THE MODERATING ROLES OF INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES ON THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ON TEACHING COMPETENCY AMONG EDUCATIONAL UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS IN WEST COAST SAUDI ARABIA

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By

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PERANAN MODERATOR VARIABEL INSTITUSI TERHADAP PENGARUH KOMUNITI PEMBELAJARAN PROFESIONAL DENGAN KOMPETENSI PENGAJARAN DALAM KALANGAN ANGGOTA FAKULTI UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN DI PANTAI BARAT ARAB SAUDI

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti peranan moderator variabel institusi terhadap pengaruh komuniti pembelajaran profesional dengan kompetensi pengajaran dalam kalangan anggota fakulti universiti pendidikan di pantai barat daya Arab Saudi. Selain itu, kajian ini juga mengkaji pengaruh komuniti pembelajaran profesional dan variabel-variabel institusi ke atas kompetensi pengajaran. Sehubungan dengan itu, sejumlah 664 ahli-ahli fakulti universiti pendidikan daripada Makkah, Madinah, Tabuk dan Jazan, barat daya Arab Saudi telah dipilih menggunakan persampelan rawak. Data yang diperoleh daripada responden dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik yang terdiri daripada tiga bahagian utama iaitu komuniti pembelajaran profesional, variabel institusi, dan kompetensi pengajaran. Semua data yang diperoleh telah dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, analisis regresi dan regresi berganda hierarki. Manakala bentuk moderator pula telah dikenal pasti dengan menggunakan kriteria Howell, Hofman dan Kerr (1986). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap keseluruhan kompetensi pengajaran dalam kalangan ahli-ahli fakulti adalah sangat tinggi. Sementara itu, tahap variabel institusi dan amalan komuniti pembelajaran profesional pula hanya pada tahap yang tinggi. Sementara itu, keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan kompetensi pengajaran secara signifikan dalam kalangan ahli-ahli fakulti berdasarkan jantina, umur, dan pengalaman mengajar. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa amalan komuniti pembelajaran profesional didapati mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap variabel institusi, dan kompetensi pengajaran. Di samping itu, dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa variabel institusi didapati mempunyai pengaruh yang sigifikan terhadap kompetensi pengajaran. Sementara itu, variabel institusi dimensi interaksi telah muncul sebagai peramal terbaik bagi kompetensi pengetahuan kandungan, dan kepuasan kerja pula bagi kompetensi pengetahuan pedagogi. Walau bagaimanapun komuniti pembelajaran profesional dimensi amalan pula telah muncul sebagai peramal terbaik bagi

kompetensi generik. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa variabel institusi seperti kepuasan kerja, interaksi, dan kolaboratif mempunyai pengaruh moderasi terhadap hubungan antara komuniti pembelajaran profesional dengan kompetensi pengajaran. Akhir sekali, hasil kajian ini juga mendapati jenis moderator yang paling banyak ditemui dalam kajian ini ialah *substitute,* dan diikuti dengan *neutralizer* dan *enhancer*. Dari segi amalan, keputusan kajin ini bermakna bahawa sokongan organisasi melalui variabel institusi seperti kepuasan kerja, interaksi dan kolaboratif mampu bertindak secara langsung ke atas peningkatan kompetensi pengajaran dengan menggantikan peranan komuniti pembelajaran profesional jika ia bertindak sebagai *substitute* Seterusnya, apabila institusi pembolehubah berfungsi sebagai *neutralizer*, maka kehadiran variabel institusi akan mengurangkan kesan komuniti pembelajaran profesional terhadap kompetensi pengajaran. Tetapi jika variabel institusi berfungsi sebagai *enhancer* maka kehadirannya dilihat sebagai pemangkin untuk meningkatkan kesan komuniti pembelajaran profesional terhadap kompetensi pengajaran. Kesimpulannya, hasil kajian ini tidak menafikan sumbangan amalan komuniti pembelajaran professional terhadap kompetensi pengajaran tetapi menerangkan cara sistem pengurusan fakulti boleh meningkatkan faktor moderator (kepuasan kerja, interaksi dan kolaboratif) untuk meningkatkan kompetensi pengajaran dalam kalangan ahli-ahli fakulti.

