THE IMPACT OF AN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION COURSE ON THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract:

This study explores the effect of the completion of an educational administration course on the expectations of pre-service teachers regarding their future workplace. Data were collected from 334 students enrolled in the educational program of the faculty of education at Taiz University. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire that consisted of 44 items. According to the findings, respondents who had completed the administration course had more realistic expectations with respect to some aspects of school organization. The significant differences between course completers and non-completers concerned the future role of teachers in the school system and the role of their superiors. The ramifications of these findings for the teachers' education program were discussed.

Key words: Expectations, Pre-service teachers, Educational administration course, School organization

Introduction

The expectations that people form regarding future events usually influence their future experiences and behaviors. Research has found that a person perception and expectation play an important role in the development of his/her career (Bandura, 1997). The field of teaching represents an appropriate example of a profession associated with the formation of noticeable personal expectations prior to labor market entry. Pre-service teachers usually form expectations during the period of their studies regarding their future occupation. When the expected outcomes correspond with the actual ones, job satisfaction will be occurred (Cranny et al., 1992). In contrast, if there is a difference between their expectations and the realities of the workplace, dissatisfaction is likely to occur. According to Murmane et al. (1991), job dissatisfaction represents the main reason for the high attrition rate among newly appointed teachers in several countries.

A common conceptualization of job satisfaction is mainly based on the idea of discrepancy. Accordingly, job satisfaction is the difference between the

expectations of employees and the actual outcome received. Therefore, dissatisfaction will occur when individuals receive less than what they expected to get (Berry, 1997). Many researchers have used the concept of discrepancy in an attempt to provide a reasonable definition of job satisfaction (Holland, 1973). According to the Smith et al. (1969) discrepancy model of job satisfaction is considered the result of a comparison between the work-related motives of employees and the incentives offered by the organization. Thereupon, when people overestimate the incentives associated with their future occupations, they confront feelings of dissonance and anxiety following entry into the chosen profession. Several studies have reported this to be the case for pre-service teachers who often form unrealistic expectations of the school environment during their training ((Johnston, 1994; Labaree, 2000).

Most of the studies conducted on new teachers' issues have generally focused on the areas of teaching and learning without considering the role of organizational variables (Weiss, 1999). However, surveys of employed leavers from the teaching profession or dissatisfied teachers have suggested that the main reasons for dissatisfaction include problems in the areas of school administration such as leadership and administrative support, school climate and teacher autonomy (Whitener et al., 1997).

A valuable influence on the expectations that pre-service teachers form in relation to organizational variables is the nature and content of their training programs. Therefore, pre-service teachers who are exposed to the weaknesses associated with the organizational aspects of schools can be expected to have more realistic views of their future workplace. The inclusion of an educational administration course into teachers' program modules represents the appropriate way of introducing pre-service teachers to these weaknesses. The content of this educational course must comprise both relevant concepts and theories and practical aspects of school organization and administration in the system. Some studies suggest that the inclusion of such a course can play an important role in preparing pre-service teachers for the realities of the workplace leading them to form more realistic expectations regarding the main aspects of school organization and administration (Rio, 2005; Bodycott et al, 2001). In addition, Meister (2000) confirms that providing pre-service teachers through the period of their training with the school system-related information can aim to enhance their understanding of actual conditions at the school unit. The author also assumes that pre-service teachers need an opportunity to explore the whole school system prior to their entry into labor market. Therefore, the completion of an educational administration course can provide pre-service teachers with an understanding of the organizational limitations that characterize schools and educational systems.

The present study examines the impact of the completion of the educational administration course mentioned above on the expectations of pre-service teachers regarding school organization. In particular, the study compares the extent to which these expectations differ among pre-service teachers who have completed (course completers) and pre-service teachers who have not completed this course (non-completers). In this context, it is hypothesized that the expectations of pre-service teachers with respect to school organization will partly determine their future job

satisfaction and professional commitment. Thus, any significant differences between the two groups of students will indicate that the educational administration course has an important role in the professional development of teachers. If this course proves to have a positive role in the preparation of students for the future occupation, it is thus considered necessary to measure pre-service teachers' expectations prior to their entry into the labor market and relate these expectations to the completion of a course in educational administration.

