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**CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE IRANIAN EFL CLASSROOMS :  
FROM THEORY TO TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICE**



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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this panel study was to investigate whether student teachers in Iran who were doing their master's studies in TEFL practiced critical pedagogy in their classrooms, and to study their beliefs about critical pedagogy and its challenges. Thirty-four student teachers who were employed by the government and private sectors and took courses in Methodology, Syllabus Design and Materials Development, and ESP at a state and a private university in Iran agreed to participate in the research. After loss of individuals, thick narrative data were collected from the remaining twenty-eight participants during the two semesters of the same academic year. The participants' beliefs, discussions, interviews, written comments, and reports on their individual practice in their own classrooms were carefully recorded and analyzed for any changes in behavior patterns during the two semesters. QSR NVivo-11 was used to categorize and summarize the written and transcribed narratives besides the careful content analysis of the same. Results revealed that the participants considered critical

pedagogy as a move forward to liberating teachers and students, and as a consciousness raising approach toward social and political issues of their context of teaching. The participants also argued that critical pedagogy would jeopardize the teachers' career, and the critical pedagogues have to accept the consequences if they opt for it. Finally, the participants who were officially employed by the government sector mostly preferred not to practice critical pedagogy compared to those working in the private sector. The debatable findings of this study may be helpful for teacher educators who believe in and/or practice critical pedagogy to reflect more on the language teaching context they work in and then decide whether or not, to what extent, and how they can or should advocate critical pedagogy in teacher training programs.

### **KEYWORDS**

critical pedagogy, critical thinking, teacher education