

A Study on the Effects of Staff Development on Teachers' Satisfaction and Perceptions of Change in Teaching Performance

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Abstract

Staff development is vital to the success of any academic institution as it ensures that staff maintains and enhances their skills and knowledge that can be used to improve quality and performance in their job role. Therefore, assessing the satisfaction of staff towards staff development activities is becoming increasingly important to its success. This paper aims to focus on the reasons why academic staff attends staff development workshops/sessions, to determine their satisfaction levels towards staff development and whether participation in such activities enhances their perceptions of their teaching practices and how effective they are as a teacher. Data was gathered through a questionnaire survey. The results indicated that the two main reasons for attending staff development are to 'gain knowledge and skills' and for 'personal development'. However, the two external factors that constrained them from attending all the workshops/sessions were 'time conflict' and 'administrative workload'. A significant positive relationship between satisfaction with staff development and enhancing staff's effectiveness as a teacher, teaching practices and applying the knowledge and techniques acquired in their lectures and classes was also found.

Keywords: staff development, satisfaction, perceptions, performance, higher education

1. Introduction

Staff development is very important in today's changing world due to competitiveness and new challenges faced by institutions around the globe. Higher educational institutions are competing to produce better rankings, attract high caliber students and offer good quality education. To shed more light on this, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) has been introduced by the UK Government to encourage excellent teaching by higher education providers. Moreover, the ratings will help students to decide which university or college to study at, by providing information about teaching provision and student outcomes. Another major development in this area is the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which is a British professional institution that works with governments, ministries, universities and individual academics in the UK, and around the globe, to enhance teaching quality in higher education institutions in order to improve student outcomes. In addition, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was set-up to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. Likewise, the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) was founded by the Egyptian government in 2007, and although it does not award quality ratings, it puts guidelines and standards for universities to increase quality. Therefore, in order to remain competitive in the marketplace, higher education institutions worldwide need to have systems in place to ensure they raise the quality of teaching. It is important for institutions to engage academic staff with new modes of teaching so that they move away from traditional teaching toward student-centred learning and enhance the student learning experience. An important way to bring about such change is through organising staff development training. Staff development is a strategy institutions use to change teacher's attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Gusky, 2002), and to enhance their teaching skills and their students' academic achievements (Blandford, 2000). It will also help teachers keep up-to-date with new pedagogical methods which in turn will contribute fully towards the achievement of goals of an institution.

From the available literature, it appears that relatively little research has been conducted on the satisfaction of teachers, working in higher education institutions, towards staff development in developing countries, such as Egypt, despite the fact that teaching staff are quite often expected to participate in staff development to improve their knowledge and skills as well as learn new ways to help students succeed. This study, therefore, addresses the need for further research into the reasons academic staff attends staff development, their satisfaction with it, and their perceptions of change in teaching practices as a result of participation in workshops/sessions.

2. Review of the literature

From the available published research findings, the reasons academic staff attend professional development training have been reported. The results of a study conducted by Muzaffar and Malik (2012) at six public sector universities in Pakistan found that the majority of teachers attend professional development training just for the sake of getting certificates. Other research findings in the USA have shown that 79% of adjunct faculty attended professional development activities for personal or professional growth, while 49% attended because a stipend

was offered (Bosley, 2004). Furthermore, the results of a study conducted at nine universities in the USA, identified five themes as motivational factors for attending professional development activities: (a) improve teaching skills, stay current and maintain excellence in teaching and scholarly activities; (b) topics and content; (c) networking, resources and information; (d) time, location, and convenience; (e) support and incentives (Lian, 2014). Besides this, according to participants of professional development programmes in Nigeria, amongst the reasons for such training is to: acquire new skills; to get a promotion; the need for providing improved library services; and to be trained to use modern information and communication technologies (Posigha & Seimode, 2015). Moreover, relevance and value were found to be key factors in faculty attending and engaging in professional development across departments in a community college in the United States (Hardré, 2012). Similarly, in a study conducted on assessing the degree of readiness and acceptance for continuing professional development in the Egyptian healthcare sector, Nassar (2017) reported that physicians in Egypt showed interest in attending continuing professional development to develop their knowledge and skills. Likewise, a study conducted in Pakistan to analyse teachers' responses regarding teacher education training and pedagogy revealed that they attend training with the hope of learning new trends and teaching methods (Gopang, 2016).

