# Key Barriers to Training Effectiveness for Female Head Teachers in Saudi Arabia: A Qualitative Survey

## By Aljawharah Alsalamah[*] & Carol Callinan[†]

This paper outlines the results of a research study, the objective of which was to explore barriers to the effectiveness of training programmes for female head teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study was carried out in the context of the National Vision 2030, implemented by the Ministry of Education with the goal of developing education in Saudi Arabia. A qualitative method survey was administered in 2018 to 24 supervisors and head teachers; respondents were asked to outline their experiences with teacher training programmes. The results provided insight into barriers to training effectiveness. Specifically, four obstacles related to trainers, trainees or the training environment were identified, all of which minimise the positive impact of training programmes. The two most significant obstacles are related to the trainers and to the lack of motivation among trainees. Based on these findings, the paper provides a series of guidelines designed to overcome these obstacles. The findings of this study are significant in that they reveal important insights for training centres with regard to barriers to effective training. These results may make it easier for trainers to tailor their programmes in order to meet the changing needs of school leadership. Trainees will be able to develop the managerial skills required of head teachers and will meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education; ultimately, educational training programmes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be enhanced.

*Keywords*: Barriers, training, effectiveness, female, Saudi Arabia

## Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is witnessing unprecedented development in all aspects aimed at sustainable development, including investment in human capital.

Accordingly, efforts have been focused on the development of human resources in all sectors of the Kingdom in order to maximise the human capital required to bring about progress in the Kingdom and achieve comprehensive development. In order to contribute to achieving this goal, the Ministry of Education seeks to play a prominent role in developing the skills and abilities of its staff, including administrators, teachers and educational leaders, by identifying their training needs and working to meet those needs. The objective is to upgrade the Ministry employees' skills and understanding of relevant areas; it is anticipated that this work will reflect on the education system as a whole.

Head teachers play a key role in achieving the goals of contemporary education. As school leaders, they are responsible for the education of all students, for staff management and for school policy making; they are, therefore, ultimately

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[*]PhD Student, University of Lincoln, UK.
[†]Senior Lecturer, University of Lincoln, UK.

responsible for the functioning and academic standing of the school and for the wellbeing of both students and staff. Implementing training programmes for head teachers is an important means to equip them to meet the administrative, financial, staff, student and technological challenges they may encounter, as well to help them to develop their ability to carry out their tasks effectively (Pheko, 2008; White, 1982).

From this perspective, in the context of efforts that have been made by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to raise the quality and efficiency of performance in schools and to keep abreast of new developments in education, the MOE has adopted a pedagogic training scheme for head teachers. To this end, it has allocated two million SAR from its 2016/2017 budget to support training programmes for teachers and educational leaders (Ministry of Education, 2016). The field of girls' education and training for teachers and head teachers of girls' schools is a focus of the MOE in all provinces in Saudi Arabia.

## Literature Review

Training has been defined as the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, attitudes, or concepts that result in improved job performance (Goldstein & Ford, 2002).

The management of any institution is influenced by social and technological developments and the rapid changes experienced in recent years; these direct management policies and practices, both pedagogical and related to employee training. Thus, although organisations must currently be able to respond to demands for change, they must also be aware that advances in technology and knowledge are making many conventional working skills obsolete, while at the same time creating the requirement for new ones. It is the ongoing threat of knowledge obsolescence that makes training and retraining vital, not only for the development of the individual but also for the viability of the organisation (Read & Kleiner, 1996).

In this regard, Mostafa (2004) points out that spending money on training and development allows institutions to avoid spending twice on corrective actions required by the poor performance of employees. Thus, training must be maintained as a key activity and factored in as a significant part of labour costs, as the training of personnel is one of the most important types of investment in human capital. Similarly, Ference (1982, p. 25) emphasised that "the best way to achieve high and quality standards and provide qualified employees is training programs." In a similar vein, Massey (2004, p. 458) stressed that training is "a key developmental strategy", while Almeida-Santos et al. (2010) go so far as to suggest that training is a principal tool and factor in enhancing the standard of living and economic performance in all countries. Indeed, according to Alslhaot (2002), training is the main tool used by various institutions for their employees to acquire proficiency in management skills and cope with challenges in various aspects of contemporary life.

From this perspective, training programmes in educational institutions should be aimed primarily at head teachers, both to equip them to meet challenges they may encounter and to develop their skills (White, 1982). Morrison and Morrison (1995) also stress the significance of training for head teachers, pointing out that all candidates for a head teacher post are teachers, and that few of these will be qualified or experienced in management.

