

Manual for Training The Teachers to improve the curriculum

Background

Training The Teachers (TTT) is a program to upgrade competencies of faculties involved in everyday teaching, specially focused on new or modified subjects with new techniques for teaching and assessment of competencies. This is seen as a part of a process towards accreditation of a specific education, for example to fill the gaps that were identified during benchmarking with the Diploma or accreditation organization. This manual was created as part of the OCULUS project 'Optometry Curriculum for Lifelong Learning through ErasmUS', aimed at improving optometry education in Europe, India and Israel (see www.oculuserasmus.org).

This manual provides a brief guidance and practical tips based on our experience for a successful implementation of TTT in your education, including planning, execution and completion.

Planning

The start point for planning of Train the Teacher (TTT) sessions is the benchmark report. One needs to identify exact gaps and strategies to fill in those. TTT sessions are useful in the bridging the academic gaps pertaining of training and assessment of knowledge and skills. The next step in planning would be to identify the teachers, mentors, clinical staff, and all those who are directly and indirectly linked with teaching of those competencies. The administrator of TTT must carefully look into time availability of all the participants. We also identified the experts from the specific domain who can lead the TTT session. The logistic arrangements such as travel, accommodation, food, TTT session material, sign boards, invitation letters and permissions need to be sorted before commencement of the session. We recommend, these logistic and administrative work may be handled by a non-teaching staff, so that participants i.e. experts and teachers can fully concentrate on the scientific contents of the TTT session.

Execution

The activities in the TTT sessions needs meticulous planning. Various teaching techniques can be used to cover specific knowledge and skill competencies. We incorporated strategies such as small group discussions, case based learning, active lectures in both face to face and online delivery mode. Some of the sessions were taken by the subject experts, some by the educational experts and some sessions by the participants themselves. Participation by different stakeholders of the academia is vital in bringing quality inputs which can be practically implemented by teachers in their regular everyday teaching.

In addition to active learning methods, we also gave small assignments to the teachers. The assignments were so designed that the planning or content development workload of teacher's everyday teaching will also get done along with the completion of assignments. E.g. development of rubrics of the any optometry skill, development of OSCE assessment, writing intended learning outcomes of their own subject, writing cases for implementation of case based learning in their

classes, planning of Evidence based teaching for variety of topics and so on. The outcomes of these assignments were reviewed by fellow participants and subject experts, in order improve its quality, so that it can be directly used in optometry program. The outcomes of these assignment (e.g. rubrics, cases, learning objectives and unit plans) were shared with all the participants of the TTT sessions. This benefited all the HEIs as the resources got generated and shared between all the faculties, reducing the academic burden of additional topics which emerged to bridge the gap.

We recommend that the TTT sessions should be organised with active participation of all the faculties, with a shared goal of enhancing teaching practices of each one of them.

Completion

Owing to the busy academic schedules of teachers and HEIs, the TTT sessions are recommended to be planned and executed as byte size activity. Small sessions with specific objectives are more effective. The administrator has to make sure that all the TTT sessions are completed before the start of academic year/ semester, so that faculties can plan the changes well in advance. This is important to effectively fill the gaps identified during benchmarking exercise.

It is also important to take feedback of the participants which may direct us to some improvements for the next TTT session. We developed a feedback form for our TTT sessions, which is available to use for academic purpose, on our website.

The follow up of TTT after few months is recommended. The leading experts along with organisers can take the follow up by contacting all the participants individually or by a quick online meeting of entire group. The experiences of actual implementation of new curriculum or new pedagogy technique can be shared with the group which further enhances the competencies of the participants. The challenges encountered in actual implementation can be discussed for possible solutions. This will assure and enrich the participants of TTT sessions, in implementing new topics/ teaching techniques in the program.

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