In addition, a number of empirical studies have proposed that there is a connection between training and development and the satisfaction of staff. The results of a study on the effect of training on lecturers' job satisfaction in Nigeria revealed that training is a determinant of job satisfaction and that it provides employees with specific skills to help correct deficiencies in staff performances (Umaru & Ombugus, 2017). Moreover, researchers found a strong correlation between Training and Development and Job Satisfaction at various universities in India. The results showed that the faculties that undergo Training and Development Programmes feel that they are able to enhance their functional areas and expertise (Chaudhary & Bhaskar, 2016). Likewise, a study from the United States has also reported similar findings. For example, a study conducted on adjuncts who attended professional development activities at a college in Florida found that they were generally satisfied with their jobs. In fact, those who attended reported a higher level of satisfaction in comparison to those that did not (Bosley, 2004). Along similar lines, the results of a study conducted by Okechukwu, (2017) on staff at a university in Malaysia found a significant relationship between training and development, and job satisfaction, while a study conducted on lecturers from a National Teacher's College in Uganda, found similar findings (Hiire, 2011). Additionally, Ghenghesh, (2013) reported that 47.6% of teaching staff at a university in Egypt, perceived training and development to be related to job satisfaction.

Furthermore, participation in professional development activities and training has been reported to enhance academic staff's perceptions of their teaching performance. The results of a study conducted by González-Geraldo and Monroy (2017) on teachers at a university in Spain, found that there was a positive and statistically significant impact of the training programme on approaches to teaching. Along similar lines, Boslet, (2004) reported that adjuncts who participated in professional development activities perceived their teaching performance to be higher as a consequence of attending activities. Specifically, they could "put what they learned into practice, develop opportunities to network with colleagues and became more confident in their teaching abilities and enhance the use of the curriculum in the classroom (p.57)." Similarly, in a study conducted on university teachers in Pakistan, it was revealed that Higher Education Commission (HEC) based training not only equipped them with knowledge but also improved confidence levels and was beneficial for teaching performance (Shaikh, Ghumro, Shah, Shaikh & Afridi 2011). In addition, the data from a study in the USA demonstrated that faculty perceived professional development activities as useful to them because it helped them to become better teachers and researchers and change teaching practice (Lian, 2014). Furthermore, in a study conducted on 32 UK higher institutions, the researchers reported participants to be significantly more student-focused after completing the UK-accredited teaching development programmes (Hanbury, Prosser and Rickinson, 2008). Likewise, the study of Gibbs and Coffey (2004) on the effectiveness of university teachers' training involving 22 universities in 8 countries also found that academics reported being more student-focused after completing a training programme than before. The authors also reported a range of positive changes in teachers that had been trained and in their students in contrast to the untrained teachers. Similarly, Knight (2006) surveyed a group of academics from eight UK institutions who were attending a teaching development course; a group who had attended a course in the past five years and a small number of participants that took part in interviews by email and telephone. Overall, the respondents reported a change in their approach to teaching from being teacher - to student-focused. Moreover, the results of a study conducted by Seyoum (2013) on participants at two universities in Ethiopia revealed that the perceptions of instructors at the beginning and at the end of a given professional development training programme varied significantly.

3. Staff Development at the British University in Egypt (BUE)

Since the foundation of the University in September 2005, it has attempted to provide ongoing staff development to academic staff. Overall, staff development focuses on three key areas: a) Staff Induction, Probation, and Personal Development Advisors; b) Assessment, Marking and Feedback and c) Teaching and Learning.

Adequate developmental opportunities are made available to staff so that they can increase their knowledge, skills, and performance that are essential to the University's mission and strategic objectives.

Faculty Staff Development Coordinators prepare Annual Staff Development Plans for their faculties which include the key elements and requirements for the different staff constituencies as outlined in the *Annual Staff Development Guidelines* as well as other key points that may be identified. The plans are developmental and therefore ongoing revision is conducted. The University Staff Development Coordinator oversees the processes that inform the planning, delivery, and evaluation of annual staff development.

