Professional Development among Academic Staff at Selected Malaysian Public Universities: Preliminary Findings of the Impact of the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC).

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Abstract

Despite the growing number of research findings that indicate the importance of professional development in academic teaching and learning, the visible impact of staff participation in professional development on effective teaching practices in Higher Education is not significant. As such, the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia has strongly urged the universities to conduct the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) for new academic staff. A self-administered questionnaire survey was carried out in four selected universities offering the BTMC. It was found that participants of the BTMC had positive perceptions about the course. They were happy for the opportunities offered by their respective universities to improve their knowledge and skills. They believed that the BTMC is useful in developing their academic potential. However, the study also found that the impact of the BTMC on actual teaching practices is minimal. This paper is a report of the findings of the study, and discusses the benefits and the extent to which the academic staff utilizes the knowledge and skills learned from the BTMC.

Key words: professional development, teaching and learning, higher education, quality, change, transformation.

Introduction

In its National Higher Education Action Plan (2007-2010), the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education stressed three salient aspects: the Apex University concept, the audit and continuous evaluation process, and the idea of the autonomous university. Further, the Ministry has delineated seven strategic thrusts:

1. Widening access and enhancing equity.
2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning.
3. Enhancing research and innovation.
4. Strengthening the institutions of higher education.
5. Intensifying internationalization.
6. Inculcation of continuous lifelong learning.
7. Reinforcing the Ministry of Higher Education's delivery systems.
8. The Autonomous university.

(Ministry of Higher Education, 2007)

Introduction

The introduction and implementation of these strategic thrusts pose a formidable challenge for professional developers to develop high quality programmes for academic staff and educational leaders of the university—particularly the second strategic thrust: 'improving the quality of teaching and learning," which requires effective strategies and continuous professional development. In-service professional development, in particular, is seen as the main tool for lecturers to facilitate change and improve the quality of teaching and learning in educational institutions (Fullan, 1993). In view of this situation, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has urged universities to introduce what it calls the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (known in Malay as *Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*), as an induction for all new academic staff. One of the objectives is to equip new academic staff with pertinent current pedagogical, andragogical knowledge and skills, as well as the latest technology and innovations in teaching and learning.

The general features of the BTMC consist of face-to-face instruction, a practicum, and assignments and self-study components, with adequate time allocated for each module. However, individual universities are free to include their own individual modules to suit their respective needs.

All of these components will be offered in three packages. In the first package, six modules will be presented—namely, academic accountability, curriculum design, the use of technology in teaching and learning, generic skills, teaching and learning management, and student supervision. In the second package, eight modules will be presented, which include learning and teaching methods in Institutions of Higher Learning, motivation and counseling skills, the concepts of testing, measurement and assessment, test planning, preparation of answer schemas, test item analysis, and exam analysis. In the third package, each participant will be observed in order to ensure that they have mastered every skill and knowledge taught in the courses, and to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to encourage diversified strategies for the teaching-learning process, and to develop self-confidence and efficacy.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this project is to present evidence on the impact of professional development among academic staff at Public Universities in Malaysia. The following are some of the major objectives associated with this research:

- To examine professional development opportunities for academic staff in Malaysian Public Universities.
- To explore the perceptions and attitudes of the academic staff towards the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC).
- To explore the benefits of participating in the BTMC.
- To investigate the extent to which the BTMC graduates apply their newly-acquired knowledge and skills to their classroom teaching.
- To identify the problems and constraints in implementing effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

Research Questions

RQ 1:What is the perception of the academic staff regarding professional development opportunities in their respective Universities?
RQ 2:What are the perceptions of the academic staff on the Basic Teaching Methodology Course?
RQ 3:What are the benefits of participating in the BTMC?
RQ 4:Do the BTMC graduates adapt their method of teaching after participating in the BTMC?
RQ 5: What are the barriers to implementing the BTMC teaching and learning strategies in the classroom?

