

Exploring the Major Tenets of a Principle-Based Approach for ELT Policies & Planning: A Tentative Model for TEFL in Developing Iran

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Abstract: *In this article we intend to introduce to the readers the notion of a Principle-Based Approach (PBA) for English Language Teaching and Learning; the entailing policies and practices, and the explication of its general framework philosophy. We will attempt to spell out the nature and components of such framework as well as to enumerate the characteristics of the notions which qualify such policy and advocate it, in our deliberations, as a suitable and workable framework of reference for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) policies and practices badly needed in today Iran as it prepares itself to enter a new era of international relationships with the world.*

*PBA identifies a set of six(6) principles aimed at helping policymakers, researchers and practitioners in diverse contexts develop locally appropriate and effective practices while paving the way to identifying and engaging with the challenges that implementation of these practices may present. These principles are **Collaboration, Relevance, Evidence, Alignment, Transparency, and Empowerment**, shortened as (CREATE). In this journey, we are going to discuss how these principles have emerged as a result of the demands of 'globalization' and how they could be, provided it is understood and digested well, adopted and modified locally to be put to good use by the decision makers at the macro-level with a view to the implicit undertakings to integrate it into the outlook set out in the 'Comprehensive 20-year National Strategy Roadmap' and appropriately implement it by respective practitioners at the various strata of the micro-level.*

Keywords: *Principle-Based Approach, Language Policy and Planning, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, globalization, macro-level, micro-level, CREATE.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General Considerations/Setting the Scene

Previous work on the standards stipulated for language teaching in a variety of contexts has provided a background of knowledge for language policy makers and practitioners to work towards an identification of aspects of quality language teaching and implementation. In comparison less effort has been applied to measure the success of the programmes developed. The main reason for this is attributed to the disregard for the policies which are adopted at the macro-level and its mismatch with the micro-level representations implemented in actual practice. Therefore, the development of standards and the application of these standards across varied contexts can be problematic. The application of a set of standards has to be based on assumptions related to the distribution of resources, access to knowledge, and appropriate infrastructure. Moreover, the types of methodologies and assumptions about learning and teaching that underlie standards are also based on notions of language teaching approaches which spouse "a particular view of the world articulated in the interests of unequal power relationships" (Pennycook, 1989, pp.589).

Language Policy (statements of intent) and planning (implementation) is defined as planning undertaken by governments at the macro-level. The discipline emerged after World War II, but came

to the fore in the late 1960s (see, e.g. Fishman, 1968; Rubin & Jernudd, 1971; Fox, 1975 and others). The striking point is that despite attempts to theorize the field (Ferguson,1968; Fishman,1974; Haugen,1983; Haarmann,1990; Homberger,1994 and a host of others) there is no generally agreed upon and unified framework for this discipline.(cf., Recento,2000 for an overview of some of the historical and theoretical perspectives related to language planning)

One of the better known frameworks suggested by Baldauf (2005) takes a goal-oriented approach to the four activity types of language planning:

- Status Planning (about social status of a language)
- Corpus Planning (about the structure of a language)
- Language-in-Education Planning (learning status)
- Prestige Planning (image status)

The above four types of activity are typically used to define the dimensions of the discipline. They are a forum to be examined across policy and cultivation planning (see Kaplan and Baldauf, 2003). Awareness of such goals may be overt/explicit or covert/implicit and occur at several different levels:

- Macro-level (the state – the political decision-making level as to which Foreign languages are to be taught, rationalizing the decisions. *We do not think this to be a very taxing choice. Indeed English Language as the sole prevailing 'lingua franca' is the Hobson's choice available to us presently.* - Italics are the writers' emphasis)
- Meso-level (the body of the community entailing myriad and multifaceted concerns and issues of the Educational system. Some of the more important are: the learners, methodologies, curriculum planning, budget specifications, materials development - to name but a few.)
- Micro-level (The actual application and implementation of the decisions some of which actually overlaps with the meso-level are placed here)

In practice, however, language policy and planning goals normally are multiple and more complex often cutting across activity types and sometimes coming into conflict with one another. Baldauf (2006) suggests four general developments devised around language policy and planning framework. They are:

- *Levels of Language Planning.* While much of the research cited in LPP has as its focus polity or macro-level language policy and planning, there is an increasing interest in micro-planning. While the former has important implications for agenda setting and the allocation of resources, the latter - although under-represented in the literature- looks more closely at specific practice and is becoming of greater interest (e.g., Baldauf,2004).
- *Covert Language Planning.* The failure to make LPP explicit, or even to address some language issues at all (i.e., decision or indecision) – while it may seem in the context of language planning to be an oxymoron – effects how languages are learned and taught, and /or how they are contextualized and viewed (Baldauf, 1994; Eggington, 2002).
- *Who are the Planners and what are their roles?* As LPP has moved from being viewed as a set of scientific procedures to having a focus on context, the role and motivations of planners has taken on greater importance (e.g., Ager, 2001; Baldauf & Kaplan, 2003).
- *Planning for Compulsory Early Foreign Language Planning, especially English in its categorizations as ESL / EFL /EIL.* In Many countries around the world there is a move through LPP to increase exposure at an early age to foreign languages (especially English, for the obvious reason aforementioned) in the hope of increasing proficiency to join the knowledge economy. The development and impact of these programmes and their impact on national population and the teaching of other additional languages is a matter for LPP consideration.

