

Teaching Assumptions within a University Faculty Development Program

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Abstract:

This study proposes that faculty who participate in structured learning activities within an educational development program would experience a change in their teaching assumptions. Further, the success of the educational development program ideally should be dependent on a change in faculty members' self-perceptions and their self-perceived role with their students and colleagues. To learn more about this process, early, middle, and senior faculty were interviewed to examine if their teaching assumptions had changed or remained the same after completing an educational development program. Interviews revealed that teaching assumptions were changed across the three faculty career stages and did so in highly individual ways. This is discussed and recommendations are identified for future research studies focusing on the importance of the role of faculty teaching within a university environment.

Key Words:

Educational development, teaching assumptions, faculty development, teaching belief.

Introduction

Within the last thirty-five years, the discipline of educational development has rapidly advanced in Canada. Teaching and learning centres within Canadian universities provide faculty with opportunities to enhance their teaching competence (Wilcox, 1997). Traditionally, educational development programs include topics such as classroom teaching strategies, short-term workshops, teaching discussion groups, and classroom

problem-solving strategies (Hubball & Burt, 2006). Upon completion of an educational development program, participants are often asked to evaluate the perceived effectiveness and helpfulness of the session(s) through methods such as surveys, feedback sheets, or rating scales. These methods provide a summative assessment that can be viewed as a way to demonstrate the usefulness of a teaching and learning idea(s), to a cross-section of faculty attenders.

Short-term educational development sessions are important and serve a purpose to introduce a teaching concept. Gibbs (2010) suggests the dimensions of quality and effectiveness of faculty workshops are based on a combination of the teaching prestige (e.g.; student qualities, academic staff), teaching process (e.g.: class size, feedback or student engagement), and the teaching products (e.g.; learning outcomes, retention, employability). These skill-based programs offer much information in short time periods.

More recently, educational development programs are designed to be more intensive, lengthier and ask participants to commit to one, two or even three separate time periods to complete a program. McGill and the University of British Columbia, for example, offer intensive educational development programs that provide faculty with the chance to explore how their teaching assumptions are presented, to understand the process, and the outcomes these assumptions have upon their students. Open to a cross-discipline of participants, across diverse lengths of service, these programs focus on small groups of faculty, (e.g.; 10-15 participants) with experienced educational developers working alongside participants to guide them through the program. In our experience, however, rarely are graduates from these comprehensive educational development programs revisited to learn about changes to their teaching assumptions within or following program completion. This became the focus of this research study.

Using a qualitative interview strategy, this study explored self-reports of teaching assumptions held by early, middle and senior faculty following graduation from a Faculty Teaching Certificate program (FTC) at a Canadian university. The FTC program offers faculty members from across campus an opportunity to participate in a teaching enhancement program. The FTC program combines class discussions on teaching theories, teaching issues, innovative teaching methods, assessment techniques and offers program participants the opportunity to practise new teaching strategies.

The primary focus was to explore changes to teaching assumptions reported during participation in and upon completion of the intensive educational development program.

As result of these inquiries, the central research question of this study asked “how do teaching assumptions of faculty members change by completing a FTC program?” To answer this, two additional questions were added: (1) What occurs pre/during/after participation in the certificate program that impacts teaching assumptions; and, (2) are these teaching assumption changes dependent on the length of one’s teaching career?

Literature Review

A pioneer in the educational development field in Canada, Christopher Knapper noted “university teaching is one of the very few professions where practitioners receive almost no formal preparation for their work, where there is no process for the accreditation of minimum competence, and where involvement in continuing education

is uncommon” (Schmidt, 2005, para 3). Wilcox (1997) adds that educational development programs have come along rapidly, “its growth and influence has been gradual and largely undocumented” (p. i). Within the past few decades, there has been an explosion of research, conferences and publications by researchers that are exploring what happens within centers of teaching and learning.

One of the central features of educational development programs is the importance they place on the underlying teaching assumptions faculty bring to their work. These assumptions serve as a central foundation to the development of personal beliefs about teaching. Brookfield (1995) defines these as “taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it” that give “meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do (p. 2). In fact, teaching is defined as a way to “impart knowledge or skill” (Random House Dictionary, 1973, p.1457) by “taking for granted or supporting a belief” (Ibid, p. 91). How knowledge is imparted is discussed within teaching workshops and instructional methods but understanding the personal teaching assumptions of faculty members is an internal process often hidden from public view. To understand these individual teaching assumptions is to discover the internal teaching presuppositions that reside within each university faculty member.