Staff Development also focuses on another two areas: Faculty Administrative Support Staff and Central Administration (i.e. Public Relations and Communication, Human Resources, Quality and Validation, Marketing, Finance, Student Affairs, Student Activities and Welfare and IT). The main aim of the training has thus far been to enhance the performance of staff in a number of areas related to their roles and responsibilities.

The British University in Egypt consists of nine faculties: Business Administration, Economics and Political Science (BAEPS), Engineering, Informatics and Computer Science (ICS), Communication and Mass Media, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Law and Arts and Humanities. Furthermore, English Language Modules, which are under the umbrella of Arts and Humanities. However, this paper will focus primarily on staff development of academic staff in three faculties: BAEPS, Engineering, ICS and English Language Modules. The rationale for this is the University was established initially with these three faculties, and the former two are the largest in comparison to the others. Furthermore, the English Language Modules offer support to all students across the entire University. Moreover, the aim of these modules is to develop students' academic English to enable them to engage in their chosen degree programme.

4. Research questions

The main aims of the current study are to:

- 1) Examine the reasons why academic staff attend staff development workshop/sessions.
- 2) To determine the satisfaction levels of staff toward staff development.
- 3) To determine if participation in staff development workshops/sessions enhances staff's perceptions of how effective they are as a teacher, their teaching practices, and whether they implement the knowledge and skills acquired in their lectures/classes.

5. Research methods

5.1 Participants

All academic staff from the Faculties of BAEPS, Engineering, ICS and the English Language Modules at the BUE were invited to take part in the completion of a questionnaire survey. The number of staff who completed the questionnaire was 248. The participants' demographic characteristics are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant's Demographic Characteristics

	Independent variables	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	73	29.8
	Female	172	70.2
Faculty/Department	BAEPS	89	35.9
	Engineering	75	30.2
	ICS	33	13.3
	English	51	20.6
Status	Professor	14	5.7
	Associate Professor	17	6.9
	Lecturer	55	22.4
	Assistant Lecturer	70	28.6
	Demonstrator	89	36.3
Contract type	Full-time	218	89
	Part-time	27	11
Length of Service (Years)	Less than one year	58	23.5
	1-2 years	49	19.8
	2-4 years	61	24.7
	4-6 years	35	14.2
	6 years' or more	44	17.8

*245 responded to gender, status and contract type. *247 responded to length of service.

5.2 Instrument

A questionnaire survey was devised for academic staff and used in order to obtain data for this study. It was made up of 15 questions. Section 'A' (10 items) illustrates the number of sessions attended, the effectiveness of them, reasons for attending, satisfaction with staff development and suggestions for improvement. Section 'B' (5 items) describes respondents' demographic information including gender, faculty/department, status, contract type and length of service.

5.3 Reliability

In order to check the internal reliability of the questionnaire, a reliability analysis was performed with the use of Cronbach's Alpha. The alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.7. According to Nunnally (1978), 0.7 is an acceptable reliability threshold. Therefore, this would indicate that the questionnaire is reliable.

5.4 Procedures

The researcher obtained permission to carry out this research from the Senior Vice-President for Teaching and Learning and the University Teaching and Learning Committee (UTLC) at the BUE.

Copies of the questionnaire were given to the administrative assistants in the Faculties of BAEPS, Engineering, ICS and the English Language Modules to be given to academic staff. Those who were willing to assist completed the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were collected by the assigned administrative assistants and then given to the researcher. To ensure respondent confidentiality no names were required.

The academic staff was instructed to respond to the two sections of the questionnaire by simply ticking the appropriate boxes in Sections A and B. Moreover, if responses to question 2 were not 'all' and for question 3 'some', respondents were asked to provide some additional information. Question 10 was an open-ended question.

5.5 Data analysis

The authors of this paper undertook the data analysis. The data obtained from the questionnaire was computer coded and processed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Frequencies for questions 1 to 9 and 11 to 15 were obtained while the responses to question 10 were analysed using content analysis technique. Correlational analyses using Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were also conducted to identify the interrelationship between variables. Furthermore, the additional information provided for questions 2 and 3 were reviewed to identify any common, recurrent and emerging themes. Tables containing the additional information to the two questions and that of question 10 were prepared.