THE MODERATING ROLES OF INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES ON THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ON TEACHING COMPETENCY AMONG EDUCATIONAL UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS IN WEST COAST SAUDI ARABIA

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the moderating role of institutional variables on the influence of professional learning community on teaching competency among educational faculty members in west coast of Saudi Universities. Besides that, the influence of professional learning community and institutional variables on teaching competency was also studied. Accordingly, a total of 664 educational faculty members from Makkah, Madinah, Tabuk and Jazan, west coast Saudi Arabia were randomly selected by using random sampling method. The data was obtained from respondents by using a set of questionnaire consisting of three key areas – Professional Learning Community, Institutional, and Teaching Competency. All the obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, One-Way ANOVA, multiple regression analysis procedures and hierarchical multiple regression. The form of moderators in this study was identified by using Howell, Hofman and Kerrs' (1986) criteria. The findings showed that the overall level of teaching competency among faculty members is very high. Meanwhile the level of institutional variables and professional learning community practices are high. The findings also shows that there is a significant difference in teaching competency among the faculty members according to gender, age, and teaching experiences. The findings also revealed that professional learning community practices were found to have a significant influence on the institutional variables and teaching competency. The results of the study also shows that institutional variables were found to have a significant influence on teaching competency. Meanwhile, institution variables dimension of interaction have emerged as the best significant predictor for content knowledge competency, and job satisfaction for pedagogical knowledge competency among educational faculty members. While professional learning community dimension of practice has emerged as the best significant predictor for generic

knowledge competency. The findings also revealed that institutional variables such as job satisfaction, interaction, and collaboration has a significant moderating influence on the relationship between faculty members professional learning community and their teaching competency. Finally, the results of this study also found that the most type of moderator is substitute, and followed by neutralizer and enhancer. Functionally, this mean that moderation effects that inherent in this study suggests that institutional variables such as jobs satisfaction, interaction and collaboration directly affects the teaching competency if it acts as *substitute* by substituting the role of professional learning community. Next, when the institutional variables function as *neutralizer*, then the presence of institutional variables will reduce the impact of professional learning community on teaching competency. On the other hand, if the institutional variables function as *enhancer* then its presence is seen as a catalyst for improving the impact of professional learning community on teaching competency. As a conclusion, the findings of this study does not deny the contribution of professional learning community practices on teaching competency but explains how educational faculty management could use moderating factors (jobs satisfaction, interaction and collaboration) in order to enhancing the teaching competency among faculty members.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Education, being the key factor of a nation development, is the one field where great focus and emphasis must be given to its development, especially in aspects related to the enhancement and improvement of the staff development, and the enrichment and rejuvenation of the teaching competencies among the teaching force. Such development is of paramount importance as it acts as the pillar towards the growth of the education development in general. Thus, the focus and emphasis towards staff development and forming of professional learning communities is essential and vital. DuFour (2007, 2004) claims that the development related to establishment of professional learning communities with staff development, encourages the professional growth and staff development towards a better focus on learning through the academic staff. This was strongly supported by Nolan and Hoover (2004) which stated that in order to enhance and nurture positive growth of professional development and competencies among the academic staff, instructional supervision plays an important role and has been identified as an integral component of staff

development, and not as a separate activity. In relevant to this, Dufour, Eaker and Dufour (2005) stated that developing collaborative work platform in actual situation develops the capacity of teachers that supports their professional growth. Coherently, the practices of professional learning communities bring benefits to educators as it provides the avenues to the educators to share and enhance their knowledge and practices related to their teaching and enriching their teaching competency (Goleman, 2001; Hoffmann, 2009; Spencer & Spencer, 2012; Ganzach, 2003).

Auger and Wideman (2009) claimed that the goal of any professional development basically contributes towards the enhancement of educational experiences and learning that are derived by educators as learners. Therefore, in general, a comprehensible judgment derived substantiates that instructional supervision models containing elements and characteristics of professional learning communities can help to support the educators' growth and learning (Aseltine, Judith & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2006). According to the researchers, new approaches to instructional supervision focus on the professionalism of teaching by supporting teachers to play a critical role in determining the focus of their professional efforts and competency.

In relation to this, when discoursing matters related to modelling a professional community with appropriate staff development and teaching

competencies, there are varied contributing variables that prominently brings an influence, generally from pre-school to tertiary education (Bezzina, 2006: Buffum & Hinman, 2006). Meanwhile, Fullan (2006) claimed that there are five dimensions that gauge the institutionalization of the development of a learning community especially at the tertiary or higher education, namely philosophy and mission of service-learning, faculty support for involvement in- service learning, student support for and involvement in service-learning, community participation and partnerships and institutional support for service-learning.