These teaching assumptions are at the heart of the faculty member’s being. They are the pillars of teaching life that is responsible for a faculty member’s work. More research is needed on this issue but literature is available which provides us with more understanding of the ways in which teaching assumptions can be identified and explored. In some cases, with the right conditions, these assumptions are shifted, readjusted or modified by faculty often with the support and assistance of experienced educational developers working within educational development programs. We explore this issue in greater depth below.

Identifying Teaching Assumptions

Researchers report faculty rarely reflect on their own learning as a way of understanding their beliefs and assumptions because of lack of time (Lawler, 2003), failure to recognize the relationship between subject matter and the underlying processes of thinking about teaching (Saroyan et al., 2004), and the discrepancy between observable teaching skills and unobservable teaching processes (Saroyan & Amundsen, 2004). Being a past student, graduate or postdoctoral student followed by teaching in the discipline without any formal training is a further difficulty which could add to confusion and conflict. Collectively, these factors can contribute to the personal and professional self-identity of a faculty member as they teach in their discipline. This pressure is intensified as members acculturate into the ways and means of further collegial, departmental and supervisory responsibilities.

Lindblom-Ylaine, Trigwell, Nevgi and Ashwin (2006) argue that teaching strategies used by university instructors are “connected with their conceptions of teaching” (p. 285) and can be matched with underlying assumptions about teaching. To identify teaching assumptions it is necessary to have personal “connections” with the subject matter taught in class. Faculty will have ways in which they think about their discipline and will typically employ teaching strategies they believe will present instructional material in a particular way. These assumptions are personal but often hidden from conversation

until they are raised in discussions with others. In fact, the study conducted by Fulton and Licklider (1998) found that faculty members who were enrolled in an educational development program to enhance their teaching styles did begin to identify some of their own underlying assumptions that guided their practice.

To understand teaching assumptions Weimer (2007) notes there are often underlying assumptions that new faculty have which influences their development as instructors. Through talking with others, google searches on teaching practices and beliefs, past experiences as students and other resources, these assumptions can include statements such as “master the lecture first” implying the transmission model is the correct way to teach, or “teachers are always smarter than the students” implicitly believing the students must learn the right way of doing things from the instructor. These statements force the development of teaching assumptions which place enormous pressure on the instructor and undermine the capabilities of students. There is little opportunity for change in these teaching assumptions unless the faculty member is open for a discussion of these assumptions in the confines of a carefully constructed educational development program.

In summarizing this process of identification, Taylor (2003) argues, “some of the most critical barriers to change in educational processes are personal ones” (p. 76). To begin to discuss teaching assumptions can be a very threatening process to a faculty member if the program is ill equipped to deal with consequences of this issue. It is essential to have experienced educational development staff that can support and work with faculty as they begin this self-examination process.

Exploring Teaching Assumptions

Discussions about teaching assumptions arise because faculty as adults typically form assumptions and expectations they derive from thoughts, beliefs and actions they perform in their work (Meizrow, 2000). Assumptions about one’s own personal teaching beliefs, style and behavior may be piqued or questioned by self or others as one progresses through an educational development program. As Cranton and Taylor (2012) point out, this can occur when teaching assumptions are challenged by self, are questioned by colleagues in a respectful and supportive manner, or faced with an experience or situation in which the outcome is at odds with the teaching assumption held. In fact, it is not unusual for a participant to remark that a question posed by a practitioner or researcher led to consider something new (McQuiggan, 2007).

When faced with these types of situations, a faculty member could conceivably ignore the situation thereby ignoring underlying teaching assumptions. If there is a lack of understanding between the practice of teaching and teaching assumptions, barriers are created by and for faculty (Saroyan et al., 2004). Meizrow (1990) argues that it is possible to adjust, shift or change personal assumptions to become “(a) more inclusive, (b) differentiating, (c) permeable, (d) critically reflective, and (e) integrative of the experience” (p. 163). This process requires further research study and the role that length of the teaching career may have upon this process.

Changes in Teaching Assumptions.

Of the three areas reviewed for this article, the modifications and changes made to the teaching assumptions are noted but are the least demonstrable through empirical educational development studies. As Lawler (2003) suggests, faculty rarely reflect on their own learning to understand how their teaching beliefs and assumptions exist or how they change. What we do know, however, is that when faculty have to prepare and present different content, they rethink their assumptions about teaching and learning (Diekelmann, Schuster, & Nosek, 1998; Jaffee, 2003). This rethinking leads to a shift or change in teaching assumptions, to some magnitude.