6. Results

6.1. Questionnaire

6.1.1. Frequencies

- *Have you ever attended staff development workshops/sessions at the BUE excluding the new staff induction sessions?*

When staff was asked if they had ever attended staff development workshops/sessions at the University, the majority 214 (86.3%) replied 'Yes' as opposed to 34 (13.7%) who responded 'No'.

- *How many workshops/sessions have you attended since you joined the BUE excluding the new staff induction sessions?*

From a total of 214 responses to this question, 39 (18.2%) said that they had attended 'all', workshops/sessions since they joined the University, whereas 98 (45.8%) responded 'most'; 55 (25.7%) 'some' and 22 (10.3%) responded 'few'.

- *Did the workshops/sessions you attended meet your development needs?*

Of the 211 staff that responded to this question, a total of 90 (42.7%) claimed that the workshops/sessions they attended at the University met their development needs, 103 (48.4%) said some of them did while 18 (8.5%) think they did not.

- *Did the workshops/sessions you attended enhance your effectiveness as a teacher?*

Of the 213 responses to this question, a total of 160 (75.1%) staff believe that the workshops/sessions they attended at the University have enhanced their effectiveness as a teacher, whereas 53 (24.9%) think otherwise.

- *Did the workshops/sessions you attended enhance your teaching practices?*

Of the 211 staff who responded to this question, 158 (74.9%) think that attendance to workshops/sessions has enhanced their teaching practice as opposed to 53 (25.1%) who think it did not.

- *Do you use the knowledge and techniques in your lectures/classes which you acquired during the workshops/sessions?*

Of the 212 responses, 171 (80.7%) answered 'Yes' to this question which illustrates that they use the knowledge and techniques in their lectures/classes which they acquire during attendance to workshops/sessions. On the

contrary, 41 (19.3%) responded ‘No’.

- *For what reasons did you attend the staff development workshops/sessions?*

In response to this question which asked about the reasons for attending staff development workshops/sessions, from a total of 212 respondents, 138 (65.1%) said ‘to gain knowledge and skills’, 136 (64.2%) ‘personal development’, 92 (43.4%) ‘they are compulsory’, 47 (22.2%) ‘quality of the workshops’, 9 (4.2%) ‘promotion purposes’ and 7 (3.3%) ‘casual reasons’ (i.e. go with a friend).

- *Is staff development one of the reasons you continue your employment at the BUE?*

The results of this question have shown that of the 210 responses, 68 (32.4%) of staff stated that staff development is one of the reasons they continue their employment at the University whereas 142 (67.6%) believe it is not.

- *How satisfied are you with staff development at the BUE?*

Of the 209 staff that responded to this question, a total of 133 (63.6%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with staff development at the University as opposed to 30 (14.4%) who are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Moreover, 46 (22%) stated they are unsure as to whether they are satisfied or not.

- *Additional information*

The last consideration of the questionnaire for this study was to elicit some additional information from staff. Moreover, only 30% or more of responses to this question have been included. A total of 42 (35%) of the 120 respondents stated that having interesting, useful, relevant and interactive workshops can improve staff development at the University.

6.1.2. Correlational Analysis

Following the frequencies, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated and tested to check the relationship between the variables. In order to interpret the size of the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), Cohen (1988) has suggested the following guidelines. See Table 2 below.

Table 2. Determining the Strength of the Relationship between Variables

$r = .10$ to $.29$ or $r = -.10$ to $-.29$	small
$r = .30$ to $.49$ or $r = -.30$ to $-.49$	medium
$r = .50$ to 1.0 or $r = -.50$ to -1.0	large

- *Satisfaction with Staff Development and enhancing effectiveness, teaching practices and applying knowledge and techniques*

The findings of the correlations are presented in Table 3. As can be seen there are statistically significant positive relationships between the variables at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis between Satisfaction with Staff Development and Enhancing Effectiveness, Teaching Practices, Applying Knowledge and Techniques

	How satisfied are you with staff development at the BUE?	Did the workshops/sessions you attended enhance your effectiveness as a teacher?	Did the workshops/sessions you attended enhance your teaching practices?	Do you use the knowledge and techniques acquired in your lectures/classes ?
How satisfied are you with staff development at the BUE?	1	.535**	.549**	.477**
Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
N	209	208	206	208

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

N refers to the number of persons that answered these questions

7. Discussion

This study sought to explore the reasons academic staff at the British University in Egypt (BUE) attend staff development workshops/sessions and to try to determine its effect on teachers’ satisfaction and perceptions of changes in teaching performance as a result of attendance to such activities.

