

# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A SHORT COURSE ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AT KHYBER MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, PAKISTAN

Brekhna Jamil<sup>1</sup>, Gohar Wajid<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND** Developing a cadre of competent teachers for their roles in medical education requires faculty development. Khyber Medical University (KMU) has developed a Certificate in Health Professions Education Programme (CHPE), as introductory-level teaching qualification for teachers from all disciplines of health sciences. The two months course has two contact sessions of four days each.

**AIM** The study determines the perceptions of the course participants about the benefits and quality of the programme to bring further improvements.

**METHODS** A quantitative, cross sectional study was conducted on the participants enrolled for the programme during 2012-2014 sessions. Five batches, including 80 participants, completed the course. An evaluation questionnaire was filled by the participants at the end of the course. Information about teaching methods, programme content, communication skills, assessment tools and participants' opinion about the effectiveness of the programme was collected.

**RESULTS** The participants consisted of 53 males (66.3%) and 27 females (33.7%). Over 93% and 84% participants expressed improvement in teaching and communication skills respectively. Over 80% agreed that their understanding of assessment techniques improved. More than 90% agreed that they were satisfied from the course experience.

**CONCLUSION** Participants had high satisfaction with the course. They found the course relevant to their personal development and professional needs. Medical universities and colleges should introduce training programmes to develop basic teaching skills of the teachers.

**KEY WORDS** Health professions education, Faculty development, Continuing professional development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Developing a cadre of competent teachers for their new roles in medical education requires faculty development. Faculty development is, however, not an easy task. It requires supportive institutional leadership, appropriate resource allocation and recognition for teaching excellence.<sup>1</sup> A good quality medical education is

dependent on how much the medical teachers know about the teaching methods, their teaching attitudes and the students' orientation.<sup>2</sup> In Pakistan, there has been an exponential increase in the number of public and private medical institutes over the past few decades. The shortage of master trainers was identified as a barrier for training the faculty of public and private medical colleges.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the teachers in medical colleges do not possess any formal qualification for teaching. They are mere medical graduates, favoring teaching instead of clinical practice or doing both jobs at the same time, with clinical practice as the first priority. A planned event of short term educational workshops can be an effective method for influencing medical teachers.<sup>4</sup> Several such programmes exist globally, such as, Essential Skills in Medical Education (ESME) accredited by Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE).<sup>5</sup> It has been designed based on the precept that all doctors in any branch of medicine or field of practice are likely to assume some teaching responsibility for undergraduates, postgraduates,

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Institute of Health Professions Education and Research, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor Medical Education, University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Brekhna Jamil  
Assistant Professor, Institute of Health Professions Education and Research,  
Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan. E-mail: drbrekhna.iph@kmu.edu.pk  
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peers, other healthcare workers or patients. Other faculty development activities are also in place in the USA and Canada.<sup>6,7</sup> In Pakistan there is scarcity of such short courses and teacher training is confined to sporadic workshops conducted in an unstructured manner.<sup>8</sup> The Khyber Medical University has developed an introductory level certificate course in health professions education (CHPE) with the aim to provide an entry-level teaching qualification for teachers who are engaged in medical education.<sup>9</sup> The programme provides an opportunity for medical teachers to learn basic teaching, learning, and communication skills along with the use of information technology, to effectively play the role of a scholarly educator, an informed assessor and proficient team player. However, the programme has not been evaluated for its effectiveness.

The objectives of this study are to determine the perceptions of the graduates of CHPE programme about the effectiveness of the programme. Moreover, to identify gaps and deficiencies in the CHPE programme and develop a course that is responsive to the needs of the teaching staff.

## METHODS

A quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive design was used to conduct the study at the Institute of Health Professions Education & Research, Khyber Medical University Peshawar for the duration of six months starting from September, 2013. The entire faculty attending CHPE program in the first five batches were included in the study. A total of 80 members formed the sample for the study. The participants were required to have a minimum of six months teaching experience in any medical institute, and, after having completed the CHPE course, worked as teaching faculty in the same institute for at least one month.

A self administered questionnaire was developed with item responses based on 5-point Likert Scale. After compiling the questionnaire,

its validity was established through extensive discussions with subject experts. The final questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section included demographic details of participants, including age, gender, teaching discipline, teaching experience and motivation for enrolment in the course. The second section was developed to assess the participants' perceptions on course content and duration. This section included 19 statements measured on 5 point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The third section consisted of seven open ended questions about different aspects of the course. The questionnaire was pilot tested with five participants before implementation. The questionnaire was administered to 80 participants who had completed the CHPE course.

The data were analysed using SPSS version 16. The mean  $\pm$  SD was calculated for the numerical variables such as age of the participants. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for categorical variables for example gender of the participants.

## RESULTS

There were 53 males (66.3%) and 27 females (33.7%) participants in the study. Mean age of male faculty members were  $38.9 \pm 8.8$  years while that of the female faculty members was  $33 \pm 11.8$  years. The teaching experience of faculty members ranging from one year to 20 years with an average  $9.7 \pm 4.3$  years. There were 22 (27.5%) faculty members from basic sciences and 58 (72.5%) from various specialties of clinical science. The primary motivating factor for pursuing the course was personal interest and faculty growth.

### Perceptions of Participants about the Course

The perceptions of participants about attitude change, improvement in teaching skills, communication skills, curriculum and assessment techniques, contents and duration of the course were collected using five

point Likert scale. The findings are presented in Table 1.