In reflecting on our experiences as former educational developers working within educational development programs, each of us can recall shifts or changes in faculty teaching assumptions which were unique, very personal, and occurred in response to an event, situation or experience that took place during the educational development period. This may have been a minor or a significant change, often were made in consultation with us, as we were able to guide the faculty through the process of creating their desired change(s). This was particularly true for cases in which faculty could identify a problem and required new approaches, resources and assistance to resolve the issue(s) in a new way.

It is only recently that these shifts, modifications or changes have been compared to the same kind of transformative changes that has been well documented in adult learning (Cranton, 1994, King, 2002). In addition, has some similarities to Fuller's (1969) stage model of teaching development. The value of this is that it places in the hands of the developers all of the theory, research, and literature from the field of educational development, and adult education and its effective principles, practices, strategies, applications, and experience (Lawler, 2003).

This change has been explored by several authors (e.g.; Meizrow, 2000; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Willment, 2012) each of which provides insight into "transformational change" within adults. For example, in introducing the concept Meizrow (2000) refers to transformational change as a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values and perspectives were questioned and thereby become more open, permeable and better validated. Cranton and Carusetta (2004) go on to suggest that when a person encounters something unexpected, he or she either rejects the new information or begins to explore assumptions about why this dysfunction between the old and new is present. Willment (2012) describes how life changes such as living with a new life-threatening illness or living again following a spouse's death requires significant changes in one's personal life assumptions.

From a faculty perspective this means that faculty must be bold and dare to take risks as they embark on developing readjustments and changes to their own teaching process, beliefs and assumptions as a result of an experience. Whether one does this by self-reflection or by some other processes, old learning and teaching assumptions are changed to match new information. As any adult educator knows, using this information involves taking risks, trying something different and even feeling some discomfort as new approaches are explored. New learning takes time, is slow and sometimes awkward but improves with practice. As Cilliers and Herman (2010) suggest,

more systematic research is needed which explores how these changes occur with teaching assumptions from faculty who are able and willing to reflect on their experience within and following graduation from an educational development program. This is the focus of this study.

Method

The focus of this study is on faculty members who graduated from an intensive educational development program between the years of 2004 to 2007. Teaching assumptions were explored from the pre, mid and post phases of the Faculty Teaching Certificate (FTC) program held at a large Canadian university.

Design of the Study

Recruitment. All 95 faculty members who participated and completed the FTC program between 2004 and 2007 were sent an email inviting them to participate in phase one of this study, which asked participants to complete a survey. Using the information from the twenty-eight respondents, faculty were sorted into three career stage categories. These twenty-eight were then invited to participate in phase two of the study which asked participants to engage in a face-to-face interview. Of the twenty-eight respondents, fifteen participants who met the following criteria; (1) graduated from the FTC program during the years 2004 and 2007; (2) continued to teach full-time at the university from which they took the FTC program; (3) acknowledged changes in their teaching assumptions as a result of the FTC program; and, (4) would share their responses with a research interviewer, agreed to a face-to-face interview. Table 1 illustrates the fifteen respondents who participated in the study of which ten and five respectively were females and males. Of these participants, nine were untenured while six were tenured with representation from the Faculties of Natural Science; Social Science and Library Science.

Table 1 Study participants

Career stage	Gender	Position	Department
Early career (1-5 years of experience)	Male: 1 Female: 5	Non tenured: 5 Tenured: 1	Natural Science: 4 Social Science: 0 Library Science: 2
Mid-career (6 – 10 years of experience)	Male: 1 Female: 4	Non tenured: 3 Tenured: 2	Natural Science: 2 Social Science: 1 Library Science: 2
Senior career (11+ years)	Male: 3 Female: 1	Non tenured: 1 Tenured: 3	Natural Science: 0 Social Science: 3 Library Science: 1

The participants were keen to participate in the study as many appreciated the opportunity to reflect back on their FTC experiences. The results examined teaching assumptions held, as reported by early, mid and senior faculty; before, during and after the FTC program.

