

Wide-scale educational reform in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: What do the teacher training students think?

Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Başkenti Abu Dabi’de Geniş Çaplı Eğitim Reformu: Öğretmenlik Programı Öğrencileri Neler Düşünüyor?

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Abstract

All government schools in Abu Dhabi, as part of widescale educational reforms undertaken in the United Arab Emirates, have undergone massive developments over the past six years. Over the course of these years, the reality of working life for Emirati teachers working in government schools has been widely altered. This research asks the question whether final year students who enrolled on a primary teacher-training program at a Higher Education Institution in Abu Dhabi four or five years ago and who will soon graduate as teachers, have had their perceptions of the profession affected by the reform. Their perceptions were compared to those of first year students in the same institution. A total of 138 students, both first and final year, were surveyed in order to answer the questions: What are the perceptions of these Emirati teacher training students about the Educational Reform in Abu Dhabi, and what are the implications of these perceptions to their graduate career plans?

Keywords: Educational reform, United Arab Emirates, pre-service teachers, perceptions

Öz

Abu Dabi’deki tüm devlet okulları, geniş çaplı bir eğitim reformunun bir parçası olarak, geçtiğimiz altı yıl boyunca büyük çapta gelişim göstermiştir. Bu yıllar boyunca Emirlikte devlet okullarında çalışan öğretmenlerin çalışma hayatındaki gerçeklikler oldukça değişmiştir. Bu araştırma, dört beş yıl önce Abu Dabi’de herhangi bir yükseköğretim kurumunda öğretmen eğitimi programına kaydolmuş ve yakında öğretmen olarak mezun olacak son sınıf öğrencilerinin, öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik algılarının reformdan etkilenip etkilenmediği sorusunu sormaktadır. Bu öğrencilerin algıları, aynı kurumda birinci sınıfta yer alan öğrencilerin algılarıyla kıyaslanmıştır. Hem birinci sınıf, hem son sınıf öğrencilerinden oluşan toplamda 138 öğrenciye şu sorulara cevap aramak amacıyla anket uygulanmıştır: Abu Dabi’deki eğitim reformuyla ilgili Emirlikteki öğretmenlik programı öğrencilerinin algıları nelerdir ve bu algıların kariyer planlarına etkileri nelerdir?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim reformu, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, öğretmen adayları, algılar

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Introduction

The Educational Reform in Abu Dhabi

A brief background

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is still a very ‘young’ country, which at the time of writing had just celebrated its 41st anniversary of formation under the late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. The early 1980s saw the rapid growth of the UAE as a nation which was formally founded in 1971. It was a ‘boom’ period for the UAE, fuelled by the further discovery of large oil reserves. The government wanted to invest the wealth it was accumulating into development of its country in a way that would benefit its population – via health, social welfare, education etc. (Kirk, 2009). It began to expand the educational infrastructure in the country. The rapid development of the country since the discovery of oil reserves in the 1960s has relied upon the importation of expertise and labour from abroad. Kuwait in particular provided aid in the form of educational salaries for teachers and school supplies in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the Kuwaiti (and Egyptian, in some subjects) curricula were widely used in schools in most subjects at this time (Davidson, 2008).

Although progress had been made in the UAE relative to the early days of the education system, still there was criticism in the early 2000s that the system was not progressing fast enough. In 2005 Sheikh Nahyan Al Nahyan made a public speech criticizing the public education system and announcing the onset of new initiatives at federal level. The reform agenda was adopted in 2006 by his successor, HE Dr. Hani Hassan Ali (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer&El Nemr, 2007). There then began a period of rapid policy development. In 2006 the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) announced ambitious plans to attempt to reform the school system.

Part of these reforms was the introduction of the PPP (Public Private Partnership) whereby foreign consultancy companies were invited to tender for advisory ‘rights’ to schools. The project unrolled in primary schools in 2006, lower-secondary schools in 2007, and secondary schools in 2008, purportedly for a three year in-school advising period per cycle. The remit of these advisers was to provide professional development to schools with a remit to improve pedagogy and encourage best practice within the classroom such as student-centred learning, etc. This was in contrast to the “teacher dominated, heavily transmitted teaching styles which were commonplace in schools until that time” (Shaw, Badri&Hukul, 1995), based on memorizing facts and regurgitation (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). Shortly after the PPP began, a new set of curriculum standards adopted from the New South Wales curriculum in Australia was introduced, and advisers were then responsible for easing this delivery by training local teachers to effectively use it. Additionally, teachers’ English proficiency levels were targeted with an English Language Trainer included in the package of on-site advisers, and the an-

nouncement by ADEC that Science and Maths subjects were increasingly to be taught using the medium of English. Thorne (2011) commented that “waves of reform were being introduced in a short time span, seemingly in an effort to find the magic recipe for success” (p. 73).

The goals of ADEC’s ambitious 10 year Strategic Plan (2009-2018) were many, and included Abu Dhabi public and private school students performing above international average, students’ knowledge of their own history and culture, and that all school age children have access to quality schools (ADEC presentation, 2009). The vehicle for this success would be the New School Model (NSM) which was implemented to Grades 1-3 in 2010 and rolled out thereafter. The key elements of the NSM were that “a child-centered environment would be fostered which would be supported by families, teachers, community”, that there would be a “standardization of curriculum, pedagogy, resources and support across all ADEC school types”, “develop Arabic and English language abilities, critical thinking skills, and cultural and national identity through the consistent use of rigorous learning outcomes and pedagogy” (ADEC New School Model Documentation, 2009).

This was followed by the announcement in the press in early 2009 that English Medium Teachers (EMTs) from mainly Western countries would be employed to take over, as generalists, the teaching of the English medium subjects of Maths, Science and English. Until that time, these subjects had been taught by a generalist in grades 1-3, but by a subject specialist in grades 4 and 5, all of whom were either Emirati citizens or non-Emirati Arabs teaching in Arabic. By June 2009, Teach Away, a recruitment agency enlisted by ADEC to support them in their endeavor to staff public schools partly by EMTs, was advertising for thousands of kindergarten and elementary school teachers needed for public school teaching jobs (Teachaway Website, 2013). The consequences of this were that a mass firing of the non-Emirati Arab expatriates, many of whom had been teaching in the country for up to 20 years, began. This made way for the newly recruited EMTs, recruited from predominantly USA, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand. In July 2011, ADEC made the announcement in a national conference that it planned to hire a thousand more EMTs from those countries. During the same conference, Dr. Mugheer Al Khaili, who was appointed ADEC Director General in 2008, announced that “Fourteen hundred teachers will lose their jobs by the end of this year as part of UAE government’s Emiratisation programme launched by the Abu Dhabi Education Council”, citing the prioritising of setting high educational standards as the reason and referring to the lack of teaching certification among existing teaching staff. (Ahmed, 2011). All of this points to a challenging time for the Emirati teachers working in government schools at this time in the educational history of the UAE.

