Program Evaluation of the New English Textbook (Prospect 1) in the Iranian Ministry of Education

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Abstract—This study aimed at conducting a program evaluation of the newly developed textbook (Prospect 1) in the Iranian Ministry of education by applying the CIPP (context, input, process, and product) program evaluation model. To this end, the study was done in two different phases: in phase I, context, input, and process evaluation of the new textbook were conducted and the participants were 4 members of the textbook development team. In phase II, product evaluation of the new textbook was done and the participants were 30 junior high school teachers. For both phases of the study, a qualitative research method was adopted using interviews. The interviews were then analyzed using content analysis. The results of phase I indicated that there were some challenges with the textbook development project such as lack of suitable infrastructure, lack of enough budgets, and lack of necessary human and physical resources. The findings of the phase II showed that there were some pitfalls with the new English textbook such as using an unsuitable method of literacy instruction; over-localizing the content; complete abandoning of grammatical structures; and setting unrealistic objectives considering the time and resources constraints.

Index Terms—program evaluation, CIPP model, textbook evaluation, prospect 1

I. INTRODUCTION

As a result of an increase in interest in EIL (English as an International Language) and in line with the latest technology growths, there seems to be an urgent need for EFL students to communicate in English on a day-to-day basis. As a result, national language education policies in many countries have moved towards CLT since the 1990s (Littlewood, 2007) because "the traditional approaches are seen as no longer serving the needs of EFL learners" (Vongxay, 2013, p.11). In Iran too, this need was well felt and responded and a movement from structural syllabi towards functional and communicative ones took place at national ELT curriculum. In other words, the shift was a movement from structural approaches of language teaching (e.g. Grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method) towards communicative language teaching approach (Curriculum Guidelines of Foreign languages, 2005; National Curriculum of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012; Prospect 1, 2013). Subsequently, EFL textbooks which are the visible, tangible, and practical manifestation of the curriculum have been planned to change in order to be designed according to the new curriculum. According to Mahmood (2010):

For the proper implementation of any curriculum, textbooks become part and parcel of the education system. Especially, in developing countries, it has been a regular practice to consider textbooks as the major source of teaching learning process to be undertaken in educational settings (p.2).

In line with this trend, the EFL textbook of the first grade of junior high school in Iran has undergone radical changes. Obviously, its evaluation becomes essential because there is a need to evaluate the innovation to ensure that it is in effect a real improvement over past practices (Nation & Macalister, 2010). If we take a glance at the literature, we could perceive that most of the approaches to material evaluation are product based (Cuningsworth, 1984; Breen & Candlin, 1987; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; as cited in Wang, et al., 2009); however, as Gooch (n.d.) argued one of the main drawbacks in the area of materials evaluation is "an almost exclusive attention to the final product, as opposed to the processes involved in the design of the materials" (p.1). To fill this gap, this study aimed at taking a process-oriented

approach towards textbook evaluation by using the CIPP (context, input, process, and product) program evaluation model which provides the opportunity to access a process in addition to a product (Stufflebeam, 2002).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Significance of Materials Evaluation

Tomlinson (2011) defined materials evaluation as "the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them (p. xiv). Moreover, Sheldon (1988) considered material evaluation as "a dynamic process which is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity where no neat formula, grid, or system will ever provide a definitive yardstick" (p. 245).

On the significance of material evaluation, Brown (1995) stated that "materials evaluation is necessary to determine the suitability of the materials for a particular program" (p.159). McGrath (2002) believed that "textbook evaluation is of an important value for the development and administration of language teaching programs" (as cited in Azizifar et al., 2010, p.132). Ellis (1997) considered textbook evaluation as being very useful in teacher development and professional growth. Therefore, "constant evaluation of textbooks to see if they are appropriate is of great importance" (Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010, p.2).

B. Materials Evaluation Models

Most evaluation models take either a macro or a micro approach based on the purpose of the evaluator (Cakit, 2006). A macro-evaluation model according to Ellis (1997), "calls for an overall assessment of whether an entire set of materials has worked" (p.37). On the other hand, "a micro evaluation model focuses on an in-depth analysis of particular tasks for particular groups of learners" (Cakit, 2006, p.20). Yet, all these models are product based (Gooch, n.d.) which totally ignore the process of materials development. It can be claimed that "process evaluation is believed as a guarantee of quality product" (Hussain, et al., 2011, p.263). Because of the lack of such a process based model in the area of materials evaluation, CIPP was implemented for EFL textbook evaluation in this study since it entails both the process and the product in the textbook evaluation procedure.

