

Performance Standards: Insights and Challenges of Pre-Service Teachers

Performans Standartları: Öğretmen Adaylarının İçgörülleri ve Onları Bekleyen Zorluklar

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Abstract

Schools in Abu Dhabi are going through a period of transformation and reform. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) commenced promoting the quality of teaching-learning through creating performance standards for teachers. The performance standards aim at enhancing Emirati teachers' capabilities in order to initiate change in light of the school reforms. This study was conducted to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions and understanding of their professional roles and responsibilities, within the context of ADEC performance standards. The paper is an exploratory case study that has employed a qualitative approach. Findings revolve around pre-service teachers' perception of their areas of strengths and weaknesses. Recommendations are within the realm of areas of improvement and the scope of ADEC's performance standards, set for teachers. Findings shed light on initiating and creating a support system and professional development plan for novice teachers in Abu Dhabi public school system.

Keywords: Teachers' education, performance standards for teachers, pre-service teachers, professional attributes.

Öz

Abu Dhabi'deki okullar bir süreden beri dönüşüm ve reform sürecinden geçmektedir. Abu Dhabi Eğitim konseyi (ADEK) öğretmenler için performans standartları oluşturarak öğrenme-öğretme kalitesini artırma sürecini başlatmıştır. Okul reformlarının ışığında değişiklikleri başlatmak amacıyla, performans standartları Körfez Emirligi öğretmenlerinin yeteneklerini artırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, ADEK performans standartları kapsamında öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğindeki görev ve sorumluluklarıyla ilgili algı ve anlayışlarını ortaya koymak için yapılmıştır. Bu makale nitel bir yaklaşım kullanan açıklayıcı bir örnek olay incelemesidir. Araştırmanın sonuçları öğretmen adaylarının tecrübesiz öğretmenler olarak kendi güçlü ve zayıf yönleriyle alakalı algılarıyla ilgilidir. Öneriler gelişmeye açık yönler ve ADEK performans standartları kapsamında öğretmen adayları için yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, Abu Dhabi devlet okulları sistemi içindeki yeni öğretmenler için bir destek sistemini başlatma ve onu oluşturma ve profesyonel gelişmeye ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmenler için performans standartları, öğretmen adayları, mesleki tutumlar

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Introduction

Novice teachers undergo a shift from being a pre-service teacher to a fully-fledged teacher. This shift underpins professional identity recognition and new career expectations that can create a state of reconciliation with a new professional identity. They develop practices that allow them to adjust to the complexities of their new profession in order to cope with the routines of work, rapid intuitive responses to classroom situations, and the taken for granted assumptions of practice. In the midst of the routine commitments, novice teachers drift away from being analytical and reflective; thus become mechanical in terms of implementing and reflecting on the anticipated performance standards (Jones et al., 2006; Blaik Hourani, 2012).

The implication of this study is to enable pre-service-student-teachers (PSTs) to examine their perceptions and understandings of their future roles as teachers in light of Abu Dhabi Education Council's 'Professional Performance Standards'. Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) teachers' 'Professional Performance Standards' features subject matter knowledge, students' abilities and learning styles, classroom events, teaching strategies, instructional techniques, classroom management, assessment strategies and team work (Blaik Hourani, 2012).

This research intends to help PSTs identify their strengths and weaknesses in light of their roles as teachers and in alignment with ADEC's expectations as contextualized by the 'Professional Performance Standards' and 'Teachers' Appraisal' documents. It aims at enhancing effective student-teacher professional preparation through helping them explore their professional weaknesses and strengths by means of self-reflecting on professional performance standards for teachers, set by ADEC. Consequently, this will help: a) PSTs explore and self-assess their professional attributes in order to improve and develop in their eventual roles as teachers in Abu Dhabi Public schools; and b) teachers' educators identify the professional performance areas that PSTs struggle at; in order to provide support and development.

Education reforms in Abu Dhabi have been taking place since 2006 through ADEC, which is a nonfederal government authority. ADEC is working hard to enable Emirati students to emerge from school with a quality education and to pursue further higher education (ADEC, 2008; Kanaan, 2008).

As part of the school reforms, the New School Model (NSM) was launched in September, 2010. The NSM is claimed as, "a new approach to teaching and learning...to improve student learning experiences and to raise academic outcomes of Abu Dhabi students to the internationally competitive level necessary to achieve the Abu Dhabi economic vision 2030"² (ADEC, 2010). The main objective of the NSM is to foster child-centered learning and to emphasize higher thinking skills. The NSM aims at the inclusion of special needs students in the public school's sector. The NSM adopts bilingual teaching (Arabic as the native language and English as a second language) and the introduction of English as a medium for instruction in science and mathematics (ADEC, 2010).

² A long-term plan for the transformation of the Emirate's economy, including a reduced reliance on the oil sector as a source of economic activity over time and a greater focus on knowledge-based industries in the future.

The NSM curriculum focuses on integrated teaching-learning of math, science and English. NSM has dictated the development of Arabic and English language literacy (bilingualism) and using English as a medium of instruction in math and science, which requires teachers to give lessons in multiple subjects and be proficient in English (Ahmed, 2012). The NSM was implemented as from the 2010/2011 school year across Kindergarten to grade 3 at Abu Dhabi government schools and was progressively applied to all cycles. It is expected that all grade levels will be transitioned into the same model by the year 2016. Within the NSM agenda and policies, community involvement and communicating with parents were stipulated. The 'School Leadership Handbook' reinforces the need for close partnerships between schools and families to improve learning outcomes, for students and sustain continuous, effective communication between teachers and parents (ADEC, 2010). As policy 4.4 states, "the purpose of parental involvement is to establish an emphasis on parent involvement in children's education and establish guidelines for the school and parent relationship" (ibid, p.2).

Emirates College for Advanced Education-ECEA (2012a) as a partner with ADEC; is the first and only teachers' college in the UAE, though education departments exist in few higher education institutions. ECAE is licensed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In line with Abu Dhabi economic vision 2030 and NSM framework, the mission of ECAE is to prepare high quality Emirati teachers for cycle 1 and educational leaders for the Abu Dhabi Emirate and across the UAE through research based learning and training (<http://www.ecae.ac.ae/>; <http://www.ameinfo.com/293997.html>Abu).

Theoretical framework

In time of educational change and school reforms, the view of teachers' roles and responsibilities varies from practicing and fulfilling classroom routines, delivering lessons and using appropriate resources, applying pedagogies and demonstrating communication skills to acting as a transformational catalyst to implement education changes. In the 21st century, teachers' roles are interwoven with attributes that are beyond the classroom walls and go beyond curricular and pedagogical dimensions (Walsh, 2013). The section below elaborates on the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

Teacher training or teacher education

Higher education institutions that are specialized in teachers' preparation have come under for criticism recently. At the core of this is a perception that there are professional attributes that are inseparable from teachers' preparation and training. The controversy has gone further to debate whether the aim of teachers' education institutions is to *train* the next generation of teachers or to *prepare* them (Walsh, 2013).

The two terms 'train' and 'prepare' are not interchangeable. *Training* a teacher is viewed as teaching and learning within a vocational framework, ignoring the well-rounded dynamics and social aspects of the teaching profession. Teacher education

signals a significant shift in the profession in terms of going beyond the classroom and the teaching-learning attributes. The term teachers' preparation embodies professional *formation*, where the function of teacher education is to launch the candidate on a lifelong and continuous path of *learning* and that is different from sole *knowledge and application of strategies and pedagogies*. The distinction between these two visions of teacher education have lead institutions of teacher education to build the "capacity" of candidates that goes beyond the classroom and school community (Walsh, 2013).

Teachers' professionalism

Teachers' professionalism is portrayed through the three different characteristics of altruism, competence and autonomy, in addition to being featured by the roles of communicator, a leader, manager, team player, learner and reflective practitioner (Anderson et al., 2009; Blaik Hourani, 2012).

Specifically, Anderson et al. (2009) conducted three investigations which examined the relationship between teacher communication behavior on the one hand, and teaching effectiveness and student learning on the other. Teachers who were perceived as having greater interpersonal solidarity and a more positive communicator style (more dramatic, open, relaxed, impression leaving, and friendly) were perceived as more effective teachers. Furthermore, positive perceptions of teacher communication style resulted in greater student affect toward the instructor, the course content, and achieving the overall learning outcomes. A significant body of research shows that increased teacher/ parent and teacher student communications improve students' academic achievement. Teachers' communication with school stakeholders leads to improved overall educational performance (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Blaik Hourani, et al., 2012).