Challenges of the Educational Reform for Emirati teachers

The rapid onset of reform has inevitably caused tensions at times in Abu Dha-

bi. One of the main problems with the speed of the reform was the lack of time for consultation with the school staff themselves before the onset of the reform. Indeed, at the end of the summer of 2006, some teams of advisers ready to set about their work of improving schools arrived in schools who had no idea that they were about to be ‘improved’. These are far from ideal circumstances in an already complex field. In some cases there was also a pre-decided reform agenda for partner schools on the part of the provider companies who have been given very flexible guidelines about how exactly to improve schools (Thorne, 2011). In practice, this could result in tensions, as school administrations often felt very much caught in the middle of the various agendas; the federal ministry of education, ADEC, and the PPPs, with neither being particularly transparent. It was such a conflict that in one case it led a principal to decide to “set a model, a special model for me so that it will satisfy me at least” (p.182). The necessity of bringing much more English language into the classroom, and the assumption in some cases those teachers would be capable of delivering this, also brought stress. Couple this with the situation of having foreign advisers in schools bringing with them different educational ideologies and understanding, not to mention cultural and social differences, and we begin to see the picture of a potentially challenging situation in schools in Abu Dhabi, in one way or another.

All parties in the educational reform struggled at stages. A previous educational adviser working in the reform program writes that “we were clearly struggling with common issues faced by many groups who work in cross cultural settings.... local teachers had been very welcoming but our lack of knowledge of the culture and of the complex history behind some of the practices hampered many of our attempts to assist in making changes to their teaching practices ... why were we here imposing an Australian curriculum in a country that functioned in a very different manner from Australia? Did the teachers share the Sheikh’s vision to compete on a global level in regard to education? How could the teachers gain an understanding of alternative approaches to learning when their own lives held so many restrictions?”(Albon, 2009).

Generally speaking, the onset of the reform brought greater expectations, scrutiny and accountability, partly as a result of the periodic monitoring agency visits which schools were subjected to, frequent lesson observations and evaluations by educational advisers, teams of foreign inspectors and new systems of performance management of teaching quality. The practical day to day differences between primary teaching five or six years ago and teaching in 2012 in Abu Dhabi are significant and are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. A summary outline of the practical changes for a primary teacher working in government schools in Abu Dhabi, 2007/2008 v 2011/2012

	2007/2008	2011/2012
<i>Length of working day, teaching loads</i>	School day typically 7.15-1.15 Teaching loads usually around 18-20 lesson from 35 maximum	School Day typically 7.15-2.15 Current 2012 teaching loads for primary teachers of English-medium subjects around 30 lessons from 35.
<i>Teaching of Maths and Science</i>	Maths and Science taught in Arabic by Emirati and non-Gulf Arab expatriate teachers. In grades 1-3 Maths and Science taught together by same teacher, in grades 4-5 by Maths and Science teaching specialists	Maths and Science taught in English by native English speakers, EMTs (English Medium Teachers) from countries such as the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K.
<i>Curriculum and Resources</i>	Curriculum based entirely on a textbook issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Very little or limited creation of teachers' own resources.	Curriculum based on a slightly adapted version of the Australian NSW curriculum, with substantial new content. Some reference to textbooks in English and Maths but these are not relied upon heavily. Expectation that teachers will create majority of resources.
<i>Professional Development</i>	Teachers were invited once or twice a semester to a lecture or workshop run by the MoE.	Between 2007-2010 on-site ADEC or private company advisors were to carry out professional CPD on at least a weekly basis but would be involved in one-to-one PD training with individual teachers on daily basis. Post-2010, CPD is partly the responsibility of Heads of Faculty, who are based in the school full-time.
<i>Teacher Appraisal System</i>	Appraisal system undertaken predominantly by external MoE supervisors on bi-annual visits which included a lesson observation, sometimes accompanied by principal but not necessarily. Heavy emphasis in appraisal documentation on teacher involvement in extra-curricular activities such as clubs, arranging assemblies etc.	Appraisals carried out by principals accompanied by the newly developed role of school-based Academic Vice-Principals. Heavy emphasis in appraisal documentation on performance in classroom, teaching portfolios containing lesson plans, evidence of assessment for learning etc. In addition, regular visits from ADEC-appointed evaluation/inspection agencies to observe lessons.

Understanding the reform has to be placed within a framework of a country in which only around 11% of the population are Nationals according to the 2010 Census (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2010), who are often grappling with the dynamics this entails. A study of university opinions on the subject of cultural influences in the UAE recorded comments from students such as “I don’t want to enforce one culture over the others like what’s happening now! You can clearly see the American way of living is spreading and taking over other cultures” and “Our new generation is very westernized and the elderly hate it ... if this keeps on going we will forget our past

and culture” (Crabtree, 2010). The need to push for reform in order to bring UAE government schools up to international standards is in a delicate balance with the need to maintain some of the educational traditions of the country. One speaker at a meeting concerning the reform noted that “Educational reform is not rocket science. It’s tougher. We’re sometimes in a hurry to do things. But are we with the local people, for the local people, or are we doing it to them? We have to change the model from top down to bottom up. We have to stop doing it *to* people or *for* people - but *with* them” (Warnica, 2010).

It is this new arena to which students graduating from teacher-training programs across the country enter in 2012. In the first cohort to emerge into the profession since the educational reform has begun in earnest, what are their perceptions about the world they are soon to enter? If they knew at the beginning of the course how different the profession would be four or five years later, would they have made the same choices? Are their reasons for entering the profession different from those of the more recent enrollees? These are some of the findings which we hoped our research would return. Dessler (2001) talks of how, in leading change in educational organization, “leaders should establish a direction, motivate people, and align them in order to be very much prepared for receiving the change. It should be noted that changes are mostly rejected by people if they are not made to understand the benefits of this change” (p.26). Communication in any organization, as indicated by DuBrin (2004) is essential as it makes people feel they are recognized. “Lack of proper communication and education makes people reject or refuse a change without knowing its implications. This is achieved by face to face communication, publications, special reports, or even formal group presentations” (Bascia&Hargreaves, 2000). These ideas were kept in mind as we began to survey the students: were the final year students in particular, motivated and made to understand the benefits of the change in order to embrace the teaching profession?

The study aim: The chief aim of this work was to find out the perceptions of teacher training students of the educational reform taking place in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and whether the developments in the educational system which have taken place since 2006 were affecting their plans to teach upon graduation.

Rationale: The participants are all either first or final year students following a teacher-training program. The final year students would have been contemplating their career choices in approx. 2005-2007, a time when the Public Private Partnership (PPP) of the reform in Abu Dhabi had just begun. The beginning of in-school advising was beginning in some primary schools in 2006, and many aspects of the reform were yet to take place. By contrast, the students who make up the current first year cohort of the BEd were hypothetically more aware that the educational world which they were joining was a new one consisting of the New School Model applied through a new curriculum for Maths, Science and English, all taught in English by mainly Western English Medium Teachers (EMTs). Part of this research looks at the students’ awareness of the

developments at the time of their admission, and whether this had an influence on their perceptions of the teaching profession and their future career plans.

