Teachers Development Programs in Family and Everyday Life Skills in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Developing teacher training programs is one of the essential objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. This research highlighted one of the Ministry of Education's initiatives, the Optimum Utilization of Teaching Staff Project (OUTSP), to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills. This research focuses on the Family and Everyday Life Skills (FELS) program under (OUTSP). The study provided the results of 23 universities in 2021-2022 and 24 universities in 2022-2023 in more detail. For the data analysis, Microsoft Excel was used to show the results of the universities in different years. The results show that the universities' performances generally increased for both graduation classes, which could explain the increase in university performance. The research concludes that (FELS) as a program of the (OUTSP) project is an effective achievement for teachers' development through professional training program. The research further concludes that it is possible to provide adequate teacher training programs to teach (FELS) subjects to teachers from different specializations. The study recommended further qualitative research to understand the program's effectiveness better.

INTRODUCTION

Vision 2030 is a comprehensive strategic framework launched by the Saudi Arabian government in April 2016. It outlines a transformative vision for the country's future across various sectors, intending to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil revenue. This ambitious plan will bring about significant economic, social, and cultural changes in Saudi Arabia by 2030 (Vision2030, n.d.).

The primary goal of this strategic framework is to transition the country's economy and society away from dependence on oil revenue towards a more diverse economy and a culture open to global engagement with an inclusive mindset (Kinninmont, 2017). The Vision is structured around three core pillars: fostering a vibrant society, cultivating a thriving economy, and nurturing an ambitious nation. These complementary pillars aim to reshape the Kingdom's economy to achieve its future goals (Vision2030, n.d.).

In the context of education and teaching development, Vision 2030 strongly emphasizes enhancing the quality of education and fostering a skilled, competitive, and innovative workforce (Vision2030, n.d.). The plan recognizes that a well-educated populace is crucial for the country's economic growth and prosperity. Vision 2030's approach to education and teaching development in Saudi Arabia includes quality of education, reforming curriculum, promoting research and innovation, e-learning and technology integration, enhancing educational facilities, and promoting lifelong learning and teacher development (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). The vision recognizes the pivotal role that teachers play in the education system. It seeks to

enhance the training and development of teachers to ensure they are equipped with the latest pedagogical techniques and subject knowledge.

The Ministry of Education is a critical sector in achieving this vision. The Ministry has implemented strategies to diversify funding sources and enhance financial efficiency to ensure that the education system's outcomes align with market needs. For instance, in 2020, they reduced the teacher-to-student ratio from one teacher for every nine students to one for every seventeen (Alsolmy, 2016). Additionally, the Ministry has been actively introducing new subjects in universities and colleges of education that align with the job market's needs, such as fashion, culinary skills (PNU, n.d), Music, and filmmaking (Madani, 2022). The aim is to attract students and prospective teachers to these courses, steering them away from traditional subjects like Islamic studies, Arabic, geography, and history.

Moreover, to reassign current teachers whose specialized subjects are no longer in demand or needed in the job market, the Ministry has launched the Optimum Utilization of Educational Staff Project (OUTSP). This project offers teachers retraining opportunities to fulfill the workforce's needs by enhancing vocational training (Singh et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to explore the effectiveness of the (FELS) program in achieving educational improvement goals.

The research Problem

In the Saudi educational system, (FELS) used to be a mandatory subject for female students only. However, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has comprehensively revised the national curriculum for public education. This includes the introduction of new subjects like music, critical thinking, digital skills, and incorporating Family and Everyday life Skills schools for boys. However, implementing these subjects has posed challenges due to a shortage of qualified specialized teachers. For instance, no Family and Everyday Life Skills instructors teach the subject across boys' schools. With the recent introduction of (FELS) education, there's been a need for (FELS) teachers.

Many schools have temporarily assigned these new subjects to non-specialist teachers to address this need. However, this solution faces several drawbacks: Firstly, the number of non-specialist teachers is insufficient to meet the demand. Secondly, there's a concern regarding teaching quality since these teachers lack specialization. Thirdly, this approach is unsustainable as it's only a short-term fix. Additionally, there's an excess of teachers in subjects like Islamic studies, Arabic, geography, and history that are being reduced in the national curriculum. Consequently, teachers in these areas risk being underemployed due to the shift away from these subjects.

