

Continuing Professional Development Training Related to the Use of Technology in Education in Saudi Universities: Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The CPD in regarding to E-Learning tools for educators and its role as an important element to develop and improve faculty members skills in adopting technology in education. As a result, the ministry of education in Saudi Arabia has made a huge effort to provide intensive training for educators in public schools and in universities. This paper aims to provide an overview of the CPD in Saudi education environment and presents its importance for improving educators' skills' especially, related to the adoption of technology in teaching and learning process. The results indicated that there were insufficient training courses for educators in related tot the integration of E-Learning strategies in education. The paper recommendations are that Saudi universities should provide adequate training which based on teachers' requirements and needs.

Key Words: Continuing Professional, CPD, Saudi, Technology and training.

INTRODUCTION

Professional development counting training play an essential role in terms developing educators' skills to adopt and integrate latest technology in teaching techniques (Alharbi and Lally,2017; Alharbi et al,2017). Moreover, Alharbi and Lally recommended that the quality of teaching and learning process can be affected by the CPD. In addition to this, educators' technical skills' should be improved by CPD as many universities have provided teaching and learning remotely(Alharbi,2020). Many Saudi universities struggle to provide intensive training courses to their academic staff in order to employ e-learning tools an effective way in education process. As a result, this paper aimed to review the literature in order to provide a comprehensive understanding about the CPD in Saudi institutions in order to help them to improve and develop the workshops that offer to their academic staff.

RESEARCH AIM

The primary goal of this study is to provide the comprehensive understanding of the current state of the CPD in Saudi academic environment based on the review the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will demonstrate an essential information of the CPD in employing E-Learning tools in education environment in general and in Saudi context based on the literature review.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is considered to be the key factor for successful teaching in any institution (Islam, Beer and Slack, 2015). If CPD is effectively implemented, it can ensure that teachers' training needs are met and that they benefit from the latest skills and knowledge. On the other hand, poorly led CPD can leave teachers feeling frustrated and unable to achieve their full potential (Zershkian et al., 2019). It is important therefore to consult with teachers to discover their perceptions of, and satisfaction with, the CPD that they are offered. This is particularly important when any change is being introduced into the classroom such as eLearning (Gillies, 2004). Teachers will obviously play a primary role in the implementation of any changes, and to do so they must be equipped with the necessary skills through training. If properly trained on any proposed changes or new systems, they will be more likely to accept them and to feel positively about the introduction of new methods (Roux and Ferreira, 2005).

The issue of a lack of effective training is reported by many researchers. Management may think that they have sent teachers on an ICT course and that they are therefore fully trained on how to incorporate ICT into classroom activities and their teaching. However, Lee (1997) points out that teachers who now might be classed as 'old' were not expected to have ICT skills when they underwent their teacher training, so this did not form part of their assessment. Cunningham et al. (2003) highlighted the fact that simply giving teachers a laptop is not sufficient to ensure effective use of ICT. They need to be provided with appropriate training, not only on the laptop itself, but also on how to use eLearning tools, such as an interactive whiteboard. Preston et al. (2000) found that a common reason for teachers not using ICT was technical faults; thus, they recommended that teachers be given training on particular ICT skills, such as how to correct basic technical problems. The study also found that teachers who were relatively new to ICT preferred to be taught the basic ICT skills before they received training on how to use ICT in their pedagogy. One of the main barriers towards the integration of ICT into learning was reported by Johnson et al. (2015) as being the lack of compatibility between the training provided to staff and the software and hardware that is available to them. Keengwe et al. (2008) also highlighted the importance of high-quality and comprehensive training programmes for faculty staff on the successful integration of new technologies. A study was conducted among faculty members and administrators at HEIs in British Colombia and Canada by Mitchell and Geva-May (2009), who aimed to explore the participants' attitudes towards online learning and how this affected its implementation. The authors interviewed 39 participants and received 382 completed questionnaires. The majority (70%) had received training on the use of technology, but they commented that the courses needed more emphasis on instructional design in order to improve their online learning skills. Jackson and Fearon (2014) also found that academics complained that training sessions did not have a high enough practical element; other complaints included the fact that training courses were uninspiring or rushed, and did not improve their levels of confidence, which actually formed barriers to learning more about

the use of technology in teaching. Zershkian et al. (2019) stated that the CPD provided to the participants should include technical and practical training, and should be flexible and based on the educators' needs. Azlim, Husain, Hussin, and Maksom (2014) conducted a study in Malaysian public universities with a sample of 93 educators. The study's aim was to determine the use of LMSs in teaching. A questionnaire was used for collecting the data, and the results showed that a low proportion of educators utilised an LMS, mainly due to a lack of training on using LMS functions. Furthermore, Fathema, Shannon, and Ross (2015) indicated that a lack of training limited the adoption of LMSs in teaching.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) IN SAUDI ARABIA