Stroud (2006) analysed the training options for experienced head teachers in the UK and investigated the need for additional training. He carried out interviews and focus groups with fourteen head teachers at primary and secondary schools and concluded that there was a gap in the professional development of head teachers throughout their careers. In support of this, Guskey (2010) asserts that there is a need for planned and continuous efforts to create projects and centres to provide professional development programmes in order to bring about changes in attitudes and beliefs, thus improving the work culture and achieving a consistently high quality in educational institutions. Moreover, to ensure that the aims of education are achieved and to help head teachers to carry out their tasks effectively, the provision of training programmes is a necessity, as indicated by a number of studies carried out in the UK and the USA (Pheko, 2008).

The idea that skilled leaders can be developed through training is supported by leadership research, as Pheko (2008) notes. AlGhamdi and AlGhamdi (2000) concluded that head teachers who have followed training programmes to prepare them for their role have high self-esteem and feel well equipped for their role in schools. Accordingly, they recommend that both long and short training courses be increased for school administrators to raise the level of their performance.

The main justification for a focus on the training of head teachers is given by Stroud (2006), who sees head teachers as a key factor in school improvement and effectiveness, as well as the reason for successful learning and the development of a strong school culture.

In addition, the leadership role played by of the head teacher has become increasingly important with regard to the process of development within the community. Head teachers support learning and develop knowledge, skills and values to improve the quality and efficacy of education, and to achieve a balance between school needs and those of the nation (Earley & Jones, 2010, p. 156). According to Ruskovaara et al. (2016), head teachers play a vital role as leaders and guardians of the educational process. They supply resources, make new connections and set examples in terms of behaviour. If we focus on head teachers, we can come to learn about methods to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in schools. In the same vein, Mbiti (2016) points out that effective training for head teachers will have a great effect on schools.

The importance of identifying obstacles to the effectiveness of training programmes arises as a result of recognising the importance of training. The key aim of identifying barriers to effective training programmes is to help the educational institution develop and implement a successful training process for its employees.

## Components of the Training Process

Training process consists of four components: trainer, trainee, training environment and training programme (Tawfiq, 1994), as shown in Figure 1.

*Figure* . Components of the Training Process



Each element of the training process affects the effectiveness of training as will be explained below.

## The Training Programme

The training delivery is related to structural and organisational aspects of the training programmes (e.g. timing of the programmes, duration, resources provision, and the provision of appealing, good content, and implementation-relevant material).

The characteristics of training, which include aspects of the training programme such as instructional style and practice, is one of three sets of characteristics that are related to training effectiveness (Alvarez, 2004).

According to King et al. (2000, p. 9) "Sound instructional design is the backbone of effective training". Instructional design is the term used to denote the process of preparing effective training. The importance of training design is that it allows organisations to identify what is expected of the trainee's performance before training begins.

Training delivery includes schedule training, conducting training and monitor training. At the design stage, training providers should select the training strategies or directions to be taken to address competence gaps identified by training packages. They define the objectives of the training programme and identify all criteria for evaluating training outcomes, pay-off, and training methods; they also appoint qualified internal trainers or external training providers. The design of a training programme is considered to be the tool that connects the training needs and the goals to be achieved through the programme, resources and training topics (Mohammad et al., 2012).

Training currently poses a considerable challenge. According to Mathis et al. (2015), this is because training providers must take into account the widely varying learning styles, experiences and personal objectives of trainees. For example, training older adults in new technology may necessitate greater effort in explaining the need for changes and in increasing older trainees' confidence and abilities when using such a technology. However, younger adults are more likely to be familiar with new technologies due to their early exposure to them. Because of differences like this, a number of considerations of training designs and delivery must be taken into account when developing training programmes for adults of different ages.

As a result, the use of a variety of instructional methods is held to be an important strategy for training design, resulting in successful training transfer. Through the provision of learning experiences in various ways, the trainees can grasp the training content in both conceptual and experiential terms. A diversity of learning stimuli also assists greatly in retention of the learning (Tennant et al., 2002).

Certain training methods may be more effective than others for a particular task or training content area. Different training methods can be selected to deliver different content (i.e., skill, knowledge, attitudes, or tasks) as all training methods can, and indeed are, intended to convey specific skills, knowledge, attitudinal, or task information to trainees. Hence, the effect of the skill or task type on the effectiveness of training is a result of the combination of the training delivery method and the skill or task to be trained (Arthur et al., 2003).