Interview questions. The following interview questions were developed to guide participants in the issues to be explored (Merriam, 2002). These included, (1) how were your teaching assumptions identified at the beginning, during and at the completion of the FTC program; (2) what occurred in the program that impacted changes to your teaching assumptions; and, (3) how where these impacts experienced by you; and, (4) is there further information that you wish to add about changes to your teaching assumptions? Interviews were scheduled to take place in a secure and comfortable setting with interviews lasting between 30 -75 minutes. All interviews were taped recorded, and participants were given an opportunity to review their responses by reading and reviewing their interview transcripts.

In this study, data analysis involved the search for patterns both *within* each individual study participant and *across* participants (Patton, 1990). This study is structured into the three key sub-groups previously described (early career faculty, mid-career faculty and senior career faculty). Data analysis took place for each individual, within each subgroup and then across the three subgroups.

To begin, each individual interview paper transcript was read and comments, which were thought to be important, were highlighted. After all interview transcripts were read, a second reading was conducted. During this read, the transcripts were read on a computer file and once again all comments seen as important were highlighted. Next, the highlighted comments from the paper-based transcripts were compared to the highlighted comments within the computer file. This dual method was done in an effort to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of the analysis.

After the transcripts were read and reread and it was felt that all key themes for each individual were recorded, a profile was developed for each individual. This profile included the interview question, the identified quotes and the initial theme for the various findings.

Progress through the FTC program by participants. To understand the changes to the teaching assumptions experienced by participants through the FTC program, transcripts were reviewed to capture the comments and descriptions about their assumptions held and these were placed into the start (pre-FTC), midway through (during-FTC) and at the completion (post-FTC) of the program. This provided a detailed review and understanding of the teaching assumptions and changes that occurred over the program. Adding the responses given by participants in the early, mid and senior career phases completed further sorting of transcripts. This created a cross-section of nine different teaching assumptions as reported by the interviewees. These results are given in Tables 2 to 4 and discussed in the results section of this article.

Study Results

Progress through the FTC Program

Pre-FTC Program.

Early career faculty group. The individuals who responded in this category described their teaching assumptions as related to the delivery of *content* to students. One participant explained this was done in spite of her internal conflicting belief about how incredibly challenging this type of teaching can be to a beginning faculty member. When the emphasis rested exclusively on faculty members' ability to transmit content to students, most expressed the view there was great pressure to respond to this need regardless of the response they receive from students in class.

These faculty also expressed the fact that students are responsible for understanding the content presented in class and in their text. That "is their responsibility" (Jay). It was not the instructor's responsibility to focus on teaching but to transmit content that students had to learn for exams. One faculty said, "I have to know it all, I have to keep control of the situation, I have to plan everything down to the last second" (Jenn). The participant felt it was also important to do so in a way in which classroom management was maintained so that lesson time was used in the most effective way possible.

The quotes from participants indicate they believed their role was to be the experts to the transmission of content information while the role of students was to learn this content regardless of how this was delivered or the needs and interests of students.

Mid-career faculty group. Although these participants had been teaching at the university for six to ten years, their self-perceived role was one in which they had to stand and deliver content with little concern for the student. The importance of student evaluations was minimized with one participant noting she did "not pay as much attention to evaluations as I could have" (Betty). "We teach the way we learned" and "if I have 50 minutes it was my responsibility to fill those 50 minutes" (Paula).

This theme of instructor-focused teaching dominated these participant responses. As Table 2 indicates, some reasons were given to why this is done (i.e., learning from our past; control issues) but all participants felt that transmission of content was central to the job of faculty member.

Senior faculty group. Senior participants entering the FTC program after teaching for more than a decade, felt that the *role of the instructor* in teaching was central to their belief structure. In fact, one participant expressed that he felt "teaching is a drain" (Herb) because it interrupted other more important faculty duties. Their teaching assumptions revolved around the fact that teaching was a job that needed to be done and when completed, one could move on to the more important aspects of their role of faculty member; mainly research. Typically, these participants believed that their teaching was done in a lecture delivery format with minimal changes needed to their lectures from year to year.

There was minimal interest in teaching evaluations and they saw no real need to change their teaching approach or assumptions. When asked what brought them to the

FTC, some noted that learning about enhanced teaching methods might produce better lecturers.

