
Pedagogical Implications of a Microteaching Training Workshop

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Abstract

This study reports on the impact of a three-day professional-development workshop on effective teaching that was attended by 90 male and female faculty members from the University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia (25 faculty pursued the microteaching session). A narrative approach was employed to answer the research questions concerning the workshop's impact on participants' teaching practices and on students' learning. The researchers found that the three-day workshop was very effective in helping to improve the faculty and the institution through high-quality teaching and classroom experiences, which in turn will lead to higher levels of student achievement.

Keywords: Higher education in Saudi Arabia, faculty professional development, faculty training program, Microteaching

Background

Higher-education systems worldwide are devoting considerable financial resources towards helping graduates contribute meaningfully to the global economy (Institute of Education, 2010). These systems are paying particular attention to improving teaching and learning processes. This is especially the case within those faculties that are primarily involved in educating and preparing graduates to perform in the global marketplace (Monash University, 2010; University of Lincoln, 2007; University of New England, 2007; University of Western Sydney, 2011). A significant shift is taking place – from a research-intensive to teaching-intensive focus – in institutions of higher learning. Improvements to students' knowledge, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and levels of personal insight are mostly achieved through exposure to high-quality teaching and learning experiences within an environment that is conducive to meaningful learning and understanding. Conversely, inadequate teaching and learning experiences affecting education have a detrimental impact on both individuals and nations over the long run (Institute of Education, 2010).

A new era of higher education is emerging in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government explicitly stated in its Ninth National Development Plan that the higher-education system must focus on preparing professional graduates who are able to support the government's ambitious multi-billion-dollar riyal development projects, which have the goal of transforming Saudi Arabia into a knowledge-based society (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). The driving force for this transformation is the need for highly-qualified

university-educated professionals equipped with twenty-first century skills. The Ministry of Higher Education established the National Commission of Academic Accreditation Agency (NCAAA) as an independent entity to oversee and monitor the quality of higher-education institutions. The NCAAA's mission is "to be recognized within Saudi Arabia and internationally for the quality and effectiveness of its contributions to continuing improvement in the quality of post-secondary education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (National Commission for Assessment and Accreditation, 2010, p. 12). One of its major areas of emphasis is the quality of teaching and learning, as stated in Standard #4, which focuses on the professional development of faculty in their teaching practices. Effective pedagogy and the reinforcement of substantive contents must work together to prepare students intellectually, personally, socially, and emotionally to engage actively in economic development.

Many higher-education institutions have begun to respond to this call to improve the quality of teaching and learning. At the same time, improving the quality of pedagogy in these institutions is closely intertwined with the quality and availability of the faculty development programs (FDP) offered to instructors. Faculty members' practices have a profound influence on the quality of students' performance and outcomes. Improving the quality of instruction and pedagogical practices among faculty members is therefore seen as a vital goal for universities seeking to support the national economy through highly qualified human resources (Author, 2013; Zha, 2011).

The University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia (UD), recently established a Dean of Education

Development (DED) in order to improve the quality of education in all its colleges. Among the DED's most important goals is the development of well-functioning teaching and learning units within various academic clusters in order to leverage knowledge and build capacity with regard to pedagogical best practices. An intensive three-day workshop was carried out by the DED at the beginning of the fall semester of 2011 with the objective of improving the quality of teaching and learning within the university's three main clusters – engineering and science, literature and art, and the humanities. The current research is largely intended to expand upon the faculty development of personal and administrative knowledge about the best practices, facilitative factors, and resources required to support the various faculties, as well as to provide information about the challenges and short- and long-term impacts of this initiative. The research findings can be used to guide future corrective actions in order to ensure the effectiveness of FDP.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

General Demographic Context

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is a historical geographic area in the Middle East consolidated under the leadership of King Abdul Aziz, who founded the Saudi Arabian state in 1902 and then formed the modern KSA in 1932. Saudi Arabia is located in southwestern Asia and has a population of 27 million, 8 million of whom (33%) are non-native. The six largest cities are Riyadh, the capital, in the central region; Dammam, the main port in the eastern region and the location where this study was conducted; Mecca and Medina, the holy cities of Islam; Jeddah, the main port in the Western region; and Abha in the southern region. Saudi Arabia is sparsely populated and most of its population is concentrated in the large cities (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Almost all Saudis are Muslim and nearly 98% are Arab (Geohive, 2010; Al-Seghayer, 2011). In order to understand the challenges that KSA faces regarding post-secondary teaching, it is important to acknowledge that KSA remains a very top-down society with a traditional view of university professors as the custodians of knowledge. Therefore, a traditional view of teaching emphasizing knowledge dissemination by professors, combined with unquestioning acceptance by students, is assumed to be correct. The idea that university professors need professional development

seems to run contrary to this view. Nevertheless, in seeking to enter the knowledge economy, KSA is trying to address some of these out-of-date traditional views, specifically by better accommodating the needs of students and society.

Educational Context

The University of Dammam (UD) hosts 1,414 faculty members and more than 28,000 students across 24 colleges. It is located in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province on the shore of the Arabian Gulf. Established in 1975, it is one of the oldest universities in Saudi Arabia, and it aspires to achieve national and international accreditation. This aspiration has led to a new focus on faculty development and is encouraging UD (along with other institutions of higher learning) to submit to a program of improvement that includes faculty-development workshops. The Deanship of Education Development, established in 2011, is part of UD's strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning with a view to earning accreditation. This can only be obtained if UD ensures that it is a strong teaching-based institution that publicly encourages sound teaching practices benefiting students as primary stakeholders in the learning process.

