The Relationship between Job Structure, Burnout, and Coping Methods among Public School County Bus Drivers, Bus Aides, Mechanics, and Clerical Workers

by Monica Restrepo, Summer 2013
Chair: Dr. Marc Weinstein;
Committee: Drs. Thomas Reio,
Dawn Addy, and Alexis McKenney

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the structure of jobs and burnout, and to assess to what extent, if any, this relationship was moderated by individual coping methods. This study was supported by the Karasek's (1998) Job Demand-Control-Support theory of work stress as well as Maslach and Leiter's (1993) theory of burnout. Coping was examined as a moderator based on the conceptualization of Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

Two overall overarching questions framed this study: (a) What is the relationship between job structure, as operationalized by job title, and burnout across different occupations in support services in a large municipal school district? and (b) To what extent do individual differences in coping methods moderate this relationship?

This study was a cross-sectional study of county public school bus drivers, bus aides, mechanics, and clerical workers ($N = 253$) at three bus depot locations within the same district using validated survey instruments for data collection. Hypotheses were tested using simultaneous and moderated regression analyses.

Findings indicated that there were statistically significant theoretically and empirically relevant relationships among the variables of interest; job demands, job control, burnout, and ways of coping. There was a relationship between job title and physical job demands. There was no evidence to support a relationship between job title and psychological demands. Furthermore, there was a relationship between physical demands, emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment; key indicators of burnout.

Results showed significant correlations between individual ways of coping as a moderator between job structure, operationalized by job title, and individual employee burnout, adding empirical evidence to the occupational stress literature. Based on the findings, there are implications for theory, research, and practice. For theory and research, the findings suggest the importance of incorporating transactional models in the study of occupational stress. In the area of practice, the findings highlight the importance of enriching jobs, increasing job control, and providing individual-level training related to stress reduction.

Implications for Practice

HRD professionals can use the results of this study to support creating targeted individual-oriented interventions, such as wellness programs and coaching in coping strategies, as well as organization-oriented interventions, such as work environment and job redesign.

A practical plan may include a 12-week comprehensive wellness program, with a two-week hiatus from fixed workouts and meetings after the first six weeks, and then completion of the program. The program would incorporate daily, individualized workout schedules, as well as nutrition education and one-on-one counseling. Sessions on how to cope with stressors may also be a valuable tool in helping to change negatively perceived job structure. The program may consist of voluntary small groups of 8-10 for one hour, once a week for six weeks with a financial reward upon completion.

Organizational-oriented interventions need to have an "individually tailored focus" (Van der Klink et al., 2001, p. 275) to be successful. For example, a planned intervention to help better the work environment would have to include feedback from all employees, not just administrators or union leaders. As far as job redesign interventions, HRD professionals would be wise to group employees by job title to hear specific issues of each. Each of the job titles would be targeted over a three-week period with interviews, anonymous surveys, and observations to build a comprehensive basis from which to launch effective changes that each job title would relate to; as often organizational job redesign is too general for the employee to feel an applicable change (Van der Klink et al., 2001).

Microteaching Lesson Study: Mentor Interaction Structure and its Relation to Elementary Preservice Mathematics Teacher Knowledge Development

by Roxanne Molina, Spring 2012
Chair: Dr. Maria Fernandez;
Committee: Drs. Laura Dinehart,
George O'Brien and Joan Wynne

Abstract

This study investigated Microteaching Lesson Study (MLS) and three possible MLS mentor interaction structures during the debriefing sessions in relation to elementary preservice teacher development of knowledge for teaching. One hundred three elementary preservice teachers enrolled in five different sections of a mathematics methods course at a southern urban university were part of the study. This included 72 participants who completed MLS across three different mentor interaction structures as part of their course requirements and 31 elementary preservice teachers who did not complete MLS as part of their methods course and served as a comparison group for a portion of the study. A sequential mixed-methods research design was used to analyze the relationship between MLS mentor interaction structure and growth in preservice teachers' mathematics teacher knowledge. Data sources included pre and post assessments, group developed lesson plans and final reports, a feedback survey with Likert-type and open-ended questions, and transcripts of audio-recorded debriefing sessions. The pre and post assessments were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the Likert-type feedback survey questions. Group MLS lesson plans, final reports, and transcripts of debriefing sessions along with the open-ended questions from the feedback survey were coded in a three-step process as described by Miles and Huberman (1994).