Table 2 Reflective quotes from faculty prior to FTC

Early career	<p>I assumed that courses were meant to cover the content because it fit into a bigger picture of what students need. I thought that at least there would be a content-driven overall view from the department (Daniel).</p> <p>One of my assumptions was that teaching a lesson or teaching a class had to be really complicated somehow, like lots of stuff had to go into it, and I guess I still put a lot of work into preparing for classes... I thought it had to be grand and complicated, and it was a lot of information transmission (Doris).</p>
Mid career	<p>...even as a graduate student and some of the instruction I received in post-secondary... it was very dry and didn't seem to have practical relevance, so I thought well, maybe that's just the way you have to teach at post-secondary (Troy).</p> <p>You have to perform and be on (Simone)</p>
Senior career	<p>...you go in and you lecture as opposed to teach. There is a difference between lecturing and teaching...I don't encourage questions...you go in and deliver the content (Len).</p> <p>Teaching is a trade-off between research and...every minute spent outside of research is guilt ridden time (Herb).</p>

During the FTC Program.

Early career faculty group. Through guided sessions on various aspects of the educational experience, by receiving feedback on their own teaching practice, and discussions with others, early participants in the FTC program began to express the view that perhaps teaching was not in fact about delivering content, but rather about helping students to learn content. This was a major change for this group of participants.

What becomes clear from examination of Table 3 is the shift in teaching assumptions from content delivery to a belief that their role as faculty member was crucial in identifying how they could meet the needs of students. The issue was how they might *illustrate* new content to their students thereby opening up discussions with their students about this content. They started to question their self-perceived role as instructors in the classroom and to discuss what changes would focus on student exploration, learning and discussion.

Mid-career group. Quotations for this mid-group of participants illustrated new ways of approaching teaching as observed in Table 3. Participants moved towards a deeper belief that teaching was more than transmission and included an emphasis on student-centered instruction and course design. Participants began to question their own

assumptions that focused not only on how to teach better, but why teaching needed to be changed? They began to ask hard questions about teaching and engaging in discussions with others in the FTC program. This “added a level of freedom” (Simone) by questioning their own assumptions and introduced personal and professional shifts in their conceptions about university teaching. An interesting result of this change in perspectives was that two of the participants actually began to revamp their courses away from content towards a student-centered teaching approach. Understanding and working with content was suddenly more important than simply transmitting content to students in class.

Senior career group. The impact FTC had on these long-time faculty instructors was the notion that *a little goes along way* as evidenced in Table 3. One participant began to realize that “because we only have one hour, we can only do so much” (Tessa). These instructors noted that what they give, they also receive from students. One instructor asked, “where am I adding value to this course, how am I adding value, why should you come to this class” (Len)? This shift not only shows the belief that if you plan a little and think about what you are doing in the class; you will likely be rewarded with more engaged students. The teaching assumptions changed from a focus of ‘getting it done’ to actually investing time and energy to improve the learning experience.

Table 3 Reflective quotes from faculty during to FTC

Early career	<p>I had never stopped and thought, what does teaching really mean? Does that mean I talk at people about a subject? Does teaching mean I facilitate learning? I had never thought that before FTC (Grace).</p> <p>I'm much more confident in saying I don't have to cover it all! I have to teach – I have to give them examples and they have to use their judgment and build up this ability to think for themselves (Daniel).</p>
Mid career	<p>I needed to go to the FTC Program and have others say, “No that's not the way you have to teach”. The problem is, we don't teach how instructors are, we don't teach academics how to teach when they get here, and that's why it's done so poorly. So that's good, I needed to hear that and okay, I can do whatever I want, and so when I picked up those two courses, I basically re-vamped those two courses completely (Troy).</p> <p>How do you really ask those hard questions of: What are you teaching for? How are you actually doing that? How would you evaluate that? Right? Those have been really good questions (Betty).</p>
Senior career	<p>...modest amount of additional effort would produce a classroom in which the energy coming back more than paid for the investment, that it would be...that it wasn't just going...it wasn't just a strictly linear trade-off between time to research and time to teach (Herb).</p>

Post-FTC Program.

Early career group. As the quotes in Table 4 reveal, participants who had taught for five years or less solidified their change of thought after the FTC had been completed. Their post- FTC program saw themselves as having *roles within the classroom*. Grace's comment was insightful; "the lectures aren't about me, this isn't about me" (Grace). Jay indicated the change in assumptions was not about content but ways of providing students with depth to content. Everybody has a textbook to read but the opportunity is given to faculty to move into content, implications, problem-solving and other in depth conversations with students. There are many ways to do this including using handouts, accessing web resources, etc. and that the classroom environment provided the opportunity to do this in a systematic and organized manner.

