



## A Comparative Study of Teacher Education Internship Curriculum in Iran, Australia and Singapore

Asad Hajazi<sup>1</sup> (Corresponding author)  
Abolfazl Bakhtiari<sup>2</sup>

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 02 May 2020 Revised: 05 July 2020 Accepted: 17 August 2020 Online: 16 March 2021</p>	<p>The aim of present study was a comparative study of internship curriculum in teacher education of Iran, Australia and Singapore. For this purpose, the Bereday's approach was used. The statistical population included universities offer internship courses in Australia, Singapore and Iran using purposive sampling method. data collection method was content analysis and its validity and reliability were indicated through perspectives of internship mentors, curriculum instructors and researchers' colleagues respectively. Then, curricula of the selected countries were extracted using tables and checklists. The research findings reveal that there are some similarities among three countries regarding full-time internships. The number of internship courses in Singapore and Iran is similar and different from Australia. There are also differences between teacher education of Singapore and Australia with Iran in cases such as amount of internship units and performance. Singapore has a postgraduate teacher education program, offers an international internship program, and extensive cooperation among schools and the National Institute of Education. According to the research findings, it is recommended that Iran's teacher education policy makers have a review of new internship program, special attention to role of tutors, more flexibility in internship programs, increasing share of dissertations and seminars, and strengthening supervision on internship programs.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Comparative Research Method of Agreement Method of Difference Internship Curriculum Teacher Education</p>	

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Farhangian University, Tehran, Email: a-hejazi@cfu.ac.ir

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Farhangian University, Tehran, Email: drbakhtiari7@gmail.com

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, teacher education has played a vital role in the development of educational institutions in many countries. While the experience of countries in the field of teacher education vary (Sahlberg, 2011), in fact, countries pay different level of attention to development of teacher education (Dee & Wyckoff, 2013). Awareness of wide studies of countries about teacher education programs provides an invaluable opportunity for the growth and development of other countries' education (Jamil, Razak, Raju & Mohamed, 2014). In fact, Internship is one of the most important programs in teacher education universities that make teacher volunteers ready to enter the classroom with professional skills. Numerous research findings indicate that internship program has very beneficial learning outcomes for student-teachers. For example, benefits such as: First, practice acquired knowledge and skills (Daniels & Brooker, 2014 ; Khalil, 2015); Second, self-guidance (Nghia & Dien, 2018; Nunley, Pugh, Romero, & Seals, 2016; Robinson, Ruhanen & Breakey, 2016); Third, gaining more self-confidence; Fourth, bridging the gap between theoretical training and practical job activities (Moore & Plugge, 2008); and Fifth, increasing student motivation and academic performance (Jones, Green & Higson, 2017). Obviously, attention to improve quality of internship curriculum for student-teacher is an undeniable necessity, because according to Mattox (2010) we are dealing with learning that disappears after teaching and does not lead to improve performance. Therefore, different universities around the world have taken effective steps to improve quality of teacher education internship programs.

In Iran, with the revival of teacher training courses after the establishment of Farhangian University in 2013, a major revision was made in the internship program. Therefore, university policymakers and planners put a project called "Training of Thoughtful Teachers" at the forefront of their programs - especially for internship. According to the current instructions and topics of internship at Farhangian University, an internship is a thought-provoking or contemplative internship that requires student-teachers to reflect while gathering their experiences. Also, with a critical awareness of their experiences, they should create mental patterns and schemas that will help them make effective decisions and evaluate results of those decisions. One of the explicit purposes of this guideline is that the internship program should have a technical approach.

In this approach, much emphasis is placed on the techniques and skills and in fact content of the internship is practice and repetition of them. In addition to the content of instruction, the internship evaluation method indicates a technical approach. The major part of the internship is the responsibility of the supervisor. With pre-planning for each student-teacher, the mentor is present in their classroom during the semester, observing students' teaching, and assessing whether or not the student-teacher has learned what has learned before the internship. Although the instructions of this course try to show the technical logic of the internship in various dimensions, it should be said that the current program is not a complete version of this approach. Challenges such as short time for teaching techniques in pre-internship courses, lack of access of centers and campuses to new research and academic resources, lack of opportunity to practice and replicate techniques, and shortage of skills and mastery during the internship ( One day a week in the last two years), lack of sufficient opportunity for faculty to fully supervise all student-teachers to assess mastery of the methods and techniques and ultimately handing them over to tutors without defined or trained specific tasks reduce technical validity of the program. Perhaps it can be said that in this course, the program is somewhat master-apprenticeship or a combination of both teacher-apprentice and technical approaches. Another feature of Iran's Farhangian University internship program is lack of clarity in its goals. In this regard, Maleki (2018) in a phenomenological study and through analyzing lived experience of main elements of program concluded that the stakeholders (Mentors, students - teachers and tutors) are confused about the goals of internship program and do not know what development and promotion the internship program is supposed to create and in what dimensions and directions in the student-teachers. On the other hand, identifying and solving school problems through two internship courses (1) and (2) are not consistent with the levels of reflective thought. Therefore, Farhangian University of Iran has a significant distance with world experiences in terms of time allocation to the internship programs.

