Original Article

Faculty Members' Experiences of Empowerment Programs in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences - A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background & Objective: Implementing faculty empowerment programs is an important strategy to make a change in the higher education system. This study aimed to identify and explain the faculty members' experiences of educational empowerment programs held at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

Materials & Methods: This was a qualitative study performed with the conventional content analysis method and by using the Graneheim and Lundman approach for data analysis. Data were collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The statistical population included the faculty of clinical and basic sciences. Data were collected from 29 interviews with 26 faculty members attending academic skills courses, who were willing to share their experiences in this regard.

Results: The interviews were classified in more than 276 open codes, 55 subclasses, four classes, and two main classes. According to the results, the main classes had themes of "individual factors" and "organizational factors". In addition, the theme of individual factors was divided into two categories of motivational and inhibitory factors while the theme of organizational factors was classified into two categories of structural and process factors.

Conclusion: By correcting the inhibitory factors (individual, environmental, process and organizational) and eliminating barriers through involving faculty members in the courses and using their opinions, academic skills course planners and managers could improve these programs.

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Introduction

Human resources have a special place in any organization and are considered its main capital. Faculty members are the main human resources of universities and academic centers, and they have a much higher position because the key specialized activities are performed by these individuals and attention to them means attention to human resources in higher education centers and universities (1). Faculty members' ability is one of the important factors for maintaining the quality of services and products of a university. In fact, teachers with high skill levels are the core of the quality of services provided by higher education institutions (2). As valuable community assets, faculty members play a very important and sensitive role in training specialized manpower (3). Therefore, universities and higher education centers have turned to using various strategies and arrangements to increase quality and responding to these issues. In this regard, faculty development programs are among the novel strategies applied in many countries in the past few decades to maintain and improve faculty members' knowledge and performance (4). By doing so, the proper foundation can be laid for transformation in the educational system in addition to improving the scientific ability of faculty members to perform their job duties in various fields of education, research,

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treatment and executing executive-managerial activities (5). Despite the importance of maturity of faculty members at the global level, studies performed in the country have shown the unfavorable status of programs and activities related to this area. In fact, faculties' maturity has been reported at a medium-to-low level, which demonstrates the existence of some challenges and barriers in this respect (6). Meanwhile, human resources development and empowerment, especially the faculty of universities and higher education institutions, are among the priorities of higher education (7). It seems that assessing these challenges is one of the most important issues that could provide the proper feedback related to fundamental decision-making in the field of faculty maturity, analysis of educational, research and service issues and lay the foundation for strategic and comprehensive program designing in the field of higher education.

Given the transformations in the field of medical sciences, there is a need for attention to the improvement of the quality of this area (8). According to previous studies, teacher empowerment programs must be designed based on solutions that could improve their individual and communication skills by empowering organizations (9). Learning about faculties' experiences and opinions is the most important step toward designing and planning educational courses. Both the needs of faculty members and their educational issues can be specified through their assessment in these courses. In addition, the effectiveness and efficiency of these courses can be assessed to prevent waste of resources and increase abilities and update the scientific and skill-related information of these individuals. Holding short-term courses and educational workshops is one of the most common strategies in this area (10). In a study performed in Mashhad University of Medical Sciences to evaluate the effect of faculty empowerment courses on their satisfaction and knowledge levels related to teaching and evaluation skills, teachers had different levels of satisfaction depending on the type of workshop. In the end, it was recommended that stronger studies be conducted to determine the experiences of participants due to the limitations of quantitative studies (11). Tabriz Medical Education Research and Development Center has conducted several surveys using a questionnaire to evaluate faculty empowerment workshops. Similar to some quantitative studies, however, it has dealt with some problems such as incomplete forms or inaccuracy in the completion of questionnaires (12), in a way that the final results lacked the necessary efficiency for improving the mentioned workshops.

In addition, assessments made about the courses held were only in the form of satisfaction surveys and the total mean satisfaction with academic skills workshops (the first four rounds) was reported to be very favorable (78.22±15.08). Regarding the latest courses, no considerable evaluation has been carried out, and with regard to the documents existing in the medical education department (absence list and evaluation checklist) and verbal feedback of participants to the medical education department, participants in recent academic skills courses lacked a significant motivation or acceptance to attend these courses. Therefore, the present study aimed to explain the perception of faculty members of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences about empowerment workshops of the Center for Medical Education Studies in order to improve the process of these programs.