C. The CIPP Model of Program Evaluation

The CIPP model of program evaluation was developed by Daniel Stufflebeam and his colleagues in 1960s, based on their experience of evaluating educational projects. Zhang et al. (2011) considered the CIPP evaluation model as the best approach for evaluation with respect to feasibility, utility, accuracy and propriety, as well as being used for improvement and accountability purposes. In this evaluation model, the performance of a program, a service, and a project is evaluated through a comprehensive framework under four categories of context, input, process and product (Stufflebeam, 2002).

In CIPP, context evaluation refers to appropriateness of activity objectives and compliance of the objectives to the needs; input evaluation refers to existing and available resources for meeting needs and attaining objectives; process evaluation refers to the effectiveness and efficiency of actual activities; and product evaluation refers to attainment of program outcomes (Stufflebeam, 2002).

Because of its adaptability and applicability, CIPP has been applied to evaluate materials, personnel, students, programs, and projects in a range of disciplines (Stufflebeam, 2002). CIPP has been implemented in the literature of curriculum evaluation in general and textbook evaluation in particular (e.g. Mahmood, 2006; Mahmood, 2009; Chen, 2009; Mahmood, 2010; Tunc, 2010; Dalton, 2009; Usmani, et al., 2010; Karatas & Fer, 2009). A review of literature reveals that CIPP has been used in the past for to evaluating EFL curriculum, courses, teacher education, programs, and textbook evaluation in other fields; yet, it has not been used for EFL textbook evaluation before. Three such studies exist in literature on textbook evaluation which will be referred to as the following:

Firstly, Mahmood (2006) analyzed the approved textbooks and their approval procedure in the Ministry of education of Pakistan by using CIPP Model. He found that that there is a need to improve the existing procedure of the Ministry of education for acquiring textbook approval. Second, Mahmood (2009) represented a conceptual framework for the production of a quality textbook in science and mathematics in Pakistan. The framework was based on the integration of CIPP model and Garvin's (1988) eight dimensions for quality. He deleted context evaluation from his framework and focused on the remaining three components, i.e., input, process, and product evaluation. In his study, input evaluation was concerned with curriculum policy, knowledge, attitude, and time; process evaluation dealt with textbook writing, review, evaluation, and printing; and product evaluation was about the evaluation of the textbooks under consideration. The results of the study confirmed that the Ministry-approved textbooks were of low quality with respect to the internationally acceptable standards of textbooks. And the third, Islas Guzman (1980) developed a model for the evaluation of instructional materials based on the CIPP model. In his proposed model, context evaluation encompassed activities such as needs assessment, goals and objectives establishment; input evaluation entailed activities such as focused on evaluation of the plans and strategies, process evaluation directed on the activities in the formative evaluation; and product evaluation determined the instructional value of the final product. His proposed model focused on the formative evaluation of instructional materials not on summative evaluation and for accountability purposes. In

fact, CIPP Model is regarded as "a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, and systems" (Chen, 2009, p.42).

In this study, CIPP has been applied for EFL textbook evaluation for the first time since CIPP provides a systematic way of looking at many different aspects of the textbook development process (Tiantong & Tongchin, 2013).

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Using CIPP, what are the efficiencies and deficiencies of the new junior high school textbook (Prospect 1) regarding context, input, and process evaluation?

2. Using CIPP, what are the efficiencies and deficiencies of the new junior high school textbook (Prospect 1) regarding product evaluation?

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher conducted the study in two different phases: Phase I, and phase II. In phase I, context, input, and process evaluation of the junior high school textbook was conducted and in the phase II the textbook as the product itself was analyzed.

IV. METHODOLOGY

For both phases of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted using interviews. Interview "is based on conversation with the emphasis on researchers asking questions and listening and respondents answering" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, as cited in Warren, 2002, p. 83). Moreover, interviewees are considered as "meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers" (Holstin and Gubrium, 1995, as cited in Warren, 2002, p. 83).

A. Participants

For the first phase of this study, four out of the six members of the textbook development team at the Iranian Ministry of Education participated in this study. Two of the members were experts in Applied Linguistics and the two others were experts in linguistics. All of them were university professors who had also some years of experience in teaching English at public high schools.

For the second phase, the participants were 30 junior high school teachers, who had the experience of teaching the new textbook at public schools.