Despite what has been said, Farhangian University's internship program has made an unprecedented leap in the history of teacher education in recent years; a jump that puts Iran in the ranks of many developed countries. However, as stated with reference to scientific and theoretical sources, this program has some problems in cases such as less attention to levels of reflective thought, inadequate sufficient time, less attention to professional characteristics, and incomplete version of Internship without reflective thought. Also, the current reality of the internship curriculum at Farhangian University of Iran indicates that although in recent years a good relations have been established between this university and schools regarding the new internship program,

there is still a long gap between the intended program and its implementation (Hejazi, 2019). Also, student-teachers are often unfamiliar with the reality of school and classroom, and most of their time is spent doing pre-arranged activities and assignments (Musaepur, 2018). However, numerous researchers inside and outside Iran have paid attention to the teacher training internship program and pointed out its obstacles and challenges at different levels. For example: Almasi, Zarei Zavarki, Nili, & Delavar (2017) revealed that status of Farhangian University internship curriculum in the design and implementation of learning unit through lesson study process and to strengthen the practical and professional skills of student-teachers is unfavorable. Zaresefat (2017) through analysis of lived internship experiences at Farhangian University found that many supervisors and tutors have overlooked their supportive role. Instead of consistent clinical oversight and moral support for student-teachers, they disclaim responsibility and run the program incompletely. The findings of Hajazi (2017) showed lack of compliance with the prerequisites of the internship course, and traditional teaching methods in schools are the main problems of the new internship program for teacher training at Farhangian University. Keramati & AhmadAbadi (2017) found that the main problems of the new student-teacher internship program of Farhangian University can be identified around the three axes of knowledge, attitude and skill weaknesses of teachers and school principals. Tatari, Tajik & Tatari (2016) in a study entitled "Internship Challenges in Iran", divided problems into two groups of university-related issues such as absence of a tutor in schools, lack of information resources and ambiguity in how to assess the quality of internships and issues and internship process problems divided into difficulty of student-teacher admission to school, lack of responsibility, and welfare facilities. Parishani & Khoroshi, (2016) examining internship opportunities from a student-teacher perspective found that the most important obstacle of internship programs is lack of appropriate and designated time. Jamshidi Tavana & ImamJuma (2015) through a research entitled "Analysis of the experiences of teacher education students about internships" shows that internship programs with active participation and interaction between schools and universities, cooperation of experienced professors and teachers, more student-teacher activities in school and classroom, increasing classroom attendance time, passing prerequisites and required credits before the internship gradually increases the knowledge of subject, practical knowledge and knowledge of educational thematic practice of the student-teachers. Vrikki, Warwick & Halem (2017) concluded that in the discussion of internships and individual teaching of student-teachers, there are certain forms of interaction in the learning process between new teachers that have different and quite obvious effects on how to use lesson study. LaBoskey (2014) in his research showed that the development of lesson study skills in the internship increases their

ability to face challenges in the first year of teaching. Research from California State University and Victoria University shows that the commonalities of all universities in various internship dimensions are importance of expanding research, improving quality of education and revising educational programs and courses (Ahmadi & Motaherinejad, 2008).

