

Investigating the Relationship among Components of Emotional Intelligence, Reflective Teaching and Burnout in Iranian EFL Teachers and the Effect of Teachers' Educational Degree on these Variables

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Received 15 March 2015

Accepted 29 December 2015

Extended abstract

1. Introduction

Nowadays, teachers' stress has become a global concern as one of their common problems and about as many as a third of the teachers, investigated through different studies around the world, reported that they consider teaching as a stressful job (Borg, 1990). A great deal of chronic stress might lead to burnout. Although reasons of stress are different among teachers, some of teachers are less prone to burnout. Therefore, there is an important question that why some teachers are more successful in dealing with occupational stress (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). It seems that one of the factors which help teachers to deal with occupational stress is emotional intelligence (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). Another important factor, which may contribute to teachers' burnout, can be teachers' reflectivity which is "the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). In an educational system, teachers' burnout can waste occupational investments and decrease teachers' efficiency. Therefore, recognizing teachers who are susceptible to burnout and finding solutions in order to prevent burnout is necessary. To this end, this study was conducted to bridge this gap in the Iranian EFL context and to examine the relationships among teachers' emotional intelligence, reflectivity, and burnout and their components on the one hand, and to investigate probable differences among their level of burnout, emotional intelligence, and reflectivity and the components of these variables with respect to their educational degree on the other hand.

2. Methodology

The participants of this study were 125 EFL teachers within the age range of 20-47. Teachers' educational degree were B.A. and M.A. in TEFL and English

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Translation. The participants were selected randomly from 7 private language institutes in Kurdistan and Hamedan, Iran. To answer the research questions, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), Teacher reflectivity (Akbari, Behzadpour, & Dadvand, 2010) and Bar-On EQ-I (1997) were used and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and MANOVA analyses were utilized to test the hypotheses.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the current study revealed that there were negative correlations between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and reflectivity on the one hand, and their burnout, on the other. Jude and Grace (2011) mention that emotionally intelligent teachers can understand and control emotions of themselves and others and can also use coping strategies in different situations. Therefore, they can control prolonged stress, which leads to job burnout. Regarding the negative relationship between teachers' reflectivity and burnout, Larrivee and Cooper (2006) believe that reflective teachers free themselves from "routine and impulsive acts, enabling them to act in a more deliberative and intentional manner" (p. 1). When teachers engage in a routine action continuously, they eventually feel powerless in affecting their future jobs and this can in turn lead to burnout (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006). In addition, negative correlations between all the components of emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as the components of burnout and also negative significant correlations between interpersonal and general mood with lack of personal accomplishment were found. High adaptability can help teachers to adjust themselves to different situations and find useful solutions for solving difficult problems in their work environment easily and ultimately makes them less susceptible to depersonalization or emotional exhaustion. Moreover, interpersonal and intrapersonal components of emotional intelligence can help teachers to increase their personal accomplishment and decrease their level of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Interpersonal component is also related to social relationship and awareness of involvement and accomplishment of rules. Therefore, this component is necessary for job resistance, and it can increase personal accomplishment (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012).

There were negative correlations among some of the components of reflectivity and components of burnout. Akbari (2007) believes that, teachers' reflection on their own personal characteristics can lead to shaping and changing teachers' beliefs, values, and their personality and can finally improve their performance. Teachers' reflection can help them to recognize their own capabilities and can ultimately lead to an increase in their personal accomplishment. Moreover, teachers can reflect on their interaction with learners to improve their interpersonal relationship. This can finally help them to reduce their working environment stress.

In addition, significant differences were found in teachers' emotional intelligence regarding their educational degree. However, there were no significant differences in the level of teachers' burnout and reflectivity with respect to their educational degree. On the part of components, it was revealed that intrapersonal, stress management, and general mood of emotional intelligence along with the critical component of reflectivity were different among teachers holding different educational degrees.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that level of emotional intelligence and reflectivity in EFL teachers were negatively correlated with their degree of burnout. Moreover, there were negative and significant relationships among most of the components of emotional intelligence and reflectivity and those of burnout. Based on the results of this study, it can be recommended that reflection and emotional learning programs be incorporated into teacher training courses. These programs can help teachers to develop their awareness of emotional intelligence and reflectivity skills and increase their skills in each of the components of these variables. Therefore, they can develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to become aware of their own and others emotions and increase their relationship with people. In addition, they can be more optimistic toward their life, job, students and people who are involved with them emotionally. Developing each of these components can help teachers to decrease their level of burnout. Moreover, these programs can increase teachers' skills in each of the components of teachers' reflectivity. Therefore they can increase their motivation to take part in different workshops, seminars and conferences related to their teaching methods. Consequently, they can develop their teaching quality and decrease their level of stress which may lead to burnout.

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