It is critical that in this rapid period of educational development in the UAE, the perceptions and experiences of pre-service teachers are examined and taken into account. This is a field in which there are currently very few studies. In terms of international relevance of the research, it would be interesting to educators worldwide to see how educational reform can affect local pre-service teachers. For developing countries too, it would be helpful for them to see documented the process of how change affects nationals – certainly the UAE is in a unique situation as being a wealthy, rapidly growing country, but still, there is sure to be parallelism with other countries who could learn from the experience. The investment of national governmental programmes into education is well known in the UAE. Recently, ADEC publicly reiterated their earlier commitment and prioritising of recruitment of Emirati teachers: "Our collaboration [with the Emirati recruitment organization in Abu Dhabi, Tawteen Council] primarily aims to increase the percentage of Emirati educators in public schools in the Emirate. Emirati staff members are the best to understand the local environment and culture and hence the presence of national teachers is key to develop the emirate's educational system" (ADEC, 2012). If the educational system in the UAE is to succeed and reach the ambitious targets set by ADEC by 2018, and Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 (Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, 2008), the perceptions of Emirati teacher-training teachers making career decisions have to be seriously considered.

Methodology

The research was conducted by means of a survey administered to first and final year students at a teacher-training program in a higher education institution in Abu Dhabi. They numbered 138 students in total (58 first year students, 80 final year students, all female). The survey questions were designed to generate quantitative data about the students' reasons for entering the college, their awareness of the educational reform at the time of their college application (these statements were different for each year group because the reform was at different stages at the time for each group) their opinions on the reform in general, and specific future plans for the final year students. Since the year groups' responses were to be compared, statistical analysis in the form of t-tests was performed on relevant questions asked to both groups. The questions were built upon a four point Likert Scale depending upon the criteria (awareness, for example). Additionally, each sections of the survey gave opportunity for further explanation or elaboration, providing some qualitative statements too.

The survey questions themselves were been checked by pre-administering to four objective pre-viewers. Feedback was gathered on the relevance of the survey questions and their relation to the research questions from: two BEd students, and two educational professionals with research interests in this field. Adjustments were made on the

basis of this feedback to increase the validity of the survey questions (Newby, 2010).

The specific research questions are as follows:

- What are the reasons for the students entering the teacher-training course, and is there a significant difference in these reasons between first and final year students?
- How much of the developments which were taking place as part of the reform were the first and final year students aware of at the time of applying to their education program?
- How do both groups of students perceive the reform?
- What percentage of both student groups plans to pursue a career in teaching upon graduation?
- For the final year students, has the reform changed their future plans and do they think that they would have joined the college if they had known the changes which were about to unfold?

Findings

Original Reasons for entering teacher-training college

Almost the entire sample agreed (Table 2) that they had become teachers because they enjoyed working with children (95 percent of first year students, 90 percent of final year students). Both groups also agreed with the statement that it was important for Emiratis to take up prime roles in the education of future generations of Emiratis (96 percent of first year students, 94 percent of final year students).

Table 2. Reasons for entering the teacher-training course

<i>Comparison of % Agree for 1st and 4th years</i>	<i>% Agree First Years (n=56)</i>	<i>% Agree Final Years (n=80)</i>	<i>t-test</i>
I love working with children	95	90	NS
Job Security	79	73	NS
I feel Emiratis should take a prime role in educating our future generations of children	96	94	NS
It is a suitable profession for women	91	76	p < 0.05
I know that education in UAE was developing and wanted to be a part of this	98	80	p < 0.01

Many qualitative, patriotic comments by both groups were added to support their views:

“As Emiratis I strongly believe we have to serve our country, especially in education” (First year student).

“My aim is to be part of the developing education in the UAE, and change the

repetitive style in schools for the better” (First year student).

“I would like to have a great impact in my student’s life in a good way. I feel that I can understand my country’s people more than anyone else not from this country” (Final year student).

“I feel that I want to work as a teacher with all these changes to develop the things that non-Emiratis can’t do” (Final year student).

The latter two points may be a reference to the large influx of English Medium teachers since 2009, or even earlier since many non-Emirati Arab expatriates worked in primary schools too. Some made additional reference to the idea of teaching as being a religiously sanctioned idea, e.g.

“Because we are followers of Prophet Mohammed, we have to deliver his messages”,

or a suitable career for Emirati women by virtue of government schools in the UAE being a gender-segregated environment:

“Because it’s suitable for women”

“The best job for women in the UAE”

“Because I strongly believe that I’m a good teacher and teaching is suitable for me as a woman”

“My family encouraged me, because it is suitable for me as a woman”

This understanding of students’ reasons for enrolling on the teacher-training program provides a richer background for examination of their perceptions of the reform later on. t-tests on data reduced to binary form were performed (Table 2) for each statement (reasons for entering the college) between the student groups (first and final years).

The statement “I knew that education in the UAE was developing and I wanted to be a part of it” were addressed with a highly significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.01$). 98 percent of first year students agreed with this statement, while only 80 percent of fourth year students agreed with it. This was fairly predictable given that the reform was in full-swing by 2010 when the first year students applied to college, but only just beginning in earnest in 2006/2007 as the final year students made their choices.

There was a significant difference between the groups’ responses to ‘teaching was suitable for women’ being a reason for choosing it ($p < 0.05$), with 91 percent of first year students agreeing with this statement, compared with only 76 percent of final year students (Table 2). It is not entirely clear why this would be the case since suitability of the profession would not appear to be a time-sensitive issue. One possible suggestion may be that in the last five years, the UAE has seen an ever increasing influx of expatriates into the workplace. There were always large numbers of expatriates working in the UAE since the oil boom of the 1960s, but very few worked in public sector where most Emiratis work (Nelson, 2005), and so the interaction of cultures

which exists now in government schools as a result of the reform is a new phenomenon. Perhaps families, particularly more conservative ones, are ever more vigilant of the possible influences and effects of a mixed working environment. Some Emirati women also value education as a means of escaping boredom at home (Crabtree, 2010), though none of the women in our study specifically mentioned this point as an additional reason.