Faculty Development Programs

There is a consensus among researchers that "reporting about the impact of professional development courses on faculty teaching is a new subject" (Cilliers & Herman, 2010, p. 254) and therefore faculty-development programs (FDPs) are a new area of interest. Indeed, currently the "evaluation of educational development programs is often limited to determining the satisfaction of participants, rather than anything beyond that" (Cilliers & Herman, 2010, p. 254). This research will help fill a gap in the literature on teaching and learning in higher education by exploring the long- and short-term impacts of professional-development programs on faculty performance through the evaluations that students give to their professors – not just through professors' self-evaluations – and through changes to teaching behaviour.

Faculty-development programs have a positive impact on students' progress and also improve the quality of their learning. Cilliers and Herman (2010) suggest that, despite being a challenge, the achievement of classroom effectiveness will have to become the focus of professional-development practitioners. Lecturers who undergo professional development integrate a more learner-

centered style into their teaching, a change in teaching approach that persists for at least two years (Gibbs & Coffey, 2000).

Previous studies have employed Kirkpatrick's (1998) evaluation framework to assess teachers' effectiveness after undergoing professional-development sessions. Cilliers and Herman (2010) explored faculty members who also participated in video microteaching as part of their professional development. The Kirkpatrick model is used in this study to conceptualize the critical examination of the impact of such workshops on participating faculty. This framework includes the personal and career benefits that accrue to the academics themselves in addition to the benefits that accrue to their students at Level 4b (Cilliers & Herman, 2010, p. 254):

- Level 1 – Participants' reactions
- Level 2a – Modification of attitudes and perceptions
- Level 2b – Acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Level 3 – Changes in behaviour
- Level 4a – Changes in organizational practice
- Level 4b – Benefits to academics and their students

Microteaching

Although this technique is well established in teacher-education programs, it is not commonly used in university faculty-development programs. Microteaching is a reasonably new application, the intent of which is to create opportunities to transform content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge by encouraging teaching under pedagogical supervision. Microteaching and video microteaching is one area that previous studies have explored in assessing the impact of workshops on faculty professional development. Microteaching has been seen as an opportunity for teachers to develop and improve their teaching skills in a comfortable environment. It is also beneficial for training individual teachers to work through and accept constructive feedback. Bush describes it as "a teacher education technique [that] allows teachers to apply clearly defined teaching skills to carefully prepared lessons in a planned series of five- to ten-minute encounters with a small group of real students or colleagues, often with an opportunity to observe the results on videotape" (Bush, 1986, cited in Macleod, 1987). Microteaching has been used in some previous teacher-training programs, but only recently has it begun to be used in FDP workshops in different parts of the world. Moreover, "Video-microteaching is based on psychological theories of behaviorism; it allows teachers in training to practice and give one another immediate

feedback" (Bell, 2001, cited in Persellin & Goodrick, 2010, p. 2). Persellin and Goodrick (2010) also note that "since its development in the late 1960s, microteaching has proved successful in settings including medical schools, instruction of graduate assistants, and universities such as Harvard (2009), MIT (2009), and Vanderbilt" (p. 2).

Teaching and Learning Trends in Higher Education

Universities currently emphasize faculty members' research interests over their teaching by tending to promote those professors with strong research records rather than those with strong teaching records. In order to ensure that graduates can respond to the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century, Saudi universities appear to be undergoing a shift in priorities away from focusing on research alone towards a more balanced approach. More specifically, instruction has begun to move away from a teacher-centered emphasis and towards a student-centered emphasis. This focus on a student-centered approach is also reflected in the NCAA standard on teaching and learning (NCAA, 2010). Indeed, "The Commission on Higher Education acknowledges that in order to meet these standards, institutions will be called upon to commit resources to the tasks of research and analysis, particularly as related to the assessment and improvement of teaching and learning" (p. 6). Furthermore, the standards indicate that "teaching and learning are central to the activities of faculty members at each institution, and faculty bear primary responsibility for promoting, facilitating, assuring, and evaluating student learning" (p. 53). Given the fact that student learning is at the heart of the mission of most institutions of higher education, the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness (see Standard 7: Institutional Assessment); this assessment includes monitoring the environment provided for teaching and learning and for the achievement of other aspects of the institution's mission, vision, and strategic goals and plans (p. 63).

This transition has placed considerable pressure on universities and other educational institutions to improve their faculty members' teaching effectiveness, including ensuring that their teaching skills and pedagogical content knowledge meet high standards. Consequently, faculties are no longer emphasizing "information transmission but they are encouraged to teach as facilitators of

students' construction of knowledge" (Light et al., 2009, p. 168).

