

Training Needs and Training Programs for Academic Leadership at Northern Border University

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the leadership training needs and the development programs to improve the skills of academic leaders at Northern Border University. The training needs will be considered at three levels: individual, job and organisational level. This paper is based on a descriptive survey method where 88 academic leaders answered a refereed questionnaire, which was tested to insure its validity and reliability. Moreover, the researcher analyzed data by calculating means and standard deviations. The results showed that the degree of need for training programs was high, and that there are no statistically significant differences between the study variables (years of experience, job title, qualification, gender). This study is limited to a sample of academic leaders at Northern Border University for the academic year 2014-2015. Designing training programs for academic leaders is based on modern analysis methods that involve academic leaders in identifying training needs at a personal, job and organisational level. The main objective is to develop adequate training programs for academic leaders based on their perception and perspective.

Keywords: Training needs, Training programs, Academic leadership, Northern Border University.

Introduction

Training Programs design for academic leadership development at higher education institutions is one of the important strategies to face today's changing world challenges. Communication and new technologies have a huge impact on industry and society, resulting in corresponding leadership changes in the skills and abilities required for leading. There is an urgent need to improve the process of leadership development at all levels at higher education institutions to maintain its competitiveness and resolve the academic leaders' succession crisis (Scott et al., 2008).

Bisbee (2007) stated that to be successful in this changing environment, institutions of higher education need to train and qualify effective and highly efficient academic leaders in order to respond to the needs of students and the local community. Additional research on academic leadership is needed to face the challenge of leadership identification and design adequate training programs.

It's worth mentioning the importance of identifying the training needs before going into training methods and program design. Traditional organizations used to identify the training needs for the staff without taking into account their point of view about their actual needs. They focused on short-term needs regardless of the importance of training and its ability to fill the gap between required skills of trainees and their current situation. However, today's organizations begin to consider training as a perfect solution to achieve skills development and performance improvement. They focus on both organizational and people needs, taking into account social and environmental conditions. Training focus on satisfying mid and long-term needs for organizations and people. Moreover, the development-oriented training programs aimed at strengthening the leadership skills to better meet the challenges of new technologies and globalisation.

The training officers, in their second meeting in Riyadh in 1997, defined training needs as "a set of required changes in the knowledge, trends and skills of workers with a view to overcome the administrative problems and obstacles which hinder the progress of work and production and prevent the achievement of the organization's objectives". Labesse (2008) highlighted that the training needs analysis process aims to bridge the gap between actual and required performance by identifying contradictions in outputs and arranging priorities according to their importance. The importance of identifying training needs appears due to the changes in business systems, technological advancement, the emergence of new government standards, and the decrease in the quality of the work in the organization or its divisions.

The assessment and analysis of training needs are done through three levels. The first level is the organizational needs where the primary goal of training is to help the organization achieve its objectives and mission. The second level is the job needs which have relationship with duties and responsibilities, skills, knowledge and behavior that people must have to perform their job properly. The third level is associated with the personal needs which are the skills needed by workers to enhance their performance and effectiveness.

Rothwell and Sredl (2000) defined training as efforts to improve the individual performance and behaviors by providing people with the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish their tasks and achieve their objectives. However, the leadership training methods

differed from what it was in the past. Broome and Hughes (2005) clarified this point by indicating that leadership training, in the past, was done in classes and conducted by trainers, but nowadays, the focus is on leadership development within the work place in order to strengthen interrelations and to create an atmosphere of cooperation between the leaders and their assistants. However in the future, leadership effectiveness and competency would be formed through global competition, information technology and by adopting teamwork approach.

Leadership training moved from the traditional approach to a more sophisticated approach due to the expansion in the labor market, the changing environment, and the progress in leadership theories and training (Bolden, 2010). Training in all its forms and manifestations is a fundamental pillar to raise the efficiency of workers in any sector of the business segments. This is reflected positively on the output of these sectors in quality and quantity. This requires that the training is a continuous process of development and keep pace with changes in this unstable world. Therefore, the process of training needs identification from the viewpoint of the trainee himself, is important and critical to the success of the training program at all levels. The participation of workers in determining their training needs gives them the opportunity to assess those needs and areas that need development (Fenstermacher and Berliner, 1983).

