

Case Study Higher Education

University /
Academic Development

University Preparatory Program Review and Professional Development of University Instructors

BACKGROUND

A University Preparatory Program (UPP) provides undergraduate and graduate students with up to 25 contact hours of instruction per week in English language, mathematics and science, depending on the students' language proficiency levels and educational learning needs.

A university in the Middle East with over 4,000 students decided to review the mission and vision statements of its UPP curriculum and practices. The review of the UPP Program examined its oral proficiency component's testing procedures. Taking into consideration the quality assurance measures, there has been a need to assess practices within the university Communication Skills program courses, as well as study the curricular plan of the university's B.Sc. Honors program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, TEFL.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Client Challenges

A university in the Middle East with more than 4,000 students was going through major structural and environmental changes in its UPP curriculum and practices:

- Transformation was taking place based on the university's new strategic goals
- Teachers' turnover was high which led to the recruitment of novice instructors with different educational backgrounds
- Instructors aspired for effective teaching strategies, and surveys showed that teachers needed and wanted more professional development and chances to progress
- Dynamic and interactive classrooms, and active environments weren't well-maintained in the UPP courses
- The university decided to achieve regional and international UPP accreditation

Our Solution

- Guided the restructuring of UPP
- Advised and guided the UPP and Communication Skills programs for the accreditation by regional and international entities
- Introduced cooperative and active learning activities
- Created a preceptorship, mentorship, and coaching program for instructors

Our Intervention's Impact

UPP Accreditation

- Laid the foundation for regional and international UPP Accreditation.

Restructured UPP Program

- Restructured curricula, courses, and programs
- Institutionalized certificate programs and courses
- Integrated new programs and courses
- Trained both experienced and novice instructors on new inquiry, problem-solving, cooperative and active learning strategies
- Trained both experienced and novice instructors on data analysis methods, curriculum content analysis, program assessment new inquiry, problem-solving, cooperative and active learning strategies

Governance and Management

- Improved performance and satisfaction of instructors

- *Improved performance and satisfaction of instructors through UPP restructuring*
- *Laid the foundation for UPP Accreditation*
- *Introduced cooperative and active learning activities*

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IN FOCUS

Key Client Challenge

There was an urgent need to review the UPP curriculum and create effective professional development programs for instructors of different courses.

Our Solution

Accreditation

Advised and guided the UPP and Communication Skills programs for the accreditation by regional and international entities. Specific measures taken include:

- Rotating the teachers in Level One of the UPP using weekly course plans
- Designing and administering bi-weekly achievement tests to all students in order to assess whether or not students have mastered the skills, content, and competencies taught during the past two weeks
- Using “flexibility measures” consisting of guided and semi-guided activities in teaching writing where needed
- Reviewing the freshman English course textbook
- Using communicative language teaching methodologies to increase interaction among students.
- Establishing the B.Sc. Honors TEFL program’s mission, vision, learning outcomes, course codes, titles, descriptions, as well as admission and graduation requirements

Educational and Professional Development

- Developed modules to provide teachers with the best practices necessary to implement the carried-out changes to the curricula
- Introduced cooperative and active learning activities
- Changed the Freshman program and Study Skills courses in order to specify what aspects of the study skills component should be addressed in a stand-alone course and what other aspects could be integrated into the existing UPP program structure and courses
- Developed training programs in curriculum design, data analysis, differentiated instruction, active and cooperative learning activities
- Delivered a series of workshops related to the above steps

Governance and Management

- Created a preceptorship, mentorship, and coaching program for instructors
- Identified teachers who were interested in training their colleagues who wanted to become teacher-trainers

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