International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2019, Volume 31, Number 3, 390-401
http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/ ISSN 1812-9129

Examining Teaching Approaches, Academic Culture, and Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Instructors at a Palestinian University

Pauliina Alenius, Tahani Z. Aldahdouh, Vesna Holubek
Jyri Lindén, and Vesa Korhonen
Tampere University

Nazmi Al-Masri, and Alyan El-Holy
Islamic University of Gaza

Only a few studies have examined work cultures, teaching approaches and self-efficacy beliefs of academic teachers outside Europe, North America, and Asia. This mixed-method study investigated the following research questions: 1) What kinds of approaches to teaching and self-efficacy beliefs can be identified among academics in the selected Palestinian university?, 2) Are there disciplinary or career-stage differences in the teachers' approaches to teaching or concerning their self-efficacy beliefs?, 3) What features of academic and teaching culture can be identified among these academics? and 4), Which factors affect teaching and learning in this institution. Quantitative data were collected from 119 teaching staff through an online, self-reported questionnaire. Qualitative data consisted of four focus group interviews with 18 teaching staff. The results showed that teaching staff reported high self-efficacy beliefs, whereas the teacher-centered approach was slightly more dominant than the student-centered approach. In qualitative data, the social and religious mission of teaching was highlighted; universities should primarily educate ethically conscious people who would serve their communities and society. The academic culture encompassed many features of contrived collegiality in which collaboration relies mainly on formal practices and is based less on informal, voluntary collaboration among teachers.

There is a growing interest in examining teaching approaches of higher education instructors in Europe, North America, and Asia (Goh, Wong, & Hamzah, 2014; Hanbury, Prosser, & Rickinson, 2008; Kemp, 2013) as well as teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2008). However, only a few studies have examined teaching approaches in the Middle East. Studies on teaching practices at Palestinian universities (Centre for Development Studies, 2010; Cristillo, 2009; Ramahi, 2015) revealed that a teacher-centered approach in teaching prevails in these institutions, traditional rote-based teaching promotes passive learning, and the education does not provide students with skills needed during their school years and after graduation (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration in teams). A study on the perceptions of graduates of a Palestinian university (Al-Holy & Abou-Dagga, 2004) showed that graduates in general were satisfied with the teaching they received although they identified problems, for example, with feedback. To our knowledge, no studies have investigated teachers' self-efficacy beliefs or academic cultures in Palestine. This study aims to fill this gap and thus enhance our understanding of higher education outside established research environments.

In this mixed-methods study, we examined teaching approaches and self-efficacy beliefs of Palestinian academics and their relationships to local academic and teaching culture. By combining findings regarding self-efficacy beliefs and cultural approaches, our general purpose is to widen the understanding of the current academic practice in Palestine. The Finnish-Palestinian research team also explored factors affecting teaching and learning in the Palestinian context based on focus group interview accounts of academics at the selected institution, the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). Research on teaching and learning is gradually expanding to new environments. This research aims to provide insights into which factors affect development of teaching in higher education outside traditional arenas.

Approaches to Teaching

A large number of studies have examined teachers' conceptions of teaching and teachers' approaches to teaching. The Approaches to Teaching Inventory (ATI) developed by Trigwell and Prosser (1996, 2004) relied on the results of a phenomenographic study that identified five qualitatively different approaches to teaching. The ATI focuses on two extreme categories: (a) a teacher-focused strategy with the intention of transmitting information to students, and (b) a student-focused strategy that aims to support students to change their conceptions. In the teacher-focused approach, the teacher aims to transmit facts and skills to students, and students are passive recipients, in contrast to the student-focused approach in which students actively participate in the learning process and reconstruct their knowledge (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004).

Gibbs and Coffey (2004) demonstrated that when teachers benefited from pedagogical training and adopted a student-centered approach in teaching, their students adopted fewer surface learning approaches. However, student performance does not depend only on teachers' pedagogical competence. Other factors can also affect students' performance, such as socioeconomic background, institutional resources, language skills, and the number of students per classroom or teacher (Liakopoulou, 2011).

The results of previous studies (Kemp, 2013; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006) showed that academics in hard disciplines, such as mathematics and medicine, were more likely to report a teacher-focused approach to teaching than those working in soft disciplines, such as history, art and philosophy. Teachers adopt a variety of teaching strategies depending on environmental factors (e.g., the size of the classroom), student groups, topics, and teachers' own preferences (Gregory & Jones, 2009; Sadler, 2012). Studies on teaching approaches have seldom scrutinized the impact of national and local settings on such approaches. Moreover, scholars have not examined how academic cultures among faculties influence teaching approaches in higher education.