Literature review

Few studies have been conducted on academic leadership training and development whether in Saudi Arabia or abroad. The next studies addressed the importance of building training programs and analyzing training needs for academic leadership.

Spendlove (2007) aimed to investigate the role of the principal leaders of a university, and the competencies (attitudes, knowledge and behavior) that are needed for effective leadership in higher education. Semi-structured interviews were held with Pro-Vice-Chancellors at 10 British universities representative of the sector. The study results showed that most respondents perceived that academic credibility and experience of university life were crucial for effective leadership in higher education, and continued with their research and teaching activities alongside their managerial roles. People skills, including the ability to communicate and negotiate with others, were also felt to be important. Most universities in the study had no systematic approach for either identifying or developing leadership skills. It is worth mentioning that the research highlights the need for a more proactive approach to identifying leadership competencies and developing leadership throughout universities.

"College Deans: Leading from Within", a book of Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) is based on a study conducted by the Center for Academic Leadership at Washington State University (Gmelch et al., 1996). the survey included 1300 deans at 360 universities in the United State and 60% responded to the survey. Six roles for the deans were identified, namely: resource management, academic personnel management, internal productivity, personal scholarship, leadership and external and political relations. The results showed that academic personnel management and internal productivity were the most important roles of the dean followed by external and political relations, leadership, resource management and personal scholarship. The study defined three dimensions that constitute academic leadership for deans: community

building, setting directions and empowering. Moreover, eight characteristics were attributed to each dimension in order to assess leadership effectiveness[*].

Inman (2007) described the journey to leadership of 18 academic leaders within six universities in Britain. Inman has interviewed the leaders 3 months to determine their perceptions of their life history, including the significance of their formative years, career pathways, incentives, training and less formal learning to get the needs of leadership. The results showed that the leadership nature of the academic leaders in higher education requires some leadership and administrative skills. The formal professional development of leaders is relatively rare. Most of what the leaders do is a result of their own efforts to learn and gain experience. Important events and people in their life affected the way of their leadership. The study showed the imbalances about the development programs of academic leaders in higher education. The challenge is the possibility of adopting skills acquired by academic leaders of practical experience, by universities to build effective leadership and development training programs. Thus, training and development initiatives take the form of a structured way to meet the needs of academic leaders and raise the performance and productivity.

Leslie (2009) aimed to identify the necessary leadership skills and their importance for the current and future organizations' needs. The study used the survey method where 2200 leaders from 15 organisations in three countries, were investigated. Seven competencies were identified as most critical for success: leading people, strategic planning, managing change, inspiring commitment, resourcefulness, doing whatever it takes and being a quick learner. Among the top five needs for leaders to be effective were: inspiring commitment, strategic planning, leading people, resourcefulness and employee development. The four most important skills for the future - leading people, strategic planning, inspiring commitment, and managing change - are among the weakest competencies for today's leaders.

Statement of the Problem

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia realized the importance of having efficient and effective leaders able to lead and manage development and achieve its goals specifically in the universities. For this purpose, Northern Border University carried out many training programs for faculty members and academic leaders. But, this training programs have been implemented without doing any study or research about the impact of these programs on the leadership skills and performance. There was a lack of a clear methodology for the training needs analysis and the design of academic leadership training programs. The training adopted traditional methods to select trainers, training programs and methods of training to develop leadership skills. In fact, this requires a scientific approach to determine the training programs according to the actual needs of academic leaders. This could be done through the involvement of trainees in identifying needs concerning their development on a personal, job and university level. In this way, the study could be defined by the question "What training programs are needed for the academic leaders at Northern Border University?"

Research questions

- 1- What are the training needs of academic leaders at the northern border university from their perspective?