Table 3. First and Final Year students' awareness of current developments in the UAE Education System at the time of applying to teacher-training college

First year students	% Aware (n=57)	Final year student	% Aware (n=80)
Question N/A		There were companies assigned to government schools which sent advisors full-time into the school to work alongside teachers and coach them to improve their teaching	64
In elementary and middle schools, the ministry curriculum has been replaced by the new ADEC Curriculum	70	A completely new curriculum was being brought into schools	68
There has been a move away from text-book driven teaching and teachers now have to create their own resources or adapt existing ones	88	Question N/A	
These teachers teach all Maths and Science classes in English at primary level	88	There was a plan for Maths and Science lessons to be taught in English	70
Western English Medium Teachers were working in schools in Cycle 1 teaching the English medium subjects	70	Western English Medium Teachers would shortly be brought into the schools to teach the English medium subjects	56
Teaching loads were being raised to include more planning and professional development time	70	Teaching loads were being raised to include more planning and professional development time	70

Table 3 shows the awareness that the students had of five of the more obvious, impacting changes for a primary school teacher in government schools in Abu Dhabi. Table 4 shows summarized percentages of overall awareness of the changes to facilitate comparison between the year groups.

Table 4. First and final year students' awareness of current developments in the UAE education system at the time of applying to teacher-training college

Level of Awareness	First Year Students (n=57)	Final Year Students (n=80)
5/5 Developments	27 %	24%
4/5 Developments	36 %	29 %
3/5 Developments	37 %	20 %
1/5 Developments	0 %	21 %
0/5 Developments	0 %	15%

There were some obvious differences in awareness, such as that EMTs would teach Maths, Science and English. This idea was still very much in the pipeline at the educational council offices in 2007 and EMTs were not employed until 2009. Accordingly, while 88 percent of first year students were aware of EMTs at the time of application, only 56 percent of final year students were (Table 3). Advertising/recruitment of the EMTs began in 2008, though talk of the idea may well have begun to filter down into schools and therefore into families unofficially prior to that, so it is possible that students who enrolled at the college in 2008 would have been aware, but not possible that the 2007 enrollees would have known of the concept at that time. Nevertheless, the figures do give us indicators of the students' perceptions.

When asked whether they were aware that Maths and Science in all primary schools were now taught in English, 70 percent of final year students said that they knew, compared with 88 percent of first year students (Table 3). At the time of the final year students' admission to college, teachers were being coached and encouraged to introduce more English into lessons by PPP or ADEC advisors, but it was not yet mandated. The subject of English language as a medium for these students appeared to be most controversial, as these additional statements from final year students illustrate:

"I think that the idea of teaching Science and Maths in English is okay, but they need to learn these subjects in their own first language first, Arabic"

"I strongly believe the students won't understand whole concepts in English the way they could in his mother tongue"

"I'm unhappy because we use English too much and this will affect our culture"

"The students' level is decreasing. Students in Grade 3 don't know how to write their own name! Students knowledge is decreasing because of the English, especially in Science"

"We have lost our identity - our language, religion, culture"

The introduction of the English medium teachers (taking the place of Emirati and

non-Gulf Arab expatriates who had previously taught English, Maths and Science in the government schools) also aroused some strong feeling:

“Some licensed teachers (as English Medium Teachers were previously known) are not professional”

“Licensed teachers still don’t know how to implement English with students who have both Arabic and English language”

Awareness of the other comparable items (a new curriculum to replace the Ministry of Education’s curriculum, and teaching loads) were remarkably similar and all between 68-70 percent for both year groups in both questions. In terms of overall awareness (Table 4), the percentage of students who felt they were aware of all five educational items were similar – 27 percent overall awareness for the first year students versus 24 percent for the final year students. However, 100 percent of the first year students were aware of three or more from the five items, while 21 percent of the final year students were only aware of one or two of the items, and 10 percent were not aware of any of the items at all.

Noteworthy, and perhaps unexpected, was the relatively low overall awareness of the first year students for some items – for example only 70 percent realized that the ministry curriculum had been replaced (in 2009), or that there were English medium teachers (employed since 2009). The item which was most widely known was that Maths and Science were taught in English. First year students who had directly entered first year would have applied to the college in 2010. Those who had started a foundation year in 2010 would have applied in late 2009. It is surprising then, that only 70 percent seemed to be aware of the changes which had occurred, especially given that they were interested in the profession. This is perhaps suggestive of inadequate communication of the reform in general, on the part of the media, schools, career guides, college admission teams – this idea will be discussed further in the subsequent section. The awareness that teaching loads (and the length of the working day) had increased was the same for both groups; first and fourth years scored 70 percent, again perhaps a surprising result from the first year students.

We will now look at whether the awareness of the developments affected how the students feel about its effect on young people considering a teaching career, and the effect of the developments on the students’ future career plans.

Awareness of Educational Reform and its effect on students’ perceptions of the teaching profession

There was a highly significant difference in the way that the two groups (first and final year students) perceived developments to be affecting young peoples’ feelings towards teaching as a career ($p < 0.01$, Table 5). Half of the first year students thought that students were being encouraged to become teachers as a result of the developments in education, which presumably reflects the role of the developments in their

own decision to enter teacher-training college (80 percent said they felt inspired to become a teacher to help their country move with the developments, Table 6). This is in contrast to the final year students, only a third of whom (33 percent) believed that people would be encouraged by the developments (Table 5), while 64 percent said that they themselves had been inspired by the developments (Table 6). This is understandable given the very early stages of the reform at that time and the uncertainty surrounding the changes which were being introduced or had recently been introduced. An approximately equal percentage of students in the groups thought that some people were being discouraged from teaching by the reforms (17 percent of first year versus 15 percent of final year students, Table 5) and more final year students than first years thought that ‘many young people who would have made excellent teachers are being discouraged’. We begin to see a pattern emerging in the data that in general, the first year students seem to have a more positive view of many aspects of the educational reform.

In terms of future plans, the first year students said overwhelmingly (97 percent of them, Table 6) that they planned to teach upon graduation (43 percent with ‘some reservations’ but they were still committed to teaching). The difference between this and the final years’ response was highly significant ($p < 0.05$); only 67 percent of this group said that they would teach upon graduation, the remaining 33 percent either undecided or said definitively that they would not (14 percent). One might speculate that this could be partly due to a first year student’s ‘rose-coloured glasses’ effect, i.e. brimming with the enthusiasm at starting a new course, and which could change over the course of the degree.

Table 6. Survey questions on the students' feelings towards future career and their perceptions of how developments affected their decision to enter teacher-training college

Feelings about future career	% First year students (n=56)	% Final year students (n=79)	t-test for these answer sets	How/if developments affected students' decision to enter the college	% First year students (n=57)	% Final year students (n=80)	t-test for these answer sets
A Very happy (Looking forward to working as a teacher)	54	34		A I felt inspired to become a teacher to help my country to move with the educational changes	80	64	
B Happy (I do plan to teach when I graduate even though I do have some concerns)	43	33	(p < 0.01)	B The developments did not affect my decision	29	16	(p < 0.05)
C Unhappy (Worried, at times regretting my career choice, I may not teach when I graduate)	3	19		C I did not know about the developments	0	5	
D Very Unhappy (I do not plan to teach when I graduate)	2	14		D The developments caused me concern but I knew I wanted to be a teacher anyway	5	13	

However, it seems unlikely, given their responses in other areas and the large difference between the groups' responses. The first years' additional qualitative responses on the subject were mainly positive, which one might expect given that 80 percent had been inspired by the developments and 97 percent planned to go on to teach, for example:

"I wanted to be an Emirati teacher with a hand in the changes, and the developments in my country's education system"

Some of the final year students who said that they would not teach explained why:

"No because the new system doesn't help us and puts us under stress. You have to work 24 hours which doesn't help us manage our personal responsibilities like children"

"No. I am worried about getting a new curriculum that makes me unable to understand the content and it's above my abilities."