To tackle these challenges, the Ministry of Education established the (OUTSP) in November 2021. Its primary objective is to furnish current teachers specializing in Islamic studies, Arabic, geography, and history with the essential training needed to instruct the newly introduced subjects proficiently. Notably, the training sessions are not conducted at the Ministry of Education. Instead, they are held at various state universities across Saudi Arabia while supervised and guided by the Ministry of Education. This approach offers two distinct advantages. Firstly, it allows the (OUTSP) to accommodate many candidates without encountering a capacity limit. Secondly, the program enables candidates to attend the university nearest them, eliminating the need for extensive travel to receive centralized training.

The (OUTSP) comprises ten specialized programs that equip current educators to teach ten distinct subjects effectively. These programs encompass the Digital Skills Program, the English Language Program, the Sciences Program, the Mathematics Program, the Physical Education and Self-defense Program, the Critical Thinking Program, the Family and Everyday Life Skills Program, the Arts Program, the Management Program, and the Marketing Program. This study centers explicitly on the (FELS) Program. After presenting an overview of the Ministry of Education's endeavour to promote educational improvement through the implementation of (OUTSP) programs, this article delves into an examination of the effectiveness of the (FELS) Program in attaining this objective. To achieve this, it initially provides comprehensive descriptions of

the course structure and the profiles of enrolled candidates. Subsequently, the article poses a research inquiry and outlines the data collection and analysis methodology.

The family and everyday life skills

The Family and Everyday Life Skills (FELS) program aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate family and everyday life challenges. For teachers, (FELS) training has a positive impact on knowledge and skills. It can enhance their understanding of family dynamics, relationships, and healthy living, ultimately enriching their classroom practice and student outcomes (Vaines, 1994). Additionally, several studies report positive outcomes of (FELS) training on teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward family life education. Ogunlola and Aina (2019) found that (FELS) training improved teachers' understanding of family issues, communication skills, and ability to develop age-appropriate learning materials. Similar findings emerged in studies by (Agyemang-Badu & Gyamfi, 2012; and Adebola et al., 2017), highlighting the program's potential to equip teachers with essential competencies for (FELS) instruction.

Another positive impact of the teacher professional program is to improve teachers' knowledge in areas like family communication, adolescent development, and reproductive health (Ogunlola & Aina, 2019). Additionally, teachers showcased enhanced skills in developing age-appropriate learning materials, facilitating discussions, and using active learning strategies (Ogunlola & Aina, 2019). Also, (Agyemang-Badu & Gyamfi, 2012; and Adebola et al., 2017) observed positive changes in teachers' knowledge of family life issues, particularly gender roles, health education, family law, child abuse prevention, family planning and child-rearing practices. During the training programs, teachers developed skills during the training which include active listening, problem-solving techniques, creating safe classroom environments for sensitive discussions, using technology in (FELS) instruction, incorporating cultural contexts, and collaborating with parents increased significantly (Agyemang-Badu & Gyamfi, 2012; Adebola et al., 2017).

The (FELS) program, built as a part of (OUTSP), focuses on equipping present male teachers of Geography, History, Islamic studies, and Arabic to teach (FELS) to elementary and high school boys' students. To qualify for the program, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree in education and a minimum of 50% in the educational competencies test.

The (FELS) program consists of 24 hours, divided into two academic terms and five courses in each one. In the initial term, which encompasses 12 hours, candidates engage in courses that focus on the curriculum and pedagogy of family and everyday life skills, social interaction skills, quality of life, and constructivist assessment in teaching. The second term consists of health and environmental education topics, effective communication skills, family skills, a successful personality skills practicum, and the end of the program.

