

Original Article (Quantified)

Comparison of the motivational level and professional competence of the students at the entrance of continuous undergraduate courses of Farhangian University with the skilled students of Article 28

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to compare the motivation and professional competence of undergraduate students at Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees. This study had an applied goal and fell under descriptive and survey research. The statistical population consisted of the Farhangian University student-teacher group (94500 people) and Article-28 skill trainees (23000 people), as 240 people were selected as the statistical sample using the stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using standard Malaienejad's Professional Teacher Competencies (2012) and Maslow's Determination of Motivation (1943) questionnaires. Educational expert opinions were used to investigate the face and content validity of the questionnaires and Cronbach's alpha was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using t-independent sample tests in SPSS (version 26) software. Findings showed that regarding dimensions of professional competence, no significant difference was noted between the student-teacher group and Article-28 skill trainees in terms of the dimensions of knowledge-based and skill competences. Meanwhile, the Article-28 skill trainees were found to outperform the student-teacher group in terms of the dimension of attitudinal competence. Findings also showed that regarding dimensions of motivation, no significant difference was noted between the student-teacher group and Article-28 skill trainees in terms of the dimension of social belonging. In contrast, the Article-28 skill trainees were found to outperform the student-teacher group in terms of the dimensions of sense of security, the sense of independence, and self-actualization.

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Extended abstract

Introduction

A successful educational system depends on a trained and skilled human workforce; for this, one key step to educate would-be competent teachers is to understand the components affecting teaching quality. Teaching, in essence, is thought of as a challenging but valuable profession because it contributes to the individual's growth and success in life. A competent and motivated teacher is capable of providing high-quality, effective, lasting, and sustainable education, and plays a key role in making the learning-teaching process effective. Hence, the factors improving or hindering teachers' dissatisfaction and students' performance should be focused seriously (Oco et al., 2022).

The world we are living in is constantly changing and generating new challenges for members of society; also, economic and technological developments in society are generating an increasingly growing responsibility for teachers, who need to be well prepared to employ their educational competence as knowledge and skills. This will certainly help them catch up with the rapidly changing society. Economic developments have led to globalization and stiff competition between schools and the market. This competition requires responsible, rational, and competitive teachers with high levels of motivation and professional competence. On the other hand, with rising economic problems and employment constraints, graduates of various courses with different motivations and competencies have applied for Farhangian University and employment in the Education Organization. For this, following the foundation of Farhangian University in 2011 and the admission of student-teacher groups in various undergraduate courses, as well as the admission of a large number of skill trainees (known as Article-28 skill trainees) to Farhangian University through free employment examinations, the manner of admitting students and promoting teachers' level of motivation and professional competence will play a critical role in the future of the Ministry of Education. This is because teachers play a pivotal role in educating and teaching the future generation of learners. In sum, the present study mainly aimed to compare the motivational level and professional competence of student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University undergraduate courses and Article-28 skill trainees, as well as ways to promote these attributes.

Theoretical Foundations

Today, unlike a century ago, to be employed as a teacher is in no way unplanned and haphazard, and teaching in most developed educational systems requires educational degrees and professional competence. In recent years, teachers' professional competence has been at the forefront of scientific discussions and educational policy-making processes (Leibur et al., 2021). Teacher competence refers to his/her ability to satisfactorily meet professional teaching needs and use a coherent set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will characterize his/her behavior (Nijveldt et al., 2015). In the same way, the concept of motivation refers to a living organism's tendency to present some regular activities varying from the lowest level, i.e., sleeping to the highest level, i.e., awakening, with the outcome of the behavior and the type of motivation alternately influencing the organism (Alipour Thabit Rai, 2021). Teacher motivation is seen as a crucial factor in constantly improving the school and classroom efficacy, as school success is largely dependent on teachers' tendency to meet school expectations and fulfill pre-determined task. Teacher motivation refers to their tendency to actively participate in the education process and positively engage in the school setting. This enables teachers to produce their best performance, and consequently, work in favor of students, parents, and society (Wu, 2024).

In the study "Comparing the Competence of Newly Employed Teachers Through Four-Year Courses and the Competence of Article-28-Trained Teachers Based on the Farhangian

University's Statute from the Perspective of Isfahan's School Principals", Rafiei Afosi et al. (2024) demonstrated that for the principals, the newly-employed teachers, recruited through four-year courses, were more competent than the ones employed based on Article-28 of the Farhangian University's statute.

In a study, Hosseinia et al. (2019) investigated the professional competence of English teachers at public schools and language institutes, concluding there was a significant difference in the professional competence of English language teachers at public schools and those at language institutes, with language institute teachers enjoying a higher professional competence.

