systematic preparation and professional development to help them practice what they preach with full awareness in order to successfully influence their STs’ beliefs, knowledge, and practices about teaching for social justice, but also drew on their pedagogical content knowledge to design and implement quality instruction that helped them transform their classrooms into democratic arenas for critical questioning and influenced their STs’ affective/cognitive, academic, and professional knowledge.

#### **10. Limitations**

This study could have come to somewhat more different results than it did, if it were not confronted with the following limitations. The small number of participants in this study does not allow for any conclusions to be drawn about the perceptions of the professional ELT TE across cultures or ranks (STs, teachers, TEs, etc.). Additionally, because the study was qualitative, the obtained findings cannot be safely generalized to different situations.

#### **11. Future research**

The findings of this study influence our understanding about the participants’ perceptions toward the professional ELT TE as SLTE social justice providers and introduce a new knowledge dimension to the field on the notion and qualities of the professional ELT TE and how it can contribute to preparing professional English teachers. These perceptions need to receive attention in order to make certain progress in assisting ELT TEs to become professionals. These perceptions further point to the importance of and the need for an ELT TE policy formulation to help design and implement a SLTE program capable of achieving quality and accountability. The findings thus hope to stimulate further research about this topic.

Therefore, a systematic investigation of the curriculum and delivery of the different ELT TE preparation programs around the world is a recommended research direction for the future. There is also a need for further studies to correlate perceptions about the professional ELT TE with TE behavior in the different international classroom contexts, and with larger numbers of subjects representing more contexts and ELT education backgrounds. In addition, future discussion could focus on a homogenous group of participants (STs, teachers, TEs, etc.) at a time to allow for deeper understanding of the qualities of the professional ELT TE at the different teacher training and education levels (pre-service and in-service) and ways of preparing them.

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## Appendix A

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire aims to identify the qualities of the “professional” English Language Teaching teacher educator. *Please note that the term “teacher educator” refers to those professionals who teach or coach (student) teachers with an aim of supporting their professional development.*

Kindly fill in the questionnaire on the other side of this paper, bearing in mind that the information you will provide is confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you very much indeed for your cooperation.

The Researcher

## Appendix B

1. Gender:
2. Nationality:
3. Qualification:
4. Current job:
5. In which country did you receive your teacher training? \_\_\_\_\_
6. In your training as a teacher, have you had one particular English language teaching (ELT) teacher educator (TE) you would consider to be “professional”? (CIRCLE one, please) YES NO
7. If YES, what qualities made this ELT TE “professional”?

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8. In the space below, please answer the following question:

What qualities make a “professional” ELT TE?

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