After emphasizing the significance of (OUTSP) in facilitating Saudi Arabia's pursuit of educational development aligned with Vision 2030, this paper seeks to scrutinize the effectiveness of the (FELS), specifically in realizing this aim. Consequently, this research aims to understand the successfulness of family and everyday life skills programs in equipping Islamic studies, Arabic, history, and geography teachers to become certified instructors.

METHODS

This research employed a quantitative approach to address the outlined research inquiries. During the data collection phase, the examination outcomes were for 23 universities during the 2021-2022 examination and 24 universities during the 2022-2023 examination. Additionally, the sample included all universities that participated in (OUTSP) during the (2021-2022) and (2022-2023).

During the data collection and analysis, the researcher was a part of the (OUTSP) management team working in the Ministry of Education and collected the university data. Moreover, the Ministry's dataset

lacked the specific breakdown needed for the research analysis. Subsequently, the researcher contacted colleagues who were able to provide the research with more comprehensive results. Through these efforts, the researcher obtained the complete results for the universities that participated in (OUTSP), explicitly providing the (FELS) program. For the data analysis, Microsoft Excel provided adequate data calculation and organization for the final university's results (Quirk, 2016). According to Quirk, this software become an invaluable tool in the social sciences for its comprehensive functionalities that assist in data management, analysis, and presentation, making it an indispensable part of the research process in these fields (2016). The software in this study provided a data management assistant analysis of the final results and overall grades of teachers in all universities that participated in the (OUTSP).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the results the universities achieved during 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 for the (FELS) program and the number of teachers who graduated successfully from each university. As shown in Table 1, Table 2, and Figures 1 and 2 below, 1124 teachers graduated with diplomas in (FELS) in 2021-2022 in 23 universities in Saudi Arabia; 1004 teachers achieved A and A+, and 120 teachers achieved B and B+.

Table 1. Teachers' grades (A+ and A) on (FELS) in 2021-2022.

University Name (2021-2022)	Number of Teachers Achieving Excellent
Taibah University	111
Qassim University	82
Ummul Qura University	81
University of Hail	73
King Khalid University	73
Shaqra University	66
Najran University	48
University of Hafr Al Batin	41
University of Bisha	37
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	37
University of Tabuk	34
Jazan University	34
King Abdulaziz University	34
Jeddah University	31
Northern Border University	31
Al Jouf University	31
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University	29
Majmaah University	29
King Faisal University	29
Taif University	26
King Saud University	26
Al Baha University	12
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University	9
Total	1004

Table 2. Teachers' grades (B+ and B) on (FELS) in 2021-2022.

University Name (2021-2022)	Number of Teachers Achieving Very Good
Najran University	33
Al Baha University	16
Shaqra University	15
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University	12
Taibah University	10
King Khalid University	9
Jazan University	5
University of Tabuk	5
Ummul Qura University	5
Qassim University	4
King Abdulaziz University	2
Al Jouf University	2
King Faisal University	1
Taif University	1
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	0
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University	0
Northern Border University	0
Majmaah University	0
King Saud University	0
University of Bisha	0
Jeddah University	0
University of Hail	0
University of Hafr Al Batin	0
Total	120
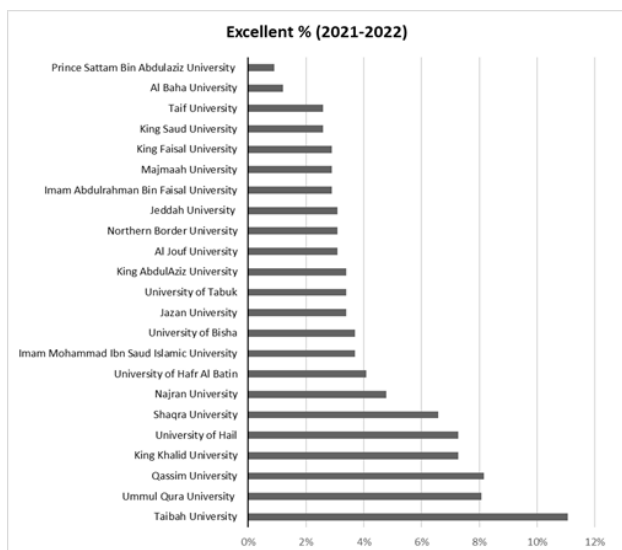
Figure 1. Percentage of teachers achieving (A and A+).
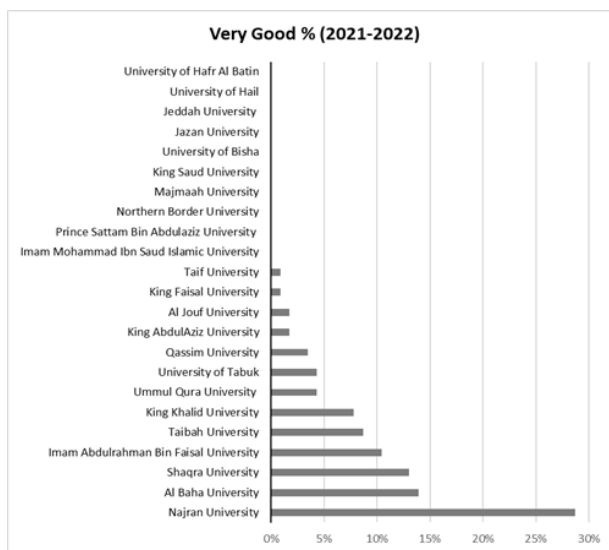
Figure 2. Percentage of teachers achieving (B and B+).