Teachers as leaders have been highlighted by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL, 2001). IEL states that classroom teachers should take part in decision-making and their role actually helps enhance school reform and provide instructional leadership. Teacher leadership is not about "teacher power". Rather, it is about mobilizing the still largely untapped attributes of teachers to strengthen student performance at ground level. Within the teachers' dimension, IEL (2001) emphasizes shared leadership that takes place in the daily life of the school. Teachers constitute an essential part of that leadership, especially when issues of instructional leadership are at stake. Teacher leadership implies participating in professional community in order to improve students' performance, take part in creating a positive school environment and become accountable for students' academic standards (IEL, 2001).

Being a good manager is a core attribute in the profession of teaching. Classroom management is the linchpin that makes teaching and learning achievable. A teacher practices managerial aspects in terms of synchronizing classroom life, planning curriculum, organizing routines and resources, arranging the environment to maximize efficiency, monitoring student progress and anticipating potential problems (Good & Brophy, 2008). Demonstrating successful classroom managerial skills have been defined as producing a high rate of students' involvement with a low rate of deviancy in academic settings. In addition, good managers also carefully arrange their

classrooms to minimize disturbances and make sure that instruction can proceed efficiently. Well-managed classrooms are established and maintained procedures that are learnt and acquired by means of practice (Weinstein, 2007).

Research on effective teaching over the past two decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, critical thinking and reflection. Blaik Hourani (2012) conveyed that reflective skills, cognitive and pedagogical tools need to be embedded in the curriculum design and curriculum organization of teachers' education programs in order to enhance reflective practice. Pre-service and novice teachers' practice can be improved through reflective-cognitive tools and self-assessment opportunities. This happens through the introduction of four modes of thinking: Technological thinking, situational thinking, deliberate thinking, and dialectical thinking. Coach-thinking and peer involvement are significant elements for reflective practice that take place explicitly and implicitly (Kahn & Walsh, 2006).

Novice teachers teaming up for support and mentoring

Lieberman and Miller (2008) discuss that teachers act as collegial collaborators. This indicates the disposition to work, learn and find support with professionals within and outside of the teaching profession. This support can take place through sharing knowledge, experience, skills and resources as well as the formation of professional partnerships and work networks.

According to MacDonald (2009) teachers have strong opinions about what works and what does not work. These characteristics facilitate learning. However, the questions remain of how teachers can work together as a team, and who the team members are that novice teachers can work with. MacDonald (2009) stated that administrators and mentors were good sources of information and guidance. In addition, teachers who taught the same grade level or subject would be good mentors that novice teachers could team up with.

Working with a mentor-mentee team is significant, yet indicates several requirements. First, the willingness to work with others and the ability to recognize that multi layered teachers' tasks cannot be performed alone. Second, teachers need to write down questions as they occur to them and as situations are encountered or anticipated. This kind of collaboration benefits students greatly and enhances better learning. Third, teachers need to be good listeners to the wisdom gained by experienced teachers, although novice teachers might think that some of their ways are outdated and do not count their skill and knowledge. Fourth, teachers need to plan with other members of their grade level team. MacDonald (2009) added that each person in the school community has a variety of strengths and talents that novice teachers need to benefit from through teaming up. Ultimately, acting and learning through a team benefits the students as well as adding value to novice teachers' experience, providing opportunities for self-improvement and enhancing better school community relationships.

Good teachers are continuous and long-life learners. Throughout their careers teachers pass through developmental stages and they keep learning implicitly and explicitly as they continue (Katz, 2004; Fullan et al., 2012). According to Fullan et al.

(2012), the developmental stages are featured by three phases. First is the novice phase, where teachers lack school-centered experience. They are anxious and nervous in their pre-occupation and they are subject to control through the school system, and this raises the level of their concerns as far as what they are teaching and how are they teaching. At this phase, novice teachers appreciate mentoring and guidance. Second is the teaching phase. Teachers at this phase have the ability to cope adequately with physical demands of teaching, however they are concerned with mastering the techniques of teaching; hence, little thought is given to the wider purposes of teaching and education, such as communicating and collaborating with the school stakeholders. Third is the extended phase of professionalism. At this phase, the focus moves to the concern for individual learners and the learning process. The teacher starts thinking about purposes of teaching and why techniques work. Teachers experiment with new ideas and share insights with others, thus becoming reflective and self-critical practitioners.

According to Katz (2004), teachers' pass through four different stages characterized first by survival stage, through which teachers demonstrate the capability of standing on one's own feet. At this point, novice teachers benefit most from support, understanding, encouragement, reassurance, comfort and guidance. The consolidation stage implies identifying specific tasks and skills to be mastered. Next is the renewal stage, during which teachers demonstrate interest in exploring new and different points of view by attending workshops, engaging in reading and making use of resources available in teachers' centers. Finally comes the maturity stage, during which teachers demonstrate an interest in deeper, and more abstract questions such as: "How are educational decisions made? Can schools change society? Is teaching a profession?" While these questions may have been asked before, they now represent a more meaningful search for insight, perspective and realism.

Throughout the developmental phases, novice teachers are in need for guidance, support and mentoring to maximize their professional abilities and acquire attributes to reach the extended professionalism and maturity stages as indicated by Fullan et al. (2012) and Katz (2004).

Pre-service- student teachers and teacher educator modeling

Loughran and Berry (2005) and Loughran (2006) demonstrate two types of modeling which teachers' educators employ to prepare novice teachers. Implicit modeling implies using congruent teaching and explicit modeling of critical reflection on practice. Through implicit modeling, the teacher educator deliberately uses teaching and learning strategies and demonstrates professional attributes, attitudes and values that reflect good professional practice and performance standards. This implicit congruent teaching-learning aims at impacting the emerging pedagogy of the PSTs, and hence aims at promoting better classroom practice. As part of the implicit modeling the teacher educator facilitates metacognitive thinking by PSTs about their own learning and performance. However, implicit learning does not ask them about the interrelationship between what they are learning and their approach to teaching or practice. On the other hand, explicit modeling of critical reflection on practice indica-

tes that the teacher educator steps out of the teaching session and thinks out loud about their approach to teaching and the embedded professional responsibilities, where a reflective dialogue takes place with another teacher educator. In this case, the teacher educator aims at providing insights into the practical wisdom that underpins the pedagogies taught; therefore, teaching strategies and methodologies are situated, positioned and pinpointed at, deliberately within the practice. Hence, attitudes and knowledge (skills included) are demonstrated clearly and purposively by the teacher educator. Therefore, the PST is expected to make connections between theory and practice and to rationalize the pedagogies applied in order to construct appropriate pedagogies and perform professional skills (Sun et al., 2005).

Most educational settings focus on teaching conceptual explicit knowledge rather than setting up an opportunity for gaining substantial experiential and mostly implicit knowledge. While this may be appropriate for some subject areas, other subject areas and professional skills may require learning information. In addition, the bottom-up direction that implies learning implicit knowledge first and then explicit knowledge, or learning both in parallel has been largely ignored despite the fact that the role of implicit learning in skill acquisition has been widely recognized in recent years. Implicit knowledge is tuned to our environment over time through teachers' educator feedback. This feedback process contributes to accomplishing the task assigned. Implicit learning is a gradual, continuous process, whereas explicit learning can occur on one attempt. Nonetheless, with implicit learning, individuals explore the world dynamically acquire and modify skills as needed through reflecting on the dynamic (on-going) learning experiences. Implicit knowledge is acquired through bottom-up learning and simulation, skills acquisition included (Sun et al., 2005).

Transformative role of teacher within Abu Dhabi school reforms

Within the scope of school reforms, the role of teachers has gone through changes and new expectations, encompassing approaches to learning and lifelong implicit and explicit learning outcomes. In addition to aiming at improving the quality of learning and achieving student-centered learning outcomes, the NSM developed positive approaches to learning which will enable students to be academically successful and to become lifelong and independent learners (ADEC, 2010).

The NSM stipulates that teachers' roles in cycle 1 imply communication-enhancing literacy skills and thinking aloud. This is characterized by first, finding out what skills and understandings the child knows and what they need to learn next; and second, assessing the reading level of the child. In terms of instilling and enhancing thinking, teachers are expected to reinforce children practicing their number skills using manipulative teaching-learning instruments to ensure a concrete understanding of abstract concepts and having the children independently record and interpret data (ADEC, 2012a).

As for instilling in the children a sense of community awareness which is also portrayed significant in the NSM, the teachers are expected to have the children observe and explain to their friends, encourage the children to work collaboratively and develop a respect for the resources and each other, and get the children to work well

with their friends. Moreover, in order to encompass creativity, another path conveyed by NSM, teachers are expected to encourage Emirati students to be innovative. Hence, they are expected to find opportunities for the children to take risks and create in an unthreatening learning environment. Consequently, embedded within the transformative role of cycle 1 and as indicated by ADEC's performance standards, teachers need to function professionally within the a) social approach, b) emotional approach, c) attitudinal approach, d) creative and resourceful approach and e) technological approach. These approaches are inculcated in the teacher's performance standards within the context of school reforms. These approaches shape the role of the teacher and necessitate the need for teachers to be communicators, interactive and collaborative community members, managers, leaders, team players, and reflective practitioners (ADEC, 2012b).