(Taken from Language Planning and Policy: Recent Trends, future trends; R.B. Baldauf)

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The issues aforesaid are illustrated to varying extents in each of the four types of language planning activities (i.e., status planning, corpus planning, language-in education planning, and prestige/image planning; see R.B. Baldauf).

There are of course other possible issues. For example, Tollefson (2002b: 423ff) suggests the following eight (8) issues which might receive attention by LPP researchers in the years ahead.

- A focus on exploitive LPP contexts and failed plans and policies;
- The role of local legal frameworks in LPP;
- Linking Political theory and processes to LPP;
- More direct work with sociology on social issues like migration, state formation or political conflict;
- The role of discourse and political leaders in shaping LPP;
- A greater focus on language of social identity and power rather than languages as lingua franca;
- A move from a state (macro-level) focus to micro-level issues in the ethnography of communication; and
- A greater focus on language rights for linguistic minorities.

The present study from start to the end and where necessary, tries to articulate the importance of realizing that the principles of PBA which we are going to emphasise have emerged as a result of the demands of globalization and are to be firmly based on the framework of a well understood LPP discussions and concerns and how they could be based on educated deliberations and adopted to best suit our local and international needs.

PBA and its six set of principles is a tentative proposition to show policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other interested sectors recognize challenges faced when developing policy and consider how policy is translated into practice. We will demonstrate through the good works of leading researchers in the field and their counterparts in the field from various associations such as the TQESOL International Association (- which the authors of this article owe a great deal to *many of our basic ideas locked into place when reading their report and completed our prior literature review of many articles and especially the 2013 version of the British Council report on the topic.*) that a PBA will assist them to design and deliver more effective policies in a range of contexts. The ultimate goal of any government, organization, or institution involved in developing or using language in education policy (in the context of ELT) should naturally be to ensure that the students can use the language with the proficiency required to enhance their prospects in assessing better opportunities in education, community membership, and employment within their contexts and/or globally, identifying the impact of social, economic, and political forces on policymaking decisions on a macro-level and the needs of students, teachers, and community members within particular contexts on a micro-level, can enable policymakers, practitioners and researchers to identify and engage with a range of issues that affect policymaking decisions. Moreover, it can enable policymakers to predict any possible challenges in relation to implementation and to ensure that the process of policy making takes account of these issues when developing ELT initiatives and interventions.

Some of the issues discussed here include the impact and influence of extra-linguistic factors on language policy and planning (LPP), such as the sociopolitical context in which policy is formulated (Cooper, 1989). This is related to the political and ideological orientations of LPP and the use of language policy, especially in relation to more dominant and powerful languages, to serve the interests of particular political parties and social hierarchies (Ricento, 2000; Tollefson, 1991). Though intrinsically this is a concept that deals within national boundaries of a social community, it has the capacity , in our belief , to be extended to the discussions relating to the dominance of English language currently imposing itself as the 'Queen of Languages' over all other International languages. The PBA has the capacity also to identify potential negative effects of policy by highlighting issues that, if not considered, may further diminish the positive impact of the implementation procedures. In the case of English which has been hailed as the unique global lingua franca and the language of globalization, it is increasingly important to identify and acknowledge the power within a contained, leashed status so as to harness the imbalance that it inherently seeks to impose to its benefit. Due

caution is to be taken as English language is awarded a privileged position in contexts where policymakers are, deliberately or inadvertently, enhancing the economic and sociopolitical value of English and further disempower local languages and communities.

It is helpful to understand that EFL is motivated foremost by sociopolitical; economic and scientific forces. TEFL research focuses on the nature of the English language learning and teaching and has of a few years back shifted its focus away from mere understanding of the nature and interworking of the language structure itself (i.e., pure linguistics). Continued research on issues of pure linguistics is a fascinating, thought provoking and justifiably academic pursuit of utmost value and necessity, but the extent of its engagement has to stay limited within a select range of academics at the juncture between the ministerial decision makers and the applied linguists; A select population of intellectually qualified academics who are prepared to take on the arduous task of theoretical research in pure linguistics. What we intend to posit here is an allocation of certain academic pursuits to its appropriate, qualified lot. The rest of the stakeholders, in our view, should engage in practical pursuits and tasks where at least some feedback as to the success or failure of their activities could be critically evaluated and either developed or modified respectively. Training an army of theory-fed degree bearers who are '*Jack of all trades but master of none*' will put to waste the valuable resources of the country whether man force or financially which modern Iran cannot and must not afford. Therefore, though EFL uses linguistic theory and knowledge about language for designing and delivering ELT programmes, the focus of language itself has often been marginalized without clear acknowledgement of the fact that certain forms or varieties of a language, for example, can have social, economic and political privilege and currency than others. In addition, access to and proficiency in privileged forms of language can result in better prospects for students and communities (J.Martin, 1999). A further issue which relates to the translation of policy into practice is the limited communication between practitioners and policy makers resulting in conflict in perceptions between the two (Kaplan, 2009). This writing aims and hopes to address some of these issues by identifying a set of principles that, we reiterate again, can help ensure that the sociopolitical and linguistic factors necessary to be taken into consideration are taken into account when attempting to formulate policy and render it into practice. In the following section, previous approaches to LPP which lays the foundation in identifying how LPP research has contributed to the understanding of policy and practices and ultimately shaped the development of PBA will be discussed.