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 above, the number of teachers who graduated from Taibah University, Qassim University, and Ummul Qura University with excellent grades is higher than that of other universities. Additionally, four universities, including Princ Sattam Bin Abdulaziz, Al Baha, Taif and King Saud universities, have fewer teachers who graduated with (A+ and A) than others.

As indicated in Table 2 and Figure 2, no teachers received (B and B+) grades in nine universities. Of a total of 23 universities, Najran University scored the highest number of graduated teachers, with very good among others.

Table 3. Teachers' grades (A+ and A) on (FELS) in 2022-2023

| University Name (2022-2023)	Number of Teachers Achieving Excellent
Taibah University	166
King Khalid University	113
Shaqra University	84
Najran University	81
Ummul Qura University	74
University of Bisha	70
Qassim University	65
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University	57
Jazan University	47
Islamic University	37
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University	34
Al Jouf University	34
Al Baha University	33
University of Tabuk	31
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	29
Northern Border University	27
King Abdulaziz University	25
King Faisal University	25
University of Hail	25
King Saud University	23
University of Hafr Al Batin	22
Taif University	20
Jeddah University	17
Majmaah University	19
Total	1158

When we look at the 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 data, there seems to be a shift in the universities' performances. Some universities improved, while others saw a decrease in their excellent and "Very Good" rating percentages. Generally, there is an increase in performance from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023, with the total number of teachers achieving Very Good and Excellent grades increasing by 15.4%. This suggests potential improvement in program effectiveness.

Performance varied considerably between universities. For the excellent category, there seems to be a close grouping between many universities, indicating that many universities have similar levels of top-performing students. In 2021-2022, Taibah University had the highest number of teachers, with an excellent 111, while Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University had the lowest number of 9 teachers. In 2022-2023, Taibah topped the list with 166 excellent teachers, followed by King Khalid University with 113 teachers, while Majmaah University had the least 19 teachers. These variations warrant further investigation into factors influencing performance at different institutions. Regarding the very good category, there's a wider spread, especially in 2021-2022, indicating a more varied performance among universities in this category.

Other universities showed consistent performers. For example, "King Abdulaziz University" and "Northern Border University" consistently appeared in the upper half of the Excellent category across the two years, indicating consistent performance. Meanwhile, "Shaqra University" and "Al Baha University" were at the regular level of the Very Good category for both years.

Table 4. Teachers' grades (B+ and B) on (FELS) in 2022-2023.

