RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LECTURERS’ PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE, TEACHING ENVIRONMENT AND CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICES AT AL-BAHA UNIVERSITY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work

To my revered father Dr. Hajjad Alghamdi who gives me confidence and boasts my morale to proceed with my studies until his intention is fully achieved...

To my dear mother Umm Khaled who for the past years patiently awaits my success story and with whose prayers and love, I accomplished this work...

To my beloved lovely wife Eman and sons Hajjad, Ahmed, Salman and Ammar whose strangeness and patience for seven years assist me in seeing the end of this journey...

To my brothers Khaled, Omar, Meshal and Sultan, as well as my lovely sisters, relatives and friends who greatly inspired my life for the completion of this thesis...
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ABDULKHALIQ HAJJAD ALGHAMDI
ABSTRACT

University lecturers are both educators and facilitators to university students to enhance the dynamics and effectiveness of the educational process. Lecturers’ professional competence and their teaching environments are two factors that influence the students’ performance through effective classroom teaching practice. However, in a university the concept of classroom teaching practices is easily overlooked as it is generally believed that the university academics have acquired professional competence and the teaching environment is judged to be conducive. Recent research indicated that university lecturers lack adequate competencies in managing the classrooms, and this issue has not been adequately addressed. Thus, the main objective of this study is to examine the extent to which professional competence and teaching environment determine the classroom teaching practice among lecturers. A mixed method design was employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data using questionnaire were gathered from 800 lecturers while seven lecturers were interviewed for qualitative information at Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia. Quantitative data were analysed using mean, percentage, Pearson correlation, one way Anova and multiple regressions. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analysed thematically to support quantitative findings. The results from the analyses confirmed that factors concerning human, teaching, technology, evaluation, and cultural competencies were from the professional competence aspect. On the other hand, control of teaching, size of classroom, support from faculty and students’ characteristics were from the lecturers’ teaching environment component which are significant determinants of the classroom teaching practice among lecturers of this university. Therefore, the study concludes that university students’ performance would be enhanced if the competencies of lecturers are improved with the provision of a conducive classroom teaching environment. Hence, it is recommended that the authorities in the university should pay more attention to these factors to improve lecturers’ classroom teaching practices aimed towards effective management of classroom activities.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Developing competences requires an analysis of the social, economic, and political context. Competence is needed in all works of life in organization or any setting. For example in the educational realm, lecturers are required to be competent to make the teaching students-centered. Competence should be understood as a collective and system-wide effort. In Saudi Arabia, competence profiles serve as the cornerstone of teachers’ development to bring about successful learning outcomes. That is, not only that the level of competence among academic staff would bring about better performance of the students at various level of studies but also would assist in their behaviours in the classrooms.

The issue of competence has become the concern of all countries (Merriënboer, Van, Van der Klink & Hendriks, 2002). Bourgonje and Tromp (2011) are of the opinions that the formulation of a common vision of desired competences should be an inclusive process with all stakeholders. The concept of competence has a long history in education, training, research and practice. However, there is no consensus on definitions of concept or what constitutes it (Kouwenhoven, 2003). Kouwenhoven (2003) puts it quite clearly that the lack of a generally accepted operational definition of competence is generally acknowledged. The conceptual meaning of competence varies throughout different countries and cultures (Edwards, Sánchez-Ruiz & Sánchez-Díaz, 2009). For example, in the USA the term competency is used in generic way different from what it means (Kouwenhoven, 2003; Smith, 1999; Merriënboer, Van, Van der Klink & Hendriks, 2002).
Amongst the many factors that contributing to education quality, it is widely recognized that lecturers play a crucial role. It is even argued out that lecturers’ quality is the contributing factor to students’ achievement. Researchers, policy makers, programme designers and evaluators (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2005) therefore, are looking for ways of understanding lecturers’ competence. Lecturer’s competence is one way of looking at a quality education. At present, around the world, many reforms in te education are oriented towards making lecturer’s education more functional for the development of competences lecturers’ need in practice. However, competence standards for lecturers and routine classroom practices are increasingly being designed to meet the students’ outcome. Lectureship is a strategic position in supporting the process and results of the overall educational system. The lecturer’s professional competence in mastering the teaching content and method affects positively students’ performances in the classroom (Anggraeni, 2013). The competence of a lecturer in the university is to acts as an educator and facilitator to university students in order to enhance the dynamics and effectiveness of the educational process. According to Anggraeni (2013), lecturer’s performance requires their personal competence including skill practices, behaviour, creativity, and self-development efforts. The competence of academic staff among the universities in Saudi has been examined (e.g., Al Dawood, 2007; Basfar, Amer, and Mohammad 2011; Ashehry, 2012) but no specific one has been conducted in Al-Baha. The competence of the lecturers however has been put under question as the performance of the students has been dropping in recent time (Abulatefah 2014). Meanwhile, Abulatefah (2014) reveals that the performance of students at Al-Baha was lower than expectation. The author attributed the finding to the level of competence among the academic staff of the university and the teaching environment. It was argued that teaching strategies adopted by the academia in the university might be one of the major factors responsible to their overall lower performance of the students.

Teaching environment is claimed to be one of the factors that helps students academically especially the university environment. According to Queensland Department of Education, (2005) safe and caring teaching environment allows students to participate actively in the various activities, engage seriously in their
study, regulate their behaviour, and know of the explicit criteria and high expectations of what they are to achieve.