Background

The Faculty of Education at Taiz University was established in the early 1980s. Approximately, two thousands of secondary school leavers enter the faculty each year (The Central Department of Statistics, 2005). The program of study for both primary and secondary school teachers offered by the faculty is divided into the following areas: (1) pedagogical sciences and psychology; (2) teaching methodology; and (3) specialization (mathematics, science, languages, etc.). Within each area, the student is required to complete a number of courses in order to be eligible for graduation. All the courses that are included in the program of study are requirements (there are no elective courses).

The course "educational administration" is a three-credit course, which is classified under the first area. As regards the content of the educational administration course, it covers both the theoretical aspects of school organization and administration, and their relevance to current practice in the educational system of Yemen. The theoretical aspects include organizational theory, leadership, school climate, motivation, and job satisfaction. The practical part of the course involves an overview of the educational system of Yemen (structure, hierarchy, roles, job descriptions, duties and responsibilities, work conditions and incentives, and limitations). Therefore, students who complete the course can be considered to be more familiar with the realities of the workplace.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to: (1) investigate the effect of an educational administration course on the expectations of pre-service teachers, and (2) determine the school organization and administration items that course completers and non-completers differ on.

Significance of the study

The findings of the present study can serve as the means to evaluate the contribution of the specific course in the overall educational experience of the student. The effect of undergraduate courses on the professional expectations of students is a largely unexplored research topic. Research in this area can help universities determine the importance that should be assigned to individual courses in their study program.

Research questions

1. Does the completion of the educational administration course meet the expectations of pre-service teachers?

2. Is there a difference in satisfaction ratings between course completers and non-completers?

3. What items of school organization and administration do course completers and non-completers differ on?

Method and procedure

The sample was purposely intended to include mainly third and fourth year students because the educational administration course is offered to students after the completion of their third year of studies. A total of 334 students were randomly selected from third and fourth year students. Of these students, 168 have completed the course (fourth year students) and 166 have not (third year students). Given that sample size were greater than 30—which sample size is often mentioned as a suitable minimum, as normal distribution is approached with such sample size (Sproull, 1995)—these were appropriate numbers.

The instrument used to gathered the primary data for the study was a questionnaire. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide information on individual background characteristics such as the year of study, age, and gender. They also completed a 44-item self-report instrument used to measure the expected degree of satisfaction associated with several aspects of school organization and administration. Respondents were asked to rate the extent of their expected satisfaction with each item using the following scale: 1 = no satisfaction; 2 = low level of satisfaction; 3 = average level of satisfaction; 4 = high level of satisfaction; and 5 = extremely high level of satisfaction.

Questionnaires were distributed to the participations in the academic year 2005/2006. Students in the third year were administrated the questionnaires in week 15 of first semester, 2006. At the meantime, fourth year students completed the questionnaires in the week 16 of first semester, 2006 (the last teaching session). Different statistical procedures were employed to analyze the data. First, principal components factor analysis was employed to group the 44 items into factors. The varimax rotation method was used to rotate the factors in order to have a new simplified data set, which captured the underlying dimensions of the original variables. Thus, through factor analysis, the original items included in the questionnaire were grouped to represent the main categories of organizational variables rated by respondents. Second, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine whether course completers and non-completers differed in the mean scores of each factor. If the MANOVA identified significant differences between the two groups of students, t-tests were run to find out the particular items in which the two groups differed.

Results

The sample contained mainly fourth year (50.30%) and third year (49.70 %) students, and the representation of male and female students was respectively: 41.62%, 58.38%.

The organizational factors

The results of factor analysis are shown in Table 1, which provides the items included in each factor along with their loadings. The extracted factors accounted for 60 percent of the variance. The alpha coefficients of internal reliability ranged from 0.73 to 0.87. Specifically, the following coefficients were estimated for Factors 1-6 respectively: 0.87, 0.84, 0.77, 0.73, 0.73, 0.75. The interpretation of each factor based on the items included in it is given below.