Literature Review

Professional development refers to "those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students" (Guskey, 2000, p. 16). High quality professional development is considered extremely crucial to educational improvement (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). Professional development entails three main characteristics. Firstly, it is an intentional process based on a clear vision of purposes and planned goals. It has to begin with a clear statement of worthwhile purposes and goals, which can be calibrated and tracked. Secondly, it is an ongoing process, simply because of the dynamic nature of education and the continuous expansion of knowledge. Consequently, educators need to engage in continuous learning throughout the entire span of their professional careers. Thirdly, it is a systemic process which incorporates change over an extended period of time and at all levels of the organization. This is reiterated by Sparks and Hirsh (1997), who affirmed that any improvement made in one area may be diminished by concurrent problems in another, unless these are simultaneously addressed.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) describes seven major modalities—training, observation or assessment, involvement in a development or improvement process, study groups, inquiry or action research, individually guided activities, and mentoring. Training consists of a presenter or team of presenters sharing ideas and expertise through various group-based activities, which can take many forms, such as large-group presentations and discussions, workshops, seminars, colloquia, demonstrations, role-playing, simulations, and micro-teaching. Joyce and Showers (1995) states that in order to ensure the effectiveness of training, exploration of theory, demonstrations of skills, simulated practice, performance feedback, and workplace coaching should be included. The second modality of professional development, observation / assessment is aimed at providing educators with feedback on their performance. This approach usually uses collegial observation, and examples include peer coaching and clinical supervision. The third mode of professional development is involvement in a development / improvement process.

In this approach, educators work collaboratively in the process of developing or reviewing a curriculum, designing a new program, planning strategies to improve instruction, or solving a particular problem. The fourth mode of professional development, the study group model, involves the entire school in the process of finding solutions to common problems. In other words, each group will find its own unique solution to a common problem. The next mode of professional development is inquiry or action research. Educators are required to: a) select a problem or question of common interest; b) collect, organize, and interpret information related to the problem; c) study the relevant professional literature and research; d) determine possible actions that are likely to achieve commonly valued goals; and e) take action and document results (Calhaun, 1994). According to Sparks and Simmons (1989), this modality is very effective in producing more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers among educators. In individually guided activities, the task of determining professional development goals and selecting activities that can help to achieve such goals are assigned to the educators themselves. It is based on the belief that individuals can best judge their own learning needs and are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning.

The mentoring model of professional development entails pairing an experienced and highly successful educator with a less experienced colleague. Regular interaction between both allows the discussion of professional goals, new ideas, as well as effective strategies that may lead to the improvement of student learning. Since there are differences among all modes of professional development, it is imprudent to assume that any single model will prove effective for all contingencies. Therefore, Guskey (1996) suggests that a professional development program should combine all modalities in a thoughtful and appropriate manner in order to increase its effectiveness and preserve its core characteristics. Various studies have been conducted which focus on issues related to the effectiveness of professional development, but most of them usually document the shortcomings and inadequacies, which do not provide educators with specific answers and workable solutions (Guskey 1994). These studies include the survey of the professional development literature to separate prominent factors (Masarella, 1980; Sparks, 1983), reports of the elements related to successful program implementation (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978), and summaries of guidelines for more effective practice (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

Guskey (2000) addresses three prominent reasons for the failure of past studies in identifying the elements of effective professional development. The first is the confusion regarding the criteria of effectiveness, which leads to the difficulty in comparing the results across studies. Secondly, there is the tendency for researchers to concentrate only on the main effects of the program, which ignores much of the other salient information that such studies might contain. The third reason is the neglect of quality issues, such as the purpose of the program, when evaluating professional development (Guskey 2000). Based on the above explanations, it can be said that there are three basic principles of effective professional development. Firstly, it has to have a clear focus on learning and learners. In other words, regardless of how varied the forms of professional development are, they should focus on the same goal, which is the accomplishment of high learning standards by all students (DuFour, 1997). Secondly, it must emphasize the importance of individual and organizational change. As stated in Wise (1991), school improvement is contingent upon the improvement of the administrators and teachers within them. Thirdly, there should be consistent small incremental changes guided by a grand vision—focusing on learning and learners.

Professional development is very important due to several reasons. The first reason is the need for new types of educational expertise at all levels. This is due to the exponential growth of knowledge in every subject area and academic discipline. The second reason is the continuous growth and transformation of new roles and responsibilities assumed by academic staff and school administrators, which require constant learning and upgrading in the way educators go about their jobs, and the changing structure of their working ecology. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teaching and learning is essential for ensuring continuous quality improvement and professional competence of educators. However, more specifically, the purpose of all CPD is to promote effective performance at work. Welsh and Woodward (1989), for example, describe CPD as the "activity which helps to maintain and improve professional competence."

Guskey (2000) posits that among the causes that contribute to the failure of professional development are the lack of focused planning as well as the misconnection between the course and the instructional practice. Therefore, a well-designed, thoughtfully planned and adequately supported professional development is a necessary ingredient in all educational improvement efforts. Professional development programs should take into account the motivational factors that drive teachers to adapt and change consistently. Professional development programs that focus on changing teachers' attitudes and beliefs presuppose that they will result in a change of pedagogical strategy leading to the improvement of student learning.

