

**A PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ENGLISH PRIMARY
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES AND THEIR ATTITUDES
TOWARDS THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

by

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**CADANGAN PROGRAM LATIHAN UNTUK MENINGKATKAN
KECEKAPAN GURU BAHASA INGGERIS PRA-PERKHIDMATAN DAN
SIKAP MEREKA TERHADAP PROFESION PERGURUAN**

oleh

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**Tesis yang diserahkan untuk
memenuhi keperluan bagi
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADDIE: Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate

APEC: Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

AQU: Al Aqsa University

ARTDO: Asian Regional Training and Development Organization

ASTTP: Attitude Scale Towards Teaching Profession

ATTP: Attitude Towards Teaching Profession

AUG: Al Azhar University of Gaza

CATs: Classroom Assessment Techniques

CTC: Commission on Teacher Credentialing

DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

EBD: Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

FLT: Foreign Language Teaching

HR: Human Resource

ISD: Instructional System Design

ISU: Iowa State University

ITD: Institute of Training and Development

IUG: Islamic University of Gaza

LCMT: Learner-Centered Micro-Teaching

MANOVA: Multivariate Analysis of Variance

MOEHE: Ministry of Education and Higher Education

MoNE: Ministry of National Education

MTAI: Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory

PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

PSTD: Philippine Society for Training and Development

QATTP: Questionnaire of Attitudes Towards the Teaching Profession

QOU: Al Quds Open University

SBEP: Support Basic Education Project

SCS: Scale of Coping with Stress

SMART: Specific, Measureable, Actionable, Realistic, Timed

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

STT: Student Talking Time

TALK: Trainingsprogramm zum Aufbau van LeherInnen Kompetenzen

TEFL: Teacher of English as a Foreign Language

TEIP: Teacher Education Improvement Project

TTT: Teacher Talking Time

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

CADANGAN PROGRAM LATIHAN UNTUK MENINGKATKAN KECEKAPAN GURU BAHASA INGGERIS PRA-PERKHIDMATAN DAN SIKAP MEREKA TERHADAP PROFESION PERGURUAN

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji keberkesanan program latihan yang dibangunkan ke atas kecekapan guru Bahasa Inggeris sekolah rendah pra-perkhidmatan dan sikap mereka terhadap profesion perguruan. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk eksperimen mudah beserta pendekatan kaedah-bercampur (*mixed-methods*) untuk mengumpul data menggunakan kad pemerhatian, soal selidik dan temu bual separa berstruktur. Keputusan menunjukkan program latihan mempunyai kesan besar atas tahap kecekapan dan sikap peserta. Jantina didapati tiada kesan ketara terhadap tahap kecekapan dan sikap peserta dalam pra-ujian, pasca-ujian, dan skor peningkatan. Peserta dari Universiti Islam Gaza (IUG) menunjukkan tahap kecekapan dan sikap tertinggi dalam pra-ujian berbanding rakan mereka dari Universiti Al-Aqsa (AQU), Al-Azhar Universiti of Gaza (AUG), dan Al Quds Open Universiti (QOU). Dalam pasca-ujian, peserta dari IUG mengatasi mereka dari AQU, AUG, dan QOU dalam domain "Pengetahuan isi kandungan subjek", dan tiada perbezaan ditemui dalam kalangan empat universiti dalam aspek sikap. Peserta dari IUG memperoleh skor peningkatan yang lebih rendah dalam kecekapan dan sikap. Peserta dari kawasan amali Gaza dan Tengah menunjukkan tahap kecekapan yang lebih tinggi berbanding mereka dari kawasan amali Utara, Khanyounis, dan Rafah dalam pra-ujian dan pasca-ujian. Sebaliknya, tiada perbezaan didapati antara lima kawasan amali dalam skor peningkatan kompetensi. Dalam pra-ujian sikap, peserta dari kawasan amali Tengah menunjukkan skor yang lebih tinggi dalam aspek "Menghargai (*Appreciation*)^{D3}" berbanding rakan mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam pasca-ujian, tiada perbezaan ditemui dalam kalangan kelima-lima kawasan amali. Namun, peserta dari kawasan amali Tengah memperoleh skor peningkatan sikap yang paling rendah.

A PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ENGLISH PRIMARY PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE TEACHING PROFESSION

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining the effects of a developed training program on English primary pre-service teachers' competencies and their attitudes towards the teaching profession in the Gaza strip. The study used the single-group simple experimental pretest-posttest design. The mixed-methods approach was used to collect data using an observation card, a questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. Results showed that the training program had a very large-sized effect on the participants' competencies and attitudes. Gender was found to be of no effect on the participants' competencies and attitudes in the pre-test, post-test, and gain scores. Participants from the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) demonstrated the highest level of competence and attitude in the pre-test as compared to their counterparts from Al-Aqsa University (AQU), Al-Azhar University of Gaza (AUG), and Al Quds Open University (QOU). In the post-test, participants from IUG outperformed those from AQU, AUG, and QOU in the "Knowledge of Subject Matter^{D3}" domain, and no differences were found among the four universities in attitudes. Participants from IUG obtained the lowest gain scores in competencies and attitudes. Participants from the Gaza and Middle internship areas demonstrated higher level of competence than those from the North, Khanyounis, and Rafah internship areas in the pre-test and post-test. Conversely, no differences were found among the five internship areas with respect to competency gain scores. In the attitude pre-test, participants from the Middle internship area demonstrated more "Appreciation^{D3}" as compared to their counterparts. However, in the post-test, no differences were found among the five internship areas. Participants from the Middle internship area obtained the lowest attitude gain scores.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The destiny of a country and its position among the other countries is mainly determined in its classrooms, and the most crucial component in shaping that destiny is the teacher. The teaching profession is the only profession charged with the challenging task of promoting and fostering the human skills and competencies that enable the society to sustain its development and succeed in the era of technology (Al-Omari & Ihmeideh, 2009). Neither the advanced curriculum and assessment methods, nor schools equipped with the best technology in the world can guarantee that our children are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of life if not led by well-prepared, committed, and caring teachers. In any education system worldwide, the teacher is the indispensable component without which all other components cannot operate. Even if instructional objectives are well-established and the content of the subject is well designed and organized, it is almost impossible to realize the desired outcomes from the educational process unless they are performed by well-prepared and competent teachers (Sunbul, 2001).

In the past few decades, researchers have given much of their attention to the importance of teacher preparation and to the teacher as the central and the most fundamental component of the educational process, whose quality is believed to be the determinant of success and excellent outcomes of the educational process and the whole society structure. Today, this attention has become more imperative as the teacher's responsibilities and challenges have doubled.

The responsibility for preparing teachers is assumed to begin with teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions. In the past few years, research has

sounded the alarm that newly appointed teachers step in the classroom insufficiently prepared to face the challenges that occur as soon as they start teaching in their own classrooms (Berry, 2004; Goddard & O'Brien, 2007; Kathleen, 2000). Teacher education is mostly, if not entirely, centered on the knowledge in the subject area, and attention to practical experiences related to theoretical contents and competencies is considerably lacking (Zgaga, Razdevek-Pu ko, & Krek, 2006). Complaints from candidate teachers, school administrators, and parents about the low quality of teacher education to cope with the actual conditions of everyday practice in schools have caused pressure to think again about both the structure and the practices of teacher preparation programs (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006). The structure and practices of teacher preparation programs should be directed by clear and realistic standards of professional competence and performance (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009).

In Palestine and mainly in the Gaza Strip, realistic national standards that drive the process of teacher education in line with the reality of the actual work conditions are lacking (World-Bank, 2006). The present structure of pre-service teacher education is excessively focused on outdated curriculum content and lacking the essential practical training and internship components (Abu-Daqqqa & El-Lulu, 2005; Al-Masri, 2012). The absence of a coherent and well-functioning structure of pre-service teacher training led to the critical need for intensive in-service programs for training all new teachers. A national strategy for teacher training is necessary to link teacher training to the actual work setting and to better satisfy the needs of the teachers and students at all levels.

In Gaza, where people live under a constant state of emergency resulting from the war activities by the Israeli Occupation, teachers should be prepared to cope with relatively

different work conditions. The educational system in the Gaza Strip is constantly affected by war activities such as siege and movement restriction, schooling suspensions, school damage and destruction, repetitive invasions, power cuts and sometimes long-term power failures, shortage in resources, and psychological effects (Abdul-Rahman, 2009). Pre-service teachers are supposed to receive highly practical training that hone their skills and abilities to cope with such conditions of work and to effectively teach children affected by this state of emergency.

This chapter sets the scene and generally builds the case for why the current research is important. It provides a brief overview of the field of the study, the constructs involved, the problems with past research, and the extent to which the current study aims to address these problems.

1.1 Geographic, Historic and Demographic Facts

Palestine - a piece of land spreading over 27,000 square kilometers – is one of 21 Arab nations and constitutes the southwestern part of Belad El-Sham, which is a large geographical unit in the eastern part of the Arab world. Other than Palestine, Sham contains Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It formerly had common borders with these countries in addition to Egypt. The length of these borders of land and sea is 949 km, 719 km of which are land borders and 230 km of which are sea borders (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, 2010).