Although it can be claimed that the initial planning for internship program by Farhangian University of Iran has been done to some extent in the last few years, there are still obstacles and challenges for mentors and tutors in this newly-established university to cultivate thoughtful teachers (Almasi, Zarei Zavarki, Nili & Delavar, 2017; Hejazi 2019; Keramati & AhmadAbadi, 2017; Parishani & Khoroshi, 2016; Niknia, 2009; ZareSafat, 2017). According to the findings of above research, the main question is what steps should be taken to keep pace with the current developments and solve the problems of teacher education internships in Iran. A look at the research findings at other countries indicate that in the 21st century, serious efforts have been made to increase quality of teacher education and teacher readiness. Quality of internship curriculum in teacher education of Iran has also been the focus of some research. It is obvious that the establishment of new and efficient educational systems requires new ideas and methods. Necessity to answer questions such as how to plan student-teacher internships to meet their professional needs will encourage present researchers to find new innovations through study of other countries' experiences. One of the research methods is to pay attention to comparative findings. Given that Singapore and Australia are among leading countries in the field of teacher training and internship reform, the purpose of this study is to identify goals and contents of the internship curriculum in teacher education centers and institutions of these two countries and compare it with Iran. The present researchers hope that the research findings will help to provide practical suggestions to improve internship curriculum situation at Farhangian University of Iran. Therefore, researchers seek to answer the following questions:

- What are innovations in the teacher training internship curriculum in Australia and Singapore?
- What similarities and differences are between internship curriculum of Australian and Singapore with Iran?
- Based on the experiences of Australia and Singapore, what are suggestions for internship courses in Iranian teacher education system?

## **2. Research Method**

The aim of this study was to compare teacher education internship curriculum in Singapore, Australia and Iran. For this purpose, comparative method based on Bereday's approach including four stages of description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison were used. The statistical population of study included all universities and higher education institutions in selected countries that have a bachelor's degree in teacher education. Since comparative research requires the existence of a minimum of similarities among the units of analysis, the researchers selected the Purposeful Sampling Method considering following criteria for sample selection: a) Universities that have student-teachers at the undergraduate level; b) Universities where access to the desired information is possible by visiting their homepage or communicating by email, etc. In this way, five universities who offer internship programs for teacher education courses were selected. Raw data were analyzed after description and coding steps. In order to achieve a common framework for comparative study, the internship curricula of the universities of Sydney, Queensland and Murdoch (Australia), Nanyang (Singapore) and Farhangian (Iran) were briefly studied. Then, according to the objectives of the research, three dimensions of characteristics, objectives, and chapter contents of internship were considered for comparison and analysis. The course characteristics include presentation method and course length; and chapter contents are set of criteria in each of the internship programs, dissertations, seminars and total units of the program.

## **3. Results**

This section contains information on the four stages of description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison. In the first phase, the internship curricula of Australia, Singapore and Iran were explained with information about the course characteristics, objectives and chapter syllabus. Then, in two stages of juxtaposition and comparison, the three countries are compared in terms of internship curriculum elements:

### ***A) Description and Interpretation***

According to Bereday's approach, description involves taking notes and providing sufficient data to examine research subject. Accordingly, by examining the documents related to internships in teacher education of Australia, Iran and Singapore, the characteristics related to the three elements of course characteristics, objectives and topics in the internship curriculum were collected

separately. In the interpretation stage, assessment and interpretation of the description stage are done.

### *Australia*

A review of the history of teacher education in Australia suggests that teacher training is formally based on internships. The Australian Teacher Education Internship serves as a bridge for professional learning at the end of the teacher education course and the start of teaching in schools. In Australia, in order to gain professional experience, usually from the second to the fourth year of study, all universities offer various programs such as development opportunities and professional experience (internship education), expanding the professional competence to teach in a primary school working with children up to Grade six. In addition, the benefit of knowledge, attitude and competencies necessary for the effective implementation of complex responsibilities for primary and secondary teachers, etc., is considered. The culmination of these programs is the internship unit (Internship Handbook, 2018). Many teacher education universities in Australia have dedicated the final year of their undergraduate to an internship course. For example, the University of Sydney has a ten-week internship program at the end of its undergraduate degree (Jervis-Tracey & Finger, 2016). At other universities, including Queensland and Murdoch, similar internship efforts are being made at the same time, albeit under different syllabus. All of these programs have in common features such as student-teacher involvement in teaching practice. Internships are usually offered in the final semester of the teacher training course, although sometimes practical exercises for different courses are included during the study (Carpenter & Blance, 2007).

The Murdoch University Handbook (2019) similarly states that after completing an internship, student-teachers achieve goals such as a more accurate understanding of a pre-service teacher's duties and responsibilities, and planning and implementation of effective teaching and learning process, understanding of the course content and how it should be taught, professional participation and interaction with colleagues, parents and the community. Similarly, at Curtin University in Western Australia and Queensland, undergraduate teacher education devotes 50 days of total professional experience time to internships (Curtin University Handbook, 2019). At the University of Sydney and Queensland, 80 days are allotted for gaining professional experience with four syllabuses: Professional Experiences number 2, 3 and 4 (preliminary) and professional experience internship.