Meanwhile, Joyce and Showers (1980) frame the outcomes of training under four categories: general awareness of new skills, organized knowledge of underlying concept and theory, learning of new skills and application on-the-job. Day (1996) presents a multidimensional professional development map of the contexts in which the learning and development of teachers takes place. It may serve to inform designs for the study of in-service teacher education across different national contexts.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework offers the conceptual foundation to proceed with the research, and since a theoretical framework is none other than identifying the network of relationships among the variables considered important to the study of any given problem situation, it is essential to understand what a variable means in this study. The detailed diagram framework is given below through Figure 1.2:

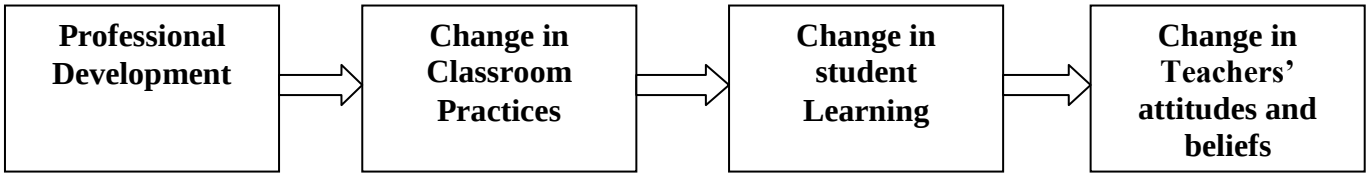

Figure 1.1: (Guskey; 2000) a Model of Teacher Change

This model shows that teachers' or academic staff participation in professional development may not bring immediate or automatic change in teaching practice. It means that the process of promoting change through professional development programs requires some real application in the classroom. The changes in terms of knowledge and skills will not determine the absolute change in teacher attitudes and beliefs about certain innovative ideas. For example, the IIUM has introduced learning outcomes in the course outlines. In order to be effective, accepted and believed by the teachers, they have to be informed about the rationale of doing so; they need training, they need to understand the outcome, before finally accepting and accommodating their attitudes and beliefs. In this study, we assume that the impact of academic staff participation in professional development programmes is substantial if there are changes in classroom practices, student learning and teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards effective teaching and learning practices.

Methodology

Design

This study employs the quantitative approach using the survey method. The data has been analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Population and Sample

A purposive sampling was adopted at four universities that have implemented the BTMC. One hundred respondents participated in the survey questionnaire. These samples have been chosen in accordance with the criteria of the study. The respondents have attended and completed the BTMC; they graduated and implemented the teaching and learning strategies that they have learnt from the course.

Instrumentation

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to elicit responses and insights regarding the impact of professional development among academic staff. Respondents were asked to rate their opinion according to a 5-point Likert-type scale, (5 = strongly agree, and 1 = strongly disagree).

Procedure of Data Collection

The questionnaire was sent to the Centres for Teaching and Learning of the four universities: Technical University of Melaka, the University of Malaysia, Sarawak, the International Islamic University Malaysia, and University of Malaysia Terengganu. The data was elicited from 100 respondents. The statistical tests performed, included an analysis of frequencies, mean score, analysis of variance and factors analysis.

Results

Table 1.1 shows a descriptive analysis of the respondents.

Table 1.1: Name of the University

University Name	Frequency	Percent (%)
University Malaysia Sarawak	15	15.0
University Technical Melaka	48	48.0
International Islamic University Malaysia	24	24.0
University of Malaysia Terengganu	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

Most of the respondents were from the University Technical Melaka (48%), followed by the International Islamic University Malaysia (24%), the University Malaysia Terengganu (13%) and University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) (15%).