Despite the popularity and wide implementation of the ATI, however, it along with its close variants have been subjected to important criticism. The critique focuses on two main areas: the conceptual and psychometric inaccuracy of the ATI and its ability to describe the complexity of teaching conceptions by using mainly the two extreme categories: student-focused and teacher-focused strategies. As the ATI was originally formulated in the cultural context of natural sciences, this instrument does not, despite its recent development, necessarily capture all the nuances of teaching approaches in other disciplinary cultures (Meyer & Eley, 2006). To overcome these issues, we examined ATI-related statistical data, along with other scales, and compared the findings with culturally and contextually sensitive qualitative data.

Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Generally, self-efficacy beliefs refer to the human capability to evaluate and regulate thinking, emotions, and actions in challenging situations (Bandura, 2006). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have been examined at schools (Alrajhi, Aldhafri, Alkharusi, Albusaidi, Alkharusi, Ambusaidi, & Alhosni, 2017; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006) and in higher education (Christiansen, Østerberg Rump, Trigwell, & Sørensen, in press; Postareff et al., 2008). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs influence students' achievement, and teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to implement active teaching methods (Caprara et al., 2006).

University teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (SEBs) were examined with the ATI (Postareff et al., 2008). This study showed self-efficacy beliefs were connected to ATI's conceptual change/student-focused teaching approach (CCSF). Interestingly, Postareff et al. (2008) showed that those who had obtained extensive pedagogical training scored lower on the CCSF and self-efficacy scales than after having completed a short course. This could be related to their increased ability to analyze critically their teaching approach. In Christiansen et al.'s (in press) study, the majority of teachers with initial high self-efficacy beliefs and low student focus developed more student focus without a significant drop in self-efficacy.

In the present study we used the measurement of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (TEBS-Self) developed by Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, and Ellett (2008). Dellinger et al. (2008) tested the instrument with elementary school teachers in the American context. Dellinger et al. (2008) emphasized that self-efficacy beliefs are task and situation specific, a learned system of beliefs in a particular setting. These beliefs may vary in strength (the intensity of the teacher's ability to do a certain task) and level (degree of difficulty of tasks) and across activities.

Academic and Teaching Cultures

Teaching culture refers to conventional cultural assumptions in an educational community. Often cited is Schein's (2010) definition that focuses on the core beliefs that are shared by community members and often affect invisibly how activities are implemented. Teaching and learning in higher education occur in specialized disciplinary settings that often have unique practices (Kreber, 2009). Yet one can distinguish cross-disciplinary shared features that define how teaching and learning are implemented in higher education (Korhonen, 2007).

Hargreaves (1994) defined five basic types of teaching cultures in educational communities that characterize teaching and the nature of teachers' cooperation. This framework has been applied to examine teaching and collaboration in higher education communities (Korhonen, 2007). The first type is individualistic culture in which autonomy and isolation are common (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003). Teachers act alone in lecture halls and prepare their teaching independently. Knowledge and practices are not shared; instead, the academic culture is competitive. Individualism and competition among scholars have often been considered typical of academe (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015). The opposite is collaborative culture (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003) in which teachers choose voluntarily to cooperate in teaching, planning, and assessment. Cooperation is based on collegial support and an appreciative atmosphere. Korhonen (2007) labeled this type of academic work culture "collegial culture". Hargreaves (2003, p. 147) called this culture "a professional learning community that transforms knowledge and learning among community members and promotes shared inquiry." This community provides potential for collaborative reflective practice in teaching (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015).

In academic culture, variations between individualistic and collegial work cultures can be

identified. Various political, structural, and symbolic dimensions in the cultural web of higher education institutions (HEIs) influence teaching and learning activities (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015). Contrived collegiality (Hargreaves 1994, 2003) describes a situation in which teachers seem to have collaborative relationships, although in practice they are compulsorily imposed, with fixed times and places set for collaboration. Balkanization describes a situation in which academics are strongly divided into different camps; in a "moving mosaic", separate groups are evolving and integrated into different development efforts or projects (Hargreaves, 1994). The latter has features of a collegial culture and support (Korhonen, 2007) and can strengthen the elements of collaboration and sharing in teaching (Loughran, 2014). Hargreave's model has been empirically tested especially in the elementary/secondary school context (see Thomson & Holloway, 1997) while Tynan and Garbett (2007) and Kennelly and McCormack (2015) reported similar findings in relation to academic cultures in higher education.