One of the key questions about internships is how long student-teachers should devote their time to practical experience (White & Forgasez, 2016). Minimum student-teacher attendance at the Australian is about 16 weeks out of 160 weeks, meaning that during the undergraduate course, the student-teacher spends at least 80 days practical experience in schools (Foxall, 2014). It is worth noting that all of this time is not provided in the form of an internship unit, but part of it is included in the student-teacher curriculum during the course and with non-internship syllabus such as "professional experience" ( Murdoch University Handbook, 2019).

Table 1 - University of Sydney, Queensland Internship Curriculum by Course details, Objectives and syllabus

Dimensions	Indices	Data
Course characteristics	Method of course presentation	attendance
	Course length	At the University of Sydney and Queensland, 80 days for professional experience
Course objectives	Practical training Expanding teaching competence Attending professional teams Interact with school elements	
Course syllabus	6 Units	

Table 2 - Murdoch University Internship Curriculum based on course characteristics, objectives and syllabus

Dimensions	Indices	Data
Course characteristics	Method of course presentation	attendance
	Course length	At the Murdoch University, 80 days for professional experience
Course objectives	Providing the ground for growth of primary teachers in all grades Development of skills, perceptions and knowledge of graduates Understanding the course content and method of teaching	
Course syllabus	6 course syllabus in total 6 course units Elementary professional experience 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Teacher as a professional	

Data in Tables 1 and 2 highlighted that the type and length of internship programs in Australia are similar. All three universities of Queensland, Sydney and Murdoch emphasize increasing professional qualifications of student-teachers, but as can be seen, the University of Sydney is more



diverse, inclusive and comprehensive in terms of goals than the University of Queensland and Murdoch. Of course, courses such as psychology, professional research, research methods, and education principals have been more or less considered as prerequisites for internships in all three universities. Both the Universities of Queensland and Sydney offer internships with the same number of credits (in both introductory to advanced stages) with one stage focus on education research, although the type and number of course syllabus are different. The Australian University Internship Program includes a wide range of teacher training to meet the objectives of teacher education. The main objectives of internship course at the Universities of Sydney, Queensland and Murdoch are:

- The presence of student-teachers in professional teams in order to participate in effective teaching
- Involvement of student-teachers in all aspects of the teacher's professional role
- Critical reflection on teacher exercises
- Providing evidence in the form of an electronic portfolio
- Successful completion of literacy and arithmetic tests in basic teacher training (CQUNI Handbook, 2019).

The internship syllabus of the universities of Sydney, Queensland and Murdoch are defined in the form of 4 courses equivalent to 6 credits in the framework of the objectives set in the program.

### *Singapore*

Internships courses at the Nanyang Technological University (National Institute of Education, NIE), Singapore are a crucial element of a teacher education program, enabling student-teachers to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in teaching the subjects in which they are taught. They should improve their teaching skills in various fields of education under the supervision of tutors and in coordination with the school and supervisors. The Singapore Teacher Education Internship Program has been developed in response to the vision of global change in education for the 21st century. Nanyang Technological University of Singapore, like many teacher education universities in the world, has designed and implemented a university-centered teacher training model. According to this model, topics are class-centered and internship courses are school-oriented. The University, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, schools and other stakeholders, wants to assist student-teachers in the effective transfer of learning.