As in many other countries, Saudi Arabia has recently implemented ICT into higher education with the aim of providing an attractive environment that will facilitate successful learning. In order for this implementation to be successful, however, staff and students must be offered CPD on the technology introduced (Algahtani, 2017). Elmahdi, Muammar, and Al-Hattami (2015), Algahtani (2017) and Almulhem (2013) advise that more training is needed on educational technology. Many research studies have concluded that a principle barrier to the implementation of ICT in Saudi Arabian educational institutions is the lack of training (Mirzajani, Mahmud, Ayub, and Wong, 2015; Algahtani, 2017). Many educators possess limited ICT and internet knowledge and skills (Al-Harbi, 2014; Alshammari, 2015). This is illustrated in the study by Al-Shammari in 2016, which aimed to explore the perceptions of 375 male academics employed in four universities in Saudi Arabia, to assess how effectively eLearning skills were being implemented. The data were gathered through a questionnaire and interviews. The main challenge reported by the members of staff regarding the implementation of eLearning was insufficient training on how to utilise eLearning techniques.

According to Al-Harbi (2011), in Saudi Arabia, professional development training is still very much at the early stages and remains limited in educational contexts. In Saudi Arabian institutions, responsibility for the training and development of academic staff lies with the Deanships for Academic Development and the Deanships of eLearning. For example, in South University and North University, the Deanship of eLearning is responsible for training academic staff and learners on using eLearning tools in their teaching and learning processes. Teacher training programmes may be either pre-service or in-service. A study by Algarfi (2005) reported that some graduates evaluated their pre-service training programmes as being out of date and inadequate. Similarly, some studies have found in-service training programmes to be insufficient in terms of their structure and content and the way that they are managed (Alsharari 2010; Altrjmi, 2010). These studies have commented on the failure to develop strategic plans for the enhancement of teachers' skills and knowledge. The study by Alghonaim (2005) was conducted at Buridah University and it investigated the teaching staff's and administrators' attitudes towards the implementation of eLearning. One of the major barriers reported by the participants was the lack of training on how to use or administer online teaching effectively. In addition, Alebaikan and Troudi (2010) found that a lack of training led to a very limited use of LMSs. Algahtani (2017) suggested that it is particularly important for university instructors based in developing countries to receive training on incorporating their LMS into their teaching and to learn about the features and tools included in the LMS.

The study conducted by Alshehri (2005) at the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia aimed to discover the significant factors that assist the employment of online teaching.

One of these factors was found to be the availability of technical and administrative support. Alshammari (2015) conducted a study in three universities in KSA; the results indicated that instructors and students have insufficient training on using eLearning technology. Recently, Algahtani (2017) carried out research across two Saudi universities, namely King Saud and Prince Nora. The study's aim was to investigate the factors affecting the actual use of the LMS. The researcher used two tools – a web-based survey and semi-structured interviews with 6 instructors – to gather data from academic staff. The sample consisted of 171 female teachers. The study results revealed that a lack of or poor training on LMS use for faculty members negatively affected its use. The researcher found that teachers' and students' use of LMS in education was limited as the training they received was either insufficient or non-existent, especially in the case of new faculty members. Additionally, the participants were not satisfied with the quality of the training provided by their institutions. Moreover, in the open-ended questions, a number of participants mentioned that they did not use the LMS in their teaching because they had not received sufficient training to assist them with the adoption of the LMS. The researcher found that many functions of the LMS were not used because the staff had not been trained to use them. It was also noted that learners were not open to the idea of the LMS system and were unwilling to use it in their learning; the researcher also attributed this to the lack of training. A strong relationship was found between training courses and the use of Blackboard in teaching. For example, Algahtani found that 91.8% of the participants did not employ Blackboard in their teaching due to the fact that they had never been exposed to courses or training. Algahtani asserts that more training is necessary for both teachers and students, which in turn will lead to more effective employment of Blackboard in the teaching and learning process. Recent research conducted by Bajabaa (2017) at the School of Education in Taiba University aimed to understand the factors affecting the integration of eLearning tools into teaching practice. The study sample comprised 257 participants, 160 of which were males. The primary study tool was a questionnaire. The results revealed that educators suffered from insufficient leader support, inadequate professional development, high levels of workload and deficient technology access. Other results from the study were that there was a strong link between the attendance of academy staff at training courses, and the adoption of technology. The study suggested that intensive training should be provided to academic staff.