"Nowadays, working as a teacher is too difficult"

"I feel that teaching is too big a responsibility now. I would do better in other sections of education".

“They have increased the teaching loads. Teaching is too much now!”

There is a strong sense of the students’ bewilderment running through their responses, and perhaps of teaching being generally much harder than they anticipated. In short, for some of the final year students, teaching today is not the teaching they had in mind when they initially applied to college:

“It’s hard to change all the time! We get used to one system and then it changes. It will keep changing and it’s a lot of work with low salary “

Some of the comments regarding the ‘difficult’ nature of teaching itself such as the student who characterized the new curriculum as ‘*above my abilities*’ are worth consideration. The previous primary school curriculum was based on the mandated textbooks, as for other school levels prior to the reform. There was generally no significant deviation from these textbooks and indeed, lesson plans which were provided by the then governing Ministry of Education often stated page numbers of the prescribed texts on each weekly plan which the teacher needed to follow. The textbooks, and therefore the teaching and learning content, did not often change from year to year. Neither too would teachers often change grade-teaching groups, except perhaps to go up or down one grade level occasionally. Therefore, even a primary teacher who was not particularly academic would be able to cope with the content of their curriculum as they quickly became very familiar with it. In addition, as seen in Table 1, there was no particular need or expectation for teachers to create additional resources to the textbooks or workbooks, meaning that less academic teachers were under less pressure, in this sense. After numerous experiences of teaching on practicum on the teacher education program, some of the less academically oriented students may have begun to realize the increased academic demands of teaching as a result of the reform.

There was a small number of comments from the final year students about the developments having a positive impact, and feeling prepared for the changes as a result of their course studies, for example:

“I want to be a teacher, even though there are many changes, because I am ready after my course and I accept all decisions that will improve my country”

“I want to be a part of this development, especially after I started the practicum, I saw how important the teacher is and I want to be an important person as well”

“When I was at school, we faced difficulty in English in particular, but I believe these children will have a brilliant future and have jobs ready for them, because it requires knowledge of English language and skills like problem solving, critical thinking, mastering which the last education system didn’t foster”.

The particular students who made these comments also agreed that they were inspired by the reform and that they definitely planned to teach upon graduation. The honest reflection that school children nowadays will have, in the latter student’s opinion, an advantage over students from pre-reform days and the critique of the past system in lacking skills such as critical thinking is both powerful and hopeful.

There appeared to be a medium level significant correlation between the final year students' awareness of developments and three aspects (Table 7).

Table 7. Correlating students' awareness of current/imminent developments and feelings towards future career with various perceptions

Correlation Coefficient	Awareness of current or imminent educational developments		Feelings towards future career (ranked as happiness levels)	
	First year students (n=58)	Final year students (n=79)	First year students (n=58)	Final year students (n=79)
1. Feelings towards future career (ranked as Very Happy, Happy, Unhappy, or Very Unhappy)	0.22 ($r < 0.5$)	0.68		
2. Perceptions of the direction in which government schools are moving	0.42 ($r < 0.5$)	0.71	0.31 ($r < 0.5$)	0.29 ($r < 0.5$)
3. Perceptions as to whether other young people were being encouraged or discouraged into the teaching profession	0.40 ($r < 0.5$)	0.60	0.69	0.57
4. Response to the question of "I know that education in UAE was developing and wanted to be a part of this"	0.39 ($r < 0.5$)	0.31 ($r < 0.5$)	0.81	0.59

Firstly, their feelings about their future career (Item 1, $r=0.68$), secondly, their perceptions of the direction in which government schools were moving (Item 2, $r=0.71$) and thirdly, their perceptions as to how the reforms were influencing others to enter teaching as a career (Item 3, $r=0.60$). In other words, their relatively low awareness of reform items is reflected in their relatively negative perceptions of the reform in terms of these items. A lack of awareness seems to have significantly negatively impacted on some of the final year students' perceptions. Feelings about their future career were fairly correlated with item 3 and 4 ($r=0.57$, $r=0.59$ respectively) which is logical; it would be odd if the students were all very happy with their future career plans as a teacher and yet did not think other students would have a good view of the profession. Similarly, given their low response to the question of wishing to be a part of the UAE's development (Item 4), it does make sense that this be correlated with 'feelings towards future career' but quantifying this adds weight to the understanding.

There was no significant correlation between the first years' overall reform awareness and future career plans or perceptions as to whether young people were being encouraged or discouraged from the profession. This is perhaps surprising, but pre-

sumably because of the number of items which they were more poorly aware of as explained earlier. In any case, lack of complete awareness apparently made little difference to the first year students since 97 percent had said they were either very happy or happy about their future career, and they planned to teach upon graduation. Upon analysis of individual awareness items though, “I knew that the UAE was developing and I wanted to be a part of it” correlated highly with their future career plans (Table 7, Item 4, $r=0.81$). Their opinions of young peoples’ perceptions of teaching as a profession was also correlated with this (Item 3, $r=0.69$). So while not knowing fully about many of the developments seemed to have been critical for the final year students, it does not appear that this was the case for the first year students. The general knowledge that the UAE has been developing and wanting to be a part of that is critical in feeling positive about their future career as teachers.

It is known that barriers which hinder change from taking place in educational organizations include ineffective communication with parties involved in change implementation, and a lack of involvement of parties involved in change management (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe&Lowe, 2003). For sure, certain factors were unclear or unknown to the final year students when they first applied to the program, such as that they would need to have a particular IELTS language level, and perhaps that they would teach Maths and Science in English (only 70% said they knew about this, Table 3). It seems fair to say that there was a lack of communication about the reform too, given the poor overall awareness of the final year students of some items. Many of these plans were still being discussed and/or developed at council level at the time of the final year students’ application, so perhaps the ‘ineffective communication’ for this group is understandable. However, since both first and final year students showed quite a poor overall awareness level about certain issues which should have, by then, for the first year students at least, become common knowledge to anyone with an interest in education, some weakness in the communication chain seems to be suggested. Leading change means engaging all parties involved in the implementation of change (Roueche et al., 2008), and there are signs that this did not take place for the students.

