

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Educational Equity in English Language Teaching at Iranian and Finnish Primary and Secondary Schools

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**Abstract.** Considering educational equity in English education as an important issue at schools in this modern time, this study aimed at comparing English education at schools of Iran and Finland from an educational equity point of view. The researcher used a qualitative research method comprising library method of research to do this study. To this end, a lot of up-to-date and useful articles, theses and dissertations were selected and studied to compare English education at schools of Iran and Finland from an educational equity perspective. According to these materials, some features of English education in Iran and Finland from an educational equity perspective were extracted. These basic features were about the weaknesses, and strengths of English education at schools in Iran and Finland with respect to the matter of educational equity. Then, all of these features were coded in numbers according to the hierarchy of importance and literature, and put in Tables 1 and 2. The salient result of this study revealed that English education at schools with respect to the matter of educational equity is more powerful in Finland than in Iran, since there is no difference between public and private schools in Finland about the age at which a student starts learning English, the quality of English education, and the quality of educational equipment in English classes. Eventually, the study

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indicated that educational equity in English education is so weak at Iranian schools. Therefore, Educational system of Iran should try to find innovative methods to improve its educational equity at schools to an optimal level. The results may contribute to English policy making process and English course planning. Then, the study provides some suggestions for improvement of educational equity in English education at public schools in Iran.

**Keywords:** English education, Iran, Finland, school, equipment, educational system, educational equity

## 1. Introduction

Currently English language plays an important role as a lingua franca and international language in different domains such as educational, social, and political issues in the world (Valipour, DavatgarAsl, & Nashta Bagheri, 2014). Therefore, to communicate with foreigners and acquire their knowledge, learners need to know a global language such as English (Mirbagheri, 2014).

However, as the history of English education in Iran reveals, on the one hand English education was a vital issue for economic and technological progresses before the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and, on the other hand, there are some distinctive features about teaching and learning English language in Iran, which make it a special and different context in comparison to other countries. First of all, there is a strong belief among people and policy makers that English is the language of countries such as the UK and the USA which are the enemies of Iran. Furthermore, English textbooks in the world were written to impose American and western cultures which are considered inappropriate and against the religion 'Islam'. Therefore, according to policy documents, if Iran needs a sizeable growth in the production of science and technology, it is necessary to focus on the development of an ELT program which does not threaten the national identity of the country.

As a student studying English for seven years in this English educational system before, and as an English teacher teaching in the current system now, the main author of this paper has found another problem in English education in Iran. The high increase of private bilingual schools in Iran that begin teaching English from pre-primary level at

elementary schools with high quality English teachers and international textbooks for students with high-income parents is an issue. Thus, this matter makes inequity among all students about learning English similarly in an Islamic society like Iran which always tries to create equity completely in all parts of the country. The author of the present paper always has thought about this matter. Therefore, it evoked her to write an article on 'educational equity in English education in schools'. So the following is a summary of English education in schools of Iran and Finland along with a description about educational equity.

### **1.1. English education in schools of Iran in Brief**

In the current educational system of Iran, English is taught as a foreign language for six years in public high schools four hours per week. Students at first grade learn the English alphabet recognition and pronunciation of letters, and limited vocabulary. Then, at next stages the main focus is on reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015). Unfortunately, listening and speaking skills are neglected. Therefore, communicative needs of students are forgotten. Because of time limit, it is difficult to implement Communicative Language Teaching method. Furthermore, because of lack of language laboratory to enhance conversational skills, public schools cannot afford the communicative needs of students. Since English textbooks are developed and published by the Ministry of Education, cultural information is neglected in textbooks and ELT program (Ashari, & Zarrin, 2014). In this system not only students but also English teachers have no strong motivation in the teaching-learning process. Thus, private schools are the best choice for students who lose their motivation to learn English (Meshkat, & Hassani, 2012) and would rather learn English through a more communicative approach (Khajavi, & Abbasian, 2011). Private schools in Iran begin teaching and learning English from pre-primary stage at elementary schools with high quality English teachers and international textbooks through a communicative approach in a more ideal situation for students whose parents can afford the fee. The author teaches English in private schools and English language institutes in Shiraz, a city in west south of Iran in the present time. She experienced English Edu-

cation in public school as a student some years ago and now approves of the new and qualified condition in private schools. However, this ideal condition is available only for students with high income families. There is a point about English teachers in Iran. Nearly all have majored in English, and hold a B.A., or M.A. to teach English in schools of Iran.

