The efficiency of a University teaching and learning training program (UTL) on developing the teaching competencies of the teaching staff at AlImam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

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Key Words

UTL, training program, active learning, Saudi Arabia, University, Teaching, Learning, teaching staff

Abstract

This study aimed at presenting the University Teaching and Learning training program UTL and determining the efficiency of the UTL on developing the teaching competencies of the teaching staff at Al Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia. The study subjects were (30) female university instructors from AL Imam University. A training group of university instructors was studied at the beginning of their training and one year later. Evidence is reported of changes over time relating to the teaching competencies performance scale improved by the researchers focusing on six competencies; Lecture Planning, Lecture Orientation, Teaching the Lecture, Asking Questions, Course Materials, and Classroom Management. The current study reports evidence of a range of positive changes in instructors' teaching competencies in the training group. The results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the performance of the training group before and after training on the pre and post-observation scale, favoring to the post –observation in improving the teaching competencies. The study recommends adopting the UTL training program used in this study to develop the teaching competencies of instructors in Saudi Universities. It also recommends organizing the content of the university text books to cope with the creative learning forms.

Introduction

University teacher education is now recognized in every university in Saudi Arabia and is becoming increasingly common in many other countries around. From being small in scale, low in credibility and poorly supported, university teacher education is now well rooted in many institutions, is often compulsory and is sometimes linked to experimentation or occupation.

The term "University Teacher Education" or training of university teachers often involves relatively sophisticated processes underpinned by theoretical models of professional development (Schon, 1987) and change over time in teachers' conceptions of teaching (Trigwell, 1994). The main objective of these training programs is to enhance the teachers' performance and help them acquire new knowledge and skills.

According to Salleh (1995), Teacher education training programs are widely used to keep teachers up-to-date on various educational areas. These programs are commonly used as means to enforce responsible self-renewal for teachers and institutions. Trainers are often articulate about what they are trying to achieve and sophisticated about their training methods, even if they are not yet sophisticated about finding out whether they are successful.

Dilts (2002) indicates that teacher education programs help teachers: (i) to be better able to handle difficult students, to develop a great understanding of different learning styles; (ii) to enhance learners' self-esteem and therefore their desire for positive reinforcement; and (ii) to become more creative, imaginative and stimulating in their presentation. Teacher education take

dissimilar styles; Nielson (1979) stated that the teacher education programs take different forms, such as training workshops, courses offered by the educational institutions or local agencies where the teachers work, or even courses offered by the institutions of higher education, such as college course work (Monjan and Gassner, 1979; Killoran, 2001).Furthermore, UTL include workshops, curriculum development sessions, peer observation, independent study, and self-assessment.

According to Jones and Lowe (1990) the effective training programs should have at least two potential outcomes: (i) change of teachers' classroom practice, and (ii) change in teachers' belief and attitudes. At the college level, it might include specific training and educational courses in counseling. These techniques are typical short-term strategies used for changing individual instructors' teaching methods and attitudes.

In fact, the importance of teacher preparation has generally emerged because it prepares teachers and provides them with the competencies necessary for achieving success in their work. This movement has had an enormous effect in preparing teachers for teaching. The university teacher education movement came as a response to traditional educational methodologies used in university teaching. This movement arose as a resent of criticism directed towards traditional teacher educational methodologies where outputs depended on the amount of knowledge and the ability to retrieve it (Huizen, 2005). The teachers' education training programs depend on analyzing the learning/teaching process into a group of competencies that every teacher must acquire, in order to increase his/her chances of successful achievement of objectives (King, 2001). Borich (1977) categorizes teacher training programs based on competencies into three types: (i) knowledge competencies (where a knowledge competency means a cognitive understanding derived from the instruction process or subject-matter content that the teacher is expected to demonstrate); (ii) performance competencies (which are the behaviors the teachers demonstrate in the classroom,); and (iii) consequence competencies (which are the outcome of the teaching and learning process between the teacher and his students). On the other hand, Houston (cited in Saeed and Mahmood, 2002) categorizes teaching competencies into five stages: (i) cognitive competencies, which are related to knowledge and intellectual skills and abilities that are expected of the learners; (ii) performance competencies, in which the learner demonstrates that he or she can do something; (iii) consequence competencies, to bring change to others; (iv) affective competencies, which are expected attitude and values that tend to resist the specificity and are more difficult to assess than the first three stages; (v) exploratory competencies, which includes activities that provide opportunities for teachers to learn about teaching. Furthermore, for Lerner (2003), the teachers in the university lecture room are in need of two kinds of competencies: (i) competencies in knowledge and skills, which include the professional knowledge, and (ii) competencies in human relationship abilities, such as cooperation, which requires teachers to be helpful, deferential, empathic, and open. The UTL requires competencies in assessment and diagnosis, curriculum, teaching practices, managing student behaviors, planning the teaching and learning environment, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Ismail (2009) measured the effect of a training module in improving knowledge competencies for special education teachers in Jordan. The module consisted of 10 training sessions, covered three domains, namely, planning, instruction and classroom management, and evaluation competencies. The sample of the study consisted of 50 teachers. The participants of the sample were distributed into two equal groups, with 25 teachers in each group. The teachers in the experimental group were attached with the training module for five weeks; whereas the teachers in the control group were exposed for the same period to the conventional training