Table 1.2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents from Pilot Study

Name	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender Profile		
Male	56	56
Female	44	44
Educational background		
Bachelor Degree	29	29
Masters	47	47
PhD	23	23
Others	1	1
Level of teaching		
Foundation studies	12	12
Undergraduate	52	52
graduate/postgraduate	9	9
postgraduate diploma	5	5
others	22	22
Credit Hours Per semester		
3	29	29
6	27	27
9	7	7
12	11	11
Others	26	26
Administrative post		
Yes	35	35
NO	65	65
Participated in any in-service		
training activities	82	82
Yes	18	18
NO		

Table 1.2 presents the demographic profiles of the respondents including gender, educational background, current level of teaching, and whether or not they hold any administrative post. About 56 per cent of the respondents are male and 44 per cent are female. Approximately half of the respondents (47%) have masters degrees, while 29 per cent hold bachelor degree. About a quarter (23%) of the respondents reported they have a PhD. Half (52%) of the respondents teach at undergraduate level, while 22 per cent teach in other modes of education. Most of the respondents teach at least three credit hours per semester (29%). A majority (65%) of the respondents do not hold administrative posts. Most of the participants (82%) reported that they get their in-service training program from their respective Centres for Teaching and Learning and Centres for Professional Development.

Descriptive Analysis Results for the Attributes of the items: Research Question One

What is the perception of the academic staff regarding professional development opportunities in their University?

In order to answer the question, descriptive statistical procedures were run for each of the items to determine the perception of the academic staff regarding professional development opportunities that exist in their respective universities. Mean and standard deviation for each item were used to examine the perception of academic staff concerning professional development opportunities.

Seven items were used to measure each of the attributes that help to identify the academic staff's perception of professional development opportunities. Table 1.2 represents the summary of means and standard deviations for each item in the categories of variables. The average mean score was moderately high, with a mean of 3.61 (s.d. = 0.795), meaning most of the respondents considered the availability and usefulness of in-service professional development opportunities to be moderately higher than what they had expected. The highest mean score in this variable is for item which state that, in service professional development opportunities helps the academic staff to get together and share their experiences (mean = 4.200; SD= .636).

Most of the respondents also agree that the BTMC training offer them opportunities to improve their teaching knowledge and skills (mean = 4.14; SD= .562).

Table 1.3 Availability and usefulness of in-service professional development opportunities

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
In-service training activities very useful in improving and solving the difficulties in the classroom	3.9700	.62692
New ideas presented at in-service professional development activities are discussed among my colleagues	3.7600	.69805
Enough in service professional development activities	3.4800	.85847
Cannot attend any workshop due to time constraint	3.0400	1.09101
Help academic staff to get together and share their experiences	4.2000	.63564
Get opportunities to improve their teaching knowledge and skills	4.1400	.65165
In-service professional development activities are not necessary; teaching experiences help more	2.7100	1.06643
Average score	**3.61**	**0.79545**

Research Question Two
What are the perceptions of the academic staff regarding the Basic Teaching Methodology Course?

Seven items were used to measure the perceptions of the academic staff regarding the Basic Teaching Methodology Course Table 1.4 presents the summary of means and standard deviations for each item in the categories of variables. The average score was moderately high, with a mean of 3.8728 (s.d. = 0.698), which indicate that most of the respondents showed positive perceptions of the Basic Teaching Methodology Course. In this category, in-service professional training helps the academic staff to improve their teaching techniques (mean = 3.96), meaning most of the respondents agree with the perception that the BTMC training improved their teaching.

Table 1.4: Perceptions of the academic staff regarding the Basic Teaching Methodology Course

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
Increased knowledge on curriculum design and development	3.9400	.70811
Improved teaching techniques	3.9600	.73745
Incorporate instructional technology into T&L process	3.9100	.60461
Motivates students in my classroom	3.8100	.81271
Using contemporary pedagogical methods in class room	3.8600	.68195
Enhance skills to use classroom-based assessment	3.8600	.60336
Increased opportunity to establish networking	3.7700	.73656
Average Score	**3.8728**	**.6978**

Research Question Three
What are the benefits of participating in the BTMC?

In the category of the academic staff's beliefs, the benefits of participating in the BTMC programs were considerable. Most of the respondents agree that through the BTMC program they can share information, materials, problems, ideas with other academic staff (mean = 4.06; SD=.664). On the other hand, most of the respondents also agree that the BTMC program helps and supports other academic staff when they have problems in teaching (mean = 4.08; SD=.506).These findings indicate that the respondents considered the BTMC to be beneficial in maximizing the ways they could help each other to improve their pedagogical knowledge, skills and learn new techniques to be better academic staff.

Table 1.5:Benefits of participating in BTMC

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
Working with another colleague, helps both academic staff to improve their teaching skills	3.8500	.72995
Share information, materials ,problems, ideas with other academic staff	4.0600	.66393
Help and support other academic staff when have problems in teaching	4.0800	.50612
Receive formal evaluations of teaching performance	3.4900	.78490
Average Score	**3.8423**	**.75402**

Even though the rest of the items in this category showed general agreement however respondents generally disagreed that they receive formal evaluation of teaching performance.