Also, Teaching environment is an inherently social act in which teacher is responsible for the teaching and perceived as a purveyor of the knowledge and student as a recipient (Gaff & Wilson, 1971). Teaching environment is a condition that surrounds the work place (Al-Otaibi 2009). The initiatives to take care of the teaching environment have started taking shape worldwide. Some major universities are already beginning to do so with organizing conferences and seminars on advancing university learning (Markwell, 2003). Putting it specifically, the urgent need to enhance the university learning and teaching is increasingly recognised by the Saudi Arabia government, especially among the newly established universities like Al-Baha. Studies have shown the fast and effective steps taken by the Saudi government to improve the teaching and learning environment (Al-Sharqi, Hashim & Ahmed, 2015; Alkubaisi, 2014; ) in the country for its awareness that contributes to educational success stories either now or in the future. However, most of these studies were conducted in old universities in the Kingdom.

It is unfortunate that few studies directly help lecturers to build the human relations skills necessary and a collegial environment (Vermunt, 1998). It has been clear for some time that student’s learning depends on a complex of influences from the whole teaching-learning environment (Entwistle, 1987; Biggs, 1993; Entwistle, 2003). Furthermore, research has offered a clear and relatively straightforward conceptual framework for thinking about ways of improving teaching and learning in higher education (Entwistle, McCune & Hounsell, 2002).

Interestingly, the majority of development and growth opportunity for addressing students’ outcome or lecturers focuses on the creation of effective learning environments inside the classroom. The focus signifies the importance of classroom practices. The classroom practice level is not simply a list of discrete behaviours that should be ticked off in the educational progress. This was deliberate because when lecturer enters the classroom or he/she draws on different kinds of knowledge, an array of strategies and tools that he/she can use for students
The classroom practice is said be actively practiced in a communicative language teaching in most of the universities across the globe. Findings of the study revealed that lecturers are more concerned with the completion of syllabus but reflective teaching is rarely practiced (Mathew, 2012). Mathew (2012) further emphasizes on the lack of classroom practices in many universities by saying that “lecturing and explanation are predominant methodologies for classroom instruction while the scope for interactive instruction is too narrow due to too many constraints”. The significance of classroom practices should be emphasized in the university for its advantages to teaching and learning outcomes.

Further, it is generally believed among the academia that teaching is centered upon innovation and generation of novel ideologies. The university teacher is a generator of those new ideas that shall be of use to the community at large (Slovenia 2015). The university teachers are commonly taken as experts in teaching and research in order to serve the community. So, University as a higher learning and teaching institution prepare students for a world in which change is given and creativity is a requirement (Mathew, 2012). The reason is that, the university students are those who are the agents of positive change in the society at large. Therefore, in order to achieve all these objectives, Slovenia (2015) suggests that, the teaching in the university must be refined and well structured.

Accordingly, Al-Zahir (2005) opines that, the university teaching needs a highly qualified lecturer with knowledge, experience, and moral. He further says that, the competence of university lecturers cannot be measured with knowledge of subject content in their specialization and what knowledge they possess, conceptions and theories alone, their competence in teaching should also be measured by their teaching assessment because the university teaching requires staff who has been effectively trained professionally and knowledge wise. He or she should use modern university teaching method that reflects in brainstorming and discussion method while teaching the students. The role of university lecturer is not only to teach the students or answer their questions but also as a facilitator to the students, encourage them on discussion in the class, and assist them in terms of research. The importance
of university teaching generally is as stressed by Chong-Cheng (1997) that, the overall goal of university teaching is to promote national unity. He added that teaching and learning in university has changed to a process of an interactive planned communication between teacher as a knowledge guider and student as a knowledge developer.

Al-Otaibi (2009) noted that, the significance of teaching in the university is to contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and thought of human societies. Chong-Cheng (1997) cited the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) as an example where teaching and learning is to assist the academic staff to understand more about the teaching–learning procedure that will enable them to improve their students as an educational outcome with the use of different teaching-learning methods. Specifically in Saudi, the importance of teaching in University is either on teaching or research and community services. According to the Saudi Ministry of Higher Learning (2000) teaching and learning in Saudi Universities must be to teach, conduct scientific research, write books, translate, publish and serve the community (p.15).

The nature of teaching in university is also crucial. Al-‘Iesa (2011) explained that the nature of teaching in the university is not attractive, particularly, the faculty are not encouraged because of workload, supervision, the rapid increase in number of learners and less financial motivation. He further said that, when the Saudi Government recognizes this, it improves the university teachers in terms of salary except that, the time of work is not decreased, other responsibilities, favoring the Saudi lecturers on foreign lecturers which results to non satisfaction of the expatriate lecturers, lack of accountability, and lack of acknowledgement to the hardworking staff.

Although, the importance of teaching in university is emphasized, except that studies examining lecture’s background, professional competence, teaching environment that will lead to the desired variables of lecturer’s classroom practices and bring us the improvement of lecturers’ classroom practices are few. Al-‘Iesa (2011) emphasized on the crisis of teaching in Saudi Universities with little chance,
learning and teaching outcome and classroom practices before the King Abdullah introduces sciences and technology into teaching in Saudi universities.

1.2 Background of Study

In the world today, competence is required to become a professional to certify the employees as well as to develop them. In the world of education, there is a dire need for qualified and experienced lecturer who will raise the society to have community of learning and teaching of high students who can work on the educational challenges (Harrison, 2004). To Epstein and Hundert (2002) professional competence takes the shape of lecturer’s ability to use judicious communication, knowledge, skills, reasoning, values to benefit in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy. With the rapidly changing environment in the higher institutions, it makes sense to promote educational environment to give students the confidence to become independent and life-long the individual learning community he/she serves. This definition signifies the importance of professional competence to ensure the continuity of a lecturing profession.

