

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION SUBSCALES: PREDICTORS OF EFL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating the relationship between Iranian EFL, English as a foreign language, male and female instructors' philosophy of education and their professional development to see whether there is any significant relation between the type of philosophy of education that teachers hold and their professional development. It also attempted to find out whether Iranian EFL instructors' philosophy of education subscales can be considered as some significant predictors of their professional development or not. Consequently, 300 Iranian EFL male and female instructors teaching at English language institutes in Mashhad, Tehran, and Bojnord, in Iran, took part in the study. The participants were asked to fill out two questionnaires, Professional Development Inventory along with Teachers' Philosophy of Education Inventory simultaneously, in order to elicit their ideas about the aforementioned issues. To analyze the data, Multiple Regression was employed. The results exhibited that "Perennialism" as one of the philosophy of education subscales was considered to have the only significant relation with Iranian EFL teachers' professional development along with being the only significant predictor of their professional development. Finally, pedagogical implications along with suggestions for further studies are discussed.

Keywords: Philosophy of Education Subscales, Professional Development, EFL Instructors, Perennialism.

INTRODUCTION

Living in a century where all its citizens should make developments to be able to fit themselves into the present era and cope with the situations, teachers, who have got a more crucial role as the members of the society, should make improvements in their profession and be aware of the philosophy of education they possess, as the philosophy they hold towards teaching purely affects their style of teaching as well as the teaching methods and techniques, they practice in their classrooms. Regarding the same aforementioned idea, researchers like Komba and Nkumbi (2008) have stated that professional development is perceived as something which receives a great degree of importance as it develops teachers "technically, academically, and professionally" (As cited in Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015). Thus, most of the organizational systems, inner or outer circles, huge or tiny

ones, are getting more concerned about their building blocks which come to be their teachers or better to say their clerks, to provide them with circumstances and activities through which the members can be professionally developed.

1. Statement of the Problem

Considering the context of the study as well as the educational system which is present in Iran, teachers have been and in fact are still sticking to all those traditional philosophies towards language teaching. They rarely think about the era that they are in and the speed of the changes taking place all around the world. As a matter of fact falling behind the present needs of the society and just acting as pure technicians. Thus, some of the instructors may not be/feel that much willing/responsible regarding their professional development or at times not having the opportunity to think about it as an important factor in their

profession. With this regard, the aim of the study was to examine the subscales of philosophy of education to see whether they can be considered as some of the probable predictors of Iranian EFL teachers' professional development or not.

2. Significance of the Study

As teachers are considered to be the heart of the every educational context and more specifically classrooms as well as the instructions that take place in them (Galabawa, 2001, as cited in Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015), it comes to be so highlighted and important to know about their philosophy of education towards teaching. And also realize how it could be related to their professional development. As a result, the outcome of the study can be informative for the instructors to reflect on their philosophy of education and their professional development, and see what changes and improvements are needed to be able to cope with the present era and the skills needed.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Philosophy of Education

Considering philosophy of education and English language teaching, few researches have been done quite related in the field. That's why the researchers have tried to keep an eye on the philosophy of education that Iranian instructors may hold and its relation with their professional development. Regarding the researches which have been done, some of them believe that philosophy of education is highly dependent on the society as well as the social relation that exists in the community and its members, highly impacting each other. In fact, philosophy of education from a social aspect prepares its members for future survivals and their lives based on particular circumstances (Ardashkin, 2015). Moreover, the philosophy of education that exists in a society or the philosophy of the education that a person may possess is an issue which must be adapted continuously based on the era the members are in. This is as a matter of facing globalization (Ardashkin, 2015). Consequently, that particular philosophy must provide a rich ground for the education in a way that the quality of life supports the quality of education (Ardashkin, 2015).

On the other hand, some other researchers in their studies

have found that having a good well-based philosophical attitude towards education can highly impact decision making which will lead to having rich choices (Gokalp, 2012). Also, Biesta, (2015) has conducted a study within which the development of the philosophy of education has been pinpointed throughout the centuries till now. Besides, Walcott, (1966) has mentioned that philosophy of education is the outcome of reflection, the point where the right and wrong issues come to be understood. In fact, it's a way which links past to the present and future. Better to say, it's a dynamic way regarding which an instructor may not possess the previous hold philosophy in the future as matter of experience (Walcott, 1966). Moreover, Dewey, (1896) believes that philosophy of education is something which can't be taught to learners, it's a part of "one's own being". In addition, Isichei, (2006) in the article "Philosophy and teacher education: An African perspective" has conducted a study to reveal the scope of philosophy of education along with its possible relation with teacher education. So the results illustrated that "It is imperative on all teachers to appreciate philosophy of education as their professional tool. Accepting the contributions of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism as philosophies of education, the paper suggests that in order for Africa to benefit educationally, she should adopt eclecticism as its philosophy of education".