### 1.1.1. Ambivalent position of English in Iran (less or more English?)

After three decades of implementing English education in educational system of Iran, there is not a clear and comprehensive path to English language policy in this country. Society pays careful attention to English, since they know that English is a necessity to communicate in the modern world, to get more science and technology, to promote research and increase the international knowledge production (Kiany, Mahdavy, & Ghafa Samar, 2011). Furthermore, policy makers wrote some national documents for English education after the revolution in 1979 which were influenced by their conservative beliefs. However, these policies are in written form not in action.

In 2004, Comprehensive Policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran Regarding Globalization was approved. “English as a necessary skill and not as an element against identity” (p.18) is introduced (Davari, & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). In 2007, another document was written for English teaching based on Communicative Language Teaching by a team of seven experts under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. According to this national curriculum, students can satisfy their basic needs in English after taking English courses in public high schools. However, this document was not approved by the new government and again this project was not implemented in the real area (school) (Ashari & Zarrin, 2014). Afterwards in 2009, The National Curriculum Document recommended a communicative approach in English education at schools, lowering the age of language instruction due to lateralization around the ages of 10 to 12, and including Islamic and Iranian values in English textbooks. Moreover, in the fourth document in 2010, The Fundamental Transformation of Education, foreign language education was designated as an optimal course in the curriculum and on the certain conditions

according to Islamic and Iranian ideologies (Davari, & Aghagolzadeh, 2015).

Thus, there is not a clear consensus between these documents and Ministry of Education towards English education in educational system of Iran. As an English teacher in this system, the author always encounters the English-in-education policy that is not unified. The basic reason is the remarkable increase in the numbers of bilingual private schools which begin English education from pre-primary level in elementary school with high quality in Iran as the key point to the importance of English education among Iranians, albeit available for well-off families, not for all students equally. The educational system that allows private bilingual school to offer English as early as possible, but does not permit public school to begin teaching and learning English in elementary stage creates educational inequity between Iranian students with respect to the matter of English education.

To mention an example on English education in Iran, in an invaluable attempt, Maftoon, YazdaniMoghadam, Gholebostan, and Beh-Afarin (2010) conducted a survey to assess the current status of English education in public schools and its practicality in private sectors. To this end, 1470 high school students, teachers and parents were asked to complete the questionnaires. Furthermore, the authors interviewed sixty-one high-ranking authorities of the Ministry of Education and university professors. The findings of this study were in congruent with previous studies, that is, there were some inadequacies in current English education in public schools and practicality of private sectors in English education.

In another study, Aliakbari and Gheitasi (2014) directed a study to compare teaching English in private language institutes and public schools in Iranian educational system from the perspective of the English teachers who practice in both systems. It also aimed at examining teachers' preference to teach in either place. The results indicated that English teachers preferred to teach in private language institutes due to the better quality of management, fulfillment and teaching environment.

Furthermore, Mohaghegh Mahjoobi (2014) conducted a study to indicate the faults of the current context of English Language Teaching in Iran, to make clear the main weaknesses of this context, and the

essential demand to change and improve the structural framework of present educational system with regard to the subject of English Language Teaching both in public and private schools in Iran and to satisfy the learners' requirements and expectations.