2. APPROACHES TO LPP

The focus of classical LPP research was on descriptions of policy and planning and goals within varied contexts through the use of frameworks such as Haugen's (1972) ecology of languages, Cooper's (1989) accounting scheme and other frameworks based on understanding the provisions of LPP from macro to micro level of implementation. Hornberger's (2006) six-dimensional framework made up of three LPP types : *Status* (about the use of language) ; *Acquisition* (about the users of language); *Corpus* (about language) and each dealt with on two levels of Policy and Function provides a useful point of departure for the analysis of LPP from the macroscopic to microscopic level but this framework is questioned first, for its lack of critical approaches on power relations (Hornberger,2006; Kaplan & baldauf,1997) and second for its being primarily descriptive in that it does not account for the actual " Process of language planning" (Kaplan & baldauf,p.87). This framework, however, aims to provide a set of principles that can guide the process to ensure that it is more equitable, effective, and sensitive to the context in which the policy is formulated. In so doing PBA incorporates the notion of "language ecology" in education setting by taking into account the diverse sociopolitical settings " where the processes of language use create, reflect and challenge particular hierarchies and hegemonies" (Creese & Martin, 2008, p.i). PBA also views schools and classrooms and their interactive practices as part of a bigger and more powerful political state in which ideologies function to reproduce particular balances of power. Since ENGLISH enjoys a hegemonic role and endangers other languages through link with globalization, it is especially important to keep in these factors in mind when considering the sociopolitical influences that language policy and practice have on the local language (baldauf, Kaplan, & Kamwangamaalu, 2010). We are well aware that the principles stipulated are advocated for 'within-a-national' community context. What we are suggesting is that the principles are viable enough to be extended to the discussion of teaching and learning of English language in Iran and serve as a point of reference to capitulate national interests and international priorities. We ought to have some parameter, some point of reference to refer to and gauge our activities and programmes against. The *defacto* picture of ELT

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in Iran needs serious rethinking and re-evaluation. As stated earlier, some good things may also happen in this bewilderment but they are certainly not the result or outcome of the state adopted planning or practices. Of course, this is a long-tailed concern which calls for various discussions from various perspectives which is not the immediate concern of this study. We just keep making repeated reference to the present situation of ELT in Iran just to reiterate the point that we have taken up the subject – which we believe to be an issue – right at the very foundation of it. We are trying to rationalize a model already advocated by different sources and suggest it as a working model for ELT in Iran today and for near future. Let us now turn our attention to the key factors that contribute to the development of PBA.

3. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION IN A PBA

PBA builds on the current work on language policy and practice, but instead of providing a set of standards, it identifies a set of principles that can help policymakers in diverse contexts develop locally appropriate language policies and practices. Previous work on the standards in relation to language teaching in a variety of contexts has enabled language policymakers and administrators to identify aspects of quality language teaching and delivery to measure the success of their programs against. However, the development of standards and the application of these standards across varied contexts can be problematic. The application of a set of standards has to be based on assumptions related to the distribution of resources, access to knowledge, and appropriate infrastructure. In addition, the types of methodologies and assumptions about learning and teaching that underlie standards are also based on notions of language teaching approaches which espouse “a particular view of the world and [can be] articulated in the interests of unequal power relationships” (Pennycook, 1989, pp. 589–590). Therefore, deciding which methodology is most suitable and determining what standards the delivery of these teaching approaches are evaluated against could be an imposition of criteria and benchmarks on local policymakers and practitioners, who may not find these approaches relevant or successful in their contexts. Understanding the limitations that such an imposition might pose in different contexts, with varying capacity for achieving these standards, professional organizations such as the TESOL International Association have attempted to collaborate with local ministries of education to develop contextually relevant standards (e.g., Integrating EFL Standards into Chinese or Malay or Japanese Classroom Settings series; see Gu, Hughes, Murphey, Robbins, Zemach, & Zhang, 2006). The collaborative development of context-appropriate standards is an important step in developing higher quality language programs in a range of contexts where there is an ever-increasing demand for ELT. However, the involvement of TESOL (or other such entities) in developing these standards in such contexts is limited. In addition, standards developed for one context that are taken at face value in other contexts may achieve variable results. Ultimately, a set of standards developed to enhance ELT in one context cannot be applied to other contexts.

To enhance understanding of how a PBA can contribute to the successful implementation of ELT, it is incumbent to look at some of the major factors that inform LPP. We know that all language learning, teaching and other education practices happen within a broad sociopolitical and economic context. These factors influence the development of ideas, theories, and policies that influence what happens in a classroom, with what resources, and how. Some of the key factors that relate to students' experience of language learning and teaching need to be considered. Figure (1) below depicts some of the major factors in LPP.