- 2- Are there any difference statistically significant at the level ($\alpha=0.05$) in the answers of respondents attributed to the variables (years of experience, job title, qualification, gender)
3- What training programs are needed for the academic leaders at northern border university?

Purpose of research

The importance of the study is reflected by the enrichment of literature by identifying the competencies and skills that should characterize the academic leaders at Northern Border University. Practically the importance of research consists in preparing a training plan based on the identification of training needs and designing adequate training programs with the participation and involvement of academic leaders at three levels: personal, job and organisational level. It is also important to manifest the adoption of modern styles and methods in academic leadership training. Following this approach the organization will avoid the expenses on training programs that do not take into account the actual needs of those involved in the training process.

Research Methodology

This paper used a survey descriptive method that fits this type of study. The population of this study is limited to 136 academic leaders (College deans, College vice-deans, head of department) at Northern Border University. the study used a stratified random sample of 88 elements representing 65% of the population investigated. Table 1 illustrate the distribution of the sample regarding the study variables: years of experience, qualification, job title and gender.

Table 1. Sample distribution according to the study variables

variables	frequency	
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	26
	5 to 10 years	20
	10 to 15 years	16
	More than 15 years	26
Job title	Dean	12
	Vice dean	18
	Head of department	58
Qualification	PhD	75
	Master	13
Gender	Male	67
	Female	21
	Total	88

Tool of research

The study used a questionnaire to identify academic leaders training needs for designing training programs to develop academic leaders' skills in Northern Border University. The questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part includes 15 items to measure the personal

training needs for the academic leaders. The second consists of 11 items to assess training needs at the job level and the third part cover 15 items to identify the training needs at the university level. Literature reviews, higher education strategic plan and other institutional documents have helped to design the questionnaire.

Tool's validity

The tool of the study was refereed by a group of experts and faculty members at Saudi universities, to get their notes and suggestions of reviewing the questionnaire items , in order to assure the validity of the questionnaire content.

To construct the validity of our measurement procedure, we explored the answers of 15 people from inside and outside the study population, we extracted the correlation coefficients for the questionnaire items with the global result. We calculated the discrimination coefficient for all items to identify the validity significance for each item by calculating its correlation coefficient with the tool from one side and with the part it belongs to from the other side. The correlation coefficients of the questionnaire items with the different parts vary between 0.442 and 0.845, and lay between 0.333 and 0.769 for the correlation with the tool (see table 2)

Table 2. Correlation coefficient between the item and its level

item number	Correlation coefficient With the tool	Correlation coefficient With the level	item number	Correlation coefficient With the tool	Correlation coefficient With the level
1	.566	.607	22	.691	.730
2	.481	.442	23	.642	.664
3	.611	.787	24	.703	.734
4	.598	.705	25	.769	.778
5	.602	.744	26	.602	.647
6	.619	.726	27	.703	.729
7	.558	.662	28	.706	.679
8	.521	.608	29	.748	.739
9	.600	.638	30	.660	.698
10	.719	.751	31	.667	.739
11	.726	.845	32	.559	.639
12	.706	.756	33	.636	.736
13	.582	.670	34	.641	.629
14	.679	.775	35	.670	.674
15	.676	.712	36	.333	.490
16	.727	.751	37	.509	.633
17	.702	.715	38	.642	.731
18	.745	.794	39	.694	.722
19	.642	.719	40	.642	.774
20	.719	.778	41	.641	.744
21	.669	.746			

Table 2 showed that the correlation coefficients' values are acceptable and statically significant, so there was no change in the questionnaire. The correlation coefficients for the three study dimensions (levels of training needs) are presented in the table 3.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between the three levels of needs

Total	Training needs at university level	Training needs at job level	Training needs at personal level	
-	-	-	1.000	Training needs at personal level
-	-	1.000	.696(*)	Training needs at job level
-	1.000	.789	.560(*)	Training needs at university level
1.000(*)	.880(*)	.922	.858(*)	Total

* Statistically significant at the level (0.05)

Tool's reliability

The study adopted the test-retest method to prove the tool's reliability for measurement of answers for 15 people asked twice with a gap of two weeks between tests. The Pearson's correlation coefficient is calculated for retest reliability and Cronbach's alpha is determined for internal consistency as showed in table 4.