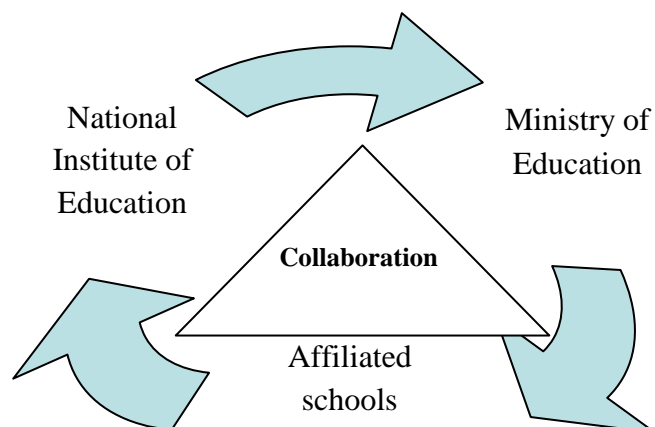


Figure 1. Participatory Internship Model in Singapore

Internship in teacher education in Singapore has a growing nature and includes 4 courses in schools: A) School experience for two weeks: one week in primary schools and one week in secondary schools. This program provides the opportunity for student-teachers to view elementary and higher school classes. B) Teacher Assistant for 5 weeks: Student-teachers experience residency in primary and secondary education. Part of the student-teacher weekly assignments is to observe the teaching of supervisors. They will also learn hands-on experience from how to prepare lesson plans, how to prepare lesson resources, and how to manage students so that they can assist the teacher in the classroom. C) Teacher training (1) is the third part of the internship that helps student-teachers in 5 weeks to learn how to teach independently, and D) Practical training (2) during 10 weeks student-teacher intelligently exposes their skills and knowledge to others. Due to the differences in the content and method of internship in different fields of study, the internship time of primary, secondary and postgraduate education is as follows:

- Primary education: Internship courses are offered 9 to 10 hours per week, which is equivalent to 20 teaching sessions.
- Secondary education: For these student-teachers the internship time is between 9 to 10 hours per week that is equal to 16 sessions of 35 to 40 minutes.
- Postgraduate Courses: For students in this educational level, an internship of 6 to 7 hours per week is equal 10 sessions of 45 minutes (Liu, Tan & Hairon, 2014).

As mentioned above, internships in Singapore include four courses as described in Table (3). The values envisaged in the Singapore Teacher Training Internship Program are divided into three

sections: values based on learner, teacher identity and service to the community and teaching profession.

Table 3 - Nanyang University Internship Curriculum based on course characteristics, objectives and syllabus

Dimensions	Indices	Data
Course characteristics	Method of course presentation	attendance
	Course length	2 Years
Course objectives	Developing teacher capacity needed in the 21st century Providing environment and infrastructure for the professional growth of primary, secondary and colleges teachers in all dimensions	
Course syllabus	Attendance at school (2 weeks) Teacher Assistant Course (5 weeks) Practical teaching internship 1 (5 weeks) Practical teaching internship course 2 (5 weeks)	

According to what was mentioned, internship in Singapore includes 4 courses for two years in schools. Among the features of this program is length variability of internship based on required degree of student-teachers (primary, secondary and postgraduate). In addition to achievement of professional experience, other goals of internship program in Singapore are travel and visit of student-teachers from schools of European, Asian, or Oceanic countries and development of cooperation between schools and teacher Education University. Acquisition of theoretical knowledge and learning practical skills with a positive interest and attitude towards educational activities, continuous updating of knowledge, efficiency and ability of teachers in the academic and professional field, attention to creativity and innovation, increasing student-teacher flexibility and internationalizing the internship program are other goals of Singapore Teacher Training for National Development.

### *Iran*

The spirit of internship at Farhangian University of Iran is based on research, reflection, and thought to help student-teachers to work as "Thoughtful Teachers." The internship program is designed in such a way that the student-teacher, at the beginning of the third year of study start to deals with teaching and learning in a practical way. The foundation of internship is thought and student-teacher activity begins with thought on the location of school; continues with finding of

problem in classroom and teaching under supervision of the tutor and finally ends with independent teaching (Ahmadi, Maleki, Mehr Mohammadi, & Imam Juma, 2019). Providing internship courses in teacher education system of Iran has a relatively long history. From the very beginning of the establishment of the Preparatory Teachers' College (1919), there was a belief among educational experts that it is necessary for students-teachers to become familiar with the school and classroom environment through practical teaching experiences. With the establishment of Farhangian University approved by "Document of Fundamental Transformation of Education", new expectations were raised from the teacher education system and Farhangian University was obliged to provide and train the manpower required by the Ministry of Education (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2011). According to the undergraduate courses of Iran Farhangian University, student-teachers are required to take at least 8 courses as interns according to the approved educational program. Objectives of each internship program are presented in Table (4).