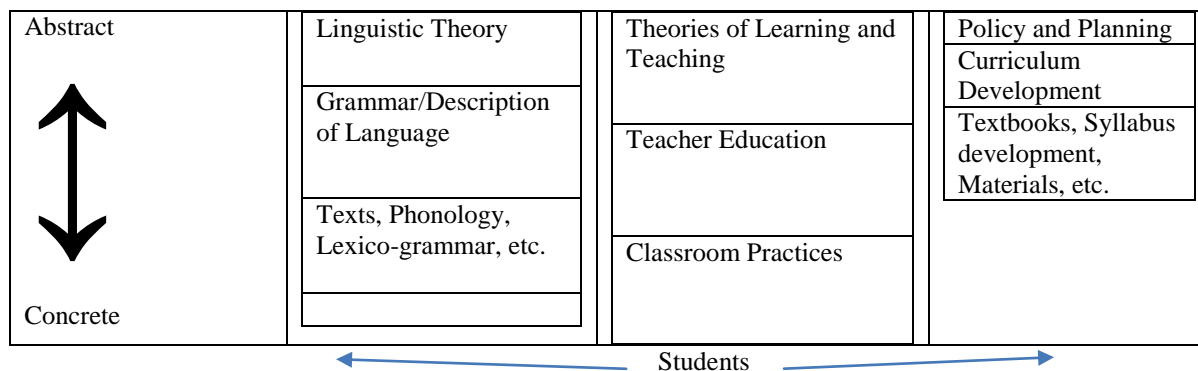


Figure1. Factors influencing PBA

Contextual factors: socio-economic, ideological, political, scientific, etc.

(Adopted from tesol International Association: March, 2012.)

Linguistic Theories are abstract ideas about what language is and how it works. Different linguistic theories explain language in different ways, which result in different types of language descriptions and influence the choices of texts and grammatical components used in pedagogical material that students learn and are taught through. In parallel, various theories of learning and teaching explain how language learning takes place and how this understanding can be used for teaching purposes. These theories are taught to the teachers during their training programmes, and the teachers use them in developing their pedagogical practices. Frameworks of language-in-education policy also influence the curriculum, which in turn, shapes the syllabi, textbooks, and other teaching and learning resources that the students use in their classes. Thus the three broad theoretical areas are operationalized in different ways to shape the learning-teaching behavior and material that students experience. These different theories and areas are not necessarily independent of each other and may overlap and/or influence the other areas. Traditional approaches to LPP tend to focus on policy and planning factors just described; however, PBA builds its framework by integrating not only work on LPP, but also in areas of linguistic theory and theories of learning and teaching.

The students are sit at the core of the total T/EFL programme, who experience, learn from and resist forms of language, material, and pedagogy that they experience. These concrete experiences are themselves shaped by larger discussions and beliefs about education, language, and curriculum that are, in turn, influenced by theoretical positions. The more abstract theoretical positions are not neutral, but are, in turn, shaped by the resources available and the cultural, ideological, and political contexts in which they evolve.

What follows is an examination of these factors as we trace their implications for a PBA. In so doing, we shall unfold some aspects of policy and planning. We shall then consider learning and teaching theories and linguistic theory and finally introduce the six principles of PBA.

4. POLICY AND PLANNING

Kaplan, Baldauf and Kamwangamalu (2011) hold that language-in-education policy is a complex process fraught with diverging issues that must be considered if it is to be successful. English Language policymakers face the difficult task of planning goals and strategies that are ultimately linked to an informed by broader issues of political, social, scientific and ideological frameworks that function in the context in which ELT as a sub-category of LPP may take form. The impact of globalization on LPP has propelled the teaching of English with greater urgency and has major implications for the language teaching contexts in which English is prioritized. Additionally, a lack of communication between policymakers at the macro-level and implementers at the micro-level means that successful practices occurring within the classrooms rarely inform policymaking, and that practitioners have access to policy only as it is filtered down through the curriculum and textbooks in the classrooms. It is here that the incongruity between policy and implementation surfaces. In advocating a PBA, the policymaking decisions should work in two directions: Teachers, syllabus designers, textbook developers and other stakeholders should have the prerequisite knowledge and sensitivity to reflect on effective pedagogical practices and be able to communicate these to policymakers and, in turn, the policymakers to relate, develop, modify and translate those ideas, where applicable, to functionally practical manifestations. There are three major challenges that policymakers face when designing TEFL policy and planning.

- Shortage of enough base knowledge for the planning of goals;
- Non-collaboration between policymakers and implementers;
- The problem of lack of explicit, clear-cut specifications between local needs and the demands of globalization.

4.1. Planning Goals

In TEFL policy and planning the purpose of the policy strategy needs to be considered with a view to achieving particular goals and outcomes. (This is while only a meagre mention is made concerning

TEFL (LPP) in the provisions of the 20-year Outlook Strategy Plan for Iran 2025). As Ricento (2000) points out, language policy is determined by ideological and political agendas of governments and organizations which create LPP strategies. We are advocating an approach where the goal of policymakers moves beyond factors of political and ideological issues and incorporates ELT with a view to the role it is going to assume to serve our national interests in international arenas. As it stands, we are afraid to bitterly confess that there is a gross rift between set goals (as it stands in state documents- for example, in the curricula for TEFL in higher education) and the output that is gained. As already mentioned, we may have exceptions to the norm but they are not an effectual result of the education they have been exposed to. Transparency of LPP objectives usually backed by a philosophy of engagement (framework) will enable various stakeholders to engage with ELT practices that policymakers ought to advocate. If executed by the rule, it will also enable researchers and policymakers to capture and critique ELT practices to ensure that LPP decisions are made based on evidence of successful and empowering practices from systematic practices.