The FTC enabled these participants to question *their* assumptions which then influenced *their* personal teaching assumptions. As revealed by one participant, the major impact FTC had on her was to realize she needed to help students learn content in a lecture. This was a huge finding for her because she began to see for herself how to conceive of other approaches to thinking about her students.

Mid-career group. Table 4 reveals that faculty began to see teaching as an evolution towards more of a designed learning experience for students. The assumption of their own teaching was to examine and question their impact on students. Further, to explore student learning in class with consideration given to the way in which they might design classroom experiences that could genuinely support student learning.

Senior career group. Table 4 reinforced the notion that spending time of diversified teaching strategies designed for classes were, in fact, important to students. The benefits of this might well provide enhanced student engagement, improved learning better and evaluations.

Table 4 Reflective quotes from faculty Post to FTC

Early career	<p>Well, I'm always thinking about, what am I doing...FTC kind of reinforced this idea that there isn't a right way to teach and that you have to watch what is happening and there is two way communication, and it's not just a matter of getting up there and if they get it, they get it, but you can actually try to make it an interactive thing, and that I don't have to cover a certain amount of material in class. I have to make sure they're engaged and thinking (Daniel).</p> <p>It's not about the students who don't care, it's about the students who do, it's not about the eight students who have had this eight times, it's about the six in there who don't know what they are doing and who will actually leave with something (Jenn).</p> <p>I [don't] have blackboard writing anymore, if it is necessary to explain more I do, I give them handouts, I put it on the web and I take ten extra copies just in case someone hasn't brought [their printout], so things like that. Now you are more ready, now they feel it is organized (Jay).</p>
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Mid career	What are my students looking for? Designing a learning environment with a class might generate an environment more interesting to students- and me too (Troy)!
Senior career	Doing a range of activities in class is more interesting than straight lectures (Tessa)!

Summary of FTC program results.

All participants in the pre-FTC period showed a transmission approach based on one-direction control and instructor-driven procedures, while the student role was one of learning content in whatever way they could without concern shown by the faculty. Should teaching be about content and teaching behavior? The teaching assumption is it really does not matter about student's attitudes or ability to understand the faculty member's assumptions of teaching, as this is of much less important than the transmission of content.

In contrast, during the FTC program faculty began to question their assumptions around what was being taught, the way content is seen by students, and the role that a faculty members need to support, guide and evaluate students in their understanding and learning about content and discipline beliefs. If one plans and thinks ahead, then a faculty member can provide the assumptions and values that enable energy, engagement and investment of time to enhance the learning of students.

Similarly, at the completion of the FTC program participants also experienced a change in their teaching assumptions over time. It was about providing students with learning experiences to enable richer and deeper student experiences. A faculty member had the chance to introduce and perhaps even integrate concepts, content and context together with their students. When post FTC program reflections were considered, these assumptions were solidified with student engagement, student understanding and student evaluations as a bigger component of the expanded teaching and learning experience.

Cross Section of Results.

As seen in Table 5, nine unique teaching assumptions were characterized by the three FTC time periods across the three stages of a faculty members' careers. These nine are characterized by three categories; the pre-FTC program reflected strong instructor-based teaching assumptions across the three time periods; during the FTC program was marked by customized/redesign teaching assumptions; and, the post-FTC program was transformative as they were profoundly and permanently changed by the successful completion of the FTC program. These nine assumptions show the differences and similarities across the various stages, and are reviewed below.

Table 5 Summary of Teaching Assumptions Across FTC Program & Career Stages

Teaching Assumptions	Early Career (1-5 years)	Mid Career (6-10 years)	Senior Career (11+ years)
Instructor-based assumptions (Pre-FTC)	Transmission	Instructor driven	Lecture-based
Customized/Redesign assumptions (During FTC)	Questioning	Student/Learning-driven teaching	Commitment to designing student learning
Transformative Assumptions (Post FTC)	Student engagement	Energy required to engage the learner and learning	Student engagement learning/improved course evaluations

Instructor teaching assumptions. As evidenced in Table 5, each participant group (i.e. early, mid and senior groups) revealed unique *instructor-based teaching assumptions* but did so in different ways. For the early career group, teaching assumptions were about content transmission with little regard for students. Similarly, the mid-career group held self-perceptions that teaching assumptions were instructor driven, with the lecture delivery focus being the underlying perspective of the senior faculty group. Senior career participants started the FTC program with teaching assumptions that focused on lecturer delivery and utilizing ways of including greater content more expediently.