### **1.2. English education in schools of Finland in Brief**

Foreign languages, as a compulsory subject should be taught at elementary schools in Finland. National Project on Finnish Language Education Policies (KIEPO) in 2005-2007 recommended starting foreign language learning at pre-school level. Among foreign languages such as German, Russian, and French, English as a foreign language is very popular in Finland. Public schools are the basic part of educational system of Finland (Kantelinen & Pollari, 2008) that offer teaching English with the same quality and quantity to the few private sectors (less than ten per cent) in Finland. The weekly exposure of 40-45 minutes with two classes a week in primary schools is according to the core curriculum program in Finland. English is taught by teachers who majored in English and also had some in-service teacher training courses. English teachers are free to use local or international materials and any teaching method they prefer in their classes (Rixon, 2013), since the main goal is learning rather than testing (Hayes, 2014). Furthermore, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) is the base to evaluate English education at Finnish schools (Kantelinen & Pollari, 2008). According to CEF, teachers should teach English using songs, rhymes, poems and games in primary schools "to motivate the pupils to learn English, to improve social skills, to develop intercultural skills and understanding of target culture and to bring joy to the FL classroom" (Sokka-Meaney, 2008, p.3). In English classes, listening and speaking are introduced in grades 1-2, and gradually reading and writing in the next grades. Students' communicative needs are the main objectives of the core curriculum (Kantelinen & Pollari, 2008). Also, English teachers have master's degree. The main goal of educational system of Finland is to offer all students equal opportunities to learn English in public system with similar quality (Hayes, 2014).

In the light of the value attached to the importance of teaching and

learning English in the era of globalization, more emphasis should be given to educational equity in English education in schools in countries in the world.

### **1.3. Educational equity**

The study of excellence and equity related directly to the study of educational equity. Two factors were so important in educational equity. The first was fairness. It suggested that personal conditions should not have negative effect on academic success. The second factor was inclusion. It was about a comprehensive standard that applied to everyone in a certain educational system. These two factors were dependent on each other for true academic success of an educational system (OECD, 2012).

Equity, as an important matter, for children, teachers, and societies, was a basic value of public educational systems. Equity was also a great important factor in enrichment of quality in education. Equity made equal access for all children, therefore, it increased the overall learning results, and social development for children. (Wood, Levinson, Postlethwite, & Black, 2011).

Ghiyasvandian, Nikbakht-Nasrabadi, Mohamadpour, Abbasi, and Javadi (2014) believed that there was a great consensus around the world about the importance of educational equity. It was as one of the students' rights that should be preserved regardless of race, religious belief, color, sex, religion, and socio-economic condition.

Without any doubt, equity in educational matters became one of the fundamental necessities of current democracies, leading as a means of doing it, to a change in agreement from the right on education to the duty of education, as indicated by the concept of mandatory schooling (Demeuse, Crahay, & Monseur, 2001).

For instance, Partanen (2012), in a study, compared the elementary educational system of USA with Finland. The results showed that the United States' educational system required to surpass its educational system and pay more attention to the matter of equity in all primary schools.

In another study, Perry (2009), through a cross-national study, compared equity of secondary student academic achievement in twelve coun-

tries, and explained cross-national differences in educational equity by examining a variety of social, demographic, and educational factors. The results showed that Finland and Canada had the most equitable student outcomes among twelve countries, and Germany and the US had the most inequitable student outcomes. The findings indicated that social, demographic, and educational factors can affect educational equity, positively, and/or negatively.

Further, in a comparative study of thirteen countries, Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) probed that political and social policies have much more effects than educational ones on educational equity in different countries in the world. The main result of this study depicted that quality education does not reduce the negative effect of social class on achievement. This study is an important “macro” study to evaluate the impact of expansion in education on educational inequality. This latter finding is “partly due to the fact that school systems select students on the basis of characteristics which are correlated with their socio-economic origins” (Blossfeld, & Shavit, 1993, p.26).

#### **1.4. Statement of the problem**

What motivated this study on educational equity in English education is the great value of English education in the world. There have made many efforts in relation to English education in Iran. However, all its objectives have not been achieved.

