



**Institute of Technology Management and Entrepreneurship**



**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHNG QUALITY FACTORS  
AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMICS AT UAE  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Hebah Ahmad Ali Elatawneh**

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHING QUALITY FACTORS AND  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMICS AT UAE HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

**HEBAH AHMAD AL ELATAWNEH**

**A thesis submitted  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



**UNIVERSITI TEKNIKAL MALAYSIA MELAKA**

**2022**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “The Relationship between Teaching Quality Factors and Professional Development of Academics at UAE Higher Education” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.



Signature :... *Hebah Ahmad* ...

Name :..... HEBAH AHMAD ALI ELATAWNEH .....

Date :..... 14 Oct 2022 .....



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UNIVERSITI TEKNIKAL MALAYSIA MELAKA

## APPROVAL

I hereby declare that I have read this thesis and in my opinion this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of Doctor of Philosophy.



Signature : .....

Supervisor Name : Assoc. Prof. Dr. Safiah Sidek

Date : 17 Oct 2022



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.



## ABSTRACT

Quality in higher education has become the emphasis of all institutions of higher education due to the competitive market of higher education and the need to prepare graduates relevant to the global market. Hence, attention need to be given to the quality of teaching in higher education. Additionally, there is a need to relook the conceptualization of quality teaching due to the lack of consensus and its complexity. As such, this research propose a conceptualization of quality teaching contextualized within higher education of the UAE, which is framed by four interconnected concentric circles, namely the individual teaching practices, academic professional identity, structures (policy) of HEIs and globalization and internationalization discourses. This model includes seven factors: five factors are categorised as academic competencies which are lesson design, teaching skills, communication skills, technology skills, and content expert; academic identity is represented by individual and occupational identity and contextual environment, represented by policy and strategy. Further, seven hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship of these factors to academic professional development. To validate and test empirically the model, a survey research has been conducted with academics in top three public universities in the UAE. Employing a simple randomised sampling method, a total of 283 samples were analysed through descriptive statistical analysis and Structural Equation Method. It was found that communication skills and lesson design were the two highest factors, followed by policy and strategy. While technology skills were the least important factor among the seven factors of quality teaching. All the five factors of academic competence were found to have significant relationship with academic professional development, while the contextual and identity factors did not have significant relationship with the academic professional development. The model of quality teaching of this research considers the role of contextual environment in influencing quality teaching. This model consists of academics' competencies and contextual environment. This research is valuable for academics, management of higher education as well as government to plan strategically for development of academic competency in delivering quality teaching in higher education.

*HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA FAKTOR KUALITI PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBANGUNAN  
PROFESIONAL AKADEMIK PENDIDIKAN TINGGI DI EMIRIAH ARAB BERSATU*

**ABSTRAK**

Kualiti dalam pendidikan tinggi telah menjadi penekanan semua institusi pengajian tinggi berikutan pasaran pengajian tinggi yang kompetitif dan keperluan untuk menyediakan graduan yang diperlukan oleh pasaran global. Justeru, perhatian perlu diberikan kepada kualiti pengajaran di peringkat pengajian tinggi. Di samping itu, terdapat keperluan untuk melihat semula konsep pengajaran berkualiti kerana kekurangan konsensus. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini mencadangkan konsep pengajaran berkualiti dalam pendidikan tinggi UAE, berdasarkan kerangka empat bulatan sepusat yang saling berkaitan, iaitu amalan pengajaran, identiti profesional akademik, struktur dan wacana globalisasi dan pengantarabangsaan. Model ini merangkumi tujuh faktor: lima faktor dikategorikan sebagai kecekapan akademik iaitu reka bentuk pengajaran, kemahiran mengajar, kemahiran komunikasi, kemahiran teknologi dan pakar bidang; identiti akademik diwakili oleh identiti individu dan pekerjaan serta persekitaran kontekstual, diwakili oleh dasar dan strategi. Seterusnya, tujuh hipotesis telah digubal untuk menguji hubungan faktor-faktor ini dengan pembangunan profesional akademik. Untuk mengesahkan dan menguji model secara empirikal, kajian tinjauan telah dijalankan dengan ahli akademik di tiga universiti awam terbaik di UAE. Menggunakan kaedah persampelan rawak mudah, sejumlah 283 sampel telah dianalisis melalui analisis statistik deskriptif dan Kaedah Persamaan Struktur. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa kemahiran komunikasi dan reka bentuk pelajaran adalah dua faktor tertinggi, diikuti oleh dasar dan strategi. Manakala kemahiran teknologi didapati sebagai faktor yang paling kurang penting di antara tujuh faktor pengajaran berkualiti. Kesemua lima faktor kompetensi akademik mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan pembangunan profesional akademik, manakala identiti dan pekerjaan individu serta polisi dan strategi tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan pembangunan profesional akademik. Model pengajaran berkualiti dalam kajian ini mengambilkira peranan persekitaran yang mempengaruhi kualiti pengajaran. Model ini terdiri daripada kecekapan akademik termasuk identiti akademik dan persekitaran kontekstual. Penyelidikan ini amat berguna untuk ahli akademik, pengurusan pengajian tinggi serta kerajaan untuk membuat perancangan strategik untuk membangunkan kompetensi akademik dalam menyampaikan pengajaran berkualiti di pendidikan tinggi.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCA	-	Commission for Academic Accreditation
CQI	-	Continuous Quality Improvement
HE	-	Higher education
HEIs	-	High Education Institutions
ISO	-	Internal System Operation
DKHD	-	Dubai Knowledge and Human Development
PD	-	Professional development
QA	-	Quality Assurance
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modelling
TQFs	-	Teaching Quality Factors
TQM	-	Total Quality Administration
UAE	-	United Arab Emirates
UAEU	-	United Arab Emirates University
UQAIB	-	University Quality Assurance Board