Purpose of the Study

The main research question of this study is as follows: What are the long- and short-term impacts, including the advantages and disadvantages, of a three-day workshop provided through the Deanship of Faculty Development (DED) of the University of Dammam? Thus, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the short- and long-term impacts of a three-day workshop that was delivered as part of the FDP initiative at the beginning of the fall semester of 2011. The workshop focused on microteaching techniques with the goal of improving instructors' pedagogical content, knowledge and practices and, ultimately, students' outcomes. It was conducted by experts from the Institute of Education (IOE) of the University of London. Students' course experiences and academic performance were also explored in the workshop, as well as the contextual factors that facilitate or impede the application of the new teaching techniques after the workshop.

A Glimpse into the Three-day Workshop: Scope and Sequence

The workshop program literature indicated that the workshop aimed at "improving effective learning in Dammam University faculty who prepare students for both qualification and lifelong learning, to support the development of effective lecturing, and to provide supportive context for lecturers to observe and try out effective strategies for lecturing in the university classroom." The content revolved around the following components: an overview of teaching and learning, evidence-based teaching, and reflective teaching. The first two days of the workshop were mainly about microteaching, which is defined in the flyer as "a technique of practicing a small segment of teaching with peers followed by constructive feedback from instructors and peers."

The main focus of the three-day workshop was to improve faculty members' teaching skills and classroom interactions in order to foster higher-order cognitive skills and improve faculty members' knowledge and skills in evidence-based teaching with a view to improving students' learning. The intentions and activities of the two presenters (one male and one female) drew on expert knowledge and research about learning, assessment, and leadership from around the world. The high-quality facilitation provided by the expert trainers was designed to achieve rich collaborative learning by drawing on the participants' own experiences and insights in relation to key teaching, learning, and leadership themes; and encouraging participants to keep a journal to record their learning as they progressed through the program.

Methodology

Overview of the Design

This small-scale case study took a narrative approach. The researcher interviewed male and female participants who had participated in the workshop and asked them to narrate their experience. Before the actual workshop, focus groups were held in order to determine the main aspects of teaching and learning with which the faculty needed assistance. And immediately after the workshop each participant generated an action plan in order to implement what they had learned. This is an example of triangulation of qualitative research.

Participants

Thirteen male and female UD faculty members (out of the total of 25 who took part in the DED workshop) volunteered to participate in the study after reading and signing the consent form. They were diverse in their backgrounds and fields of expertise, and included professors of engineering, education, linguistics, chemistry, microbiology, mathematics, and medicine. They were also diverse in their years of experience: some were novice

professors while others had more than 10 years of experience at the university level.

Name	Nationality/Culture	Numbers of Years Teaching	Rank	Gender	Field of Study
Yasseen	Egyptian	16	Assistant	M	Design/Engineering
Ali	Jordanian	10	Associate	M	Architecture
Omnia	Saudi	17	Assistant	F	Linguistics
Maraam	Saudi	24	Associate	F	Linguistics
Shada	Indian	6	Lecturer	F	Computers/Engineering
Sama	Saudi	5	Lecturer	F	Interior Design/Engineering
Mira	Saudi	4	Lecturer	F	Design/Engineering
Samira	Saudi	6	Assistant	F	Design/Engineering
Amal	Saudi	6	Assistant	F	Mathematics
Rania	Saudi	6	Assistant	F	Mathematics
Nawal	Saudi	2	Assistant	F	Mathematics
Salma	Saudi	17	Assistant	F	Microbiology
Naser	Saudi	8	Assistant	M	Linguistics

Instrumentation

A qualitative method was used to answer the research question concerning the ways in which faculty members improved their teaching practices as a result of attending the workshop (see Appendix A). Each of the participants was interviewed individually for approximately one hour. The questions asked were intended only as probes or triggers to encourage faculty members to narrate their experience in the classroom before and after the workshop; these questions are set out in Appendix C. The study examines the points that faculty members highlighted in the pre-evaluation with regard to their understanding of effective teaching, post-evaluation, and action plans.

Before the workshop, faculty members were asked to fill out a pre-evaluation form about effective teaching; afterwards, they were asked to fill out a post-evaluation form. At the end of the workshop, they were also asked to develop a target and an action plan for implementing the strategies learned in the workshop. Furthermore, a few days after the workshop a survey was distributed via email to measure faculty members' satisfaction with the workshop. These data were used to measure the short-term impacts of the study and,

specifically, to help answer research questions 1, 2, and 3 (see Appendix D). The researchers met in person or had a phone conversation with each faculty member to ask about the short- and long-term impacts of effective teaching and about the associated facilitative and

impeding factors. A semi-structured interview protocol was used in this phase to collect data to help answer research questions 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Data Collection

Qualitative case-study methods were employed, including mixed-methods such as a questionnaire, interviews, and analyses of faculty members' action plans. The use of multiple data-collection techniques produced a rich description of faculty members' conceptions and practices. Interviews were the primary method of data collection, as well as the action plans that were written by the faculty members and collected at the end of the workshop. Thirteen participants were individually interviewed using an open-ended, semi-structured format. The study's narrative approach sought to establish the extent to which the participants had changed their pedagogical practices as a result of

attending the workshop. We were particularly interested in the relationship between teachers' conceptions of their students' learning cultures and their implementation of associated culturally relevant practices, as well as the extent to which their changes in conception resulted in changes in these practices.