Due to imperialism and the continued colonization that the Palestinians have had to endure in the past 60 years, almost half of the Palestinian people, that is, 49.29% live in the Diaspora. Palestinians number 11.07 million, of which more than 5.42 million live in the Diaspora, and around 4.29 million are residing in the West Bank and Gaza (2.64 million in The West Bank & 1.63 million in The Gaza Strip). Over 1.36 million Palestinians live

inside the Green Line Area (1948 Occupied Territories) constituting 12.2% of the total population (PCBS, 2011).

In Gaza – the study platform – more than half of the population – 780,578, or 53% – is under the age of 18. There are a total number of 688 schools (396 government schools, 244 UNRWA schools and 48 private schools) of which 543 are primary schools to ninth grade. The total number of primary school students amounts to 399,510 (DFLP, 2010).

According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics PCBS (2006), there are five main universities in the Gaza Strip, namely, Islamic University of Gaza, Al-Azhar University of Gaza, Al-Quds Open University, Al-Aqsa University, and University of Palestine. The five Gaza universities have given certificates to an estimated number of 12,000 graduates in 2010, 42% (5660) of which are awarded to the teaching profession including approximately 640 English teachers who have been exposed to professional training in schools under the supervision of 62 supervisors (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The primary role of teacher education programs is to produce competent and qualified teachers for the profession of teaching. The main problem this study addresses is the neglect of the practical component of teacher training in the Gaza strip where this study was conducted. The training received by student-teachers is excessively focused on general theoretical knowledge at the expense of the specialized practice of teaching skills (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Al-Masri, 2012; Darwish, Al-Masri, Hammad, & Al-Ser, 2009). Teacher education programs provided by universities in The Gaza Strip offer very few opportunities for student-teachers to put the theoretical knowledge they learn into practice. In addition, the content of the training is quite irrelevant to the Gaza context that is

characterized by the long-term state of emergency caused by the frequent war activities on The Gaza Strip. This part of training is neither theoretically nor practically addressed in the teacher education programs provided by universities or local teacher training institutions. These programs are too centered on outdated curriculum content (Abu-Daqqa & El-Lulu, 2005; Al-Masri, 2012) and lack the essential practical skills and teaching competencies needed to cope with the emergency education in Gaza (Abdul-Rahman, 2009; Al-Subu', 2009; Sabri, 1997). The absence of sufficient and practical preparation of pre-service teachers and the inadequate focus on the professional competencies they should possess to cope with the emergency situation caused the reality shock experienced by most novice teachers and led to the conflict between their expectations of the role they are prepared to play and the reality of the actual work conditions. To compensate for this failure, the Ministry of Education and UNRWA resorted to retraining the newly appointed teachers by enrolling them in intensive in-service training courses. However, this training has been described as impractical and consumes the time and effort of the in-service teachers at the expense of students' learning (MOEHE, 2010; Thabet, 2007; Sabri, 1997).

The above stated problem has been explored more deeply by a number of studies that revolved around the status of teacher education in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip. A report by MOEHE (2010) concluded that the majority of teacher education programs in The Gaza Strip do not provide pre-service teachers with sufficient practical training. This severely undermined the skills and competencies with which they enter the teaching profession. Moreover, Thabet (2007) investigated the difficulties facing the implementation of quality assurance framework in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools in Gaza. He explored four domains of quality, one of which addressed difficulties

related to teacher training. Thabet's findings indicated that 73% of the head teachers and school supervisors attributed the difficulties of implementing quality assurance framework in school education to ineffective teacher training. This domain was examined through ten items in Thabet's questionnaire. Table 1.1 shows the part of Thabet's questionnaire which focuses on the difficulties related to training.

Table 1.1
Difficulties Related to Teacher Training in Thabet's Questionnaire

No.	Item	Mean	percentage
1.	Insufficient time allocated for training.	3.74	74.8
2.	Inappropriate training times.	3.3	66
3.	Unbalanced distribution of training time on the content.	3.57	71.4
4.	Incomprehensive training content.	3.35	67
5.	Emphasizing the theoretical side and ignoring the practical side in training.	4.22	84.4
6.	Absence of applied and practical exercises.	4.15	83
7.	Training does not include all relevant staff educators.	3.78	75.6
8.	Incompetent trainers.	3.6	72
9.	Inappropriate methods used in training.	3.49	69.8
10.	Non-availability of materials and equipment needed for training.	3.34	66.8
	Total	3.65	73

Thabet, Z. (2007)

It is clear from Table 1.1 that the greatest difficulties are those related to the focus on the theoretical aspect and ignoring the practical side of teacher training. Sabri (1997) also has investigated in-service teacher training programs in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip and found that these programs should pay more attention to class application and teaching techniques rather than concepts and theories of learning. Teachers who encounter difficulties in their teaching practice attribute their experiences to the lack of opportunities for practice in teacher preparation.

