Preparing university teachers for times of uncertainty: the role of a transnational pedagogical-development training in Palestinian higher education

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which a transnational pedagogical training affected university teachers' approaches to teaching, as well as their efficacy beliefs and cultural perceptions, and to examine how such training could stimulate teachers' pedagogical-development processes beyond the specific context.

Design/methodology/approach – An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was adopted for the study. Quantitative data were collected through an online self-reported questionnaire from two-independent samples, both before ($n = 119$) and after ($n = 110$) the training. Qualitative data were collected after the training through episodic narrative interviews with five teachers.

Findings – The quantitative and qualitative findings indicate contradictory aspects of the teaching approach and perceived culture. While the questionnaire responses highlighted the dominance of teacher-centred teaching approaches and an individualistic culture, a thematic analysis of the interview data showed that teachers experienced pedagogical development as (1) increasing student engagement, (2) improving their own teaching practices, (3) a community activity and (4) an institutionalised process.

Research limitations/implications – The design of the current research may have limited the authors' potential to deeply investigate the effect of the transnational pedagogical training, as only snapshots of the teachers' perceptions were elicited. Future studies might consider a within-subject longitudinal design to thoroughly follow teachers' trajectories in learning and development over time.

Practical implications – The research findings suggest that transnational pedagogical training initiatives are to be promoted amidst these uncertain times. Even though the focus of the study was not to explore the teachers' perceptions of teaching development during the pandemic, the current results imply that the mentioned training helped teachers in tailoring their pedagogical practices to suit the unexpected online teaching settings.

Originality/value – The study adds to the relatively new literature on the perceived effect of transnational pedagogical training initiatives. This study's findings contribute to the body of knowledge related to pedagogical development in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Keywords Transnational education, Pedagogical development, Higher education, Teaching approaches, Efficacy beliefs, Academic and teaching cultures

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The higher education (HE) literature has increasingly examined pedagogical development, with the aim of enhancing the quality of university teaching and to equip teachers with essential competencies to cope with uncertain times and varied contexts (Fabriz *et al.*, 2020; Fischer and Hänze, 2020; Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Ödalen *et al.*, 2019; Postareff and Nevgi, 2015; De Vries *et al.*, 2014; Wood *et al.*, 2011). Some argue that influencing teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning through pedagogical-development opportunities will positively affect their teaching practices, which in turn will lead to better student learning outcomes (Sabat *et al.*, 2022; Fabriz *et al.*, 2020; Gibbs and Coffey, 2004). As a result, numerous pedagogical-development opportunities are being promoted through channels both formal (e.g. accredited courses and trainings) and informal (e.g. collegial conversations). A recent yet fast-developing approach to foster HE teachers' competencies is to introduce pedagogical-development training (PDT) through transnational education, which is the focus of the current study.

PDT term is often used interchangeably with "faculty development", or "academic development" and is defined as a training that focuses on improving pedagogical competencies and academic teaching capacity of university staff members. Transnational PDT refers to training programmes that have been designed and implemented as part of transnational cooperation between two partner higher education institutions (HEIs) operating in two different countries; the sending and host countries (Holubek *et al.*, 2022). In practice, university teachers from the host country participate in a PDT taught by educators from the sending country. Rationales for initiating transnational PDT programmes include the intercultural exchange of good practices, improving the quality of academic teaching and the modernisation of education provision to meet growing demands for HE (Korhonen and Alenius, 2018).

Generally, PDTs are a tool that university teachers can utilise for pedagogical-development purposes and when facing novel situations and challenges in teaching, although such trainings may or may not include specific instructions on how to manage specific emergencies. PDTs may vary in structure, duration, aims and comprehensiveness (Hicks *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, the aim of most PDTs is to improve teaching, enhance students' learning and build teachers' adaptive expertise and deliberate practice (Ericsson, 2014; Macnamara *et al.*, 2014). One synthesis of research on the characteristics of effective professional development highlights the importance of enabling "contextualisation by teachers to their particular teaching situations" (McAleavy *et al.*, 2018, p. 12), which in turn helps teachers to tailor their pedagogical practices when they teach in varied contexts.

Numerous researchers have investigated the extent to which PDTs affect teachers' conception and attitudes towards teaching and learning (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Hanbury *et al.*, 2008; Postareff *et al.*, 2007; Stes *et al.*, 2010), although the findings from these studies have been inconclusive, varied and context dependent (Sadler and Reimann, 2018). Few researchers have explored how teachers, as a result of participating in such PDTs, experience the pedagogical-development process when they have suddenly been forced to move to online teaching due to COVID-19 or to cope with emergent catastrophes such as war and other conflicts.