The interview took a life-history approach, whereby teachers were asked to reconstruct their different teaching experiences and to situate them within their own cultural contexts. They were also asked to consider how their pedagogical practices had changed to align with the new context. Conversations focused first on teaching methods and strategies, and on any preconceptions that the teacher may have had regarding the cultures within which he or she had taught and was currently teaching. The conversations then focused on teachers' views regarding the status of education in the cultures within which they had taught and were currently teaching. Depending on the teachers' availability, the interviews lasted between one and two hours. Audio recordings of each interview were made with consent.

Data triangulation was achieved by cross-checking information obtained from the participants regarding their goals prior to the workshop and their action plan thereafter. The questions were validated and approved in a discussion with a professor of curriculum and pedagogy. These questions (see Appendices B and C) were then sent via email for faculty members to read and provide feedback before the interview. In addition, the faculty members' action plans and the goals that they articulated at the beginning of the three-day workshop were examined. Interview participants consistently addressed the main levels around which the questions were framed, as detailed below. The themes that emerged include but are not limited to:

The challenges and joys that the teachers experienced with respect to students;

The teaching strategies and pedagogy used by teachers after the workshop;

Changes to teaching methods used to promote students' academic abilities, and cultural influences that affect students' learning and academic progression;

The teachers' expectations;

The adoption of new teaching frameworks; and

Students' individual needs.

Data Analysis

The researcher used a variety of coding and summarization techniques to reveal the trends and

assertions within the faculty members' answers. The analysis used the Kirkpatrick (1998) model to reveal those results that speak directly to the experiences of teachers. Several processes were used to organize the study data. First, all the responses were read and brief notes were made about their themes. This facilitated the development of contact summary sheets as the analysis progressed. During the reading process, particular ideas and thoughts, patterns of behaviour, attitudes, and important words and phrases that are relevant to the four levels which helped frame the questions. These were sorted under Kirkpatrick's four levels, which became the coding categories and subcategories. Responses were coded in a similar way to the Kirkpatrick study: notes were taken from readings of the teachers' journals, and all the information was entered into one electronic document of salient topics. As more pertinent categories emerged, the themes were revised and cross-checked. Those themes that were most specific to the study's research questions were carefully selected for the purpose of data analysis.

The results are divided into short- and long-term impacts based on Kirkpatrick's four levels:

- Short-term impacts
 - Participants' reactions (Kirkpatrick Level 1)
 - Modification of attitudes and perceptions (Kirkpatrick Level 2a)
 - Acquisition of knowledge and skills (Kirkpatrick Level 2b)
- Long-term impacts
 - Change in behaviour (Kirkpatrick Level 3)
 - Change in organizational practice (Kirkpatrick Level 4a)
 - Benefits to academics and their students (Kirkpatrick Level 4b)

Data Sources

This research paper explores the long-term impacts on participants' professional development. It is worthwhile to mention that microteaching was used as an instructional technique during the second and third day of the workshop. To describe and justify the data sources and their purposes, the researchers used the following techniques:

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1. Interviews were used to obtain a sense of how participants perceived the workshop, the sessions, and the discussions that took place during the workshop.
- Videotapes of the microteaching sessions were taken for teaching purposes, and, along with the clinical interviews of the pre- and post-teaching supervisory sessions, provided rich and valid insights into reflections on actions and into justifications for actions during the second and third days. The videotaped microteaching was optional for the female sector. No videotapes of microteaching were used but some were analyzed and discussed by the participants during the third-day session.
- Pre- and post-evaluation forms of the workshop were collected and were read and re-read to make sense of how participants used the points about teaching pedagogy highlighted and discussed by the two experts. The pre- and post-evaluation forms were intended to determine how the participants received the workshop and presenters, and how the participants viewed the activities. The following section highlights key statements made in the 13 interviews and inferences that flowed from those statements. Details about the survey are included in Appendix A.
- A few weeks after the workshop data were collected, a letter of invitation to participate in a survey was sent to the 90 male and female workshop attendees, of whom only 13 replied.
- Prior to leaving the final session, all the workshop attendees completed an action-plan template containing four main questions: What have I learned about my teaching and how do I plan to apply my learning to my practice? How will my students benefit? When will start? Whom will I talk to about it?

Results

This study's two main research questions focus on the short- and long-term impacts of a three-day professional-development workshop. This section will discuss the themes that emerged after reading and re-reading the research data.

Participants' Reactions

Ninety-five percent of the participants found that the workshop was effective in terms of giving them greater confidence in their practices or refreshing what they already knew about teaching in the new millennium, specifically with regard to inquiry-based knowledge. Shada indicated that "the workshop was very helpful for me because it provided me an opportunity to see my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. It also gave me many new ideas [about] managing the classroom and teaching more creatively." Like 85 percent of the participants, Rania suggested that the workshop refreshed what she already knew about effective teaching. Sara found the workshop to be unique because all the theories presented were applied by the instructors of the workshop; according to her this made a significant difference and made this workshop effective.

According to Samira, "the workshop focused on learning, not teaching in the traditional sense.... As a faculty member, self-directed learning was one of the highlights for me from the workshop, and in my opinion we need that because our students are used to spoonfeeding." Maraam's view was consistent with that of several others: "The workshop inspired me to work harder... after so many years working in academia everyone needs to attend such workshop[s] to energize and remember various teaching strategies.... The experience was excellent and it gave us what we need – theory amalgamated with practice." Sama believed that this type of workshop would be most appropriate for novice instructors who need to build their practices on solid foundations.