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- 1) Elatawneh, H.A.A., and Sidek, S., 2021. Structural model of teaching quality improvement factors for academics: Professional development of UAE higher education institutions, *Psychology and Education*, 58(2), pp.3748-3754.
  
- 2) Elatawneh, H.A.A., and Sidek, S., 2021. Formulation of theoretical framework of teaching quality factors for professional development for UAE higher education institutions, *Psychology and Education*, 58(2), pp. 3755-3763.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introductory chapter of a thesis that reports on a research that updates the knowledge of quality teaching of higher education in response to the changing needs of knowledge workers for global market and the increased competition in the higher education sector. Quality teaching practices need to be given more attention as academics are required to have the necessary teaching skills and knowledge to prepare graduates (job ready graduates) with the new work skills and knowledge for the workforce in the digital and knowledge-based economy.

As an introduction, this chapter is organized into eight sections. After the overview, the second section presents the background of the research, focusing on the reform in HEIs, quality teaching and preliminary study that motivates this research. The third section is dedicated for the problem statement, and the subsequent two sections, namely section four and fifth outline the research questions and research objectives. The sixth and seventh section present the scope and significance of the research, while the seven section presents the operational definitions of the constructs considered in this research. The final section presents the organization of this thesis.

#### 1.1 Research background

This section provides a background of the research, highlighting the need for higher education to reform in response to the changing landscape of higher education and consequently, the need to relook the teaching qualities of the academics and the

relation to academic professional development, considering the academics' significant roles to prepare the students of higher education for the current needs of workforce and global citizen. For this purpose, this section is organised into two subheadings: Firstly, the reform of higher education, teaching qualities and professional development of academics, and secondly, a preliminary study of the perceived teaching qualities.

### **1.1.1 Higher education reform, teaching qualities and professional development**

Higher education is the catalyst of the economic and social development of a nation. It has significant role in driving the wealth creation and quality of life (Pineiro and Pillay, 2016; Badran, Baydoun and Hillman, 2019; Hamda, Sarea, Khamis and Anasweh, 2020) and technology innovation (Zhou and Lou, 2018). However, the higher education institutions (HEIs) are under heavy pressures to adapt to accelerating changes in modern society, influenced by globalization and industrial revolution (Levchenko, Horpynchenko and Tsarenko, 2017). HEIs worldwide have undergone various transformation at the latter end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Aufi and Ali, 2014), and extensive studies have reported the transformation undergoing by of HEIs worldwide (such as Marginson, 2016; Zgaga, Teichler, Schuetze and Wolter, 2019).