When choosing methods of training delivery, several factors must be taken into consideration. These are the nature and topic of the training; the number of trainees; whether the training is for individuals or a team; whether it is guided or self-paced; whether it is conducted online or in the traditional way; the resources and costs of the training; the location of the training; the time allotted to it; and the timeline for its completion (Mathis et al., 2015).

The growth of training technology has expanded the choices available to trainers according to the type of training, approaches and methods which can be used to conduct training (Mathis et al., 2015). Moreover, before undergoing training, the trainees are provided with the necessary information about the time and place of the training. Qualified internal trainers or external training providers are selected, whose responsibilities are to carry out all the activities specified to ensure effective interaction between the trainer and the trainee, monitor the implementation of the training programme and avoid errors, as well as to provide support through the provision of the appropriate environment, tools and materials to conduct the training programmes and convey information for trainees in an optimal way (Aidan, 2012). Lim (2000) confirmed that the use of diverse instructional methods is considered an important strategy for training design that leads to successful training transfer. By providing learning experiences in different ways, the trainees can master the training content conceptually and experientially. Diverse learning stimuli also help retention of the learning to a great degree.

Santos et al. (2003) suggest that it is important for students to see the relevance of course content for their work to be more motivated to apply and learn

the information on the job. This is important for the transfer of training: when trainees feel good about or satisfied with the training programme, they are more likely to perceive the training content as relevant, and transfer is more likely to take place.

The study showed that the effectiveness of training needed to be improved through the optimization of training design; the redefinition of training roles; the provision of an adequate budget; commitment from management; attention to individual, job and organisational needs; the use of motivation mechanisms; and the use of ongoing and summative evaluation Farjad (2012). Defining factors include job-based training, defined training based on poor performance, defined training based on organisational objectives, consideration of the needs of individual learners, staff awareness of the objectives of training courses, continuity of training, application of training to the workplace and proper implementation of training can directly lead to improving the effectiveness of training Farjad (2012).

**The Trainer**

In addition to the structural and organisational aspects of a training programme, it is important to consider the role of the trainer in determining the effectiveness of the training. Trainers act as mediating agents between programme planners or policy-makers and trainees, or the actual "customers" of training programmes. Their role in the process is to implement training plans.

A number of studies highlight the importance of the quality and efficiency of the trainer and their style in ensuring the success of the training programme. For example, Sitzmann et al. (2008) found that instructor style and human interaction had the strongest effect on trainee reactions. When trainees feel good about or are satisfied with the training programme, they likely perceive the training content as relevant, and transfer is more likely to take place. Marsh and Overall (1980) found that if a trainee liked their instructor, they were more likely to be satisfied and motivated to do better in the course. Morgan and Casper (2000) examined the structure of participant reactions to training and concluded that the trainer is of high importance in trainees' total discernment of the training; the instructor was found to have a strong influence on trainees' general satisfaction. Finally, Turner et al. (2018) pointed out that the instructor's skills and knowledge had a particular influence on the trainees.

It is clear, then, that satisfaction with the trainer plays a role in the transfer of skills and knowledge delivered through the training programme (Bhatti et al., 2014).

**The Training Environment**

The extent to which training programmes can be considered a success depends, at least partially, on the amount of support provided in terms of facilities and resources. The facilities provided in the training centre include the organisation of the training room, training means and techniques, and the provision of toilet facilities and meals and drinks. The importance of facilities and

resources cannot be ignored in evaluating the effectiveness of a training programme. Bhatti et al. (2014) confirm that an understanding of environmental factors may enhance training effectiveness and improve employee performance.

Mumford (1988) suggests some intrinsic and extrinsic factors which may prevent trainees from participating in the training programme. He identifies three extrinsic inhibitors to training, one of which is physical logistical constraints, such as the location of the training. In addition, environmental and situational factors can affect trainee learning and transfer after training (Turner et al., 2018); this was confirmed by Azab (2002), whose study of training provided for Jordanian public servants showed that one of the weakness of the programme was that lecture halls were not prepared properly. Al-Qaisi (2010) recommended that the requirements of the training environment be identified and developed in order to achieve the desired results of the training.

**The Trainee**

Trainee characteristics include conscientiousness, self-efficacy, motivation to learn, learning goal orientation, performance goal orientation, instrumentality (Tziner et al., 2007), job function, position and job experience (Swaminathan and Sudhakar, 2017). Trainee characteristics are an important factor in the effectiveness of training and the transfer of training to the work environment. The literature suggests that the trainee characteristics having the greatest influence on the outcome of training are those related either to personality or to motivation (Tziner et al., 2007). The attribute emphasised in this study is motivation, which has been shown to have an effect on the outcome of training.