Table 4 - Nanyang University Internship Curriculum based on course characteristics, objectives and syllabus

Dimensions	Indices	Data
Course characteristics	Method of course presentation	attendance
	Course length	2 Years
Course objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internship 1 (first semester): Reflective observation of educational issues</li> <li>▪ Internship 2 (second semester): Applying discursive / logical methods to examine learning situations</li> <li>▪ Internship 3 (third semester): Understanding teacher practice in the classroom</li> <li>▪ Internship 4 (fourth semester): Independent teaching</li> </ul>	
Course syllabus	<p>Internship 1: Problemology of teaching / learning, narrative research and dissemination</p> <p>Internship 2: Situational awareness, teaching / learning activities, professional development and dissemination</p> <p>Internship 3: Designing and guiding teacher-assisted learning, professional development and dissemination</p> <p>Internship 4: Design, produce and direct learning independently, professional reflection and dissemination</p>	

These goals clearly show what the policy makers and planners of teacher education system expect from internship programs based on "thoughtful teacher education" (Ahmadi, Maleki, Mehr Mohammadi & ImamJuma, 2019).

According to the internship program in Iran, the internship activity starts from the beginning of the academic year and continues throughout the year. In the process, the student-teacher experiences four internships offered during the final two years of study. Also, the total time of internship program is 512 hours - equivalent to 14.9% of the total teacher training curriculum (Musaepur, 2018). This time is equivalent to one day a week for two academic years. The allocation of this time for internship has been based on this reason that student-teachers spend one day per week at school during last two years of their studies. The three elements of course characteristics, objectives and topics of the internship curriculum in Iran are as follows:

Internships are the same in structure and content for all disciplines, and student-teachers in elementary education, counseling, physical education, and the various disciplines of secondary education have similar internship programs. Students in all disciplines attend school in their final four semesters, one day a week in whole 58 days per one academic year. According to Table 4, it seems that in the internship program of Farhangian University of Iran, separate goals are set for each course, which conceptually reflects the course assignment and the intern's duties. For example, in Internship 1, the goal is stated as follows: "Student-teachers with reflective observation identify educational issues at the classroom and school level and explain using scientific evidence and documents, and then record their reflective observations and experimental findings in the form of Narrative Research." Thus, in the internship program of Farhangian University, tables of goals, dimensions and development are not designed in each dimension (Ahmadi & et al, 2019). It is also not clear how the quality of student-teacher repetitive teaching during multiple internships should be determined. While the experience of Australia and Singapore in setting internship goals shows that the dimensions of teaching are clear and for each dimension, sub-components and expectations have been formulated.

Also, in Iranian teacher training internships, repeated and numerous teachings, followed by reflection, whether in written or oral (talking to the mentor, etc.) constitute the main content and topic of the program. Based on the levels of reflection and characteristics that these levels have, it seems that it is not possible to force student-teachers to teach and face multiple challenges in the early stages of internship. Therefore, it is better to start these courses by observing a class by the student and gradually acquaint him with direct teaching facing more challenges and reflection. Apparently, this principle has been observed in the internship program of Farhangian University.

## ***B) Juxtaposition and Comparison***

During the Juxtaposition phase, the information reviewed in the previous phases is classified in terms of similarities and differences and based on three elements: course characteristics, course objectives, and course syllabus. In other words, based on the interpretation stage research evidence is categorized in this stage to pave the way for next stage, namely the comparison of similarities and differences of educational phenomenon under study.

### *1. Course characteristics*

#### *Similarities*

- Attendance and mandatory courses
- Full-time courses

#### *Differences*

- The internship program of Farhangian University of Iran is significantly different from the world experiences- especially with selected countries (Singapore and Australia) in terms of time. In Singapore and Australia, time has been considered as an important and influential element in the realization of the internship program of teacher education.
- In Singapore, internship schedule varies based on degree required to teach (primary, secondary and postgraduate levels), while in Australia and Iran this issue has received less attention.
- The structure and content of internship at Farhangian University of Iran is the same for all disciplines. Student teachers in primary education, counseling, physical education, various secondary education, etc., have a similar internship program. In Singapore and Australia, however, internship programs vary by discipline.
- The application of effective teaching models and the internationalization of the internship program are among the innovative ideas in teacher training in Singapore that have not been considered in teacher training in Iran and Australia.
- Existence of related dissertations and seminars or internship units and continuity in providing internships during academic years and full responsibility of student-teachers is a good feature of the Australian teacher education system.

