

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS AT QASSIM, SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: *With the increased concerns about Saudi students' results in multiple ESL/EFL standardized tests, educational districts in Saudi Arabia are now, more than ever, working hard to ensure that students are receiving the best education and teaching practices possible. While research has well documented the importance of effective teachers for students' learning, it states that it is now essential for schools to identify them (Herrera, 2010). Schools' principals are by large considered important predictive individuals to identify the effective teachers, novice and veterans, from those who are not. The current study investigates the principals' assessment of the performance of pre-service English teachers in Saudi Arabia based on Danielson's first dimension of FFT framework, planning and preparation. Mixed- methods approached, namely classroom observations and semi-structure interviews, were used to collect the data. Twenty three pre-service English teachers who were observed, and three schools principals who had been as the school principal for three years or more were interviewed. The finding of the study indicates that, 1) the pre service English teachers obtained a relatively high scores on the performance with the mean score was 84.09 (sd = 11.71); 2) the highest mastery was in the component E, Designing Students Assessment, with a mean 19.6 and sd = 2.44; 3) all the principals interviewed stressed the importance of self-efficacy for the pre service teachers, and 4) all principals shared a common thought by gradually emerging them in schools' responsibilities is the key to pave the teaching road for them.*

KEYWORDS: Saudi EFL; Pre-service teachers; school principals; teaching.

INTRODUCTION

With the recent educational reform and accountability, educational districts are now, more than ever, working hard to ensure that students are receiving the best education and teaching practices possible. While research has well documented the importance of effective teachers for students' learning, it states that it is now essential for schools to identify them (Herrera, 2010). Schools' principals are by large considered important predictive individuals to predict good teachers and identify the effective teachers, novice and veterans, from those who are not (Evans, 2014). Skilled principals will greatly help to develop effective competent teachers, and weak principals will just do the opposite.

Moreover, with the pressure of standardized testing, schools' principals are now facing the challenge of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning to improve students' success and learning achievement (Donaldson & Peske, 2010). In fact, many studies have stated that the roles of schools' leaders are largely changing from merely monitoring and encouraging teachers to leading teachers to produce tangible and effective results (Milanowski, 2011; Lashway, 2003). School principals have become not only instructional leaders with much more

engagement in classroom settings and activities, but also legitimate predictors of effective teachers.

However, many educational systems in the Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, have not yet implemented a clear, complete and coherent quality teachers' evaluation system (Gholam& Kobeissi, 2012). This becomes more urgent with English teachers due to the increasing concerns, expectations and attentions to students' achievement scores in local and international assessments. For instance, according to TOEFL (2017) report, Saudi students scored the lowest scores among all Middle Eastern countries in Reading and Writing skills (TOEFL Data Summary, 2017). Such low scores are not surprising with the absent of a legislative and comprehensive evaluation framework especially for pre-service and novice teachers and with unheard voices of schools' principals.

Research Problem:

Education in Saudi Arabia has always been controlled and centralized by the Ministry of Education (Alshumaimeri, 1999), which is as a results in charge of enacting laws and appointing teachers with various majors in schools. Schools' principals, on the other hands, have often expressed some concerns or even complains about the performance of those newly appointed teachers, and ask for more involvement in teachers' evaluation (Herrera, 2010).

Moreover, the performance of Saudi students in different English standardized assessments often come away behind their counter parts of at least the neighboring countries. For instance, the overall scores of Saudi students on TOEFL ibt test for five consecutive years (2012-2015) came the least or before the least. This indicates a lower than expected scores with minimal performance.