One of the fundamental changes that occurred within the NSM framework of reforms is the introduction of English as a medium of instruction to teach math and science. Nonetheless, Emirati teachers and in particular ECAE-PSTS are bilingual teachers and Arabic is their mother tongue. According to Moussu and Llurda (2008), it has become recurrent in the last few years to point out the ever-growing number of nonnative speakers and learners of English in the world and as a result of these escalating demands in English instruction, the majority of trained ESL/EFL teachers in the world are nonnative English speaking teachers. Canagarajah (2005) adds that 80% of the English teachers in the world are non-native speakers. Moussu and Llurda (2008) add that these teachers if trained efficiently are used to provide English instruction exclusively in EFL contexts.

Performance standards and developing teachers

Determining performance standards contributes and raises the professional attributes of the teaching profession in many different countries. For example, according to the Hawaii Teachers' Board Standard (HTBS, 2013), there are four priority areas that characterize teachers' performance standards. This includes the learner and learning, content, instructional practice and professional responsibility. Each standard is divided into the areas of performances, essential knowledge, and critical dispositions. The core teaching standards include a focus on knowledge and skills, personalized learning for diverse learners, collaborative professional culture, improved assessment literacy, and new leadership roles for teachers and administrators.

For the 'Australian Professional Standards for Teachers' and as indicated by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2012), standards outline what teachers should know and be able to do, providing a nationally consistent reference and description of the role of the teaching profession. Within each standard, focus areas provide further illustrations of teaching knowledge, practice and professional engagement. These are then separated into descriptors at four professional career stages: graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and leader.

In reference to the AITSL, teachers are expected to draw on a body of professional knowledge and research to respond to the needs of their students within their educational contexts. The standards indicate that teachers know their students well,

including their diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The standards imply that teachers are expected to know how to structure their lessons to meet the physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of their students. The standards include knowing students and how they learn, knowing the content and how to teach, planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning, creating and maintaining supportive and safe learning environments, assessing, providing feedback and reporting on student learning, engaging in professional learning and engaging professionally with colleagues, parents/ careers and the community (AITSL, 2012).

Teacher's performance standards as set by ADEC

Similar to the Hawaiian and Australian teachers' set performance standards, ADEC teachers are evaluated against five 'Professional Performance Standards'. Teacher evaluators are required to cite evidence to justify their judgment(s). Each teacher will receive a final rating that indicates performance according to the following five-level performance scale (ADEC, 2012a):

1. **Accomplished:** The teacher is consistently meeting most performance standards to a very high level.
2. **Established:** The teacher is consistently meeting most performance standards satisfactorily
3. **Emerging:** The teacher is consistently meeting some, but not all, performance standards satisfactorily.
4. **Foundation:** The teacher is partially meeting some of the performance standards.
5. **Pre-Foundation:** The teacher is not meeting the performance standards, or is meeting them at only a basic level.

The following will be considered appropriate sources of data/evidence for evaluators when making judgments on teacher's performance (ADEC, 2012a; ADEC, 2013): formal class room observations and post observation conference discussions; unscheduled observations of the teacher, including walking through their class, viewing the teacher while they are supervising students; formal and informal conversations with the teacher; the teacher Personal Development Plan (PDP); teacher reflection on their work; objectively collected survey data (Students or Parents); document analysis (lesson plans, unit plans, tests, assignments, evaluation of written feedback to students, student report and certificate comments'; written home-school communication, teacher attendance records, or other written personnel reports).

In terms of 'Professional Performance Standards' for teachers and within the context of Abu Dhabi public schools school reforms, there are four different standards that teachers are subject to be evaluated at. These are:

- Professional Standard-1: The Profession,
- Professional Standard-2: Curriculum (endorses teaching-learning)
- Professional Standard-3: The Classroom and
- Professional Standard-4: The Community.

The above professional performance standards embody various indicators that reflect numerous elements that teachers are expected to meet during their appraisal

and evaluation (ADEC, 2012a). PSTs' knowledge about these professional standards is fundamental for their professional success. This necessitates self-reflecting professionally speaking, on these standards in order to recognize and self-assess their professional strengths and allocate areas needing development. Performance standards are stated in the 'ADEC Teacher Evaluation Process, Explanation and Instrument, 2013-2014' document. The performance standards and their indicators are illustrated in Table-1 (refer to page 34).

PSTs (ECAE participants in this research) have been familiarized with the teachers' performance standards and appraisal designed by ADEC. Relevant material to performance standards was covered in 'Teachers and Schools', a course offered for B.Ed. 4 students prior to their internship engagement. Hence, PSTs are familiar with their roles and responsibilities not only theoretically speaking, but also practically through the practicum and internship. The section below illustrates the methodology and research method tools administered to conduct this study.

Method

This research is an exploratory case study. Case-study research focuses on "discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied; offering the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (Merriam, 2009, p.3). Case study research excels at bringing the researchers to an understanding of a complex issue and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis. The purpose of case study research is to describe that particular case in detail and take learning from that and develop theory from that approach, which is particularistic and contextual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

As indicated by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), in research where prior hypothesis is not employed themes will emerge through the data collection and analysis, and this approach is applicable to the current research.

Qualitative approach for data collection was employed by the researcher. In qualitative research, Creswell (2003) argues, researchers use the literature and empirical material in a manner consistent with the assumption of learning from the participants and not prescribing the questions that need to be answered from the researcher's standpoint.

Research questions

This research focuses on the potential benefits of improving and developing teachers' practice at schools, through giving PSTs, at the Emirates College for Advanced Education (2012b) the opportunity to explore their professional strengths and areas needing improvement, as contextualized by ADEC's professional performance standards and teachers' appraisal documents. Hence, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are PSTs' perceptions of their roles, in terms of ADEC's 'Professional Performance Standards' including: professional attributes, curriculum and teaching-learning, classroom, and community performance standards?

2. What areas do PSTs need to develop at, for better practice in line with their anticipated roles and responsibilities and as contextualized by ADEC's Professional Performance Standards?

Research tool

The research tool was designed in alignment with ADEC's performance standards and appraisal document for teachers. Participants were encouraged to reflect, discuss and share their thoughts, beliefs and experiences relevant to teachers' professional attributes and performance in line with their roles, responsibilities within ADEC's professional expectations and professional standards. An interview guide and guided questions were constructed to steer the dialogue. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled to last between 45-60 minutes. A sample of the general questions is illustrated in Appendix 1.

Semi-structured guided interview questions 1-11 addressed research question 1 and semi structured guided interview questions 12-29 addressed research question 2. The anticipated challenges emerged through the semi structured interview questions 1-29. The semi structured interview questions reflected the following aspects: PSTs professional traits/ attributes; PSTs knowledge about professional standards and anticipated roles and responsibilities; and PSTs professional reflections on pre-service practice that shed light on challenges and areas needing improvement.

Research participants and sample selection

The participants in this case study are PSTs in a teachers' college in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. A 30% purposive sample of BEd-4, cohort 3 (n=59; females=100%), were engaged in this research, resulting in the selection of 18 PSTs as participants for the current study. The justification behind the purposive random selection of BEd-4 is that this cohort was involved in the teaching internship and had completed 3 practicum courses in Abu Dhabi public schools, and hence would be soon enrolled in the teachers' profession. Consequently, this cohort was aligned with the rationale of the study and addressed the research questions. Each participant was assigned a number from PST-1 to PST-18 to preserve their anonymity.

The researcher explained the research to BEd-4 verbally during an orientation session and gave out participation and consent letters. Students were given the opportunity to contact the researcher for queries and clarifications. To obtain rich data and verify the authenticity of data collected, the following measures were undertaken: first, a consent form was signed by the participants; and second, the participants were given time to read through the questions and encouraged to make notes, seek clarification prior to conducting the focused group semi-structured interviews.