The absence of sufficient and practical training of pre-service teachers and the rather irrelevance of the training content to the actual work conditions and to the critical state of emergency resulting from the war activities have caused a decline in the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. The more problems teachers encounter

in their teaching practice, the more anxieties and fears of failure they will have and the more negative their attitude towards the teaching profession will become (Kulkarni, 2011). Therefore, providing pre-service teachers with learning opportunities that address the real classroom practice is of paramount importance for equipping them with the right teaching competence and promoting their positive attitudes towards teaching.

To address the above stated problems, a teacher training program that integrates theory and practice in the learning experiences of pre-service teachers and meets the requirements of the actual teaching conditions was developed. The current study aimed at examining the effect of this developed training program on English primary pre-service teachers' competencies and on their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

After the problem has been stated, there is a need to explain why solving it is important and why it is important to conduct this study. This study provides an intervention teacher training program that compensates for the practical component which is lacking in teacher education programs provided by universities and local institutions. Universities in The Gaza Strip do not have a unified national teacher education curriculum and teachers resort to taking content from curricula that are not appropriate for the context of The Gaza Strip. This necessitates an immediate intervention that can compensate for the shortcomings of the randomly selected materials and integrate the theoretical knowledge of teaching into workable practice. This intervention should also provide pre-service teachers with learning opportunities that address the real classroom conditions (Al-Masri, 2012; Cuadra, 2012; Darwish et al., 2009; World-Bank, 2006).

The intervention is also supposed to provide pre-service teachers with the competencies needed to cope with the challenges that arise when teaching an emergency-affected population of learners (Nicolai, 2003; UNESCO, 2010). This can contribute to the successful production of well-prepared teachers who are able to maintain highly effective learning environments and handle problems of misbehavior that arise from teaching learners who have traumatic experiences.

Finally, the review of the current literature shows a scarcity of studies that evaluated the effect of foreign language teacher education programs and very few of them touched on the area of pre-service teachers' teaching competencies and their attitudes towards the teaching profession (European Commission, 2012; Pantic & Wubbels, 2010; Peacock, 2009). The present study is a response to conduct more studies in this area.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives of the present study are:

1. to investigate the effect of the proposed training program on English primary pre-service teachers' competency level,
2. to investigate the effect of the proposed training program on English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession,
3. to investigate if there are significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to their gender, university, and internship area,
4. to investigate if there are significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession due to their gender, university, and internship area.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study listed above, eight research questions were formulated.

Four of them are on competencies while the other four are on attitudes. The questions are:

1. Does the proposed training program have any effect on English primary pre-service teachers' competency level?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the gender variable?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the university variable?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the internship area variable?
5. Does the proposed training program have any effect on English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the profession of teaching?
6. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the gender variable?
7. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the university variable?
8. Are there statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the internship area variable?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The research questions have the following corresponding null hypotheses.

1. The proposed training program has no effect on English primary pre-service teachers' competency level.

2. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the gender variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.
3. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the university variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.
4. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' competency level due to the internship area variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.
5. The proposed training program has no effect on English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the profession of teaching.
6. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the gender variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.
7. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the university variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.
8. There are no statistically significant differences in English primary pre-service teachers' attitudes due to the internship area variable before training, after training, and in the gain score.