This study examines the perceived effect of a PDT in and for HE in Palestine, which suffers from the double crisis of bearing the global COVID-19 pandemic while also being a

fragile and conflict-affected context, or FCAC (World Bank, 2020). In this article, we present the case of the transnational eTraining FinPal project conducted between the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and Tampere University, Finland, with the aim of developing pedagogical practices among Palestinian HEIs by designing and implementing a PDT programme for university teachers. The Palestinian teachers' pedagogical approaches before the training were examined and reported in one of our previous studies (Alenius *et al.*, 2019). The aim of the current study is threefold: (1) to report the university teachers' pedagogical approaches after the PDT, which took place (unintentionally) during COVID-19; (2) to examine whether teachers experienced that PDT benefited their practices and pedagogical expertise; (3) to explore whether and how PDTs may help university teachers to experience and think of pedagogical processes beyond specific contexts.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Transnational PDT

Responding to increasing demand on quality education, higher education institutions seek to provide pedagogical-development training through transnational education (TNE). TNE refers to the mobility of education programmes and providers between countries (Knight, 2016). TNE is commonly established as a cooperation between sending and host HEIs located in different countries to provide education to students in the host country (Knight, 2016). The cooperation is shaped with different forms of TNE partnerships supported by online and distance education.

The provision of PDT for university teachers in the form of TNE is not standard practice and is fairly under-researched (Allen, 2014). Previous studies on educational-development initiatives implemented through TNE cooperation (Allen, 2014; Bovill *et al.*, 2015; Jordan *et al.*, 2014) have addressed the cultural transferability of educational practices and have stressed the importance of the *context* in which the transnational activities are implemented (Holubek *et al.*, 2022). In other words, to make learning relevant for the participants, the contents and methods of TNE must be developed based on the needs and common practices of the host HEI in its institutional, sociocultural, political and economic context.

For the present study, three theoretical frameworks were specifically selected to study the main measurable effects: approaches to teaching (Trigwell and Prosser, 2004), efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2001) and academic and teaching cultures (Korhonen, 2007). From the pedagogical-development standpoint, approaches to teaching and efficacy beliefs are related to teachers' personal development and practices, while academic and teaching cultures are related to how teaching and its development are generally perceived to be organised in the target context.

2.2 Approaches to teaching

The practices and strategies that teachers adopt in teaching are often referred to as "approaches to teaching". These manifested practices reflect teachers' hidden beliefs, intentions and understandings of teaching. Trigwell and Prosser (2004) identify and measure two dimensions in their "approaches to teaching inventory" (ATI): the *teacher-centred approach*, which emphasises knowledge transmission, and the *student-centred approach*, which emphasises knowledge construction. Several studies have focused on the implications of these approaches on student learning and have found that the teacher-centred approach is more likely to orient students towards a superficial approach to learning, whereas a student-centred approach seems to promote a deeper approach to learning among students (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Uiboleht *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the aim of PDTs is to foster student-centred teaching practices which would contribute to meaningful student learning and better achievements.

The ATI has been implemented in a range of contexts, including Eastern countries such as Turkey (Aksoy *et al.*, 2018), Malaysia (Goh *et al.*, 2014) and China (Han *et al.*, 2015) and Western countries such as Finland (Lindblom-Ylänne *et al.*, 2006), Belgium (Stes *et al.*, 2008) and Spain (Monroy *et al.*, 2015). The findings from these studies indicate that ATI's appropriateness differs in different countries and contexts. The present study examines the ATI in the context of Palestinian HE. The qualitative and quantitative findings from our previous research (Alenius *et al.*, 2019) indicate the dominance of the transmission perspective and a lack of active learning methods among teachers' practices.

2.3 Efficacy beliefs

"Self-efficacy beliefs" are based on Bandura's (1997, 2001) social cognitive theory regarding people's own beliefs in their capabilities to gain control over their own functioning and over events and how such control affects their agency or ability to act in these circumstances. According to Dellinger *et al.* (2008), self-efficacy beliefs are learnt, task- and situation-specific systems of beliefs in particular settings. These beliefs may vary in strength (the intensity of teachers' abilities to do certain tasks), level (tasks' difficulty) and across activities. It is shown that PDTs not only contributes in altering teaching and learning conceptions, but also strengthens teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Vilppu *et al.*, 2019).

Previous research has provided more information on the nature of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in HE contexts but has mainly concentrated on European contexts. Researchers have examined connections to student-focused teaching (Postareff *et al.*, 2008; Noben *et al.*, 2021), mastery experiences in assessment (Myyry *et al.*, 2021) and teachers' emotional intelligence (Giménez-Lozano and Morales-Rodríguez, 2019). Others have conducted studies in Asian settings to study the related concept of teaching efficacy in HE (Chang *et al.*, 2010, 2011; Han *et al.*, 2018). Teaching efficacy is grounded in Bandura's (1997, 2001) self-efficacy theories, with a particular focus on efficacy beliefs in teaching situations (Tschannen-Moran *et al.*, 1998). In the Asian context, Chang *et al.* (2011) demonstrate that university teachers' intentions are more oriented towards knowledge transmission and classroom management and less oriented towards learning facilitation. Concept-related efficacy beliefs or teaching efficacy in HE thus seem to differ culturally.