In Iran’s current educational context, English is taught at high school for the first time as a compulsory course in public schools, but it is taught from pre-primary level at private schools or private language institutes (Shariatmadari, 1985; Shokouhi, 1989; Shoarinejad, 2008). “Instead of such an abandoned place of English language in the Iranian state educational system, there are many private schools which provide intensive FL tuition to the students with high-income parents. The Iranian English language teaching context mirrors Iranian parents’ keen interest in FL education even if this requires extracurricular payments.” (Rassouli, & Osam, 2013, p. 264)

Perry (2009) stated that most people in democratic societies generally agree that students should have similar educational opportuni-

ties. All students should have access to a quality education, regardless of where they live or how much money their parents earn.

Although one of the main aims of educational system of Iran is making equal and high quality education for all, there is an educational inequity in access to high quality and early English education especially at public schools. Thus, there is a necessity for evaluation of the issue of educational equity in English education in schools in Iran in order to promote learning quality, especially learning English among all students equally through a comparative research. Since Pepin (2004) believed that cross-national comparative research can help to understand uniqueness of the country and get the view of the problems of a particular fact. This is of a special value for such a disputable subject as the study of educational equity.

Countries differ in the extent to which they value fairness and equity. It seems that Finland considers educational equity in English education as a foreign language more than other countries in the world. Learning English at elementary level is a compulsory part of all schools in Finland. Every student should learn English in elementary school equally. Therefore, the central goal of this study is to compare Finish English education with English education of Iran in order to know strengths, and weaknesses of English education in schools of both countries from educational equity point of view to make sure what educational system of Iran can learn from educational system of Finland.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following questions were raised by the researcher:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of English education in schools in Iran with respect to the matter of educational equity?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of English education in Finland with regard to the issue of educational equity in schools?

## **2. Methodology**

In this study, a qualitative library research method was conducted to compare English education at schools of Iran and Finland, in order to identify some strengths, and weaknesses of both educational systems

with respect to the issue of educational equity at schools (primary and secondary schools). Due to teaching English at a secondary school and at a language institute in Shiraz, Iran, the author always sees inequity in English education in educational settings in Shiraz, a big city in west south of Iran, so the author chose a qualitative study to collect the findings of other quantitative and qualitative studies to come to new results by putting them together in this study. The objective of this study, as a cross-national comparative study was to reach a judgment on the educational equity of educational systems of Iran and Finland with respect to the matter of English education at schools. Therefore, the main researcher of this paper along with three skillful English instructors established confidence in the findings of this study and considered credibility of results through comprehensive peer debriefing method. Further, they investigated the dependability of outcomes using code-recoding (inter-coder reliability) strategy.

### 2.1. Materials

In order to compare English education at schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity point of view, the author of the present paper used Internet and libraries to search, find and select different but top notch journals (Iranian and foreign journals) to find new articles, surveys, theses and dissertations pertinent to the topic of this study. She found and then printed some articles, dissertations and surveys on English education in Iran and some articles, surveys and theses on English education in Finland as well as other countries, to gather related information to achieve the objectives of this study. Based on literature (articles, theses, and dissertations), educational system of Finland is the most outstanding system in implementing educational equity in English education at schools among other countries in the world.

### 2.2. Procedure

For the purpose of this study, some new articles, surveys, theses, dissertations were studied, in order to compare English education in schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity point of view. The main approach taken to collect information was constant comparative method, that is, first, all materials were read by the author. Next, step by step

all texts were compared and afterwards, she found some basic features of weaknesses and strengths of English education with regard to educational equity at schools of Iran and Finland. Then, some features of strengths were coded in numbers 1 to 13, and were situated in Table 1 and some features of weaknesses were coded in numbers 1 to 10, and next were positioned in Table 2. The main criteria for coding were based on hierarchy of importance and literature. Table 1 and 2 were made by the researcher. So, as mentioned above, Table 1 and 2 were validated through peer review strategy. Then, trustworthiness (dependability) of material in Tables was enhanced through inter-coder reliability method by three experts in the field of TEFL and education.