1.7 Conceptual framework

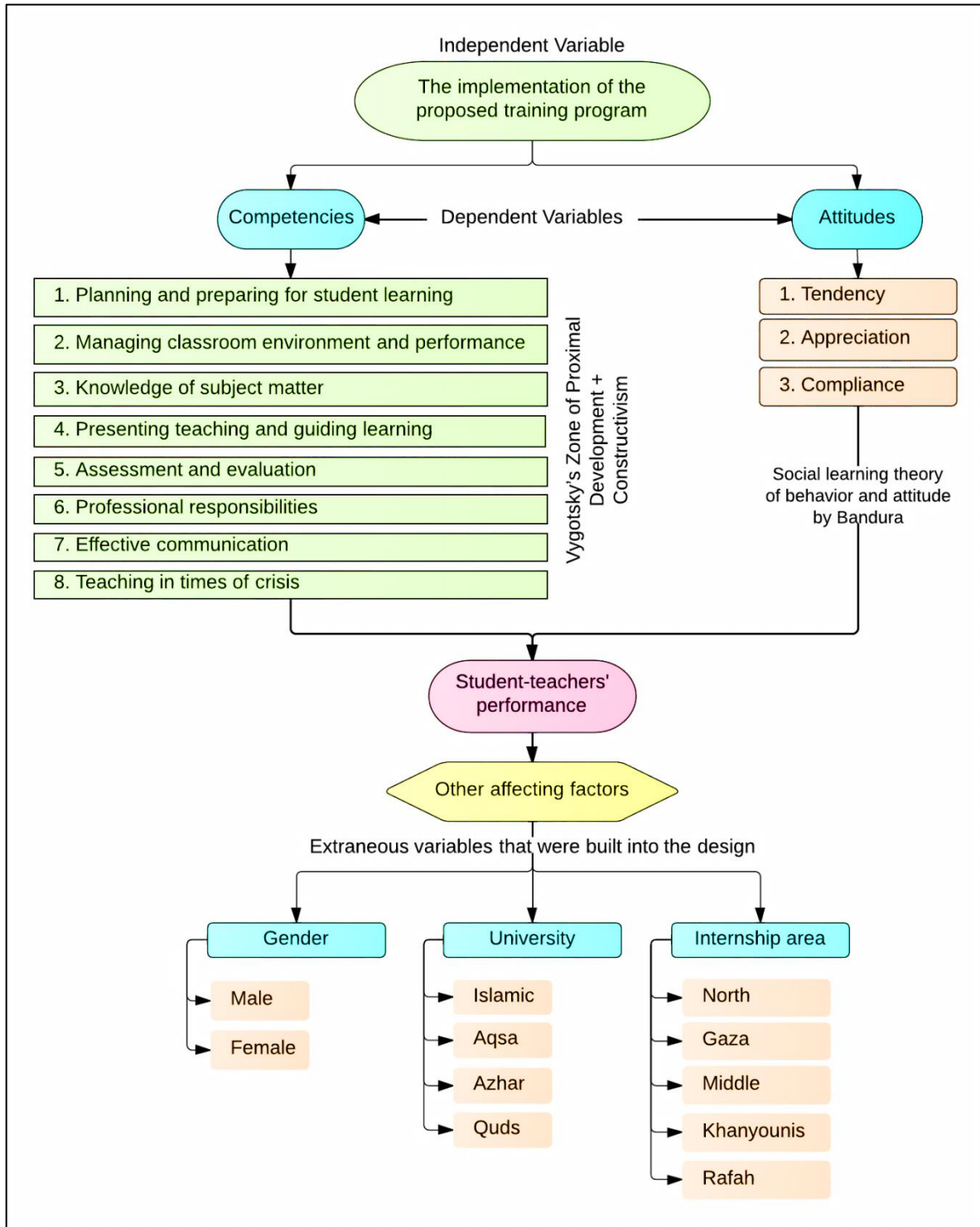


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the proposed training program on the competencies of English primary pre-service teachers and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. The conceptual framework explains the main factors, concepts, or variables that have been studied and the presumed relationships among them. It is the system of concepts and theories that support and inform the research. To explore the study questions outlined above, the researcher developed a conceptual framework as a representation of the study of key concepts, variables, and theories and the relationships among them. The independent variable in this study is the proposed training program that integrates the theoretical knowledge student-teachers learn into workable practice as a compensation for the shortcomings of the regular programs provided by universities and local institutions. English primary pre-service teachers' competencies and attitudes towards teaching are the dependent variables that were influenced by the training program causing an improvement in the pre-service teachers' performance. The framework also contains three important factors that may affect the relationship between the training program and the pre-service teachers' competencies and attitudes; namely, gender, university, and internship area.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be explained from three aspects. First, this study offers a training program that integrates theory and practice in the learning experiences of pre-service teachers and emphasizes the practical component of training. If proven effective in improving the practical competencies of the pre-service teachers and promoting positive attitudes towards the teaching profession it can compensate for the shortcomings

of the regularly criticized university programs that excessively emphasize theoretical knowledge over the practical experiences related to this knowledge.

Second, the training program provides training related to teaching an emergency-affected population of learners and providing psychosocial support to learners with trauma and disability. This component is entirely neglected by the teacher education programs in the Gaza Strip. Results of the current study can help reform the Educational Policy related to teaching learners with special needs and learners affected by the war activities, and develop an organized structure of teacher education that meets the present and future requirements of the emergency-affected population of learners.