Table 5. Internship curriculum characteristics in Australia, Singapore and Iran

Characteristics	Australian	Singapore	Iran
Attendance in person and course is mandatory	*	*	*
Full-time courses	*	*	*
Considering element of time important and effective in teacher education internship program	*	*	-
Internship schedule based on teaching level (primary, secondary and postgraduate)	-	*	-
Application of effective teaching models and internationalization of internship program	-	*	-
Utilizing related dissertations and seminars or internship units, continuing to provide internships during the academic years with full responsibility of student-teachers	*	-	-
Unification of the internship program in terms of structure and content for all disciplines	-	-	*

## 2. Course objectives

### Similarities

- ❖ All three countries emphasize determination of teacher competencies, provision of infrastructure for development of skills, perceptions and knowledge of teacher education graduates, and the role of creative and critical thinking in setting goals.
- ❖ All three countries emphasize on important role of mentors, the school tutors and other elements of the internship.
- ❖ All three countries emphasize acquisition of teacher experience through active participation in various forms of internship program.
- ❖ Emphasis on training of future teachers through development of professional skills and competencies is another similarity in the objectives of internship program in Australia, Singapore and Iran.
- ❖ In all three countries, the goals are set in an idealistic and ambitious way

### Differences

- In Singapore, post-graduate teacher training internships are offered by Nanyang University, while Iran and Australia do not offer this program.

- Singapore provides student-teachers and faculty participation in a foreign university internship program (one-semester international internship program). This opportunity is not provided for teacher education courses in Iran and Australia.
- There is extensive cooperation between schools and the teacher education university in Singapore, as well as clear relationship among student-teachers, mentors, tutors, and school with university. In Iran, these connections are weak and not very well defined. In Australian teacher education, communication is strong and more defined due to the existence of university-affiliated schools.
- Attention to updating the knowledge and efficiency of supervisors in Australia and Singapore is more than Iran.

Table 6. Combination of internship program goals in Australia, Singapore and Iran

Characteristics	Australia	Singapore	Iran
Emphasis on teacher competencies, infrastructure provision for development of skills, perceptions and knowledge of graduates along with creative and critical thinking	*	*	*
Emphasis on the role of instructor, tutor and other elements of internship in achievement of courses' objectives	*	*	*
Gaining various forms of teacher experience through internship	*	*	*
Emphasis on nurturing future teachers by cultivating professional skills and competencies	*	*	*
Set goals in an idealistic and ambitious way	*	*	*
Internship for postgraduate courses	-	*	-
Internationalization of internship program	-	*	-
Extensive cooperation between schools and teacher training universities	*	*	-
Updating knowledge and efficiency of guidance teachers in schools	*	*	-

### Course syllabus

### Similarities



- All three countries use active teaching methods and dynamic assessment in determining the syllabus of the internship program. However, due to the lack of some basic conditions or unskilled internship professors, the active methods mentioned in Iran may be less applicable.
- In all three countries, the syllabus content is not limited to the classroom and school environment, and student-teachers use other methods of internship outside the classroom and school.
- In all three countries, the course syllabus is selected, organized and edited based on predefined objectives.

### *Differences*

- Six syllabuses (equivalent to 6 credits) make up the content of the Singapore Teacher Training Internship Program, which is about the same in Australia, while the number of internships in Iran is less.
- In addition to enhancing the professional qualifications of teachers, Australian internship curriculum syllabus focuses on multilingual teaching - learning experiences and environmental education.
- The syllabus of the Iranian internship program emphasizes on concept of reflection, careful observation in school and the classroom and its effect on learning experiences. In Australia and Singapore, the concept of reflection as defined in Iran is not included in the curriculum. Internship syllabus in Australia and Singapore benefit from methods of reflection, problem solving and discovery.
- In Iran, the design and guidance of learning is considered in two ways: teacher assistance and independently, while in Australia and Singapore, it is part of internship program's content.
- In Singapore, the presentation of dissertations and seminars related to internships has been considered

Table 7. Combination of internship program syllabuses in Australia, Singapore and Iran

Characteristics	Australia	Singapore	Iran
Use of active teaching methods and dynamic assessment	*	*	*
Internship training is not limited to classroom and school environment	*	*	*
Select and organize course content based on predefined goals	*	*	*
Gain experience by attending school and practicing as a teacher	*	*	*
Attention to more units and appropriate time in determining content of the internship program	*	*	-
Emphasis on variety of methods of reflection, problem solving and discovery in internship training	*	*	-
Design and guide learning	*	*	-
Presenting dissertations and seminars related to internship units	-	*	-

At this stage, the elements of internship program in teacher education are examined and compared in detail in Table 7 according to the differences and similarities. This comparison is based on John Stuart Mill's agreement / difference method.