B. Instrumentation

At the first phase, extensive review of the literature on both program evaluation in general and textbook evaluation in particular were done and subsequently these studies formed the basis for semi-structured interview questions related to the EFL textbook evaluation for the first three components of CIPP (context, input, and process evaluation). The designed questions were validated by eight experts; one university professor, four PhD graduates of TEFL and three PhD students.

For the second phase, an open-ended questionnaire was developed based on the review of literature, expert opinions, and stakeholders' concerns. To develop the open-ended questionnaire, besides reviewing the literature, 15 EFL academic experts (4 PhD, 7 PhD candidates, and 4 MA) were required to do an impressionistic evaluation of the new textbook and its supplementary materials from various aspects such as approach, skills and sub-skills, practicality concerns. Relevant points from experts' opinions were also extracted to be used in the developed questionnaire. The Kesidou and Roseman (2002) used expert opinion to shape their criteria for textbook evaluation (as cited in Swanepoel, 2010, p. 141). Moreover, interviews were conducted with 20 junior high school teachers in order to find out their perceptions, concerns, and expectations on the new textbook. According to MacDonald (2006) stakeholder concerns is a relatively new approach to criteria determination (as cited in Swanepoel, 2010, p.141). The interview questions were mainly directed towards understanding teachers' views on the new textbook and the problems which they encountered during its implementation as well as their main concerns especially regarding students' learning. For instance, nearly all the teachers were very concerned about developing literacy in students. It is worth pointing out here that there were some overlaps between experts' opinions and teachers' views such as concerns over developing literacy in students, overlooking cultural competence, etc. Thus, the researcher decided to contain these elements in the questionnaire. The developed questionnaire was content validated by 13 experts (5 PhD, and 8 PhD students, among them 3 were teacher experts).

C. Data Collection and Analysis

At this stage and for the first phase of this study, four semi-structured interviews with four members of the textbook development team at the Iranian Ministry of Education were conducted and audio-taped. The questions were related to context, input, and process evaluation of national textbook development project of the junior high school textbook. The interviews were then transcribed, and analyzed using content analysis. As Weber (1985, p. 7) put it, "a central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories" (as cited in Tesch, 1990, p. 79).

For the second phase of the study, similar to phase I, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 junior high school teachers and then were transcribed and analyzed by content analysis.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (FIRST PHASE)

At the first phase of the study, the results of the content analysis indicated that there were 11 categories for context evaluation, 9 for input evaluation, and 14 for process evaluation. Each category in the context, input, and process evaluation section further yielded some sub-categories. The following elaborates on the categories and the sub-categories.

A. Context Evaluation

Stufflebeam (2002) defined context evaluation as "assessing needs, problems, assets, and opportunities within a defined environment" (p. 287). Issues addressed by the context analysis are of paramount importance in textbook evaluation and because of this many scholars have emphasized doing context analysis for materials evaluation in general and textbook evaluation in particular (Skierso, 1991; Brown, 1995; Graves, 2000; Richards, 2001; Woodward, 2001; Kurniawan, 2006; Nation & Macalister, 2010). This even becomes more critical in the time of curriculum innovation and change and the introduction of new textbooks in any educational system. The reason is that the purpose of context analysis is to make sure that what happens is likely to be successful because it takes account of the local situation (Nation & Mclinster, 2010).

Based on the results of this research, the context analysis addressed issues related to the following cases:
- Major features of the relevant context
- Challenges within the defined educational context
- Opportunities within the defined educational context
- Intended beneficiaries
- The beneficiaries' needs
- How the beneficiaries' needs were determined
- Problems and barriers in meeting the needs
- Assets and opportunities for addressing the needs
- Goals setting
- The extent of the relevance of goals to the needs
- The extent of viability of goals considering the context

The findings of the context evaluation indicated that the most important characteristics of the educational context (i.e. public schools) were the formal system of education; heterogeneity regarding facilities, teachers, and students; English being taught as a foreign language with two hours specified for its instruction. The main challenges of educational context were considered to be lack of resources at schools; schools being very different equipment-wise; large classrooms; teachers not being trained for the new change; extremely heterogeneous population of students and teachers; insufficient time specified to language education at public schools; negative attitudes towards the educational context of public schools in general and language education at public schools in particular. Almost all the participants believed that challenges outweigh opportunities in the educational context. Opportunities were the feeling of need for change by almost all stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, and society as a whole; some teachers' readiness and enthusiasm for change; free education in public schools; schools being very influential across the country; healthy atmosphere at public schools; and holding in-service training courses for the teachers.