Table 4. Internal consistency and retest reliability coefficient related to 3 levels of needs

Training Level	Internal consistency	Retest reliability
Personal training needs	0.921	0.876
Job training needs	0.904	0.831
University Training needs	0.915	0.850
Total	0.967	0.863

Statistical analysis

- 1- To answer the first question we used means and standard deviations to measure the degree of training needs
- 2- To answer the second question we used the analysis of variance to identify the level of the differences' significance related to the respondents' answers and the study variables
- 3- To estimate the degree of training needs the following scale standard has been used

Table 5. Scale standard to estimate the degree of training needs

(Range: $5-1=4$, Interval: $4\div 3=1.33$)

Value of mean	Degree of needs
From 1 to less than 2.33	small degree
From 2.33 to less than 3.66	medium degree

For more than 3.66	high degree
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Findings and results

The results are set out in the order of asked questions

First question: What are the academic leaders training needs at NBU from their perspective?

To answer this question we calculated means and standard deviations, for the academic leadership training needs from their perspective, and put them in table 6 in decreasing order of means.

Table 6. Means and standard deviations, for academic leadership training needs

Sequence	Rank	Training needs level	Standard deviation	Means	Degree level of needs
3	1	University level	0.74	3.80	High
2	2	Job level	0.76	3.75	High
1	3	Personal level	0.73	3.63	Medium
		Total	0.66	3.72	High

We can see from the table 6 that

means vary from 3.63 for the personal training needs (with a value of 0.73 for standard deviation) to 3.80 for the university level needs (with a value of 0.74 for standard deviation). The mean for job level needs is 3.75 (with a value of 0.76 for standard deviation). Thus, we have a high degree of training needs at personal and university level. However, the results represent a medium degree of training needs at the job level. At the total needs level, the mean equals 3.72 and the standard deviation is 0.66. This indicates a high degree of training needs for the academic leaders in general.

We have calculated means and standard deviations for the answers of respondents, by considering three parts (personal level needs, job level needs, university level needs)

First part: leadership training needs at personal level

Table 7 showed that means vary between 3.19 for the item "formal correspondence" and 4.00 for the item "Creating motivating work environment". The mean is 3.63 for all personal training needs, which means that we have a medium degree of personal level training needs.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for personal training needs in decreasing order of means

Degree of needs	Standard deviation	means	item	sequence	rank
High	.868	4.00	Creating motivating work environment	2	1
High	.978	3.91	Crisis management	6	2
High	1.147	3.86	Administrative leadership	4	3

High	.973	3.86	Decision making	3	4
High	1.006	3.81	Change management	7	5
High	1.034	3.76	Persuasion skills	13	6
High	1.015	3.67	Strengthening governance	1	7
medium	1.119	3.61	Analyzing personal styles	15	8
medium	1.093	3.61	Skills of influencing workers	14	9
medium	1.071	3.60	Conflict management	5	10
medium	1.124	3.54	Analyzing different situations	12	11
medium	1.283	3.45	Self-management	11	12
medium	1.064	3.33	Future prediction	9	13
medium	1.367	3.31	Building ethic values	10	14
medium	1.203	3.19	Formal correspondence	8	15
medium	.73	3.63	Personal training needs		

Second part: leadership training needs at job level

Table 8 showed that means vary between 3.20 for the item "delegating authority" and 4.00 for the item "teaching and learning development". The mean is 3.75 for all training needs at job level, which means that we have a high degree of training needs at job level.