Data management and analysis

During the data analysis process, the researcher began with an initial reading of the semi-structured interview transcripts that shed the light on the following dimensions: 1) pre-service teachers' perceptions of teachers' professional attributes, 2) pre-

service teachers' perceptions of teachers' professional standards, set by ADEC; 3) pre-service teachers' reflection on their areas of strengths and 4) pre-service teachers' reflection on the areas needing improvement for (their) better practice. Followed by this, data collected from the semi-structured interview questions were coded and grouped into tentative categories and subcategories (based on the above mentioned dimension) using the following process. First, an initial transcript was read to ascertain data that appeared significant to each dimension. A second reading of transcripts prompted underlining of key phrases, clauses, or sentences that had deliberate bearing on each dimension. Continuous questioning took place and this initiated additional thoughts and ideas around each of the four dimensions endorsed in the overall research. Relevant summary notes were made in the margin of the transcript, accordingly. The first-level data analysis produced initial codes that established tentative categories and properties for each of these dimensions researched.

Once, all qualitative data was coded according to the dimensions intended, a second layer of analysis was conducted. As a result, patterns and subcategories related to each dimension emerged. What followed involved sorting and deciding and contextualizing the data, its categories and its subcategories within each of the above mentioned research dimension. Throughout the process, an analytical framework relative to the challenges that PSTs faced during their practicum was formed and consequently themes and subthemes emerged. Hence, coding and decoding was implemented through the analysis stemming from the participants' responses and triangulation of data was implemented through the analysis of these responses and in alignment with the literature review and ADEC's documents on teachers' performance standards.

Findings

The findings are presented in the same order as the research questions posed for the current study. It was observed that the following themes emerged: 1) perceptions of the PSTs' roles in terms of ADEC's Performance standards, including: professional attributes, curriculum and teaching-learning, classroom, and community; and 2) areas that PSTs need to develop at in line with their roles and responsibilities as contextualized by ADEC's Professional Performance Standards

PSTs' perception of professional standards set by ADEC

Findings conveyed that PSTs had responded to various performance standards set by ADEC. The findings featured the PSTs' perceptions of their roles per performance standard and their understanding of their expected roles and responsibilities, as conceptualized within the current educational changes and school reforms.

Professional attributes performance standard

PSTs responses relevant to professional attributes encompassed positive attitudes towards fulfilling their roles, professional development and communication. PSTs viewed themselves as helpful, open to new ideas, capable of working under pressure and receptive to guidance. They expressed their readiness to develop professionally. PSTs perceived themselves as tolerant in terms of their willingness to re-teach and

scaffold in order to accommodate differentiated teaching- learning needs (PST-2; PST-9; PST-11; PST-12; PST-15; PST-17).

Communication is embedded within the scope of professionalism, PSTs were aware of different and multi-layered communication channels they have to undertake with school stakeholders. In relevance to this, PST-6 stated: "I am willing to communicate with various school stakeholders ... and transmit ADEC's learning outcomes to parents. This requires time and skill". On the positive side, PSTs indicated that being bilingual (Arabic/ English), the communication with both Arab and Western teachers and administrators is feasible (PST-2; PST-8; PST-17).

Curriculum and teaching-learning performance standard

PSTs expressed that they are knowledgeable about ADEC's curriculum, student-centered teaching-learning strategies and differentiated teaching-learning methods that are endorsed by the NSM. PSTs perceived themselves as well prepared, creative, capable of delivering their lessons and able to engage students in learning (PST-3, PST-5, and PST-9-PST-11; PST-15). PST-8 indicated, "As a pre-service teacher, I am prepared to explain the lesson through using suitable strategies." To elaborate on employing differentiated teaching-learning, PST-10 expressed: "I use various methods of teaching that match the students' learning styles". PST-2 added: "I like to engage students in the class and make learning interactive". PST-14 indicated: "I prefer to use different strategies and technology tools when I am teaching a new lesson". To concur, PST-3 indicated, "I value differentiated instruction and try to incorporate that in my planning; I understand the curriculum requirements most of the time", within the same perspective, PST-5 stated, "I conduct fun activities, though I face difficulties in disciplining the students".

PSTs noted their capability to construct lesson plans to address various learners' needs and abilities (PST-7; PST-18). PST-2 said, "Students learn better in his/ her learning style... I construct math lessons using four different tools, in order to cater for diverse learning styles. I use cubes, narration, movies and monetary games to enhance interactive learning". In a similar vein, PST-12 stated "I can explain concepts and new ideas very well. I am good at asking a variety of questions or asking a question from different perspectives to address different students' levels". With reference to the curriculum/ teaching-learning performance standard, PST-13 added "I am good in planning the lessons because I can conduct different activities for different students' levels."

As for students' engagement in learning, PSTs indicated their skillfulness in terms of attracting students' attention and involving them in interactive learning (PST-1; PST-7). For example, "As a teacher, I have creative ideas and always ready to plan for engaging activities...I try to connect my activities to the real world and Emirati culture"(PST-5). PST-15 conveyed, "I am knowledgeable about engaging children in learning, I use demonstration and role playing in my teaching."

Classroom performance standard

A few students described the classroom standard as an area of strengths. For example, "I think my strength is situated in classroom management more than content

delivery; I managed to discipline grade 5 and deliver a lesson without many interruptions” (PST-6). PST-14 added: “I can manage my classroom and put the children on task”. On a similar note, PST-15 added: “I am a good manager. I employ classroom management techniques and this helps me achieve my learning outcomes”. PST-17 added, “I am an Emirati bilingual teacher and this helps me communicate better with my students and therefore manage my class efficiently and effectively.”

Community performance standard

In terms of community, PSTs stated the significance of communicating with parents. They indicated that being a bilingual Emirati teacher was an asset, in terms of communicative language and social context of teaching-learning. Moreover, PSTs rated themselves as friendly, social and good listeners (PST-1; PST-10; PST-11; PST-18). PASST-16 stated: “I start by being strict and I interact with students; because I feel that I need to connect with children and once that is established, I become more confident in delivering my lesson.” PST-8 concurred, “I am a social teacher, I like to have strong relationship with my students”. This dimension was explained by PST-4: “I am able to build relationships with parents, students and teachers. I am a good communicator; this helps me achieve my professional goals”. Within the communication realm, PST-7 referred: “I am Emirati and students like that, since I relate to their culture and social context ... I am bilingual- Arabic/English, so I can help students effectively and explain instruction in Arabic, if needed.”

Being Emiratis and bilingual have positioned the PSTs within the suitable socio-cultural context of learning. PSTs voiced this element, as part of their strengths; especially that ADEC has hired EMTs- English native speakers who teach math, science and English and mostly these EMTs are non-Arabic speakers. To illustrate on this, PST-8 stated, “I am a bilingual teacher. This is a source of socio-cultural comfort on the students’ side. Being Emirati allows me to reteach and re-explain concepts in Arabic.”

Despite the above, most of the PSTs expressed the difficulties they encountered in relevance to several performance standards. This is drawn in the section below.

Areas needing development

The following section discusses the areas that PSTs need to develop at in line with their roles and responsibilities, as contextualized by ADEC’s Professional Performance Standards. This embodies professional attributes and challenges that endorse curriculum and teaching-learning concerns, classroom management issues, communication barriers and delimitations, and dealing with the school community. Within the professional attributes scope, qualitative data suggested that the PSTs were not knowledgeable about keeping abreast with new research in the teaching profession. They noted a number of shortcomings within the expected professional attributes including the lack of establishing positive climate in the school as a whole, not grasping the significance of professional development and failing to conduct self-reflection throughout their practice (PST-1; PST-5; PST-8; PST-16). Moreover, though schools offered professional development for their existing teachers (PSTs undertaking in-

ternship inclusive), limited opportunities for community involvement and exposure were offered for the PSTs. Therefore the PSTs noted their shortcomings in being unable to invest in the community to improve their professional attributes on communication skills level (PST-1; PST-4, PST-7; PST-9; PST-13).

In addition to the above, communication as a dimension embedded in the professionalism-performance standard is portrayed as double-edged sword. On one hand, being bilingual and Emirati features the strengths that PSTs were endowed with, because they were able to communicate with the Arabic speaking school stakeholders. On the other hand, few professional constraints and limitations have emerged within the teaching-learning and classroom standard and professional communications due to the lack of English language proficiency. In light of this, Emirati PSTs viewed the English language as a communication barrier, hence a shortcoming and area needing improvement. The language barrier was encountered within the boundaries of delivering the lesson in English as a required medium of instruction for math and science. To illustrate, the following was stated: "I use Arabic as a medium of instruction, while I am expected to use English. I use Arabic, so students understand the concepts...I am more comfortable with using Arabic as a medium of instruction" (PST-1).

Aside from English being a language barrier since it is the medium of instruction, PSTs noted communication problems with parents. For example, "I face difficulties of communicating with parents as far as providing a feedback about the child progress" (PST-15). In addition, PST-12 noted: "I find dealing with parents very difficult... I don't know what they (parents) are expecting. I am not prepared to deal with parents. I would like to learn about paths of communication and channels of building positive relationship with parents".