adopted by the Ministry of Education in Jordan. The results of (ANCOVA) revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the means of the two groups' means on the post-achievement test, favoring to the experimental group.

Bataineh (2010) identified the core competencies belonging to general education teachers in Jordan. The sample of study consisted of 320 male and female teachers. The results revealed that teachers' competencies of classroom management on a subscale ranked first, and those teachers' competencies of definitions, characteristics, assessing, and rights of students came in the last rank. The results also indicated that there are significant differences due to the interaction between gender and teaching experience.

The results of Brownell (2005) has vividly shown that teachers need specific competencies for the advancement of their knowledge and skills, which are program characteristics that include extensive field experience, collaboration, and program evaluation, although the ways in which programs incorporated these components varied. In another empirical study, Gilberts and Lignugaris- Kraft (1997) search for classroom management competencies address to teacher ability to manage the educational environment, and directly manage and assess students' classroom behavior. In that study classroom management competencies are divided into four categories address the educational environment: (i) arrangement of the physical environment to facilitate student management, (ii) formulation of a standard for student behavior in the classroom, and two categories address teachers' management and behavioral assessment; (iii) implementation of strategies to increase appropriate behavior or reduce inappropriate behavior, and (iv) assessing the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. In these programs, teacher educators used a variety of strategies to help students examine their beliefs about instruction; integrate the knowledge; acquire academic, social and cultural knowledge about their students; and reflect on the impact of their instruction.

In a detailed training programme designed explicitly to change teachers' conceptions of teaching, UTL has demonstrated this chain of influence through training goals and training processes, to teachers' approaches and to their students' approaches. UTL has oriented towards changing the teachers' approach to teaching they can, therefore, if they are successful, this will improve both student learning processes and outcomes.

Method
Population and Sample

The population of the study composes (120) female university instructors participated in the UTL program at Imam University during the period from 2009 till the end of the year 2013. They are distributed within (8) colleges. The sample of the study consisted of 26 female instructors. All the twenty six instructors were chosen according to the stratified random sampling. The teachers in the experimental group enrolled into the UTL training program module based on instructional competencies for five-weeks.

Tools

In order to measure the level of teaching competencies among the training instructors, a classroom observation checklist was developed by the researchers based on the UTL teaching competencies. The checklist was given to a group of referees for validation and modification purposes. The final version of checklist was categorized into six competencies; Lecture Planning, Lecture Orientation, Teaching the Lecture, Asking Questions, Course Materials, and Classroom Management. The inter-raters reliability is the constancy of the agreement and disagreement among the observers concerning the observed subjects, for testing the inter-raters reliability in

this study, ten university instructors (pilot study) were randomly selected and each was observed by four (4) different observers. The overall percentage of the inter-raters reliability (0.78), which is a reasonably satisfactory percentage.

This research reports the administration of a scale observation checklist to the training instructors. The observation checklist was administered twice: once as near as practicable to the beginning of the UTL training program and the trainee teachers' own course, and once approximately one year later, after the training was completed.

The observation checklists were machine read, data were collected and an individual report produced for each training instructor, showing their own scores before and after training in the UTL program. For the analyses undertaken below the entire training group data are combined. What matters here are any differences between the teaching competencies of the training groups in terms of the size or direction of change between before and after participating in UTL. The observation checklist consists of six competencies: Lecture Planning, Lecture Orientation, Teaching the Lecture, Asking Questions, Course Materials, and Classroom Management.

