

Title: Developing and implementing a sustainable faculty development program

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What problem was addressed: At earlier phases of establishment of a new medical school like ours, there may be a good opportunity to plan for and conduct a development program that does not only aid staff building capacity but also considers the school's educational strategy. The faculty comes from various universities as well as MOH and they expressed their need to gain optimum knowledge and skills to become effective teachers. However, Faculty development programs are sometimes perceived as ineffective, boring, non-appealing and more importantly do not have sustainable effects.

What was done: The design of the development program depended on a thorough needs assessment that was conducted to staff members as well as other stakeholders. The participants and the school management agreed that the priority areas to be covered via the development program are: interactive teaching, problem-based learning, modern learning methods, effective presentation skills and using technology in teaching. The needs assessment also included the participants' perceptions of drives that might motivate them to participate actively in such a program and they responded that getting prepared for teaching and sustaining academic vitality are the priority drives for most of them. The needs assessment revealed that the best means for sustaining the outcomes of the program from the staff perspectives are continuous feedback from students and evaluation of teaching becoming a routine part of their performance appraisal process.

Proper instructional methodology was used to match the principles of adult learning with the least possible portion of didactic lecturing. Most of the content were covered by group discussions and assignments. A secondary objective of these workshops was to prepare staff members for receiving and giving feedback to and from their peers using the Pendleton feedback model. The preparatory workshops took three months before the start of the academic year, once the year started, a comprehensive evaluation of the development program was put in action. Instructors received 360° feedback from students, peers, and members of the medical education unit with specific suggestions regarding possible areas for improvement. Establishing a medical education unit was necessary for the development program to become sustainable. Members of the unit were able to develop the policy of the peer review process, orient staff members about the process, design questionnaires at the various levels, and to share a confidential performance report for each staff member with the member, dean and vice dean for education.

What was learned: Involving staff members by exploring their views and not only their needs seems to be a predictor of success of the program. Using leadership and change management tools to estimate the interest of various stakeholders, expect the level of resistance, assign a powerful team and plan ahead for implementation is a essential for success. School leadership support and continuous emphasis on the importance of the FDP is another success element.