Professional competence is a must for lecturers in education. However, its conceptual meaning of competence varies from country to another and from one higher learning institution to other across the learning cultures (Edwards, Sánchez-Ruiz & Sánchez-Díaz, 2009).

The governments of each country strive to maintain the standard of education to increase the competency standards. Trinder (2008) argues that science universities are responsible for educational development. The university also requires to be having competent lecturers who can raise standard to meet with the world challenges today. He further argues that, competence is relevant because it has been achieved in many countries of the world namely; United Kingdom, USA, Canada and Australia with a slightly different standard relevant to each country. However, in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, the lecturers’s professional competence has not been realised (Al-‘Iesa, 2011). Most of the professional competence programmes
organized have not yield expected outcomes as the performance of students have not improve as planned by the Ministry of Higher Education (Al-Ghamdi & Li, 2011).

Higher education is becoming a major driver of economy learners (Allan & Clarke, 2007). In creating supporting learning and teaching environment for students there should be the type of skill-oriented outcomes which students are expected to learn and the kind of learning activities which are likely to result to the students desired outcomes including who students learn with and where students best learn. With regards to this aspect, both Peters (2000) and Biggs (2003) posit learning activities that constitute an effective learning and teaching environment. Both suggest that self-study which might be guided or self-directed is a key component. Biggs makes a distinction between teaching and learning environment that is lecturer centered and the one that is student centered while Peters records the significance of taking part in teaching events at the university. For deeply emphasizing on the teaching environment, studies show that students’s learning is dependent on a complex of influence from the whole teaching-learning environment (Entwistle, 1987; 2003; Biggs, 1993), the teaching-learning environment is also recognized as a powerful learning environment designed to strongly impact on learning outcomes (De Corte, Verschaffel, Entwistle, & van Merrienboer, 2003). In addition to the quality of the lecture per se, quality teaching requires attention to be given to the teaching learning environment” (Ellet, Loup, Culross, McMullen & Rugutt, 1997) of students. Indeed, learning is enhanced for students in higher education settings that address students’ personal learning environment needs (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012).

The importance of teaching-learning environment is also felt in Saudi Arabia where the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2000) focuses that teaching and learning in Saudi Universities be to tought, conducting scientific research, writing books, translating, publishing and serving the community (p.15). The problem is more pronounced among newly established universities in the country. In their study, Alghamdi, Wagih, Alzahrani, and Attia, (2015) reveals that Al-Baha University, being an emerging modern institution founded by the royal decree No 9682/mb dated September 9th, 2005 with a mission to provide distinguished and comprehensive higher education, research, community service and lifelong learning environment
through the utilisation of the available resources to ensure the best results, is not exempted from this problem. Also, Al-Kabbaa, Ahmad, Saeed, Abdalla and Mustafa (2012) in their study carried out on Saudi Arabia medical students at Taibah University found that a motivating learning environment fosters deep self-directed learning in students.

Classroom teaching practice is meant by focusing on student’s learning. This typical learning approach takes place in a class where students have independent learning and lecturer becomes a facilitator for the students’ learning. According to Saxena (2013) classroom teaching practice can be practically effective when lecturer shifts teaching to students. That is to say, the focus is on students as a teaching outcome not on lecturer. Hénard and Roseveare (2012) found that in higher education quality teaching becomes more glaring when teaching is focused on student’s learning outcomes. They further stressed that the education offered in the university must ensure that it meets the expectations of students and the requirement of today and the future. Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2008) report that good classroom teaching practice is necessarily student-centered, its aim is most and for all student’s learning.

Classroom teaching practice is a collaborative learning in which students interact with their peers and lecturers in a fundamental part of learning (Bernad, Rubalcave & St. Pierre, 2000). This type of learning is social interaction amongst individual learners that comprises a range of performance such as communication, coordination, problem solving, negotiation and information sharing (Roberts, 2004). Classroom teaching practice that is collaborative is considered to be an effective method to enhance student’s learning and academic achievement compared to conventional instructional methods (Amey, 2010; Bennet, 2004; Turner, 2011).

Unfortunately in Saudi Arabia, the classroom teaching practice is almost based on directed teaching. Al-Ismaiel (2013) found that the classroom teaching practice as a learning strategy and it is rarely used in Saudi higher education. This phenomenon reflects the Saudi culture where the relationship between lecturers and students remains a formal relationship (Al-Keaid, 2004).
with the intention that students must rely on their lecturers for their learning (Hofstede, 1980; 2001) with little emphasis on student’s personal skills (Hall, 1966; 1976).

Many studies have demonstrated various factors that determine lecturers’ classroom practices. Some of the factors identified determining lecturers’ classroom practices are lecturers’ background, staff professional competence and teaching environment. Lecturer’s background is one of the most important determining factors of classroom teaching practice in the literature. Its importance lies in the fact that, it explains the lecturer’s knowledge content, experience, their relation with the faculty members and the position held. In the same sense, there is no agreed definition on professional competence (Epstein & Hundert, 2002) most importantly is that professional competence is a set of techniques, skills, abilities and knowledge displayed. In this context, professional competence is measured by teaching, technology, human, evaluation, and culture as suggested in the review of related works. Interestingly, work environment is a work place and work condition. The work environment is an essential factor which impacts on classroom environment in any educational realm. The existing literature delineates teaching load, teaching aids (Ijaiya, 1999; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) and Out-of-field teaching (Ingersoll, 2003) as determinants of workplace.