Table 1: Variables included in each factor and factor loadings

Factors	Variables	Loadings
1. School climate	Communication among teachers	0.80
	Communication with principal	0.77
	Respect of one's abilities by colleagues	0.73
	Respect of one's opinions by colleagues	0.70
	Equal treatment of teachers by the	0.68
	headmaster	0.67
	Co-operation among teachers	0.62
	Teachers' enthusiasm for their work	0.59
	Assistance from colleagues	0.55
	Principal/teacher co-operation	0.52
	Teacher/student interaction	0.48
	Communication with parents	0.47
	Human relations	0.45
	General school climate	
2. School organization	Introduction of innovations	0.76
	Evaluation of school work	0.73
	Autonomy of school unit	0.72
	School planning	0.56
	Serving of community	0.52
	Maintenance of social values	0.51
	Co-ordination of school activities	0.49
	Adoption with local environment	0.46
	General school organization	0.44
3. Teacher incentives	Payment	0.73
	Possibilities for promotion	0.61
	Possibilities for in-service training	0.60
	Recognition of one's work by superiors	0.58
	Working conditions (other than	0.56
	payment)	0.51
	Teachers' room for initiative	0.25
	Work content	
4. Teacher evaluation	Inspector's abilities in control and	0.85
	supervision	0.82
	Principal's abilities in teacher evaluation	0.76

	Treatment of teachers by superiors	0.60
	Principal's abilities in control and supervision	0.56
	Communication with inspector	
5. Principal's role	Principal's initiative for school improvement	0.61
	Principal's leadership ability	0.58
	Principal's level of education	0.56
	School administration by principal	0.53
	Principal's administrative experience	0.52
6. Teacher's role	Teachers' participation in decision making	0.67
	Teachers' work effectiveness	0.59
	Teachers' participation in studying content	0.56
	Teachers' participation in school administration	0.53

The first factor (school climate) is the largest, consisting of thirteen items. These items referred to the quality of school climate. Five of the 13 items concerned communication (with other teachers, principal, and parents) and co-operation (with principal, and other teachers). Two items concerned the respect of the teachers' abilities and opinions by their colleagues. Two general item were also included, namely, human relations, and general school climate. The remaining items concerned the interaction between teachers and students, the equal treatment of teachers by the principal, the teachers' enthusiasm for their work, and the assistance teachers received from colleagues.

The second factor named school organization included nine items that concerned the general organization and administration of the school unit. As shown in table 1, the highest loadings were recorded for three items that concerned the school ability to take on initiatives for improvement (introduction of innovations, evaluation of school work, and autonomy of school unit). The remaining items (school planning, serving of community, maintenance of social values, co-ordination of school activities, adoption with local environment, and general school organization) had comparatively lower loadings, ranging from 0.56 to 0.44.

The third factor (teacher incentives) included seven items that related to the incentives and work conditions of teaching as a profession. Six of these items (payment, possibilities for promotion, possibilities for in-service training, recognition of one's work by superiors, working conditions, and teachers' room for initiative had loadings above 0.50. The final item (work content) had a low rating of loading, which is 0.25.

The fourth factor (teacher evaluation) included five items concerned the abilities of inspectors and principals in evaluating teachers. One of these items concerned the treatment of teachers by principals and inspectors. Two items concerned the principal's abilities in evaluating teaching staff and the principal's abilities in control and supervision. The inspector's abilities in control and

supervision were also included as was communication with the inspector. As shown in table 1, two of the items (principal's abilities in control and supervision, and communication with the inspector had comparatively lower loadings, ranging from 0.60 to 0.56.

The fifth factor was termed principal's role. This factor included five principal-related items. These items were grouped together, namely, the principal's initiative for school improvement, principal's leadership ability, principal's level of education, principal's administration of the school, and principal's administrative experiences. As seen in table 1, the highest recorded loading for this factor is 0.61, which is not so high.

The final factor referred to the teacher's role in the educational system. This factor consists of four items. Three of these items concerned teachers' participations in decision making, content to be taught, and school administration. The remaining item concerned teachers' work effectiveness.