In alignment with findings from Fernandez (2005, 2010), elementary preservice teachers participating in MLS grew in content knowledge related to MLS topics taught by one another. Results from the analysis of pre and post content knowledge assessments revealed that participants grew in their understanding of the mathematics topics taught during MLS, regardless of their mentor interaction structure and when compared to the participants who did not complete MLS in their methods course. Findings from the analysis of lesson plans for growth in pedagogical content knowledge revealed the most growth in this area occurred for participants assigned to the interaction structure in which the MLS mentor participated in the first two debriefing sessions. Analysis of the transcripts of the discourse during the debriefing sessions and the feedback surveys support the finding that the elementary preservice teachers assigned to the interaction structure in which the MLS mentor participated in the first and second debriefing sessions benefited more from the MLS experience when compared to elementary preservice teachers assigned to the other two interaction structures (MLS mentor participated in only the first debriefing session and MLS mentor participated in only the last debriefing session).

Implications for Practice

Through the completion of this study, a rubric for analyzing lesson plans was developed based on Graeber's (1999) framework for pedagogical content knowledge. This rubric concretizes Graber's framework in ways that may be useful for researchers, project evaluators, mathematics educators, professional development facilitators and others that seek to use lesson plans to record individuals' levels of mathematical pedagogical content knowledge or assess growth in individuals' mathematical pedagogical content knowledge while partaking in professional learning experiences and projects. Through the use of the rubric, preservice and practicing teachers may also reflect on their use of pedagogical content knowledge in their own lessons and assess their own ability to plan mathematics lessons that are rich in terms of pedagogical content knowledge.

A Q Factor Analysis of College Undergraduate Students' Study Behaviors

by Yang Yang, Summer 2011
Chair: Dr. Leonard Bliss;
Committee: Drs. Laura Dinehart,
Mohammed Farouk and Thomas Reio

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better understand the study behaviors and habits of university undergraduate students. It was designed to determine whether undergraduate students could be grouped based on their

self-reported study behaviors and if any grouping system could be determined, whether group membership was related to students' academic achievement.

A total of 152 undergraduate students voluntarily participated in the current study by completing the Study Behavior Inventory instrument. The Q factor analysis technique using principal components extraction with varimax rotation to examine the participants in relation to each other and to detect a pattern of intercorrelations among participants based on their self-reported study behaviors.

The Q factor analysis yielded a two-factor structure representing two distinct student types among participants regarding their study behaviors. The first student type describes proactive learners who organize both their study materials and study time well. Type 1 students are labeled "Proactive Learners with Well-Organized Study Behaviors." The second type represents students who are poorly organized as well as being very likely to procrastinate. Type 2 students are labeled "Disorganized Procrastinators."

Hierarchical linear regression was employed to examine the relationship between student type and academic achievement as measured by current grade point averages (GPAs). The results showed significant differences in GPAs between Type 1 and Type 2 students. Student type was found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement beyond and above students' attribute variables including sex, age, major, and enrollment status. The study has several implications for educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in terms of improving college students' learning behaviors and outcomes.

Implications for Practice

The findings from the current study have provided both students and educators with valuable information concerning students' study behavior patterns. Some measure of students' study behaviors should be implemented as soon as students enter higher educational institutions. The results of such measurement would inform students about the strengths and weaknesses in their learning habits as well as the potential academic performances associated with them.

Understanding students' learning behavior patterns allows educators to pay special attention to the group of students who demonstrate ineffective study behaviors and habits, such as poor time management, procrastination, and lack of preparation in and review of the course contents.

Because study behavioral patterns are very likely to be associated with poor academic performance, as found in the current study and the literature (Eilam & Aharon, 2003; George et al., 2008; Whipp & Chiarelli 2004), knowledge of these patterns could help identify students who are at risk for academic failure.

At the institutional level, colleges and universities should provide training in the development and application of the effective study behaviors as part of the first-year experience programs. Cuesta (2007) has demonstrated that study behaviors can be taught to college students, which led to both more effective study behaviors and better academic performance. Such training programs could target students' weaknesses and allow them to practice effective learning behaviors until they eventually internalize these newly learned behaviors. By acquiring effective learning behaviors early on in college, students are more likely to stay in college, make adequate academic progress, and graduate in a timely fashion.