**Motivation of Trainees.** The definition of motivation is "variability in behaviour not attributable to stable individual differences (e.g. cognitive ability) or strong situational coercion" (Hysong & Quiñones, 1997, p. 182–183). Motivation to learn refers to the intention of the trainee to invest high levels of consistent effort in a certain training programme (Tziner et al., 2007). Training motivation is frequently described as being two-faceted: motivation to learn and motivation to transfer. Motivation to learn is the employee's wish to learn what is being taught in the training programme. Motivation to transfer refers to employees' desire to use their knowledge and skills learnt in training programmes on the job (Kim et al., 2014).

Studies have suggested that employees' motivation for training is an important factor in achieving the desired outcomes of training (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Facteau et al., 1995; Mathieu et al., 1992; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Sitzmann et al., 2008). Motivation can influence how willing an employee is to attend training (Noe & Wilk, 1993), to invest resources in the training (Ryman & Biersner, 1975) to increase learning from training (Mathieu & Martineau, 1997; Tziner et al., 1991) and to transfer their learning to their job (Badwin & Ford, 1988; Colquitt et al., 2000).

To raise employees' motivation for training, managers should inform them about the importance of training prior to their attendance (Tai, 2006). According to Tsai and Tai (2003), employees were more motivated when encouraged by

management to attend a training programme than if they decided themselves to attend. This is due to the fact that management-assigned training is obviously important, and the nature of assigning the training (whether voluntary or mandatory) can enhance the trainees' perception. Some empirical studies demonstrate that advance information creates more motivation. Hicks and Klimoski (1987) found that motivation increased when trainees attended training programmes after being given accurate information from their superiors; having correct information about the training allowed trainees to prepare for the event and increased motivation to learn. Baldwin and Magjuka, (1991) also showed that trainees who were given information in advance of training programmes showed more motivation than others (Tai, 2006) .

Similarly, support from leaders has a positive influence on public sector employees' training motivation, specifically, the motivation to transfer learnt knowledge and skills to their jobs (Kim et al., 2014). Moreover, King et al. (2000) suggest that trainee motivation can be improved by asking trainees to set their own goals, by using different motivational strategies, by supporting participation during training and by linking the subject matter to job-related difficulties and circumstances.

## Methodology

### Participants and Procedure

The sample of the study consisted of twelve head teachers, all at different schools (primary, intermediate and secondary), and twelve educational supervisors working as trainers and supervisors for head teachers. It is important to emphasise that the education system in KSA is segregated by gender in all schools and universities. As is accepted practice for a conservative Islamic society, article 155 of the Policy of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1969) prevents the mixing of males and females throughout the different stages of their education, except for nursery school (Alhqail, 2011). Therefore, the study was limited to female head teachers.

The study used a survey method to explore the barriers to training effectiveness. Data was collected in two phases:
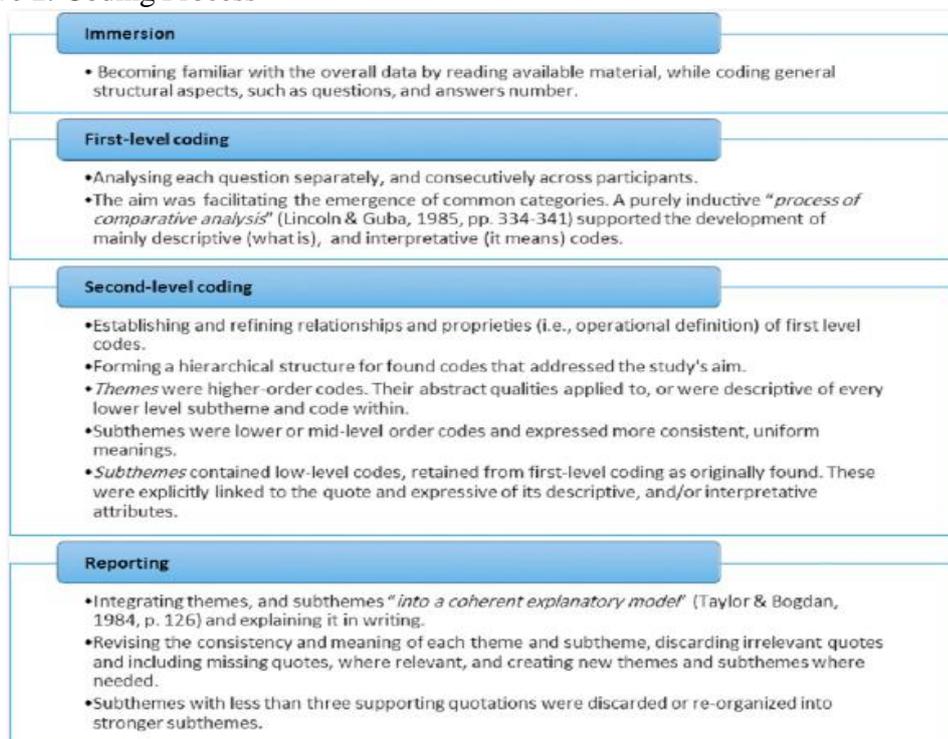
- Phase 1: Questionnaires with open questions; this was answered by twelve head teachers.
- Phase II: Interviews with twelve supervisors.