4.2. Policy and Implementation

A variety of reasons may be accounted for policy not being effectively translated into practice. During the legislative-political processes, however, decisions may be subjected to unwanted transformations (Hornberger & Recinto, 1996). The roles of the teacher, the learners (needs analysis) and materials production just to name the most important is currently undermined and underutilized. Teachers themselves often believe that they have little say to effect policy and most of them do not view themselves as implementers of macro-level policies as a natural continuation of the total picture/framework of LPP. (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). Policy is rarely absorbed by practitioners working in classroom situations as an index of a greater philosophy which might serve the national interest. The underlying ideological motivations and global incentives and aspirations of policies tend to be implicit. " Policy is formulated at the level of government, but practitioners responsible for implementation often have access to the implications of policy only through the curriculum and textbooks"(Mahboob, 2012: Tesol International Association Report). Therefore lack of collaboration or communication between policymakers and practitioners (i.e., teacher trainers and teachers) which is detrimental to the process of policymaking is one of the loopholes in the formulation of a sound policy. Practitioners should find ways to engage in working collaboratively with policymakers to determine policy goals. These goals should be made visible, transparent, and accessible to practitioners and in compatibility with the real aptitude of students and their needs and aligned with the national interests of the country. [Note: We feel obliged to give a word of caution here. By no means do we intend to undermine the academic diction of the text or 'politicize' the issue. This is what we believe in and that's why we are positing this as a tentative approach.]

4.3. Global vs. Local

English has been referred to as the language of globalization with a strong emphasis on the fact that English is linked to technology, science, economy, culture and most importantly to politics and hence to the notions of development and modernization. Our view of the English language is all that plus notions of 'colonization', 'exploitation', 'hegemony', 'cultural invasion', and 'cannibalistic attitude', (a term we borrowed from the field of translation studies).

The complexity of language planning in relation to English is linked to the fact that the demand for ELT comes from several different sources and it makes it all the more challenging for policymakers who are in a difficult position of taking all these factors into account while acting in the promotion of the National interests and representing domestic needs and global requirements.

If ELT is a serious means to equip the local community with an instrument which can ease engaging with globalization and provide for them access to global resources, then it must answer questions about the relevance of teaching English ; what variety of English and for what purpose. Initially policymakers should determine the purpose of English LPP. In determining the purpose, they should collaborate with local communities, practitioners, industry, and other stakeholders. Policymakers have to make sure that ELT teaching practices are suited to the needs of the particular context in which they occur. As Rajopalan (2005) states, "global, specialist knowledge" needs to be readjusted "to suit local circumstances" (p.119) in a bid to equip them with the necessary capabilities to carry out their tasks.

In addition, evidence of programme outcomes should be monitored to ensure that they achieve the goals determined at the outset of the policy-makers process.

5. THEORIES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

It is important to realize that language teaching and learning theories contribute to the improvement of language training and delivery. Policies should be formed with an understanding of this literature so that they can be translated into more effective practice. Most of the dominant theoretical frameworks are developed in the West with data collected in those contexts. These theories are then, oftentimes uncritically, adopted and promoted in the rest of the world, where local practices may or may not support them. If the policymakers open rooms for the critical analysis of such imported packages in an effort to, so to speak, “naturalize” them for local benefits and use, they ought to have a visible and viable, domestic alternative/s to it.

Learning and Teaching Resources and Methodology This topic mainly deals with contexts with few resources, financial constraints, and lack of infrastructure where little room is left but to resort to the use of language programs and materials which advocate pedagogies and methods that are largely theorized and developed in the West and then exported without considering whether these pedagogies are appropriate or effective in local contexts. To equip teachers who face a variety of unique context-specific issues in their classrooms with learning and teaching methodologies imported from other countries is not an adequate solution. Chick (1996) states: “a sort of naïve ethnocentrism is to think that what is good for Europe or the USA has to be good for others “. When faced with a variety of methodologies and material imported from Western contexts and promoted by international organizations, we must think twice before utilizing them blind-foldedly.

6. LANGUAGE THEORY

Language theory plays an influential role on LPP and ELT because curriculum and textbooks incorporate knowledge about language in the form of lessons based in most parts on the description of language parts with little focus as to how language creates text and meaning.

6.1. Knowledge about Language

This is basically due to the shortcomings of KAL on the part of the policymakers and implementers alike which filter down to students whose needs nor aptitudes are appropriately discerned and evaluated. There is also the notion of cultural disconnect. In many an instances teachers who have not had the cultural experience themselves make mistakes. The technical aspects of language are also too complex and theoretical that they are minimized or left out in teacher training curricula. The training to teach other subjects, such as science, mathematics, law, history and so on are completely missing from our domestic programmes. Academic knowledge of any discipline is considered critical for their teachers. How is it that in-depth knowledge of language and linguistics and other language-related strings attached to it are often not considered as crucial for language teachers? There is also this native *speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992) that being a native speaker or an expert user of the language (whether native or non-native) provides sufficient understanding of language for them to qualify them as ELT teachers. [Regrettably at the moment, in ELT spheres in Iran good and bad are mixed. Anyone holding an M.A and above degree in English language is considered to have the qualification to become a teacher.].

