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Iranian EFL Teachers' Attitudes toward their Teaching Profession

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Abstract

Teacher's success and efficiency in their profession is closely affected by his/her attitude towards the teaching profession. The major objective behind this study was to investigate Iranian EFL prospective teachers' attitude towards their teaching profession. In so doing, the 10 item attitudes towards teaching profession scale (ATTP) questionnaire developed by Askar and Erden (1987) was administered to 50 male and female Iranian EFL teachers. The obtained data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Independent Sample t-test. The findings revealed that Iranian EFL prospective teachers have positive attitude towards the profession of teaching. It was also realized that teachers' educational level has significant affected teachers' attitudes; that is, teachers with BA degree had more positive attitude towards their profession. Similarly, a significant gender difference was observed in their attitudes towards the profession. That is females had more positive attitude towards the profession of teaching than males.

Keywords: Prospective Teachers, Attitude, Teaching Profession

Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, qualified individuals keeping up with novelties and developments are need ed. Education also changes with the demand and expectations of the society. Uwaifo (2009) mentioned that education unlocks the door of modernization and sustainable development and that, it is teachers that hold the key to the door. The whole process of education is shaped by a human personality called the teacher, who plays a pivotal role in any education system. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programs into action. In fact teacher is an active agent of social change. Teaching is a very noble and pious profession (Trivedi, 2012). Teaching is the noblest of all the professions. It is most rewarding too, not in terms of luxuries but in terms of its being the dispenser of human destinies (Kumar, 2006). The role, function, competence and preparation of teachers have no doubt undergone a change from time to time, but the need for a teacher has been the same in all ages and all times. Teachers are mostly responsible for raising these individuals.

According to Kavcar (2005) the most important element of an education system is teacher. A teacher serves as a model for the students with his/her attitudes and behaviors. One of the important factors that effect a teacher's success and efficiency is his/her attitude towards the profession. Therefore, aside from teachers' efficacy and productivity, their attitudes towards their professions are quite important. In literature, attitude is defined as "the core of human individuality", "the permanent organization of an individual's motivational, emotional, perceptional and mental processes towards an event or a psychological object", "positive or negative sensual intensity", and "learned tendency" (Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Eze, 2004; Tezci & Terzi , 2010; Tok, 2011). Individual's attitude towards profession, will affect the way of doing the required tasks of profession. As long as individuals have a positive attitude towards profession they will tend to do it better.

The teacher's attitude towards the profession is "the concepts that are not explicitly expressed and that are formed about teaching, students, classroom atmosphere and the topic to be taught, usually without being aware" (Güneyli & Aslan, 2009, p.314). Positive attitudes towards the profession are reflected in the teacher's classroom behavior and provide opportunity to better fulfill the role of teacher. Thus, the manner of the teacher's attitude towards his/her profession will affect the way the student learns. And this will bring along professional satisfaction.

The teachers thinking and their job satisfaction, their expectation from the job all such things affects their work (Trivedi, 2012). In this regard, knowledge in the subject matter, teaching competencies and positive attitudes towards teaching as a profession are defined as three factors to success in the profession of teaching (Daniel, 2006). According to Gun (2012) in order to be successful in the teaching profession, which requires patience, dedication and continuous operation, it is important to like and willingly practice this profession. In this context, the attitudes of teacher candidates play a significant role in their future career successes due to the reason that they motivate the individuals to behave in a positive or negative way. This also casts a fruitful effect on learning of the students.

Beside teachers' level of knowledge, there are some other elements affecting their teaching process. One of the most important elements is teachers' beliefs. According to Nespor (1994) "teachers are likely to teach in different ways because teachers' beliefs are more powerful than their knowledge, in influencing the way in which they teach" (p.42). Teachers' beliefs are significant indicators of the behaviors that will be present in the classroom. Therefore, teachers' beliefs play an important role in the classroom. In this regard, the teacher's attitude towards his/her profession will affect not only him/her but also the other

elements of the education system as well (Sabzian and Gilakjani, 2013). Therefore, it is considered to be important to investigate the attitudes of the EFL prospective teachers towards their teaching profession. However, teaching as a profession when compared to other professions like engineering, medicine, and Law professions, continues to enjoy low esteem and professional autonomy in the third world countries. Most educationists, however, pay excessive attention to the knowledge component while neglecting the development of practical competencies and positive attitudes towards the teaching profession. Therefore, gaining an appreciation of their attitudes towards teaching profession may provide useful insight into the future of teaching profession and acceptance. Thus, given the dearth of both empirical and qualitative research on the teaching profession, the current study intends to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward their teaching profession in Iran.