For the interviews, a one-to-one, semi-structured format was used. This is the most common type of interview used in qualitative research (Holloway & Galvin, 2017), as it allows a great deal of flexibility. A semi-structured interview involves a series of questions; the researcher retains the freedom to omit or add to some of these questions, and to follow up on specific points during the flow of the conversation.

**Data Analysis**

To analyse the qualitative data obtained from the study, the process was supported by the software NVivo 11 Pro. Data were anonymised and numeric pseudonyms (#1 to #24), randomly assigned by the software were used to identify participants. Thematic analysis (TA) was the method chosen for analysing their interview transcripts. Overall, the TA process employed for the analysis of the data was qualitative, thematic, inductive and iterative, involving four main iterative stages (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). A hierarchical structure was established between the more inclusive and abstract themes and their subthemes. See next Figure for the coding process.

*Figure 2.* Coding Process



**Immersion**
- Becoming familiar with the overall data by reading available material, while coding general structural aspects, such as questions, and answers number.

**First-level coding**
- Analysing each question separately, and consecutively across participants.
- The aim was facilitating the emergence of common categories. A purely inductive *"process of comparative analysis"* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 334-341) supported the development of mainly descriptive (what is), and interpretative (it means) codes.

**Second-level coding**
- Establishing and refining relationships and proprieties (i.e., operational definition) of first level codes.
- Forming a hierarchical structure for found codes that addressed the study's aim.
- *Themes* were higher-order codes. Their abstract qualities applied to, or were descriptive of every lower level subtheme and code within.
- Subthemes were lower or mid-level order codes and expressed more consistent, uniform meanings.
- *Subthemes* contained low-level codes, retained from first-level coding as originally found. These were explicitly linked to the quote and expressive of its descriptive, and/or interpretative attributes.

**Reporting**
- Integrating themes, and subthemes *"into a coherent explanatory model"* (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 126) and explaining it in writing.
- Revising the consistency and meaning of each theme and subtheme, discarding irrelevant quotes and including missing quotes, where relevant, and creating new themes and subthemes where needed.
- Subthemes with less than three supporting quotations were discarded or re-organized into stronger subthemes.

**Findings and Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Participants discussed the "obstacles" and factors hindering the achievement of positive outcomes and sometimes made suggestions for addressing those aspects of the training that negatively affected the results of training. Head teachers discussed three obstacles, while supervisors added a further obstacle, namely, lack of motivation. Figure 3 shows a comparison of the obstacles referred to by the head teachers and the supervisors.

*Figure 3.* Comparison of the Obstacles Referred to by the Head Teachers and Supervisors
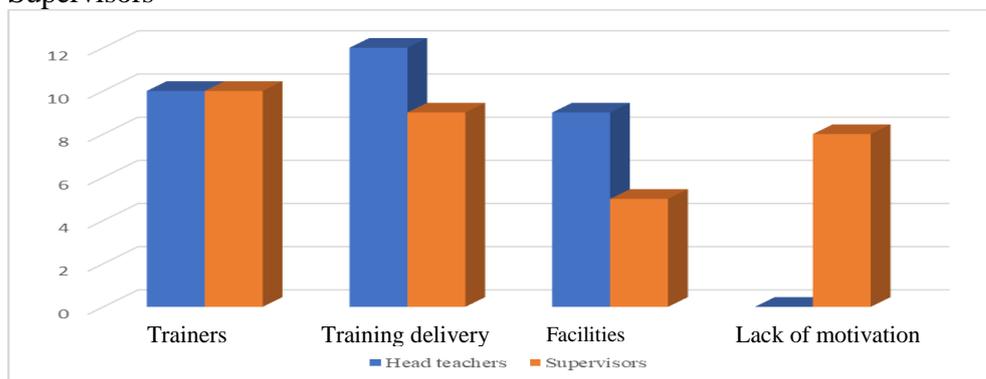