Significant of the Study:

Recent studies have largely emphasized the quality of schools' instructions provided by teachers and stated that it is the most significant factor linked to students' achievements (Rivkin et al., 2005). However, while the relationship between teachers' instruction and students' achievement is not a surprising finding, many evaluation procedures have failed to not only predict but also differentiate between more and less effective teachers, either in- or pre-service (Donaldson & Peske, 2010; Jacob & Lefgren, 2008). As a result, school supervision has shifted from focusing merely on administrative duties to classroom observations and indulgence to insure learning and teaching quality (Marzano et al., 2011). The current study investigates the principals' assessment and perspectives on the performance of pre-service males English teachers in Saudi Arabia based on Danielson's first domain framework, planning and preparation. Little, if any, research has focused on this which this study tries to examine. Pre-service English teachers in Saudi Arabia have been largely assessed subjectively and with no comprehensive framework.

In this study, the pre service English teachers were defined as the male teacher/student who graduated with English major and were seeking the Educational Diploma (ED) at Qassim University and doing their teaching internship at one of Onaizah schools districts in spring 2017. The ED was mandatory and a prerequisite to get hired as school teachers in Saudi Arabia. Those pre service teachers were teaching in 32 public schools ranging from middle and high schools.

Research Questions:

The current investigation addresses the following questions:

- 1) How schools' principals overall scored the pre-service English teachers' performance based on the adopted Danielson's first domain?
- 2) Is there statistically significant relationship between the components of the first domain and the overall teaching performance of pre-service English teachers?
- 3) What are the major concerns and suggestions regarding pre-service English teachers based on the principals' perspectives?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some evidence in the literature that reflects the significant roles of schools principals on school performance, effectiveness of teachers and students' success. According to Aaronson, Barrow & Sander (2007), when teachers begin to feel better about themselves and what their collective missions are as a result of significant interactions with their principals, they become more effective in the classroom (p. 2).

Furthermore, Kaplan, Owings and Nunnery (2005) indicated that the schools' principals are the most important factors affecting the teaching and learning in any given school. They also stated that the principals are usually important factors in mentoring teachers, novice or veterans, and keeping good teachers in the school. As a result of their efforts, students usually demonstrate high academic achievements aligned with local or national academic standards.

Unfortunately, a significant body of research concludes that many traditional methods used for teachers' evaluation fail to differentiate between effective and less effective teachers (Donaldson & Peske, 2010; Steele et al. 2010). This is an alarming findings especially with the increasing expectations of education and current educational trends for competitiveness and accountability.

Having teachers with good quality in every classroom will not happen without a strong teacher evaluation system which can be best done by schools' leadership and principals. In a recent study by Ames (2013) done in high poverty urban schools showed that principals' effective evaluation had greatly improved students' learning outcomes which eventually improved classroom instructions and teachers' quality. Ames concluded that the role of schools' principals is known to be multifaceted but retaining teachers' growth and evaluation should always be prominent.

More importantly, Jaber (2002) insisted on the benefits of using a comprehensive and coherent teacher evaluation system that would for sure help to achieve the professional growth for all teachers, pre-service novice and veterans alike. Jabir, moreover, argued that teacher evaluation helps to identify pre service or novice teachers who are not capable of practicing good teaching or just not fit with the teaching career. Additionally, the evaluation system will also insight to the veteran teachers who in need for training and professional development. In their study about the role of principals in developing novice teachers, Roberson (2009) argued that principals

play critical factor in novice teachers' success or failure. They, moreover, discussed two proven mentoring strategies that were very beneficial and greatly impacted novice teachers in their assimilation into effective teaching; one was establishing regular visits and observations, and the other was providing meaningful instructive feedback.

Kane & Staiger (2012) argued that observations done by schools' principals have been found as effective method in teacher evaluation. They also found that observation rubrics and value-added model (VAM) in teachers' evaluation to be significant not only in the improvement of teachers but they also found a correlation between teachers' scores on the evaluation instrument and students' achievements.

Moreover, in their analysis of the relationship between a teacher's score on an evaluation rubrics and students' achievement, Borman & Kimball (2004) found interesting correlation with each increase in a teacher's evaluation. They stated that on the evaluation score distribution "a teacher at one sd below the mean .. and a teacher at one sd above the mean, will tend to have classroom achievement scores that are one-fifth of one sd apart." (p.22).