Materials and Methods

This was a qualitative study performed with a conventional content analysis method and by using the Graneheim and Lundman approach for data analysis (13). The exploratory nature of the present study made the use of a qualitative study inevitable. Data were collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews since the discussion and the topic can be guided in order to achieve the research goals in

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addition to exchanging information in this regard. The research population included faculty members of Tabriz Universities of Medical Sciences who had previously attended academic skills courses of the university during 2015-2019. Subjects were selected by purposive sampling and theoretical saturation was used for determining the sample size based on the repetitive results of interviews and lack of achieving new information. The inclusion criterion was the individuals' willingness to share their experiences about the courses. To achieve more diversity in data, attempts were made to choose the participants with maximum diversity in variables such as service location, educational department, gender, work experience and scientific rank. After choosing the subjects and contacting them through phone calls, the necessary arrangements were for their in-person visit in order to explain research objectives and methods and obtain informed consent. In addition, participation in the research was voluntary. The time and location of the interviews were determined based on the opinion of participants and data collection was carried out by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews. With regard to the main question of the research, the interview continued with some open questions, such as: "what is your motivation and goal for attending the academic skills course?", "could you please share your experience of attending the course and explain how your educational activities have been beneficial as a faculty member?". The next questions arose exploratively to continue the interview based on the type of response of the participants and access to richer data to complete the classes. The mean duration of interviews was 60-90 minutes depending on the subjects' desire and environmental conditions. In order to use all content presented during interviews, the content of the interviews was recorded using an MP3 device (with the permission of the subjects) and the interviews were transcribed verbatim in the end. In total, each subject was interviewed once or twice, and this variability was due to limited time or unexpected work of the participants. In total, 29 interviews were made with 26 individuals. The data collection process continued until reaching data saturation. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table1: The characteristics of the study participants

Participants	Gender	Specialty	Educational group	Academic Rank	Job experience(year)
1	Female	Pharmacology	Basic science	Associate Professor	11
2	Female	Medicine	Basic science	Assistant Professor	7
3	Female	Pharmacology	Basic science	Assistant Professor	6
4	Male	Medicine	Basic science	Associate Professor	20
5	Female	Medicine	Clinical science	Associate Professor	18
6	Male	Nursing	Clinical science	Assistant Professor	6
7	Male	Nursing	Clinical science	Associate Professor	12
8	Female	Nursing	Clinical science	Assistant Professor	8
9	Female	Dentistry	Basic science	Associate Professor	6
10	Male	Nutrition	Clinical science	Associate Professor	14
11	Female	Dentistry	Basic science	Assistant Professor	8
12	Male	Health information Management	Basic science	Assistant Professor	5
13	Female	Rehabilitation	Basic science	Associate Professor	10
14	Female	Pharmacology	Basic science	Assistant Professor	25
15	Male	Librarianship	Basic science	Assistant Professor	7
16	Female	Rehabilitation	Basic science	Assistant Professor	8

The validity of the data was assessed using the verification method and the review technique by the participants and the approval of the professors of the research team. In addition, the constant Comparative Analysis (CCA) strategy was used to validate the results. The researcher ensured the accuracy, consistency, stability, significance and verifiability of the research model and findings by asking frequent questions and moving back and forth between coding stages.

For data transferability, we used the researcher's self-reflection in their work (reflective statement). Moreover, data were collected from different people of various fields (triangulation) to ensure the trustworthiness of a part of the data. Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis method. In fact, the following steps are taken in qualitative data analysis: 1) familiarity with data, 2) creating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) preparing reports. In addition, the entire text of each interview provided on paper was read by the researcher several times in a way that they relatively mastered the interviews and learned about the concepts and meanings hidden in texts of interviews. Afterwards, the initial codes were identified manually and by reviewing the interviews. The process continued until identifying the codes neglected in primary stages. Following that, the relevant codes and semantic units were classified into one category. At this stage, the researcher categorized the codes that referred to a common theme and classified them into a category. In the next stage, the researcher re-reviewed the different classes by examining the dimensions, features and differences and similarities between the extracted classes, which were semantically similar in nature, and gave the appropriate name to the classes, which is known as the theme. In fact, the researcher defined a specific and comprehensive name for a class based on the common meanings that existed between the codes. Ultimately, the conceptual framework of the research was drawn based on the identified themes. The themes, categories and subcategories of experiences of faculty members related to the quality of empowerment programs are presented in Table 2.