The effect of the perception of the reform on the final year students’ career plans

A key question was specifically asked of the final year students: “If you had known how schools would change due to the developments which would take place during the time that you were at college (2007/2008-2012), do you think you would still have enrolled on the course?” While 56 percent said that yes, they would have, 44 percent of students said they would either not have (10 percent), or were unsure if they would have (34 percent). There was a correlation between this question item and awareness of developments at the time of enrolment too ($r=0.65$). The reasons for this sentiment are likely complex, but a theme which regularly arose in the final year stu-

dents' additional qualitative answers was that of the current (and relatively recent) policy change in Abu Dhabi which is a requirement for new teachers in primary schools to have attained a band 6.5 in Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS). There was no such requirement at the time of the students' enrollment in the college and it may well have come of a shock to learn of this new development half way through a degree course. Some of their comments seem angry, and there was a poignancy to their answers too as some began to realize that their dream was not the one they had imagined for themselves:

"I am extremely happy to become a teacher, but the IELTS 6.5 issue might stop my dream coming true.... "

"I want to become a teacher, but my IELTS is not 6.5 and my confidence became so low now. I'm confused."

"If I knew what the changes were going to be I would have worked hard on my English to get a 6.5 and be confident and ready to teach."

"I want to teach. But if I had known that I had to get 6.5 to be a teacher I would not have chosen to be one."

"The language makes it too hard. If I knew this was going to happen, I would have reconsidered being a teacher."

The challenge of the language requirements for those students who not only did not realize they would come into effect, but who are not strong in English or learning languages in general, may have seemed insurmountable to some. Given the shock this may have been, and linking this in with the earlier expressed emotive sentiments about using English as a teaching medium for Maths and English and its perceived role in the loss of identity and culture, one can empathize with the feelings expressed here. The first year students had no such issues and none chose to add an additional comment in this section. Their situation was entirely different since they knew that the IELTS was a requirement from the beginning upon enrollment and even if they had not reached the required standard at that time, they were informed and knew the parameters within which they would have to work to reach that level. For people to clearly understand changes, they must have information about the particular changes; the changes need to be learned, and people need information to learn. That particular information was simply unavailable to the students at the time of enrollment, because the policy decision came later on meaning that the students were quite simply unable to have this 'learning of change', which puts some of the students in an uncomfortable position as we have seen. The other point here is that ADEC itself is a relatively new organization, only established in earnest at the onset of the reform, meaning that there may not yet be a full trust in the decision makers, so a natural first reaction may be to resist (Lunenburg, 2010).

Discussion

Certainly, courses and institutions can help students overcome fears during times

of change and in theory, prepare them for the changes, especially (one would think) if those fears were of an academic nature and based on a lack of familiarity with content, resources etc. However, a study of pre-service teachers in the USA state of Texas found that even though pre-service teachers were made aware of certain parameters during their course, in this case about the “mandated curriculum” and “high-stakes testing system” of the state, “putting that knowledge into practice is a difficult task to undertake” (Brown, 2012) and this is probably true for some of the students who voiced fears in this study too: no matter what preparation they were given for the changes, they still find the changes themselves over-whelming.

The final year students in this study were by far the more vocal of the two student groups. 74 percent of final years students chose to add optional qualitative comments onto their survey, compared with only 16 percent of first year students. Easterby-Smith et al (2003) discuss how “leaders and managers of change may allow these people who oppose change to express their views on the proposed change indicating potential problems and giving suggestions on their modifications”. The resistance to change that we see verbalized in this study, though, is not one which the students (or even school teachers at the time, for that matter) were at liberty to express their views on or give suggestions on modifications. Indeed, an article published in 2008 in a prominent national newspaper ran the headline “If teachers try to disrupt the reform, sack them” (Safadi, 2008), giving a flavor of the feelings which were running high at the time and of the non-negotiable nature of the reform. One study in Canadian schools supported the idea of giving teachers in the midst of an educational reform greater empowerment through involvement and consultation, finding that “teachers know reform in terms of initiative and control as do theoreticians” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). This may apply to teacher training students too, and may be a future direction for ADEC and other Emirate Educational Councils to move towards to ensure greater harmony and reduced reform resistance, thus retaining more Emirati teachers upon graduation. Godwin (2006) postulates that “as a minority cultural group the UAE Government has a responsibility to ensure Emiratis are given opportunities to participate in the economic endeavors and prosperity”; education plays a large part in these endeavors, and Emirati pre-service teachers need to feel part of the educational developments if they are to ‘participate in the prosperity’.

There is another important point to consider here. The nature of modern education in an increasingly globalised world is that it is frequently changing, which is true even in a country not undergoing wide-scale reform, but which is simply changing on a school level as a result of in-built good practice such as teacher appraisal, peer observations, personal or systematic action research, etc. Might it therefore be possible then that those students so overwhelmed by the changes the reform has brought about, those students whose comments target change in general (e.g. “*It’s hard to change all the time!*”), may not been the most ideal teachers anyway? Granted, the changes

happening in Abu Dhabi now are extensive and have been extremely rapid, relatively speaking. But perhaps the students' reactions are also an early indicator of a dislike of change which would have arisen later anyway. At the risk of controversy, the author poses a question : might one of the major effects of the educational reform to teacher training students be a form of 'natural selection', selecting out those more able to deal with fluctuation? One student wrote on her paper that "*Yes, the developments affected me. I changed my mind about becoming a teacher!!*"

Conclusions

Our study shows a direct correlation between the final year teacher training students' awareness of current educational developments and three things – happiness/optimism about the teaching profession, plans to become a teacher, and perceptions of how other young people view the profession as a result of the educational reform in Abu Dhabi. The final year students' awareness of educational developments in Abu Dhabi was low, compared with the first year students who embarked on the course five years into the educational reform - no first year students were aware of less than half of the major developments. However, some surprising gaps in awareness appeared in the first year students' responses too. It seems that more work needs to be done in order to ensure that prospective college students are making an informed decision about teaching and are more knowledgeable about the current status of the profession. That Maths and Science are taught in English seemed to be a contentious topic for final year students (not for first year students, apparently), with numerous qualitative comments relating to this. Many final year students also expressed upset that they themselves were expected to have reached a certain level in the Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which they were not aware of previously. They voiced fears about loss of the Arabic language and culture as part of the reforms too.

As a consequence, perhaps, many more first year students than final year students felt inspired by the developments of the educational reform in Abu Dhabi ($p < 0.05$), and believed that other young people were being encouraged to join the teaching profession by the developing educational system ($p < 0.01$). First year students were also much more likely to have chosen the career in the first place because they wanted to help their educational system to develop. Nearly all first year students said that they planned to teach upon graduation, with only two-thirds of the final year students stating the same. Almost half (44 percent) of the final year students said that they may not, or would not, have become a teacher had they known the full extent of the developments which would unfold through the educational reform in Abu Dhabi. The study shows that many final year students, who enrolled on the course in the early days of the educational reform with limited knowledge of the imminent developments, have been adversely affected by the reform and many would have reconsidered their decision with a greater understanding of what would unfold in education over the next

five years. First year students were in general more positive about the reform and their future part in it.