Hence, the issues of quality practice in higher education are influenced by varied reasons as it has not been approached through the development of field-wide standards. It is strongly believed that there is a strong body of knowledge in the field about the existence of variables that supports and sustains successful service-learning and community engagement at both the individual and institutional levels.

The tertiary education or higher education is increasingly important at any nation's agendas. The widespread understanding and recognition that tertiary education is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge based global economy has paved toward focusing on the importance on high quality tertiary education. The imperative for countries is to raise higher-level of employment skills, to sustain a globally competitive

research base and to improve knowledge dissemination to the benefit of the society and the nation.

Undoubtedly, a university's education is essential for the progress of society, growth and development and welfare. Therefore, great attention has been paid to improve the educational quality of students by selecting faculty members who are well qualified, experienced, and certified (DuFour, 2004). Therefore, the faculty members being the key knowledge dissemination element and bridge, plays an important role in preparing new generations for the required human capital of a nation.

In relation to this, in this study, the researchers will give attention towards the understanding of the extension and level of teaching competencies among the faculty members in Saudi Arabian Universities, apart from identifying the contributing factors affecting the level of teaching competencies of the faculty members and the relating variables that influences and effects the teaching competencies of the faculty members.

Pertinent to this, it is therefore important to comprehend the general overview of Saudi Arabia as a country, its education policy, the education system and socio-cultural background of its educational entities. Apart from that, the issues and matters that will also be converged and culminated in this

chapter would be on the matters related to the institutional variables, professional learning community variables, teaching competency as well as the underlying principles of four main research objectives and four main research questions addressed by the researcher in this study. This is followed by the significance, rationale of the current research, and definition of terms existing in this chapter.

Relatively, in order to scrutinize thoroughly on the matters focused on this research, it is necessary to understand the background of the research.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1. Higher Education Evolution in Saudi Arabia

Generally, since the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1952, a great emphasis and prominence have been placed in the field of education in Saudi Arabia. This means that education is free for people of all age groups in all levels, beginning from kindergarten, elementary, middle, secondary, and university (Ministry of Education, 1974). However, according to Al-Khatib (2010: 187) "The First Development Plan (1970-75) emphasized on the construction of primary, intermediate and secondary schools in the major population centers while providing for the establishment of technical and managerial training centers. Between 1970 and 1983, the number of schools in

Saudi Arabia rose from 3,107 to more than 13,400, an average annual growth of 13.1 percent". Moreover, the Ministry of Education introduced a new policy by dividing the educational system into three main categories include, general education, higher education and technical and vocational education. General education consists of six years of elementary school, beginning at age six, three years of intermediate and three years of general secondary school (Abdulaziz, 2004).

The second phase of the educational system in Saudi Arabia is the technical education and vocational training in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which started in the early 1950s and it was integrated with general education (Al-Issawi, 2004). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Higher Education which was established in 1975 (Abdulaziz, 2004) offers education facility and training holistically in almost all of the human aspects.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2011), higher education in Saudi Arabia has undergone a tremendous growth over the last five decades and has expanded tremendously, including 20 public universities, 18 primary teacher's colleges for men, 80 primary teacher's colleges for women, 37 colleges and institutes for health, 12 technical colleges, and 24 private universities and colleges (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011).

1.2.1. Teaching Competency in Saudi Arabia Higher Education

Until today, comprehensive empirical studies which explain the teaching status competency among faculty members till date are rarely being conducted. There are only three studies (Darusalam, 2008; Sara, 2005; Al-Shami, 2004) which were carried out among non-educational members (among faculty members in engineering or other faculties from the standing perspective of students or lecturers), and a report teaching competency by students-teacher performed by the Ministry of Education Report (2011). Throughout the reports, the phases of teaching competency among the lecturers and students teachers are very low. Although the reports show the teaching competency phases are low, all the reports have their descriptive nature, non-causal effects and are done in non-educational faculty settings.

Darusalam (2008) explained that due to the tremendous accelerated intensification of building prominence on the institutions of higher education, and the fast growth of these institutions, some important areas in regards to teaching abilities and competencies were not given prior attention or appropriate weightage apart from the other elements in regards to the management of studies and curricula. Apart from that, Darusalam (2008) and Al-Shami (2004) also reported that the impacts of the developments are few niche while important elements were left alone to progress simultaneously or cultivate itself. These areas undoubtedly pose themselves as factors that hinder to some extend a mismatch to the real focus and aim of the

formation of these universities, particularly in regards to teaching competencies and highlighting of the professional development and professional learning community.