Third, every new teacher needs to be self-reliant and maintain a positive attitude towards self-development to trace the new teaching strategies and to satisfactorily meet his/her professional responsibilities. The training program in this study encourages student-teachers' self-development and autonomous learning to develop appropriate professional skills. It also provides them with strategies of effective professional development.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study investigated the effect of a proposed training program on English primary pre-service teachers' competencies and their attitudes towards the teaching profession in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. The population of this study were English primary pre-service teachers from four universities in Gaza, namely; Al Aqsa University, the Islamic University of Gaza, Al Azhar University, and Al Quds Open University.

Only fourth-year English Primary student-teachers who met the criteria of the study could participate in the training program. The relatively small sample size of 87 and the

geographic factor of the research sites have led to the use of the single-group simple experimental design which has its limitations. However, some precautions were taken to compensate for the drawbacks of the single-group pretest-posttest design. These include holding the extraneous variables constant, excluding student-teachers who were involved in institutional training, setting a small significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.001$ to indicate the effectiveness of the training program, and triangulating the findings with a semi-structured interview (more details are found in section 3.1).

1.10 Definition of Terms

Competency: Competency refers to the essential features of a profession to be successfully carried out (Gultekin, 2006). It is also defined as knowledge and skills required to perform duties of a specific profession (Support Basic Education Project, 2006). Student teachers should possess certain competencies in order to perform their jobs successfully because the teaching profession requires specialized knowledge and skills (Sisman & Acat, 2003). Competencies develop not only through the teachers' acquisition of theoretical knowledge during their initial teacher education but mainly through the practical applications of this theoretical education (Nielsen, 2004).

Performance Indicator: Measurable behaviors that may prove whether a competency is fulfilled or not (SBEP, 2006). It is the criterion by which the performance, efficiency, or achievement of student-teachers can be assessed, often by comparison with an agreed standard or target.

Attitudes: mental predispositions or tendencies to respond positively or negatively toward a certain thing, such as persons, events, or attitude objects (McMillan, 2000). It is the

tendency which is attributed to the individual and which forms his/her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards a psychological object (Ustuner, 2006).

Teacher Education Program: an approved course of study, the completion of which indicates that a student-teacher has met all pre-stated training and educational requirements to be certified as a teacher (Young, Grant, Montbriand, & Therriault, 2001).

Teacher Education: the process of providing teacher-trainees with competencies, skills, and knowledge as a result of the teaching of practical skills and knowledge that relate to specific field of study (Barzaq, 2007). Teacher education is also defined as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Teacher education is often divided into these stages:

1. **Initial teacher education:** a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher.
2. **Induction:** the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school.
3. **Teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD):** an in-service process of training for practicing teachers.

Emergency: a crisis situation that limits the ability of a society to survive by using its resources alone (Nicolai, 2003). It is a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring an immediate set of actions.

Education in emergencies: a set of connected project activities that enable structured learning to continue in times of acute crisis, long-term instability, less local capacity and fewer resources (Nicolai, 2003). Education is critical for all children, but it is especially

urgent for the tens of millions of children affected by emergencies, be they man made or natural disasters.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical evaluation of what other researchers have done, and identifies the gap in the literature that the proposed research intended to fill. It also demonstrates the background theory relating to pre-service teacher education and other related topics such as teaching practice, microteaching, theory and practice, teachers' competencies, and teachers' attitudes. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of previous research to strengthen the present study.

2.1 Introduction to Teacher Education

Teacher education refers to the strategies and techniques designed to provide student-teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to carry out their duties successfully in the classroom, school, and local society. Initial teacher education has recently created considerable debate in both academic and policy contexts. In this new century, attention to teacher education as an object of academic research is beginning to be better valued and recognized (Korthagen et al., 2006). During the past few years, researchers have debated over the extent to which pre-service teachers are prepared before they enter real teaching environments and what counts in order for a new teacher to be considered competent enough to teach. However, the research evidence shows that good teacher education increases retention of new teachers and improves their effectiveness (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010). Recently, and on a large scale, voices of discontent with the quality of teacher preparation have been raised and called for the reformation of initial teacher education to reinforce its knowledge base, its connections to both theory and practice, and its efficiency in supporting the development of powerful teaching (Al-Omari

& Ihmeideh, 2009). Recently, research has tended to stress several issues related to teacher education. These are like relevance, quality, knowledge, competencies, and sustainability of teacher professional development. Focusing solely on the outcomes of teacher preparation programs cannot provide educational authorities with the necessary insights for reforming and improving such programs.