Table2: The themes, categories and subcategories of experiences of faculty members related to the quality of empowerment programs

Theme	Categories	Subcategories
Individual factors	Motivational factors	The feeling of need and necessity in the course to become a good instructor
		Meeting professional and educational needs
		Improving the quality of educational activities
		Personal interests
		The effect of the course on improving some classroom management skills
		Improving the previous knowledge in educational planning
		Improving question design skills
		The effect of course on speech skills
	Inhibitory factors	Less willingness to participate in the course due to short of time
		Interaction of course training programs with current program and activities of participants
		Failure to meet some individual educational needs
		Feeling less personal interests by participating in workshops on academic skills compared to the research skills course.
		Feeling that the course is futile for some learners because of participation in similar workshops

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Continue of Table2: The themes, categories and subcategories of experiences of faculty members related to the quality of empowerment programs

Organizational factors	Structural factors	Adequacy of course executive facilities
		Inadequacy of course duration
		Inadequacy of course time
		Paying little attention to new educational topics
		Less attention to learners' educational needs in course design
		Holding courses as workshops and presenting practical solutions in the training course
		Repetitiveness of most of the material presented
		The need to specialize the course tailored to the educational needs of different educational departments
		Insufficient payment to student management discussions
		The necessity of benefiting from the opinions of expert professors in planning the academic skills course
		Inadequate use of new educational technologies
		Inadequate use of modern educational methods
		Use of prominent professors to teach the course
		Integration of the training program of academic skills into the curriculum of specialized courses
		Holding the course in the continued training program
	Process factors	The need for participation in the course for the raise of the ranking
		The need for participation in the course to change the employment status
		The need to pay tuition fees to participate in the course
		Holding the course in a mixed manner rather than merely in person or unattended
		Insufficient information about training courses
		Students' lack of personal interest in using educational methods in the course
		Higher organizational value for research activities compared to the educational activities
		Comprehensive course evaluation
		Overcoming the burden of treatment on education in educational activities of faculty members

Results

The qualitative analysis of 29 interviews made with 26 faculty members participating in academic skills courses led to the extraction of 276 open codes, which reduced to 156 codes as the analysis progressed with continuous comparisons. In the end, there were 55 subclasses, four classes and two main classes.

Motivational Factors

The need to participate in a course to become a good teacher and responding to the educational and professional needs were the classes evolved in the motivational factors. In fact, a number of faculty members felt the need to participate in such courses in order to become a great teacher. In this regard, a faculty member stated: “a graduate might be a good specialist in their field but is not necessarily a good teacher. Empowerment is required for efficient teaching.” (Participant 2)

Faculty members expressed personal interests and the need to improve the quality of their educational activities as motivational factors. In this respect, a faculty member of pharmacy school expressed: “I felt a need for such courses and believe that I have to improve the quality of my training activities.” (Participant 3)

The effect of the course on the improvement of some class management skills was identified as another motivational factor. According to some faculty members, the course helped them employ

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some class management skills, such as how to control the improper behaviors of students in class, how to deal with students with a wide range of behaviors and how to increase their interest in the class. In this regard, a faculty member of pharmacy school declared: "one of the problems a teacher has in the classroom is how to manage student behavior, including how to manage the exam session and how to prevent cheating. We learned some tips during these courses." (Participant 3)

Teachers who previously participated in similar workshops found this course useful for reinforcing their previous knowledge of how to design questions and lecturing skills. In this respect, a faculty member of the school of medicine mentioned: "these classes reinforced my knowledge earned from previous courses." (Participant 4)

Regarding the effectiveness of the course on question design, a faculty member of rehabilitation school affirmed: "one of the benefits of this course was that I understood the principles of designing a test and became familiar with designing a variety of questions." (Participant 13)

Inhibitory Factors

In this study, inhibitory factors emerged with subcategories of less desire to participate in the course due to time constraints, interference of course training programs with current programs and activities of the participants, failure to meet some individual training needs, and ineffectiveness of the course for some learners due to participating in similar workshops. In this regard, a faculty member of nursing and midwifery school mentioned: "it was a challenge for faculty members to participate in these courses due to their simultaneous delivery with their own educational classes in the school. I was witness to their calls (during the course) from workplace, school or class announcing their inability to participate in the program." (Participant 6)

According to the participants, the lack of needs assessment before the course and the lack of opportunities for Q&As during the training sessions prevented the courses from meeting some of their training needs. One of the faculty members of the school of nutrition expressed: "theyfailed to cover the topics I needed. They had to make a needs assessment and prioritize our problems." (Participant 10)

Organizational Factors

Organizational factors were the second main theme derived from the experiences of the faculty members, which were divided into two categories of structural and process factors.

