

# IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON TEACHING IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA: AN ANSWER TO THE TEACHING NEEDS OF ACADEMICS

**María José León Guerrero, M<sup>a</sup> Carmen López López, and José Luis Ortega Martín**

Universidad de Granada  
Granada (España)

## Abstract

*In the last years, Spanish universities have given great importance to in-service training focusing mainly on the quality of teaching.*

*This increase, which is a clear sign of the effort done by Spanish universities to improve the professional competence of academics, must be accompanied by aspects such as the evaluation of the given training/courses, the inclusion of different elements to be assessed, i.e. the lecturers, contents, structure of the course, number of participants, degree of satisfaction of the participants with the received training, the impact of the course on the development of teaching competences and the impact of the new skills on the teaching practice, considering, mainly, the teaching of the participants.*

*This paper analyses the needs expressed by academics as well as the offer proposed by the University of Granada to those needs. A survey conducted in 2012/13 of more than 500 academics is used to gather information.*

## 1. IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

The interest in increasing the quality of university education has been placed at the forefront of public debate, and in-service training is the tool of choice for achieving this purpose. Improving university education is not possible without improving the quality of its faculty. This conviction has led many universities to intensify efforts in this area.

This interest in educational work and its training represents a significant change in the philosophy that has governed the practice training and teaching at the university. Traditionally, university professor training has not been considered an important factor for improving the university, at least in Spain (the term will be used in this paper to include all the possible roles –professor, principal lecturer, senior lecturer, associate lecturer, assistant lecturer and any others- to make reading easier). It was always granted that the mastery of the subject, along with experience, were sufficient components for a good professor. Professor Mayor [1] captures this tradition by stating,

In university, as our ability to learn is presupposed - and since we start to become professors, it 'seems' that we do not need training in teaching, either because we acquire it or simply because our scientific knowledge is enough... – then clinging to this belief is that any changes wanting to be introduced do not carry a parallel formation mechanism, but rather the faculty will adapt gradually, somehow or other, to the new situation. (p.117)

The lack of institutional commitment in this regard, together with the epistemological and cultural weakness from which it has been exercising teaching in higher education, has placed the university faculty in a fragile position from which it is complex to address the challenges facing the university [2]. The university must modify the philosophy that has governed the training processes in the past, incorporating a new educational model focused on learning competences, improving its relationship with the business network, establishing systems of quality assurance and promoting the establishment of collective commitments to improving teaching. According to Valcárcel [3], the lack of faculty involvement, as well as inadequate training are two of the main obstacles for achieving these.

The development and advances made in the field of teacher education make it advisable to boost in-service training processes that are contextualised (connected to the real problems of the teaching profession and the professors' needs), institutionally supported (recognised and encouraged properly in the evaluation systems of quality teaching), capable of compelling new business relationships grounded in professor collaboration, the creation of professional learning communities for professors and the contemplation of the faculty in all its facets (cognitive, emotional, ...). They should also promote the value of the professional practice, the observation, analysis and reflection of it and help teachers to clarify the reasons for their actions, to feel the need to change and explore, committing themselves to improving their practice [4; 5].

The same advances in the field of teacher education have highlighted the convenience for university teacher training to contemplate the different needs in terms of the phases of professional development that is found [6; 7].

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study we present aims to identify the training needs of the University of Granada professors to adapt the existing training proposal to the stage of professional development and thus contribute to improving the quality of education offered by this institution.

The objectives of the research are:

1. Meet the training needs of experienced and novice professors of the University of Granada.
2. Determine whether there are significant differences between the training needs perceived by the new and experienced professors.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To achieve the proposed objectives, a survey was applied to 549 professors from the University of Granada to represent a percentage of the total. Of these, 426 are experienced (more than five years of teaching experience) and 123 novices.

The survey consists of sixteen items of scale mode (1-10) and an open question. The quantitative data was subjected to descriptive and inferential analysis by means of applying the statistical program SPSS, and those questions of the qualitative nature have been grouped on the basis of categories and those with a frequency equal to or greater than 10 are presented.

## **4. RESULTS**

The results obtained in the descriptive analysis demonstrate contrasting needs of experienced and beginner professors (Table 1).

76.78% of beginning professors request training for the presentation of applications for innovation projects, research, etc. This percentage is 62.13% in the case of experienced professors.

The second most valuable variable is the training for the assessment of the teaching and learning process, which is also highlighted in this case by new professors with 73% while only 59.36% of the experienced professors believe that it is relevant.

Both experienced professors (66.59%) and beginners (71.62%) emphasize the need for language training for a better command of English in the classroom. Furthermore, this demand is higher (72.35% for the novices and 67.74% for the rest) if such training for linguistic ability focuses on improving oral and written communication in academic contexts outside the classroom.