On the intended beneficiaries' needs, the following points were found out. Firstly students, and secondly teachers were referred to as the main intended beneficiaries. No formal needs assessment studies were done for the determination of needs and it was considered as one of the major drawbacks of the project. Yet, the needs were determined based on a thorough review of literature (studies which were done on the needs analysis such as theses and dissertations, books, and papers as well as studies which were done on the old books and problems related to them); interviews with experts and scholars in the field, as well as interviews with stakeholders such as teachers, students, and parents. The opportunities in meeting the needs were considered to be the feeling of need for change, as well as enthusiastic and qualified teachers. About the challenges in meeting the needs, the participants referred to the teacher training and preparing the teachers for the change; lack of suitable infrastructures for the change; as well as eliminating the traditional method and introducing the new method (CLT).

As for the goals, it was stated that there were two kinds of goals; general and specific. The general goals were cited in the top-hand documents of the country like Iran's 20 years perspective, and the national curriculum and were extracted from these official documents. The more specific goals were extracted from international frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The specific goals were also set based on the given needs. The participants stated that the goals were mainly set based on the needs and were highly relevant to them. To cut it short, they believed that the goals were to some extent and not to a great extent viable considering the context, resources, and the policies because of the challenges in the educational context.

B. Input Evaluation

According to Stufflebeam (2002) "input evaluation refers to existing and available resources for meeting needs and attaining objectives". In fact, input evaluation refers to the plans of the program for reaching the objectives. Based on the results of this study, the input evaluation consisted of the following categories:

- Textbook development plan and budget
- Ideal resources, inputs, facilities, and equipment used for textbook development
- Actual resources, inputs, facilities, and equipment which were used for textbook development
- The required qualifications for textbook development team membership
- Preparatory actions that were done before the development and delivery of the new EFL textbook
- The actual allocated time for textbook development
- The ideal time for the successful completion of the textbook development
- Available information for the chosen approach (CLT) for textbook development
- The administrative feasibility of the approach (CLT) within the specified context

Regarding the textbook development plan, the participants did not give clear answers. They only mentioned that the plan of the work was mainly based on the macro-policy making in the educational program of the Ministry of Education. On the budget, they pointed out that it was a meager amount of money but they prefer it to remain confidential and not be revealed in the study.

On the provision of resources, inputs, facilities, and equipment for the textbook development project, they believed that there were not enough facilities and resources for the project due to the lack of the budget. The only resources were physical environment, some official facilities, and free transportation services. Had the necessary budget been given to the team of experts, they could have had a huge file of pictures and illustrations, the possibility of making a video for the textbook, and piloting the textbook at least in some of the regions of the country. The team members were chosen according to their qualifications and capabilities based on some criteria such as teaching at public schools; having experience in compiling, designing, and developing both the main textbooks and supplementary ones; having a high degree of motivation; having positive attitudes towards education at public schools; not giving up because of hard conditions; being confidential, dedicated, and honest; and finally having a high level of scientific qualification and ability.

The actual allocated time for textbook development and delivery was eighteen months which was considered to be ideal by the team members. Since CLT was selected based on the national curriculum and the members did not have any role in its selection, the participants did not answer the questions related to the chosen approach, i.e. communicative language teaching (CLT) for Prospect 1. Regarding the administrative feasibility of the approach (CLT) within the specified educational context, they referred to the challenges as they had experienced in the context analysis section such as lack of resources and equipment at schools (e.g. classrooms not being suitable for the designed tasks, lack of CD players and video projectors); low proficiency of most of the language teachers; extremely heterogeneous population of students and teachers; teachers being accustomed to the traditional methods; and the inadequate time specified for language education.