University Name (2022-2023)	Number of Teachers Achieving Very Good
Najran University	62
King Khalid University	41
Qassim University	38
Majmaah University	19
Al Baha University	19
Taibah University	17
University of Hafr Al Batin	16
Shaqra University	12
University of Hail	12
Islamic University	11
Al Jouf University	10
Taif University	8
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University	5
University of Tabuk	5
King Saud University	2
University of Bisha	2
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University	1
Northern Border University	1
King Abdulaziz University	1
Ummul Qura University	1
Jazan University	1
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	0
King Faisal University	0
Jeddah University	0
Total	268
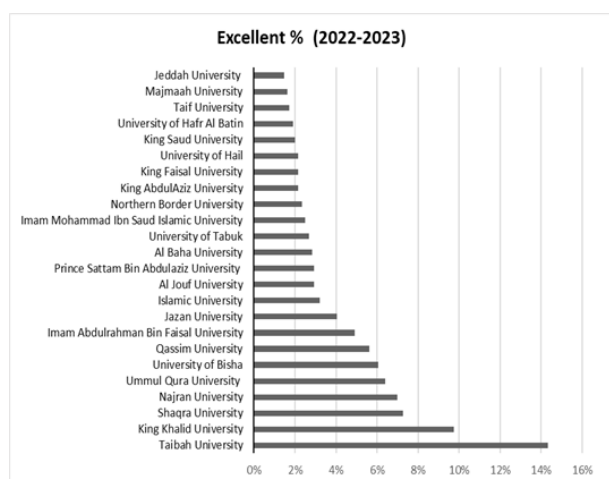
Figure 3. Percentage of teachers achieving (A and A+).
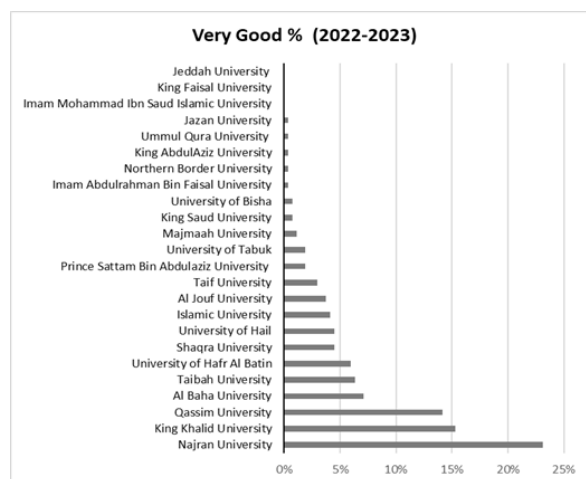
Figure 4. Percentage of teachers achieving (B and B+).

Further discussion of the results showed that there was a substantial increase in the number of teachers achieving high grades in the (FELS) program during the academic years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. This signifies a notable advancement in the program's efficacy in preparing educators across various disciplines, including Islamic studies, Arabic, history, and geography. The quantitative rise in the number of teachers with excellent and very good grades indicates a successful outcome for the program.

Aligned with the core objectives of (FELS), which prioritize the development of practical and pedagogical skills for educators in family and life skills education (Brown & Paolucci, 1979), the enhancement

in grade outcomes is accompanied by the provision of adequate support systems and resources to the teachers. As underscored in various studies (Gibson & Andrews, 2022; Davis & Chang, 2018), such resources, encompassing teaching materials and professional support, are imperative for the successful execution of educational programs. Additionally, the data suggests that the program has significantly enhanced teacher competence and academic impact, mirroring the pivotal goals outlined by (Haapaniemi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the increase in certification rates is anticipated to foster improved educational practices, enriched student learning experiences, and a more comprehensive integration of (FELS) principles into the curriculum.

An essential element contributing to the success of any teacher training initiative is its influence on teacher preparation and confidence. The escalating participation of educators in the (FELS) program implies a positive correlation with teachers' self-efficacy (Davis & Chang, 2018). Studies by (Gyemang-Badu & Gyamfi, 2012; Ajadi Kayode 2022 Adebola et al., 2017) corroborate that heightened confidence in their subject matter enhances teachers' capacity to implement the curriculum effectively, thereby nurturing a conducive learning environment conducive to addressing sensitive topics related to students' health and relationships.