Not all of the responses were entirely positive. Shada commented on the course attendance, as well as on the cultural mix of participants.

"If we had the same number of people on the third day of the workshop as we [had] on the first day, it would have been better. Secondly, we have people belonging to many cultures working in the university. And I do not know about the male side, but in the female section, I was the only non-Saudi participant. I feel that we can benefit if faculty members

belonging to different nationalities are invited [to] such workshops.”

Modification of Attitudes and Perceptions

Sixty percent of the participants in this study confirmed that the workshop led them to change their way of thinking about learning and about their pedagogical practices. Even more – 75 percent of the participants – indicated that as a result of the workshop they wanted to learn more about teaching pedagogies in higher education. At least 45 percent said that they would not go back to their previous approach to instruction. Sama admitted that prior to the workshop she was “not interested in a workshop about effective teaching.” In her words, “Teaching is lecturing... so when I was invited to this workshop I wanted to join my department. Then after the first day I felt that this was the best workshop ever.” Shada elaborated on the value of working with colleagues from other parts of the university: “When I got to work with people from other colleges and also when I got to see the teaching styles of different faculty members... I learn[ed] what not to do in order to become an effective teacher.”

Samira commented on how the workshop changed her approach to teaching:

“I changed how I present the content in my lecture, which affected students’ learning positively.... Students are no longer listeners but they are participants. The workshop changed my perception totally. When I first started teaching some years ago I used to think that I cannot give up any minute during my classes without talking.... I have to fill up all the time with my voice and points. Now I laugh and think what my students felt... of course that was wrong.... It took me years to realize that I have to communicate, and communication should [never be] dominated by the teacher.”

Rania said that her immediate response was “changing the room structure. Students are no longer sitting in rows waiting for information to be delivered. They sit in groups to discuss, analyze and present... and this was the first step to[wards] break[ing] the habit of traditional seating.”

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills

The participants found the workshop to be an outstanding opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge. Sama stated that “the most useful techniques that I used in my lectures immediately were jigsaw and peer assessment.... I felt that my students need them the

most and they are the most applicable for my design history class.” Shada noted that “the most useful [element] was the feedback that we were given at the end of each teaching session in microteaching.” Samira also said that she found watching others in the microteaching sessions to be advantageous.

Sama argued that the workshop taught her to investigate teaching pedagogies that had not been mentioned in the three-day course. “I went looking for and asking my colleagues [for] help to know more about concept mapping and collaborative learning pros and cons because I teach courses that are related to design and architecture.” Maraam confirmed that “the workshop provided lots of basic concepts that were not forgotten and people didn’t know it or forget it... such as feedback, evaluation, collaborative learning, and group discussion.”

The literature indicates that the long-term impact of professional development sets high standards for teachers, promotes continuous staff learning, and enhances staff intellectual and leadership capacity (Hassel, 1999, p.28). This is what the interviews with Sama highlighted: the importance of shifting the focus towards improving skills and pedagogical knowledge. According to Hassel (1999, p. 24) one of the expected long-term impacts of PD is the ability to “make a clear plan that includes research that supports the chosen content/process for professional development.”

Changes in Behaviour

Shada touched on the changes in behaviour brought about by the workshop:

“After the workshop I believe that teaching is more about getting the students involved and attending to their needs. I have become more sensitive towards their problems and difficulties in learning. I have certain learning outcomes [at] the beginning of the semester and I know that I have to deliver the knowledge to [my students], but I am not very restrictive about the assessment methods any more. If there is something that is not working then I change it. I have started doing early evaluation for my course, after the first exam and based on the students’ feedback. I constantly try to improve myself and address any issues that the students have. It may not always involve me changing everything, but I make sure that I justify all my methods and assessment strategies.”

She added that

“One of the techniques that was most useful was the unlucky draw. So, before every lecture, I randomly pick students and ask them questions from the previous lecture and I inform them that this is counted towards the participation marks. So, if they do not answer then it will cause them to lose marks. This has really changed their attitude and they have started reading more.”

Of the techniques that she learned in the workshop, Asmaa suggested that “self-learning and group learning are students’ favourites because they help break the ice between the teacher and students and students’ groups.” Omnia said that she “will never go back to being the teacher dominator... it is much better and more effective to teach using [a] student-centered approach... after the workshop I am only a facilitator.” She added that “I used to think that *only I, as a professor*, have the power to explain the theory but now I believe the opposite.... Students and teachers alike are able to convey knowledge.”

Omnia sought ways to change her students’ attitude towards learning:

“Although it is almost a fact that art students are mostly disinterested in learning, and study[ing] for exams is their method to pass courses, I have changed that for the two groups I taught since the workshop. I connected with my students via Blackboard and used [it] to put [out] an expression that talks about positive change in one’s attitude.... By doing so I wanted to work on my students’ psychology to have them accept being at the centre of learning [and] not on the margin as they usually feel or desire. I tell them ‘Change is coming and it’s better you take advantage of it.’”

Samira admitted that “before the workshop I used to push to get have my curriculum covered. I honestly didn’t care about activities or students’ engagement.... Now I care a lot for the skills and the content students comprehend. I realized after my first class after the workshop how students love to discuss what they learn.”

