ABSTRACT

The research aimed to study the effectiveness of using an E-training package to develop Webquest designing skills for teachers of gifted students. The main research question was how well gifted students’ teachers acquire the Webquest’s designing skills after studying the proposed E-training package? The research follows a quasi-experimental design for one group. The sample consists of 23 teachers of gifted students. The research only focuses on the designing skills for long term webquests. It is administered in a private school located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the second semester of academic year 2008-2009. The researcher used a pre-post test and a webquest rubric to evaluate the teachers’ knowledge and skills. The researcher found that gifted students’ teachers acquired very well the knowledge and skills related to the design of webquests after studying the E-training package. However, the skills of describing the process clearly and selecting resources were poorly acquired. This finding indicates that e-training packages can be used to train teachers on developing new instructional methods and tools. The researcher has put several recommendations. E-training packages should be used as complementary method and not as a replacement for face-to-face training. In addition, E-training packages should be supervised when implemented in an organization. In addition, the Arabic Web resources should be enriched with high quality websites.

Keywords: Designing Skills, Educational Design, Educational Technology, E-Training Package, Webquest

1. INTRODUCTION

Gifted students are usually served through enrichment programs. These programs employ several instructional strategies that develop inquiry learning, discussion, discovery, presentation skills… etc. They also aim to develop the personal traits such as cooperative learning, and improve self-awareness of gifted individuals. In addition, they are usually designed around one theme, problem, or concept and they tackle this topic in more depth than the regular curriculum.

Teachers of gifted students play an important role in developing and implementing successful enrichment programs. Rinzulli (1998) confirmed in one of his studies that teachers...
of gifted students have been ranked as number one factor among 15 important factors in the success of educational programs for gifted and talented students (Gerwan, 1998).

Moreover, many studies showed the need for training teachers of gifted students on effective instructional strategies. Gerwan mentioned that most Arab world countries do not have teachers’ training programs related to gifted education. Maajinee also concluded in two of his studies (1998, 2006) that teachers in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain need to develop their knowledge and skills in gifted education (Maajinee, 2006). In addition, Shata (2005) concluded that female teachers in Saudi Arabia need training courses on effective instructional strategies for gifted students (Shata, 2007).

Furthermore, studies have shown that gifted teachers need training on integrating technology in the learner experience. Alqahtani (2005) concluded in his study that teachers of gifted individuals need training courses in educational technology (Alqahtani, 2005). Also, Shaunessy (2005) confirmed that teachers should be trained on using the technology and on integrating it in their classes, such as employing webquests, PowerPoint presentations, and simulations techniques (Shaunessy, 2005).

Therefore, we can see the need to train teachers on enrichment strategies and integrating technology in the learner experience. This research paper aims to study the effectiveness of an e-training package on developing webquest designing skills for teachers of gifted students.

2. PROBLEM

The problem of the study emerges from the experience of the researcher as a gifted specialist in a private school in which teachers of gifted students are not trained on effective teaching methods nor on integrating technology. They need to be trained on developing higher order thinking skills for gifted students. They also need to employ technology in their classes. Moreover, they need more flexible training methods that can go well with their heavy work schedules. Therefore, the researcher suggests an e-training package to develop webquest designing skills for teachers. E-training package is an easy to use training technique, flexible and suitable to the nature of teachers’ work routines. It also assists in training them on designing effective webquest for gifted students.

3. HYPOTHESES

- There is no statistical significance difference at alpha level of 0.05 between the means of pretest and posttest for the experimental group treated by the e-training package;
- There is no statistical significance difference at alpha level of 0.05 between the mean of teachers’ scores in the webquest rubric and acceptance grade of 75%.

4. IMPORTANCE

- The study is pioneer in Saudi Arabia as it is the first on the local level to study the effectiveness of e-training packages on Saudi female teachers of gifted students;
- The study is proposing e-training packages to train teachers. Thus, it helps trainers, teachers, gifted specialists and educational designers when developing training programs for teachers especially those of gifted students;
- The study is proposing a new technique to build enrichment units for gifted students using webquests;
- It opens the door of more scientific research that tackles the topic of e-training methods for teachers.

5. LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to the skills of designing long term webquest. It was administered in a private school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the second semester (2008-2009).
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