In this study we have utilised a validated measurement of Dellinger *et al.*'s (2008) "teacher efficacy belief system – self" (TEBS-Self). TEBS-Self was previously used in an international OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) study (2013) and in our previous study with Palestinian instructors (Alenius *et al.*, 2019). In that study, we demonstrated that strong self-efficacy beliefs were generally prevalent and were connected to both teacher- and student-centred teaching approaches.

2.4 Academic and teaching cultures

Those involved in pedagogical development must distinguish between shared cultural features that define how teaching and learning is implemented in HE (Korhonen, 2007) and the general academic institutional administrative and organisational culture (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008; Tierney and Lanford, 2018). Hargreaves (1994, 2003) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) provide a distinction on teaching cultures in educational communities, which characterises the nature of teaching work and the level of teachers' professional co-operation. Especially in HE, the distinction between individualistic and collegial teaching cultures has proved useful in outlining prevailing teaching priorities (Korhonen, 2007). Individualistic cultures include more traditional ways of conducting teaching work based on individual responsibility, where autonomy, isolation and insulation prevail (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Knowledge and practice sharing are rare in this type of culture; instead, the culture is competitive. Individualism and competition among scholars are typical

characteristics of academia in general (Tynan and Garbett, 2007; Kennelly and McCormack, 2015).

The opposite is a collaborative culture (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012), also known as collegial culture (Korhonen, 2007). This type of teaching community may include professional learning communities, which transform knowledge and learning among community members, promote shared inquiry and encourage teachers to devise local improvements and learning about their teaching (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Kennelly and McCormack (2015) note this kind of collaborative reflective practice as a potential means of developing teaching to enhance collaboration among academics.

Individual and collegial features could exist at the same time as an academic culture. For example, in our previous study with Palestinian HE instructors (Alenius *et al.*, 2019), the instructors' teaching culture did not appear to be unequivocally individually or collegially oriented. Complementary qualitative data showed that collaboration between teachers occurred mostly in official, formal meetings, and the originator of activities was the institution's administrative guidelines and instructions rather than the teachers' own initiatives and collaboration (Alenius *et al.*, 2019). Hargreaves (1994, 2003) calls this type of collegiality "contrived collegiality". Teachers in contrived-collegiality cultures may have some observable collaborative relationships, but only those that are compulsory, for example within official planning meetings.

2.5 Effects of pedagogical-development trainings

Examining the extent to which PDTs are effective is challenging for several reasons, including the difficulty of defining and measuring effectiveness (Fabriz *et al.*, 2020). Researchers have employed several methods to determine PDTs' effectiveness, including participants' perceived satisfaction, their perceived change in teachers' teaching approaches, their confidence in the role of university teachers (Ödalen *et al.*, 2019), their self-efficacy and subjective knowledge about teaching (Fabriz *et al.*, 2020) and student learning approaches (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004). The findings from these studies have been contradictory, however. While some researchers have documented a shift in teachers' orientation towards a student-centred approach (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Hanbury *et al.*, 2008; Postareff *et al.*, 2007), others have found no effect (Norton *et al.*, 2005) or even a shift towards the teacher-centred approach (Ödalen *et al.*, 2019) and conflicting impacts of instructional development in terms of changes in HE teachers' learning and behaviour (Stes *et al.*, 2010). Research also indicates that changes in teachers' conceptions and practices require relatively long training (Postareff *et al.*, 2007).

Apart from the lack of clear evidence of PDTs' effectiveness generally, exploring their potential in FCACs is another aspect that may not have been considered. In such challenging contexts, university teachers are not just expected to cope with COVID-19 but also with the lack of security due to fragility and conflict. Although research on PDTs in fragile contexts remains rare and ad hoc in nature (Motteram *et al.*, 2020), the few opportunities that do exist still seem to have contributed to teachers' development by promoting contextualisation and their ability to adapt pedagogical principles to suit their particular teaching situations (McAleavy *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the perceived effects of a transnational pedagogical-development training on Palestinian university teachers' approaches to teaching and their efficacy beliefs and cultural perceptions?

RQ2. How do university teachers perceive the benefits (if any) of the pedagogical training to their work as teachers?

RQ3. How do university teachers experience pedagogical-development processes?

3. Methods

3.1 The research setting

According to the latest list from the World Bank (2020), the Palestinian territories have been considered an FCAC ever since 1948 (AlDahdouh, 2021). The Gaza Strip in Palestine, where our sample participants reside, has experienced several wars, most recently in May 2021, and is still under long-lasting blockades (Milton *et al.*, 2021). As such, Palestinian universities, which were established to resist efforts to obliterate Palestinian culture and national identity, are affected by various obstacles and operate under trying social, political and economic circumstances (Abu-Lughod, 2000). HE in Palestine is highly valued and is often perceived as Palestine's main asset (Abouzir, 2010).

