

Brave New World for University Educators: Effects of Pedagogical Training on Teaching at Higher Education Level

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Abstract

Mastery of content knowledge and expertise in research are no longer the only requirements expected of university educators. Knowledge of a range of pedagogical skills is also elemental to ensure effective delivery of instruction, enabling meaningful transfer of knowledge takes place. Recognizing the need to develop and upgrade its academics' pedagogical knowledge and skills, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), in 2002, initiated a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning program (PGDip in TL) with the objectives of developing and enhancing its academics' knowledge, competence and performance in teaching. This paper presents the findings of a study which investigated the effects of pedagogical training, specifically the PGDip in TL program on UNIMAS' academics approaches to teaching. Implication of the findings on the design and development of pedagogical training modules for university educators is also addressed.

Keywords: Approaches to Teaching, Pedagogical Training, Higher Education

Introduction

That teaching and learning are the core businesses in any university (Zawawi Ismail, 1996) is a fact which cannot be denied, and they are the means from which quality graduates who exhibit life-long learning and autonomous learning skills could be developed. Executing the teaching and learning processes effectively would take the university a step closer towards excellence (Confesorre, 2008). Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for the practice of teaching at higher education institutions to be overshadowed by the scholarship of research. Accolades are often awarded to university educators based on breakthroughs unraveled from the findings of their research, and more often than not, it is the quantity of research, the amount of financial grants secured and the list of publications churned from research endeavors which are considered as key indicators of their academic excellence. It is also typically assumed that university educators who excel in research would provide their learners with a more up-to-date knowledge about the content area they specialize in, piquing further the learners' intellectual curiosity and interest for knowledge (Brew, 1999; Wei, Chen & Zhao, 2007). However, findings from research on the relationship between research productivity and teaching effectiveness have