C. Process Evaluation

The purpose of process evaluation is to provide a complete description of the actual program activities (Stuffelbeam, 1971). Relating this to the textbook development, process evaluation refers to what activities were done during the textbook development process. In this study, the process evaluation was directed towards what actually happened during the textbook development phase. The process evaluation was concerned with the following issues:

- Activities performed through the textbook development process
- The duty or task for each of the members of the team
- The translation of objectives into activities
- The problems that were encountered during textbook development and delivery
- How the textbook development team addressed the problems
- Whether any conflicts arose during the textbook development phase
- The costs of the textbook development project
- The budgeting problems
- Critical factors with regard to the successful completion of the textbook development
- The adjustments or revisions which were made during the textbook development
- The duration of time for textbook development, review, and evaluation
- Whether any guidelines were available for textbook review and evaluation
- The availability of reviewers
- Proposed changes in the structure of textbook development and review process

The participants stated that choosing the most suitable domain (personal) from the alternative ones (social, academic) for the beginners; selecting topics and themes; and sequencing were amongst the most important activities that were done in the textbook development phase. Assigning duties and responsibilities to each member was also another activity that was done in this phase. The duties were assigned to each team member according to the specialty and expertise and

also the experience that they had. Indeed, it was pointed out that the textbook development was mainly the product of a team work. All the members were engaged in all the phases of textbook development.

On the transformation of the objectives to the specific activities, the participants did not go into details and just pointed out that they attempted to incorporate into the book both the general and specific objectives. This was considered a very demanding task since there were some incongruities between the general objectives and the specific ones. For instance, in the general objectives, the emphasis was given to the Islamic and Iranian culture, while in the proposed approach (CLT) the focus was on the promotion of intercultural competence or understanding between cultures. The outcome was the presentation of a totally localized version of the CLT.

Many problems were encountered during textbook development and delivery. The most important ones were budgeting problems; lack of enough physical and human resources; low experience of the team members in comparison to the high sensitivity of the national project; the recent publication of the national documents like the national curriculum and therefore the ambiguity and lack of transparency of important concepts and definitions. The costs of project implementation and the allocated budget remained confidential. The participants also expressed discontent about the lack of enough fund and budget for the project. Yet, the coordination and cooperation between the team members; coming to an agreement; having harmony and unanimity; the cooperation of top-level authorities in charge; the validation of the textbook; the support of the administration/execution staff like the school principals; and the teachers were among the most critical factors mentioned by the participants which resulted to the betterment of the book development and administration.

Many revisions and adjustments were done before the final delivery of the textbook mostly based on the feedback received from the stakeholders. However, as the team members confessed only the logical and reasonable feedbacks were taken into consideration. The duration of time for textbook development, review, and evaluation was about eighteen months which was thought of by most team members as almost ideal for the project. No guidelines were available for textbook review and evaluation. But, there were three groups of human reviewers for textbook review and evaluation such as the team members themselves, the experts in the planning and research organizations of the Ministry of Education, and some outsider reviewers and editors. Finally, the team members considered the absence of textbook piloting as the main drawback.

In sum, radical changes in the English textbook of the first grade of junior high after 27 years has evoked a lot of reactions (mostly negative ones) from different stakeholders (especially teachers). Not knowing about leading factors such as the context in which the textbook will be used, inputs and resources specified for its development; and what occurred in the process of its design could obscure the picture of Prospect 1. An interesting point observed was that teachers' expectations was high because they had waited so long to get a perfect version of the revised book yet they were disappointed since it could not meet the expectations of most teachers. Besides, based on many teachers' viewpoints, the book was far from other similar internationally recognized textbooks (Prospect 1 teachers, personal communication, December, 20, 2014). To respond to this expectation, one of the Prospect 1 authors stated that "because of lack of enough resources and a very low budget, Prospect 1 could not compete with the glittering international textbooks in the market". Still, another author asserted that "Prospect 1 has not been produced under a very powerful international supervision of big names like Oxford, Cambridge, and British Council. Therefore, it could not compete with global textbooks".

All aforementioned facts were revealed by context, input, and process analysis of the textbook development project. In fact, conducting context, input and process evaluation of the new textbook helped to a great extent in gaining further understanding of the end product (Prospect 1). In other words, there are discernible stages in the design and development of instructional materials that could have a great impact on the evaluation of their final product (Islas-Guzman, 1980). CIPP has been considered to be a comprehensive model for EFL textbook evaluation because it provides a systematic way of looking at many different aspects of the textbook development process (Tiantong & Tongchin, 2013).