Figure 3 shows that both head teachers and supervisors see a lack of preparation on the part of trainers as an obstacle to the success of training. All head teachers identified the reasons for the training as a factor, versus nine of the supervisors; the head teachers who receive training realise the importance of this factor, as well as the importance of the training facilities. In contrast, the study found that lack of motivation among trainees was not mentioned as a factor by a single head teacher, yet eight supervisors pointed out its importance. The most commonly discussed "mediating factors" were: training programme (N=21); trainers and their materials (N=20); facilities (N=14); and lack of motivation (N=8).

The most commonly discussed factor related to the content of the training, particularly where there was low potential for implementation of the training content. As #20 remarked, one factor affecting the positive impact of training programmes was the "lack of implementation and expertise transfer, where some training programmes are remote from the field reality, being mere theoretical and cannot be implemented in reality." Four participants emphasised the importance of implementation, linking it to the quality of the trainer and the presented material. There was one participant for whom "the educational output result is satisfactory after implementation of the training courses for the head teachers" (#4). Other comments described factors that decreased the quality of the content. These included the subjects included in training programmes, the repetitive nature of training, confusing content and the lack of new management theories and practices (to possibly solve via ministerial legislation).

Some comments addressed the frequency of training. The large number of courses offered each semester represented an interruption from regular duties in school, and "time loss" for head teachers (#2). For example, #12 remarked that "for experienced head teachers, boredom and work interruption are negative, especially if the programme is repetitive." For this participant, the relevance, novelty or quality of the taught content was critical, as it could affect the experience and work of head teachers –and, through "cascade" sharing of knowledge, the overall institution. These participants offered solutions, such as focusing on "the quality rather than quantity" (#11) of training courses; or

providing "assistants for the head teacher, who perform the work of the head teacher while she is absent from work to attend training courses" (#3).

The second most commonly discussed factor was related to trainers. This subtheme brings together a wide variety of comments highlighting how the quality of both the trainer and the taught material was critical and encompassed many different "components" (#7, #14). First, some respondents indicated a lack of satisfaction with the trainer's preparedness or ability to deliver the material; for example, #11 complained of "weak preparation of the training material by the trainer". Other trainees #23 were referred to the "non-efficiency of trainer in presenting the training content as well as being remote from discussion and dialogue with trainees". In some cases, the experience of the trainees exceeded the information given by the trainer, indicating a mismatch between training needs and provision (#19).

For some participants, the issue of finding the right trainer could be addressed, and the benefits of training maximised, by employing trainers with practical field experience. Participants #15 and #12 in particular mentioned ways to improve the selection of trainers. Comments included:

> "... training programmes with a field trainer are more beneficial, so we have a peer training programme. We appoint the head teachers with long experience as trainers to the rest of the head teachers. This would give a massive and highly effective impact (#18)."

The third factor discussed by the participants was a lack of motivation among head teachers to attend training programmes. The subthemes of motivation, attendance and rewards included discussions about how head teachers sometimes lacked the motivation to attend training programmes or implement the course content. Such lack of motivation minimised the positive impact of training programmes and could be addressed by offering moral and/or financial incentives and penalties. Participant #5 explored this solution in detail:

> "… lack of motivation by head teachers, so attendance at training courses must be linked with incentives and penalties, i.e. vacations and certificates of appreciation, encouraging the head teachers and increasing their motivation to attend the training programmes."

Seven participants discussed the importance of incentives, almost as many as those discussing the impact of head teachers' motivation upon the outcomes of training. It is noted that this factor was discussed by supervisors only; the head teachers did not mention it. This is because the supervisors are the ones who supervise and understand the reasons for not attending training programs.

The final obstacle to the success of training programmes is facilities; some participants mentioned the importance of the facilities where the training was provided. In brief, participants remarked that the training centre should be geographically close for trainees (#12: "remoteness of the training centres"); sufficiently large (#9: "if the training environment is not suitable, narrow, small"); fully equipped (#12: "equipping the place to hold the training programmes; i.e.

halls, methods and devices' and #22: "training centre is very poor in services; it is not comfortable and does not provide training requirements"). These are considered necessary to maximise the benefits of training.


## Discussion

A set of factors that minimise the main and cascade effects of head teachers' training programmes was described, and suggestions for improvement were provided. These can be divided into four factors.