Moreover, PSTs conveyed their discomfort regarding dealing with the school community and stakeholders: "I was never exposed to dealing with the community before" (PST-1). PST-3 added "Communication with the school community is difficult... I need to focus on self-improvement, in this area. My focus, at the moment is on improving my classroom performance; nevertheless, I am not emphasizing on school-home communications". PST-11 referred: "I think I will face problems in communicating with parents... some parents can be negligent and difficult to deal with and I am not sure how to tackle that." PST-1 added: "Due to language constraints, I find it hard to communicate with non-Arabic speaking faculty and administration".

Though 'Community' is identified by ADEC as a performance standard on its own and was covered in the findings independently, 'Professionalism Performance Standard' has overlapped with the 'Community Performance Standards'. Therefore, communication as a challenging dimension was portrayed by the PSTs throughout both 'Professionalism' and 'Community' performance standards.

Another challenge situated within ADEC's curriculum/teaching and learning performance standard is employing assessment strategies and constructing assessment tools. PST-10 indicated "Although I have learnt about types and tools of assessments, I still find it difficult to design an assessment". Moreover, within the assessment domain, PST-10 responded "Assessing students is frustrating, because the assessment

results slack behind, given the amount of time I spend on teaching and I am not sure what's going wrong? Is it the assessment? Or my teaching?"

PST-6 stated, "My major pitfall is assessment, planning and creating resources. I need assistance and guidance in constructing assessments". Moreover, issues relevant to difficulties faced in subject knowledge were also categorized as challenges "I am weak in subject area content" (PST-7). PST-14 added: "I struggle in using subject area technical language and jargon".

Since cycle-1 teachers are expected to integrate the teaching-learning of math, science and English, few teachers have stated their shortcomings, as far as the implementation of integrated teaching-learning activities (PST-7; PST-11). To elaborate, PST-15 said "I have difficulties in integrating math, science and English subjects".

As for teaching-learning resources, shortcomings in this area were also reflected. PSTs expressed difficulties faced in constructing teaching-learning resources in line with learning outcomes: "My weaknesses are revealed in failing to align resources with the teaching-learning activities and learning outcomes" (PST-12).

Difficulties in implementing teaching-learning strategies within the context of Abu Dhabi learners were drawn. From this perspective, PST-1 indicated: "I want to apply the different student-centered strategies I have learnt. However, implementing these strategies is beyond the level of my students."

PSTs exclaimed that constructing lesson plans and completing the lesson plan successfully within the assigned time frame was farfetched. PST-11 referred: "Planning is beyond me, because sometimes I write weekly-unit planning, but I am unable to finish my unit lesson plan, therefore I am unable to assess students on unfulfilled learning outcomes." PST-13 said: "I am confused with my lesson planning, especially linking and integrating between/ among subject areas".

Conclusively, in relevance to the curriculum performance standard that endorses teaching-learning, PSTs expressed areas of weakness in terms of their inability to: a) give constructive feedback on students' work; b) stimulate discussion in the classroom and create learning experiences; c) deliver interdisciplinary learning; d) encourage and create opportunities for students to become independent learners; e) adjusting instructional strategies in response to students' feedback and learning progress; and f) reflect on how and what are the children learning (PST-3; PST-7; PST-11; PST-12; PST-16; PST-17).

In relevance to the classroom performance standard, most of the PSTs voiced difficulties faced in disciplining students. They viewed the classroom-performance standard to be challenging and an area awaiting improvement, as far as their professional preparation and training. The classroom performance standard on one hand and curriculum/ teaching-learning standard on the other are interwoven and they act as a domino theory. Classroom management, being a core dimension embedded within the classroom performance standard, shapes teaching-learning and effective curriculum delivery. Any breach in classroom management impacts the curriculum performance standard, teaching-learning inclusive. Consequently, this puts classroom management at stake in terms of the role this dimension plays in enhancing effective teaching-learning (PST-3; PST10; PST-14). PSTs explained the drawbacks relevant to imple-

menting classroom management. They pointed out the shortcomings novice teachers encountered within the scope of classroom performance standard. PSTs raised classroom management issues. For example, PST-4 stated: "Classroom management and dealing with students' behavior is difficult. It is hard to absorb and manage children's behavior. I need time to look into each student's behavioral problem and how to discipline him/ her." PST-5 added "Problems I may face in my teaching profession are related to classroom management; especially if I have an inclusion class with special needs students". PST-3 exclaimed, "I lack knowledge about behavioral modification techniques for special needs students". Difficulties in dealing with behavioral problems erupting in the classroom were expressed by PST-2, "I am not prepared to deal with hyperactive disruptive students. This may impact my classroom environment; I fail to manage my class and hence I don't achieve my teaching-learning outcomes".

PSTs have conveyed the difficulty in terms of the gap between the theory and practice, regarding the implementation of classroom management strategies and techniques. PST-1 stated, "I still need to improve my classroom management techniques, so I can achieve the desired learning outcomes... I think there is a gap between classroom management-theory and practice; I haven't been able to cope with it yet". PST-9 indicated, "I am still dissatisfied with my classroom management techniques. Students demonstrate different behaviors and I need to work hard to tackle behavioral problems and find solutions to change their behavior. Whereas PST-13 explained, "I am weak in classroom management. Sometimes I can't discipline my students or communicate with them; so my teaching is ineffective".

Classroom management concerns were addressed in a multilayered manner. First, PSTs expressed that managing the classroom varied based on the gender of students. "From my experience in practicum, I realized that I am weak in classroom management, especially with boys because they are hyper and they don't listen. I found it difficult to discipline them" (PST-11). Within the same spectrum, PST-12 noted: "My last practicum was in a boys' school. Boys were disruptive and hard to manage". Similarly, PST-16 added, "Difficulties in classroom management are bound to differentiated teaching-learning. The existence of various levels of students makes it hard to discipline students, who are engaged in different tasks and hence their task completion varies. This creates chaos in my class". In this realm, the following was stated: "I consider classroom management challenging, especially in a classroom that embodies various levels of learners... tailoring for differentiated learning and instruction is hard, so applying classroom management techniques successfully becomes at risk" (PST-18).

Other PSTs viewed the challenges related to classroom management relevant to curriculum and teaching learning concerns: "...classroom management is a skill that develops and improves with experience. The difficulties I face are in line with my inability to build positive relationship with my students and this impacts negatively, my classroom discipline and the progress of my lesson" (PST-8).

The above mentioned factors make the implementation of classroom management techniques complex, consequently PSTs fail to achieve the learning outcomes. As a result, they do not complete their lesson successfully and effectively. Conclusi-

vely, the drawbacks of being unable to meet the classroom performance standard will burden the curriculum performance standard, and impedes effective teaching-learning.

The community performance standard revealed PSTs' weaknesses mainly in the area of establishing productive relationships with parents/guardians, non-Arabic speaking faculty and staff. This impacted the community professional learning negatively (PST- 3; PST-17).

Encountering communication barriers (English/ Arabic) have impacted the community performance standard. To elaborate, language barriers on both the English and Arabic native speakers' sides unfolded challenges within the arena of team planning. These challenges were embedded in the teaching-learning/ curriculum performance standard. PSTs noted that team planning may be frustrating due to language barriers and other consideration, such as lack of: tolerance, sharing and equity (PST-3; PST-6; PST-12). In relation to this, PST-9 explained, "I encounter difficulties in handling team work... I hate that my ideas may be rejected. I don't feel comfortable receiving orders. Being unable to work within a team hinders my professional development and limits my career improvement". Within the same domain PST-14 stated "I am not comfortable with team planning because some teachers have different ideas in terms of teaching-learning and it is hard for me to accept different views and sometimes I don't get what they are trying to say."

Weaknesses drawn from community performance standards contributed negatively to interpersonal communication skills, and vice versa. Consequently, the interdependence between communication dimension and community performance standard sheds light on deficiencies relevant to classroom and curriculum /teaching-learning performance standards (PST-2; PST-15; PST-16). Communication obstacles were also drawn in relation to 'Professionalism' as a performance standard, where PSTs noted that language barrier is negatively impacting their professional attributes within the context of the NSM and the existence of EMTs, as part of the school community.

Discussion

Findings of the current study were driven by the qualitative data gathered. The findings shed light on the PSTs' strengths in terms of their professional roles and responsibilities, highlighting the challenges they faced and unfolding areas in need of improvement.