Meanwhile, Sara (2005) described one of the reasons behind the lack of impressiveness of teaching competency phase among the lecturers. This is because most universities did not obtain special educational preparation in the curricula, ways and methods of teaching, methods in dealing with students and other educational matters necessary for teacher and educator. Not only that, Sara (2005) also explained that usually a faculty member is assigned after receiving a high degree in one of the branches of different science. Such appointment is done without the consideration of the adequacy in tutoring or proficiency, and perhaps even without taking into account the personality traits that should be a fundamental criterion for the faculty member. If there is a lack of teaching competencies, professional and personal characteristics of the faculty member, then tutoring should not be exercised, until receiving enough educational training to qualify the instructors for different roles. This is a matter that needs to be identified but the fact is that many institutions of higher education consider the certificate as a criterion for hiring its instructors, since there is no alternative solution except the improvement and development of performance during the exercise of the teaching.

Professional development is a set of operations and a continuous process that starts with the identification and analysis of individuals' needs, then the design of

appropriate programs to those needs, followed by the application of these designed programs, then the monitoring of the impact on individuals and finally, the evaluation of their feasibility, the strengths and weaknesses (Sara, 2005). In this observation, the study of Darusalam (2008), Sara (2005), Al-Shami (2004), and Ministry of Higher Education (2011) discovered that there is an insufficient emphasis on professional development. In addition, support from the management in providing institutional variables in institutions of higher education leads to lack of teaching competency among the lecturers. This issue being discussed in the Ministry of Higher Education's report (2011: 225) are as follows:

- the faculty member is not being professionally prepared but scientifically, which requires gaining teaching experience required for the success in his work.
- the explosion of knowledge leads to several changes in the way and curricula that requires the lecturer to follow up with the new development in the field of knowledge by the faculty member, to maintain the academic level, and increase the functional abilities and skills.
- the increasing growth of awareness that the instructor does not succeed in the work relying solely on knowledge, but with the aid of way and style of teaching, which requires expertise and skills that help to fulfil multiple roles and duties.

Altogether, it can be concluded that teaching competency means it is the set of processes aimed to change the skills, attitudes and behaviour of faculty members in order for them to be more efficient and effective to meet the needs of the university community besides the needs of the faculty members themselves, those who are responsible for these operations are the university, the college, or other of professional institutions for the development of the faculty member professionally so that they can achieve the functions of the university or college. Consequently, various factors that have been identified as contributing factors boost teaching competency among the university lecturers. As for the purpose of this study, the factors are described in the subtopic below.

1.2.2 Professional Learning Communities

The terms Professional Learning Communities has been woven and linked in the literatures of Educational Leadership and professional development since the late 1990s. Initiated from Hord in 1997, she outlined a new construct for educational organizational development and improvement. The construct brought forward the idea of learning organization filtered through as learning communities which was developed into the new construct of The Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

Hord (1997) claimed that learning organizations should institute change in practice and curriculum centered based on five principles namely (a) shared leadership, (b) collective creativity, (c) shared values and vision, (d) shared personal

practices, (e) supportive conditions. Relatively, Buffum and Hinman (2006) stated that PLC functions as the catalyst of collaborations, as the educators is no more an independent entity that are loosely affiliated to teaching but collaborative team members who share lesson and best practices, which becomes a method that battles away educators isolation. This was supported by Dufour and Eaker (2008) that traditional educators work in isolation, while the educators of professional learning communities share ideas about practices.

In relation to this, Buffum and Hilman claimed that PLC gives structure to a collaboration that should be happening with every professional in a field. The main problem is that teaching profession has been inherently non-collaborative (DuFour, 1999). Hord (1997) lamented the fact that generally, the public and professionals believe to the connotations that the legitimate use of time of the educators begins during the time of confronting with the students. However, the actual truth is beyond this. Meanwhile, Burant (2009) came out with three constructs of professional learning community comprising of a policy (improvement of teaching and learning), program (work collaboratively), and practices (commitment to continuous improvement) and link it with personal and professional growth.