Furthermore, lecturer’s background includes teaching experience found to significantly related to the classroom management (Luo, Bellows, & Grady, 2000), lecturer’s position held (Driver & Campbell, 2013), number of courses attended (Lembke, 2006) which are reported to impart new learning into classroom. Additionally, professional competence and its ramifications namely, human (Schnonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010), technology (Cator, Schneider, & Ark, 2014), teaching (Cabrera, Colbeck, & Terenzini, 2001), evaluation competence (Wong & Moni, 2014), and cultural competence (Johnson, 2010) are found as the main influences of the perceived quality of modules in the classroom. Volume of studies suggests that, size of class (Dibbon, 2004), control of teaching (Rasul, Bukhsh & Batool, 2011), students’ characteristics (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008), support from faculty (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), workload (Galton &
MacBeath, 2002), and teaching out-of-field (Ingersoll, 2003) are teaching environment factors that bring changes to classroom environment positively or negatively. The significance of lecturer’s background, their professional competence and workplace has been identified in many empirical studies to have an effect on the change of classroom practices. For instance, Inegethan (2008) who stresses the use of information technology among university lecturers found a correlation between high academic achievement and the use of computer than the use of tradition method.

Teaching environment is also one of the determinant of classroom teaching practices. Allan and Clarke (2007) suggest that in higher institutions, educational environment gives students the confidence to become independent and life-long leaners. Studies affirm that students’s learning is dependent on a complex of influence from the whole teaching-learning environment (Entwistle, 1987; 2003; Biggs, 1993). Also, study by De Corte, Verschaffel, Entwistle, and van Merrienboer, (2003) found that teaching-learning environment is recognized as a powerful learning environment designed to impact strongly on learning outcomes. Ellet, Loup, Culross, McMullen and Rugutt (1997) assert that quality teaching requires that attention be given to students’ teaching-learning environment. Additionally, Hénard and Roseveare (2012) found that learning in higher education enhances students’ personal learning environment needs (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012).

The Saudi Ministry of Civil Service established in 1997 has two ways in appointing Universities lecturers. The first way is to identify students who performed extremely well in undergraduate level. These kinds of students are sponsored to obtain PhDs and upon their graduation, they would be given an opportunity to lecture in the Universities which they keep their performance tracking record. The standard yard stick to teach in the Saudi Universities is to obtain very good or distinction in certificate and excel in knowledge. The second way is to appoint someone as a lecturers provided the appointee has good character and obtains his/her certificate from any highly reputable universities recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education.
In Saudi Arabia, enhancing research productivity in higher education is a key pillar of Saudi’s National Development Plan for achieving the social and economic aspirations of the Kingdom. In order to achieve these aspirations, the Ministry of Higher Education has allocated resources to support research productivity by establishing scientific research centres and technology for the Saudi faculty members and their scholars.

The Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi oversees all the educational levels for both males and females (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). This Ministry is also superintends the establishment of Universities in the country namely, the King Saud University in 1957, the Islamic University of Madinah in 1961, the King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals in 1963, the King Abdul-Aziz University in 1967, the Um Al-Qura University in 1967, the Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University in 1974, and the King Faisal University in 1975. The purposes of this establishment were exclusively to offer special programs in accordance with the country’s needs, create, administer universities and colleges in the Kingdom, to raise the level of communication and coordination between institutions of higher learning, to coordinate with other governmental ministries and agencies in terms of their interests and needs in higher education, to represent the government abroad in all educational and cultural affairs, through various cultural and educational offices distributed over 32 countries (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to Washington DC, 2011).

The Ministry of Higher Education is a centralized authority responsible for directing university education in accordance with the adopted policy, supervising the development of university education in all sectors, coordinating among universities especially in the field of scientific departments and degrees, encouraging research, and formulating rules and regulations for compliance by all institutions of higher learning (SACM, 2011).

Despite this effort, Alebaikan and Troudi (2010) notified that, the capacity of universities and a college in Saudi is limited compared with the rapid growth of students applying. As-Subai’ee (2009) found that, faculty are not competent in using
computer and internet for teaching. The Literature shows that, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education did not focus on the lecturers’ background, their professional competence, and teaching environment to enhance the classroom practices. For example, Ahmed and Hijjah (2012) discovered that, the faculty members lack three things namely; human competence, evaluation competence and teaching competence. Al-Hakami (2004) found that, students complained that their lecturers lack lecture preparation and content knowledge. Al-Shahrani (2013) found the lack of teaching aids in the lecture rooms makes the students bored. Al-Abdul Gafur (2002) found that the problems in the Saudi universities are in teaching aids in the lecture rooms, the number of students, and staff low teaching competence. Al-Jabiri (2009) suggested that, scientific studies investigating the academic success and absenteeism among Saudi students are few. Laal (2004) recommended the lecturers to use multimedia in teaching at the Umm Al-Qura University. Al-'Iesa (2011) observed that, in spite of achievements recorded by the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, the issue of Universities independency, identity development in their mission and vision and objective remain something that has not been researched about. There are also challenges in university classroom teaching. Some of these challenges are related to the method used in teaching and teaching hours. Bagazi (2010) found that the students’ dropout from Saudi universities is as a result of teaching method and curriculum itself. An-Nuh (2006) stressed that, one of the problems facing the Saudi universities is reflected in the increase of teachers’ workload.