Specifically, the findings revealed that PSTs were going through professional preparations in terms of general planning, acquiring curricular and pedagogical cognitive knowledge and skills. However, teacher training is ineffective if not accompanied with preparation within the realm of attributes required for the teaching profession (Walsh, 2013). Among these attributes, PSTs noted areas needing improvement. For example, concerns and challenges were featured by the shortcomings in the following areas: Community involvement, communication, team playing, reflective practice leadership and classroom management. These shortcomings impacted the pedagogical, curricular and behavioral dimensions of teaching-learning, such as: integrated teaching-learning, unit planning, team planning and disciplining the class. NSM policy mandates special education inclusion (ADEC, 2010). Based on the findings of the

present study, implementing inclusion and differentiated learning-learning have raised complex and multilayered issues relevant to curriculum and classroom management. Because the NSM policy stipulates community involvement and communicating with parents (ADEC, 2010) and given the fact that teachers' communication with other school stakeholders is positively associated with students' academic, behavioral and emotional wellbeing (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009), this dimension emphasizes the need to prepare teachers in these domains that were claimed by PSTs as needing improvement. This is relevant to communication and managerial skills.

The curricular difficulties PSTs encountered were related to assessment, integrated planning and synchronizing learning outcomes with resources. These difficulties could be rooted in the fact that PSTs lack the experience and the absence of the mentor-mentee support system. Moreover, PSTs were not prepared to function through team planning and team work, hence demonstrating that the team playing dimensions were challenging. This brings MacDonald (2009) into perspective where she suggests that novice teachers need to initially function within a team, which paves for opportunities to share knowledge and experience with other professionals within and outside the school community and as part of academic activities provided within the teachers' education program.

It was also evident that PSTs experienced language drawbacks. The NSM dictated that English as the medium of instruction for math and science (ADEC, 2010), consequently breaching this premise through delivering lessons in Arabic is totally unacceptable, given that the use of English as a medium of instruction has been mandated. A language support program is also recommended to improve Emirati PSTs language skills, who are Arabic native speakers and who are teaching in English as a medium of instruction. This brings Canagarajah (2005) and Moussu, and Liurda (2008) on board. They present a valid argument that non-native English-speaking teachers can be proficient in English if trained effectively and efficiently.

PSTs professional preparation is featured by internship experience and college preparation through the structured academic courses, practicum and internship. Teacher education goes beyond subject knowledge, it endorses exploring learning opportunities and professional attributes and skills. Within this scope, teacher education ought to focus on teachers' preparation rather than the mechanical training of teachers (Walsh, 2013). This includes developing communication skills, team building skills, leadership and management skills.

To support the fundamental need for improving communication with school stakeholders, Anderson et al., (2009) and Epstein (2001) state that when teachers employ positive and good communication skills, this impacts the students' achievements of the overall learning outcomes as well it instills desired students' behavior and an overall positive and more effective teaching-learning milieu.

In terms of the professional attribute relevant to collaboration, MacDonald (2009) emphasizes the significance of teamwork in benefiting student learning and performance. Endowing teachers with leadership skills as a professional trait will enhance instructional leadership that strengthens academic achievement, performance and positive behavior among students. In addition to this, teachers need to be equipped

with managerial skills for improved classroom management, in order to reduce the potential of academic disturbances and to increase students' involvement in learning (IEL, 2001; Weinstein, 2007). Developing such skills will build positive relationships with the school stakeholders and promote professional attributes that teachers need to be enriched with.

Reflective practice is significant for professional development and career improvement. Nonetheless, reflecting on practice was another area addressed by the PSTs as needing improvement. Novice teachers need to be endowed with cognitive tools and reflective opportunities beyond the teaching experience (initially) to realize their drawbacks, assess themselves and find means to improve their practice (Kahn & Walsh, 2006; Blaik Hourani, 2012). Lifelong professional skills that go beyond curricular delivery need to be facilitated through the parameter professional preparation. Demonstrating the above mentioned long life professional skills and attributes are inseparable from subject area and pedagogy preparation (Walsh, 2013).

While Abu Dhabi is preparing Emirati teachers, teacher support system for novice teachers becomes inevitable, especially given the NSM conceptual framework where integrated teaching-learning, English as medium of instruction and student-centered learning are at the core of the school reforms and education changes. Through the support system, teacher educators and teacher education institutions provide a road map for novice teachers. This is characterized by creating a robust support system to achieve the readiness of novice Emirati teachers and attain sustainability and effectiveness of teacher education programs. The support system needs to inculcate professional skills within teacher education programs without eliciting a dependency element. The support system for novice teachers needs to feature both professional guidance and professional development. In addition, the support system needs to demonstrate both implicit and explicit modelling within the teacher education program. Novice teachers' self-assessment in a social constructivist learning milieu and modelling can improve professional performance of teachers (Loughran, 2006; Loughran & Berry, 2005).

Learning to teach should not be a linear process but a practical endeavor that encompasses a holistic understanding and implementation of performance standards. This requires inculcating professional practice of the teaching attributes, pedagogy and curriculum inclusive. Non programmatic experiences such as professional skills that come within the hidden structure of teacher education equip novice teachers with professional attributes. The construct of teacher education includes several dimensions, such as: communication skills, community involvement, reflective skills, leadership skills and management skills. These dimensions shape the PSTs' professional identity and help them demonstrate their roles and responsibilities more confidently. This paves the way for a more productive explicit understanding and performance of the teaching profession. There seems to be an absence of explicit attention to bodies of knowledge and skills relevant to teacher education, especially in times of education changes and school reforms as it is the case in Abu Dhabi.

Conclusion

Preparing teachers is multifaceted and complex due to the cognitive skills and multilayered nature of the profession. Novice teachers must excavate the meaning of teaching deep seeded concepts, notions and skills need to be integrated in preparing and training novice teachers. Acquiring professional attributes are intertwined in terms of the theoretical preparation, professional training and lifelong education preparation (Katz, 2004; Fullan, Hargreaves and Pruden, 2012). Within the context of Abu Dhabi, ADEC has introduced professional performance standards. These performance standards need to be taken on board on both the theoretical and practical levels, in terms of preparing and training teachers for Abu Dhabi public schools (ADEC, 2010; and ADEC, 2012a).

According to the findings, PSTs portrayed knowledge and understanding of the various professional performance standards set by ADEC. The PSTs' perception of their roles and responsibilities endorsed: professional attributes, curriculum and teaching-learning, classroom, and community. Nevertheless, their responses revealed the challenges in terms of communicating with the school stakeholders and this was featured through communicating with the parents and team planning. Moreover, language barrier reflected two limitations, the first was relevant to curriculum delivery and the second was related to communicating with non-Arabic speaking faculty and administrators. The language barrier which embodies an intertwined impact can be resolved, if language training is delivered efficiently for non-native English speaking teachers (Canagarajah, 2005; Moussu & Liurda, 2008). PSTs voiced that classroom management was problematic due to inclusion and lack of praxis. As for teaching-learning, PSTs were aware of the following difficulties: a) integrating subject matter areas across the curriculum, b) employing student-centered learning and c) constructing and conducting assessments.

The challenges addressed in this paper require redesigning and restructuring teacher education goals and aims in order to improve the quality of teachers' preparation in order to elevate the level of professionalism among novice teachers. The process of becoming a teacher is endless, and a developmental progression rather than linear.

In conclusion, PSTs need to make connections between theory and practice. Teacher educators and teacher education institutions ought to integrate within the structure of their programs cognitive skills that are aligned with the expected performance standards (Sun et al. 2005). Teacher education institutions and educators need to focus not only on training the future teachers in prescribed manner, but also preparing them to meet the attributes of the profession and providing them with support systems and processes, modelling and mentoring channels for improved practice (Lo-ughran & Berry, 2005; Fullan et al., 2012).

Özet

Giriş

Abu Dhabi'deki okullar bir süreden beri dönüşüm ve reform sürecinden geçmektedir. Abu Dhabi Eğitim konseyi (ADEK) öğretmenler için performans standartları oluşturarak öğrenme-öğretme kalitesini artırma sürecini başlatmıştır. Okul reform-

larının ışığında değişiklikleri başlatmak amacıyla, performans standartları Körfez Emirliği öğretmenlerinin yeteneklerini arttırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu makale, nitel bir yaklaşım kullanan açıklayıcı bir örnek olay incelemesidir. Araştırmanın sonuçları öğretmen adaylarının tecrübesiz öğretmenler olarak kendi güçlü ve zayıf yönleriyle alakalı algılarıyla ilgilidir. Öneriler, gelişmeye açık yönler ve ADEK performans standartları kapsamında öğretmen adayları için yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, Abu Dhabi devlet okulları sistemi içindeki yeni öğretmenler için bir destek sistemini başlatma, oluşturma ve profesyonel gelişmeye ışık tutmaktadır.

