

Comparison of Vocational Commitment and Professional Competence of Teachers with and without experience of participating in Action Research

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Abstract

The organization of education, in order to fulfill its high goals, that is, the education of human beings, requires attentive, committed, and professional teachers. The purpose of this study was comparison of vocational commitment and professional competence of teachers with and without experience of participating in action research in elementary schools in Shiraz. The present study is an analytical-comparative study. The statistical population of this study is all teachers of elementary schools in Shiraz, who taught in the academic year 2016-17. The sample consisted of 56 teachers (28 with and 28 without experience of participating in action research) who were selected in the simple non-random (targeted) sampling. The questionnaires that used in this study were Rothwell & Arnold vocational commitment questionnaire with 9 items and Babaei professional competence questionnaire with 39 items. Validity and reliability of the questionnaires were examined and the results showed that the measurement tools had acceptable content validity. Data were analyzed by SPSS software package and used descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Boxes test, Levenss test, Multivariate tests (Pillais Trace, Wilks Lambda, Hotelling trace, Roys Largest Root) and independent t-test. The results showed that the mean of vocational commitment and professional competence of teachers with experience of participating in action research were more than that of teachers without experience of participating in action research. Also, there was a significant difference between the dimensions of professional competence (cognitive-skills competence, attitudinal competence, managerial competence) between the two groups of teachers.

Key Words: Action Research- Vocational Commitment- Professional Competence

Introduction

Education system as a key factor in social, economic, cultural and political development has played a

fundamental role in the sustainability and survival of human societies for a long time. Educational institutions have

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gradually realized that in today's complex and difficult situation, they will not be able to respond to the growing needs of their education and society without having been trained, efficient, committed, professional and loyal staff.

The importance of professional competence of employees and their impact on organizational performance has led organizations to try to provide the necessary grounds to improve their performance (Sanei, 2011). The importance and necessity for professional development of teachers is due to the intensification of the challenges facing the teacher's profession and the increase of people's expectations about the quality of education (Genser, 2000). In particular, despite many efforts, organizations and educational centers still suffer from low quality in many respects, and they are in serious trouble in improving it. For solving this problem, we need to focus on the basic and influential elements that are more important, and among these elements, the role of the teacher is generally the more important. Teacher is not only one of the variable required to change in order to improve educational systems, but also he is the most important factor that causes change (Jafari & et al., 2016).

The need for committed and effective human resources at all levels of education is vital for the continuity and survival of the educational system. Each person has a force that called commitment

in the occupational and organizational dimensions that is an important factor in the efficacy and duties of the employees (Biatali, et al., 2016). The existence of a professional commitment among employees as a motivation to work (Cohen, 2011) preserves the workforce and prevents emotional breakdown or the decision to leave their jobs; therefore, more committed, more adhered to values and professional goals, and they play a more active role, and also less able to leave the organization and find new employment opportunities (Greenberg & Baron, 2003).

One of the tools for improving the quality of teacher training, which enriches the experience of teaching in classrooms, is action research (Chou, 2010). Nowadays, action research is an educational tool and learning strategy for educators (Capnick, 2013; Elder, 2009). Research shows that action research is one of the most effective processes for empowering teachers to help themselves and their colleagues to "learn from the practice, overcome excellence from transformation, promote creativity and reflection, and to test mental hypotheses." Therefore, we can say that action research in the creation of learning organizations and cultures has a unique role, since teachers are constantly learning, hypothesizing, and testing the hypothesis (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Hathorn and Dillon (2018), in a research entitled "Action Planning for a Professional Development", showed that teacher

participation in the process of action research leads to the development of professional and educational reform in the educational system. Thus, the application of the research in particular, in the field of research and development, has received special attention. Action research is mainly conducted as a research for teachers and for the purpose of new and professional knowledge; a career that comes with creativity, including initiative, intuition, and decision making (Mehramohammadi, 2000; Rezaei, 2011). Considering the role and importance of action research, the purpose of this study is to compare vocational commitment and professional competence of teachers with and without experiences of participating in action research among elementary schools in Shiraz.

Methods

Participants

To select the sample size purposefully, among 56 elementary school teachers in Shiraz, 56 teachers were selected through targeted sampling method. Out of these 56 teachers, 28 non-participating teachers and 28 teachers participating in participatory action research and their articles were accepted (out of 9 teachers in their area 1, 8 of them, were from 15 teachers In the area of 2, 13 of them, out of 3 teachers who were accepted in their 3 articles and in area 4 from among the 5 people who accepted the paper, 4 of them)

according to the Morgan table they were selected.

Methodology

This is a causal-comparative study. The method of doing it is fieldwork. In order to conduct the research, a referral form was first obtained from the University for the Department of Education in Shiraz. Through the ministry of education, the list of names and schools of teachers who participated in the study of action research and their articles were considered by each area separately. After selecting a sample, the researcher referred to the Schools on the basis of the list and teachers in the action research completed the professional qualification and commitment questionnaires, along with the teachers from the same schools who did not participate in the action research.

Measures

The instruments used in this research are vocational commitment questionnaire and professional qualification questionnaire, the descriptions of each questionnaire are summarized below.

• *Vocational Commitment Questionnaire*

This questionnaire was designed and used in 2007 by Ratwell and Arnold. They used 9 items to measure employee commitment. To answer the questionnaire, a Likert scale of 5 degrees was used from completely disagree to the completely agree. The validity of

this questionnaire in the research of Pearson (2014) was correlated with a general question by the researcher. It was found to be 0.81 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.8 and the mean scores of this scale were 3.66 and standard deviation of 0.59, respectively ($P < 0.001$). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha and String alpha 0.77 and 0.67 respectively. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.89 in Cronbach's alpha in this research.