3.2 Professional Development

Based on the present century and the improvements that are taking place, all issues/fields must develop in order to be able to fit into the needs of that particular century. Consequently, instructors in the field of TEFL must do their bests to adapt themselves as much as possible regarding their profession not to fall behind others as well as the present century they are in. For doing so, they cannot be efficient practitioners in their job unless they make developments regarding their job and major, such as the competency, methods, methodologies, teaching and learning resources, efficiency, and the like (Rogan, 2004 & Mosh, 2004, as cited in Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015). In addition, such development is usually made out of a teachers' experience as an instructor, student, understanding theories, reflecting on the teaching process

and learners' learning outcome, a sort of professional development which highly needs reflection (Mahmoudi & Özkan, 2015). Besides, a qualitative study has been done using questionnaires and interviews to come to know about the challenges that may, from a South African perspective, affect the instructors' involvement in Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The results revealed four reasons behind "Insufficient contribution of the school management to teachers' CPD; teachers' reluctance to participate in CPD activities; factors obstructing teachers to partake effectively in CPD events; and inadequate knowledge presented by CPD programs" (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015).

Also, Mahmoudi & Özkan, (2015) have conducted a study through which they tried to find out which PD activities are more helpful for teachers and then what are the differences between novice and experienced teachers' perspective towards professional development through interviews and questionnaires. The results revealed that both groups benefited from PD activities, but they varied in the kind they attended as well as facing differences between the two viewpoints. In addition, another study was done regarding the relationship between teachers' continuing professional development and their beliefs towards teaching and learning. The outcome of the article pinpointed the issue that the more the instructors participated in CPD activities, the more student oriented they were (Vries, Jansen, & Griff, 2013). Also, some other CPD activities have been proved to be quite helpful in case they are practiced on part of the teachers such as "updating their knowledge and skills, reflective activities, and collaboration" (Schraw, 1998; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Verloop, 2003, as cited in Vries, Jansen, & Griff, 2013). To put it in a nutshell, countries, educational systems, and more specifically instructors as the core practitioners must continuously plan to develop in their profession in order to fit perfectly in the century they are living in.

4. Research Questions

To gain the goals of the present study, the following research questions were raised:

- Is there any significant relation between Iranian EFL

upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education and their professional development?

- Which of the Iranian EFL teachers' philosophy of education subscales can be considered as a significant predictor of their professional development?

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants and Setting

In this study, the sample population was selected based on simple random sampling from Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers teaching at some language schools; i.e all the sample/participants had equal chance of being involved in the study. The data was collected from Tehran, Mashhad, and Bojnord in Iran. Consequently, the English language schools were Kish, Zabansara, and Khaneye Zaban, respectively. The number of the participants was determined out of a whole estimated population of 2835, EFL instructors teaching at English institutions in Mashhad, based on the Krejcie & Morgan, (1970) sample size table, 95% confidence, which came to be 300. Also, the participants who took part in the study were both male and female and their native language was Farsi. Better to say, 300 upper-intermediate EFL instructors from the aforementioned language schools were selected randomly, among the available ones at the institutes, and were introduced to the researchers by the managers of the institutions to take part in the study. In addition, their ages ranged from 23 to 35.

5.2 Instrumentation

5.2.1 Iranian EFL Teachers' Philosophy of Teaching Scale

Through investigating the related literature, educational philosophies are mostly classified into five categories as perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism (Guttek, 2014; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012; as cited in The relationship between prospective teachers' critical thinking dispositions and their educational philosophies, n.d.). Consequently, the Inventory of Philosophies of Education was applied in the study which measures a continuum of five educational philosophies, such as essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism

(Sadker & Sadker, 2003). The aforementioned questionnaire consists of 40 statements in the form of 5-point Likert Scale ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly." In addition, each of these philosophies has 8 statements. That is statements related to numbers 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36 are related to essentialism, and numbers 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37 go for perennialism. Also, numbers 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38 include social reconstructionism, numbers 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39 for progressivism, and finally existentialism which includes the numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40. According to Sadker and Sadker (2003), the questionnaire has got content validity. Besides, the reliability of the questionnaire has been estimated by the researchers through the previous studies and it has been proved that all the questionnaire along with its subscales have got high reliabilities.