Research Question Four

Do the BTMC graduates change their method of teaching and learning after participating in the BTMC?

In the category of whether academic staff BTMC graduates change their method of teaching and learning after participating in the BTMC, most of the respondents reported that the BTMC helps academic staff to develop new teaching practices. The respondents gave an average rating of 3.59 (s.d. =.866) for the item "Assigning academic staff a mentor helps to improve new teaching practices".

Table 1.6: Academic staff change their method of teaching and learning after participating in the BTMC

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
BTMC objectives have been accomplished	3.7700	.64909
Assigning academic staff a mentor helps to improve new teaching practices	3.5900	.86568

Research Question Five

What are the problems and constraints in implementing effective teaching and learning in the classroom?

This section highlights the statements about problems and difficulties in implementing knowledge and skills learned in the BTMC. In the category of problems and constraints in implementing effective teaching and learning in the classroom, the mean score was 2.685 (s.d. = 0.942) which fall in between disagreement and undecided category. In general, there is no substantive problem and constraints perceived by respondents in their teaching and learning process.

Table 1.7: Problems and constraints in implementing effective teaching and learning in the classroom

Items	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
Classroom management	3.0900	.85393
Heavy teaching loads	3.3400	.91254
Too many administrative duties	3.2600	.98083
Lack of preparation time	3.0700	.86754
motivating students	3.1100	.99387
Making the subject meaningful to students	3.3000	.91563
not knowing how to deal with students from different countries	2.5500	.95743
integrating islamization of knowledge into the course that i am teaching	2.4200	1.21589
evaluation of students learning time(SLT)	2.9900	.97954
learning outcomes match the assessment methods in the courses	2.7900	1.04731
Average score	**2.685**	**0.942091**

Factor Analysis

To assess the dimensionality of the academic staff's perceptions of professional development opportunities, factor analysis was performed using the principal factor/ component (PF) method, followed by the varimax rotation. Table 1.8 shows the results of the factor analysis test for the variables. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) value is 0.786, this indicates sampling adequacy is consistent. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is 0.000, exceeding 0.5 value which further confirm that the factors generated from the variables is adequate.

Table 1.8: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.786
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	615.673
	Df	120
	Sig.	.000

Table 1.9: Output of Factor Analysis

Items	Component	
	Academic' s feelings	Availability of services
Motivates students in my classroom	.882	
Improved teaching techniques	.802	
Enhance skills to use classroom-based assessment	.778	
Using contemporary pedagogical methods in class room	.774	
Incorporate instructional technology into t&l process	.773	
Increased knowledge on curriculum design and development	.624	
Assigning academic staff a mentor helps to new teaching practices	.531	
BTMC objectives have been accomplish	.488	
Help academic staff to get together and share their experiences	.425	
New ideas presented at in-service professional development activities are discussed among my colleagues	.368	
Working with another colleague, helps both academic staff to improve their teaching skills		.749
Share information, materials, problems, ideas with other academic staff		.749
Help and support other academic staff when have problems in teaching		.520
Receive formal evaluations of teaching performance		.496
In-service professional development activities are not necessary; teaching experiences help more		.491
Increased opportunity to establish networking		.462

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error. Two frequently used indicators of a scale's reliability are test-retest reliability and internal consistency. In this study we used internal consistency. This is the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attributes. Nunnally (1978) recommends a minimum level of .7, so according to his proposition our values of alpha are well met. This statistic provides an indication of the average correlation among all the items that make up the scale. A value range of 0 to 1 with a higher value indicates greater reliability.

Table 2.0: Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.418(a)	.175	.158	.59804

a. Predictors: (Constant), availability of services, academics Feelings
b. Dependent Variable: Academic perception

Table 2.1: ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.348	2	3.674	10.273	.000(a)
	Residual	34.692	97	.358		
	Total	42.040	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), availability of services, academics Feelings
b. Dependent Variable: Academic perception