6.2. Visible Pedagogy

It is safe practice that policies be made accessible and transparent to practitioners. Simultaneously, classroom practices and pedagogy should also be made visible and should aim to enable students to create discourse appropriate for communities of practice. In *visible pedagogy*, the structuring of texts used within specific communities of practice are made visible for students so that they can learn and effectively use these discourses in the relevant context (J. Martin, 1999).

Explicitly and visible teaching discourse strategies and structures through analysis and deconstruction of text through approaches such as genre-based pedagogies can enable students to access powerful genres and reproduce them effectively, empowering them in the process. Visible pedagogy recognizes that texts are produced within contexts of culture and contexts of situation and that certain texts are more privileged and more powerful than others; thus, mastery of these text types can enable students

to access opportunities for employment, education, and research at a local as well as an international level.

6.3. Cultural Sensitivity

The manner in which imported textbooks are designed to promote a particular culture, ideology and nationalistic sentiment is to be understood and addressed. It is nothing new that in most international textbooks, the aspirations of the hegemonic Western culture has been reflected under the guise of “We are just reflecting ‘a way of life’. There is no cause for concern.” Well, we are not going to comment on this at length because that again calls for another multi-faceted angles of discussion beyond our immediate focus of attention here. As opposed to international textbooks with such ill-fated intentions as mentioned above, the development of materials and production of textbooks by ministries of education or curriculum/textbook boards in countries wishing to safeguard the national identity promote over-extensive national cultural ideas. This too is a grave pitfall. On the one hand, this seems a positive move because it draws on cultural motifs that students are more familiar with and celebrates and protects the national culture from Westernization resulting in a more empowered engagement with globalization. This empowered engagement is evident from examples in certain Iranian textbooks developed by ministry of education. [*Omissions or alterations does sometimes create funny situations and may even get across the wrong concepts*]. At the same time, however, the promotion of a national culture may sometimes be strongly linked with religious and ideological content which promotes one ideology above others (Maboob, 2009) and this will complicate matters further if the culture of hardline groups is disseminated which will bring about taxing confusion to the students and undue animosity between cultures. We strongly believe that differences in cultures instead of being a departure point for divergence should be celebrated for its variety. The world would be a dull place if all looked alike or thought alike. So, a balance should be struck between teaching language proficiency and the information needed about the delicacies of the culture the student is trying to learn their language. Therefore, while remaining respectful of all cultures at all times, it is important that the information transferred to the student is aligned with the initial goals of language programmes and does not undermine them.

7. THE PRINCIPLES OF PBA

A set of six principles as an initial conceptualization of PBA is introduced hereinafter. These principles are an initial set of tentative proposals for a presumed LPP framework for ELT in Iran to begin a discussion on what PBA might eventually look like to entail the stipulations of the 20-year Comprehensive Plan in academic spheres. The ideas expressed in this paper will be strengthened by the undertaking of critical analysis of best practice\es and cases of ELT programme implementation in a variety of contexts from the perspective of the proposed principles. These principles are always open for regular evaluation; feedback; consultation and revisions needed over time.

7.1. Collaboration

Collaboration should take place at various levels and domains. The stakeholders such as local teachers, experts, students and other related parties should be given voice to positively influence the design of policy, curriculum and textbooks so that the policies adopted are understood, accepted and duly translated into appropriate practice. Three key areas where collaboration could spur further enhancement of ELT policy and practice are:

7.1.1. Policymakers and Local Teachers

A key component in policymaking should be the understanding of the students' and teachers' needs by the sharing of knowledge from the grassroots level. Collaborating with teachers will ensure that policy can be implemented and that it will strengthen and serve our national interest. We must urgently put an end to the waste of time, energy and resources and base our decision makings not on wild notions or guesses but on educated deliberations through teamwork.

7.1.2. Policymakers and Experts

Policy decisions should be informed by an understanding of current theories in a range of disciplines. From a PBA perspective, we believe that consulting with experts in the areas of linguistics, pedagogy, and language development as well as ESP related subjects is as important as consulting with experts.

7.1.3. Policymakers and Other Parties Involved

Policymakers should also consult with other stakeholders other than teachers and experts and publish the results. Dissemination of policies through press and media should encourage public debates about the relevance of the policies. Doing so will enable policymakers to gain the consent of those concerned directly and general public indirectly.

Language –in-education policy has implications for industry in that it informs the training of a population that will join the workforce in various needed capacities. As such policy decisions need to be taken with direct and/or indirect input from domestic market. This can help policymakers to make decisions that will meet industry requirements and result in training a population of expert graduates that can succeed in their future jobs.

In addition to the stakeholders identified above, it is also crucial to engage with and draw on discussion with syllabus designers, local textbook writers, administrators, and others who translate policies into concrete materials and procedures that teachers and students use and experience.