5.2.2 Professional Development Inventory

Regarding the measurement of teachers' professional development, a CP questionnaire was given to the participants of the study. For confirming the validity of the items, the researchers Vries, Jansen, & Griff (2013) have asked experts who were school managers and expert teachers in the schools that were involved in their study to review and reword some of the item formulations. Moreover, the questionnaire is in the form of a four-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "very often". Besides, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire have been estimated through the same aforementioned study. At the end, it's worth mentioning that the PD inventory has been adapted by the aforementioned researchers from a qualitative research done by Kwakman, (1999). Consequently, after researchers had a careful consideration of the inventory's items and comparing them with the objectives of the study, the inventory was applied in the study because of fitting into the purpose of the research.

5.3 Procedure

In order to conduct the study, first the researchers went through the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size table to come to know about the exact number of participants needed to take part in the study. Better to say the sample of the study was chosen based on the total population of EFL

instructors teaching at English institutions in Mashhad, Iran which came to be 2835. By the time the exact number of the participants (sample) has been made vivid, 300 EFL male and female upper-intermediate Iranian teachers, they were chosen by the managers of Kish, Zabansara, and Khaneye Zaban institutes randomly, in Tehran, Mashhad, and Bojnord cities in Iran to take part in the study. After that, the two aforementioned questionnaires were handled to the participants by the researchers to be answered within 20 minutes in their workplaces. At the end when the data has been gathered, it was analyzed using SPSS Software and more specifically by running Multiple Regression.

5.4 Study Design

As the researchers' aim was at finding any probable significant relations between Iranian EFL teachers' philosophy of education and their professional development the design of the study is a correlational one.

6. Results

In order to find the answer to the research questions, i.e. whether there is any significant relation between Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales and their professional development, and which of the Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales can be considered as a significant predictor of their professional development, Multiple Regression was employed through SPSS Software, the results of which are illustrated in the following tables.

As depicted in Table 1, all the philosophy of education subscales have a degree of relation with professional development, among which "Perennialism", one of the philosophy of education subscales, has got the most preferable relation with professional development, the dependent variable, .152, being the nearest to 3. Consequently, to realize which of the philosophy of education subscales has got a statistically significant relation with professional development, the Sig. goes for Perennialism subscale, (.004 < .05).

Moreover, to check the multicollinearity assumption and also for comparing the contribution of each of the independent variables, philosophy of education subscales, to the dependent variable, professional

development, Coefficient Correlation is employed and the results are shown in Table 2.

As it is depicted in Table 2, The Tolerance values for each of the independent variables as predictors of Iranian EFL teachers' professional development are not less than .10; consequently the assumption of multicollinearity isn't violated (.987, .991, 1.000, .960, and .974). In addition, having VIF values well below 10 can be considered as another support for not violating the multicollinearity (1.013, 1.009, 1.000, 1.042, and 1.027).

Moreover, Standardized Coefficients (Beta) was utilized to

compare the degree of the contribution of each independent variable to the prediction of the dependent variable. Therefore, the larger the Beta value, the more contribution that particular independent variable, philosophy of education subscales, has over the dependent variable, professional development. The largest Beta value goes for "Perennialism subscale", .160, and the least Beta value is possessed by "Social reconstructionism subscale", .014. Also, "Existentialism subscale" with a Beta value of .056 has proved to be the second independent variable which has got a

		CPD	Existentialism	Progressivism	Social Reconstructionism	Perennialism	Essentialism
Pearson Correlation	CPD	1.000	-.037	.055	.013	.152	-.016
	Existentialism	-.037	1.000	.043	-.008	.096	-.032
	Progressivism	.055	.043	1.000	-.003	.087	.004
	Social reconstructionism	-.013	-.008	-.003	1.000	-.003	-.018
	Perennialism	.152	.096	.087	-.003	1.000	.153
	Essentialism	-.016	-.032	.004	-.018	.153	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Total	-	.262	.171	.409	.004	.391
	Existentialism	.262	-	.228	.443	.049	.288
	Progressivism	.171	.228	-	.480	.065	.474
	Social reconstructionism	.409	.443	.480	-	.482	.378
	Perennialism	.004	.049	.065	.482	-	.004
	Essentialism	.391	.288	.474	.378	.004	-
N	Total	300	300	300	300	300	300
	Existentialism	300	300	300	300	300	300
	Progressivism	300	300	300	300	300	300
	Social reconstructionism	300	300	300	300	300	300
	Perennialism	300	300	300	300	300	300
	Essentialism	300	300	300	300	300	300

