



## Success Story

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### The Faculty Development Initiative

*Improving Quality of Education Through Development:  
Helping Our Teacher by Making Them Better Educators*



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|               |  |
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| <b>BDU</b>    | Bahir Dar University                                   |
| <b>CDC</b>    | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention             |
| <b>CHS</b>    | College of Health Sciences                             |
| <b>CMHS</b>   | College of Medicine and Health Sciences                |
| <b>DBU</b>    | Debre Berhan University                                |
| <b>DMU</b>    | Debre Markos University                                |
| <b>I-TECH</b> | International Training and Education Center for Health |
| <b>MHSEDU</b> | Medical and Health Sciences Education Development Unit |
| <b>MU</b>     | Mekelle University                                     |
| <b>MUHAS</b>  | Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences     |
| <b>PBL</b>    | Problem Based Learning                                 |
| <b>PEPFAR</b> | President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief             |
| <b>TOT</b>    | Training of Trainers                                   |
| <b>UCSF</b>   | University of California San Francisco                 |
| <b>UoG</b>    | University of Gondar                                   |
| <b>WHO</b>    | World Health Organization                              |
| <b>WU</b>     | Wollo University                                       |

This project was made possible by the International Training and Education Center for Health (I-TECH) with funding from Cooperative Agreement U91HA06801-06-00 with the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), through the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEFAR). The contents and conclusions do not necessarily reflect the views of I-TECH, HRSA or the US government and are the sole responsibility of the author.



# Success Story

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## **Improving Quality of Education through Faculty Development “The Faculty Development Initiative”**

### **“Helping our teachers by making them better educators”**

#### **1. Background**

Faculty development is a critical component of health professions education. The term refers to a broad range of strategies that institutions use to enhance their roles as teaching/learning centers. Initiatives designed to improve the performance of faculty members in teaching, research and management play a central role in these strategies. Nowadays, it is recognized that being a highly regarded health care professional or scientist is not enough to be an effective teacher; additional skills are required. Every instructor/teacher should be well versed in the principles of effective teaching and learning skills, and should be able to assess the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.

With the goal of producing effective educators, individuals can take lead roles as agents/facilitators of change, thus the concept of faculty developers. These agents of change will be transformative leaders in health science colleges; they will take on the responsibility of promoting good teaching practices and ensuring that effective instruction prevails in the health sciences.

Most health science colleges in Ethiopia are critically understaffed. Available faculty are usually junior staff or fresh graduates who lack training in effective instruction skills; even the most senior faculties are not adequately trained in pedagogic principles. This necessitates a dedicated office that facilitates and coordinates continuous faculty development activities, including effective teaching, leadership and management. For this initiative to be both effective and sustainable, it must be supported by leadership and fully implemented by institutions.

## **2. Situation**

There is a critical shortage of faculty in the medical and health science colleges and for those available, the faculty development effort is limited. The total health workforce density in Ethiopia is 0.7 per 1000 population—lower than the sub-Saharan average by about a third! (The WHO recommendation for low-income countries is 2.3 per 1000.) Most of the available faculty at medical and health science colleges are junior staff with either limited or no prior teaching experience, and no training in effective teaching skills. A situational analysis conducted by I-TECH in 2010 at Bahr Dar University (BDU), Mekele University (MU), and University of Gondar (UoG) prior to the implementation of its pre-service support programs found that 71.4% of health science teachers had less than two years of teaching experience; only 7% of the faculty had more than 10 years of experience. As a result, course preparation, delivery and student assessment methods were inefficient. Faculty development activities, if any were inconsistent, and neither coordinated nor standardized. They were also costly, as training workshops were conducted at outside facilities—necessitating travel, and at the same time compromising services in the health science colleges. The workshops were conducted by external stakeholders (partners or governmental bodies), meaning the health science colleges had no ownership of these faculty development activities, which were therefore not sustainable. Most of the time, these external training activities failed to address local issues.

## **3. Response/Interventions**

In consultation with FMOH and the three leading partner universities (UoG, BDU and MU) in the Amhara and Tigray regions, I-TECH Ethiopia implemented its faculty development initiative, with the objectives of building up the teaching capacity of instructors, and promoting ownership of, and self-sufficiency in, faculty development activities. To achieve these objectives, I-TECH Ethiopia established partnerships with the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) in the US, and Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) in Tanzania, to learn from their faculty development programs and implement a similar program here in Ethiopia. UCSF and MUHAS have had a long-standing, successful partnership in faculty development that I-TECH felt was worth adopting and sharing. The UCSF/MUHAS team developed a syllabus with a clearly stated goal: “to develop faculty capable of providing training to peers on specific educational topics.”

The faculty development training workshops conducted are described below.

**Phase I:** The January 22–24, 2014, “Train-the-Trainer” workshops were organized by I-TECH in collaboration with UCSF and MUHAS. The twelve faculty members who participated were selected from the Medical and Health Sciences Education Development Units (MHSEDU) of the three universities (UoG, MU, and BDU), based on their qualifications, interest and motivation to be agents of change. The objective of the Phase I training workshops was to create a critical mass of faculty developers capable of expanding this faculty development initiative to their own colleges and universities.