### The First Obstacle: The Training Programme

This obstacle refers to structural and organisational aspects of the training programme (e.g. timing and duration), and to the provision of appealing content and relevant material. Twenty participants complained about some aspect of the training programme. Concerns included lack of inclusiveness in the subjects taught; repetitive and/or confusing content; a lack of new management theories and practices; and the fact that some training programmes are remote from the field of reality, being merely theoretical, and unable to be implemented in reality.

The above findings are consistent with other studies on training and the evaluation of training. Basyouny (2000), for example, showed that certain characteristics of training, related both to the actual programmes and to the training methods, caused problems. The former covered such concerns as lack of inclusiveness, lack of coherence between training programmes and training needs, failure to provide focused programmes, and repetitive and confusing content. The latter included failure to address the practicality of theory, failure to use training programmes and not enough field visits.

Santos et al. (2003) suggest that it is important for students to see the relevance of course content for their work to be more motivated to apply and learn information on the job. This is important for the transfer of training when trainees feel good about or satisfied with the training programme, they likely perceive the training content as relevant, and transfer is more likely to take place. Hence, satisfaction with training plays a role in training transfer (Bhatti et al., 2014).

The study showed that effectiveness evaluation in the subject centre needed to be improved through optimising the design of training, redefining training roles and providing an appropriate budget. Also important are management commitment; attention to individual, job and organisational needs; the use of motivation mechanisms and the use of ongoing and summative evaluation (Farjad, 2012). Factors that can directly lead to improving the effectiveness of training include defined training based on the trainee's job; defined training based on poor performance; defined training based on organisational objectives; consideration of the needs of individual learners; staff awareness of the objectives of training courses; continuity of training programmes; application of training in the workplace; and proper implementation of training (Farjad, 2012).

This obstacle can potentially be overcome by providing appealing, accurate and implementation-relevant material, and by basing the plans of the training programmes on the requirements of the Ministry of Education, taking into account the diversity of programmes and not replicating them to the same trainees. There is frequent training each semester, representing an interruption from regular duties in school, and time loss for head teachers. It is crucial that the training delivered be new to the trainees and of high quality; otherwise, it could affect the experience and work of the head teachers, and, through "cascade" teaching, influence the overall institution. These participants offered solutions, such as focusing on the quality rather than the number of courses; or providing an assistant for the head teacher, who can perform the work of the head teacher while the latter is absent from work to attend the training courses.

## The Second Obstacle: Trainers

The barrier most commonly discussed by supervisors related to trainers and their materials. This was mentioned by eight of the trainees in their open-ended questions and by ten of the supervisors in their interviews. These trainees believed that the changes after the training programmes were not positive; their reaction to the trainer was not positive and they complained of the professional limited skills of the trainer. This shows there is a positive correlation between the trainer and positive changes for trainees.

This is also consistent with other studies. A study by Sitzmann et al. (2008) indicates that instructor style and human interaction had the strongest effect on trainee reactions. If a trainee likes their instructor, they are more likely to be satisfied and motivated to do better in the course. This supports earlier findings by Marsh and Overall (1980). Morgan and Casper (2000) examined participant reactions to training and concluded that the trainer is of high importance in trainees' total discernment of the training, and that the instructor has a significant influence on trainees' general satisfaction. Similarly, Turner et al. (2018) pointed out that the instructor had a particular influence on the trainees.

Selection of trainers and their role in the success of the training should be taken into consideration by training centres and training organisers. Respondents in the study discussed ways to improve the selection of trainers in two ways: first, by employing trainers with practical field experience; and second, through a peer-training programme whereby the training is assigned to a head teacher with a significant amount of experience, who can train other head teachers.

## The Third Obstacle: Lack of Motivation among Trainees

The third obstacle to the effectiveness of training referred to by the supervisors is lack of motivation among head teachers to attend training programmes. Such lack of motivation minimises the positive impact of training programmes as confirmed by Roberts et al. (2018); Grossman & Salas (2011); and Colquitt et al. (2000); they conclude that trainee characteristics and motivation are the most important antecedents to training transfer. Similarly, Kim et al. (2014)

supports findings that trainee motivation towards training and development is decisive in ensuring the effectiveness of training programmes in which organisations invest.

Interviewees suggested that one reason for a lack of motivation is that some trainees consider training to represent an interruption from regular duties, and a potential "waste of time". These reasons were confirmed by Mabey and Thomson (2000), who identified several factors that impede managers' participation, including time pressure and costs. Thomson et al. (2001) point out that another reason for lack of motivation is doubt among trainees that any tangible benefits will result for attending the training.