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (SECOND PHASE)

Product Evaluation

The results of the content analysis indicated that eight categories for the evaluation of Prospect 1 emerged which could be listed as follows:
- Strong and weak points of the new textbook
- The applicability of the textbook in the educational context
- Eliminating students' needs to participate in extracurricular English classes
- The motivating aspect of the textbook
- The desirability of only Iranian culture in the textbook
- Meeting the two major goals of "communication" and "literacy" skills
- Supplementary materials
- Suggestions for improvement

Each category was further analyzed and some subcategories emerged which will be discussed below.
- Strong and weak points of the new textbook

From teachers' perspectives, the new textbook addressed some of the problems of the old textbook such as being based on traditional methods of language instruction; focusing mainly on reading and writing skills; lack of attention to communicative skills; not having supplementary materials; and promoting a teacher-centered classroom atmosphere. To sum up the improvements in the new book are; being based on the newer approaches of language teaching (CLT); reviving the forgotten skills of listening and speaking; paying attention to the learners' communicative needs; being equipped with supplementary materials (teacher's book, work book, CDs, and flash cards); changing the class atmosphere from absolutely teacher-centered to more student-centered; and focusing more on meaning. Conversely, weak points of Prospect 1 were: not paying enough attention to literacy skills; not presenting English alphabet letters in order and at the start of the instruction; being very difficult for students with no English background; abandoning grammar; mere attention to fluency at the expense of accuracy; and presenting merely the Iranian culture.

As teachers put it the most problematic area is the method of alphabet instruction. Contrary to the old textbook that presented the alphabet in the order (from A to Z) and at the onset of English instruction; alphabets are spread across all units and are taught via conversations in the new textbook. Moreover, the alphabets are not presented in the order (from A to Z).

The teachers believed that the authors should have paid attention to the fact that the audience are not limited to Tehrani students who are usually familiar with English before attending schools, but are from all over the country including faraway villages. Unfortunately, most of the teachers confessed that they deviated from the textbook method and taught the alphabet at the onset of English instruction. They considered this as the last resort and believed that most of their problems are solved this way. Some of them also stated that they taught the grammar rules explicitly to the students when confronted with students asking questions on grammar points.

Teachers observed the new textbook as the opposing pole to the old one and complained about the fact that the two textbooks lay at the two ends of the continuum. In fact, teachers demanded striking a balance between communication (listening and speaking) and literacy skills (reading and writing).

- The applicability of the textbook in the educational context

What we mean by educational context here is public schools. The main features of public schools are: the formal system of education; heterogeneity regarding facilities, teachers, and students; English being taught as a foreign language with two hours specified for its instruction. According to Iran's Educational Measurement Organization, the country is divided into three different regions: privileged, semi-privileged, and deprived. Evidently, the most tangible issue of any curriculum and textbook development is identifying the needs of each region independently (Maftoon, et al., 2010). However, most of the teachers stated that in the design and development of the new textbook, the heterogeneity of the needs in each of the above-mentioned regions was not taken into consideration. Nearly all the teachers believed that the textbook is applicable mostly in the privileged areas of the country. In fact, they demanded allocating more resources for the deprived areas of the country because lack of resources imposes double pressure on their teaching.

Teachers also pointed out that in general the textbook is not very much applicable because of time and resource constraints. They mentioned that lack of educational facilities and the little amount of devoted time for English instruction will definitely reduce the performance of both teachers and students.

- Eliminating students' needs to participate in extracurricular English classes

Since English language teaching in the formal education of public schools in Iran does not equip students with the required level of English to meet their communicative needs, students usually resort to private language institutes to achieve their goals. These private institutes are active throughout the country and a lot of students are attracted by them because of their almost acceptable level of English instruction in comparison to public schools. Furthermore, the educational materials used by these language institutes are more diverse and appealing in comparison to schools. Therefore, both teachers and students prefer to use these materials in their classes (Maftoon, et al., 2010). Most teachers compared the new textbook to the global textbooks taught in private institutes and expressed their dissatisfaction towards the new textbook.

One of the main objectives of changing the English school books of public schools has been pointed out to be "reducing the gap between the public and private sectors" (Prospect 1 authors, personal communication, July, 11, 2014). In other words, it was claimed that students' needs to participate in the private language institutes or any extracurricular English classes would be eliminated by studying the new textbook. However, nearly all the teachers believed that the quality of English Language instruction at public schools is lower compared to private language institutes or other extracurricular English classes. They mentioned less amount of time dedicated to instruction; low proficient teachers; less interesting textbooks; and lack of equipment and resources as some of the reasons behind this deficiency.

- The motivating aspect of the textbook

Regarding the "motivating" aspect of the book, most teachers concurred that the textbook could be motivating for both teachers and students since teachers were very bored of the old books; the textbook is more functional in comparison to the old book; it pushes teachers forward in making themselves more up-to-date and more proficient in language; is based on the learners needs, and assigns more active roles for both students and teachers.