Based on this notion, this study proposes to determine the causal relationship between lecturers’ background in Al-Baha University of Saudi Arabia, their professional competence, work environment and lecturers’ classroom practices in accordance with the theories proposed and the existing literature. The study would be of significant by revealing the professional competences of academic staff in the University as the quality unit to collate this information are presently not available.
1.3 Statement of Research Problem

The conduct of classroom activities by the teachers, lecturers, and other academic staff has been a subject of discussion over the years among the practitioner and academia. The significant of the good practices in the management of classroom include better time management by the staff and sound performance of students which is the ultimate objective of any institution of learning (Duarte 2013). However, in the Universities environment, the concept of classroom teaching practices is easily overlook as it is generally believed that the academic staff at that level of career might have acquired some of professional competence and that the teaching environment is judged to be conducive. Meanwhile, the recent development has so that some of the universities lecturers lack adequate competences in managing the classrooms (Lucky and Yusoff, 2013) but the question that has not be adequately addressed is the factor that determine the classroom teaching practices among the academic staff. Though, there are few studies that document some factors, none is known about Al-Baha university of Saudi Arabia. Being a new university, with ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of graduates in the country, there a need to consider the classroom teaching practice among the academic staff.

This become imperative as the earlier studies about the university have documented low performance of the students (Alghamdi, et al., 2015; Abulatefah 2014; Abulatefah 2012; Al-ghamdi 2012) which has given the management of the school serious concern over years. For instance, these authors find that the students dislike the traditional methods of teaching being currently practice by most of the academic staff. Hence, this has called for the assessment of the professional competence among the lecturers. Also, Abulatefah (2014) reveals that 68% of the academic agreed that the teaching environment in the university is below the standard, thus affect their classroom teaching practices. The author argued further that the condition of environment in the university is not conducive due to the fact that most of the faculties are still being operated from rented building since the permanent site of the university is still under construction. To address this problem, the current study considers the possible impact of professional competence and teaching environment on the classroom teaching practices among academic staff at
Al-Baha University. In addition, since the lecturers in the university are of different backgrounds, the study consider the possible impact of their background on the classroom teaching practices.

Based on prior studies (e.g., Ahmed and Hijjah 2012; Salamah 2005; Al-Yawar 2009; Johnson 2010) the present study examines the possible competencies factors, environment conditions and background of the academic staff that could improve their classroom’s teaching practices. For instance, Ahmed and Hijjah (2012) recommended increase staff in terms of human competence as one of the professional competencies. Salamah (2005) find that technology competence among the academic staff has positive correlation with the classroom teaching and learning effectiveness. Al-Yawar (2009) asserted that one of the obstacles hindering the learning and teaching in the open Arabic University in Jeddah is that the academic is not able to evaluate students’ performance adequately. Hence, suggest a proper evaluation competence among the academic staff. Johnson (2010) found out that culturally competent leaders in college campuses are necessary.

Further, following the model of Prosser and Trigwell (1997), the present study considers teaching environment variables in higher education such as, size of class, control of teaching, students’ characteristics, support from faculty and workload. Meanwhile, based on argument of Ingersoll (2003), teaching out-of-field was included in the model as it is regarded as a general phenomenon. He explained that out-of-field teaching is a new problem confronting education worldwide. It means a teacher who is not qualified for a certain course teaching the course.

Besides, studies have suggested some lecturers’ background that could affect classroom teaching practices (e.g., Mgheer, Al-Sultani and Abbas 2015; AlShurman and Ja’aferah 2014; AsSrayrah 2011; Musa and Alotaibi 2011; Abu Samhadanh 2010; Dunkin, 1991). For instance, lecturers’ teaching experience is consider as one of the fundamental factor of background that influences classroom teaching practices among the academic staff of universities (AlShurman and Ja’aferah 2014; Tame 2008; Dunkin 1991). Another possible element of lecturers’ background suggested in prior studies is academic positions, such as Professor, Associate professor,
Assistance Professor and Lecturer (e.g., Mgheer, Al-Sultani And Abbas 2015; Abu Samhadan 2010; AsSrayrah (2011). Also, Musa and Alotaibi (2011) reveal that course work and workshop attended is one of major factors that could shape the manner academic staff manage the classroom. Meanwhile, another background factor that could influence the classroom teaching practices, especially at Al-Baha University is the nationality of the academic staff. Currently the university has academic staff from various part of the world. Their approach to managing classroom could be greatly influenced by this concept.

Though, efforts have been put in place to manage this problem in the country but the approach has not being the yielding positive results as Al-Ghamdi and Li (2011) found that most of the professional competence programmes organized do not aim specifically at teachers and university lecturers. Classroom teaching practice in Saudi Arabia is believed to be challenging (Shah, Hussain & Nasseef, 2013) in general and specifically at Al-Baha University (Alghamdi, et al., 2016; Abulatefah 2014). We cannot fold our hands and looking without doing research to solve the problems identified in the Higher Education because the country development rests on the quality education.

Therefore, there is a need to study on the variables that related to improve teaching practices at Al-Baha University. Thus, the objectives of this study are to determine the level of lecturers’ professional competence, their level of teaching environment and the lecturers’ classroom teaching practices level, their use of teaching methods, their responses to students’ queries, control of students’ behaviour, and teaching reflection and to determine the relationship between lecturers’ teaching environment, their professional competence and their classroom practices.

Specifically, the current study considered Al-Baha, one of the newest government owned universities in the country. The university is not immured from the challenges of universities’ in the country and issue of professional competence in the university has been identified by earlier study (Alghamdi, et al., 2015; Abulatefah 2014).
1.4 Research Objectives

The major objectives of the present study are as follows:

1.4.1 To determine the level of lecturers’ professional competence regarding teaching competence, human competence, technology competence, evaluation competence, and cultural competence.