We also note that 63.09% of experienced teachers stress the importance of being able to take courses for the knowledge and development of active and participatory methodologies in university teaching.

With regard to the comprehension and use of ICT for teaching (63.35%), the training the university offers to use resources aimed at improving teaching (62.82%) or using social networks for this purpose and thus having more and better contact with the students (53.69%), the differences between the two sectors are not significant. There is a much greater appreciation for the need to know how to create and correctly use a website on the domain of the UGR by new teachers (66.91%), compared to the experienced professors who do not consider it as important (52.65%).

The orientation training and action tutorial (62.69%) for Professional Ethics (56.92%) and for university management (53.93%) received average ratings indicating that they are subjects of interest to the faculty.

ITEMS	< 5 YEARS		> 5 YEARS		TOTAL SAMPLE	
	%	average	%	average	%	average
1. Knowledge and use of information technologies and communication applied to teaching	65.93	6.65	62.60	6.32	63.35	6.39
2. The use of resources offered by the UGR (CSIRC, CEVUG, etc.) for teaching	68.94	6.95	61.05	6.22	62.82	6.39
3. The creation and use of the UGR website for improving teaching	66.91	6.80	58.65	6.18	60.58	6.32
4. Using social media to improve teaching and student contact	57.31	5.83	52.65	5.51	53.69	5.58
5. Language training for a better command of Castilian in academic contexts	53.33	5.61	48.61	5.14	49.67	5.24
6. Language training for a better command of English in the classroom	71.62	7.22	66.59	7.09	67.72	7.12
7. Language training to improve oral and written communication in English in academic contexts outside the classroom	72.35	7.36	67.74	7.27	68.77	7.29
8. Language training for a better command of French in the classroom	47.56	5.42	40.86	4.88	42.36	5.00
9. Language training to improve oral and written communication in French in academic contexts outside the classroom	49.10	5.54	41.38	4.88	43.11	5.04
10. Training for the evaluation of the teaching and learning process.	73.00	7.42	59.36	6.23	62.42	6.50
11. Training for the guidance and tutorial action at university	69.43	7.00	60.75	6.18	62.69	6.36
12. Training for the understanding and development of active and participatory methodologies in college teaching	69.67	7.26	63.09	6.54	64.57	6.70
13. Training for professional ethics	65.04	6.67	54.57	5.81	56.92	6.01
14. Training for the university management	65.69	6.68	50.53	5.33	53.93	5.64
15. Training for the submission of applications for innovation projects, research, R & D, evaluation and accreditation processes, etc.	76.78	7.79	62.13	6.49	65.37	6.78
16. Training on gender issues	48.53	5.06	37.84	4.23	40.23	4.43

Table 1. Results of the descriptive analysis of university professor training needs

Following we present the results obtained after performing the inferential analysis based on the student's *t*-distribution that allows us to affirm that there are significant differences in favour of less experienced teachers in perceived training needs.

The following table shows the items in which the p-value (Sig, bilateral) is equal to or less than 0.05 and those that demonstrate the difference.

ITEMS	< 5 YEARS	> 5 YEARS	<i>t</i>	Sig, bilateral
Item 2	6.95	6.13	3.432	0.01

Item 10	7.36	6.10	5.326	0.00
Item 11	7.00	6.07		0.00
Item 12	7.14	6.32	2.874	0.004
Item 13	6.56	5.47	3.757	0.000
Item 14	6.62	5.07	5.176	0.000
Item 15	7.72	6.23	5.335	0.000
Item 16	5.06	3.83	3.864	0.000

Table 2. Significant differences in relation to the training needs of novice and experienced professors.

With respect to the qualitative data, the most recurring proposals for training by the faculty of the University of Granada are:

- Techniques to increase motivation and participation of students for learning
- Communication skills (oral and body: oratory, rhetoric, diction, body language...)
- Emotional Intelligence: responsiveness and attitude problems, or conflictive situations with students inside and outside the classroom (offensive, verbal, violent, etc.)
- Promotion of entrepreneurial culture

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results obtained, we can derive the following conclusions:

1. There are significant differences in relation to the training needs perceived by the faculty based on their situation of professional development.
2. The novice professors' needs focus mainly on the evaluation of the teaching and learning process and in improving their competence in the processes that enable their participation in innovation and research projects that contribute to their professional development.
3. The experienced faculty believes that their training needs should be covered by targeted training in the use of active methodologies in the classroom and the improvement of their competence in the use of English in the classroom.
4. The greater convergence between the two collectives is given in the need to develop their language training to improve oral and written communication in English in academic contexts outside the classroom.

## References

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