The Relationship of Culturally Responsive Instruction and the Reading Comprehension and Attitude of Struggling Urban Adolescent Readers

by Rona Moore, Summer 2013
Chair: Dr. Joyce Fine;
Committee: Drs. Joan Wynne,
Linda Spears-Bunton, and Paulette Johnson

Abstract

Culturally responsive instruction refers to the identification of relevant cultural aspects of students' lives and infusion of these into the curriculum. This instructional approach assumes that a culturally appropriate curriculum can potentially motivate, engage, and lead students to higher rates of achievement.

This quasi-experimental study *(N=44)* investigated the relationship of culturally responsive instruction and the reading comprehension and attitude of struggling urban

adolescent readers. The study incorporated the use of culturally responsive instruction using culturally relevant literature (CRL), the Bluford Series Novels, as authentic texts of instruction. Participants were seventh grade reading students at a Title I middle school in South Florida.

After a baseline period, two different classes were taught for 8 weeks using different methods. One class formed the experimental group ($n = 22$) and the other class formed the comparison group ($n = 22$). The CRI curriculum for the experimental group embraced the socio-cultural perspective through the use of small discussion groups in which students read and constructed meaning with peers through interaction with the Bluford Series Novels; gave written responses to multiple strategies according to SCRAP – **S**ummarize, **C**onnect, **R**eflect, **A**sk Questions, **P**redict; responded to literal and inferential questions, while at the same time validating their responses through evidence from the text. The Read XL (basal reader) curriculum of the comparison group utilized a traditional form of instruction which incorporated the reading of passages followed by responses to comprehension questions, and teacher-led whole group discussion.

The main sources of data were collected from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR), and the Rhody Secondary Reading Attitude Assessment. Statistical analyses were performed using Repeated Measures ANOVAs. Findings from the study revealed that the experimental participants' reading attitudes and FAIR comprehension scores increased when compared to the comparison group. Overall, the results from the study revealed that culturally responsive instruction can potentially foster reading comprehension and a more positive attitude towards reading. However, a replication of this study in other settings with a larger, more randomized sample and greater ethnic variation is needed to make full generalizations.

Implications for Practice

The results of this quasi-experimental research have important implications for the practice of teaching reading. Notably, the findings suggest that the reading of high interest and culturally relevant text, complemented with literature discussion groups can improve the reading comprehension and reading attitudes of struggling adolescent readers. Educators should look at the benefits of utilizing similar types of novels that are relevant to students' interests and lives for classroom reading instruction and incorporating similar activities as typified in this study as opposed to (1) utilizing novels that are on topics of less interest and (2) focusing on isolated reading skills deemed necessary to be successful on standardized tests.

The use of literature discussion groups may potentially give students a sense of voice, autonomy and liberation to engage in critical discourse while at the same time learn from their peers and construct meaning in a social context. Educators should incorporate activities in the classroom that give students an opportunity to engage in discussion in various ways – debate, Socratic Seminar, small-group discussion, fish bowl discussion, philosophical chair – in an effort to build their speaking skills.

The Development of Rubrics to Measure Undergraduate Students' Global Awareness and Global Perspective: A Validity Study

by Stephanie Doscher, Spring 2012
Chair: Dr. Hilary Landorf;
Committee: Drs. Peter Cistone,
Adriana McEachern and Joan Wynne

Abstract

Higher education institutions across the United States have developed global learning initiatives to support student achievement of global awareness and global perspective, but assessment options for these outcomes are extremely limited. A review of research for a global learning initiative at a large, Hispanic-serving, urban, public, research university in South Florida found a lack of instruments designed to measure global awareness and global perspective in the context of an authentic performance assessment.

This quasi-experimental study explored the development of two rubrics for the global learning initiative and the extent to which evidence supported the rubrics' validity and reliability. One holistic rubric was developed to measure students' global awareness and the second to measure their global perspective. The study utilized a pretest/posttest nonequivalent group design. Multiple linear regression was used to ascertain the rubrics' ability to discern and compare average learning gains of undergraduate students enrolled in two global learning courses and students enrolled in two non-global learning courses.