### Participants Suggestions about Improving the Course

In response to "what are the useful components of the course?", 56% stated that the course comprised of the important and needful components of teaching skills. However, only 12% believed their lecture and communication skills practically improved with the course.

Almost one third of the participants (28%) stated that their assessment skills to have improved due to an increased knowledge about developing assessment tools like MCQs, SAQs, OSCE and OSPEs. In response to "what are the least useful components of the course?", 16% reported that the time given to each topic was not sufficient and it needed to be increased. In response to the number of days of the course, 65% reported that the number of days for each contact session should be five (i.e. total 10 days duration). In response to the the number of modules to be taught in the course, 71% agreed that the two modules were sufficient.

In response to the assessment method, "Are two assignments sufficient for assessment or should there be another form of assessment?" 90% participants agreed that two assignments were sufficient for assessment.

## DISCUSSION

This study shows encouraging results through responses from the faculty members who completed the certificate course. Faculty members reported active participation in the course. The study also signifies the need for designing material that is relevant to the local educational environment and needs of the students and teachers. Careful selection of reading material from international literature and the development and designing of reading material responsive to local needs may enhance the effectiveness of the course. The duration for most of the short courses range from one week to one

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE AND MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE COURSE

Items	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1	Mean score
1. The program was helpful in improving my teaching ability.	53.1	40.7	4.9	-	-	4.4
2. I have altered my teaching method.	59.3	38.3	1.2	-	-	4.5
3. My communication skills have improved due to this course.	34.6	48.1	14.8	1.2	-	4.2
4. The program content was relevant to my Curriculum planning needs.	43	43	9	2	-	4.2
5. The program content was relevant to my teaching methods needs.	33.3	46.9	18.5	-	-	4.1
6. The program content was relevant to my assessment needs.	35.8	46.9	16.0	-	-	4.7
7. The course is relevant to my teaching practice.	46.9	43.2	8.6	-	-	4.4
8. I have used the learned material from the course?	29.6	49.4	16.0	3.7	-	4.2
9. I have a better understanding of developing the multiple choice questions (MCQs) than before.	44.4	40.7	8.6	4.9	-	4.3
10. I have a better understanding of developing the short answer questions (SAQs) than before.	34.6	55.6	7.4	1.2	-	4.2
11. I have a better understanding of developing the OSCE than before.	39.5	48.1	9.9	1.2	-	4.3
12. The duration of the course is appropriate.	23.5	48.1	22.2	3.7	1.2	3.9
13. The course contents are sufficient.	19.8	55.6	16.0	4.9	2.5	3.4
14. The amount of time spent on each session is appropriate.	18.5	54.3	14.8	7.4	3.7	3.7
15. My interest in health professions education increased?	63	35	2	-	-	4.6
16. I have considered it to be a benefit to my institution.	43.2	39.5	13.6	1.2	1.2	4.2
17. The course met my needs?	27.2	60.5	1.2	8.6	2.5	4.1
18. I am satisfied with overall course experience?	45.7	45.7	6.2	-	1.2	4.8
19. I have recommended the course to my colleagues.	60.5	33.3	4.9	-	-	4.5

month.<sup>10</sup> The courses, workshops symposia, and lectures as part of continuing professional development (CPD), enhance the teaching skills and improve the quality of professional practices.<sup>11</sup>

Clinical teachers have time constraints due to clinical and teaching duties. They find it difficult to attend workshops of a long duration, particularly extending over days. A number of lessons were learnt from this study. These lessons can be used to develop a conceptual framework for a comprehensive teacher training programme.

The study showed that any teacher training programme must be responsive to the needs of the faculty. These needs should be well understood by programme developers. Moreover, the programme should be based on the principles of adult

learning. The programme should address teacher training needs at various levels, ranging from the beginners to the advanced levels. The outcomes, goals and objectives of the programme should be clearly specified. The duration of the programme and the number of modules should be flexible, providing room to programme organizers to tailor the programme based on local needs and requirements of the faculty. The basic level programme should focus on the most common competencies that are required by every faculty member. The programme should be based on the principle of 'needs to know' rather than 'nice to know'. If a particular concept or technique is not under use in the local system, it should be avoided at the basic level of the programme. Careful designing of the instructional material for busy

faculty enhances the success of the programme. The programme should have a careful balance of e-learning and face to face, interactive teaching and learning. Teacher trainers should be highly skilled in programme execution and must understand the dynamics of programme delivery. Teachers trainers must be able to demonstrate that the programme is not built on hypothetical ideas, rather 'it actually works'.

## CONCLUSION

The study has signified the importance of short term structured faculty development programme for busy health professionals. The instructional strategies used during the course were valued by the respondents. Participants reported a positive change in their knowledge of teaching methods and improvement

in the teaching ability after completing this course. Participants claimed that the programme improved their teaching skills, motivated them for teaching, and developed an appreciation for professional development. They have reported an improvement in the use of assessment instruments. Khyber Medical University experience with the certificate programme can be used to develop a national framework for developing a multi-module, multi-level (beginners, intermediate, advanced) programme that is responsive to the needs of Pakistani medical faculty.

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### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

The study was part of BJ Masters in Health Professions Education. GW supervised the dissertation, and was involved in every part of the analysis, idea's development, and write-up.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

### ETHICS APPROVAL

The approval/permission was obtained from Khyber Medical University Research and Ethics Board.

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