Objectives of the study

The current study aims at:

-Presenting the University Teaching and Learning training program UTL to develop the teaching competencies in Imam University.

-Finding out the extent of efficiency of UTL on developing teaching competencies among the teaching staff at Imam University.

Questions of the study

This study attempts to answer the following two questions:-

1- What is the University Teaching Learning training program UTL?
2- To what extent is the efficiency of the UTL training program on the development of the teaching competencies of the teaching staff at Imam University in Saudi Arabia?

Importance of the study

The importance of this study is represented by the following:

-It may suggest a full program about university teaching competencies and teaching skills during the service to train teaching staff members in Saudi universities which will be ended by giving them a professional specialized certificate.

- The study may help teaching staff members in Saudi universities to develop modern teaching competencies and improve them.

-It may help the people who are intended to improve university`s curricula and allow the use of the new active learning methods and encourage it through improving the teaching competencies of their teaching staff.

-It may help researchers to do more researches about the efficiency of training programs which focus on teaching competencies at universities.

Findings and Discussion

Question Number One: What is the University Teaching and Learning training program UTL? The University Teaching and Learning training program (UTL) is a professional development program for university teachers designed to enhance teaching effectiveness and provide an educational context for ongoing career development. It integrates key concepts of teaching and learning, teaching strategies and skills, reflection and the experience of actual

teaching within a cooperative and scholarly learning environment. UTL offers immediate practical support as well as a framework for ongoing reflective practice and further development or study. Topics include teaching for active learning; assessment; group work; e-Teaching; teaching as part of an academic career; and teaching in a culturally diverse university. The teaching practice component brings together theory and practice in higher education as participants plan and implements a short teaching and learning episode. Reflective practice, collegiality in professional development, the application of research and other educational literature to inform teaching, and the use of feedback to improve teaching are emphasized as participants jointly explore pertinent issues, engage with relevant research and literature, undertake peer observation of teaching, respond to student evaluations, develop their teaching philosophy, and explore an aspect of their teaching practice through an independent project.

UTL consists of two units: Unit1: Building Blocks. A five-day intensive on foundational ideas and processes in teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation in higher education. Unit2: Peer Observation. A structured set of observations of teaching.

Through active participation in UTL, instructors were able to apply their developing understanding of learners and learning to their teaching; design and implement effective learning experiences for their students; reflect upon feedback from students and colleagues in order to evaluate and improve their teaching practice; access and use University policies and guidelines relevant to teaching, learning and assessment; access and utilize literature on teaching, learning and assessment in higher education; value and share their own and their colleagues' experiences and knowledge of teaching; conduct a structured and scholarly exploration of an aspect of teaching and learning in their own context.

UTL was designed to help participants become more informed about teaching and learning in higher education, familiar with critical issues, and able to apply developing knowledge and insights to their teaching; independent learners in the field of university learning and teaching, able to access ideas and practices from a variety of sources, and critically evaluate and apply these in the context of their own teaching practice; problem solvers when confronted with challenging issues in teaching, able to respond to these critically and creatively, seeking to attain high standards through flexible, innovative approaches to teaching; effective communicators about teaching and learning, willing and able to share ideas and practices with colleagues in the university and beyond; and responsible university teachers who are aware of the impact of their teaching on students and colleagues and who act with a high degree of integrity as a part of the local, national and international community of university teachers.

UTL is normally completed over two semesters. An extension can be requested by completing the UTL Application for Extension form. Participants will be recorded as discontinued in week 1 of the third semester if this procedure is not followed.UTL Unit 1 is offered before the commencement of each teaching session and involves a series of face-to-face sessions over five days. Participants can then undertake Unit 2.

According to UTL assessment process; first, Unit1 is assessed through a teaching practice report prepared by each trainee. Its length is between 800-1200 words. This task requires the trainees to report on their teaching practice session, including their plan for the session, summary of, and response to, the feedback they received, what they have learnt through watching a video of their session, and a short statement of their conception of teaching. Second, Unit 2 is assessed through preparing a Peer Observation Report between 1500-2000 from each trainee. Reflection is an active process involving exploration of the trainees' own experiences, conversations with their colleagues, feedback from students, and 'conversations' with educational literature. These dimensions are canvassed in the assessment for this Unit.