Özet

Giriş

1960 yılında petrol kaynaklarının bulunmasından bu yana Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri hızlı bir gelişme göstermiştir (Kirk, 2009; Davidson, 2008). 2006 yılında, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri'ndeki Abu Dabi, eğitim sistemini geliştirmek için hızlı bir eğitim reformu başlatmıştır (MaPhersoni, Kachelhoffer & El Nemr, 2007). Eğitim danışmanları pedagojiiyi geliştirmeleri ve öğrenci merkezli öğrenme gibi en iyi eğitim aktivitelerini ve mesleki gelişimi sağlamak için okullara atanmıştır (ADEC sunum, 2009; ADEC Yeni Okul Modeli Belgesi, 2009). Bu durum, o zamana kadar okullarda yaygın olan öğretmenin baskın olduğu eğitim anlayışı ve ezbere dayalı, bilgi aktarımından başka özelliği olmayan eğitim sistemi ile (*regurgitation*) (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005) (Shaw, Badri & Hukul, 1995) çelişmiştir. 2009'un ilk dönemlerinde çoğunluğu Batı ülkelerinden gelen İngilizce öğretmenleri (*english medium teachers*) ilkokullarda Matematik, Fen ve İngilizce konularının anlatılmasında uzman kişiler olarak görevlendirilmiştir (Teachaway Web sitesi, 2013; Ahmed, 2011). Bütün bunlar, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri devlet okullarında çalışan Emirlik öğretmenlerinin zor zamanlar yaşamalarına neden olmuştur (Thorne, 2011; Albon, 2009; Warnica, 2010; Safadi, 2008). Abu Dabi, nüfusunun sadece %11'i aslı unsurlardan oluşan bir ülkedir (UAE, Ulusal İstatistik Bürosu, 2010). Bu nedenle kendi dinamik ve zorluklarını beraberinde getiren reformun anlaşılması güç olmuştur (Crabtree, 2010).

Emirlik Öğretmenleri İçin Eğitim Reformunun Zorlukları

Eğitim reformu başladıktan sonra öğretmenlik programlarından mezun olan ilk topluluğun girecekleri iş dünyasına ilişkin algılarının neler olduğu, eğer dört beş yıl sonra mesleklerinin ne kadar farklılaşacağını bilselerdi aynı seçimi yapıp yapmayacakları, mesleğe girme nedenlerinin kendilerinden sonra programa giren öğretmen adaylarından farklı olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Dessler (2001), eğitim örgütlerinde temel değişikliklerin nasıl yapılması gerektiğinden söz ederken: "Liderlerin insanlara bir yön verebilmesi için insanları motive etmeleri ve bu değişimin faydalarını insanlara anlatmaları gerekir. Eğer bunlar yapılmazsa değişim, insanlar tarafından reddedilir." der. Ayrıca iletişim de insanları değişim sürecine ve birbirlerine bağlamak için gereklidir (DuBrin, 2004; Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, s.75; Roueche et al., 2008; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, s.157). Bu yüzden Abu Dabi hükümeti uzun dönemli planlarında Emirlikleşmeyi (*Emiratisation*) (ADEC, 2012; Abu Dabi Ekonomik Vizyonu 2030, 2008; Godwin, 2006) ve Emirlik öğretmenlerini görevlendirmeyi ve uzun süre görevde tutmayı planlarının önemli bir parçası

olarak öncelikleri arasına almıştır. Bu fikirlere araştırma yapılırken de öncelik verilmiş ve özellikle son sınıf öğrencilerinin, motive edilip edilmedikleri ve öğretmenlik mesleğine bağlanabilmeleri için değişimin faydasını anlamalarının sağlanıp sağlanmadığı konusu üzerinde durulmuştur.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri başkenti Abu Dabi’de gerçekleştirilen eğitim reformunu, öğretmen adaylarının nasıl algıladıklarını ve eğitim sisteminde 2006’dan bu yana gerçekleşen gelişmelerin öğretmen adaylarının mezun olduktan sonraki öğretmenlik planlarını etkileyip etkilemediğini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Katılımcılar bir öğretmenlik programına devam etmekte olan birinci ve son sınıf öğrencileridir. 58 birinci sınıf ve 80 son sınıf öğrencisi olmak üzere toplam 138 öğrenci araştırmaya katılmıştır. Anket soruları, öğrencilerin üniversiteye girme nedenleri, üniversiteye başvuruları sırasında gerçekleşmekte olan eğitim reformuyla ilgili farkındalıkları, reformla ilgili düşünceleri ve son sınıf öğrencilerinin gelecek planlarıyla ilgili nicel veri elde edecek şekilde tasarlanmıştır.

Alt araştırma soruları aşağıdaki gibidir:

- Öğrencilerin bir öğretmenlik programına girmelerinin nedenleri nelerdir ve birinci ve son sınıf öğrencileri arasında programa girme nedenleriyle ilgili olarak anlamlı bir farklılık var mıdır?
- Birinci ve son sınıf öğrencileri eğitim programına başvururken, yapılan eğitim reformunun gelişmelerinden ne kadar haberdardılar?
- Her iki grup öğrencileri de reformu nasıl algılamaktadır?
- Mezun olduklarında her iki öğrenci grubunun yüzde kaçını öğretmenlik mesleğinde kariyerlerini sürdürmek istemektedir?
- Son sınıf öğrencileri için, reform öğrencilerin gelecek planlarını değiştirmiş midir ve gerçekleşmek üzere olan değişimlerin farkında olsalardı eğitim fakültelerine girmeyi yine de düşünürler miydi?

Bulgular

Örneklemin neredeyse tamamı, çocuklarla çalışmaktan zevk aldıkları için öğretmen olduklarını belirtmiştir. Her iki grup öğrencilerinin de büyük bir çoğunluğu, Emirliğin gelecek nesillerinin eğitiminde öncü rol almanın önemli olduğunda hemfikirdir (Birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin %96’sı, son sınıf öğrencilerinin %94’ü). Her iki grup da görüşlerini bildirirken düşüncelerini açıklamak için birçok nitel, vatansever yorum eklemiştir. 2009’dan beri ana dili İngilizce olan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin (English Medium Teachers) gelişine göndermeler yapmışlardır. Bazıları öğretmenlik düşüncesine dinen onaylanmış bir düşünce olarak yaklaşmış, bazıları ise cinsiyet ayrımcılığı içeren bir yaklaşım sergileyerek BAE (UAE) devlet okullarının Emirlik kadınları için uygun bir kariyer sağladığından bahsetmiştir (Nelson, 2005). “BAE’de eğitimin gelişmekte olduğunun farkındaydım ve bunun bir parçası olmak istedim.” cümlesi, iki grup arasında yüksek oranda anlamlı farklılık göstermiştir ($p < 0.01$) (Newby, 2010).