Table 1. Correlations: Professional Development and Philosophy of Education Subscales

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	107.790	8.328		12.943	.000	91.399	124.180						
	Existentialism	-.130	.135	-.056	.961	.337	-.395	.136	-.037	-.056	-.055	.987	1.013	
	Progressivism	.103	.137	.044	.756	.450	-.166	.372	.055	.044	.043	.991	1.009	
	Social reconstructionism	-.037	.151	-.014	-.244	.808	-.334	.260	-.013	-.014	-.014	1.000	1.000	
	Perennialism	.381	.140	.160	2.721	.007	.106	.657	.152	.157	.156	.960	1.042	
	Essentialism	-.092	.126	-.043	-.732	.465	-.340	.156	-.016	-.043	-.042	.974	1.027	

Table 2. Coefficients of Correlation

considerable amount of contribution to the professional development, the dependent variable.

At last, the Sig. values were employed to find out whether the Beta values are making a statistically significant contribution/prediction to the dependent value or not. Among all, "Perennialism subscale" has a significant contribution to professional development (.007 < .05). As a result, the other independent variables in the present study don't have any significant contribution/prediction regarding Iranian EFL teachers' professional development.

Table 3 illustrates how much of the teachers' professional development is predicted according to the independent variables, philosophy of education subscales.

The results in Table 3 show that philosophy of education subscales accounted for 3% of the variance in Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. Also, the Adjusted R Square, used for smaller samples, illustrates that philosophy of education along with its subscales accounted for 1.3% of the variance in Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. To be more comprehensive, the Iranian EFL Teachers' Philosophy of Teaching Scale is presented in Table 4.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating any significant relations between Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales and their professional development. In addition, finding out which of the Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales can be considered as a significant predictor of their professional development.

Although few studies have pinpointed the contribution of philosophy of education subscales in the field of English language teaching as a second/foreign language as some probable significant predictors of teachers' professional development, some studies have highlighted the role of each separately. Regarding teachers' professional development, Mahmoudi & Özkan, (2015)

have conducted a study through which they tried to find out which PD activities are more helpful for teachers and then what are the differences between novice and experienced teachers' perspective towards professional development through interviews and questionnaires. The results revealed that both groups benefited from PD activities, but they varied in the kind of the activity they attended as well as facing differences between the two viewpoints. In addition, another study was done regarding the relationship between teachers' continuing professional development and their beliefs towards teaching and learning, somehow in line with the philosophy teachers hold towards education. The outcome of the article pinpointed the issue that the more the instructors participated in CPD activities, the more student oriented there were (Vries, Jansen, & Griff, 2013).

Moreover, considering teachers' philosophy of education and their professional development, it has been believed that the philosophy of education that exists in a society or the philosophy of the education that a person may possess is an issue which must be adapted continuously based on the era the members are in. This is a matter of facing globalization (Ardashkin, 2015). Consequently, that particular philosophy must provide a rich ground for the education in a way that the quality of life supports the quality of education (Ardashkin, 2015). In addition, it aims at Isichei (2006) in the article "Philosophy and teacher education: An African perspective" has conducted a study to reveal the scope of philosophy of education along with its possible relation with teacher education. Thus the results illustrated that "It is imperative on all teachers to appreciate philosophy of education as their professional tool".