Maraam said that she had been changed in various ways by the workshop:

“I became more connected to my students than ever before via email. I became more confident and brave in trying new strategies and ideas. I [spent] more time interacting with my students without feeling guilty about not covering the

content of the textbooks.... Now I spend a full day prior to the lecture [preparing] my teaching material because I am enthused and I want to make a difference.”

Yasseen, an associate professor with extensive experience working at various international institutions, said that although he had attended many teaching workshops in the past, this workshop taught him to be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of students and colleagues. He believed this to be a result of viewing the videos on individual microteaching.

Changes in Organizational Practice

Omnia expressed enthusiasm for applying new organizational practices. “Since [I attended] the workshop I ask my students ‘What [have you learned] from linguistics to practice in your daily life?’.... This was the most significant for me, to feel that... my students are taking their knowledge outside of the classroom. And this is what the workshop focused on.” Shada reinforced similar insights: “I believe that the enthusiasm of my students is what encourages me to apply new techniques. In my college [the] majority of students are very bright and intelligent and that is what motivates me to work hard and be more creative with my teaching methods.” Amal further confirmed that “by implementing the new strategies I learn[ed] in the workshop, I improved my class interaction and incorporated new methods and other effective strategies to make my students’ experience better. I am more enthused to provide my lectures in practical ways.” Asmaa also highlighted her new methods, saying that she had “learn[ed] new strategies in how the students look up information in any references.” She has also “implemented a new strategy [of] one slide per student presentation.”

Ninety percent of the participants highlighted the benefits of gathering student feedback, another technique taught in the workshop. Sama said that “I told my students that I need their feedback to develop better teaching skills and since then they [have given] me their feedback in the last ten minutes of every lecture.” Rania has devised interesting, amusing, and student-centered methods for collecting feedback regarding her performance.

Benefits to Academics and their Students

Mira was the only participant with a Master’s degree in education. She asserted that regular workshops of this type would help instructors and

faculty members refresh what they already know about effective teaching. Yasseen supported the idea that this sort of workshop should be a compulsory part of the orientation for any new faculty member. In his view, it would help ensure that faculties and departments are harmonious in their teaching strategies, eventually leading to the success of the institution.

The participants' enthusiasm about the feedback process, as indicated above, is a reflection of its effectiveness for many teachers. It is also a way to gauge the benefits of the workshop for students' learning. Some participants quoted the positive comments that they had received from their students, such as "We never knew that we could think and discuss material in class... your teaching made this possible." Maraam said that "after 23 years of teaching I can sense [the] students' excitement. We are building characters, not graduating young minds to the workforce only. Our students were unable to have a simple dialogue in the second language they are studying. I honestly doubt that they can do so even in their own language." Rania also quoted one of her students, who said, "You made me realize that I can think and use my brain." Another student told her that "for the first time I feel that I can understand math."

Eighty-five percent of the participants said that they had received positive responses from their students about their teaching after the workshop. The two linguists, Maraam and Omnia, indicated an increase in the success rates in the courses that they taught using teaching strategies introduced in the workshop. Omnia had an 86 percent success rate and Maraam a full 100 percent success rate, up from previous success rates of 75 percent and 80 percent, respectively. Both teachers confirmed that this had happened for the first time in their teaching careers. Maraam said openly that this was "due to the fact that I changed my approach after the workshop.... I am no longer lecturing but engaging.... I started looking at my students as lifelong learners and therefore I connected them to real-life situations. I moved beyond papers and pencils... through activities I engaged them.... I am more enthused to teach than ever before."

One of the participants, who is also a linguist, indicated that prior to changing her teaching methodology she explained to her students that the change was a result of attending the workshop. "I want my students to feel that knowledgeable and be aware of what is going on, and I needed to start with myself." Nawal, who teaches math to senior-year students, indicated that "applying the workshop strategies made students more enthused learners.... Their satisfaction with the teaching methods and strategies increased too."

Naser confirmed that approaching learning through a student-centered approach "teach[es] students not to think of grades as the ultimate mean[s] for learning.... Students should learn for the sake of learning and this will happen only when we change the academic culture."

Rania also commented on her shift to student-centered teaching:

"This workshop taught me to manage my time better and taught my students how to be self-learners. I transferred that to them.... They reached the conclusion that memorizing means no need to think and no need to exercise any brain power... just a recorder power.... My students now realize the need to be independent learner[s].... I give them chapters and I tell them that this is an independent study section.... They accept that and don't resist it."

These teacher reflections are in accordance with Guskey (1986), whose research indicates that "student learning is unlikely to improve without improvements in teaching, namely teachers' knowledge, skills, practices, and, eventually, their attitudes and beliefs (p. 33). Group discussion was another aspect of teaching strategy examined by the participants. Some confirmed that although group discussion is a thoughtful technique that accommodates the Saudi collective culture, it needs to be monitored carefully by the instructor. Naser noted that "students' discussion could be going astray from the main points I am trying to reach.... I need to be careful and follow the group discussion carefully." Maraam also confirmed that some participants rushed to practice things learned in the workshop, such as group discussion, without being fully aware of the potential challenges. Her reservations extended to the value of promoting such methods to students who are not fully prepared for them: "It is not a good idea to follow what we saw in the workshop simply because our students are not ready." This readiness also extended to some teachers: "One of my colleagues who attended the workshop followed the strategies blindly.... She covered only four chapters out of ten in 14 weeks because she gave the entire load to her students.... She said that this is student centered and I don't agree.... She misunderstood the concept, I feel." Neither Maraam nor Naser are against group discussion, but they both call for the importance of planning before implementation.