Thus far, academic and teaching cultures have not been scrutinized in relation to academic instructors' teaching approaches. In this study, a new instrument was developed and tested to assess academic and teaching culture in higher education and potential connections to teaching approaches.

Purpose of the Study

This research aimed to examine teaching approaches and self-efficacy beliefs of academics and common features of academic and teaching culture in a Palestinian higher education institution. The results provide insights to develop training for academics that takes into account the factors affecting teaching and learning in the institution, teachers' pedagogical competences and self-efficacy beliefs, and the teaching culture. The study can also enhance understanding of the factors that affect the development of teaching in less examined higher education environments, such as Palestine.

The following research questions are examined:

- **Research question 1.** What kinds of approaches to teaching and self-efficacy beliefs can be identified among academics in the selected Palestinian university? (a) How are the information transmission/teacher-centered and conceptual change/student-centered teaching approaches balanced? (b) How are the scales of teacher self-efficacy beliefs related to approaches to teaching?
- **Research question 2.** Are there disciplinary (hard vs. soft) or career-stage differences in the teachers' approaches to teaching or concerning their self-efficacy beliefs?
- **Research question 3.** What features of academic and teaching culture can be identified among these academics? (a) How are the collegial and individual work cultures balanced, and what is the level of collaboration in teaching? (b) What is the relationship between teaching approaches and the dimensions of the academic and teaching culture?
- **Research question 4.** Which factors affect teaching and learning in this institution?

The Setting

Higher education plays a key role in the social and economic development of Palestine. Higher education is perceived to be the population's main wealth in the absence of natural resources (Abouzir, 2010). In 2016, there were 49 HEIs in Palestinian territories: governmental, public (established by nongovernmental organizations), and private institutions. These institutions included 14 traditional universities, 16 university colleges, 18 community colleges, and one open education university with 22 branches in the West Bank and Gaza. Insufficient funding creates difficulties for many institutions; and the majority of budget funds comes from tuition fees that are not regularly paid (European Commission, 2017). Other challenges are related to the increasing student/teacher ratio, lack of resources, the heavy workload of faculty members, and meagre research activity (Hashweh, Hashweh, & Berryman, 2003). The current strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) stresses the importance of developing teaching by moving from the "instructional and memorization approach to a student-centered approach" in Palestinian HEIs (Ministry of Education and Higher Education [MOEHE], 2017, p. 6).

The Gaza Strip has 28 HEIs: eight universities, 10 university colleges, eight community colleges, one polytechnic, and one higher studies academy (MOEHE, 2018). The institution investigated, the IUG, is a multidisciplinary university with 17,500 students enrolled in 11 departments: Medicine, Engineering, Information Technology, Nursing, Science, Health Science, Education, Arts, Sharia & Law, Theology (Osoul Eddin), and Commerce. This study relates to the eTraining FinPal project (https://research.uta.fi/finpal/) conducted between the IUG and the University of Tampere, Finland. The three-year project (2017–2020) aims to improve the pedagogical competencies of the IUG's academics, establish a pedagogy unit at the IUG, and offer a study program on academic teaching to other Palestinian universities. During the first phase of the project, the current state of pedagogical approaches and the training needs of local academics were examined through the survey and focus group interviews.

Methods

This mixed-methods study combined quantitative and qualitative research approaches. All teaching staff at the IUG were invited to participate in the study via email. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality assured.

Quantitative Data and Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through a 64-item, online self-reported questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic by native Arabic speakers and piloted on a sample of 24 participants. Out of 399 teaching staff members, 221 responded to the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 55%. Political unrest and power outages in Palestine in December 2017 may have negatively affected the quantity of data gathered.

Data screening reduced the usable questionnaires to 119. Of these, 104 respondents were male (87%), and 15 were female (13%) which represented the male-female percentage at the IUG. The participants were 46 years old, on average (*SD* = 10.399) and reported an average of 15 years (*SD* = 8.352) of work experience in higher education. The sample was distributed according to Biglan's (1973) classification into two academic disciplines: soft (55%, *n* = 66) and hard (45%, *n* = 53). In terms of academic position, 23% were full professors, 18% associate professors, 35% assistant professors, 13% lecturers, and 11% teacher assistants.

The staff's approaches to teaching were measured using a 16-item questionnaire adapted from the ATI (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). The adapted instrument asked the participants to focus on their teaching in general. The inventory consisted of two subscales: a student-centered approach (eight items, e.g., "In my interactions with students, I try to develop a conversation with them about the topics we are studying.") and a teacher-centered approach (eight items, e.g., "I design my teaching with the assumption that most of the students have very little useful knowledge of the topics to be covered."). A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (*rarely*) to 5 (*always*).