7.2. Relevance

This principle ensures that the practices, beliefs, and material that the policy encourages attain the goals for which they are developed and accord with the particular context. The principle of relevance is best understood in relation to the key areas of policy, practice, and production of materials.

7.2.1. Policy

The primary aim of the policy is to increase language proficiency. However, the outcomes of a particular ELT project is more difficult to determine. Identifying the particular goals of policy will enable policymakers to determine the relevance of proposed changes or lead to a more relevant policy. Moreover, it will ensure that the materials chosen or developed to support the policy are more likely to achieve the desired outcomes.

7.2.2. Practice

In creating relevant practice, it is necessary for the government to clearly outline the purpose of the English Language Policy and then create materials that translate this policy into practice. As already stated, it seems that few are fully aware or even willing to view themselves as one small part in a unified, coherent and broader picture (i.e., the National Strategy Plan) where everyone is acting for the national interest. The practices need to be relevant to the needs of the country when the purpose and practices are determined in collaboration with local ELT professionals, the practices can be designed to better enhance the skills that the policy has prioritized.

7.2.3. Production of Materials

The production of materials that translate policy goals into practice must also be relevant to the socio cultural practices with the context. Policymakers should determine the extent to which ELT will have an intra- or international focus and whether the teaching of language should also include the teaching of global cultural practices in addition to engagement with local practices.

7.3. Evidence

Banks (2009) believes that "basing policy on evidence shifts it from being an experimental endeavor to one that is supported by analysis and best practices". But the challenge is that it would be a costly and time-consuming challenge to collect a sizable quantity of quality evidence. Moreover, evidence-based policymaking has been criticized for its quantitative methods of assessment which is focused primarily on accountability (Sanderson, 2002). This will, of course, depend on the resources being available. It is known fact that not all contexts provide the possibility to supply exhaustive evidence to support successful practices. The strength of evidence-based policy in ELT is that it can safeguard against developing policy based on best practices from a variety of contexts and implemented as a one-size-fits-all solution without consulting local practitioners or cultural sensitivity.

7.4. Alignment

Alignment is important in that it ensures the project outcomes integrate and match the goals of ELT policy and that the knowledge drawn from it by policymakers is relevant to the goals of the policy. The outcomes should, however, be set realistically and assurance made that monitoring and evaluation

practices take into account the sociopolitical and other intervening impacts. The incorporation of the reliable and valid outcomes into the development of curriculum and textbook materials need to be aligned with classroom practices. These practices are to be assessed according to whether the students demonstrate the required level of language proficiency and skills as delineated by the policy framework.

7.5. Transparency

This principle requires that policy objectives, goals, and outcomes be visible, easily accessible, and justifiable to all beneficiaries within the policy framework. Transparency enables the policymakers to:

- Gain support from various beneficiaries to try out the implementation of the policy according to the policy framework.
- To be trusted by teacher trainers, administrators, teachers, and researchers to get hold of full access of their findings and evaluative assessments.
- Prevent corruption, hidden ideological agendas, and possible political aspirations that may hinder the realization of the program and sabotage all efforts.

7.6. Empowerment

This principle delivers at its core the notion that the ultimate objective of any ELT project should be the effectiveness of the overall system in a manner that the losses and pitfalls at various levels are reduced to a minimum and this will hopefully lead to the empowerment of the country and the educational system. Every project should provide sustainability with respect to socio-political, economic, and national cultural environment. Empowerment through a PBA towards ELT policies and planning is not easy to achieve because it has to be based on knowledge, expertise, dedication, hard work and a belief that it is possible to be reached.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF PBA

The implications of the principles foregone are applicable to a host of various recipients within the framework. Some of them are as follow:

8.1. Implications for Policy Makers

- Identify policy that is realistic and viable. The policymaker/s should strike a balance between complex needs of the community and national interests.
- Policy that takes into consideration national interests should take into account the economy of the plan of action as far as possible.
- Policy should be suitable for the context as regards the capacity, training, and expertise of domestic team at various levels and the availability of resources.
- Set reasonable goals and apply suitable tools for measurement of achievements.
- Promote accessibility for quality ELT through specification of national needs and priorities.
- Make sure that ELT issues are incorporated appropriately within the overall National Educational System.

8.2. Implications for Practitioners

- Incorporate means to make sure that the principles behind the policy are fully understood by those involved. Training plays an important role here.
- Make sure that you fully understand how to translate policy stipulations into curriculum, textbooks, and practice through case studies and other accessible resources.
- Strike a balance between EFL teaching and the culture it brings with itself and the measures required to safeguard the domestic culture.
- Increase understanding of how to measure achievement according to the standards outlined locally.

- Promote KAL, best practices, and understanding of how to adapt methodologies to best suit the objectives of the ELT programme.

8.3. Implications for Researchers

- Shift your focus of attention from the bulk of theoretical studies to carrying out a reasonable portion of case studies too and identify the best practices that will inform the formulation of macro-level policy and how it is implemented at the micro-level. (This can be promoted through assigned research projects)
- Produce real time context-informed research and theory that can be used by policymakers and practitioners.
- Distinguish the links between national, regional and international policy frameworks to identify best practices for use by policy developers and practitioners.
- Carry out serious critical evaluation of existing, past and proposed ELT programmes to determine culturally and contextually suitable material and develop methodologies that could yield optimum outcomes through implementers practice.