Contradictory views on the motivation aspect of the book were also perceived. Some teachers believed that the textbook could not be motivating because of students' language proficiency levels are diverse, schools have diverse

educational facilities and resources, enough time is not allocated to training teachers to implement the new method, and students' not being able to improve their literacy skills.

• The desirability of only Iranian culture in the textbook

The sole presentation of Iranian culture in the new textbook was an attribute that mostly aroused teachers' negative reactions. Although this issue has pros and cons among teachers, the opponents outweigh the proponents. Those in favour believed that considering students' age and level, the native culture suffices. They also maintained that only the Iranian Islamic culture should be accentuated in the textbook.

However, those against this position believed this to be one of the biggest weak points of the textbook. They considered the textbook as being very closed; full of cultural bias; causing a barrier to language learning because of being incongruent with the principle that language and culture are integrated; and presenting some gender-biased pictures. In fact, teachers called the textbook as an "English book with a pure Iranian world". They considered the purpose of learning English as "thinking beyond rather than within the borders". They believed that English is an international language and the purpose of studying it is to become acquainted with the cultures of the world. Most revealing is that they considered the textbook to be extremely over-localized.

Many scholars (e.g. Chastain, 1988; McGrath, 2002; etc), are strongly in favour of teaching the culture of a language that is taught (Guilani, et al, 2011). The teaching of culture is considered to be an important part of modern foreign language learning and teaching since one major aim of language teaching is to increase the understanding and tolerance between cultures. Furthermore, the cultural knowledge is needed for international communication and contacts (Corbett 2003, as cited in Lappalainen, 2011). Yet, the textbook doesn't remind the students that they are supposed to learn English to communicate with other cultures and nations. Whatever the reason, the presentation of only the Iranian culture was not appealing for most of the teachers because they saw this as contradictory to both principles of CLT and Common European Framework of Reference (Lappalainen, 2011).

• Meeting the two major goals of "communication" and "literacy" skills

Two main goals of the new textbook were developing "communication" and "literacy skills" in students after the end of the educational year (Prospect 1, 2013). On this issue, almost all the teachers agreed that the textbook has been successful in developing communication skills (listening and speaking) while it has not been successful in developing literacy skills (reading and writing). Regarding communication skills, because of the complete abandoning of grammatical structures, teachers were very concerned about lack of accuracy in students' speech. They expressed their deep concerns on developing literacy skills in students since they considered students as not being able to meet the expectations of both activities of work book and final achievement tests because of being very weak at literacy skills and becoming demotivated as a result.

• Supplementary materials

Overall, the teachers' views on supplementary materials (work book, teacher's guide, CDs, and flash cards) were positive. They considered the supplementary materials as being very helpful in both teaching and learning. For instance, they thought of the work book as being useful yet very challenging for students; focusing just on literacy skills; not having diverse and motivating activities for students; and not being practical because of lack of time. Teachers also commented that workbook characters such as Motahhari, Rajaee, Beheshti are the post-revolution famous characters known to the adults rather than to the teens of that age. Most of these characters are not included in the background knowledge of the students at that age. They believed that the authors could have used more familiar characters such as famous actors, sports champions, or cartoon characters.

Lack of resources at schools was also pointed out to be a major barrier in using CDs. Other pitfalls with CDs were the fast speed of speech as well as the low level of recording quality. Some teachers demanded that the number of CD tracks be increased in order to improve learners' motivation. Some other teachers preferred to have video CDs for the textbook.

On teacher's book, most of the teachers believed that it is good but complained about the inaccessibility of the book at most schools. They demanded more variety in presenting activities (like games, tests). They considered some parts in teacher's guide to be redundant and presented with so much details that might cause a barrier for teacher's creativity.

The flash cards too were considered to be good but inaccessible to the majority of teachers. Most teachers also complained about the high price of flash cards.

• Suggestions for improvement

Some teachers refrained from giving suggestions to improve the new textbook. The reason was they were very pessimistic about their views being taken into consideration and their voices being heard by the pertinent authorities. The overall suggestions made were focusing more on literacy skills (reading and writing); injecting a healthy dose of grammar in the textbook in order to prevent students from speaking in a parrot-fashion way; including more authentic, meaningful conversations in the students' book; including more fun activities and tasks; presenting the positive and negative aspects of the target and international cultures in order to promote critical thinking in students; abandoning written tests because of the gradual alphabet instruction and students' inability to write; and finally hearing teachers' voices.