Staff's self-efficacy beliefs were measured using 11 items adapted from the TEBS-Self instrument (Dellinger et al., 2008) that was originally developed in the context of elementary school. Since our study focuses on higher education, we chose and adapted 11 items that we considered pertinent in this context. Four items measured self-efficacy beliefs related to classroom management and maintaining a positive classroom climate (e.g., "maintain high levels of student engagement in learning tasks"). Three items measured self-efficacy beliefs related to students' motivation (e.g., "provide a positive influence on the academic development of students"), and four items measured self-efficacy beliefs related to developing higher-order thinking skills (e.g., "actively involve students in developing concepts"). Self-efficacy beliefs were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*weak beliefs*) to 5 (*very strong beliefs*).

The staff's perceptions of the academic culture in their departments were measured with the Academic Culture scale, developed and based on theoretical framework devised by Hargreaves (1994, 2003) and Korhonen (2007). The scale is comprised of two subscales: collegial work culture (five items, e.g., "share often work-related information and create new knowledge together") and individual work culture (five items, e.g., "work mainly independently to attain the objectives set up by the management"). The 5-point Likert scale used ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Staff's self-assessment of how often they collaborate in teaching was measured with eight items adapted from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD, 2013) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). An example item is, "I teach jointly as a team in the same course." The following six-point Likert scale was used: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once a year or less*, 3 = *2–4 times a year*, 4 = *5–10 times a year*, 5 = *1–3 times a month*, and 6 = *Once a week or more*.

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS 22.0 statistical package. The analysis included calculating the mean and standard deviation, two independent-samples *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and zero-order Pearson correlations. As the constructs investigated in this study have not been previously examined in the Palestinian context, factor analysis was conducted to verify the underlying structure of the data.

Qualitative Data and Analysis

Qualitative data were collected through four focus group interviews with teaching staff. The voluntary participants (18) were selected in such a way that they represented teaching staff in all faculties, different career levels, and both genders. Two focus group interviews were conducted in Arabic and two in English. The thematic interviews dealt with teachers' understanding of students' learning; factors that enhance and support learning; the aims of teaching; the combining of research and teaching, assessment, and feedback; and pedagogical and curriculum development in the departments.

Interview data were transcribed verbatim, and the two interviews conducted in Arabic were translated into English. The qualitative content analysis was conducted inductively (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) by systematically coding with the assistance of the Atlas.ti program all parts that related to the factors affecting teaching and learning at this institution (research question 4). The codes referring to similar themes were grouped together

Table 1
Five-Factor Solution of the Measured Dimensions in the Teacher Questionnaire

Items	Factor loadings					Communality
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	
TEBS_CMPCC_01	.63					.50
TEBS_CMPCC_02	.77					.54
TEBS_CMPCC_03	.77					.65
TEBS_CMPCC_04	.73					.63
TEBS_HOTS_01	.63					.42
TEBS_HOTS_02	.64					.49
TEBS_HOTS_04	.68					.59
TEBS_MOT_01	.79					.62
TEBS_MOT_02	.81					.56
TEBS_MOT_03	.48					.34
WRC_COL_01		.74				.55
WRC_COL_02		.75				.58
WRC_COL_03		.79				.64
WRC_COL_04		.83				.67
WRC_COL_05		.79				.63
WRC_IND_02		.84				.66
WRC_IND_03		.59				.44
WRC_IND_04		.60				.50
WRC_IND_05		.66				.42
TALIS_CT_01			.59			.38
TALIS_CT_02			.63			.48
TALIS_CT_03			.59			.44
TALIS_CT_04			.73			.48
TALIS_CT_05			.58			.44
TALIS_CT_06			.60			.51
TALIS_CT_07			.79			.63
TALIS_CT_08			.79			.57
ATI_tchr_03				.72		.63
ATI_tchr_04				.44		.25
ATI_tchr_06				.55		.37
ATI_tchr_08				.44		.23
ATI_std_03					.65	.42
ATI_std_05					.57	.35
ATI_std_06					.54	.63
ATI_std_08					.47	.28
Eigenvalues	7.10	5.74	2.36	1.32	1.02	
Explained variance (%)	20.28	16.39	6.75	3.78	2.91	