8.4. Why is it Important to Integrate the Concerns of EFL into a Working, Economic Approach?

The story of English language teaching (ELT) in Iran, as one of the most notable anti-imperialistic countries in the world, has experienced a host of extreme ups and downs. English is simultaneously known as the language of non-friendly countries (i.e. the United States and the United Kingdom) on the one hand (Borjian, 2013) and as a tool for progress (Riazi, 2005) on the other. While Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) believe that Iran's policy on English stops short of nationwide dissemination of the language, the last decade in particular has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of Iranians learning English. Davari (2013) points out that the rapidly changing situation in Iranian society is transforming English language learning into a fashionable trend, with the result that ELT is not only a flourishing market in the private sector, but is also playing a major role in English language spread.

The undeniable shortcomings of English learning in centralised public sector English learning, leading to low efficacy and inefficiency with the growth of a new booming private sector ELT market, have been mainly rooted in policy makers' ambivalence towards English education. To prove this claim, instances of inconsistency between available policy documents and paradoxical practices are reviewed to show that the issue of ELT remains a sensitive and covert unsolved question.

Iran has been in the headlines in the recent years and decades for many socio-political reasons. Many of these involve the confrontation between Islamic revolutionary values and the foreign policies and aspirations of Western governments. Among the Iranian state's revolutionary values there are no articulated aspirations to isolate the country from the outside world but progress and globalisation are defined within Islamic, revolutionary and nationalistic discourses and therefore the status of English as a foreign language in Iran has been controversial and questionable. Of course the English language is in demand in Iran and it is associated with globalization and progress. However, in the dominant official discourses it is often considered a threat because it incorporates Western values, allows access to these values, and could thus be deemed harmful to local cultures and identities.

The two paradoxical perspectives on the English language in Iran are among the main reasons for tension and difference between top-down official policies and the bottom-up grass-roots English language learning practices of contemporary Iranian society. The state prescribes mainstream English language teaching (ELT) provision from the age of twelve, but parents who can afford private sector ELT provision encourage their children to learn English outside the limited mainstream education system. Restricted and limited mainstream ELT could therefore be seen as the English language learned by the masses, but private sector ELT remains for the privileged few.

The aim of this study was to make a contribution to studies of language policy and planning in general and to an understanding of English language policies and practices in particular that could best serve the objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In principle, language policy as a sub-discipline of sociolinguistics can be studied in all communities and nation-states, including Iran, but at the same time one of the main aspirations of the paper is the introduction of this critical field of research to a context to which it has not been sufficiently debated.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper introduced a principles-based approach (PBA) for ELT practices and policies. PBA provides a set of six principles that emerge from a consideration of a range of local and global issues that relate to, impact, and influence the ELT policies, practices, and outcomes in diverse contexts. These principles comprised of collaboration, relevance, evidence, alignment, transparency, and empowerment (CREATE). The six principles outlined above are not mutually exclusive but relate to each other in a variety of ways. These principles were shown to be applicable in a range of contexts with their implications. By considering these principles, various stakeholders will be able to mold their own ELT practices and policies in ways that suit their needs and reflect local conditions and practices. As such, PBA moves away from a prescriptive approach to language practice and policy and refrains from setting any standards or universal measures across diverse contexts. Instead, PBA recognizes the need for using different approaches to ensure effective delivery and successful outcomes of ELT practices and policies. To achieve this goal, stakeholders can use the PBA principles to identify relevant issues, and, by doing so, they can develop local practices and policies that can be easily implemented and that can result in achievable outcomes. The principles have the potential to be operationalized in different ways which may yield different answers and lead to different positions. This heterogeneity of responses or positions is, in our belief, healthy as long as they are dealt with ethically in a judicious manner and not accepted at face value. Also note that these tentative principles will need regular reevaluation and updating to meet the needs of the time and ensure their relevance, validity, and applicability across a variety of contexts. This paper which is a gross reflection, mainly of Baldauf and his suggestions reflected by Mahboob & Tilakaranta (2012) in a report for tesol International Association, was respectively taken up by us and its ideas expanded and developed to elaborate our (Iran's) main areas of concern in LPP and its relation to TEFL planning and policy. We hope that, within the scope of an article, enough attention is paid to clarify the subject and reason why the need for a PBA to TEFL is calling. Follow-up papers will hopefully discuss the implementation of this approach.

The unique socio cultural, political, economic, and historical aspects of each individual country or setting need to be taken into account when developing language policies and ELT programs and standards appropriate to these contexts. In this respect, local consultants working and developing research in these countries are best suited to determine what constitutes effective practices within those countries. Therefore, this paper recommends the development of a principles-based approach to influencing and enhancing successful and effective ELT practices and policies.

This paper is a reminder to help policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders recognize challenges faced when developing policy and consider how policy is translated into practice. In doing so, it demonstrated that a PBA would help them design and deliver more effective policies and practices in a range of contexts. For the purposes of this paper, we have assumed that the ultimate goal of any government, organization, or institution involved in developing or using language in education policy (in the context of ELT) is to ensure that students can use the language with the proficiency required to enhance their prospects within an overall national framework.

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