3.2 The eTraining FinPal project

The transnational Finnish-Palestinian collaboration project "eTraining FinPal" was established in 2017 to develop pedagogical practices in Palestinian HEIs. The partners jointly designed a PDT programme based on a study of Palestinian university teachers' pedagogical approaches and training needs (Alenius *et al.*, 2019). Transnational PDT can for example involve collaboration on developing institutional practices and curricula to incorporate some specific teaching methodology such as active learning or problem-based learning (see for example Jordan *et al.*, 2014). The PDT programme was implemented with three cohorts of university teachers (127 in total) between 2018 and 2020. The training included individual and group activities on numerous topics related to university teaching, including student learning and engagement, learning environments, and developing expertise. The training assignments were designed to engage the participants with the scholarship of teaching and learning through reflection and discussion of their own pedagogical practices in light of scholarly articles. Eight Finnish university teachers acted as educators in the PDT programme for the first cohort of Palestinian university teachers, organised using the blended learning model. The PDT with the third cohort finished in early 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 Study design and procedures

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was adopted in which "the researcher begins by conducting a quantitative phase and follows up on specific results with a subsequent qualitative phase to help explain the quantitative results" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018, p. 135). The mixed-methods design enabled us to collect multiple datasets that were triangulated to gain better understanding of the researched phenomenon from multiple perspectives. Such methodological and data triangulation (Patton, 1999) complemented by the investigator triangulation (i.e. research conducted by a team of researchers) ensures reliability and validity of the study.

We used an online self-reported questionnaire to collect quantitative data before and after the training, using two independent samples of IUG teachers. We did not adopt a pre-post design with the same participants to avoid the Hawthorne effect (Shayer, 1992), where participants of an experimental study tend to alter or improve their behaviour because they feel they are being evaluated or observed. To deepen our understanding of the perceived effects of the PDT under investigation, we conducted five individual interviews with Palestinian university teachers who had participated in PDT programmes. The interviews conducted after the PDT programme focussed on the participants' experiences with pedagogical-development processes, which specifically addressed RQ3. The participants' answers from the questionnaire and the interviews were not connected. Participation in the study was voluntary and based on informed consent.

3.4 Quantitative data

3.4.1 Sample. Quantitative data were collected from a non-probability sample of university teachers working at IUG. All IUG teachers were invited to fill in the questionnaire twice. The first round was administered before starting the training, in December 2017 ($N = 119$); the second round of the questionnaire was administered after the training, in April 2020 ($N = 110$). The 110 responses consisted of 43 responses from teachers who had attended one of the three training cohorts, in addition to 67 responses from teachers who had not attended any of the training programmes. We will provide a descriptive analysis of the whole sample ($N = 110$) in the following, but for comparative purposes, we will consider only the sub-sample of trained teachers ($n = 43$).

The participants ranged from 22 to 71 years of age ($M = 49.87$; standard deviation [SD] = 9.579), with an average work experience in HE of 17 years (SD = 8.099). The educational levels were distributed as follows: bachelor's degree (5%; $n = 6$), master's degree (14%; $n = 15$), doctorate degree (89%; $n = 81$). In terms of academic positions, 28 (25%) were full professors, 24 (22%) were associate professors, 37 (34%) were assistant professors, 15 (14%) were lecturers and 6 (5%) were teacher assistants. A total of 43 teachers indicated that they had participated in pedagogical training as follows: 12 (first cohort), 20 (second cohort), 10 (third cohort), 1 (missing data).

3.4.2 Measures. The same measures of the first-round questionnaire were replicated in the second round. We ensured the reliability of validity and examined the dimensionality of the study variables through factor analysis in our previous study (Alenius *et al.*, 2019). The current analysis is thus based on the previously confirmed and valid factors, since the two samples were drawn from the same population. In addition, one more section was appended to measure the teachers' perceptions of the training's effect on their work as teachers. Table 1 shows the questionnaire measures while reliability values measured by Cronbach's alpha are shown in Table 2.

Measure	Dimensions	Likert scale
Approaches to teaching Trigwell and Prosser (2004)	(1) student-centred approach: eight items (e.g. "I make opportunities available for students in this course to discuss their changing understanding of the subject matter") (2) teacher-centred approach: eight items (e.g. "I feel it is important to present a lot of facts to students so that they know what they have to learn")	1 (rarely) – 5 (always)
Self-efficacy beliefs TALIS 2013 – OECD international survey and Dellinger *et al.* (2008)	TALIS 2013 – OECD: five items (e.g. "present a summary of recently learnt content") Dellinger's *et al.* (2008) TEBS-Self: 11 items (e.g. "maintain high levels of student engagement in learning tasks")	1 (weak beliefs) – 5 (very strong beliefs)
Academic culture Hargreaves (1994, 2003) and Korhonen (2007)	(1) collegial work culture: five items (e.g. "share often work-related information and create new knowledge together") (2) individual work culture: five items, (e.g. "work mainly independently to attain the objectives set up by the management")	1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)
Pedagogical training assessment	Seven items were developed by the Finnish team researchers so that the participants assess the extent to which the pedagogical training affects their work as teachers (see Table 4)	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Very much)

Table 1.
Study measures

3.4.3 Analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS 22.0 statistical package. The sample (consisting of 110 responses) was screened prior to analysis. A limited number of missing values per variable were detected and imputed by the mean for the continuous variables (e.g. age and experience) and by the median for the categorical variables (e.g. Likert scale items).