Therefore, as mentioned elsewhere in the article, the present study aimed at investigating any significant relations between Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales and their professional development. In addition, finding out which of the Iranian EFL upper-intermediate teachers' philosophy of education subscales can be considered as a significant predictor of their professional development. Consequently, after running Multiple Regression through SPSS Software for analyzing the data,

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.172 ^a	.030	.013	6.71133

^aPredictors: (Constant), Essentialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructionism, Existentialism, Perennialism

Table 3. Model Summary

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Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below:

S. No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The curriculum of schools should be centered around the basic subjects such as reading, writing, history, math, and science					
2	The curriculum of the schools should focus on the great thinkers of the past					
3	Many students learn best by engaging in real world activities rather than reading					
4	The students should be permitted to determine their own curriculum					
5	Information is taught effectively when it is broken down into small parts					
6	The curriculum of a school should be determined by information that is essential for all students to know					
7	Schools, above all, should develop students' abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively; this is more important than developing their social skills or providing them with a useful body of knowledge about our ever changing world					
8	Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom					
9	Reality is determined by each individual's perceptions. There is not objective and universal reality					
10	People are shaped much more by their environment than by their genetic dispositions or the exercise of their free will					
11	Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have read and mastered certain key material					
12	An effective education is not aimed at the immediate needs of the students or society					
13	The curriculum of a school should be built around the personal experiences and needs of the students					
14	Students who do not want to study much should not be required to do so					
15	Programmed learning (sequential, step-by-step) is an effective method of learning					
16	Academic rigor is an essential component of education					
17	All students, regardless of ability, should study more or less the same curriculum					
18	Art classes should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity					
19	Effective learning is unstructured and informal					
20	Students learn best through reinforcement and reward					
21	Effective schools assign a substantial amount of homework					
22	Education should focus on the discussion of timeless questions such as "What is beauty?" or "What is truth?"					
23	Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for substantial social interaction in their curricula					
24	The purpose of school is to help students understand themselves and find the meaning of their existence					
25	Frequent objective testing is the best way to determine what students know					
26	Iran must become more competitive economically with countries such as Turkey, and schools have an affirmative obligation to bolster their academic requirements in order to facilitate such competition					
27	Students must be taught to appreciate learning primarily for its own sake rather than because it will help them in their careers					
28	Schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of minorities and women					
29	Each person has free will to develop as he or she sees fit					
30	Reward students well for learning and they will remember and be able to apply what they learned, even if they were not led to understand why the information is worth knowing					
31	Iranian schools should attempt to instill traditional Iranian values in students					
32	Teacher guided discovery of profound truths is a key method of teaching students					
33	Students should be active participants in the learning process					
34	There are no external standards of beauty. Beauty is what an individual decides it to be					
35	We can place a lot of faith in our schools and teachers to determine which student behaviors are acceptable and which are not					
36	Schools must provide students with a firm grasp of basic facts regarding the books, people, and events that have shaped the Iranian heritage					
37	Philosophy is ultimately at least as practical a subject to study as is computer science					
38	Teachers must stress for students the relevance of what they are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside, the classroom					
39	It is more important for a student to develop a positive self concept than to learn specific subject matter					
40	Learning is more effective when students are given frequent tests to determine what they have learned					

Table 4. EFL Teachers' Philosophy of Teaching Scale

both of the null hypotheses of the study were rejected, coming to the point that "Perennialism" as one of the subscales of the philosophy of education is considered as the most important predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' professional development, having a high contribution regarding the dependent variable, professional development. In addition, the same subscale of the philosophy of education, Perennialism, was considered as the only subscale which had a significant relation with Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. Thus, possessing "Perennialism" as a philosophy of education on part of EFL instructors which follows the idea that "human nature and moral principles do not change and people should be trained according to these unchanging moral principles", (Arslanoğlu, 2012), along with being integrated with the new competencies and components of language learning and teaching according to the era the instructors are working can extremely lead to professional development.

Based on the aforementioned results of the study, there comes some pedagogical implications as well. EFL teachers seem to be responsible for the philosophy of the education that they possess, therefore paying more attention to their beliefs and philosophy they hold towards education which highly impact all the aspects of their profession among which professional development can be considered as one of the subcategories or underlying factors. Besides, ministry of education can implement some programs through which EFL teachers can raise their awareness about their philosophy of education, as one of the factors which affects teachers' professional development. Therefore, based on the needs of the present century/era and the needed skills, ministry of education should try to change the philosophy teachers possess, aiding them to be more professionally developed.

After all, although the present study had some unique contributions/results regarding the context and variables under study, the results should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First of all, the data was collected from some limited cities in Iran as well as some limited English language schools. Thus, another study can be done

regarding EFL instructors teaching at universities in various cities, based on the aims and scope of that study. In addition, just professional development as a whole issue was considered as the dependent variable of the study. For future studies, the relation between philosophy of education subscales and their relation with various types of PD activities can be investigated.

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