### 3. Results

The present research is a special effort to compare English education at schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity perspective. Therefore, both English educational systems were compared, and the researcher received some distinct information about educational equity in English education at schools (primary and secondary) of both systems. Through this comparison, some features of English education in Iranian and Finnish schools from educational equity point of view were considered, which were arranged according to two categories, that consist of strengths, and weaknesses of English education in schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity point of view, and they were coded in numbers based on the hierarchy of importance and literature. Afterwards, the results about these features will be shown in Table 1 and 2. Then, some findings of the strengths of English education in schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity perspective are given in Table 1, and lastly, some findings of the weaknesses of English education in schools from educational equity point of view are given in Table 2. Then Table 1 and 2 were validated by three experts in the field of TEFL and education.

**Table 1.** Some features of the strengths of English education in schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity point of view

| Features   | Country  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Iran   | Finland  |
| 1.The early start of English instruction at schools                      |  | English is introduced rather early in grade 1 or 2(Kantalinen, &Pollari, 2008)   |
| 2.The quality of English teachers  | Teachers in private schools are more qualified than public schools ( Maftoon, Yazdani Moghadam, Golebostan, & Behafarin, 2010)   | English teachers with master's degree are professional in their teaching (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015)   |
| 3.The high quality of teacher-training                                   |  | Practice and teaching more than theory (Niemi, Jakkusihvonen, 2010)  |
| 4.The status of English teacher in society                               | English teachers are respected in Iran (Ahmadzadeh, 2014)  | Teachers are highly respected (Hayes, 2014).   |
| 5.The place of culture of target language in instruction and textbooks   |  | The pupils, besides getting to know the culture of the target language realize that they are equal in value (Kantalinen, Pollari 2008).                                |
| 6.The level of motivation in students and teachers                       | In private school, motivation is more than public school (Meshkat & Hassani, 2012)   | Highly motivated students are in the schools (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015)   |
| 7.The condition of English class   | Less emphasis on conversation inside the class, overemphasis on grammar, and long reading texts less opportunities for students to interact with teacher and students, less time for groupwork (Meshkat & Hassani, 2012) | Students engage in cooperative, inquiry-based, and problem-solving activities. Class is managed according to student-centered method (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015) |
| 8. Teacher's autonomy  | It is better in private school than public school (Maftoon, Yazdani Moghadam, Golebostan, & Behafarin, 2010)   | Teachers have high degree of autonomy to teach their students based on teachers' choice (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015)  |
| 9.The importance of communicative method of teaching                     | This method is used in private schools more than public schools (The author of this paper, 2016)   | This method is the foundation of English class (Kantalinen, & Pollari, 2008)   |
| 10.The quality of teacher recruiting                                     | Teacher choice is better in private school than public school (Maftoon, Yazdani Moghadam, Golebostan, & Behafarin, 2010)   | Best and qualified teachers are recruited (Darling-Hamond, 2010) (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015)   |
| 11.Equity in English education   |  | Equity is the most important goal of public education (Popa, Laurian, Fitzgerald, 2015).   |
| 12.The value of long-life learning in English education                  |  | Students become good learners not test takers (Sahlberg, 2009).  |
| 13.The similarity between public and private school in English education |  | There are high degrees of similarities between schools in Finland (Niemi, Jakkusihvonen, 2010).  |