Parallel pretest/posttest forms of the performance task required students to respond to two open-ended questions, aligned with the learning outcomes, concerning a complex case narrative. Trained faculty raters read responses and used the rubrics to measure students' global awareness and perspective. Reliability was tested by calculating the rates of agreement among raters.

Evidence supported the finding that the global awareness and global perspective rubrics yielded scores that were highly reliable measures of students' development of these learning outcomes. Chi-square tests of frequency found significant rates of inter- rater agreement exceeding the study's .80 minimum requirement. Evidence also supported the finding that the rubrics yielded scores that were valid measures of students' global awareness and global perspective. Regression analyses found little evidence of main effects; however, post hoc analyses revealed a significant interaction between global awareness pretest scores and the treatment, the global learning course. Significant interaction was also found between global perspective pretest scores and the treatment. These crossover interactions supported the finding that the global awareness and global perspective rubrics could be used to detect learning differences between the treatment and control groups as well as differences within the treatment group.

Implications for Practice

The results generated practical implications for global learning assessment and instruction. These implications were derived on the basis of their consistency with the results and with literature on global learning and assessment.

The rubrics used in this study were developed as a pre/post student learning assessment for incoming freshmen, transfers, and graduating seniors participating in a university global learning initiative. However, the global awareness and global perspective rubrics could be used to assess student learning through a wide variety of performance tasks, across the entire span of the curriculum, and at the course, program, and entrance/graduation levels. The rubrics could also be used for valid peer- and self-

assessment to contribute to increased global learning. When utilized for these purposes, rubrics can be used not only as assessment tools, but also as teaching and learning tools (Hafner & Hafner, 2003).

Another implication concerns faculty members utilizing global awareness and global perspective pretest scores to differentiate pedagogy and content to maximize student learning. Faculty could use enrolled students' pretest averages to make pedagogical decisions concerning the appropriate number and pacing of highly structured vs. low structured learning activities throughout the course and the amount of time allowed for students to complete these tasks (Cronbach & Snow, 1977; Snow, 1989). Pretest scores could be used to organize diverse learning groups composed of students with varying aptitude or readiness for global awareness and global perspective.

GRE as a Predictor of Graduate Student Success at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education

by Katherine Perez, Spring 2011
Chair: Dr. Leonard Bliss;
Committee: Drs. Roger Gonzalez,
Thomas Reio and Janice Sandiford

Abstract

Accurately predicting the success of graduate students is an important aspect of determining which students should be admitted into graduate programs. The GRE is a pivotal factor to examine because it is one of the most widely used criteria for graduate school admission. Even though the GRE is advertised as an accurate tool for predicting first year graduate GPA, there is a lack of research on long term success factors such as time to degree and graduate rate (Luthy, 1996; Powers, 2004). Furthermore, because most studies have low minority sample sizes, the validity of the GRE may not be the same across all groups (ETS, 2008b; Kuncel, Hezlett, & Ones, 2001). Another gap in GRE studies is that few researchers analyze student characteristics, which may alter or moderate the prediction validity of the GRE. Thus, student characteristics such as degree of academic involvement, mentorship interactions,

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and other academic and social experiences have not been widely examined in this context. These gaps in the analysis of GRE validity are especially relevant given the high attrition rates within some graduate programs (e.g., an estimated 68% of doctoral students never complete their programs in urban universities; Lovitts, 2001).

A sequential mixed-methods design was used to answer the research questions in two phases. The quantitative phase used student data files to analyze the relationship of two success variables (graduation rate and graduate GPA) to the GRE scores as well as other academic and demographic graduate student characteristics. The qualitative phase served to complement the first phase by describing a wider range of characteristics from the 11 graduate students who were interviewed.

Both proximal and distal moderators influence student behaviors and success in graduate school. In the first phase of the study, the GRE was the distal facilitator under analysis. Findings suggested that both the GRE Quantitative and the GRE Verbal were predictors of success for master's students, but the GRE Quantitative was not predictive of success for doctoral students. Other student characteristics such as demographic variables and disciplinary area were also predictors of success for the population of students studied. In the second phase of the study, it was inconclusive whether the GRE was predictive of graduate student success; though it did influence access to graduate programs. Furthermore, proximal moderators such as student involvement, faculty/peer interactions, motivational factors, and program structure were perceived to be facilitators and/or detractors for success.