Çalışmanın Kuramsal Çerçevesi

Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının (ÖA'lar) Abu Dhabi Eğitim konseyi (ADEK) 'öğretmenler için performans standartlarıyla' ilgili algı anlayışlarını araştırmaktır. Abu Dhabi Eğitim konseyi (ADEK) öğretmenler için performans standartları alan bilgisini, öğrencilerin becerileri ve öğrenme yöntemlerini, sınıf-içi eylemlerini, öğretme stratejilerini, öğretim tekniklerini, sınıf yönetimini, değerlendirme stratejilerini ve grup çalışmasını içermektedir (Blaik Hourani, 2012).

Bu çalışma, 'Öğretmenlik Performans Standartları' ve 'Öğretmenlerin Değerlendirme Belgeleri' kapsamı içinde, öğretmenlerin görevleri ışığında ve ADEK'in beklentileriyle uyumlu olarak, ÖA'lara kendi güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu belgeler eğitim-öğretim sürecini geliştirmek ve öğretmenleri değerlendirmeye beraber öğretmenlik mesleğinde kalite garantisini sağlamak amacıyla standart bir ölçüm aracı oluşturmak için ADEK tarafından hazırlanmıştır (Ahmed, 2012; ADEC, 2013). Bu araç, adaylara güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini keşfetmede yardımcı olmak ve öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik performans standartlarını kendi kendilerine değerlendirecek, öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliğe hazırlıklarının etkinliğini arttırmayı hedeflemektedir. Dolayısıyla bu araç Abu Dhabi Devlet okullarında, öğretmen olarak görevlerini geliştirmek amacı ile ÖA'lara kendi öğretmenlik niteliklerini keşfedip, kendi değerlendirmelerini yapmalarına; ayrıca destek ve gelişim sağlamak amacıyla, öğretmen eğitimcilerinin öğretmenlik performans alanlarını tanımlamalarına yardımcı olmaktadır.

Öğretmenlerin Profesyonellikleri

Abu Dhabi'de eğitim reformları federal olmayan hükümet makamı olan ADEK tarafından 2006 yılından beri gerçekleştirilmektedir. ADEK Körfez Emirliği öğrencilerini kaliteli bir eğitim sisteminden mezun edebilmek ve öğrencilerin yüksek eğitim almalarını sağlayabilmek için yoğun bir şekilde çalışmaktadır; bu çaba da Yeni Okul Sisteminin kurulmasını gerektirmiştir (ADEC, 2008; Kanaan, 2008; ADEC, 2012a; ADEC 2012b).

Abu Dhabi okul reformlarının bir parçası olarak iki dilli (İngilizce/Arapça) eğitimi başlatmasına rağmen, yeni başlayan öğretmenler ve öğretmen adayları eğitim dili olarak İngilizceyi kullanmakta hâlâ zorlanmaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla, bu onların öğretmenlik performanslarını etkilemekte ve Canagarajah (2005) ve Moussu ve Liurda (2008)'yı denklemin içine sokmaktadır; çalışmalarında bu yazarlar, etkin bir şekilde

eğitildiklerinde anadili İngilizce olmayan öğretmenlerin İngilizceyi kullanarak başarılı eğitim verebileceklerine inandıklarını belirtmektedirler.

Öğretmenliğe yönelik standartlar oluşturmanın önemi Avustralya Öğretmenlik ve Okul Liderliği Enstitüsü (2012) ile birlikte Good ve Brophy (2008) ve Hawaii Öğretmen Standartları Kurulu (2013) tarafından da vurgulanmaktadır.

Eğitim Liderliği Enstitüsü (2001) öğretmenlik performans standartları oluşturmanın etkili öğretimi teşvik ettiğini belirtmektedir. Jones, Jenkin ve Lord (2006) ve Kahn ve Walsh (2006) de aynı fikri paylaşmaktadır. Profesyonelliği teşvik eden diğer bir faktör, profesyonel öğretim toplulukları oluşturma ve öğretmenlerin uygulamalarını ve rehberliğini örneklemedir (Lieberman ve Miller, 2008; Loughran, 2006; Loughran ve Berry, 2005). MacDonald (2009) takım halinde eğitimi ve mesleki işbirliğini; müfredat ve pedagojik seviyelerde daha başarılı uygulamalar gerçekleştirmek için desteklemiştir.

Yukarıdakilere ilave olarak, Weinstein (2007) etkili sınıf yönetimi becerileri uygulamanın daha etkili ve başarılı eğitim ve öğretim sağladığını belirtmektedir. Öğretmenlerin profesyonel eğitimi ve hazırlıklarına gelince, Katz (2004) öğretmenlerin kendi ayakları üzerinde durma becerilerini gösterebildikleri 'hayatta kalma aşamasıyla' tanımlanan dört farklı gelişim sürecinden geçtiklerini belirtmektedir. Fullan, Hargreaves ve Pruden (2012) ve Katz'a (2004) göre bu gelişim süreçlerinde, yeni başlayan öğretmenler öğretmenlik becerilerini arttırmak, gelişmiş profesyonellik ve olgunluk aşamalarına ulaşmak ve niteliklerini geliştirmek için rehberlik, destek ve danışmalığa ihtiyaç duymaktadırlar.

Birçok eğitim ortamı, büyük ölçüde deneysel ve çoğunlukla kesin olmayan (örtülü) bilgiyi elde etme fırsatları oluşturma yerine, kavramsal kesin bilgiye odaklanmaktadır. Kesin olmayan (örtülü) bilgi zamanla öğretmenlerin geribildirimleri aracılığıyla ortama uyum sağlamaktadır. Bu geribildirim süreci verilen görevleri yerine getirmeye katkıda bulunmaktadır. Örtülü öğrenme yavaş yavaş gerçekleşirken, sürekli bir süreç iken, açık (kesin) öğrenme ise deneme yoluyla gerçekleşmektedir. Bununla birlikte, örtülü öğrenme ile bireyler dünyayı keşfederler ve dinamik (sürekli) öğrenme tecrübeleri üzerine düşüncelerini yansıtmak için gerekli olan becerileri edinir ve zamanla düzeltirler. Örtülü öğrenme, beceri edinimi ile beraber tümevarımsal öğrenme ve benzetim yoluyla gerçekleşir (Sun ve diğ., 2005).

Ayrıca, Anderson, Norton ve Nussbaum (2009), Epstein (2001) ve Blaik Hourani, Stringer ve Baker (2012) olumlu öğrenci etkileşiminin öğrenmeyi geliştirdiğini göstermişlerdir. Benzer şekilde Hill ve Tayson (2009) da ailelerin işin içine girmesinin ve ev ile okulun iletişim ve iş birliğinin öğrenci başarısını olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermişlerdir.

Sonuç olarak, eğitimde değişimler ve okul reformları sürecinde öğretmenlerin görevleri ve sorumlulukları; sınıf için rutinleri ve sınıf yönetimini gerçekleştirmekten, uygun kaynaklar kullanarak dersi işlemekten, pedagoji uygulamak ve iletişim becerileri göstermekten sıyrılıp, bu eğitimsel değişiklikleri uygulayan dönüştürücü katalizör olma yoluna doğru ilerlemektedir. 21. yüzyıl öğretmenlerinin görevi, müfredat ve pedagoji boyutlarını da aşılıp, sınıf dışına taşan niteliklerle iç içedir (Walsh, 2013).

Yöntem

Bu çalışma, veri toplanması için araştırmacı tarafından nitel yaklaşımın uygulandığı açıklayıcı bir örnek olay incelemesidir. Çalışmada Merriam (2009), Bogdan ve Biklen (2003), Creswell (2003) ve Denzin ve Lincoln (2003) tarafından da benimsenen nitel araştırma çerçevesi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına cevaplar aranmıştır:

1. ADEK'in 'Öğretmenler için Performans Standartları' çerçevesinde, profesyonel nitelikler, müfredat ve eğitim-öğretim, sınıf içi ve toplumsal performans standartlarını da içerecek şekilde, ÖA'ların öğretmenlik görevleriyle ilgili algıları nedir?
2. Tahmin edilen görev ve sorumluluklarla beraber, ADEK'in 'Öğretmenler için Performans Standartları' çerçevesinde, daha iyi uygulama yapabilmek için ÖA'ların kendilerini hangi alanlarda geliştirmeleri gerekmektedir?