The ratings of respondents based on the completion of the course

The extracted factors were used as the basis for a comparison of the satisfaction ratings of students who had completed the educational administration course and students who had not. In this framework, the data were subjected to multiple analysis of variance, in which the extracted factors served as dependent variables and the student's status with respect to the completion of the course (completion versus non-completion) served as the independent variable. The comparisons were based on factor scores that represented the mean scores of each respondent on each factor. The findings of multiple analysis of variance pointed to significant differences between completers and non-completers. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the two groups of students on each factor, and the results of MANOVA.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the scores of respondents on each factor, and the results of MANOVA

Factors	Groups	Mean	SD	F	p
School climate	CC	3.14	1.14	3.34	0.069
	NC	3.38	1.11		
School organization	CC	3.43	0.69	1.53	0.218
	NC	3.57	0.71		
Teacher incentives	CC	3.32	0.68	6.03	0.021
	NC	3.72	0.81		
Teacher evaluation	CC	3.45	0.78	5.71	0.017
	NC	3.56	0.99		
Principal's role	CC	3.62	0.78	2.26	0.134
	NC	3.81	0.85		
Teacher's role	CC	3.46	1.25	5.67	0.018
	NC	3.87	1.13		

note: CC = course completers (n = 168), NC = non-completers (n = 166)

As shown in the table, the expected satisfaction ratings of course completers and non-completers differed significantly on three factors (teacher incentives, teacher evaluation, and teacher's role). In the three cases, the ratings of non-completers were significantly higher than those of course completers. High ratings were also recorded for non-completers in all factors. To investigate the significant differences between the two groups of students, independent t-tests were conducted on the responses of completers and non-completers on the items included in the three factors mentioned above (teacher incentives, teacher evaluation, and teacher's role). Accordingly, it was necessary to isolate the factor items responsible for this difference. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis, through the mean scores of completers and non-completers on the three factors (teacher incentives, teacher evaluation, and teacher's role), the relevant t-values, and the level of significance.

Regarding the first factor (teacher incentives), the two groups of respondents differed significantly on one item, namely, recognition of one's work by superiors. The course completers expected to be less satisfied with the role of superiors in recognizing their work. In the case of the second factor (teacher evaluation), the significant differences were founded in four of its five items. These items were: inspector's abilities in control and supervision, principal's abilities in teacher evaluation, principal's abilities in control and supervision, and communication with inspectors. In agreement with the general tendency, completers expected to be less satisfied than non-completers with the abilities of both their

principals and inspectors in teacher evaluation, control and supervision. Completers also expected less of their inspectors in the area of communication. Finally, with respect to the third factor (teacher 's role), the two groups of students significantly differed on two items, namely, teachers' participation in decision making, and teachers' participation in school administration.

Table 3: Means for completers and non-completers of the course, F values and significance levels

Categories	Items	Mean CC NC		F	p
Teacher incentives	Payment	3.32	3.61	1.23	0.235
	Possibilities for promotion	3.56	3.82	1.54	0.385
	Possibilities for in-service training	337	3.65	1.09	0.209
	Recognition of one's work by superiors	3.33	3.89	8.00	0.006
	Working conditions (other than payment)	3.46	3.61	0.55	0.457
	Teachers' room for initiative	3.75	3.82	0.78	0.567
	Work content	3.14	3.47	1.91	0.241
Teacher evaluation	Inspector's abilities in control and supervision	2.98	3.74	13.96	0.000
	Principal's abilities in control and supervision	3.35	3.92	10.00	0.002
	Principal's abilities in teacher evaluation	3.14	3.87	9.98	0.002
	Treatment of teachers by superiors	3.57	3.87	0.067	0.775
	Communication with inspector	2.98	3.61	18.84	0.000
Teacher's role	Teachers' participation in decision making	3.23	3.63	7.68	0.006
	Teachers' work effectiveness	3.47	3.88	0.14	0.711
	Teachers' participation in studying content	3.58	3.74	0.094	0.745
	Teachers' participation in school administration	2.92	3.34	11.99	0.001