1.4.2 To determine the level of lecturers’ teaching environment regarding size of class, control of teaching, students’ characteristics, support from faculty, workload, and teaching out-of-field.

1.4.3 To determine the level of lecturers’ classroom teaching practices regarding the use of teaching methods, response to students’ queries, control of students’ behaviour, and teaching reflection.

1.4.4 To determine the relationship between professional competence and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices.

1.4.5 To determine the relationship between lecturers’ teaching environment and their classroom teaching practices.

1.4.6 To determine the relationship between lecturers’ professional competence, lecturers’ teaching environment and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices.

1.4.7 To determine the differences in lecturers’ professional competence based on their background (teaching experience, position held, and number of attendance in teaching & learning related courses/workshop).

1.4.8 To determine the differences in lecturers’ classroom teaching practices based on their background (teaching experience, position held, and number of attendance in teaching & learning related courses/workshop).

1.4.9 To determine the contribution of lecturers’ background, professional competence and teaching environment towards lecturers’ classroom teaching practice.

1.4.10 To develop a framework for improved lecturers’ classroom practices.
1.5 Research Questions

This research is particularly designed to answer the following questions:

1.5.1 What are the lecturers’ professional competence level regarding teaching competence, human competence, technology competence, evaluation competence, and cultural competence?

1.5.2 What are the lecturers’ teaching environment level regarding size of class, control of teaching, students’ characteristics, support from faculty, workload, and teaching out-of-field?

1.5.3 What are the lecturers’ classroom teaching practices level regarding the use of teaching methods, response to students’ queries, control of students’ behaviour, and teaching reflection?

1.5.4 What is the relationship between professional competence and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices?

1.5.5 What is the relationship between lecturers’ teaching environment and their classroom teaching practices?

1.5.6 What is the relationship between lecturers’ professional competence, lecturers’ teaching environment, and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices?

1.5.7 Are there any differences in lecturers’ professional competence based on their background (teaching experience, position held, and number of attendance in teaching & learning related courses/workshop)?

1.5.8 Are there any differences in lecturers’ classroom teaching practices based on their background (teaching experience, position held, and number of attendance in teaching & learning related courses/workshop)?

1.5.9 Are there any contribution of lecturers’ background, professional competence and teaching environment towards lecturers’ classroom teaching practice?

1.5.10 What is the framework for improving lecturers’ classroom teaching practices?
1.6 Research Hypotheses

To answer research questions (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9), the following null hypotheses are formulated.

Hypothesis (1) answers research question no (4):

\[ H_0^1: \text{There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ professional competence and their classroom teaching practices.} \]

Hypothesis (2) answers research question no (5):

\[ H_0^2: \text{There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ teaching environment and their classroom teaching practices.} \]

Hypothesis (3) answers research question no (6):

\[ H_0^3: \text{There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ professional competence, lecturers’ teaching environment, and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices.} \]

Hypothesis (4) answers research question no (7):

\[ H_0^{4.1}: \text{There is no significant difference in lecturers’ professional competence based on their teaching experience.} \]

\[ H_0^{4.2}: \text{There is no significant difference in lecturers’ professional competence based on their position held.} \]

\[ H_0^{4.3}: \text{There is no significant difference in lecturers’ professional competence based on the number of teaching and learning related courses or workshop they attended.} \]
Hypothesis (5) answers research question no(8):

\( H_0.1 \): There is no significant difference in lecturers’ classroom teaching practices based on their teaching experience.

\( H_0.2 \): There is no significant difference in lecturers’ classroom teaching practices based on their position held.

\( H_0.3 \): There is no significant difference in lecturers’ classroom teaching practices based on the number of teaching and learning related courses or workshop they attended.

Hypothesis (6) answers research question no (9):

\( H_0.6 \): Lecturers’ background, professional competence, and teaching environment do not contribute to their classroom teaching practices.

1.7 Significance of Study

The present study will benefit the management and governing body of the Al-Baha University by understanding the level of professional competence among the academic lecturers. This would help in formulating appropriate policies and procedures concerning the training about teaching methods and provision of conducive teaching environment in the university. The study is important to the authority of Al-Baha University in order to professionally enhance the staff and their classroom teaching practices. The study will benefit in promoting staff who use an effective classroom teaching practice to motivate others. This study will also improve the students’ learning outcome, particularly those who face problems of teaching and learning, while improving teaching practices for the faculty members in Saudi universities. The study shall be of benefit to the educational policy makers in the High Ministry of Education in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
1.8 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

The study will contribute to the use of theories into practice for empirically testing the theory of professional competence by Grant, Elbow, Ewens, Gamson, Kholi, Neumann, Olesen and Riesman (1979), theory of teaching environment by Lewin’s Field theory (1942), and theory of classroom teaching practice by Piaget all of which reported to have an impact on classroom such as in Al-Baha University. The study proposes a practical framework from the theories that will be useful for educators. The study is assumed to contribute to the existing body of previous research works which have been conducted in effective teaching method. The study will particularly contribute to the corpus of studies that have been carried out in Al-Baha University. Besides, it will also add an insight in teaching to the newly established universities in Saudi Arabia such as Al-Baha University as well as old established Universities in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore will also develop a framework for improving lecturers’ classroom practices in Saudi universities.