Research Questions

1. What are the prospective teachers' attitudes towards their teaching profession?

2. Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' educational levels and their attitudes towards their teaching profession?

3. Is there any difference between Iranian male and female EFL prospective teachers in terms of their attitudes towards their teaching profession?

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study adopts a correlational quantitative design to primarily identify teachers' attitudes towards their profession and secondarily to determine the relationship between their educational background and their attitudes through administering a closed-ended questionnaire.

Participants

The participants in this study were 50 Iranian EFL teachers (25 male and 25 female) who were teaching in 14 different private language institutes in Shiraz. The participants were selected through purposive sampling so that they all had at least two years teaching experiences. All subjects were native speakers of Persian. The participants graduated either at B.A or M.A in English language teaching and translation.

Instrument

Attitudes towards teaching profession scale (ATTP) developed by Askar and Erden (1987) was employed in this study. ATTP is a 5 likert-type scale consisting of 10 items, 6 of which are positive and 4 are negative. A minimum score of 10 points and a maximum score of 50 points could be calculated from the scale. High scores indicate a positive attitude towards the profession. Reliability of this scale was determined through Cronbach Alpha which was 0.80. Table 1 shows the reliability of the scale which was satisfactory value.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.82	.80	10

Table 2 demonstrates the demographic information of the participating teachers.

Table 2. the characteristics of the participants

Sex	Degree	Age			Total
		24-27	27-30	30 or more	
Male (N=25)	B.A.	4	9	2	15
	M.A.	3	6	1	10
Female (N=25)	B.A.	5	10	1	16
	M.A.	2	4	3	9
Total		14	29	7	50

Data collection and analysis Procedures

Sixty ATTP questionnaires were distributed by the researcher through face-to-face contact in 14 different privet language institutes in in Shiraz, Iran, or via email. Some of the teachers filled it out in the institute and some others completed them at home. Finally, 50 forms were returned. The participants and institutes were selected based on purposive selection techniques. The teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the filled questionnaires were coded and analyzed anonymously. Some additional information which was relevant to the nature of the research project was also given to them. The data were collected in summer 2017. The collected data were then analyzed through descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and Cronbach Alpha.

Results

Attitude towards the teaching profession (ATTP) questionnaire conducted by Askar and Erden (1987) was used to see Iranian teachers' attitudes towards their teaching profession. Then, the obtained data were analyzed. To this end, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated. The descriptive statistics for all items of the questionnaire is shown in Table 3 below.

Based on Askar and Erden (1987) in scoring the attitude towards the teaching profession (ATTP) questionnaire,

1) If the calculated means were between 4.21 to 5, it was taken as definitely agree.
2) If the calculated means were between 3.41 to 4.20, it was considered as agree.
3) If the calculated means were between 2.61 to 3.40, it was taken as moderately agree.
4) If the calculated means were between 2.60 to 1.81, it was taken as disagree.
5) And finally if the calculated means were between 1.80 to 1.00, it was regarded as definitely disagree.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for attitudes toward teaching profession

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. I read books about teaching in my free time.	50	4.21	.43245	Definitely Agree
2. Teaching is the last job that I want to do.	50	2.65	.52953	Moderately Agree

3. Teaching has a sacred nature as a job.	50	4.91	.41242	Definitely Agree
4. Teaching is one of the most respected professions.	50	4.89	.42245	Definitely Agree
5. Teaching is not an enjoyable profession.	50	1.90	.63592	Disagree
6. I would not like to become a teacher.	50	2.21	.52953	Disagree
7. Teaching is an honorable profession.	50	3.41	.54913	Agree
8. I like teaching as a profession.	50	2.60	.52953	Disagree
9. Teaching is an ideal profession for me.	50	3.46	.52953	Agree
10. Teaching is not a valuable profession.	50	1.74	.63592	Definitely Disagree

According to Table 3 six items were between moderately agree to definitely agree. In this regard, items number 3, 4 and 1 were in the range of definitely agree (mean No. 4.91, 4.89 and 4.21, respectively). Items number 9 and 7 with mean score of 3.46 and 3.41, respectively, were in the range of agree. Only item number 2 with mean score of 2.65 was in the range of as moderately agree. In negative statements items number 8, 6 and 5 were in disagree and item number 10 was in definitely disagree range. The findings show that teachers had highly positive attitudes towards their teaching profession. Table 4 shows Teachers' Overall attitude towards their teaching profession.