Conducted by expert trainers, two each from UCSF and MUHAS, the workshops were held at the Axum Hotel in Mekelle city. The following topics were covered:

- Large-Group Teaching
- Providing Effective Feedback
- Introduction to Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
- Transforming Multiple-Choice Questions to Effectively Assess Application of Knowledge
- Leading Small-Group Discussions
- Teaching Methods

These training workshops were found to be effective in addressing the existing gaps in Ethiopia’s faculty development programs.



Phase I graduates from BDU, MU, UoG

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**Phase II.** As part of their training, Phase I participants prepared and conducted Phase II workshops under the supervision of UCSF and MUHAS expert trainers. Simultaneous workshops were held January 27–30, 2014, in the towns of Axum and Debre Berhan. Thirty-two participants from six health science colleges participated (Table 1). In both phases of training, feedback was provided at every step by the trainees, trainers, and UCSF and MUHAS experts.

These series of faculty development workshops were very good examples of experiential learning—they were intensive and fully engaged participants. Participants reported being extremely satisfied with the training: they felt they had acquired new knowledge and skills in adult education, and were motivated to pass on their experiences to their peers at their respective institutions. They further expressed confidence in their roles as faculty developers.

With the objectives of building consensus to create sustainable faculty development programs, establishing networks of local universities to share available resources, and South-to-South collaboration among universities, I-TECH organized a half-day meeting of stakeholders on January 31, 2014, in Addis Ababa. Participants included FMOH, representatives of the seven partner universities (Table 1), MHSEDU leaders from the three universities (UoG, BDU and MU), representatives of UCSF and MUHAS, and I-TECH Ethiopia. During the meeting, very positive feedback was received regarding the just-completed two phases of faculty development training. It was agreed to expand the faculty development initiative; to that end, realistic, university-specific action plans were presented and endorsed.

The faculty development workshops and the half-day stakeholders meeting provided unique opportunities for learning from the MUHAS faculty developers who have gone through this process, and from the UCSF senior faculty developers and their extensive experience with the faculty development initiative from inception to implementation. Based on MUHAS' history of success with faculty development, I-TECH Ethiopia organized a benchmarking and awareness-creating visit to the MUHAS campus in Tanzania to promote implementation and ownership of faculty development initiatives by local institutions. The benchmarking team consisted of academic vice-presidents and deans from the health science colleges of the three universities (UoG, BDU and MU). The visit was designed to help university leadership gain opportunities to learn more about the program, support the initiative and help replicate this outstanding practice at their own institutions, and improve overall educational performance.

The purpose of this activity was to build local capacity, motivate ownership, and expand and sustain the faculty development initiative. The "Train-the-Trainer"(TOT) initiative was deemed an "eye opener" for most of the local academics involved in faculty development.



Phase II graduates with trainers from BDU and UoG.

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**Phase III:** As per the plan endorsed during the stakeholders meeting, the trained faculty developers from the four universities (UoG, BDU, MU and Debre Markos University (BMU)) have passed on what they have learned to teachers at their own universities. A male instructor from the Department of Internal Medicine at UoG cited the effects of the training on his career as an educator as follows:

*“Well, I hadn’t been using standard techniques to teach my students. But now I have learned dynamic presentation, how to lead discussions, feedback-giving skills, teaching methods and MCQ, and from here on I will teach my students by applying the principles and techniques that I got from this training.”*

A female instructor from the Pediatrics Department at UoG had this to say:

*“My feedback-giving technique was very much discouraging, but now I have learned ways of giving structured feedback from this training, and I will go forward giving feedback in an Ask-Tell-Ask manner while I teach in both clinical and classroom settings.”*

In summary, all training workshops were well-planned, implemented phase-by-phase and conducted in unique and exemplary fashion.

#### **4. Results**

So far, 178 instructors have participated in the faculty development workshops. The 12 faculty developers trained in Phase I, together with those trained in Phase II, conducted a series of faculty development workshops, training an additional 134 instructors from UoG, BDU and MU (Table 1). Some of the Phase III workshops held at UoG and MU were funded by outside sources, an indication of ownership and sustainability. Following each workshop, participants were asked to evaluate the process; all respondents described the workshops as very important, and recommended them for every instructor.

**Table 1. Number of Faculty Development Training Participants by Phase**

| <b>Phase</b> | <b>No. of Participants</b> | <b>Participating Universities</b> | <b>Venue</b>                                      |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>I</b>     | 12                         | UoG, BDU and MU                   | Axum Hotel, Mekelle                               |
| <b>II</b>    | 15                         | Axum University, UoG, MU          | Consular Hotel, Axum                              |
|              | 17                         | DBU, DMU, WU                      | Eva Hotel, Debre Berhan                           |
| <b>III</b>   | 60                         | UoG (3 rounds)                    | King's Hall, CMHS, University of Gondar           |
|              | 54                         | MU (3 rounds)                     | In-service meeting hall, CHS, Mekelle University  |
|              | 20                         | BDU (1 round)                     | Tele-medicine center, CMHS, Bahir Dar University. |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>178</b>                 |                                   |   |

## **5. Conclusion**

The faculty development initiative has met its objectives of building local capacity, ownership and sustainability.. Phase III Faculty development workshops were conducted onsite at the respective universities by newly trained faculty developers. For guaranteed sustainability, faculty development programs should be mainstreamed.

The benchmark visit to the MUHAS campus in Tanzania showed that support of university leadership is essential to strengthen and sustain medical and health science education development units.