Note. TEBS = Teachers' Efficacy Beliefs System; CMMPCC = Classroom Management and Maintaining a Positive Classroom Climate; HOTS = Higher Order Thinking Skills; MOS = Motivation of Students; AWC = Academic Work Culture; COL = Collegial; IND = Individual; TALIS = Teaching and Learning International Survey; CT = Collaboration in Teaching; ATI = Approaches to Teaching Inventory; TCA = Teacher-Centered Approach; SCA = Student-Centered Approach.

into key themes that were analytically connected to other research questions, particularly teaching approaches. Next, the analysis was conducted with a directed approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) through analyzing the data particularly in light of Trigwell and Prosser's (2004) theoretical framework in relation to the teaching approaches. Two researchers performed the analysis simultaneously and compared their results to enhance the validity of the analysis. Qualitative data and its analysis provided deeper insights into the lived reality of Palestinian academics in Gaza and their own accounts of the factors that affect teaching and learning at their institution.

Results

Factor Analysis Results

Factor analysis was performed on all items of the measures using principal axis factoring (PAF) as the extraction method and oblique (i.e., promax) as the rotation method. PAF is recommended when the data violate the multivariate normality condition as in our case (Costello & Osborne, 2005) while the promax rotation method was used because the constructs were expected to correlate with each other. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (> .80) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2241.29$, $p < .001$) showed the data were adequate for the factor analysis. We followed the rule of thumb recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) and used .32 as the cut-off value of the minimum loading of an item on any factor. Items that loaded on two or more factors with a value higher than the cut-off were considered cross-loaded items. Items with communalities lower than .20 (Child, 2006; Yong & Pearce, 2013) loaded lower than .40 on their corresponding factor or cross-loaded on more than one factor were discarded. As Table 1 shows, a five-factor solution explained 50.12% of the variance.

The factor analysis revealed mixed results that both supported and contradicted the literature. In contrast to previous findings (Dellinger et al., 2008; Olivier, 2001), self-efficacy beliefs (TEBS) emerged as one factor instead of three factors. Work culture (WRC) emerged as one factor instead of two factors as proposed by Hargreaves (2003) and Korhonen (2007) in their theoretical framework. Cooperation in teaching (TALIS-CT) was shown to be one factor, and the ATI was also confirmed to be two factors in accordance with the literature (Postareff et al., 2008; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). The estimates of internal consistency for each of the factors were calculated utilizing Cronbach coefficient alpha. The reliability coefficients were .905 (Teacher self-efficacy beliefs), .913 (Work culture), .866 (Collaboration in teaching), .675 (Teacher-centered approach), and .651 (Student-centered approach). Although Cronbach's α coefficients are generally recommended at .70 or higher, a minimum value of .60 is also accepted considering the sample size, the number of scale items, and the exploratory nature of the research (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

As the data deviated from the normal distribution, we applied a two-step normalizing transformation technique to transform the data (Templeton, 2011). The means, standard deviations, and zero-order Pearson correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the teaching staff reported high teaching self-efficacy beliefs ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .518$) on a scale of 1–5. Both teaching approaches were reported. The teacher-centered approach ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .675$) was slightly more dominant than the student-centered approach ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .669$). Although the mean score for the work culture (including the individual and collegial features) was above the average ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .679$), the mean score for collaboration in teaching was below the average ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .738$).

In terms of correlation, Table 2 shows a statistically significant medium positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and the teacher-centered approach ($r = .326$, $p < .01$) as well as the student-centered approach ($r = .373$, $p < .01$). The findings also show a statistically significant small ($r = .259$, $p < .01$) and medium ($r = .429$, $p < .01$) positive correlation between the work culture on one side and the teacher-centered approach and collaboration in teaching on the other side.

Differences in Staff's Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Approaches to Teaching Regarding Their Disciplines and Career Stages

To examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in academic teachers' self-efficacy beliefs attributed to their disciplines, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare between the mean scores of the self-efficacy beliefs of staff members working in hard and soft disciplines. The results showed that no statistically significant difference existed. Furthermore, we categorized the work experience continuous variable into four categories based on the mean and standard deviation as follows: (a) 19 participants (less than 7 years), (b) 40 participants (7 to less than 16 years), (c) 41 participants (16 to less than 23 years), and (d) 19 participants (23 years or more). One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare mean differences in self-efficacy beliefs among staff with different career stages. No statistically significant differences were detected.

For approaches to teaching, the independent samples *t*-test ($t_{(117)} = -2.04$, $p = .043$) revealed that staff working in soft disciplines reported a higher tendency for the student-centered teaching approach ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .629$) than their counterparts in hard disciplines ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .697$). However, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups in the tendency for the teacher-centered teaching approach. Moreover, results of one-way ANOVA showed that there were no statistically significant differences among staff at different career stages in their approaches to teaching.