**Note:** The blank cell is the sign of lack of that feature for that country.

**Table 2.** Some features of the weaknesses of English education in schools of Iran and Finland from educational equity point of view

| Feature  | Country   |         |
|--|---|---------|
|  | Iran  | Finland |
| 1.The late start of English instruction at schools | English education starts late at high schools(Kiany, Mahdavi, & Jafarsamar, 2011).  |         |
| 2.The low quality of English instruction           | Less emphasis on conversation inside the class, overemphasis on grammar, and long reading texts, less opportunities for students to interact with teacher and students, less time for groupwork (Meshkat & Hassani, 2012) |         |
| 3.The quality of English teacher                   | They are not highly qualified specially at public schools(Sadeghi, & Richards, 2015)  |         |
| 4.The low quality of teacher-training              | Teacher-training is based more on theory than practice(JamshidiAvanaki & Sadeghi, 2014)   |         |
| 5.No attention to communicative approach           | The majority of teachers do not use communicative method of teaching ( Mirbagheri, 2014).   |         |
| 6.The weak content of textbooks                    | The content of books is not authentic.lack of pragmatism and functionalism in books(Mirbagheri, 2014).  |         |
| 7.Lack of motivation in class                      | Students are demotivated in English classes at public schools (Meshkat, & Hassani, 2012).   |         |
| 8. No attention to target Culture in English books | Textbooks do not prove in developing cultural understanding(Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012)   |         |
| 9.Teacher's autonomy                               | Lack of autonomy to administer the class the way the teacher thinks the best ( AliAkbari & Gheitasi, 2014)  |         |
| 10.Inequity in English education                   | Inequity is so clear in English education between schools in (Tabatabaei, & Pourakbari, 2012, Rasouli & Osam, 2013)   |         |

**Note:** The blank cell is the sign of lack of that feature for that country.

### 3.1. Discussion

The goals put forward by this study were to compare English education of Iranian and Finnish schools, in order to identify some weaknesses, and strengths in English education from educational equity point of view. Based on the results of this study in Table 1 and Table 2, there are more weaknesses than strengths about educational equity in English education in schools in Iran in comparison to Finland. Therefore, there are some important issues to discuss about English education in schools in Iran and Finland from educational equity perspective.

The first issue that is the most important sign of inequity in English education in schools is the big difference between public and private schools in Iran about the age at which a student starts learning English. Valipour et al (2014) stated that “the recognition of English as a global language among teachers, students and (parents) is a clear matter. Almost everybody thinks of English as a means of gaining better employment and higher social and educational status and as a requirement for adapting oneself with modern society” (p. 260).

Therefore, English education as one of the most important key principles of strengths in each educational system must be offered at the same age to all students in the society to create educational equity.

Implementing Communicative Language Teaching is the second matter in English language classrooms in public schools of Iran. Employing CLT as the most known comprehensive approach in language teaching (Ashari, & Zarrin, 2014) is considered difficult. According to Ghanbari and Ketabi as cited in Ashari and Zarrin (2014), “Lack of feasibility, and compatibility of the new existing method with existing values and practices, lack of enough appropriate training and retraining course, teachers’ low confidence in the new approach, practical constrains, and unsupportive school environment” (P.295) are some obstacles to use CLT in EFL context like Iran. According to this paper the special method of English instruction in public schools is grammar-based, and audio-lingual. Lack of emphasis on listening and speaking inside the English class, in other words a non-communicative method of teaching English is a demotivating factor for students in public high schools. Nevertheless, English is taught according to communicative method in private schools. In con-

trary to Iran, English is taught communicatively in public and private schools in Finland. This matter is in line with Sadeghi and Richards's (2015) finding that the method of English teaching is better in private schools than public schools in Iran.

The third problem relates to the quality of teachers in public schools that is because of the quality of teacher-training centers in which they were taught. What is ignored more than anything else in Iranian teacher education is the practice of teaching. This is a basic need of the teacher education to make a balance between theory and practice, as it has been soundly provided in the Finnish teacher education based on the results in Table 1. This issue is in line with JamshidiAvanaki and Sadeghi's (2014) finding that teacher education in Iran puts more emphasis on theory in comparison to teacher education in the UK which puts more emphasis on practice. Kashef (1999) proposed that teacher-training centers in Iran could not provide practical teaching courses with suitable educational hours for their applicants.