Theoretical Framework:

This study adopts Danielson's (2013) framework which is widely used and accepted as a comprehensive description of good teaching in modern days. However, only the first domain of Danielson's framework, planning and preparation, and its components were taken into consideration due to the fact that the pre-service English teachers at the time of the study were new to teaching and they were partially teaching for two days a week only. In 1987, Charlotte Danielson began her work with the Educational Testing Services (ETS) to develop The Praxis Series which was an assessment measure for the readiness of potential instructors to help schools and educational districts in making decisions regarding teaching licensure. It was during that time when Danielson began to develop the Framework for Teaching (FFT) (Danielson, 2007). The framework is a comprehensive guidance of effective teaching and teachers. It was developed to help not only in the training of pre service teachers but also for the development of novice and veteran teachers alike (Danielson, 2007).

The Framework for Teaching (FFT) consists of four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2007). Each domain is divided into five or six components to cover the skills and aspects of the domain, and each component has two to five elements to elaborate on the essential aspect of the domain (Danielson, 2007). The scoring rubrics for each element consists of four criteria ranging from unsatisfactory, basic, proficient to distinguish. The unsatisfactory means that the teacher fails to master the skill or concept of the element whereas distinguished reflects a teacher ability not only a full mastery of the skill, but also contributes within or outside school. The following table shows Danielson's fist domain and its components.

Table 1: Danielson's first domain of FFT and its components

Domain	Components
1. Planning and Preparation	1a: Demonstration Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy 1b: Demonstration Knowledge of Students 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes 1d: Demonstration Knowledge of Resources 1e: Designing Coherent Instruction 1f: Designing Students Assessment

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the study objectives, mixed- methods approached were used to collect and analyze the data. Classroom observations and semi-structure interviews were the methods used. Observation checklists based on Danielson's first domain and its components were adopted. However, there were some indicators under some components that were adjusted or divided to suite the evaluation methods used in Saudi educational system and the familiarity of the schools' principals. The final observation checklist was reviewed by four panel. Comments and suggestions were offered and some adjustments were made. The observation checklist consisted of 31 indicators.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three schools principals who had an experience as a school principal for three years or above. As king (2004) stated that face-to-face interviews offer the advantages of rapport and visual cues which makes it highly recommended amongst other interviewing methods. Observations, on the other hands, provide insightful and adjustable explanations for the phenomenon. Suli (2013) indicated that in order to measure a progress or a process of individuals, they must be observed for some time to underline the key points and predict performance or outcomes.

The sample of the study consisted of a) 23 pre-service English teachers who were observed during their teaching internship at Onaizah public schools in the spring semester of 2017, and b) semi-structure interviews with three schools principals who had been as the school principal for three years or more. Purposive sampling was used for the interviews to gain insightful qualitative data. Each participant in the study was given a code as any identification information was removed.

Each semi structure interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded, audio taped, and transcribed. Principals were asked to choose the convenient time and place for the interview. Observations, on the other hand, were taken during the teaching of the pre service teachers. Each one of the pre service teacher was observed by the school principal between 15 to 20 minutes. For reliability purposes, the researcher set with each principle to discuss the rubrics and provide clarifications and sufficient explanations of the observation checklists.

The observation checklist consisted of the five components adopted from the first domain of Danielson's (2013) FFT framework. However, Danielson's D component, the demonstration knowledge of resources, was omitted due to the fact that the resources in classrooms where the pre service teachers were teaching were identical and equipped with almost the same resources. Under each component, there were indicators along with scoring rubrics.

Based on Danielson's four categories, the scoring rubrics ranged from scores 0-3 to reflect one of the following levels respectively: unsatisfactory, basic, satisfactory, and distinguish. The grading rubrics for each indicator reflected the degree each participant master the skill or understand the concept of each indicator in which 0 means unsatisfactory, when the pre service teacher failed to master the skill or show understanding of the concept, whereas 3 means distinguished, when a pre service teacher showed not only a full mastery of the skill but also a contribution within or outside school. Each pre service English teacher was observed three times during the spring semester of 2017, and each observation lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.