Öğrencilere Abu Dabi’de devlet okullarında ilkokul öğretmenleri için daha net ve etkileyici değişimlerden haberdar olup olmadıkları sorulmuştur. Öğrenci grupları arasında farkındalık düzeylerinde bariz bir farklılık bulunmaktadır. Tüm ilkokullarda Matematik ve Fen derslerinin İngilizce olarak öğretildiğini bilip bilmedikleri sorulduğunda, birinci sınıf öğrencileri %88 gibi bir oranla bildiklerini belirtirken, son sınıf öğrencileri %70 oranında bildiklerini söylemiştir. Ana dil olarak İngilizce konusu öğrenciler için en tartışmalı konu olarak görülmektedir. Araştırmanın dikkat çekici ve beklenmedik sonuçlarından biri, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin bazı maddelerin (*items*) çok az farkında olmalarıdır. Örneğin öğrencilerin sadece %70’i, bakanlık müfredatının (2009’da) değiştirildiğinin ya da (2009’dan beri işe alınan) Batılı İngilizce öğretmenlerinin görev yaptığından haberdardır. Bu durum muhtemelen reformu gerçekleştirenlerle okullar, medya, kariyer rehberleri ve üniversite kabul komisyonlarının aralarındaki yetersiz iletişimden kaynaklanmaktadır.

İki grup arasında, gelişmelerin genç kişilerin öğretmenlik mesleğine ilişkin duygularını etkileme yönünde yüksek oranda anlamlı farklılık bulunmuştur ($p < 0.01$). Birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yarısı eğitimdeki gelişmeler sonucunda öğrencilerin öğretmen olmaya teşvik edildiğini düşünmektedir ve %80’i ülkelerinin, gelişmelerle birlikte, kalkınmasına yardım etme fikrinin onlara esin kaynağı olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bunun aksine son sınıf öğrencilerinin sadece %33’ü, insanların gelişmelerden ilham alabileceklerini düşünmektedir. Verilerden anlaşılacağı gibi genel olarak, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin eğitim reformunun boyutlarıyla ilgili daha pozitif bir görüşe sahip olduklarına ilişkin bir sonuca ulaşılmaktadır. Gelecek planları yönünden, birinci sınıf öğrencileri büyük çoğunlukla (%97) mezun olduktan sonra öğretmenlik yapmayı planladıklarını belirtmiştir (%43’ü ‘biraz tereddütle’ kendilerini öğretmenliğe adanmıştır). Bu maddeye verilen cevapta birinci sınıf ve son sınıf öğrencileri arasındaki fark yüksek oranda anlamlıdır ($p < 0.05$); son sınıf öğrencilerinin sadece %67’si mezun olduklarında öğretmenlik yapacağını söylerken, geri kalan %33 ise ya kararsız olduğunu ya da kesinlikle öğretmenlik yapmayacağını belirtmiştir. BAE’nin gelişmekte olduğu ve bu gelişen sistemin bir parçası olma düşüncesi, öğrencilerin kariyer planlarında kritik önem taşımaktadır. Son sınıf öğrencilerine özellikle şu soru sorulmuştur: “Üniversitede bulunduğunuz zamanlarda yapılan reforma bağlı olarak okulların değişeceğini bilseydiniz (2007/2008-2012), yine de bu programa girmeyi düşünür müydünüz?”. %56’sı bu soruya evet cevabını verirken, %44’ü ya hayır ya da kararsız oldukları cevabını vermiştir. Bu soru ve üniversiteye kaydolma zamanlarında gelişmelerin farkında olma durumu arasında korelasyon bulunmuştur ($r = 0.65$).

Sonuç

Çalışma, son sınıf öğrencilerinin günümüz eğitimsel gelişmeleriyle ilgili farkındalıklarıyla üç öge – öğretmenlik mesleğine ilişkin mutluluk/iyimserlik, öğretmen olma planları, Abu Dabi’deki eğitimsel reformun sonucu olarak diğer gençlerin öğretmenlik

mesleğine ilişkin algıları - arasında doğrudan korelasyon olduğunu göstermektedir. Eğitim reformunun beşinci yılında sürece katılan birinci sınıf öğrencilerine nazaran son sınıf öğrencilerinin Abu Dabi'deki eğitimsel gelişmelerle ilgili farkındalıkları düşüktür, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin hiçbiri önemli gelişmelerin yarısının bile farkında değildir. Gelecekteki üniversite öğrencilerinin öğretmenlikle ilgili bilinçli bir tercih yapmalarını sağlamak için ve öğretmenlik mesleğinin bugünkü durumuna ilişkin öğrencilerin daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmaları için yapılacak çok iş var gibi görünmektedir (Brown, 2012). İngilizce olarak verilen fen ve matematik dersleri eğitim fakültesi ilk sınıf öğrencileri için değil ama son sınıf öğrencileri için tartışmalı bir konu olarak görülmektedir. Bunu öğrencilerin sorulan sorulara verdikleri cevaplardan anlamak mümkündür. Birçok son sınıf öğrencisi de daha önceden farkında olmadıkları IELTS'de belli bir seviyeye ulaşmış olmayı umdukları halde istedikleri seviyeye ulaşamadıkları üzgün olduklarını ifade etmektedir. Reformların sonucunda Arap dilini ve kültürünü kaybetmekten korktuklarını dile getirmektedirler. Onlar bu konuda karar verme yetkisi olanlara karşı tam bir güven duymamaktadırlar (Lunenberg, 2010).

Sonuç olarak, son sınıf öğrencilerinden çok, birçok birinci sınıf öğrencisi Abu Dabi'deki eğitim reformu gelişmelerinden ilham almaktadır ($p < 0.05$) ve gelişen eğitim sisteminde yer almaları için gençler, öğretmenlik mesleğine katılma konusunda teşvik edilmektedir ($p < 0.01$). Birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin neredeyse tümü mezun olduktan sonra mesleklerini yapmayı planladıklarını söylemektedir, fakat son sınıf öğrencilerinde aynı şeyi söyleyen kişi sayısı mezun olacak gurubun sadece üçte ikisidir. Tüm son sınıf öğrencilerinin neredeyse yarısı (yüzde 44'ü) öğrencilik yılları boyunca Abu Dabi'deki eğitim reformunun getirdiklerini tam anlamıyla bilmiş olsalardı öğretmen olmayacaklarını söylemişlerdir. Bu çalışma göstermektedir ki, eğitim reformuyla ilgili gelişmeler hakkında sınırlı bilgiyle öğretmenlik eğitimi sürecine dâhil olan, birçok son sınıf öğrencisi reformdan olumsuz yönde etkilenmiştir ve bu öğretmen adaylarının birçoğu önümüzdeki beş yıl içinde eğitimde nelerin değişeceğini düşünerek mesleklerini yapma konusundaki kararlarını gözden geçireceklerdir. Birinci sınıf öğrencileri ise reform ve reformun gelecekteki sonuçlarına ilişkin genel olarak daha pozitiflerdir.

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