• *Professional Competency Questionnaire*

This questionnaire was created in 2014 by Babaei. This questionnaire consists of 39 items and 3 subscales of cognitive-skillful competency, attitude and managerial competence. Babaei (2014) confirmed the content and formality of the questionnaire with the

suggestion of the professors and experts of this field. The sub-scales of this questionnaire Cronbach's Alpha by Babaei (2014) was 0.90-0.96. Also, the reliability of the professional competence questionnaire and its subscales by Cronbach's alpha method were 0.89 to 0.96 in this study.

Findings

Before analyzing the multivariable analysis, all the assumptions were tested and all assumptions of the analysis of variance were approved.

As shown in Table 1, multivariate experiments (Philais Trace, Wilks Lambda, Hotelling Trac, and Roy s Largest Root). Based on the result of the table, the effect of the variables was statistically significant. In other words, it is seen that F values in each of the 4 tests are significant at the level of $p < 0.05$.

Table 1- Multivariate test results

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Partial Eta Squared	sig
Intercept	Philais Trace	0.998	5312.04	4	51	0.99	0.0001
	Wilks Lambda	0.002	5312.04	4	51	0.99	0.0001
	Hotelling Trac	416.63	5312.04	4	51	0.99	0.0001
	Roy s Largest Root	416.63	5312.04	4	51	0.99	0.0001
groups	Philais Trace	0.77	43.19	4	51	0.77	0.0001
	Wilks Lambda	0.22	43.19	4	51	0.77	0.0001
	Hotelling Trac	3.38	43.19	4	51	0.77	0.0001
	Roy s Largest Root	3.38	43.19	4	51	0.77	0.0001

Table 2- Results of the effects of variables

	Dependent Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	vocational commitment	1263.50	1	1263.50	160.75	0.0001	0.74
	cognitive-skillful	244.44	1	244.44	7.88	0.007	0.127
	competency attitude	100.44	1	100.44	6.22	0.016	0.103
	competency managerial competence	110.37	1	110.37	5.04	0.029	0.085
Intercept	vocational commitment	59020.07	1	59020.07	7509.11	0.0001	0.993
	cognitive-	204853.01	1	204853.01	6609.99	0.0001	0.992
		10184.44	1	105184.44	6512.91	0.0001	0.992

	skillful competency attitude competency managerial competence	308229.63	1	308229.63	14095.24	0.0001	0.996
groups	vocational commitment	1263.50	1	1263.50	160.75	0.0001	0.74
	cognitive- skillful	244.44	1	244.44	7.88	0.007	0.127
	competency attitude	100.44	1	100.44	6.22	0.016	0.103
	competency managerial competence	110.37	1	110.37	5.04	0.029	0.085
error	vocational commitment	424.42	54	7.86			
	cognitive- skillful	1673.53	54	30.99			
	competency attitude	872.10	54	16.150			
	competency managerial competence	1180.85	54	21.86			
Total	vocational commitment	60708.00	56				
	cognitive- skillful	206771.00	56				
	competency attitude	106157.00	56				
	competency managerial competence	30952.85	56				
Corrected Total	vocational commitment	1687.92	55				
	cognitive- skillful	1917.98	55				
	competency attitude	972.55	55				
	competency managerial competence	1291.22	55				

The results of Table 2 show that participation or lack of participation in action research has created a significant difference in the commitment of teachers ($F = 160.75$ and $P < 0.0001$). There is a

difference between two groups of teachers (with experience and without experience of participation in action research) in terms of cognitive-skill competence ($F = 7.88$, $P < 0.007$).

In terms of attitude competency, there is a significant difference between two groups of teachers (with experience and without experience of participation in action research) ($F = 22.26$ and $P < 0.016$). There is also a difference between the two groups of teachers (experienced and without experience of participation in action research) in terms of managerial competence ($F = 0.04$, $P < 0.029$).

Discussion and conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to compare the vocational commitment and professional competence among teachers with and without experience of participating in action research among primary schools in Shiraz. This research is a practical research, and a causal-comparative study.

Since participation in the process of action research leads to finding answers to class problems and challenges, teachers, by improving the conditions and focusing on problem solving, regard the educational environment as an environment that they are interested in, and, by participating in problem-based research, leads to an increase in commitment among them.

The results of this study were compared with the results of Gorgani & et al. (2011), Rezayi (2011), Fallahpour (2012), spokespersons & et al. (2014), Pejman & et al. (2016), Boogler & Smesch (2004), Hayen (2013), Martel (2014), Hein & Lauraie (2014), Castro & Granada (2016). Participating in action research for teachers offers special opportunities

for experiencing new situations. Upbringing and equipping new skills will increase teachers' motivation for self-esteem and help them to find educational goals.

The purpose of action research is adding practical knowledge and empowering practitioners about the phenomena to which it faces and this type of research has social and educational empowerment goals. Research leads to the growth, creative, innovation and ability to solve problem in teachers. Action research is a type of research to improve practical practice during teaching, which is used in education, management, and professional growth (Lee-Hsieh, Kuo, & Tsai). In the end, teaching research methodology and collecting data for action research is suggested for teachers and for practical research, it is suggested that research be conducted on the impact of teachers' participation in action research on learning and academic achievement of students.

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