Work Culture in Relation to Collaboration in Teaching and Approaches to Teaching

The result of the factor analysis of the work culture showed individual and collegial features exist at the same

Table 2
Connections between Approaches to Teaching (ATI), Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs, and Perceptions of the Academic Culture in the Teaching Units

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teacher self-efficacy beliefs	1				
2. Work culture	.144	1			
3. Collaboration in teaching	–.111	.429**	1		
4. Teacher-centered approach	.326**	.259**	.153	1	
5. Student-centered approach	.373**	.001	.036	.263**	1
Mean (*M*)	4.22	3.39	2.86	3.84	3.51
Standard Deviation (*SD*)	.518	.679	.738	.675	.669
Scale	1–5	1–5	1–6	1–5	1–5

** $p < .01$.

time. However, this result does not show whether the collaboration occurs in divided subgroups (Balkanized culture in Hargreaves' (1994) theory) or only in formal planning meetings (contrived collegiality in Hargreaves' (1994) theory). To elaborate on this question more, an analysis was conducted on the original items of the work culture measure and by separating the two dimensions. The results showed that teaching staff perceived their work culture as individualistic (M = 3.47, SD = 0.579) slightly more than collegial (M = 3.32, SD = 0.769). Further, we examined the correlation between the two dimensions, the work culture and the collaboration in teaching and approaches to teaching scales. Collegial (r = .418, $p < .01$) and individual (r = .354, $p < .01$) work cultures were found to be moderately correlated with collaboration in teaching. Interestingly, both dimensions of the work culture were shown to be moderately correlated with the teacher-centered approach (collegial r = .225, $p < .05$; individual r = .266, $p < .01$) but not with the student-centered approach.

Results of the Qualitative Study

External Factors Shaping Teaching and Learning

Based on the analysis of the focus group interviews, we identified the following key themes as influencing teaching and learning opportunities at the IUG: external factors (lack of resources, restricted mobility, and insecurity), institutional policies and practices, and individual factors (teachers' approaches, teachers' conceptions of teaching and knowledge, and challenges with student motivation and behavior). Due to several wars and the siege, Gaza has suffered from high unemployment, economic problems, and insecurity. The participants reported that lack of equipment, materials, and finances narrowed possibilities for offering up-to-date education. Lack of electricity shortened the time available for studying, conducting experiments, and preparing lessons. Lack of research facilities created problems for the research-teaching nexus, particularly in scientific-technical studies in which students could not conduct all experiments. Teachers and students could not access expensive databases or journals which limited the sources of information available. Despite the siege and challenges with mobility, the interview accounts revealed that staff members had adopted ideas and practices from foreign universities (during their studies abroad or when searching for international models to develop a curriculum).

The Social and Religious Mission of Teaching

Many participants emphasized the social mission of teaching: universities should primarily educate ethically conscious people who would serve their communities and society. These ideas were connected to broader Islamic principles that highlight the significance of learning, individual development, and conveyance of wisdom to younger generations. The IUG's institutional mission coincides with these principles: The university aims to develop society in a framework of Islamic and universal values. The religious tradition also affected the ways in which teachers' and students' roles in the learning process were understood. The following extract reveals how, in the Islamic tradition, it is perceived that students should adopt knowledge conveyed by the teacher while teachers also understand the need to activate students in learning processes:

> We have two kinds of teachers: inactive and active teacher. The active teacher tries to combine between giving the lecture in the Talkeen way [spoon feeding teaching] because our Islamic knowledge is Talkeen science. In some courses, as in the Interpretation of Quran, there is no role for the student. The student comes to listen and to receive the knowledge from the teacher. (Interviewee 15, Faculty of Sharia & Law)

Institutional Policies and Practices

Institutional policies and practices seemed to have an influential role in affecting teaching processes. In relation to teacher collaboration, the results showed that teachers rarely cooperated in planning their teaching although curriculum development was organized together, often in formal curriculum committees. According to the interview data, curriculum guidelines were seen as official regulations that also directed the basic elements of the teaching practice. For example, the official preference for one textbook for a course may be related to students' ability to develop critical reasoning and their understanding of disciplinary knowledge (see, for example, Wheelahan, 2010). At the IUG, pedagogical assessment of academics gives special weight to students' opinions of their teachers' performance. Participants criticized in particular how students misused their opportunity for a strong influence on teachers' performance rating. The following extract shows how some students aimed to reduce their workload through exerting pressure on their teachers:

> We get confused about the feedback from students, the feedback from the distinguished students who want and agree to achieve the goals and the feedback from most of the students who are probably more than the half of the students and who don't agree. Those students want the teacher who simplifies their duties: simplify, simplify, simplify, so we evaluate you good on the Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire. We are now between those [two types]. (Interviewee 12, Faculty of Science)

Diversity of Teaching Approaches

Participants described diversity of teaching approaches among the academics at the institution. There were accounts of student- and teacher-centered approaches to teaching and learning. The following extract shows an example of a teacher-focused strategy (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004) with the intention of transmitting information to students without taking into account students' prior knowledge:

> Yes, I think most of the system here is simply traditional learning. I mean the teacher or the professor make maybe 95% of the lecture. Only very few questions for the students, but in general, it is a lecture learning, we make the lecture, of course, using, most of us use PowerPoint slides, the discussion is not too much, simply because we teach principle courses, and students, they don't have an idea about our subject. (Interviewee 6, Faculty of Science)

The accounts related to teaching strategies aiming to activate students to develop their conceptions (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004) were in some cases combined with a static conception of knowledge, as the following shows:

> I teach with the American books. These are American textbooks with full of knowledge, this is education, this is knowledge, this is the main body of understanding that the students should understand. I give them [students] all the time assignment [sic], I try to give them quizzes, I try to push hard on them because I want to train them, train them to work by themselves for trying to understand the concepts and how they can analyze it [sic]. (Interviewee 1, Faculty of Commerce)

Several participants expressed the need to include student discussions and dialogue in lectures. This approach could be labeled a teacher/student interaction strategy (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004) with the aim of supporting students to acquire the concepts of the discipline but not necessarily with the intention to change or develop their conceptions. A stronger student-centered approach was visible in the accounts of a few participants who had provided individual and collaborative research assignments for students, aiming to activate them in the learning process (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004), and often applying the problem-based learning approach:

> I feel after a period of 12 years in teaching at the IUG that the best way for students to learn is to integrate students into research projects and not in the traditional way of transferring information. The students are directed to identify one of the society's problems and to search for a solution for it as groups (Interviewee 17, Faculty of Education).

Challenges with Student Motivation and Behavior

When discussing the education process, the interviewees explained some of the challenges they encounter, such as a large number of students in the courses. The teachers perceived that these challenges negatively influenced the motivation of some students to engage with their education, leading to attempts to minimize the workload, plagiarism, and misbehavior. Behavioral problems could also reflect challenges with academic socialization and generational divides. Moreover, high graduate unemployment and a lack of vision negatively affected students' motivation to study.

Discussion and Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative results showed that features of student- and teacher-centered teaching

could be identified from the data. The traditional transmission perspective was more dominant than the student-centered approach, particularly in light of the qualitative data. In addition, the importance of student–teacher interaction was highlighted in focus group interviews. The participants emphasized the pedagogical significance of the ethical and religious basis of their teaching. Previous research on teaching approaches (Kemp, 2013; Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004) did not scrutinize the impact of religious traditions, institutional policies, or broader socioeconomic factors affecting teaching, while this study draws attention to the importance of examining these perspectives. Similarly to the findings of Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006) and Kemp (2013), this study showed that teachers working in soft disciplines scored higher on the conceptual change/student-focused approach than those working in hard disciplines, although no statistically significant differences were found in relation to the teacher-centered approach.

Strong self-efficacy beliefs were prevalent among respondents and were connected to both teaching approaches. It has been argued that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs are more prepared to engage in difficult tasks and set up manageable goals for their productive teaching activities (Gordon & Debus, 2002; Postareff et al., 2008). Similarly, the results could indicate the highly developed capability of the teaching staff in managing their teaching tasks in the current situation and applying teaching approaches that are functional under the current conditions. The interview data showed that the local institutional policy and practices supported a strong assessment culture in which teachers are constantly subjected to evaluation by various actors, such as students. This probably contributed to the formation of the respondents' self-efficacy beliefs.

Based on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the work culture demonstrated features of individual and collegial cultures and showed some connections to the teacher-centered approach and teacher collaboration. The qualitative analysis showed that collaboration in teaching was quite rare, and collaboration between teachers was organized mostly in official, formal meetings, such as in curriculum planning committees. Therefore, the prevailing academic culture encompassed many features of contrived collegiality (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015; Korhonen, 2007), thus illustrating that the regulator of activities was the institution's administration guidelines and instructions and less the teachers' own initiatives or spontaneous collaboration.