RESULTS

The current study investigated the principals' perspectives on teaching performance of pre service English teachers based on Danielson's FFT first domain. The observation checklist handed to the schools' principals included five components of Danielson's first domain: demonstration knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstration knowledge of students, setting instructional outcomes, designing coherent instruction, and designing students' assessment. The data were entered and organized using SPSS. The reliability coefficient of the observation checklist was calculated, and Cronbach coefficient alpha was .98 which indicates a high reliability. The following table indicates the central tendency of data for each component.

Table 2: Central tendency for each component with its number of items

Component	<i>N</i>	Percent%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<u>MIN</u>	<u>MAX</u>
A	7	22.6	18	3.34	11	21
B	4	12.9	11.09	1.38	8	12
C	5	16.1	13.52	1.65	11	15
D	8	25.8	21.9	3.41	15	24
E	7	22.6	19.6	2.44	14	21
Total	31	100	84.09	11.71	62	93

As the above table shows, the total number of indicators in the observation checklist was (31). The pre service teachers obtained a relatively high scores in which the mean score was 84.09 (sd = 11.71). Moreover, the pre service English teachers showed a high level of mastery in the component E, Designing Students Assessment, with a mean 19.6 and sd = 2.44. This was an interesting finding in which assessment usually demands a wide range of skills and a high level of interpersonal communication.

Furthermore, as regards to the overall teaching scores for the pre service English teachers, the maintained scores were divided into four groups or quartiles to gain a better understanding of the data. The possible obtained overall teaching scores ranged from 0, if the pre service teacher was given a zero on all the observation indicators, to 93, which was the highest score possible if the pre service teacher scored 3 or distinguished on all of the indicators in the observation checklist. The scores were rounded to the nearest number.

- 1) Unsatisfactory: if the overall teaching scores of pre service teacher was ≥ 24 out of 93.
- 2) Basic: if the obtained score was between 24 – 46.75
- 3) Satisfactory: if the obtained score was between 47 – 70
- 4) Distinguished: if the obtained score was < 70.25 to 93.

However, as table 2 indicates, some pre service teachers got the highest score possible, which was 93, whereas the lowest score obtained by some of the pre service teachers was 62, which reflects a satisfactory level. The following table illustrates the overall teaching scores for the pre service English teachers in more details based on the observation checklist.

Table 3: Frequency for pre-service teachers' overall teaching scores

Scores	N	%	Rank
62	3	13	3 rd
64	2	8.7	4 th
85	2	8.7	4 th
88	3	13	3 rd
89	5	21.7	2 nd
91	2	8.7	4 th
93	6	26.1	1 st

The above table indicates the overall teaching scores. More than 26 % of pre service English teachers obtained the highest possible score on the observation indicator (93), whereas only 13% obtained the lowest score on teaching, which was in the range of satisfactory level. In fact, only 21.7 % of the total number of the pre service English teachers performed at the teaching satisfactory level. The majority of the pre service teachers, on the other hand, scored at the

distinguished teaching level, more than 78%. This finding indicates a high mastery level of pre service teachers for the teaching first domain, planning and preparation.

Answer of the second question:

The study's second main question was the relationship between the subjects' scores on each component and their overall teaching scores. The following table shows the correlation matrix between the first domain components and the overall teaching scores of the pre service English teachers.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix between the components with the total of teaching

Components	A	B	C	D	E	Total
A	1.00					
B	.937**	1.00				
C	.833**	.839 **	1.00			
D	.931 **	.862 **	.861**	1.00		
E	.873 **	.820 **	.854**	.984 **	1.00	
Total (Teaching)	.966 **	.925**	.906**	.985**	.961**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

As indicated in the above table, all of the components in the model were good predictors of the pre-service teachers' planning and preparation with strong multiple correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .91$ to $r = .98$, which indicates strong relationship between the criterion variable, the overall teaching scores of pre-service English teachers, and the predictor variables, the first domain's components.