While these three forms of instructor-based teaching assumptions differ in the ways that faculty can be in control, the role of the student was not considered. This was a one-way transmission of content and though one could hope to become more efficient and proficient in their teaching, participants were not even aware that other forms of teaching assumptions could be entertained. They were not aware that their belief structure could expand beyond this narrow set of teaching assumptions.

Customized/redesigning teaching assumptions. At this point in the program, each of the groups shifted their assumptions about teaching away from previously held assumptions to a new way of thinking. In the case of early career participants, they moved from the transmission approach they held coming into the FTC program to one of questioning their role about their own teaching style. During the FTC program, mid-faculty who had been teaching for more than five years, shifted from an instructor-driven approach prior to the FTC to a student learning and course driven approach, or what Barr and Tagg (1995) explain as the learning paradigm. When they were able to open the door to possibility, they found new approaches to explore in their work with others. Students became the focus rather than concern. The senior career group shifted their teaching assumptions from the need to lecture and deliver content, to one in which the design of student learning experience was central to their work. Retrospectively, each

participant illustrated a way in which they began to customize and redesign their teaching assumptions.

This process of self-examination of teaching assumptions achieved during the FTC program happened when faculty felt secure and trusting enough to be open to constructive feedback and ideas that often begin with gentle criticism and questioning from experienced faculty developers. Each participant identified their own approach teaching assumptions from this experience and began their shift in the FTC program.

Transformative teaching assumptions. As Table 5 indicates, the early career group emphasized the fact that student engagement needed to be developed within classes. Similarly, those in mid-career felt their teaching assumptions had expanded to a belief that energy to engage the learners was a key component in the new teaching assumptions in these faculty. The senior faculty group who had taught for over a decade changed from the assumption that teaching was all about lecture delivery to alternatives in which teaching assumptions was about learner experiences, student engagement and even enhanced course evaluations.

All three categories reflected teaching assumptions which had permanently and profoundly changed. There was no evidence from the interviews that any participant had reverted back to their “old” teaching assumptions more than one to three years earlier. All realized how their teaching assumptions influenced the role of their teaching, the importance of student over instructor, and the ways they could establish and build foundations that permanently changed the life of these faculty participants.

Limitations. A limitation was the fact the study was a retrospective analysis of fifteen participants who met the criteria for the study. Participants were asked to reflect on their teaching experience prior, during, and post participation in the FTC program. Participants were asked to provide documents that supported their reflections (lesson plans, teaching philosophies, student assessments of teaching) but it is still important to recognize that a limitation for this study is the reflective nature of the study design.

While this study could have included others who may have voiced changes to their teaching assumptions, only fifteen participants met the additional criteria of the study. Furthermore, the study did not include those individuals who did not believe the FTC program impacted their teaching assumptions. It is important to recognize these limitations as they provide a clearer picture of the findings.

Summary. These changes in teaching assumptions across the early, mid and senior career stages suggest that change is possible in any one of these participant groups. The trigger for this change, however, occurs with an effective FTC program in which faculty experience the activities necessary for the development of the conversation about teaching assumptions. Stabile (2014) states that “A culture of teaching and learning excellence starts with each faculty member becoming self-aware of their assumptions about what they do and that these assumptions dictate how they act and interact with students, curriculum, and each other (p. 224). To achieve this, it is more than simply talking through lectures about teaching assumptions. Rather, it occurs by working with faculty to develop trust, sensitivity, gentle feedback, peer conversations and by offering suggestions to and between faculty as they come to identify and transform their own assumptions about teaching.

Discussion

This study produced several findings that support the notion that research can provide several very helpful implications to the educational development field. Some of these are summarized below.

Results of this Study

This study provides qualitative research results drawn from interviews that support the finding that teaching assumptions can be addressed within educational development programs such as the FTC program. In this study, results were found to support the primary research question that teaching assumptions were; (1) *self-identified* by faculty when teaching assumptions was explained to faculty as the Faculty Teaching program began; (2) *observable* by educational development personnel as they interacted with faculty about their teaching; (3) *changed* as faculty began to realize there were additional ways to understand their teaching roles by identifying the way these conceptions of teaching impacted the teaching assumptions, and (4) *maintained* these changes in teaching assumptions after completion of the FTC program. Each of these findings are significant as outcomes from completing an intensive educational development program. These gains reflect the issues raised in the literature review, were in evidence through participants' responses in this program, and likely would be present in other intensive educational development programs designed to provide structure learning experiences with a small number of faculty over an intensive period. Finally, it is believed that experienced education development staff is essential in this process as novice personnel may not have accumulated significant understanding to see or respectfully question faculty about this central issue.