Table 8. Similarities and differences of curriculum elements in selected countries

Internship Curriculum Elements	Similarities	differences
Course characteristics	2	5
Course objectives	5	4
Course syllabuses	4	4

According to Table 8, internship curricula in teacher education systems of Australia, Singapore and Iran have the most similarities in goals. These three types of internship curricula also show the least similarity in course content and characteristics. In terms of differences, the most difference is between the characteristics and the content of the course. The difference in syllabus of three curricula can be attributed to the lack of objectives' transparency. In a general conclusion, it can be said that despite common principles, the differences between selected countries in all three dimensions are more than their similarities. On the one hand, this indicates the existence of innovative and creative curricula in universities of three countries, and on the other hand, it shows

the wide range of needs for teacher education in primary and secondary school. Of course, the status of higher education institutions and their curricula diversity also affect the curriculum.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The present study aimed to compare internships in teacher education systems in Australia, Singapore and Iran. The results showed that the selected universities have acted in several similar indicators. Also, what is understandable in a general view is the existence of obvious differences in the internship curriculum of the studied countries compared to their similarities. The reason for this is more attention to the numerous and diverse educational needs of different countries in primary, secondary and post-graduate levels, which has led to the formation and development of innovative internship curricula in teacher education systems. In terms of course characteristics, there are similarities such as presenting the course in person, mandatory and full-time. The research findings also indicate that selected universities in indicators such as internship schedule based on student-teacher's educational needs (at elementary, secondary and postgraduate levels); application of effective teaching models and internationalization of internship program (Nanyang University); existence of internships and seminars related to internships (University of Sydney, Queensland and Murdoch) and continuity of internships during the academic years (Nanyang University) have acted differently from each other. While this program is done in Farhangian University of Iran full time and for two years and without flexibility in internship course's implementation.

In examining content of internship program, similar creative ideas can be seen in all three countries such as use of active teaching methods and dynamic assessment, no restriction of internship training to the classroom and school environment, selection and organizing course content based on predefined goals, school experiences and teaching practice. On the other hand, developing a flexible program with a diverse range of educational knowledge for primary, secondary and postgraduate courses (Nanyang University), adherence to a centralized program (Sydney and Murdoch), presentation of thesis and seminar related to internship units (University of Sydney), and thematic diversity of program and allocation of appropriate time and place (Nanyang University, Sydney, Queensland and Murdoch Universities), are superior features of internship program in universities of selected countries compared to Farhangian University of Iran. At the same time, the content of internship in teacher education system of Iran follows a linear and predetermined path, and therefore priority and latency of courses and observance of prerequisites are strongly emphasized by planners. This indicates excessive attention to the way in which the

curriculum materials are consistently related to teacher education in Iran and neglect to provide them in parallel. The amount of elective credits for this course is 8 units, while no other elective path is considered for the internship program due to the variety of disciplines.

Although internship for bachelor degrees of teacher education in Iran have significantly improved compared to the associate degree in terms of number of units and contents, allocation of only 4 courses (a total of 8 units) for this subject indicates a very small share of student-teacher training course during four-years. Therefore, the thematic scope of internship, despite its advantages, may not be effective due to lack of sufficient time. One challenges of Australian's teacher education is uncertainty of universities about quality of mentors' performance to guide student-students (Walker, Morrison, & Hay, 2019). Cochran-Smit et al. (2015) also found that differences in views have adverse effects on the quality of teacher training and students-teacher performance in the early years of service. Accordingly, Talbot, Denny and Henderson, (2017) provided a model for the interaction of the intern, mentor, and school tutor. They believe implementation of this model allows all three groups to better understand each other's views on the philosophy of teaching and learning, and to communicate more successfully. According to the participatory model, supervisor, school tutor and student-teacher collaboration can play an important role in the success of Iran's internship program. Based on the findings, the suggestions are as follow:

- Implementation of incentive programs (professional and financial) by the directors of Farhangian University and the Ministry of Education especially for mentors,
- Review of how to submit a dissertation or final seminar for internship and increase its importance and position in the teacher training programs,
- Strengthen practices to monitor the implementation of the internship program,
- Increase time for faculty and mentors to conduct research by outsourcing internships to experienced school teachers,
- Increasing the participation of school teachers in the internship program of teacher education courses, and
- Creating the necessary platform for the presence of educational and specialized guidance professors of Farhangian University in schools and creating a "Professor Desk" in related schools

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