Structural Factors

The improper time of the course due to interference with the educational programs of the teachers and the long duration of the course were among the structural factors proposed by the participants. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of medicine declared: "it was better to hold the course in the form of an accelerated one (two-three sessions per week for two months). However, the course was held once a week for six months, which was not ideal." (Participant 4)

Inadequate attention to new educational topics and less attention to the educational needs of learners, academic discussion in the field of educational activities, ethical issues and conflicts between educational groups were structural factors mentioned by faculty members. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of pharmacy stated: "discussions should be made academically and based on new findings and articles. We must also have complicated discussions such as teaching methodology and group dynamics." (Participant 1)

A number of faculty members pointed out the theoretical nature of most discussions, lack of holding courses in the standard workshop form, lack of addressing teaching challenges and providing practical solutions to these challenges instead of lectures, duplication of some content and lack of designing specialized courses tailored to the educational needs of different groups and lack of distinction between clinical groups and base groups. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of

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pharmacy affirmed: "if I were to hold a course for faculty members, I would not present topics in the form of lectures. In fact, I would hold workshops by forming small groups so that the participants' learning could be improved by practical work." (Participant 1)

Insufficient attention to the issues of student classroom management, failure to provide solutions to deal with irregularities in the classroom, inability to conduct the scientific evaluation of students due to issues such as a large number of students in a class, insufficient time, low number of faculty members and insufficient motivation were among the issues mentioned by the subjects. In this respect, a faculty member of the school of rehabilitation marked: "students use their cellphones in the classroom and there is nothing we can do about it. Our main problem was to prevent them from doing so in any way possible, which did not happen." (Participant 13)

The need to benefit from the opinions of expert teachers in planning the course, the use of prominent professors to teach in the course, insufficient use of new educational technologies and new teaching methods were discussed as structural factors. In this respect, a faculty member of the school of medicine asserted: "we need to use teachers who are experts in education (i.e., their bias is education) should be used in course design." (Participant 2)

According to the participants, the integration of the university skills training program in the curriculum of specific courses and holding the course in the form of a continuing education program to facilitate participation in the course and solve many issues and problems were among the issues in this field. A faculty member of the school of medicine claimed: "it is better to include university skills as a credit in supplementary courses." (Participant 2)

Most participants were satisfied with issues such as the location of the course (due to easy access) and the training environment (in terms of appropriate educational facilities) as well as the good reception and implementation of the course in accordance with the program. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of medicine expressed: "one of the advantages of the course was its logistics and support. In addition, the reception was good, and the environment was suitable in terms of educational facilities." (Participant 4)

Process Factors

Regarding the necessity of these courses, most of the participants considered the compulsion and urgency to attain the conditions for promotion and conversion of employment status as the factor of participating in the course. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of pharmacy stated: "we received a letter from the automation, saying that we had to participate in the course to upgrade our certificate." (Participant 1)

According to the subjects, obtaining tuition was a negative point, and the inappropriate tuition payment method was recognized as degradation of education by these individuals. In this respect, a faculty member of the school of pharmacy argued: "a big problem was the cost of the courses. If the course has a certain cost, I have to be able to decide whether I need to participate in it or not. If the authorities determine this need, they have to pay the cost of the courses themselves." (Participant 14)

Participants acknowledged that the virtual courses lacked sufficient efficiency, proposing that classes be held in person to be more effective. Presenting homework in cyberspace was one of the reasons for faculty members' preferences to attend blended learning. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of medicine asserted: "virtual classes are not sufficient and must be held along with in-person workshops, where teamwork occurs. In fact, only a part of the assignments must be electronic." (Participant 6)

Participants mentioned lack of motivation, insufficient information about training courses and the inability to use some teaching methods due to cultural backgrounds in some students as important process factors. In this respect, a faculty member of

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the school of medicine marked: "information provision about the courses is unfavorable. If faculty members know that educational assessments affect their promotion, they will heed more attention to this area." (Participant 2)

Another important factor was the organization's greater appreciation of research activities, compared to educational activities. In this respect, a faculty member of the school of nursing and midwifery stated: "it is argued that education is overshadowed by research, and research has had a much more emphasized role in promotion, compared to education." (Participant 8)

In the comprehensive assessment of the course, the faculty members mentioned issues such as the need to review the educational outcomes of participants in evaluating educational activities after the course, the necessity of providing the proper foundation for accurate evaluation, the need for formative evaluation instead of cumulative evaluation, and lack of an educational failure tracking system. In this regard, a faculty member of the school of pharmacy marked: "in order to examine the educational outcomes, we must evaluate the student to have a correct evaluation of the educational activities of the teachers." (Participant 3)