To sum up, for the successful implementation of any change, three conditions should be met: First, the culture of new trends should be cultivated in the stakeholders including learners, teachers, parents, authorities, and administrators.

Second, the government should provide adequate funds, personnel, and resources. Third, assuming that a teacher is the most significant factor in the whole educational program, the teacher education centers should train teachers to implement the new approaches in different contexts (Farhady et al., 2010). Unfortunately, in case of the new textbook, none of these three conditions have been met; the culture of the new trends were not cultivated in stakeholders; the government did not provide adequate fund, personnel, and resources for the change; and most teachers did not receive training regarding the implementation of the new approach in their contexts (Prospect 1 authors, personal communication, July, 11, 2014).

In fact, most Prospect teachers confirmed that they have not been psychologically and educationally ready for such a tremendous change and except some head teachers, most teachers have not received any training on the new textbook. Teachers confessed that they were sticking to their traditional methods in their actual practice because that way they felt more confidence and less frustrated in their work. They had a lot of concerns about the application of the new textbook in their classes since they did not have adequate information, time, and access to resources, and training to use it.

Thus, the findings of the product evaluation (the new textbook) could make the textbook authors aware of the merits and pitfalls of the textbook from teachers' perspectives. This is important since teachers are considered to be the key variable for successful implementation of any change since they must shoulder classroom burdens by themselves (Fullan, 2007). Since the study was done with a considerable number of teachers in a vast geographical distribution of the country, the study results could help in making some useful recommendations for the curriculum planners, course designers, and material developers in the Ministry of Education for further improving the quality of the textbooks and produce more quality EFL textbooks for the next grades.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at conducting a program evaluation of the newly developed English textbook in the Iranian's public schools by applying the CIPP model. To achieve this purpose, the study was conducted in two phases: Phase I, in which the CIP (context, input, and process) evaluation of the new textbook was done and phase II, in which product evaluation of the new textbook was conducted from teachers' perspectives.

The results of phase I revealed both challenges and opportunities in the textbook development project. Lack of suitable infrastructures for the change as well as lack of adequate funds and resources was pointed out to be the main barriers in the prosperity of the project. On the other hand, the most important opportunities were the strong feelings of the need for the change by almost all stakeholders as well as the congeniality between the textbook development team members. However, amendments of the weak points of the project are required (e.g., establishing the suitable infrastructures for the change; injecting reasonable finance into the project; providing adequate physical and human resources; etc) to produce more satisfactory and appealing EFL textbooks for the next grades.

The results of phase II showed that most of the teachers considered the new textbook as a significant move forward for English instruction at public schools compared with the old version. However, they believed that like any other initiative; this innovation is not without its pitfalls. Nearly all teachers were discontent about the method of alphabet instruction as well as the ignorance of the development of intercultural competence in the textbook. The teachers were also dissatisfied about the methods of evaluation and applicability of the textbook. Moreover, they considered the textbook objectives as being unrealistic because of lack of time and resources. Yet, reviving the forgotten skills of listening and speaking as well as being equipped with supplementary materials was pointed out to be the strengths of the new textbook. To improve the textbook, some suggestions have been offered by teachers (e.g., paying more attention to literacy skills; including more authentic, and meaningful conversations in the students' book; presenting the positive and negative aspects of the target and international cultures; abandoning written tests; etc). What teachers expect is that their voices be heard and their perspectives be taken into account by the pertinent authorities.

This is the first time that an English national textbook development project by the Ministry of Education has gone through such an extensive program evaluation. Two points are worth considering here: First, enormous differences among the Prospect 1 end-users (both teachers and students) from many aspects such as being from diverse economical conditions, geographical positions, and having various cultural values made the development project much more challenging for the textbook development team members because the textbook has been expected to work for a nation and meet a variety of expectations. Thus, one should be fair in any evaluation and judgment of the textbook both at the development and the application phases. Second, it must also be noted that one round of evaluation is never enough for such a huge project at the national level. It is hoped that those interested will carefully put the project under their lens once more to come up with more cases of weak and strong points. Such revisions will prove to be invaluable when similar national textbook development projects are to be launched once more by the Ministry of Education in the future. Improvement and modification will not come true unless willingness and compliance is ensured from different sides of top-down policy makers, executive staffs like the textbook development team members, and bottom-up fraction of school teachers and students.

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