In the study "Comparing the Motivation and Occupational Satisfaction of Teachers at Various Schools across Kazakhstan", Zhundybayeva et al. (2024) found that teachers with a higher level of occupational satisfaction were more motivated to teach than their counterparts.

In the study "Comparing the Self-Efficacy, Professional Commitment, and Motivation of Newly-Employed Teachers Based on Recruitment Processes (Graduates of Farhangian University and of the Article-28 Skill Training program)", Sahraei Sarmezdeh & Salehi (2021) found that the professional commitment and teaching motivation of the newly-employed teachers graduated from Farhangian University, were significantly higher than those of the teachers graduated from the Article-28 process.

Methodology

This study had an applied goal and fell under descriptive and survey research. The statistical population consisted of all Farhangian University student-teacher population (94500) and Article-28 skill trainees (23000), as 240 people were selected as the statistical sample using the stratified random sampling method. Data were collected by standard Malaienejad's Professional Teacher Competence (2012) ($\alpha = 0.861$) and Maslow's Determination of Motivation (1943) ($\alpha = 0.97$) Questionnaires. Educational expert opinions were used to investigate the face and content validity of the questionnaires and Cronbach's alpha was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire, suggesting the questionnaires had significantly strong reliability. The data were also analyzed by SPSS software and investigated using statistical descriptive (the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, Standard Deviation, and Means) and inferential (independent t-test) methods.

Findings

At the statistical descriptive level, all numerical variables had a mean of greater than 3, indicating the desirability of the variables for the respondents. Also, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test's significance of all the variables under study was greater than 0.05, indicating the variables were normally distributed. Parametric tests were therefore used to test the study hypotheses.

At the statistical inferential level, regarding the first question *Is there a difference in dimensions of professional competence between student-teacher groups, admitted to undergraduate courses of Farhangian University, and Article-28 skill trainees?* it was found that there was no significant difference between the scores of the dimensions of professional competence, including cognitive competence (sig.=0.539) and skill competence (sig.=0.949) between student-teachers groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$). There was a significant difference, however, between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$) in the dimension of attitudinal competence. The comparison of the means showed that Article-28 skill trainees' attitudinal competence (with a mean of 4.576) was



greater than that of the student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University (with a mean of 4.380).

Regarding the second question *Is there a difference in levels of motivations between student-teacher groups, admitted to undergraduate courses of Farhangian University, and Article-28 skill trainees?* It was found that there was no significant difference between the scores of the dimensions of motivation, including the sense of security (sig.=0.090) and social belonging (sig.= 0.618) between student-teachers groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$). There was a significant difference, however, between the scores of the sense of respect (sig.=0.001), the sense of independence (sig.=0.005), and self-actualization (sig.=0.003) between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$). The comparison of the means showed that Article-28 skill trainees' sense of respect (with a mean of 3.833), sense of independence (with a mean of 4.017), and self-actualization (with a mean of 4.97) were greater than those of the student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University (with a mean of 4.380).

Discussion and Conclusion

The response to the first study question showed no significant difference between scores of professional competences, including cognitive competence and skill competence between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$). There was a significant difference, however, between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$) in the dimension of attitudinal competence, with the latter group having a greater attitudinal competence than the former group. It is concluded that the findings of this study were in line with those of studies by Rafiei Afosi et al. (2024) and Hosseinia et al. (2019).

Meanwhile, the independent t-test was used to examine the differences in the dimensions of motivation between student-teacher groups at Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees. It was found that there was no significant difference between the scores of motivation levels, including the sense of security and social belonging between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$).

There was a significant difference, however, between the scores of the sense of respect, the sense of independence, and self-actualization between student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University and Article-28 skill trainees, at the 95% level ($p \geq 0.05$). The comparison of the means showed that Article-28 skill trainees' sense of respect, sense of independence, and self-actualization were greater than those of the student-teacher groups admitted to Farhangian University. It is concluded that the findings of this study were in line with those of Sahraei Sarmezdeh & Salehi (2021) and Zhundybayeva et al., (2024).

The findings of this study recommend officials and professors of Farhangian University and other universities the following:

To improve the professional competence of teachers:

- Hold educational and training courses and workshops; establish coaching programs via guidance and counseling by more experienced teachers to newly-employed teachers; support teachers to continue their studies and gain higher degrees; train teachers to use new technologies and digital educational programs; and establish an atmosphere for exchanging experiences with and learning from colleagues through group sessions and common workshops.



To improve skill trainees' and student-teacher group's levels of motivation:

- Identify and acknowledge their good performance; provide educational courses; hold seminars and workshops to update teachers' skills and knowledge; improve the physical and mental conditions of the working environment; and encourage teachers to engage in school affairs and educational curricula.