3.5 Qualitative data and analysis

The qualitative data for this study consists of transcripts of individual interviews with five Palestinian university teachers conducted after the PDT, in April 2020. The interviewees had participated in all three cohorts of PDT. This longer-term involvement with pedagogical-development processes gave them a unique opportunity to experience the complex educational changes introduced by the PDT. The interviews were conducted online and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The quotes in this paper have been lightly edited for clarity in English. The length of the interviews varied between 23 and 60 min. The interviewees could choose to speak Arabic or English in the interviews, which were facilitated by two researchers (one who spoke English and one who spoke Arabic). Arabic transcriptions were transcribed and translated to English by the Arabic-speaking researcher.

The interview protocol was developed using the episodic narrative interview framework (Mueller, 2019). This interview approach enables researchers to explore various social phenomena through narrative accounts of experiences with the phenomena and within the context of a bounded situation or episode (Mueller, 2019). During the interviews, the teachers were asked to explain their understanding of university teachers' pedagogical development and to share their experiences with and reflections on situations related to pedagogical development in general and in the PDT programmes under investigation. We followed the six-steps analysis procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87): reading and coding the data, searching, reviewing and defining themes, producing the report. An inductive (data-driven) analysis approach applied focused on identifying patterns across the interview dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In other words, the coding process did not follow a pre-existing coding frame, but the text sections were coded based on their meaning. A recursive process of analysis aimed at finding repeated patterns of meaning by collating codes into thematic groups. ATLAS.ti software was used during the coding and analysis phases. The second author conducted the primary analysis outlining the four main themes that were then further refined within the research team and brought into relation with the findings of the quantitative data.

4. Results

4.1 Results of RQs 1, 2 and 3

RQ1 is "What are the perceived effects of a transnational pedagogical-development training on Palestinian university teachers" approaches to teaching and their efficacy beliefs and

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teacher-centred teaching	1				
2. Student-centred teaching	0.502**	1			
3. Efficacy beliefs	0.546**	0.504**	1		
4. Collegial culture	0.224*	0.217*	0.226*	1	
5. Individualistic culture	0.220*	0.224*	0.273**	0.824**	1
M	3.95	3.51	4.30	3.51	3.59
SD	0.654	0.704	0.595	0.778	0.614
Alpha Cronbach	0.68	0.64	0.93	0.90	0.73

Table 2.
Means, standard deviations and correlation among the study variables

cultural perceptions?' We calculated the means, SDs and correlations among the study variables for the sample after the training ($N = 110$), as shown in Table 2.

Notably, teachers' average scores in teacher-centred and student-centred approaches were above average on a scale of 1–5. This result indicates that both teaching approaches are endorsed by teachers with more emphasis on teacher-centeredness over student-centeredness ($t_{(109)} = 6.811$; $p < 0.001$) and individualistic culture over collegial culture ($t_{(109)} = -1.985$; $p = 0.05$) as revealed by the two-paired sample t-test. To see the perceived effect of the transnational PDT on teachers' approaches to teaching and their efficacy beliefs and cultural perceptions, we compared the scores of teachers who had participated in the training ($n = 43$) with the scores of those who had participated in our previous study ($n = 119$). Two-independent-sample t-testing was conducted to examine the effect, as shown in Table 3. As the table shows, no significant differences were detected, indicating inconclusive evidence about the effect of the training.

RQ2 is "How do university teachers perceive the benefits (if any) of the pedagogical training to their work as teachers?" On average, the participants indicated a mean score of 3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5 (SD = 0.71) as self-assessment of the extent to which the pedagogical training had affected their work as teachers (See Table 4).

RQ3 is "How do university teachers experience pedagogical-development processes?" A thematic analysis of the interview data identified four main themes in the interviewees' accounts of their experiences with PDT programmes. They experienced pedagogical

	Before ($n = 119$)		After ($n = 43$)				
	M	SD	M	SD	t(df)	p	Sig
Teacher-centred teaching	3.84	0.675	3.96	0.692	−1.021(160)	0.31	n.s
Student-centred teaching	3.51	0.669	3.41	0.711	0.776(160)	0.44	n.s
Efficacy beliefs	4.22	0.518	4.30	0.679	−0.818(160)	0.41	n.s
Collegial culture	3.32	0.769	3.49	0.834	−1.196(160)	0.23	n.s
Individualistic culture	3.48	0.637	3.59	0.713	−0.965(160)	0.34	n.s