Based on this, it is evident that Professional Learning Communities is an essential tool which ensures betterment of professional growth of educator and

enhance of personal competencies. Educators cannot help students to learn in a higher level unless they work together collaboratively (Burant, 2009; Barth, 2005) and a strong professional communities encourages collective endeavors rather than isolated individual efforts (Senge, 1999, 2000; Senge, Lucas, McCube, et al., 2000). In the team organizational management, studies by Hipp (2011), Servage (2009), Fullan (2006), Hipp and Huffman (2006), Haris (2006), Bezzina (2006), Wells and Feun (2007), and Sharp (2003) discovered that PLC is able to increase collegiality, and continuous improvement, which pursues a greater range of interaction about instruction (observation, shared planning). Little (2012), and DuFour and Burnette (2002) found PLC reduces the attention to school wide goals, isolation among teachers and vice versa, it increases job satisfaction and commitment. Not only that, Burant (2009), Joyee (2009, 2004), LuFee (2003), DuFour, Eaker and Karhanek (2004) discovered that PLC increase responsibility to improve students' learning.

1.2.3. Teaching Competency

Competency is derived from the word "competence" which means "to be suitable" (Hofmann, 1999). Competency is addressed as a set of behavior of the managers and staff during the implementation of duty and responsibility well in relation to professional endeavorment (Boyatzis, 1982; Hoffmann, 1999; Spencer and Spencer, 2012; Boyatzis, 1982). Meanwhile, Saedah (2006), Al-Shami (2004), and Hofman (1999) defined teaching competency as a set of abilities, knowledge and

belief which a teacher possesses in producing effective teaching and learning process and it contains three main divisions, namely, content knowledge competency, pedagogical knowledge competency, and generic knowledge competency.

Studies by Shulman et al, (1986, 1987), Grossman (1990), Boyatzis (1982), Spencer and Spencer (2012), Goleman (2001), Hassan (2011), Florence (2007), and Andries (2006) discovered teaching competencies have an influence on teachers' job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Garret (2008), Zid (2008), Capenter, Peterson and Carey (1988), Zohat and Marshall (2012) found social weaknesses can prevent the competence and knowledge of effective pedagogical competence. In the meantime, Zohat and Marshall (2012), Hashweh (1985), and McClelland (2006) discovered in their study that instructors who have a low level of competency were found to have failed to maximize knowledge and technical skills in creative and innovative mode, less motivated, and commitment to change; less self-efficacy in the ability to communicate effectively. Next, researchers like Spencer and Spencer (2012), and McClelland (2006) stated that institutional factors like employer's support, training, job satisfaction, collaboration, efficiency and effectiveness in management of an organization is found to have an influence on competency possessed by a teacher.

1.2.4. Institutional Variables

According to Clark (2007), and Clark and Oswald (2006), issues of allocating resources to effectively improve the teaching competency is one of the major

problems faced by educational researchers and policymakers. Meanwhile, Reyes (2002), and Kaplan and Owings (2002) stated that organizational support through allocating resources in an organization were distributed through various forms and one of them is in the form of institutional variables. Al-Akash (2005) stated that institutional variables are the entities that act as the contributing elements that work towards the enhancement of the educators' self qualities towards achieving self development and satisfaction and fulfillment in regards to work. Clark (2007) on the other hand stated the opportunities to attend training to improve the professionalism, supplying the equipment needed to complete a task; encourage collaboration, enhance two-way interaction, enhance involvement, encourage positive attitude like satisfaction and commitment on the organization. Even in the educational context, this support is in the form of more commonly known as institutional variables such as feedback, recognition, justice, collaborative problem solving, encourage bilateral discussions, member's training to boost their professionalism, and physical support (equipment to improve the quality of teaching and learning) are found to have a positive impact on the satisfaction and commitment towards teaching quality (Billingsley & Cross, 2002; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 2007). In addition, Barry, Dent and O'Neill (2002); George, Reed, Ballard, Colin and Fielding (2013), and Houston et al.,(2006) discovered that the institutional variables act as moderator on the relationship between learning organization with the change of attitude, perception and behavior of members of the organization such as involvement in learning organization and teaching competency.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Professional Learning Communities is currently one of the hottest trends in educational leadership. DuFour (2004) acknowledges that the idea of improving educational institutions by developing professional learning communities is currently in vogue. It is evident that Professional Learning Communities is an essential tool which ensures the betterment of professional growth of educators while enhancing personal and professional competencies. A strong professional community encourages collegiality; continuous improvement, pursuing a greater range of interaction about instruction (Hipp, 2011; Servage, 2009; Burant, 2009; Joyee, 2009; Fullan, 2006; Haris, 2006; Bezzina, 2006). However, if the competencies of the educators are weak or mal-nurtured, then it leads to decrease in work satisfaction and detrimental to teaching variables instead (Hipp, 2011; Burant, 2009).