Relevance of this Study

This study provides support for the importance and significance of teaching assumption changes which occurred when faculty were asked about these but which were not included in the evaluation results conducted at the completion of the program. These changes only became apparent when two experienced and former educational development researchers designed a research study that addressed these issues through an interview process with faculty who had graduated from the FTC program. Had this research study not been initiated, these results would have remained hidden to faculty, to administrators and to other practitioner-based educational personnel. This suggests that other educational research concepts could be explored in future using an interview process much the same as was done in this study.

These findings are critically important because they provide information that can change the way a faculty thinks about themselves, their teaching responsibilities, and their students. By learning how teaching assumptions are formed and can be changed over time, faculty members are able to guide and mentor those graduate students who may be preparing to become faculty in future. By articulating their experience with this study, the quality of teaching is enhanced for faculty who have graduated from this program.

Universities should be encouraged to provide educational development programs for faculty across career stages. Although some may argue that faculty in the early career

are the only ones who may change, this study reveals that changes are possible regardless of the career stage of faculty participants. This also provides the necessary research evidence to prove that the work of centres for teaching and learning can assist both faculty and administrators in the teaching work that benefits today's students and classroom environments.

Although not a central feature of this research, the fact remains that these results were not discovered from the evaluation methods used at the conclusion of the FTC program. This study suggests that evaluations need be designed on the basis of the program evaluation literature that is deeper and more comprehensive than many evaluation tools currently in use with short-term educational development programs. While time is a factor in the design of appropriate evaluation materials, the success which can accrue from program evaluation literature can result in solid and accurate findings. These results can then be used to demonstrate success and progress to university administrators, student union associations and faculty associations.

Research into Teaching Assumptions as a New Direction.

In this study, nine teaching assumptions were identified. Others might be recognized with further study but these assumptions are similar to the transformations discussed by Meizrow (1990). Collectively, they emphasize enhanced inclusivity, differentiation where needed, permeability, flexibility and critically reflection based on personal experiences of change as a result of an educational development program. These changes were permanent and changed the view of each teaching member in unique ways. In short, each faculty took it upon themselves to discover ways to blend their teaching assumptions with teaching skills to enable deeper and more engaged learning with and for their students.

Teaching assumptions also must not remain hidden or unexplored within educational development programs. By using structured educational development techniques, such as faculty discussions, teaching exercises, constructive feedback and other methods, teaching assumptions can be uncovered, explored and shifted by faculty members with experienced personnel who can guide the development of shifts into new teaching assumptions. These findings are valuable in supporting the need for structured programs while building a body of research within the discipline of educational development. Further, the need for experienced and trained educational developers with knowledge of research-based studies is paramount as they build on the research findings as presented in other studies (Booke, 2011, p. 132).

The importance of employing education development personnel that provide respectful, trusting, open and co-operative relationships also cannot be denied. Both the faculty and consultant must be prepared to engage in risk-taking opportunities in order for teaching assumptions to be voiced and constructively discussed before new approaches are tried.

Conclusions

Participants commented their teaching assumptions were built from the experiences they had during their time as a student – some decades earlier. What participating in FTC provided was an opportunity to examine those assumptions and articulate newer

faculty-based assumptions of teaching. It is important to recognize that faculty members may need to engage in an educational development program when changing from student to faculty otherwise they may miss the value of identifying their personal assumptions to themselves, to students, and to their discipline.

Akerlind (2003, p. 378) argues that faculty must understand how they view and are viewed by others in their role as an instructor. This current study did just that, focusing on an in-house educational development program. These faculty members changed their assumptions of teaching from instructor/content-focused assumptions of the teaching role to that of a student-centered teaching role. Research participants discussed the changes they made to their assumptions through participating in the FTC program. These assumptions are the very foundations upon which one's philosophy and practice are founded. It is this underlying set of beliefs that shapes the ways in which faculty see themselves and are prepared to make changes. The opportunity to see, experience and feel these assumptions by watching their own teaching may lead to a change in one's belief structure as a teaching faculty member.

Finally, it would be interesting to survey students drawn from classes to determine what the teaching assumptions might be for faculty who are seen to be engaging, encouraging and helpful for students. From the student perspective this could offer information that would guide faculty in the development of enhanced teaching assumptions for themselves, their students, their classes and their discipline.

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