Table 8. Means and standard deviations for training needs at job level, in decreasing order of means

Rank	sequence	Item	means	Standard deviation	Degree of needs
1	17	Development of teaching and learning styles	4.00	.983	High
2	22	planning	3.97	1.011	High
3	21	Workers development	3.84	1.044	High
4	19	Use of performance indicators	3.82	.917	High
5	20	Faculty members performance evaluation	3.82	1.089	High
6	18	Use of technology	3.80	1.098	High
7	24	Knowledge-based economy	3.74	1.062	High
8	25	Work monitoring mechanisms	3.72	1.031	High
9	16	Stimulating competitiveness	3.68	.994	High
10	23	Diversifying the financial sources	3.63	1.298	Medium
11	26	Delegating authority	3.20	1.261	Medium
		Training needs at job level	3.75	.76	High

Third part. Leadership training needs at university level

Table 9. showed that means vary between 3.59 for the item "programs implementation" and 4.14 for the item "stimulating excellence and innovation". The mean is 3.80 for all training needs at university level, which means that we have a high degree of training needs at university level.

Table 9. Means and standard deviations, for training needs at university level, in decreasing order of means

Rank	sequence	Item	means	Standard deviation	Degree of needs
1	33	Supporting research	4.36	0.952	High
2	32	Quality assurance at the university	4.33	0.858	High
3	29	Developing e-learning	4.21	0.99	High
4	27	Stimulating excellence and innovation	4.14	0.922	High
5	28	Diversifying student assessment methods	3.82	1.006	High
6	35	Team management	3.78	0.982	High
7	34	Meeting management	3.77	0.942	High
8	30	Developing student activities	3.69	1.049	High
9	38	Community contribution	3.69	1.201	High
10	36	Creating partnership with the private sector	3.67	1.231	High
11	31	Developing student service	3.65	1.104	Medium
12	41	Programs implementation	3.59	1.11	Medium
13	39	Applying university's regulations	3.56	1.233	Medium
14	37	Organisational analysis	3.4	1.253	High
15	40	Finance management	3.35	1.307	Medium
			3.8	0.74	High

Second question: Are there any statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha=0.05$) in the answers of respondents attributed to the variables (years of experience, job title, qualification, gender)?

To answer this question, we have calculated the means and standard deviations related to the respondents' answers about academic leadership training needs, regarding the study variables (Years of experience, Job title, Qualification, Gender). The result is presented in table 10.

Table 10. means and standard deviations, for academic leadership training needs regarding the study variables

Training needs		Variables	
Standard deviation	means		
.12407	3.7146	Less than 5 years	Years of experience
.19668	3.6228	From 5 to 10 years	

.08268	3.9714	From 10 to 15 years	Job title
.12247	3.6579	More than 15 years	
.16351	3.5450	College dean	Job title
.14926	3.5848	College vice dean	
.08859	3.8038	Head of department	Qualification
.07338	3.7387	PhD	
.21778	3.6370	Master	Qualification
.07897	3.7612	Male	
.14978	3.6039	Female	Gender

Table 10 indicates a neat difference in means and standard deviation values related to the sample answers and study variables. To show the statistically significant differences for means, we used the analysis of variance for variables as indicated in table 11.

Table 11. Analysis of variance for the study variables

Statistical significance	F-value	Mean square	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	Source of variance
.906	.186	.077	3	.230	Years of experience
.968	.033	.014	2	.027	Job title
.053	3.901	1.609	1	1.609	Qualification
.360	.851	.351	1	.351	Gender
		.412	64	26.396	Error
			88	1257.59	Total

It can be seen from the table 11 that there were no statistical significant differences that could be attributed the study variables (Years of experience, Job title, Qualification, Gender) at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This means that the academic leadership training needs are the same regardless the level of study variables (Years of experience, Job title, Qualification, Gender).

Third question: What training programs are needed for the academic leaders at northern border university?

Based on the study result of identifying the leadership training needs at three levels (personal, job and university level), some training programs are suggested for academic leadership at northern border university. The personal needs have a medium degree of needs, but there have been a high degree of needs at job and university level. Table 12 presents the training programs suggested based on our findings.