Relatively, in the Universities in Saudi Arabia, the processes are designed with intentions to increase the professional knowledge, to enhance the abilities and skills of the faculty members pertinent to the needs of the university and community (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). The establishment and institutionalization of such programs will reflect positively on the development of quality in teaching performance and competency apart from the production of quality outputs from the higher education institution. Apparently, from the perspective of educational literature and development, there is a lack as very few researches have been done

among faculty members in Saudi Arabia Higher Institutes. Therefore, this study is expected to clarify the roles of professional learning community in improving the teaching competency in Saudi Arabia Higher Education Institute environment.

Another perturbing issue in higher education in universities at Saudi Arabia is related to the teaching competency among the university educators (Al-Subaie, 2010: Subaihi, 2009). Competency has been defined as the degree to which individuals can apply the skills and knowledge associated with a profession to the full range of situations that fall within the domain of that particular profession (Queeney, 1996). In relation to this, Al-Shami (2004) and Matrafi (2009) studied teaching competency among the faculty members at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia discovered that the faculty members evidently lacks of teaching competency. Following this, Al-Subaie (2010) conducted a study that examines teaching competency among the faculty members in the faculty science at Umm Al-Qura University. Consistently, Al-Subaie (2010) noticed that the findings showed similar condition where the level of teaching competency among the faculty members is found to be low. At the university in Saudi Arabia, supports in the form of institutional variables always become an important issue (Darussalam, 2008). For example, the study by Darusalam (2008), Sara (2005) and Ministry of Higher Education (2011) found that there is a lack of emphasis on professional development in institutions of higher education and the management support in the form of providing institutional variables such as encourage collaboration, enhancing two-way interactions,

encouraging positive recognition such as job satisfaction, and providing training. The absence of these supports has led to a low level of teaching competency among lecturers. Furthermore, the teachers who have low competency level were found to have failed to build up knowledge and technical skills in creative and innovative way, they have the least motivation and commitment to change; least of self-efficacy, and ability to communicate effectively (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer 2012; Goleman, 2001; Hassan, 2011; Florence, 2007; Andries, 2006).

Unfortunately, until today, comprehensive empirical studies which explain the teaching status competency among faculty members are scarcely being done. From previous studies, it is discovered that the institutional variables may act as moderator on the relationship between professional learning community and teaching competency. But, up till date, there is a lack of researches conducted in linking all these three variables especially in the Saudi Arabia background. Therefore, the current research is the first empirical study to be done among the education faculty members in light of hope to narrow the existence of literature gap. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the condition and level of teaching competency among the educational faculty members in Saudi Arabia universities. Moreover, this study also aims to gain greater understanding of the factors affecting teaching competency among the faculty members and attempts to identify the influence of professional learning communities on enhancing faculty members teaching competency through the role of institutional variables.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Generally, the purpose of this study is to identify the influences of professional learning community and institutional variables on teaching competency among educational faculty members in Arab Saudi Universities. Relatively, the key focus of this study is to examine the relationships among factors identified which are potentially related to it. Thus, in accomplishing this purpose, the objectives of the study are to determine:-

1. The level of teaching competency among the faculty members in West Coast Saudi Arabia universities.
2. The differences in the level of teaching competency among the faculty members, attributed to the following demographic characteristics (gender, age, and teaching experience).
3. The influences of professional learning community on the teaching competency among the faculty members
4. The influence of professional learning community on the institutional variables among the faculty members
5. The influence of institutional variables on the teaching competency among the faculty members
6. The best predictor of teaching competency among the institutional variables and professional learning community variables

7. The role of institutional variables as moderator in the relationship between faculty members' professional learning community and their teaching competency.

1.5 Research Questions

Pertaining to the objectives of the above, the following are the research questions that the research attempts to clarify in this study:-

1. What is the level of teaching competency among the faculty members at West Coast Saudi Arabia universities?
2. What are the differences in the level of teaching competency among the faculty members, attributed to the following demographic characteristics (gender, age, and teaching experience)?
3. Does the professional learning community have a significant influence on the teaching competency among the faculty members?
4. Does the professional learning community have a significant influence on the institutional variables among the faculty members?
5. Do the institutional variables have a significant influence on the teaching competency among the faculty members?
6. Is there a significant predictor of teaching competency among the professional learning community and institutional variables?