The dominance of therapeutic activities over education in the activities of faculty members was another process factor. A faculty member of the school of nursing and midwifery affirmed: "doctors who work in the clinic are forced to attend training courses because they do not have sufficient time." (Participant 7)

Table 4. The theme of organizational factors of faculty members' experience of empowerment programs

Discussion

One of the results of the present study was a greater appreciation of research activities in an organization, compared to educational activities, which has reduced the participation of faculty members in educational activities and decreased faculty empowerment. Most faculty members referred to issues such as prioritization of the role of research in the promotion of faculty members compared to the educational role of these individuals, more emphasis on research activities in the teacher evaluation system, induction of higher importance of research compared to educating young faculty members, lack of valuation of research activities by the authorities in comparison with research, lack of giving points to educational activities, and dependence of greater success on the improvement of research activities. Meanwhile, one of the key responsibilities of faculty members is to train and educate others, and providing quality education requires the attention of academic centers' managers to the quality of faculty members' educational activities. In fact, this attention must be felt by the faculty members and increase their motivation to appreciate and participate in educational activities. In a study by Movahedi et al. (2011), there was a negative relationship between scientific rank and the teaching quality of faculty members. However, they reported a positive significant association between the scientific rank and research performance of faculty members (14). In a study by Marsh (1987), there was a conflict between teaching and research in terms of time allocation, motivation and reward (15). In the present research, motivational factors were also recognized as factors involved in the faculty members' participation in academic skills courses. According to the experiences of the participants, the most important factor in the participation of faculty members in empowerment programs was to become a good teacher by meeting educational and professional needs and improving the quality of educational activities. In a study, Sayyah Baragar and Ahmadi (2017) showed that the concept of job enrichment was a motivating factor for teachers to participate in faculty empowerment programs. In fact, job enrichment is a sense of satisfaction and usefulness in doing the task (16). Another

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motivational factor was the positive effect of the course on the improvement of some skills of teaching, educational planning, question design and lecturing. Choosing the appropriate class management and organization technique is a sign of teaching success. Studies show that class management is one of the most time-consuming professional activities of teachers. When more class time is spent on disciplinary issues, there is practically less time left to teach lessons (17).

In this study, the subjects regarded the courses as a necessity for improving their managerial skills. Gaining the skills of designing written exams was among the subjects' motivational factors for participation in the courses. Shakoornia (2016) performed a research in Ahvaz University of Medical Sciences, reporting the inadequate skills of teachers to develop exams. According to this scholar, teachers often measured simple concepts of the lesson to measure their academic achievement. In addition, questions were vague in most cases. Therefore, attaining the skills required for designing appropriate exams is a necessity of the teaching profession (18). The analysis of the subjects' experiences revealed their insufficient time for attending educational or research courses due to being extremely busy in the school or hospital. However, they prefer to give this time to research-related programs due to their personal interests, such as promotion of academic rank and improvement of financial benefits. In a study, Asayesh et al. (2011) aimed to determine the factors affecting the faculty members' educational and research activities at Golestan University of Medical Sciences. In the end, the results showed that motivational factors, such as improvement of scientific rank, increased the faculty members' attention to point-earning activities (e.g., research tasks), which, along with having executive responsibilities, reduce the time for teaching activities (19).

According to the results of the present study, one of the weaknesses of the course was the lack of updating the content presented in the course. In addition, duplication and high similarity of contents, overlap and lack of coordination of content presented by course instructors led to the dissatisfaction of the subjects with the course. In the research by Sayyah Baragar (2017), the topics of the teacher empowerment programs were often outdated and there was no innovation in the content presented (16). One of the structural factors developed in this study was low attention to the educational needs of learners in designing academic skills courses. Research shows that one of the most basic stages of educational planning is setting goals and priorities based on the needs of learners (20). One of the faculty members' recommendations about the structure of the course was holding the course in the form of a workshop to present practical solutions by group work and focusing on teaching challenges. The improper use of the workshop method discourages faculty members from participating in the course. In a study by Kumagai (2007), using the technique of discussion in small groups increased people's attitudes toward empowerment workshops (21). Moreover, the majority of participants mentioned that poor coordination related to the time of the programs caused by interference of the training program with the current programs of the participants was one of the problems of the course. This lack of coordination prevented the faculty members from attending course sessions with peace of mind.