Table 4. Teachers' Overall attitude towards their teaching profession

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Teachers' Attitude towards Their Teaching Profession	50	3.19	.52064	Moderately Agree

Table 4 reveals the mean attitude of the Iranian teachers' towards their profession was 3.19 with standard deviation of .52. It means the attitude of teachers towards their teaching profession was in range of moderately agree. Therefore, they had generally positive attitude.

In order to compare Iranian EFL teachers' attitude towards their teaching profession based on their educational level, Independent samples t-test was run. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test for The Role of Educational Level on Teaching Profession

	N	mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Differences	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
MA	19	7.541	.74126	1.910	52	3.214	.000
BA	31	9.451	.57821				

$^{**}p<0.01$ $^{*}p<0.05$

Table 5 indicates the results of Independent samples t-test for the role of educational level on teaching profession. The results show that p value is 0.000 ($p<0.01$). It is illustrated that there was a significant difference between BA and MA teachers in terms of their attitudes toward their teaching profession.

It was also intended, in this study, to determine if male and female teachers significantly differ in terms of their attitudes toward their teaching profession. To this end, Independent samples t-test was applied to

measure any probable difference between Iranian male and female teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession.

Table 6. Independent samples t-test for The Role of Gender on Teaching Profession

	N	mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Differences	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	25	6.941	1.30362	1.979	52	4.599	.000
Female	25	8.910	1.60949				

$^{**}p<0.01$ $^{*}p<0.05$

Table 6 illustrates a statistically significant difference between the male and female, Sig. (2-tailed) =0.000. This difference between the two groups suggests that female had more positive attitudes towards the teaching profession than their male counterparts.

Discussion

According to descriptive statistics of demographic information of participants in this study, the frequency and percentage of male and female participants were the same (25, 50%, respectively). Based on the results of Table 1, 58% of teachers were between 27 to 30 years old. In educational status, Table 2, 62% of participants had BA.

Based on the results of descriptive statistics for all items of the questionnaire, the mean score of positive attitude was more than the negative (3.59 and 2.11, respectively). The findings also, indicated that most of the teachers' belief *"Teaching has a sacred nature as a job"* (item number 3). On the other hand, just a few of them belief that *"Teaching is not a valuable profession"* (item number 10). Based on the descriptive analysis of overall teachers' attitude towards their teaching profession, Table 4, it can be concluded that, the Iranian teachers' attitude towards their teaching profession was positive. Therefore, the first null hypothesis in this study was rejected.

According to independent samples t-test for the role of educational level on teaching profession, Table 5, the mean score for teachers with MA degree was 7.541 and for teachers with BA degree was 9.451. This table also indicated that the significant level was 0.000. Thus, the difference between BA and MA teachers' attitudes towards their teaching profession was a statistically significant and the second null hypothesis was rejected.

In order to answer the third research question, Independent samples t-test was applied. The results of independent samples t-test for the role of gender on teaching profession, Table 6, illustrated that there was a statistically significant difference between males' and females' attitude. That is, female had more positive attitudes towards their profession. Since Sig. was 0.000, the findings indicated that females were more appreciated than male. So, the third null hypothesis in this study was rejected.

These results were in line with the previous findings, for example Alkhateeb (2013) investigated attitudes towards teaching profession of education students in Qatar. The results indicated that the participants tended to hold a fairly positive attitude towards teaching as a profession. Results also suggested that education students' attitudes towards the teaching profession affected their undergraduate academic achievement. In another study Güneyli and Aslan (2009) conducted a study to evaluation of Turkish prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession. Although a significant difference

occurred in favor of female prospective teachers in relation to the gender factor, they found that the majority of prospective teachers chose Turkish language teaching because they love the profession. The prospective teachers think that there are some deficiencies in the education they receive.

In this regard, Musa and Bichi (2015) investigated the assessment of prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession: The Case of northwest university, Kano-Nigeria. Findings revealed that prospective teachers have positive attitude towards the profession. Similarly, a significant gender difference was observed in their attitudes towards the profession. However, the results of further analysis showed no significant difference in the prospective teachers' attitudes towards the profession in relation to field of study and level of study.

Bichi, ert al., (2015) investigated the attitudes of education undergraduate students towards teaching profession, using a random sample of 160 prospective teachers from Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Nigeria. The result of the study indicated that prospective teachers have negative attitudes towards the teaching profession; however, female attitude was found to be more positive than the male prospective teachers. Sharbain and Tan (2013) examined gender differences in primary English language teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. The findings of the study showed that there were significant differences in English Language Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession between male and female teachers. Female English Language Teachers seemed to have more positive attitudes towards teaching than their male counterparts. The gender variable had a large-sized effect on the teachers' attitudes.

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