The primary purpose of a teacher preparation program is to provide candidates with a set of basic competencies that enable them to teach in a specific context (Banks, Shelton, Oakes, & Sutton, 2001), and cope with the challenges they encounter in their everyday teaching work. The real challenge is to help the candidate teachers put the theoretical knowledge they learn from the teacher preparation programs into practice (Cheng, Cheng, & Tang, 2010). This challenge can best be accomplished using practical approaches in which student-teachers learn by experimentation, and not by being told what will happen.

Teacher education should be a non-stop process of development that aims at encouraging teachers to keep up-to-date with methods and techniques of teaching, integrate new knowledge and explore the uses of new technology. However, this process is often divided into two stages, pre-service or initial teacher training and in-service or continuing professional education. Pre-service Teacher Education is the education and training provided to pre-service teachers before they have formally joined the teaching profession. It varies drastically from one place to another in the world in such features as structure, content, time allocation, institutional context, and practical experiences provided to student-teachers (Ben-Peretz, 1995). It also varies in how societies recognize its purpose. Despite the fact that many societies see that this training is the only professional training teachers will receive throughout their professional careers, the present inclination is

towards admitting that it is simply the first step in a longer process of professional development.

The literature related to teacher education shows that many teachers, perhaps even the majority, encounter difficulties in learning to teach during their initial training and first few years in the classroom (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Consequently, the idea of expanding the conception of teacher education and professional development is supported by most educators. This does not necessarily mean the need to increase the duration of initial or pre-service teacher education. Commonly, the pre-service preparation varies depending on what level the teacher will teach after completion of the preparation process. However, there is a new common inclination to impose the same level of preparation on all teachers, irrespective of the level they will teach (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

2.2 The Status of Pre-service Teacher Training

The quality and the nature of teacher education have been given much attention in many countries worldwide. Preparing highly qualified teachers demands constant efforts to restructure the process of teacher education (Al-Omari & Ihmeideh, 2009). In an era of rapid change, higher education institutions have been under pressure to provide high quality training to their student-teachers. Despite the remarkable efforts exerted in initial teacher preparation, numerous researchers have point out that some teacher preparation programs do not sufficiently prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of the actual work settings (Goodlad, 1990), paying excessive attention to theory and very little attention to providing student-teachers with opportunities for actual teaching practice (Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGowan, 1996). It has been concluded in many studies related to initial teacher education that many new teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared

for the difficulties and challenges they encounter during their actual teaching. (Berry, 2004; Lau, 2004). Some student-teachers plan very good classes, and then make a complete failure in front of the class. Holden (1979) believes it is primarily because they were not well-equipped with the competencies that enable them to face such a group of students, while Carroll, Forlin, and Jobling (2003) believe it is because teacher preparation programs tend to overstress the importance of obtaining knowledge and theories rather than providing students with practical skills, particularly the field-related experience that is similar to situations which occur in the real classroom. And yet, the greatest benefit of any pre-service training program is field-related practice where pre-service teachers put the learned knowledge and theories into context within real classroom settings (Richards & Clough, 2004). Many researchers have pointed out that pre-service teachers' learning is not the result of being exposed to theoretical knowledge and concepts of teaching (Korthagen, 2010). The practical experience is essential to pre-service teachers in the sense that these experiences provide them with a vital source of teaching efficacy (Liaw, 2009).

Pre-service teachers believe that most of their knowledge about teaching comes from real practice in the field or through experimentation when they enter the classroom. Many pre-service teachers are less interested in learning theories of teaching and more interested in a practical approach to teacher education (Whitbeck, 2000; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Wilke, 2004). Graduates of teacher preparation programs, supervisors, school administrators, and parents frequently complain about the irrelevance of teacher education to the reality of the actual work conditions. These complaints have created much pressure to reconsider both the policy and the practice of initial teacher education (Korthagen et al., 2006). Along with these complaints Zgaga et al. (2006)

identified two major inadequacies in teacher education worldwide. First, teacher education is predominantly, if not exclusively, focused on theoretical knowledge. Second, teacher education lacks emphasis on practical experiences related to theoretical contents, topics and competencies. This problem of mismatch between theory and practice makes the teaching practice an essential component in the process of preparing teachers (Baştürk, 2009). Mewborn (1999) emphasized that the major concern of pre-service teacher educators should be helping student-teachers to reflect on problems of practice, and consequently, identifying the challenges and difficulties student-teachers experience in their teaching. This helps in defining the quality of theoretical and practical education provided to student-teachers during their education, and in analyzing their needs. The purpose of teaching practice is to provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to practically make use of the theories and skills they learned during the period of their initial education (Sonmez & Can, 2010). Unfortunately, most, if not all, of teaching practice is placed at the end of the student-teachers' academic career. Holden (1979) argues that practice teaching should be a gradual and systematic process, very well coordinated and planned so that it can be integrated into school and the normal student's activities. It also has to be developed in close contact with the theory the student-teacher has been given in his/her recent teacher training course.