Among the factors that lead to the changes include the changing emphasis of knowledge economy, development of new technology and digitalization and the proliferation of knowledge and life-long learning. In a similar vein, higher education is evolving rapidly consistent with the development of digital technology and the

changing composition of learners. The digital technology has facilitated the online learning which allows for access of education regardless of space and time. Distance education programmes are among the most important applications of digital and communication technologies today (Broglia et al., 2018). Further, the changing emphasis on the knowledge society has resulted in the changing emphasis towards life-long learning (Olo et al., 2020). The emphasis on active learning has resulted in teachers no longer dominate the entire learning process, and material knowledge is no longer the only source of knowledge for students (Xing et al., 2005; Anis and Islam 2019). The educational task is also expected to change from the position of instructor to the function of mentor, facilitator, manager, consultant, and founder (Hu et al., 2018). The role of institutions has changed from formal classes focusing on the dissemination of knowledge to co-creation of knowledge.

The provision of higher education is no longer restrictive to specific time and space, but has been transformed to flexible and distant learning facilitated by digital technology. Further, emphasis on the co-creation of knowledge rather than passive recipient of knowledge has also resulted in the need to rethink the conventional teaching practices. Recently, the COVID-19 global pandemic, which restricts mobility and face-to-face interactions has resulted in the new norm of teaching practices that are heavily depend on digital technology. According to Wilms and Zell (2003) and Khan (2018), the upward cost, unpredictable wages, the explosive increase in student demand, quality issues and an explosion of new technology have driven HEIs to face a steep learning curve. Focusing on teaching and learning as the core activities of HEIs, El-Azar (2022) asserted that HEIs need to undertake true reform, namely changing towards active learning and teaching skills that will endure in a changing world.

Reimers and Chung (2019) highlighted that quality education is considered to be one of the fundamental necessities for providing the nation with the information, skills and competences to resolve the challenges emerging from globalisation (ICT).

HEIs are responsible to prepare job-ready graduates, in which graduates are equipped skills and knowledge relevant to the digital economy (DePauw, 2019; Harrison, Meyer, Rawstrone, Razee, Chitkara, Mears and Balasooriya, 2020; Molla and Cultbert, 2022). HEIs have been pushed to use quality methods to take advantage of the developments in education and optimise educational and learning processes (O’Sullivan, 2016). The provision of quality higher education, specifically the academic teaching qualities that facilitate the development of job-ready graduates have become an important agenda for HEIs. As such, it is crucial to ensure academics are equipped with high quality teaching practices so that they are capable of producing highly skilled workforce suitable for the knowledge economy.

A wide range of strategies have been adopted by HEIs to improve quality of teaching practices such as the use of survey instruments to get students’ feedback and qualitative approach through focus groups (Greatbatch and Holland, 2016). Chalmers and Hunt (2016) (in Harrison et al., 2020) suggested that multiple methods should be integrated to fully understand and enhance teaching qualities. Based on a systematic literature review, Harrison et al. (2020) identified four methods to measure teaching qualities, which are student assessment, self-assessment, peer-review and teaching portfolios. However, they argued that the adoption of any method of quality assessment does not necessarily lead to the enhancement of teaching quality. As such, there is a need to link the quality teaching factors to the professional development of academics to ensure the enhancement of teaching qualities among the academics.

Enhancing teaching quality should be made a priority in HEIs to promote and improve academic knowledge and skills. HEIs are responsible for enhancing the quality of teaching among academics in the face of fast evolving, expectations for high standards and demands for high quality of higher education (Zangar et al., 2019; Muammar and Alkathiri, 2021). According to Biggs (2011), increased attention needs to be given to promote professional development (PD) of academics in order to enhance their teaching qualities. Kent (2004) emphasises that academics have to keep up-to-date with best practices and overall development in programme quality for professional development. Bryan and Clegg (2019) also consider that PD programs provide academics with appropriate and up-to-date skills to help them function efficiently.

### **1.1.2 Higher education in the UAE**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East. Since the discovery of oil in the 1960s, the UAE has rapidly developed across various sectors including higher education. Higher education is a relatively modern phenomenon in the UAE (Gallagher, 2019; McMinn et al., 2020). Since 1997, the UAE has expanded its higher education system internationally, attracting many well-known foreign universities to open branches through its 'free zones' (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), 2017). This investment is part of the UAE's commitment to compete globally as a knowledge-based society (Emirates Competitiveness Council, 2014; Ashour, 2020, 2021). The QAA (2017) reported that there were approximately 140,000 higher education students in the UAE, in which approximately one third studied in three public HEIs and the remaining two-thirds of