Question Number Two: To what extent is the efficiency of the UTL training program on the development of the teaching competencies of the teaching staff at Imam University in Saudi Arabia?

To answer this question the researchers used an observation tool of teachers' teaching competencies (See appendix 1) based on the focused competencies of UTL program .This observation tool was used in the trainees' classes before and after training. The first observation was at the beginning of the academic year 2012/2013 and before the training program .The second observation took place at the end of the academic year 2012\2013 and after training. The collected data was analyzed and a comparison was undertaken of matched pairs of before and after data for the trainee competencies who completed the UTL both before and after training (sees Table 1). Table 1 displays an almost identical pattern of change to that for the entire training group.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Teaching Competencies before and after UTL program at Imam University

Teaching Competencies	Test	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Lecture Planning	pre	26	22.26	1.85	.364
	post	26	28.27	2.27	.446
Lecture Orientation	pre	26	11.81	1.65	.324
	post	26	21.81	2.02	.396
Teaching the Lecture	pre	26	19.65	2.19	.429
	post	26	28.85	2.14	.421
Asking Questions	pre	26	12.12	1.54	.295
	post	26	15.42	1.74	.343
Course Material	pre	26	11.42	1.065	.209
	post	26	14.38	1.26	.249
Class Management	pre	26	22.27	1.66	.326
	post	26	27.54	2.21	.434

From the first sight of the table, it is obvious that teaching competencies scores were improved .The training groups' scores on the six competencies, which concerned about teaching skills, were compared before and after training. The training group's scores after training improved significantly on all six competencies. The maximum score on each scale is 30. One scale of the teachers' competencies increased significantly for the training group after training; teaching the lecture was the competency that improved the most (m=28.85) this was not the case before training (m=19.6) .This result reflects that UTL main focus was on the teaching methods inside the lecture hall. However, asking questions competency was improved very slightly; since the UTL dedicated very small number of training hours to improve this competency. The researchers recommend modifying the number of the training hours of asking questions to guarantee the improvement in parallel with teaching methods inside the classroom.

The t-test analysis was run to determine whether the difference between the means of the pre-teaching competencies and Post – teaching competencies of the experimental group are statistically different. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the performances of the participants before and after training.

Table 3
T. Test
Pre-Post Teaching Competencies of the Participants in UTL Program at Imam University

Teaching Competencies	Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the difference		t	Sig. 2-tailed
	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.ErrorMean	Lower	Upper		
Lecture Planning	-14.65	2.966	.582	-15.852	-13.456	-25.1	.00
Lecture Orientation	-10.00	2.383	.467	-10.963	-9.037	-21.3	.00
Teaching the Lecture	-13.192	3.453	.677	-14.587	-11.798	-19.4	.00
Asking Questions	-3.308	2.112	.414	-4.161	-2.455	7.9	.00
Course Material	-2.962	1.777	.349	-3.679	-2.244	-8.4	.00
Class Management	-5.269	2.987	.586	-6.476	-4.063	-8.9	.00

To examine whether there is a significant statistical difference at (α=0.05) between the groups' mean scores and to test the assumption that the participants across the two observations are equivalent in term of the level of teaching competencies, t-test technique was conducted. Table 2 presents the results of the t-test, showing the overall differences in the teaching competencies performances of the pre-TC and post –TC of the training group. These significant differences are in favor of the experimental group. Table 2 also shows differences in the performance of the experimental group at pre and post-TC, and the differences are in favor of the post -TC.

From the previous results in table 2, it is very obvious that the level of sigma (α=0.05) is less than.01.This means that the difference between pre teaching competencies and post teaching competencies of Imam's instructors is statistically significant at (α=0.05) after UTL training program. Based on this result, UTL training program has changed the teaching competencies of Imam's instructors positively. The result is proved by the negative value of (t).

In short, after the completion of the UTL training program with the experimental group members, they have achieved their objectives of developing the teaching competencies. It is clear that the training program has developed the teaching competencies of Imam's instructors. The analyses of the data of the post-observation for the experimental group members support the results of the study.