Some participants expressed concerns about how low levels of attendance might affect the value of the workshop for overall institutional practice. Omnia wondered about the wider application of the workshop's methods among staff who either did not attend or did not put its lessons into practice:

"It would be much easier if all my colleagues in the department believe in this method of teaching... I can't force them.... Some who attended the workshop said that they are not confident but I feel that they will never be.... It is almost like 'spoonfeeding' when instructors don't apply what they learn. Then what's the point?"

Shada had just started work in a new college, which she described as "a challenge itself." She was also the only member of staff from her college to attend all three days of the workshop. This combination of factors, she claims, would make it even more difficult for her to convince her colleagues of the workshop's value.

Discussion

It seems that most participants benefited greatly from attending the three-day workshop. One area not yet highlighted are several factors mentioned by participants that impeded their learning, such as a lack of facilities, learning sources, and a lack of support. One participant, a math professor, said, "Whenever I submit for any conference related to education, it will be rejected without any reason." Naser also highlighted how a lack of learning resources and facilities deterred faculty members from using workshops effectively. "It's difficult to apply what we learn in the workshop.... These people, the trainers, are coming from different cultures and thus don't realize the challenges we face here.... They are not familiar with the culture of learning here so this makes it difficult to apply what we learn from them." Ali argued that oversized classes, the diversity of students, and the overloading of professors with too many teaching hours all negatively affect quality of teaching and discourage effective teaching. These seem to be common challenges faced by faculty members in most teaching institutions.

Another issue highlighted by some participants was students' resistance to changes in pedagogy. It appears that students were unable to foresee the long-term advantages of the new methods because it was easier for them to be passive than to be active.

Ninety-five percent of participants appreciated that, unlike the other workshops that they had attended, this one was not merely preaching. The trainers were practicing group work, microteaching, feedback, and the writing of action plans throughout the three days. Another interesting point highlighted by two participants is the short-term change in perception that occurred immediately after the workshop – that participants became aware that "became aware that they were class dominators"

There was some noteworthy feedback about the challenges to faculty members' progress and to their ability to apply the workshop's ideas. Among these challenges are the high number of students in each session and the number of teaching hours covered by faculty members per term, a factor that affects the number of hours that they are available in their offices. Another challenge highlighted was the difference between the Saudi culture and the culture from which the trainers came which is western (United Kingdom). Naser, for example, claimed that the learning cultures are so different that some aspects of the workshop were unrealistic in the Saudi context.

Pedagogical Implications

The present research is aligned with University of Dammam's (2010) commitment to building a highly qualified professional workforce. Its findings will have many applications to and implications for FDP initiatives of the DED, and will be used as an empirical basis for informing the DED of corrective actions needed to improve the quality of FDP in general and of teaching and learning workshops in particular. One interesting implication articulated by 90 percent of the participants is the need for a Manual for Effective Teaching for those faculty members who did not attend the workshop.

Improvements to faculty members' conception of teaching and learning are an expected outcome of faculty professional development at any educational institution. Professors who attend these workshops come from different fields of knowledge and indeed may never have been trained as teachers. It therefore follows that professional-development workshops offer enormous potential to change attitudes about teaching. Faculty members' accountability and suitability for promotion have long depended on their volume and quality of research, and have had little, if any, relationship with their quality of teaching. It is expected that the increasing emphasis on professional development will change this tradition and that faculty members will begin to seek further opportunities for

professional development within their institution or even abroad.

The researchers are aware of the significant advantages to students – as stakeholders in faculty professional development in general and in workshops like this that promote effective teaching in particular – from faculty members’ participation in these programs. Seventy-five percent of the participants indicated a major increase in the success rate of their students, and half said that this had happened for the first time in their course.

Microteaching helped faculty members trained in various fields of knowledge to convert new concepts and theories of teaching and learning into new behaviours and classroom practices. The usefulness of the microteaching sessions was highlighted by 85 percent of the participants. Faculty professional development enhances and supports the entire higher education system, including the performance of the deanship and the reputation of the university. From this study’s analysis the three-day workshop was shown to have refreshed participants’ knowledge about effective teaching strategies, made them excited and enthused to implement immediate changes in their classrooms, and drove them to read and learn more about effective teaching in higher education. These major advantages would not have been achieved without UD implementing such a workshop, especially given the fact that 95 percent of participants praised how the workshop was practical and not only theoretical, and provided hands-on activities to be used in the classroom. It is suggested that the provision of more workshops will further improve faculty performance.

The workshop days also included break periods that enabled faculty members to mingle and get to know one another. This helped them form collaborative groups to support one another after the workshop ended. Eighty-five percent of the participants emphasized this networking with others from different faculties and departments as a major positive advantage.