The relevance of the (FELS) curriculum to the cultural and societal context emerges as another crucial determinant of its success. The program's adeptness in engaging educators in meaningful and culturally resonant content potentially catalyzes improved grades. Patel and Kumar (2018) posit that engagement is pivotal for learning and retention. Moreover, Vaines (1994) emphasizes the significance of cultural and contextual relevance in her work on the ecosystemic approach to (FELS), suggesting that when educators find the curriculum meaningful and resonant with their teaching environments, their academic achievements will likely be enhanced. Additionally, scholarly literature accentuates the indispensability of professional development and support systems for the successful execution of educational programs (Ehlert & Souvignier, 2023), a sentiment reflected in the solid support systems, including ongoing training and resources integral to the (FELS) educational framework.

In terms of achieving the Vision 2030 goals for educational development, the positive trend in teacher achievement holds broader implications for schools and communities. While individual teacher success is evident, it is imperative to acknowledge the program's overarching impact on schools, students, and the community. Effective teacher training programs not only augment teacher performance but also bolster student outcomes and contribute to community development (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Furthermore, (FELS) education holds significant potential in catalyzing community development and family well-being, especially for educators with no prior knowledge of the subject, such as male teachers in Saudi Arabia (Alharbi & Renwick, 2017). Improved teacher qualifications could pave the way for more effective teaching strategies aligned with community-oriented education.

Overall, while the upsurge in the number of teachers achieving high grades in the (FELS) program indicates a promising trend, it is imperative to consider the broader context and qualitative factors to evaluate the program's success comprehensively. Aspects such as the quality of instructional delivery, teacher retention rates, and the long-term impact on teachers' professional practices necessitate meticulous consideration (Chang & Soong, 2017). A multi-faceted evaluation approach encompassing both quantitative achievements and qualitative outcomes is indispensable for a conclusive analysis.

CONCLUSION

The study provided insights into the accomplishments of the Ministry of Education and Universities in the Family and Everyday Life Skills Program, a component of the Optimal Utilization of Teaching Staff Project in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the study has focused on the progress of 23 universities in 2021-2022 and 24

universities in 2022-2023, conducting a detailed analysis of their performance in each category. The study highlighted two key findings that emerged. Firstly, the initiation of the (OUTSP) by the Saudi Ministry of Education appears to align with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, particularly regarding teachers' professional development in education. The study determines the value of retraining experienced teachers who initially specialized in outdated subjects to teach new subjects like family and everyday life skills, contributing to the broader goal of achieving teachers' development in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the high grades achieved by the universities in this research suggest that teachers are willing to expand their knowledge and instruct subjects outside their primary expertise. Consequently, the (OUTSP) programs, especially the Family and Everyday Life Skills, are proving to be advantageous for enhancing the skills of teachers open to subject changes and for the professional development of those seeking to obtain new knowledge.

Recommendations

Finally, two recommendations can be drawn from this study. First, since most (OUTSP) programs consist of 36 hours, the Ministry of Education could develop the Family and Everyday Life Skills to match other programs regarding academic hours, knowledge, and teaching practicum. Adopting this recommendation would result in more knowledge in various courses relevant to the subject.

Secondly, motivation might be provided to individuals participating in the (FELS). For instance, participants could receive reduced working hours and a decreased teaching load, allowing them more time to enhance their new skills online or complete their assignments. Implementing these adjustments would be a constructive move towards motivating more educators to improve their skills, thus accelerating the achievement of Saudi Arabia's educational goals.

Limitation and Considerations

The study suggested that the (FELS) program has successfully equipped teachers to become certified instructors, as evidenced by the increased number of teachers achieving high grades over consecutive years. However, a multidimensional approach that includes qualitative and quantitative analysis is necessary to comprehensively understand the program's effectiveness. This would ensure a holistic view of the program's impact on teachers, students, and the broader educational landscape. Further research is recommended to explore the qualitative aspects of the program's success, including teacher satisfaction, classroom skills application, and the impact on student learning. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into the sustainability of the program's outcomes.

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