The participants offered two solutions to this issue. The first involves providing assistants for head teachers; these assistants can perform the work of the head teacher during her participation in training courses. The second involves linking attendance at training courses to incentives and penalties, such as vacations, certificates of appreciation, and increased degrees of performance, thereby encouraging the head teachers and increasing their motivation to attend training programmes. This is confirmed by Bhatti (2014), who investigated the relationship between intrinsic rewards and training retention and found that intrinsic rewards promote transfer and reinforce retention. This could be one form of positive perception toward training, with intrinsic rewards tied to training. Moreover, lack of motivation can be addressed by the supervisor, who requires the head teacher to take part in the training programme, and who sends a clear signal that the training is important. The manner in which the training is assigned (mandatory attendance or volunteer) can enhance trainee perception of the task (Tsai & Tai, 2003). Similarly King et al. (2000) suggests enhancing training motivation by involving trainees in setting their own training objectives to increase their commitment and motivation in achieving them, by encouraging participation during training delivery, by using a variety of motivational strategies, and by linking the training subject matter to situations occurring in the workplace.

It is noted that this factor was discussed by supervisors only; the head teachers did not mention it. This is because the supervisors are the ones who supervise head teachers and understand their reasons for not attending training programs.

**The Fourth Obstacle: Training Centre Facilities**

Twelve participants referred to the nature of training centres as an obstacle. The importance of facilities and resources cannot be ignored in evaluating the effectiveness of a training programme. Bhatti et al. (2014) suggest that an understanding of environmental factors may enhance the effectiveness of training and improve employee performance after training. Turner et al. (2018) confirm that training programmes can succeed or fail depending, at least partially, on the amount of support provided in terms of facilities and resources. Many environmental and situational factors can affect trainee learning and transfer after training.

The study showed that the training environment in training centres is often less than ideal; centres are not well equipped to the level that satisfies most

trainees and makes them feel comfortable. This may, in turn, affect trainees and lead to weaknesses in the training process. This is evidenced by research on training evaluation in the Middle Eastern context, notably, a study by Azab (2002) into training evaluation for Jordanian public servants, and one by Alsaadia (2008) who aimed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the training programme for the basic education of head teachers in the Sultanate of Oman. One of the reasons for the weakness of the programme was that lecture halls were not prepared properly.

These findings have the potential to inform future research into training, to investigate the role that a training environment may play, and to assess the relationship of reaction results and the training environment. Al-Qaisi (2010) recommends the provision of specific requirements for the training environment in order to achieve the results of training. Thus, future research should consider how environmental factors enhance the effects of training.

It is noted that trainees referred to this obstacle more frequently than supervisors. This is due to the fact that the trainees are active participants in the training, and they see and note the lack of services in the training centre.

Figure 4 summarises barriers to training effectiveness with solutions proposed.

*Figure 4.* Barriers to Training Effectiveness with Solutions Proposed
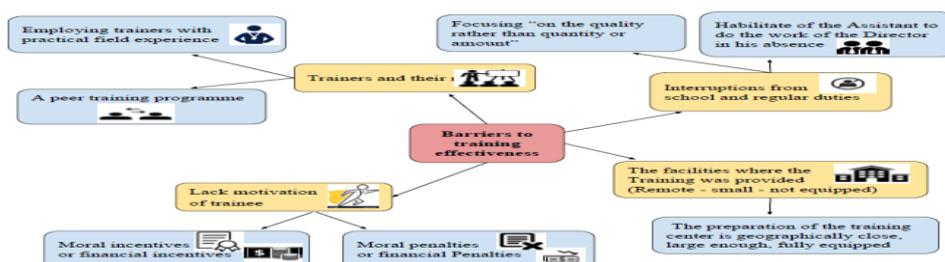


## Conclusions

The present article is aimed at identifying obstacles to the effectiveness of training programmes in Saudi Arabia. The significance of the findings in the study is justified by the fact that they provide insights for training centers with regard to the effective training aimed at comprehensive development in KSA.

The study used a survey method to explore the barriers to training effectiveness (questionnaires and interviews).

Our findings from the study showed that certain characteristics of training, related both to the actual programmes and to the training methods, trainers, lack of motivation among trainees and training centre facilities all significantly impact on effectiveness of training.

This study suggests that better access to quality training content, good trainers, quality facilities and support for trainees' motivation through a rewards system can be crucial in overcoming barriers to the effectiveness of training programmes.

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