Table 3.
Results of two-independent samples t-test

	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage of the degree of agreement				
			1 (Strongly disagree)	2	3	4	5(Strongly agree)
1. My idea of learning has changed because of training	3.91	0.996	2.3	4.7	25.6	34.9	32.6
2. My idea of teaching has changed because of training	3.91	0.996	2.3	4.7	25.6	34.9	32.6
3. My behaviour as a teacher has changed because of training.	3.70	1.059	4.7	9.3	18.6	46.5	20.9
4. Training has made me more eager to develop my teaching.	4.16	0.843	0	4.7	14.0	41.9	39.5
5. I am able to use my training when developing teaching at my department/faculty	4.05	0.815	0	2.3	23.3	41.9	32.6
6. Because of training, I am able to give pedagogical support to others	3.884	0.8510	0	4.7	27.9	41.9	25.6
7. Because of training, my students have learnt better/ earned better grades	3.70	0.887	2.3	2.3	37.2	39.5	18.6

Table 4.
Mean, standard deviation and percentage of the degree of agreement on self-assessment items

development as (1) a process of increasing student engagement, (2) a way to improve their own teaching practices, (3) a community activity and (4) an institutionalised process. In what follows we provide description of those four themes.

The interviewees often described pedagogical development and its goals as *increasing student engagement* in their university studies. Reflecting on their teaching practices after the PDT, interviewees described them as student-centred practices and emphasised the need to activate their students in the learning process. The interviewees felt that the PDT had enabled them to develop attitudes, knowledge and skills to apply activating pedagogical practices that would facilitate student learning and engagement in their studies. They mentioned different practices in the interviews, for example developing interactive lectures, maintaining open communication and feedback, and incorporating students' expectations and previous knowledge in the course design. A quote from one interviewee demonstrates this perspective:

> In the past we didn't consider the students at all.... The teacher is dominant and gives lots of information to the students . . . and we don't allow students to communicate or give feedback . . .. We should engage students. I think this is very important (Interviewee 1).

Another interviewee felt that students' active participation in their own learning processes was an important aspect of developing the knowledge and expertise necessary in their later working lives:

> We need to increase teachers' awareness of novel ways to enable them to engage students . . .. This in turn will contribute to the development of students' practical and professional capabilities (Interviewee 5).

Most interviewees referred to pedagogical development as a process of *improving the teaching practices* of university teachers. The interviewees described numerous ways in which the PDT had introduced new pedagogical perspectives and new teaching methods, tools and assessment practices, all of which helped them improve their work as university teachers. As exemplified in the quote below, they perceived the adoption of new practices as a way of overcoming those challenges that university teachers encounter in their daily teaching situations, such as high teaching loads, large student numbers and low student participation in classes.

> One of the pedagogical-development goals is to develop university teachers so that they become more innovative and have the ability to devise modern pedagogical methods and strategies that can help to solve the problems that confront them continuously (Interviewee 5).

The interviewees saw the sudden shift to teaching online due to the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the most difficult challenges they had faced in their recent teaching. One interviewee spoke of online teaching during COVID-19 in relation to the PDT programme:

> The FinPal programme was helpful to me in developing . . . a plan for distance education with the whole department . . .. We actually received the FinPal pedagogical training as distance training . . .. [which] made me understand the meaning of distance education, how I could get involved in remote learning, and how I could do a complete, comprehensive plan for each course based on distance learning (Interviewee 5).

Another recurring theme in the interviews was the description of pedagogical development as an *activity of the community*, i.e. a joint endeavour to improve HE. The interviewees pointed out that PDT enabled them to learn from their colleagues and to exchange pedagogical ideas and practices with university teachers from other faculties and universities. They described a few examples of knowledge exchange they had experienced when forming a team of teachers to develop a new course in their department, or a new assessment method using role-playing.

As Interviewee 2 explains in the quote below, the community of university teachers plays an important role in the pedagogical development of individual teachers; mentoring others in PDT also improves one's own pedagogical expertise and teaching practices.

> A significant point I acquired during the FinPal project is the fact that my colleagues are also an important part of my own development. I can't do it alone. If I want to achieve my goals, I have to work in an environment that encourages the students, that encourages the teachers themselves to develop and look forward for better outcomes (Interviewee 2).

The fourth main theme to emerge in the interviews was that pedagogical development should be an *institutionalised process* in terms of providing facilities, resources and continuous support to university teachers to develop their teaching. The interviewees implied that HEIs must develop a systematic and organised approach to pedagogical-development processes. They also saw continuity as an important aspect of pedagogical development:

> An important issue is that we can't say, "That's it, I've achieved everything; I'm now the perfect university teacher", because [pedagogical development] is a non-stop process; it's a kind of circular progressive process (Interviewee 2).

The interviewees spoke about several educational-development initiatives they had previously participated in, but they deemed that these initiatives had failed to deliver the planned goals because they were short, fragmented and lacking in institutional support. Interviewee 4 described these fragmented initiatives:

> In our country, I think that the pedagogical development of university teacher depends on unorganised steps. Many times I feel that this development is arbitrary . . .. I hope that this project [FinPal] has the output to be an institutional [model].