Bir mülakat rehberi ve yönlendirilmiş sorular ile diyaloglar yönetilmiştir. 45 ila 60 dakika süren yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar planlanmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki katılımcılar, Emirlik İleri Eğitim Kolejinde (EİEK) okuyan öğretmen adaylarıdır (EİEK, 2012a; 2012b). EİEK ECAE Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Abu Dhabi'de bulunan bir öğretmen yetiştirme kurumudur. Çalışma grubu 18 adet lisans düzeyinde öğretmenlik eğitimi (B.Ed) alan 4. sınıf öğrencilerinden oluşmaktadır. Dördüncü sınıfta toplam 59 öğrenci bulunmaktadır. Cinsiyete göre dağılıma bakıldığında bütün katılımcıların kadın olduğu bu öğrenci grubunun yüzde 30'u amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilerek araştırma kapsamında üç ayrı gruba ayrılmıştır. Çalışma grubunun seçiminde amaçlı örnekleme yöntemine başvurulmasının nedeni öğretmenlik uygulamasında adayların gruplara ayrılması ve Abu Dabi devlet okullarında 3 farklı stajı tamamlamış olmalarıdır. Ayrıca, bu grup kısa bir süre içinde öğretmenliğe atanacaklardır. Kısaca, bu gruplama yöntemi bu çalışmanın araştırma sorularıyla da paralellik göstermektedir.

Bulgular

Araştırmanın sonuçları, sorularla aynı sırada sunulmaktadır. Sonuçlar aşağıdaki konuları desteklemektedir; 1) ADEK'in 'Öğretmenler için Performans Standartları' çerçevesinde, profesyonel nitelikler, müfredat ve eğitim-öğretim, sınıf içi ve toplumsal performans standartlarını da içerecek şekilde, ÖA'ların öğretmenlik görevleriyle ilgili algıları 2) Tahmin edilen görevler ve sorumluluklarla beraber, ADEK'in 'Öğretmenler için Performans Standartları' çerçevesinde daha iyi uygulama için ÖA'ların kendilerini geliştirecekleri alanlar.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, ÖA'ların ADEK tarafından oluşturulan çeşitli performans standartlarına yanıt verdiklerini göstermiştir. Geliştirilmesi gereken alanın ise ÖA'ların görev ve sorumlulukları noktasında olduğu belirlenmiştir. Adaylar beklenen profesyonel nitelikler çerçevesinde birkaç eksikliğe dikkat çekmişlerdir: bir bütün olarak okulda olumlu bir iklimin olmaması, öğretmenlik mesleğiyle ilgili gelişim eksikliğinin kavranamaması ve uygulama süresince özdeşümüm yapamamak. Endişe ve zorlukların sebebi şu alanlardaki eksikliklere bağlanmıştır: toplumun katılımı, iletişim, takım oyunu, düşünüm uygulamasında liderlik ve sınıf yönetimi. Ayrıca, ÖA'ların karşılaştıkları müfredat zorluklarıyla ilgili değerlendirmeleri; bütünleşmiş planlama

(matematik, fen ve İngilizce) ve öğrenme sonuçlarını kaynaklarla eşleştirmeye ilintilidir.

Sonuç

Öğretmen yetiştirme, bu alanın bilişsel ve çok katmanlı doğasından dolayı çok yönlü ve karmaşık bir iştir. İşe yeni başlayan öğretmenler öğretmen adaylarını hazırlamak ve yetiştirmek için gerekli kavram ve becerilerle beraber öğretmenliğin derin anlamlı kavramlarını anlamak zorundadırlar. Profesyonel nitelikleri kazanmak teorik hazırlık, profesyonel eğitim ve ömür boyu eğitim hazırlığıyla iç içedir (Katz, 2004; Fullan, Hargreaves and Pruden, 2012).

Abu Dhabi, ADEK öğretmenlik performans standartlarını uygulamaya koymuştur ve öğretmen yetiştirme ve eğitimi açısından bu performans standartlarının hem uygulama hem de teorik düzeyde dikkate alınmasını beklemektedir (ADEC, 2010; ADEC, 2012a).

ÖA'ların yanıtlarından görev algıları, profesyonel nitelikler, müfredat ve eğitim-öğretim, sınıf ve toplumu eğitim sürecine dâhil etmeyle ilgili düşünceleri ortaya açmış; bu sonuçlar ADEK'in 'Öğretmenler için Performans Standartları' açısından değerlendirilerek ÖA'ların performans bilgileri ve bunların yorumlanmasına ışık tutmuştur. Okulun paydaşlarıyla iletişim bakımından adayların yanıtları karşılaştıkları zorlukları da içermektedir. Buna göre zorluklar ailelerle iletişim kurma ve takım planlaması yapmayla ilgilidir. Uygulama eksikliğinden dolayı ÖA'lar sınıf yönetiminin sorun olduğunu dile getirmişlerdir. Eğitim-öğretimle ilgili olarak, ÖA'lar aşağıdaki zorlukları da ayrıca dile getirmişlerdir: a) Ders konusunu müfredatların tamamıyla bütünleştirmek, b) Öğrenci-merkezli öğrenmenin uygulanması ve c) Değerlendirmenin oluşturulması ve gerçekleştirilmesi.

Bu makalede ele alınan zorluklara göre; öğretmen yetiştirmenin kalitesini arttırmak ve yeni başlayan öğretmenlerin profesyonellik seviyesini yükseltmek için öğretmen eğitiminin hedef ve amaçlarının gözden geçirilmesi ve yeniden yapılandırılması gerekmektedir. Öğretmenlik süreci sonu olmayan bir süreçtir. Bu süreç düz ilerleyen bir süreç değil, ilerleyen gelişimsel bir süreçtir. Öğretmen yetiştirme eğitimi ve eğitimcileri sadece öngörülen şekilde öğretmen yetiştirilmesine odaklanmamalı aynı zamanda ÖA'lara destek olmalı, örnekler ve danışmanlık modelleri sunarak onlara öğretmenliğin niteliklerini kazandırmaya çalışmalıdır (Loughran ve Berry, 2005; Fullan ve diğ., 2012).

Sonuç olarak, öğretmen adaylarının teori ve uygulama arasında bağlantı kurmaları ve öğretmen eğitimcilerinin ve öğretmen yetiştiren kurumların, öngörülen performans standartlarını kendi programlarıyla birleştirmeleri gerekmektedir (Sun ve diğ., 2005).

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Appendix
Sample of Questions

1. How do you describe yourself as a teacher? What are your professional traits and attributes?
2. What knowledge do you have about the professional standards expected of you as a teacher in the future? For example, ADEC expectations/ roles as far as the curriculum, communicating with parents, teaching learning, assessment, team planning, reflections etc...
3. What are your strengths professionally speaking? Which professional standards do you see yourself excelling at? Why? Give examples?
4. What are your weaknesses professionally speaking, in relation to the professional standards expected from you (classroom management/ student-teacher relationship / school community relationships/ assessment/ planning/ creating resources/ team playing/ technical- language/ pedagogical)?
5. Which professional standards may you face difficulties at fulfilling? What makes you think so? Why? Give examples relevant to the difficulties you may face in certain professional standards. Would these difficulties hinder you from meeting the professional standards? How? Elaborate.

More questions in relevance to professionalism were endorsed:

6. How far do you see yourself as a thoughtful and responsive listener?
7. To what extent do you keep abreast of new research and development in your discipline?
8. Do you take part in professional development organized by the school and understand its significance to improve your practice?
9. In what ways do you see yourself confident in the knowledge and pedagogies of the subject-areas that you teach?
10. How do you ensure a positive learning environment in your class?
11. How far do you practice self-reflection and self-assessment in your professional learning?

On the curriculum performance standard (endorsing teaching/learning) the following was addressed:

12. Do you understand the major tools of inquiry in your discipline?
13. What learning experiences do you provide to encourage students' creative and critical thinking?

14. When and how do you adjust your instructional strategies? Give examples.
15. What interdisciplinary learning experiences and opportunities do you create for your learners to integrate knowledge from several disciplines? Give examples?
16. How do you contribute to the preparation of lessons, planning and construction of teaching-learning resources, within the team you work with?
17. What strategies do you employ to support learning of students whose first language is not English?
18. What diverse types of teaching-learning strategies and tools do you implement? When? Give examples.
19. What multiple measures do you use to assess student learning?
20. What teaching-learning opportunities do you create to enhance the successful implementation of the assigned curriculum and learning outcomes?
21. What teaching material and resources do you construct in alignment with the curriculum and learning outcomes? Give examples.

In terms of the classroom performance standards the following questions were embodied:

22. What engaging learning environment do you create? Give examples/
23. What paths do you follow to manage your class effectively? Explain and give examples.
24. How do you stimulate participation and discussion in your class?
The following questions reflected the community performance standard:
25. What channels do you use to communicate with parent and how do you convey feedback to parents/guardians regarding student progress and achievement? What topics, information, notions and instructions do you communicate?
26. What school community events and activities do you participate in or contribute to? Give examples.
27. How do you manage to maintain respectful and productive relationships with parents/guardians?
28. Do you face any communication barriers? What are they? Explain.
29. What are avenues of communication that exist with your colleagues?