Moreover, the coefficients of determination, which is the amount or percentage of variance in the criterion variable, can be estimated from the above table by simply squaring the correlation (r^2) between the two variables. As a results, the coefficient of determination for A component was .93. This indicates that 93% of the variance in the criterion variable is accounted for by the variable A, demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy. The coefficients of determination of the remaining variables B, C, D, and E are .85, .82, .97 and .92 respectively.

Table 5: Beta weight obtained multiple regression analysis prediction master of planning and preparation

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	sig
A	3.39	.196	.97	17.24	.000
B	7.86	.703	.92	11.17	.000
C	6.44	.656	.91	9.83	.000
D	3.38	.13	.98	26.33	.000
E	4.61	.28	.96	16.01	.000

$p < .0001$

The above table shows the beta weight, which is the standardized multiple regression coefficients, used to assess the importance of the predictor variables in the planning and preparation in classrooms on the pre-service English teachers. The table indicates that all of these components displayed significant beta weights ($p < .0001$), which indicates that all of the components together were significant and in the same importance of predicting teaching performance of pre service teachers. All of the coefficients were in the predicted direction.

Answer of the third question:

The last main question of the current study investigated the schools principals' views about the pre service English teachers performance in teaching and instruction the classrooms. Three principals were selected for interviews who had an experience as a school principal for three years or more. Each principal was given a code as any identification information were removed. The first school principal was given a code P1 and so forth for the remaining principals.

P1, who had been a high school principal for the last 5 years, emphasized the importance of time and nurturing for those pre-service English teachers due to the fact that pre-service teachers were still in their early careers of teaching. In his opinion, "pre-service English teachers I experienced were too young to understand not only the concept of teaching but also the consequences and efforts needed for good teaching."

P2, a middle school principal who was the principals for the last 8 years, clearly expressed his concern about the preparation of those pre-service English teachers. He called them 'the new generation of pre-service teachers' which reflects his thought about the traditional versus current teachers. He said 'I think the new generation of pre-service teachers are not really devoted to teaching no are they minded focus'. He clearly expressed his belief in passion as an essential factor for good teaching.

Unlike the other principals, P3 emphasize the importance of self-efficacy for the novice teachers. Based on his experience as a high school principal for the last 4 years, P3 stated that "improving self-efficacy for pre-service teachers is the key for them to succeed". He also added that "it does not really matter how long you have been teaching; what really matters is your self-efficacy'.

Moreover, the three principals shared a common thought to assess those pre-service teachers by gradually emerging them in schools responsibilities as the key to pave the teaching road for them; those pre-service teachers are in need for hands to take care of them and light their experience.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The current study revealed the need to have a comprehensive evaluation system in Saudi Arabia especially for pre service or novice teachers which aligned with Jaber's (2002) findings. Lack of coherent evaluation system encouraged some school principles to stress the importance of nurturing and observation for the pre service teachers to develop a sense of effective and meaningful teaching.

Moreover, school principals in the current study showed a coherent ability and legitimacy to identify good teachers from those who were incapable of delivering an effective instruction. This finding echoed Aaronson et. la (2007) study which stated the importance of schools principals as significant figures in the process of evaluation.

Self-efficacy was also an issue addressed by schools principles which could affect students' achievements. This finding matched the finding of Donaldson & Peske (2010) which correlated students' achievements with teachers' self-efficacy. When teachers have confidence in themselves and in their ability to accomplish the tasks, they tend to teach more effectively.

Although research certainly provides us with guidance to effective teaching competencies, there is still no formula for identifying effective teachers. Voices of schools principals should be significant parts of any development of evaluation system for teachers. The current time, expectations and consequences of education require an assessment for teachers, novice or veterans, to insure the quality of teaching and instruction.

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