1.9 Limitation of Study

This thesis is bounded to be completed within the time frame of 2015 -2016, and it will be carried out in Al-Baha University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample to be involved in this study will be lecturers from different faculties. This study proposes to use the theory of Grant, Elbow, Ewens, Gamson, Kholi, Neumann, Olesen and Riesman (1979), theory of Field (1942), and theory of Applefield, Huber and Muallem (2001) in classroom practices.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

The current study is based on theory of professional competence by Grant, Elbow, Ewens, Gamson, Kholi, Neumann, Olesen and Riesman (1979), theory of teaching environment by Lewin’s Field theory (1942), and theory of classroom teaching practice by Applefield, Huber and Muallem (2001) as the empirical studies
found the causal relationship of professional competence, teaching environment and lecturers’ classroom teaching practices.

1.10.1 Theory of Professional Competence

The theory of professional competence is first introduced into higher education by Grant, Elbow, Ewens, Gamson, Kohli, Neumann, Olesen and Riesman (1979) in the United States. Grant et al., develop their theory called competence-based education (Grant, Elbow, Ewens, Gamson, Kohli, Neumann, Olesen, & Riesman, 1979). The theory is focusing on the lecturers’ direction on competence-based education with the competency movement in the USA that was spreading around at that time. Grant et al., (1970) argues that certain competency-based lecturer’s education have to be fulfilled in order to make students come out successfully in their test that is used to measure learning outcome. They further stress on the competence-based programs which were not received well by students at various institutions of higher learning worldwide. The theory of Grant et al., aims to describing competence-based projects at undergraduate college level in various liberal arts and non-teaching professions. Competence-based education tends to be a form of education that focuses on an analysis of a prospective or actual role in modern society to certify student’s progress (Mulder, 2014). In the same vein,
literature review showed that competency theory comes from the US, although there are also various authors in Europe who have contributed to the development and dissemination of this concept, such as in the UK (around the New Vocational Qualification and Accreditation of Prior Learning), France (around the ‘bilan the competence’) and Germany (around the notion of ‘Kompetenz’) (Mulder, Gulikers, Wesselink & Biemans, 2008). Literature asserts that teachers’ professional competence has a significant relationship with the environmental education curriculum implementation (Carril, Sanmamed & Sellés, 2013). According to Astuty (2015) professional competence is the lecturer’s ability to master learning materials in broad and deep manner, this includes mastery of materials, curriculum as well as mastery of the structure and methodology. Thus, the theory of competence is used as proposed in this study to uncover the lecturers’ professional competence at Al-Baha university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1.10.2 Lewin’s Field Theory of Teaching Environment

Lewin’s theory links teachers’ commitments to teaching environmental education (EE) to significant life experiences as well as to beliefs and attitudes about EE. Field Lewin’ theory (Lewin, 1942) formed the foundation for the model-building process. The underlying premise of field theory is that two constructs namely; the person and the person’s environment operate together in an integral way within the immediate “field of time.”. The theory simply states that at any given time, a behaviour (B) is a function of the person (P) and the environment (E). According to Lewin, behaviour (B) refers to any change in life space or “the environmental and psychological factors of the current situation surrounding the behaviour” (p. 218) (Shuman & Ham, 2010). Lewin clearly states that the ‘total field includes time perspective at a given time’ (1992a, p. 207). Lewin further argues in his theory, the pattern of interaction between individual and the environment regarding the place, time and the individual. He proposed that human behaviour is a function of both person and the environment in which the behaviour takes place with the inclusion of social settings. Lewin postulated that needs organize perception of the field and acting within that field. This can be understood as dynamic interrelation of elements in the
field itself. He said learning is essential to coping with the opposing force field, and having side that he also believed that a comprehensive observation of human behaviour and learning must be in environment in which the learning takes place with the psychological environment of the learner whom he/she interacts with (Sahakian, 1976).

From the perspective of field’s theory, teaching EE is a behaviour that is a function of both the lecturer and the educational environment. Lewin postulates that behaviour is any change in the environmental and psychological factors caused by the action of the person. For the purpose of this study, environmental factors are considered to mean size of class, control of teaching and other factors as included in the research conceptual framework.

1.10.3 Theory of Classroom Teaching Practice

Classroom teaching practice is a student-centered. Constructivism is a major referent theory in university classroom teaching. Constructivism is that students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through learning. Gresen (2004) argues that learning becomes active, knowledge is constructed from and shaped by student’s experience. Student-centered approach rooted in constructivist approach is a typical learning approach where knowledge and context are connected determined by students experiential in nature (Hannafin, Hill & Land, 1997, p. 94). This approach emphasizes that students are active and able to build new paradigm of knowledge upon their prior knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; von Glasersfeld, 1995). According to Barr and Tagg (1995) student centered learning approach is challenging, cooperative and collaborative. Lea, Stephenson, and Troy (2003) argue that this approach is reliance on active rather than positive learning. In constructivist learning approach, Glasgow (1997) adds that students are expected to gradually take more responsibility for their own learning.
The term constructivism is mostly derived from Piaget’s reference to his views as constructivist (Applefield, Huber & Moallem, 2001). This term also includes the discovery of learning, generative learning, situated learning, and authentic instruction (Applefield, Huber & Moallem, 2001).

The theory of constructivism emphasizes on providing opportunities for students to construct their own judgments and interpretations of the knowledge or situations they come across based on their prior knowledge and experience. Hussain (2012) argued that constructivism is based on active involvement or participation of students in teaching learning process. It aims at developing students’ skills by offering them activities and projects in their relevant disciplines and contexts.
1.11 Conceptual Framework

This framework is developed from the theories mentioned earlier and is shown below in the full fledged conceptual framework.