7. Do the institutional factors moderate the relationship between faculty members' professional learning community and their teaching competency?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

There are 6 main hypothesis formulated to test the validity of the stated hypothesis are formed under the Null Hypothesis and the validity will be tested using the significant level of $\alpha<.05$. The hypotheses are as follows:

Ho:1 There are no significant differences of teaching competency among the faculty members according demographic characteristics (Gender, Age, and Teaching Experience).

Ho:1.1 There are no significant differences of teaching competency according to gender.

Ho:1.2 There are no significant differences of teaching competency according to age.

Ho:1.3 There are no significant differences of teaching competency according to teaching experience.

Ho:2 There is no significant influence of professional learning community on the teaching competency among the faculty members.

Ho:3 There is no significant influence of the professional learning community on the institutional variables among the faculty members.

Ho:4 There is no significant influence of the institutional variables on the teaching competency among the faculty members.

Ho:5 There is no significant predictor of teaching competency based on the professional learning community and institutional variables.

Ho:6 There is no significant moderating influence of the institutional factors on the relationship between professional learning community and teaching competency.

Ho:6.1 There is no significant moderating influence of the institutional factors on the relationship between professional learning community and teaching competency dimension of policy.

Ho:6.2 There is no significant moderating influence of the institutional factors on the relationship between professional learning community and their teaching competency dimension of program.

Ho:6.3 There is no significant moderating influence of the institutional factors on the relationship between professional learning community and their teaching competency dimension of practice.

1.7 Rationale of the Study

Former researches indicated that competence has a strong effect on the quality of education. Pertinent to this, the motivating factor inspiring this study was the urge besides the need to identify the level of teaching competencies among the faculty members and the factors affecting the faculty members' competencies. Identifying the level of competency among the faculty members will help the stakeholders and policymakers of the faculty to have a wider understanding and knowledge of the specific skills and knowledge that should be given emphasis and enhance the competency of the teaching staff.

In addition to this, the findings of this study should substantially contribute to the general knowledge in providing information about the assessment of teaching competency and also about the factors affecting teaching competency among the university educators. In relevance to this, in investigating this issue, it would in return help to determine the relevant professional development programs that are required to enhance lecturers' competency. Likewise, the results of this study will serve to inform academic administrators of the Universities in Saudi Arabia concerning the matters in relation and contributing elements of teaching competency in order to develop the quality of education in higher education scenario.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Significantly, the importance of this study is an attempt to promote faculty professional growth and improvements in teaching effectiveness. This is in parallel and consistent with a number of researchers (e.g. Matrafi-2009; Rehab, 1998; Massad, 1997; Rajab, 1998) whom have identified the importance of developing the academic performance among the faculty members due to the fact of the globalization of the challenges faced by the higher education perimeter. This study is significant because it is adopting a self-evaluation method and the results of the study will provide noteworthy information on the nature of preferred contents of professional development activities.

Finally, this study will be an important integral and constituent in assisting planning executed for the developmental needs of faculty teaching staff at the universities in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the results of this study are important in the following aspects:

a. The findings of this research will contribute to future development of teaching competency of the faculty members.
b. The findings of this research can assist in future policy planning in Saudi Arabia, particularly with regards to the teaching competency of the faculty members.

c. The study can landmark substantial contributions to the existing researches related to teaching competency of the faculty members.
d. The findings, recommendations, and suggestions of this study could be shared with relevant institutions worldwide.

1.9. Limitations of the Study

This study is a cross-sectional research using a questionnaire to get the data from respondents and the respondents of this study involves only educational faculty members. Therefore, all the answers given by the respondents are based on either perceived or self- measurement (self-report). The use of self measurement is still a disputed issue in social science research such as respondent biasness (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Thus, generalizations are only made to the context of educational faculty in West Coast of Saudi Arabia only.

Since this the first comprehensive empirical study done to explain the teaching status competency among faculty members and to discover the role of institutional variables as moderator on the relationship between professional learning community and teaching competency, there is a lack in literature especially in the context of educational faculty in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the current research is having problems in getting relevant research literatures and inevitably, it has to use