Implications for Practice

This study has various implications for policy change in higher education admission standards and procedures and for future research in assessment validity. First of all, as also suggested by the ETS, the GRE should not be the only measure of success used in determining admission to graduate school (ETS, 2008b). In fact, the GRE Q may not be a strong predictor of success for doctoral students. It is recommended that graduate programs consider other measures of success along with the GRE. This may help in providing a broader picture on the candidates applying for admission.

The Effects of the Ethic of Care in an All-Boys School from 1903-1974

by Donald Cramp, Fall 2011
Chair: Dr. Peter Cistone;
Committee: Drs. Erskine Dottin,
George O'Brien and Tonette Rocco

Abstract

Nel Noddings' 1984 publication, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* was the first formal introduction of the concept of an "ethic of care." It is a concept that stresses the importance of compassion in any relationship. For the purpose of this dissertation, the ethic of care was studied in a specific educational community.

This research focused on the role of care ethics in a secondary school (The Ransom School for Boys) from 1903 to 1974. The researcher identified this school as one that operated with an ethic of care and collected and analyzed data from historical school documents as well as from 60-90 minute individual interviews with six alumni, five retired faculty, and two administrators.

The case study addressed how students and faculty experienced care ethics within the school and how it has been maintained throughout the adult lives of alumni. An a priori coding rubric was used to examine the presence of care ethics at the Ransom School for Boys and in the adult lives of its alumni. This rubric was generated using information taken from the literature review and encompasses 36 different words to identify the presence of care ethics.

The primary research question was: How have alumni incorporated care ethics into their personal and professional lives? Secondary questions included: How did the ethic of care present itself over the span of 71 years? Was character education part of the formal curriculum at the Ransom School? Was character education part of the hidden curriculum at the Ransom School? Did the presence of care ethics support the values being taught in the home?

While there has been research done on the importance of care ethics in an educational institution, the research is void of direct evidence associated with care ethics in a school community, specifically, an all-boys, private school. Through deductive analysis, care ethics was found to be present and utilized at the school. The interviews and historical documents suggested that moral education was an integral part of the informal curriculum and helped to integrate the ethic of care within the community.

Implications for Practice

Throughout the data collection process, a number of common themes were identified that indicated the best practices for educational institutions interested in creating and strengthening the role care ethics can play in its community. In essence, four elements must be present if a school wishes to generate and foster the ethical paradigm of care: (a) consistent modeling by school leadership, (b) supportive behavior by the school leadership towards faculty and students, (c) moral education as an integral part of the informal curriculum, and (d) consistent and open communication with school leadership to inspire faculty and create belief in the goals of the school.

The Relationship of Instructor Technical Literacy to the Academic Performance of Students in Career Academies

by Jorge Gomez, Summer 2013
Chair: Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr.;
Committee: Drs. Tonette Rocco,
Dawn Addy, and Erskine Dottin

Abstract

Career Academy instructors' technical literacy is vital to the academic success of students. This nonexperimental ex post facto study examined the relationships between the level of technical literacy of instructors in career

academies and student academic performance. It was also undertaken to explore the relationship between the pedagogical training of instructors and the academic performance of students.

Out of a heterogeneous population of 564 teachers in six schools, 136 teachers (26.0 %) responded to an online survey designed to gather demographic and teaching experience data. Each demographic item was linked by researchers to teachers' technology use in the classroom. Student achievement was measured by student learning gains as assessed by the reading section of the FCAT from the previous to the present school year.

Linear and hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine the research questions. To clarify the possibility of teacher gender and teacher race/ethnic group differences by research variable, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted. As revealed by the ANOVA results, there were not statistically significant group differences in any of the research variables by teacher gender or teacher race/ethnicity. Greater student learning gains were associated with greater teacher technical expertise integrating computers and technology into the classroom, even after controlling for teacher attitude towards computers. Neither teacher attitude toward technology integration nor years of experience in integrating computers into the curriculum significantly predicted student learning gains in the regression models.

Implications for Practice

The findings suggest that identifying teacher levels of technical literacy may help improve student academic performance by facilitating professional development strategies. Teacher professional development programs could benefit by increasing their offerings to include more computer and information communication technology courses. Teacher preparation programs could benefit as well by including technical literacy as part of their curriculum. Finally, state certification requirements could be expanded to include formal surveys to assess teacher use of technology.