5. Discussion
The quantitative findings indicate that the university teachers enjoyed high levels of efficacy beliefs, yet their teaching approaches still hovered around teachers rather than students, and they perceived their culture as individualistic. The analysis of survey responses before and after the training yielded a non-significant difference, thus indicating inconclusive evidence of the training effect. Apart from the fact that the teachers' efficacy beliefs were already high before the training (thus offering limited potential for improvement), several possibilities could explain the lack of significant difference in the concepts measured after the training.

First, the different measurement contexts could have affected the teachers' responses. After-training measurements were administered to university teachers during the early days of COVID-19, when they had experienced an abrupt shift to online teaching. Most teachers lack experience in online teaching, and they suddenly had to turn from their usual accustomed practices to beginning online teaching. This situation recalls findings from a previous study (Korhonen and Törmä, 2016) on the development cycles of university teachers, where the first step in the developmental stages is to embrace teacher-centredness. In this stage, the teachers' main focus is to preserve control and act for the sake of their students. Empowering students to act for themselves and to control their own learning only arrives in later stages of teachers' expertise development. The lack of studies of teaching approaches in the Palestinian context reflects the fact that university teachers there might have had to ponder their identity as online teachers for the first time. The novelty of the context that teachers experience thus might start their journey towards becoming mature university teachers (Ödalen *et al.*, 2019).

We acknowledge that considerable discussions in the literature have focused on why pedagogical-intervention effects may come later and not necessarily immediately after

training (Postareff *et al.,* 2007). For example, McAleavy *et al.* (2018) state that "professional learning and change takes time to embed" (p. 11), and what happens during the professional learning experience is crucial for long-term change. Postareff *et al.* (2007) indicate that fundamental approaches to teaching are hard to change with a short-term perspective. Teachers need time not just to elaborate on the concepts they have learnt but also to practice them and develop as a result of everyday workplace learning (Knight *et al.,* 2006).

One notable finding to emerge from the present study is the relationship between the two dimensions of the ATI. As Table 2 shows, we noted a moderate positive relationship between student- and teacher-centred teaching approaches. Approaches to teaching as a concept appear not to be perceived in the Eastern and Middle East contexts as they are in the Western context. A review of the literature shows a negative low correlation between the two constructs in Western studies, such as that by Lindblom-Ylänne *et al.* (2006), and a positive correlation in Eastern contexts such as China (Han *et al.,* 2015) and Malaysia (Goh *et al.,* 2014). Understanding these differing conceptualisations of teaching and learning is particularly important in developing transnational pedagogical collaborations.

The interview results offer a way to investigate the perceived effects of PDTs in parallel to the concepts measured in this study. The results yielded four main themes. Pedagogical development oriented towards student engagement represents the first theme. Instead of transmitting knowledge, teachers reflected on practices that stimulate students' thinking and guide their learning processes through facilitating feedback and active participation in the classroom. Promoting student engagement is one of PDTs' key elements that contributes to high-quality teaching and learning (Vilppu *et al.,* 2019).

The second theme spotlighted teachers' experiences of pedagogical development as a way to improve their own teaching practices and a catalyst for adapting changes in uncertain times. In transnational PDTs, teachers discuss topics that they may not have experienced before. This situation has helped teachers to widen the boundaries of their existing theories of practice (Vermunt and Endedijk, 2011) and to expand their adaptive expertise (Ericsson, 2014; Macnamara *et al.,* 2014). One recent study (McCune, 2018) showed that although lack of time is one barrier to developing teaching, in pressured contexts, HE teachers dedicate more time to reflect on their practices and develop their teaching.

Pedagogical development as a collegial and community-oriented activity emerged as the third theme. This theme resembles the notion of communities of practice where teachers share experiences, discuss teaching matters with colleagues and learn from each other. This finding adds to the growing body of studies that have shown the positive impact of teacher collegiality in professional growth and development. For instance, in a recent study on what contributes to experienced academics' pedagogical development in HE, McCune (2018) found that collegial conversation was one of the three focal areas to emerge from the data. More recently, Myllykoski-Laine *et al.* (2022) reported that the lack of collegiality was perceived as being negative to university teachers' pedagogical development and establishing a culture of sharing is crucial and recommended.

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the interview data was pedagogical development as an institutionalised process. This was an expected finding, since long-standing research into PDTs has highlighted the need for institutional support to embrace teachers' developmental efforts (Chakraborty and Biswas, 2020). For instance, Timperley (2008) showed that teacher development depends heavily on the organisational conditions that nurture professional learning and self-regulated inquiry. Myllykoski-Laine *et al.* (2022) asserted that academic development should be encapsulated in institutional norms, structures and discourses. McCune (2018) accentuated the institutional role in embracing collaboration and allowing time and resources that promotes development and not rely only on teachers' initiative themselves.