Table 12. Training programs for developing academic leaders

Program title	Training needs
Creating motivating work environment	
Crisis management	
Decision making	
Administrative leadership	

Change management	Personal level
Persuasion skills	
Strengthening governance	
Personal styles analysis	
Influencing workers in different ways	
Conflict management	
Different situations analysis	
Self-management	
Developing teaching and learning methods	Job level
Planning	
Employee development	
Faculty members evaluation	
Use of performance indicators	
Use of technology	
Knowledge-based economy	
Follow-up mechanism	
Identifying job level training needs	
Diversifying financial sources	
Delegating authority	
Supporting research	
e-learning development	
Stimulating excellence and innovation	
Diversifying student evaluation methods	
Team management	University level
Meeting management	
Student activities development	
Community participation	
Creating partnership with private sector	
Student services development	
Training programs implementation	
Applying university regulations	
Organisational analysis	
Quality assurance at the university	

Training programs can be implemented on the workplace or outside, under the supervision of an expert , by action learning or by attending conferences and meetings.

Discussion

The study findings showed that there is a high degree of needs for academic leaders training at Northern Border University. This corresponds to the result of study conducted by Bisbee (2007). It shows that many of academic leaders think they need to be prepared and early identified for leading, the institution should expose them to more leadership opportunities through various experiences, and offer them part-time roles before they accept leadership positions. Many of them did not feel to be prepared at all for leading.

The mean related to the personal training needs was (3.63), this mean that the academic leaders require several leadership skills, they need to attend various training programs to meet their personal needs to be capable of leading through influence (Scott et al., 2008). The study result at this level is sustained by Gmelch (2013), who mentioned the lack of training opportunities for academic leaders in universities, and that only 3% of the universities are training academic leaders on a regular basis.

The item "Creating motivating work environment" is the first need for academic leaders training, the financial and moral support increase the desire to acquire diverse skills, and the item "Crisis management" was the second need, which means that the academic leadership require training programs to help them resolve their work problems. In the third place comes the item "decision-making", the fact of being new to the position, the academic leaders need to develop their skill of making decisions that could be implemented, whether on a personal or organisational level. Adair (1973) stated that workers expect from their leaders to respond their personal needs, and help them achieve their tasks and participate to teamwork.

The job level training mean is 3.75 which indicate a high degree of training need at this level. This can be attributed to the recent establishment of the university and the recent appointment of many academic leaders, in addition to the lack of leadership skills and competencies. The program of "development of teaching and learning styles" is the most important training program for the academic leaders, as it represents the heart of work at the university. We can also mention the importance of competency "planning" and that of "employee development". This is consistent with what Leslie (2009) confirms about the lack of organisation leaders competencies, namely, leading people, strategic planning, employee development, managing change.

The degree of university level needs is estimated to be high, since the means average equals 3.80. This is attributed to the recent establishment of the university. It was founded in 2008. It should strive to meet the challenge of competitiveness and excellence, and make effort to develop local community. It's important to mention that the item "supporting research" indicate the highest degree of need. This is due to a lack of planning and research development projects. The item "quality assurance" indicate the second high degree of need, the NBU is working to end the self-study leading to the academic accreditation which is to be granted by the commission of academic accreditation in Saudi Arabia. There is also a need for training programs concerning "E-learning development" for academic leaders at NBU. Fitzmaurice (1992) who mentioned that the organisations would face the challenge of creating sufficient number of competent leaders has discussed this. He stated that the problem would be resolved through training process development leading to improve leaders' skills and competencies as "team management" and "project implementation".

Recommendations:

In light of the findings of the study, we recommend the following:

- 1- Implementation of intensive training programs to meet the training needs for the academic leaders at Northern Border University at the three levels of need.
- 2- Involvement of the academic leaders in identifying and prioritizing their training needs
- 3- Link between training needs at different levels to acquire common skills and competencies

- 4- Preparation of academic leaders to resolve the leadership succession crisis
- 5- Adoption of modern methods in academic leaders training

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