Table 2.2: Coefficient Matrix

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.591	.623		2.556	.012		
	Academics Feelings	.477	.130	.359	3.657	.000	.881	1.136
	Availability of services	.193	.155	.123	1.249	.215	.881	1.136

a. Dependent Variable: Academic perception

Table 2.3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.768	.795	30

Limitation of the study

This study was set up to explore the professional development opportunities for academic staff at selected Public Universities in Malaysia. This study reveals certain limitations. One of them is the sampling size is small (n=100). Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. Another limitation of this study is the technique of data collection. The survey questionnaire has limitations in capturing the unique contexts of each university in this study. The absence of comprehensive accounts of the contexts of each school could be best addressed through an ethnographic study in which the research could be carried out using participant-observation. This may allow researchers to get closer to the respondents by taking part in their daily routines. This would enable researcher to experience the academic staff professional development activities alongside the respondents as well as enabling us to interview and observe how the activities have impacted on the teaching practices and student learning in classrooms. Nevertheless, this study even though preliminary in nature illuminates the role of professional development in improving quality teaching and learning especially in increasing trainees' pedagogical knowledge.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has shown that the opportunities to participate in in-service professional development programmes were inadequate to fulfill the professional needs of novice lecturers or academic staff in the area of teaching and learning. This observation might be linked to the roles of the Centre for Teaching and Learning or Centre for Professional Development of the respective universities in creating and developing learning opportunities for all academic staff. This finding indicates that most of the public universities have provided adequate training for the academic staff. One of the more significant findings that emerge from this study is that participants of the BTMC have found the module in the course very useful in helping them to improve the quality of their teaching and learning. The new knowledge that they have learnt can be seen in the increased of pedagogical knowledge, particularly the awareness about different techniques of teaching and assessment to enhance quality teaching and learning in higher education. However, the impact is not substantial. Academic staff's participation in professional development (BTMC) in the selected universities brings only minimal change to teaching practices. This finding informs us that the structured training (BTMC) is not able to change teaching practices in the classroom, since the belief and attitude towards new approaches are not in line with teachers' beliefs on the best practices of effective teaching. It is important to realize that this is mainly dependent upon the teachers' attitude toward learning and teaching.

Ackerland (2004) and Ho et.al. (2001) argues that the approaches to teaching would not change for some educators until the conception of teaching is changed. Changes in the conceptions only occur after duration of teaching experiences (Klein, 1996) or simply by exposure by other teachers or colleagues (Ackerland, 2004: Entwistle & Walker, 2000). This means the longer a teacher use an approach, the longer the teacher would be familiar with it and will change to something better. Similarly, if during an observation or conversation with colleagues, the teacher found out that other approaches are better then, the teacher would make changes accordingly. It is from this juncture that many administrations are trying to help educators to change their mindsets and approaches to teaching. Programs are conducted to show to the educators new ways of teaching and the reason why it is important especially in the United Kingdom where Education Development Centers (EDC) are increasingly becoming prominent (Gosling, 2010).

Nevertheless, program developers will have to realize that teachers' perceptions, assumptions and conceptions are equally important to be addressed if changes are needed for them to use the new approaches (Young, 2010). Ho et.al. (2001) conducted an academic faculty development program with teachers. The program started with a self-awareness session and progressed to the teachers confronting their conceptions of teaching and learning. Finally they are exposed to new approaches to teaching and learning. What was interesting to observe is that the teachers has exhibit a degree of commitment to implement the changes in their classrooms. In addition, what makes the programs effective in changing the teachers' conceptions can be listed as the effective way the framework are presented. A number of studies have found that teachers' participation in professional development did not result in significant changes in teaching practices. For instance, Norzaini and Mohamad Sani (2002), who conducted a study on the effectiveness of in-service training courses for the MSS, found that teachers' participation in professional development had a moderate impact on teachers at the MSS to implement smart school approaches. These findings are also supported by a study conducted in the United States by Porter et al. (2000).

In their three-year study on the impact of professional development programmes on teaching practice, they found that teacher professional development activities bring little change to teaching practices in the classroom. This problem may be related to the teachers' difficulties and failures in transposing knowledge from in-service training to the classroom. The findings of this study have far-reaching implications for the public universities and Ministry of Higher Education—to overcome the weaknesses of the in-service professional development policies programmes. The professionalization of teaching requires a paradigm shift, the structured training could be combined with reflective practice, which may lead academic staff to engage in high quality professional development for teaching. In addition, the new paradigm of professional development for academicians should enhance their capacity for critical thinking and continuous reflection on teaching, learning, research and publication. The development of teaching and learning in higher education should be based on recent research findings and practices. Furthermore, teaching in challenging times requires continuous professional development that promotes experiential, critical, self-directed learning and life-long learning among academicians. Therefore, the modules or curriculum of professional development should be linked to research findings on learning and principles of adult learning. A blended mode of delivery (online and face-to-face interaction) could be integrated into professional development programmes.

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