When integrating the results from the questionnaire and the interview together, one will notice a few contradictory aspects regarding the teaching approach and perceived culture. For instance, teachers' scores in the questionnaire showed the dominance of teacher-centredness, whereas a focus on student-centredness showed in the qualitative data. According to the questionnaire data, teachers perceived their prevailing work culture as individualistic, while they pointed towards collegiality in the qualitative data. One possible explanation for this scenario could be that teachers often experience friction between how they teach and how they want or expect to teach. In the interviews, teachers seemed to reflect on the optimal goal, or how things should be, and not necessarily on what they believed in and acted on in practice. As an example, the following quotes reflect the interviewees' aspirations towards activating students in learning: "We *should* engage students", "We *need to* increase teachers" awareness of novel ways to enable them to engage students' and "If I *want to* achieve my goals, I *have to* work in an environment that encourages the students" (emphasis added). According to Vermunt and Endedijk's (2011) theory on how teachers learn, those who experience contradictions between expectations and actual practices often endorse problematic learning patterns. This approach is not completely undesirable, as it may indicate that "teachers are actually attempting change and challenging their existing beliefs but are still struggling with developing productive new views and teaching practices" (Vermunt *et al.*, 2019, p. 64).

Another explanation might be related to the nature of experiences narrated by those interviewees who had particularly engaged in longer pedagogical-development processes and acted as trainees and later as trainers according to the PDT plan. As Schmidt *et al.* (2016) indicate, teachers teach as they were taught at the beginning of their expertise development. The interviewees highlighted that being involved in the online PDT had helped them to flexibly adapt their teaching to cope with the ongoing COVID-19 situation. That outlook might reflect why teachers particularly emphasised student-centredness and collegial culture in the interviews.

5.1 Implications

The findings have a number of important implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, the study adds to the literature by revealing that the relation between the dimensions in the ATI inventory is culturally dependent. Practically, the findings suggest that direct and rapid effects are not usually achieved with such kinds of PDTs, and the current results of the quantitative part indicate this in line with previous studies (Postareff *et al.,* 2007). However, broader changes take place more as teachers gradually start to develop their thinking and practices in their communities and this always takes longer time to occur (McAleavy *et al.*, 2018; McCune, 2018). The qualitative interview results demonstrate better this kind of change in thinking, as the themes that emerged in the results mimics the goals of the whole pedagogical training programme. Interestingly, the current qualitative results to some extent echo the four major themes for professional development reported by Hicks *et al.* (2010): (1) embedding a student-centred approach, (2) facilitating the scholarship of teaching, (3) initiating and building up networks and relationships and (4) introducing staff to institutional policies. That said, the transnational PDT at hand appears in line with scholarly efforts aimed to define the bold lines of any pedagogical-developmental initiative. The role of university administration is, thus, to offer helping hands to sustain such change and push it forward (Myllykoski-Laine *et al.*, 2022). For example, university pedagogy centres may offer continuous consultation services for teachers to develop their teaching practices. Continuation in the offered support and making it structured, as indicated by the current results, is crucial to foster university teachers' professional development and is seen as a way to help teachers in their change process. Moreover, such institutional support should aim at developing not only the individual but also the community-level expertise.

The current findings suggest that transnational PDT initiatives are to be promoted amidst these uncertain times (Pandya *et al.*, 2022). Even though the focus of the study was not to explore the teachers' perceptions of teaching development during the pandemic, the current findings imply that the mentioned PDT helped teachers in tailoring their pedagogical practices to suit the unexpected online teaching settings. One highly rated item in the PDT's self-assessment, "Training has made me more eager to develop my teaching", suggests that transnational PDTs might be seen as an eye-opening experience to teachers as it offer opportunities for teachers to reflect upon their pedagogical practices, challenge their understanding, trigger their curiosity to think about pedagogies other than those they are familiar with and pave the way to delving into various inquiry processes. Transnational PDTs provide spaces for teachers to learn that "teaching skills, like athletic skills, can always be improved or at *least better tuned to the situation*" (Kugel, 1993, p. 327, emphasis added).

5.2 Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, the design of the current research may have limited our potential to deeply investigate the effect of the PDT, as only snapshots of the teachers' perceptions were elicited. Future studies might consider a within-subject longitudinal design to thoroughly follow teachers' trajectories in learning and development over time. The selection of interviewees could also be linked to the results of quantitative analysis in similar studies to better examine the development of teachers with different teaching perceptions during pedagogical trainings and interventions. In addition, as Kane *et al.* (2002, p. 177) argue, research that examines "only what university teachers say about their practice and does not directly observe what they do is at risk of telling half the story". Peer observation thus could be utilised as a tool in future studies to examine the effect of PDT. Finally, future work could consider applying Vermunt's (2019) learning pattern inventory to further examine whether teachers who participate in PDTs experience problematic learning patterns; efforts should also be made to help such teachers to move smoothly to a student-centred teaching approach.

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