Inadequate CPD for teachers can affect the whole education system. Problems associated with teacher training programmes, according to Alnassar (2004), include failing to provide teachers with the skills necessary for classroom management, dealing with parents and using ICT in their teaching. In 2016, Alkabish conducted a study at Albah University in KSA. The aim was to examine the readiness of academic staff for using Blackboard, the challenges they faced and the benefits they derived from the training courses at their university. The sample of the research was 112, comprised of both male and female instructors. The researcher used a closed questionnaire and focus group interviews as tools for gathering the data. The findings of the research indicated that 79% of the participants did not use Blackboard in their teaching. The reason for this was that the instructors had received insufficient training in basic ICT skills and the use of the Blackboard. And the challenge that prevented them from benefiting from the CPD that occurred in their institution was that most of the computers in the classrooms were not ready to be used or did not contain necessary programs such as Microsoft office and Java. Some computers had viruses, which made them restart many times, and the rooms and labs where the training took place were not suitable. Some teachers found it difficult to understand the terminology and the specific times when the training took place presented another difficulty

for them. The study also revealed some suggestions. These were that the deanship of eLearning should consider the time for the training so that it fitted the teachers' schedule, provide intensive workshop training for teachers, give course training at different levels and update the training equipment. Along the same lines, in 2017, Al-Hathlol carried out a non-experimental mixed-methods study looking into the quality of distance learning at two large Saudi universities (King Abulaziz and Imam Muhammad ibn Saud). The sample consisted of female and male students only (n = 591). The tools employed in the study were questionnaires and interviews. The findings emerging from this study were that academic staff did not effectively adopt the new technology in their distance learning environment due to them having inadequate technical skills. The study further stated that the educators had received insufficient training on how to adopt distance learning in their teaching.

The study by Al-Sarrani (2010) was based in the Science Faculty at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia with the aim of investigating any issues regarding the implementation of blended learning and the training that faculty members had received. An overwhelming majority (93%) of the participants stated that they required training and information on how to incorporate ICT into their teaching, particularly the pedagogical aspects of integrating ICT. They also commented that workshops were needed on a regular basis to update and maintain their skills. An online survey was carried out by Alahmari and Kyei-Blankson (2016) with 70 teachers in Saudi Arabia to explore their concerns and the barriers and benefits of adopting eLearning. The teachers were very satisfied with the Classera system they were using, citing its advantages as encouraging communication and collaboration between students and between teachers and parents, making it easy to deliver the teaching content, and thus facilitating student learning. Their concerns and the challenges they faced included finding time for training, their professional development and difficulties with accessing the internet. Alharbi (2011) carried out research on newly qualified teachers in Saudi Arabia and found that commonly they all experienced problems with a lack of teaching resources and materials and a lack of professional support. In addition, they often struggled with planning and preparing lessons, and knowing which teaching methods to employ. Alaugab (2007) added that teachers who work in Saudi universities lack training on how to use technology in teaching. Bingimlas (2009) also found that Saudi university teachers did not receive sufficient CDP. The study by Al-Shawi and Al-Wabilm (2013) investigated how often university lecturers employed the internet with students and the results showed that there was a positive correlation between general use of ICT among the 504 participants and the level at which they used the internet with students. This highlights the importance of general computer literacy among faculty members, and the urgent need to provide training for faculty members so that they can develop their technological skills.

Several studies have commented on the fact that the CPD programmes that exist in Saudi Arabia are inadequate as they do not provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and experience of a range of teaching and learning approaches (Ziyadah, 2012). A number of studies (Almulhem, 2013; Elmahdi, Muammar and Al-Hattami, 2015) have examined teacher training programmes and the professional education courses that they offer in Saudi Arabia. They all found that both the content and the number of these courses were insufficient to meet the needs of teachers in the country. Recommendations were therefore made to make changes to the content of such programmes and to increase the hours that teachers spent each year attending such courses. For example, Ziyadah (2012) carried out a study to investigate the factors that

either hindered or facilitated participation in online courses. Data were gathered via a questionnaire and interviews, and the participants were graduate assistants and university administrators. They stated that their main requirement was adequate training. This required training included a variety of subjects: online course design, graphic design, software use, technical skills, how to use online teaching and interactive tools, creating courses in the LMS, presenting lectures online, and using virtual classrooms. The study also reported that incentives were needed to encourage teachers to take the step to design and participate in online courses. The study by Al-Mulhem (2013) also explored the training needs of university teachers; the participants in the study were 69 members of staff at the School of Education at a Saudi Arabian university. They responded that their most urgent need was for training programmes that would provide them with the skills to use ICT effectively, in addition to training on utilising online assessment systems and fundamental eLearning technical skills. The preferences of the staff were to have training sessions close to the start of new terms, and ideally lasting between two and four weeks. In terms of how the training was delivered, they found a blended approach to be most useful, where they learned online and also had face-to-face contact with the instructors.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to find out the effect of the training courses on educators especially in terms of the adoption of technology in education in Saudi academic environment in order to provide a comprehensive understanding about the current state of the CPD offer to their educators. Based on the literature review that instructors have deficiency of training workshop that offer by their institutions which led to lack of integration of technology in their teaching process. As a result, universities should provide intensive training courses especially that related to how to adopt new technology in teaching methods which might help and assist instructors to employ the latest technology in their lessons.

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