In general, the findings of this study suggest that the educational administration course completed by approximately half the sample had an impact on the expectations of pre-service teachers regarding the organization of their future workplace. The comparison of the mean scores of the two groups indicated that course completers had less optimistic outlook of two areas directly related to their role and function at the school. They expected to face problems, especially in relation to their participation in school administration, and the recognition and evaluation of their work. At the meantime, completers questioned the abilities of their principals and inspectors to effectively supervise and evaluate their work. It is

noteworthy that completers and non-completers differed significantly in three of the four inspector-related items in the questionnaire. Consequently, the completion of the course appears to be associated with a less enthusiastic view of the ability of school inspectors to successfully carry out their evaluation role.

Conclusions and implications

The present study has examined the extent to which the expectations of pre-service teachers regarding school organization differed among completers and non-completers of an educational administration course. The findings suggest that pre-service teachers who complete the educational administration course offered in the faculty of education at Taiz University are more likely to expect problems in certain aspects of school organization. Thus, the course appears to be associated with a more reserved, less enthusiastic assessment of their future workplace. The examination of the pre-service teachers commonly leads to an awareness of the main limitations that relate to the administration of schools. For instance, the fact that completers of the course expect to be less satisfied in relation to the future evaluation of their work can be attributed to the discussion of research work in the course which points to dissatisfaction among Yemeni in-service teachers in the areas of personnel evaluation and promotion. The recognition of possible problem areas in relation to school administration can help course completers avoid a real work shock after their entry into teaching. Pre-service teachers who form realistic expectations with respect to their future workplace are less likely to suffer from anxiety and frustration due to a discrepancy between initial expectations and the actual conditions at the school unit.

The findings of the study suggest that pre-service teachers who do not complete the educational administration course can be expected to face a discrepancy effect to a greater extent than those who are exposed to the course materials. This has important implications for the career development and future job satisfaction of non-completers. A major workplace disappointment in the first few years of employment can introduce uncertainty and anxiety in the lives of new teachers as they struggle to come to terms with a reality they had not previously anticipated or expected. In fact, the difficulties associated with the experience of initial dissonance or discrepancy may have an impact that extends beyond the first years of employment. An early incidence of dissonance may result in the adoption of a negative stance throughout individuals' career as they learn to expect similar disappointments in the future. It is thus important for educational planners and policy makers to design and implement measures that can influence teacher expectations of school organizational variables in an attempt to avoid any major discrepancies between these expectations and the realities of the workplace.

One measure suggested by the present findings is that the educational administration course must include both the relevant theory and its translation into practice in the schools of Yemen. Such a course can be used to prepare students for the realities of the workplace leading them to form more realistic expectations with respect to the main aspects of school organization and administration.

A second measure that can be used in the effort to better prepare teachers for the workplace is the improvement of the practicum in the teacher preparation program. At present, the practical experience module offered to students in the final year of their studies focuses on preparing them for the teaching and learning aspects of their careers. This module may allow them to gain significant classroom experience but fails to address the organizational aspects of their work. Therefore, the practicum should be modified to allow for greater contact between pre-service teachers and principals, and pre-service teachers and inspectors. Moreover, more frequent interaction between groups of pre-service and in-service teachers would also be helpful by enabling the former to acquire information on the experiences of the latter in relation to school administration.

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ملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف أثر مقرر الإدارة التربوية على توقعات المدرسين قبل الخدمة تجاه مكان عملهم المستقبلي. تألفت عينة الدراسة من (٣٣٤) طالب وطالبة من طلبة كلية التربية بجامعة تعز، بينما كانت الأداة المستخدمة عبارة عن استبيان مكون من ٤٤ فقرة. وفقاً للنتائج، كانت توقعات الطلبة الذين أكملوا دراسة المقرر أكثر واقعية من توقعات الطلبة الذين لم يكملوا دراسة المقرر. الفروق ذات الدلالة الإحصائية بين الطلبة تعلقت بالدور المستقبلي للمدرسين في النظام المدرسي وكذلك دور المدراء والموجهين. وقد ناقشت الدراسة استخدام هذه النتائج ضمن برنامج إعداد المدرسين.