**Figure 1.2 A conceptual framework of the study**

Figure 1.2 of the research conceptual framework explains the causal relationship among the independent variables namely, lecturers’ background variables (teaching experience, position, and number of attendance in teaching and learning related courses and workshop, professional competence variables (teaching competence, human competence, technology competence, evaluation competence, and cultural competence) and teaching environment variables (size of classroom, control of teaching, students’ characteristics, support from faculty, workload, and
out-of-field teaching) with the first dependent variables namely; lecturers’ classroom teaching practice variables (use of teaching methods, response to students’ queries, control students’ behaviour and teaching reflection) and the second dependent variable namely framework for improving lecturers’ classroom teaching practices.

1.12 Operational Definition

The title of this thesis is “Lecturers’ Professional Competence and Teaching Environment as Determinants of Classroom Teaching Practices at Al-Baha University.” In order to explain clearly the meaning of the title and also to avoid misunderstanding in defining the title, the researcher provides the definition of terms as follows:

1.12.1 Lecturers’ Background

Lecturer’s background is the amount of knowledge and skills that the lecturer has to own (Isambert, 2010). In this study, this variable is operationalized as lecturer’s teaching experience, position held means professor, associate professor, assistant professor and lecturer, number of courses or workshop attended in teaching methods and technology in line with earlier studies (e.g., Musa and Alotaibi, 2011; Tame, 2008 and Abu Samhadan, 2010). Professor is highest rank in the academic carden in the university. They are mostly involve in both academic and administrative activities in the university. Associate professors are academic staff with at least four years post PhD degree. The waiting period on this position is four academic years. The promotion is subject to adequate performance and publications. The promotion is subject to external assessment. Assistant professor are fresh PhD graduate. The waiting period in this position is four year and the promotion is subject to performance and the adequate publication of empirical research findings. Lecturer are academic staff with master dregree. The during of the position depend on the completion of the PhD before they can become Assistant Professor Assistant lecturers are academic staff with the first degree qualification. They are mostly not
regarded as full staff until they acquire master degree. The nationality has used in the study comprises of Saudis and Non-Saudis.

1.12.2 Professional Competence

According to Mizell (2010), professional competence is defined as the strategy used by the educational authorities to strengthen the lecturers to ensure that they continue their practices throughout their career. In this study, professional competence is perceived as lecturer’s ability and skills to deliver their own knowledge content in the classroom students-centered. In the present study, this variable is measured by teaching competence, human competence, technology competence, evaluation competence, and cultural competence. Firstly, teaching competence means lecturer’s competence which focuses on students’ learning. Human competence is meant by being accountable to Allah and responsible, while quality of friendly teacher who encourages an open discussion with student and offers a constructive criticism. Technology competence refers to lecturer’s ability to use computer and smart board in teaching. Evaluation competence refers to lecturers’ assessment of examination preparation, students’ assignment, classroom participation, correction and feedback. Cultural competence refers to a lecturer who is multiculturally educated, a person who understands different students’ cultures in learning. These definitions were based on the previous studies such as Ahmed and Hijjah (2012); Al-Ghazywat (2005) and Essa and AnNaqa (2006).

1.12.3 Teaching Environment

Teaching environment is an inherently social act in which teacher is responsible for the teaching and perceived as a purveyor of the knowledge and student as a recipient (Gaff & Wilson, 1971). Teaching environment is a condition that surrounds the work place. Following the prior studies such as Breket et al., (2010), Al Khateeb (2004), this construct is measured by size of a class, control of teaching, students’ characteristics, support from the faculty, workload, and teaching
out-of-field. The size of a classroom can be defined as an appropriate number of students with the classroom size. Meanwhile, the control of teaching can be defined as the lecturers focusing on amount of teaching aids to use in the classroom. The use of various teaching materials that is meant here as smart board and computer. Beside, the students’ characteristics are something to be focused on learners’ variation in gender, as well as students’ background of study. A support from the faculty is balancing between teaching, research, motivation, and teamwork with other academic staff. The workload is meant by the time the lecturers used for teaching. Out-of-field teaching is meant by subject taught by a lecturer who is not specialized in teaching that subject.

1.12.4 Classroom Teaching Practices

Classroom teaching practice is what teachers should know and do (Australian Institute for teaching and school leadership, 2014). Classroom teaching practice is also the flow of learning and teaching in the class that should be a student-centered. In this study, this variable with the use of teaching methods, lecturers’ ability to respond to students’ query, their ability to control students’ behaviour, and teaching reflection. Teaching method refers to brainstorming and problem solving method, whereas lecturer’s ability to respond to students’ query refers to lecturer’s ability to answering student’s question positively and student-teacher participation in finding appropriate answer to the question. Lecturers’ ability to control students’ behaviour refers to the lecturers’ ability to control students’ late coming to the class and control their noises. Reflection is meant by lecturer reflects upon what he or she teaches in the students’ centered classroom before and after. The measurement was adapted from earlier studies (e.g., Musa and Alotaibi, 2011; Al Alwani, 2009).
1.13 Summary

This chapter discusses about the background as an entry to the study. In the study background, the definitions of the variables of topic of interest and their importance were discussed. The chapter also presents the problem statement which calls for the present research. The objectives of study were highlighted as proposed. The questions that will answer the objectives were posed which are in line with the formulated hypotheses. The chapter also discusses about the contribution of the present study to the existing body of knowledge in the related area as well as relevance of study. The theories underpinning the present study were discussed and the conceptual framework. The scope and limitation of the study which the researcher will cover were presented in details. The variables of the study were operationally defined based on the researcher’s understanding of the issue. In conclusion, the summary of chapter one was written to give the reader a picture of the overall chapter.
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