According to the results of the present study, one of the inhibitory factors was the lack of usefulness of the course due to the similarity of the course's content with similar workshops. Moreover, inattention to the professional needs of teachers and duplication of the content presented in the course led to the faculty members' waste of time and boredom. Another challenge mentioned in the current research was the improper time of the course both in terms of holding time and duration of the course. Some of the subjects recommended holding the course in summer

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due to the faculty members' more free time. In addition, some of them considered holding the course upon recruitment and during the assistant professor stage because teachers have more time for attending courses during the period. According to the subjects, six months was a long period for such a course and they preferred accelerated courses (a few sessions a week for a shorter period). Most participants emphasized the necessity of specialization of courses based on the educational needs of various departments. Sayyah Baragar (2017) also emphasized the flexibility of courses tailored to the circumstances of the participants, attention to various levels of audiences, and specialization of educational courses and efficiency of topics (16). Insufficient use of new educational technologies was identified as another weakness of the courses. In this regard, the participants complained about holding the classes in the form of lectures and not using other educational technologies, such as displaying movies or even introducing free apps. In addition, they referred to the use of novel educational techniques, such as participatory training, educational activities in the form of role-playing or educational activities in the form of small groups. According to Richard Titer (2009), problem solving-based techniques and small groups were effective strategies used in teacher empowerment workshops (22). In another study performed at the level of medical universities of the country, the need to teach new training methods was the first priority in the field of education, which is in line with our findings (23).

To facilitate the course, the participants suggested the integration of a university skills training program in the content of courses, their own specialized courses, or even a continuing education program, so that people would be more willing to participate in and pay for the courses to earn retraining points. One of the process factors that led to the dissatisfaction of faculty members was the obligation to participate in the course due to the necessity of this condition in promotion and employment. This issue was so unpleasant that it even prevented faculty members from active participation in the course. In addition, the compulsion to pay tuition was a negative point in this regard. According to the participants, if university officials consider passing the course a prerequisite for the promotion of faculty members, they should not be charged for it. In fact, universities must pay for the faculty members' training if they want to invest in their human resources. Moreover, the tuition payment method was another negative experience in empowerment courses. In fact, the subjects declared that the certificate presentation method did not match the tuition payment form of the course and the whole process was degrading. According to the participants, insufficient information about the training courses was one of the negative experiences in the program, elimination of which could lead to greater participation in educational activities in the future. In this regard, it is recommended that proper information methods (e.g., virtual media) be used to optimize this aspect of educational programs.

The comprehensive assessment of the course was another process factor, attention to which can increase the quality of academic courses. According to the participants, objective indicators should be defined for educational activities, according to which assessment could be made throughout a year (developmental evaluation instead of cumulative evaluation). In addition, the results should be provided in a quantitative form and follow-ups should be made to eliminate any possible weakness. Moreover, the proper foundation must be laid for assessment, and the educational activities of the participants must be evaluated as an accomplishment at the end of the course. According to Ahmadi et al. (2017), evaluation is an integral part of the education system, and evaluation related to education is defined as the process of judging aspects of pervasive behavior and includes skills that could help determine whether learners have achieved the specified goals or not (24). The subjects mentioned

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that using the opinions of students, especially the elite, as the receptors of educational services could improve the quality of educational assessment. In a study by Blum (2004), the participation of learners in the planning and teaching-learning process was an effective factor, which was mentioned in many other studies as well (25).

Another process factor that decreased faculty members' participation in educational activities was the prioritization of their therapeutic role over their educational role during educational activities. The majority of faculty members mentioned the large volume of medical activities and the important factor of lack of time and leisure as a deterrent to educational activities. In another study, it was declared that the lack of serious involvement of clinical education departments in medical training topics was caused by spending a large amount of time in the treatment section, which is congruent with our findings (26).

Conclusion

Since the main goal and mission of academic skills courses is to respond to and improve the abilities of faculty members in terms of better performance of educational activities, attention to individual and organizational motivational factors, such as improving the quality of courses, meeting the educational and professional needs of people based on needs assessment, and creating financial and spiritual motivation could encourage faculty members to participate in educational activities and programs. It is recommended that measures be taken by academic skills course planners and managers, such as correcting inhibitory factors (individual, environmental, process and organizational) and eliminating barriers to the participation of faculty members, using solutions proposed by these individuals (e.g., improving the content of the course), holding part-time courses, paying attention to different levels of the audience and specialization of the course, updating the content and topics of the course, using proper educational techniques, such as working in small groups, displaying movies, using participatory training and assessing the courses, to improve the efficiency of empowerment programs.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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