The fourth problem is related to the English textbooks in public schools in Iran. Meshkat, and Hassani (2012) found that "there was a trend in Iranian students to consider 'learning contents and materials' as a demotivating factor. Iranian students are demotivated by the lessons that focused on grammar', 'long reading passages', and expectancy to use grammatically correct English in the classroom" (P.748). And according to the findings in Table 2, the weak content of English textbooks in public high schools in Iran is one of the weaknesses. This finding is in line with Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) finding that 'learning contents and materials' was a demotivating factor for high school students in their study.

According to results of this paper, another problem about the content of Iranian English textbooks is lack of information about the culture of target language. Chastain (1988), and McGrath (2002) strongly supported the idea of teaching the culture of a foreign language that is taught. In his analysis of the Iranian high school textbooks, Aliakbari (2004) investigated the shortcomings of ELT textbooks with respect to the matter of target culture. Based on the contents of Table 2, it is clear that English textbooks taught at private schools are international

textbooks which are written according to communicative approach, and contain cultural points of foreign language. In comparison to Iran, in Finland English textbooks are international books, or locally written according to communicative approach. This result confirms Validpour et al's (2014) findings that teachers and students "preferred using international materials, and they considered teaching English culture as a requirement of better understanding and learning materials" (p.261). Mahboudi and Javdani (2012) stated that "Without being equipped to deal with the cultural and ideological pressures from the outside world, most students will have wasted much of their time in the EFL classroom on a linguistic code they will never use" (p.93).

#### 4. Conclusion

As it can be concluded from the present study, English education in Iran needs serious changes in public educational system. These changes are in terms of lowering the age of English instruction, implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) comprehensively in English classes, enhancing the quality of English textbooks (including cultural subjects to respect first and target language culture and enhance inter-cultural information) and giving equal attention to the four skills. Furthermore, the quality of English teachers should be promoted through state-of-the-art teacher-training courses. JamshidiAvanaki and Sadeghi (2014) hold the view that:

English teachers urgently need specialized and professional training for their expected and successful teaching methods with appropriate techniques, if successful teaching/learning is expected. Since they have the important responsibility, educating the generation, those who will run the society in future (p.1156).

Therefore, English teachers will be able to use CLT skillfully to engage students communicatively in classrooms' activities. Thus, this will enhance the degree of motivation between teachers and students. In Behroozi and Amoozegar's (2014) study "teachers showed willingness to receive training in how to plan and perform their teaching more effective and motivate students' engagement in class activity; also teachers seek effective approach for teaching English" (p.203).

As an English teacher teaching in private bilingual schools and language institutes in Shiraz, a big city in west south of Iran, the author always is faced with the big discrepancy in English education between public and private schools in Iran. Students must be taught all subjects in English everyday in a week from pre-primary stage in bilingual schools; however, English is taught in public schools only two sessions in a week at high level of schooling. Indeed, the educational system of Iran is more stratified, and which assigned students to tracks from an early age by important role of private schools. It creates more unequal situation in English education, since socio-economic background affects all levels of the educational system. In comparison to Iran, Finnish educational system focused on a comprehensive education, limited role of private schools and consequently low impact of socio-economic background. It is hoped that the policy makers also change their political views about English to have an excellent English system with high quality, since there are many studies done in the field of English education in Iran to encourage the course planners to lower the deficiencies in English educational system of Iran. It is believable that there are many skillful English professors, instructors, teachers, and university students who have a lot of experience and skills to help the educational system through giving new ideas. The author again confirms this fact, because Iran has high quality universities with skillful experts in English major.

It is understandable that only some features of educational equity in English education were found in this study. Without any doubts undertaking further studies is a necessity to realize and discover other features of educational equity in English education in schools of Iran and Finland through quantitative studies.

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