Conclusion

The discussions of the qualitative and the quantitative results revealed the importance of in-service training programs, especially who adopt the workshop method aiming at enhancing the performance of the teachers and improving their teaching competencies in order to help them acquire the skills and the knowledge .This program keeps the university instructors informed about the latest developments in the educational field of higher education. It was also found that there are significant effects of the UTL training program based on teaching competencies in improving the knowledge, performance, professional, and personal competencies of the experimental group's instructors. These effects can be attributed to content

of the UTL training program. It included instructional experiments, activities, and instructional skills, which helped provide the instructors with the appropriate teaching competencies to develop their knowledge and performance. Furthermore, the UTL training program based on teaching competencies play an important role in upgrading skills, knowledge, and performance of university instructors to be more effective.

In Addition, as it was mentioned in the introduction of this study, the in-service training programs have improved the competencies and skills for special education teachers; the training program was presented through workshop which used module method. Ysseldyke and Algozine (1982) indicated that in-service training programs are important methodologies used to develop and improve teachers' skills in order to enhance their instructional competencies and provide them with the latest about educational developments. The UTL training program module was adapted and organized in a way that is according to define criteria in term of the content and structure. In addition to the instructional and the evaluation activities, the discussion sessions among the teachers themselves and between the teachers and the trainer had a great impact on increasing interaction between the trainees and the training program. It also enhanced the teachers' knowledge of instructional methodologies and developed various instructional competencies. The display of the live models and learning by observation had effective effect on improving the instructional competencies of the teachers. The training program included video, demonstrations; data show presentations, and practicum observations by personal visits to peers in the same college.

The data presented here provide support that UTL training can increase the extent to which instructors adopt active learning skills as a strategy that maximizes students roles and minimizes teachers' role at university lectures. Active learning strategy is known to be associated with students taking a deep approach to a greater extent, and hence to improved quality of student learning outcomes, and so this is an important finding. In addition, UTL training program can improve a number of aspects of instructors' teaching competencies. Without the support of training, changes may be insignificant or negative. Moreover,UTL training program can change instructors such that their students' improve their learning. Without the support of training no such positive change in student learning is evident. Whereas the positive impact of training is easy to understand, the sometimes negative impact of no training requires some explanation. On the training programs teaching was seen to be valued and the improvement of teaching encouraged. Innovation and change were supported and openly discussed. These and other forms of support and encouragement may well have contributed to the positive changes in the instructors' identified in this study.

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers recommend Imam University to use and support this program for a larger number of trainees in the university .In addition, it is recommended that the Saudi Universities adopt the UTL program as one of the successful development programs in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices
Appendix 1
Teaching Staff's Teaching Competencies' Tool
Information of Teaching Staff member
Name:
Department:
Major:
Course Code:
Subject:
Date:
Time\Start:
Time\Finish:
Number of Students:

Competencies	Performance Indicators	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Not very well	Not at all well
	Determines the level of the target learners					
Lesson Planning	Defines the goals of the lesson					
	Determines the learners' preliminary consideration(previous knowledge)					
	Defines the students' expected learning skills					
	Expects learning problems					
	Determines strategies to solve the learning problems					
	Chooses teaching tools and technical aids that are suitable for					

	the lesson.					
Lesson Preparation	Introduces the lesson in an appropriate way that motivates students to learn more.					
	Spends an appropriate time for the introduction.					
	Divides students into suitable groups.					
	Follows suitable teaching methods.					
	Uses appropriate worksheets.					
	Determines the required time of the lesson					
Teaching the lesson	Determines the required period of time to do assignments.					
	Defines the teacher's activities					
	Give students clear instructions before each assignment.					
	Encourages students to learn and do their activities by themselves.					
	Provides students with interesting experiences					
	Connects the lesson with learners` real life.					
	Puts learners into learning challenging situations.					
	Provides students with realistic problems and situations					
	Guides students to follow the steps and strategies of solving problems.					

	Asks clear questions					
Asking Questions	Enhances the distinguished answers and shows them to the learners to take their advantage.					
	Gives students time to think about the answers.					
	Enhances learners` answers.					
Course Materials	Uses the b.board effectively.					
	Uses lecture aids in an interesting way for the learners.					
	Uses the right lecture aid for the lesson.					
	Uses the course book in an active way.					
Class Management	Makes learning process interesting and negotiates with students about meanings and ideas.					
	Helps students to communicate.					

	Observes students` discussions and interferer to offer help.				
	Divides students into bilateral groups for discussion				
	Divides the roles between students in cooperative groups				
	Uses suitable communication skills with the students				