Among the more significant pedagogical implications challenged by the workshop and highlighted by participants was the shift away from the dominant-professor approach. As educators the researchers were surprised to learn that some professors still approach learning in this way. As Omnia observed,

“I kind of knew this – student-centered teaching and learning – and I read about it but now I will never see students in the previous light but in a new one. Now I tell my students [to] read and come to discuss in class.... In the beginning they found it difficult because they are not used to it

and they are now in their senior years, but gradually they [came to] accept it.... I am facing less and less resistance every class and eventually it will diminish [to nothing].”

Naser also commented on the same issue of the dominant professor.

“One of the issues in teaching in this context is the fact that many professors here feel that they are the boss in the lecture hall and that students don’t have anything to add.... Teachers feel they are the masters, the ones with power, while students are powerless.... [However,] following these teaching strategies such as group work, feedback, summarizing and reading, and students presenting, enables students to see the big picture and realize that they cannot reduce the educational process [to just] grades.”

Naser rightfully notes that

“within the available sources we are trying our best to use what we know.... Another point that is worthy to be considered in pedagogical practice is the fact that learning will be thought of and considered the student’s responsibility not the professor’s job. A professor’s job is to prepare students for life, not for jobs and not for grades.”

In the feedback, the participants expressed strong appreciation of microteaching. Ninety percent of the participants said that they found it to be very helpful. The male participants were the most enthused as their microteaching was videoed, which the female participants did not do for cultural reasons related to privacy and gender segregation. Yassen said that he never thought that he would videotape himself and watch his hand and body movement. “Seeing and monitoring my movement made me put myself in [my] students’ shoes.... I realize that I need to practice a lot in order to lessen my unnecessary movement.”

Conclusion

The main research questions sought to explore how faculty members developed on a professional level through a three-day workshop and how they implemented what they learned. Ninety-five percent of the participants were interested in learning new

teaching methods in higher education, new pedagogical practices, and new methods of assessing students' learning. Eighty-nine percent of participants felt that they were reviewing what they already knew about teaching pedagogies, and 79 percent said that the workshop activities refreshed their knowledge about teaching.

The segregation of the male and female participants into two separate and simultaneous workshops might have affected the discussion and the flow of points. However, the interviews and the action plans submitted by the faculty members who were later interviewed in the study revealed their absorption of best practices discussed in the workshop. The reading of the action plans confirmed the faculty intention of good teaching practices. The faculty action plans has a positive impact about their future plans to move forward with their classroom practices.

In summary, universities should be aware of the goals of faculty-education programs. They should provide ample time for professional development and should acknowledge the impact that this will have on the training of their staff. Moreover, university faculty should be provided with opportunities to experiment with the ideas that they are developing in these workshops. Above all, this study provides insight into the development of experiences that could be incorporated into faculty training programs and into in-service training workshops.

More specifically, the study's outcomes will assist the DED in the following areas:

1. Improving the short- and long-term effectiveness of FDP;
2. Improving faculty members' conceptions of teaching, knowledge, and pedagogical practices to ensure long-term behavioural change in instruction;
3. Providing information about the factors that facilitate change in instruction and teaching practices and that facilitate change in strategies towards a student-centered approach;
4. Identifying the contextual challenges that prevent instructors from applying new knowledge and pedagogical strategies in their classrooms;
5. Assessing the impact of FDP on students' course experience and overall satisfaction; and

6. Assessing the impact of FDP on classroom academic performance.

This study has also found that microteaching – as a means of training teachers at all levels – enhances the quality of teaching. It thereby encourages the DED to focus on providing faculty members with workshops and forums that emphasize this method. One of the study's most significant outcomes is to inform the DED about future needs. Through discussions with participating faculty members regarding how the workshop influenced their perceptions of and approaches to teaching, and regarding how they could achieve effective teaching, this study will eventually cultivate educational change emanating from the top. Knowledge is power, and the more workshops and training sessions that professors are enrolled in the better the educational process will be.

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الآثار والمضامين التعليمية والتربوية المتعلقة بورشة عمل للتدريب واستراتيجية التدريس وأعضاء الهيئة التدريسية بجامعة الدمام

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المُلخَص

تلقي هذه الدراسة بظلال الضوء على تقارير ورشة عمل التطوير المهني الاحترافي لعضو هيئة التدريس التي استغرقت ثلاثة أيام ومدى تأثير ذلك على عملية التدريس الفعال، حيث حضرها ٢٥ عضوا من أعضاء وعضوات الهيئة الأكاديمية بجامعة الدمام بالمملكة العربية السعودية. وقد استخدمت "طريقة السرد" للإجابة على الأسئلة البحثية المتعلقة بمدى تأثير ورشة العمل حول "الممارسات التعليمية للمشاركين والمشاركات، فضلا عن منظومة عملية تعلم الطلاب. ووجد الباحثون أن ورشة العمل المنعقدة في غضون الثلاثة أيام هذه قد لعبت دورا فاعلا للغاية في تقديم يد العون والمساعدة سواء لأعضاء الهيئة الأكاديمية أو المؤسسة الجامعية على حد سواء، ولاسيما تعزيز وتحسين معدلات التدريس ذات الجودة الفائقة والخبرات الدراسية المصقلة، والذي بدوره سيؤدي مستقبلا إلى ازدياد معدل مستويات التحصيل العلمي للطلاب والطالبات قاطبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية، التطوير المهني الاحترافي لعضو هيئة التدريس، البرنامج التدريبي لعضو هيئة التدريس، المملكة العربية السعودية