Overall, the data indicate that the majority of the staff has attended staff development workshops/sessions at the university. This would indicate that they are interested to participate in staff development to enhance their skills and gain more knowledge. Moreover, over sixty percent have attended all or most of the offered workshops/sessions since they joined the University. Furthermore, the results have also shown that the two external factors that constrained staff from attending all the workshops/sessions were ‘time conflict’ and ‘administrative workload’. Also, over forty-two percent of respondents believe that the workshops/sessions they

attended have met their development needs, while just over forty-eight percent claim that some of them did. The topics that are considered to have met their development needs are related to teaching and learning, technology, assessment and exam design, marking, double marking and feedback. It can be said that some training needs will be common amongst staff and will apply to many, if not all. However, since people can be so different, they will have different skills and different levels of understanding. Therefore, staff development should not follow a 'one size fits all' approach if it is to be effective. Rather, to improve performance and empower staff, the right training needs to be provided for the right people. This requires a better understanding of what activity is required to support the individual to undertake their role to meet individual and University objectives.

The most important reasons found for attending staff development workshops/sessions according to the participants were to 'gain knowledge and skills' and 'personal development'. These findings are in accordance with the results of other studies conducted in different parts of the world (Bosley, 2004; Lian, 2014; Posigha & Seimode, 2015; Nassar, 2017; Gopang, 2016). Since academic staff is required to spend a period of time, throughout the academic year, in staff development workshops/sessions, 'gaining valuable knowledge and skills' is important for their 'personal development', as this will ultimately help them excel in their profession.

In addition, findings indicate that over sixty percent of the staff is either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with staff development at the University. Furthermore, the majority believe that their attendance at staff development workshops/sessions have actually enhanced their effectiveness as a teacher and their teaching practices. Moreover, the results also demonstrate that staff actually applies the knowledge and techniques obtained from attending the staff development activities in their lectures/classes. To shed more light on this, further findings indicate that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between satisfaction with staff development and enhancing staff's effectiveness as a teacher, teaching practices and applying the knowledge and techniques acquired in their lectures/classes. This is probably because attendance to staff development enhances the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of teachers. It helps teachers gain self-confidence, deepen their understanding of learning and teaching, find out about the latest teaching and learning theories, and try out new teaching practices, thus developing their teaching ability. The findings of the current study are consistent with other researchers that reported a relationship between participation in professional development activities and approaches to teaching (González-Geraldo and Monroy, 2017; Boslet, 2004; Shaikh, et al. 2011 and Lian, 2014).

8. Conclusion

This research depicts a strong positive correlation between satisfaction with staff development and attending staff development activities. Results show that staff that attend staff development workshops/sessions feel that they enhance their effectiveness as a teacher and their teaching practices. Moreover, the knowledge and techniques acquired through attendance to staff development activities give them the opportunity to implement their new knowledge and practices. Hence it can be concluded that staff development activities lead to satisfaction of teachers at the BUE as it gives them the opportunities to work together, to share ideas and good practice, to master new behaviours, develop knowledge and skills, to address students' learning challenges and to incorporate new practices into their teaching routine.

9. Limitations

Even though the results of this study provide insights into the effects of staff development on teacher's satisfaction and perceptions of change in teaching performance, some limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the study is limited to teachers from three faculties and the English Language Modules. It would be useful to see if the findings presented in this paper could be confirmed by participants in other faculties, and other universities. In addition, paper-based and online questionnaires can yield low response rates.

10. Future study

This research should be extended to include participants from other faculties at the BUE and other universities in order to compare findings.

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