2.2.1 Models of Pre-service Teacher Education

It is difficult to prescribe one pre-service model in the world today, as heterogeneity and diversification characterize teacher education. Having gone through the teacher education programs existing in most Western Europe countries, Vonk (1995) concluded that there are two common models of pre-service teacher education. The first is called

teacher professionalism. This model is mainly grounded on the principles of understanding the subject knowledge and professional competence. In this model, teacher preparation equips student-teachers with knowledge related to pupils' learning processes and instructional skills. The second model is called the personal growth model which suggests that teachers would inevitably be better teachers if they have better self-understanding, are more reflective, more sensitive, and more fully self-actualized.

Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) presented three models of initial teacher education found in different countries around the world. Each of these three models is based on a variety of different approaches to the learning process and places a different emphasis on specific aspects of learning how to teach. The enculturation model gives emphasis to the process of social interaction in professional development. This model defines teaching as a challenging task that takes place in a material and ideological environment. The physical resources of schools, organization, and values embedded in institutional practices powerfully influence the student-teachers, and may often take the lead of the practices acquired in the institutions of teacher preparation (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). As a matter of fact, this model is technically complex because schools usually have various ideologies. Research has remarked that when trying to integrate into a new school, the challenges experienced by beginning teachers usually explain how they can discard what they learned during their pre-service teacher education or their exploration of their personal teaching style. The second model presented by Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) was the technical, or knowledge and skills model which gives emphasis to the knowledge and skills student-teachers need to acquire in order to contribute to classroom practice. Since early 1960s until late 1970s, the main focus of this model was on classroom behavior, for instance,

micro-teaching, questioning techniques or behavior control during times of transition. The technical model also emphasizes pedagogical content knowledge. In other words, it emphasizes the knowledge that experienced teachers usually have and that beginning teachers need to acquire. This includes teaching strategies, curricula, knowledge of children's growth and learning process, subject matter, and facilitating comprehension in learners (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). A third model called teaching as a moral endeavor emphasizes caring for young learners, considering their interests, influencing the way in which they live and interact with each other, and preparing them to be a part of tomorrow's society. It has been claimed that this constitutes a central aspect of teaching, which is vastly valued by teachers, parents and learners, but is not given enough concern in the professional development of teachers. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), it is the moral dimension of teaching that makes this profession unique.

Another model of pre-service teacher education is called Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE). This model describes a teacher education program in which there are specific competencies to be acquired, with corresponding explicit criteria for assessing these competencies. The emphasis in CBTE is on the observable performance of the student-teacher against the declared criteria (Ismail, Al-Zoubi, Rahman, & Al-Shabatat, 2009). Conversely, in traditional teacher training the emphasis is on entry requirements, hours of classwork, homework etc., assessed by written examinations. According to Arends, Masla, and Weber (1971) there are three criteria used to assess the student-teachers' cognitive understanding, their teaching behavior, and their teaching effectiveness. These are knowledge, performance, and product, respectively. Houston (1975) as cited in Field (1979) categorized CBTE into five phases: (1) cognitive competencies, which relate

to knowledge, intellectual skills and abilities to be demonstrated by student-teachers; (2) performance competencies, where the student-teacher should demonstrate technical and vocational skills; (3) consequence competencies, to bring change to others; (4) affective competencies, which are the attitudes and values that should be demonstrated by student-teachers; and (5) exploratory competencies, which include activities that provide opportunities for teachers to learn about teaching. CBTE is severely criticized for its lack of an empirical research foundation. No large scale research has been attempted and no significant correlations between discrete competencies and pupil learning discovered for this model.

2.2.2 Pre-service Teacher Education Standards

The president of the National Center for Education Information in the United States stated that the central issue in teacher education is getting student-teachers into real teaching environments early with mentor teachers (Feistritzer, 2001). If prospective teachers were asked what is most crucial to them in developing their teaching competence, the first and most important thing they will cite is doing it, and the second thing is working with other experienced teachers. Thus, field-based teacher preparation with mentor teachers is definitely essential. Expert in education and teaching Darling-Hammond (2010) added, in the same vein, that pre-service teacher education courses should be very much linked to application as well as theory.

Korthagen et al. (2006) analyzed three cases of initial teacher education from different continents: Institute of Education at Utrecht University, The Netherlands, Faculty of Education at Queen's University, Canada and Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia. They came out with a construction of seven standards of pre-service