The IUG institutional policies stress the importance of applying Islamic perspectives in teaching. Therefore, one can examine to what extent the academics' teaching approaches reflected various Islamic traditions of education. Although memorization and oral transmission have prevailed in Islamic teaching to ensure the embodiment of knowledge, more active didactic approaches have been applied, such as promoting dialogue (Al-Khalediy, 2011; Sabani, Hardaker, Sabki, & Salleh, 2016). However, Halstead (2004) suggested that enhancing student autonomy and critical thinking do not necessarily coincide with traditional Islamic understanding of education. Kemp (2013) highlighted that the constructivist, student-centered teaching approach requires a profound shift in teachers' thinking about knowledge. Future research could examine in more detail the relationship between teachers' conceptions of knowledge and their teaching approaches.

A limitation of the study was that it focused only on one Palestinian university. Future research could examine other higher education institutions in Palestine. Gathering data from other Palestinian HEIs could provide opportunities for examining differences between institutions in the same national setting. Moreover, these results do not necessarily reflect how teaching is conducted in practice or how students experience and evaluate teaching. To examine this topic, the data could be supplemented with studies focusing, for example, on students or peer observations.

The survey presented in this study requires additional testing with large samples and in different kinds of settings. It could then provide a useful tool for measuring prevailing teaching approaches, self-efficacy beliefs, and academic cultures and provide insights for the development of pedagogical programs at specific HEIs. Our aim is to reexamine these perspectives and potential changes after having conducted a pedagogical program for almost half of the academic staff at the IUG. Moreover, we plan to conduct similar studies in Brazil and Thailand in which pedagogical programs are also provided. Cross-national comparisons could provide useful information for examining the impact of transnational pedagogical programs in different kinds of cultural environments and the ways in which academic cultures may influence developmental efforts.

References

Abouzir, Y. (2010). Needs and context of ODC at the Palestinian institutions. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 11*(4), 243-255.

Al-Holy, A., & Abou-Dagga, S. (2004). تقويم برامج الدراسات العليا في الجامعة الإسلامية بغزة من وجهه نظر الخريجين [Graduate students' evaluation of graduate programs at IUG]. *Islamic University of Gaza Journal, 12*(2), 391–424.

Al-Khalediy, K. (2011). Education and methods of teaching in Islam in the era of Az-Zarnooji. *Al-Majma, 3-4*, 23–60. Retrieved from

http://www.qsm.ac.il/arblanguage/docs/majalla/3+4/eng=2=kalid.pdf

Alrajhi, M., Aldhafri, S., Alkharusi, H., Albusaidi, S., Alkharusi, B., Ambusaidi, A., & Alhosni K. (2017). The predictive effects of math teachers' emotional intelligence on their perceived self-efficacy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 67,* 378–388. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2017.07.003

Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 307–337). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Biglan, A. (1973). The characteristics of subject matter in different academic areas. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 57*(3), 195–203.

Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Steca, P., & Malone, P. S. (2006). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as determinants of job satisfaction and students' academic achievement: A study at the school level. *Journal of School Psychology, 44,* 473–490. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.001

Centre for Development Studies (2010). *Improving the flow of information between universities, youth, and the labor market to enhance learning and development of the workforce*. Retrieved from: http://home.birzeit.edu/cds/publications/2010/flowe.pdf

Child, D. (2006). *The essentials of factor analysis* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.

Christiansen, F. V., Østerberg Rump, C., Trigwell, K., & Sørensen, H. (in press). Measuring dimensions of impact of university teacher development courses.

Costello, A. B., & Osborne, J. W. (2005). Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: Four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research & Education, 10*(7), 1–9.

Cristillo, L. (2009). *National study of undergraduate teaching practices in Palestine*. Ramallah, PS: Amideast. Retrieved from: http://www.amideast.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/PFDP%20Report%20Final%201005.pdf

Dellinger, A., Bobbett J., Olivier, D., & Ellett, C. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: development and use of the TEBS-Self. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24,* 751–766. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2007.02.010

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62,* 107–115. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

European Commission. (2017). *Overview of the higher education system: Palestine*. Brussels, BE: European Union. Retrieved from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_palestine_2017.pdf

Gibbs, G., & Coffey, M. (2004). The impact of training of university teachers on their teaching skills, their approach to teaching and the approach to learning of their students. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 5,* 87–100. doi:10.1177/1469787404040463

Goh, P., Wong, K., & Hamzah, M. (2014). The approaches to teaching inventory: A preliminary validation of the Malaysian translation. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39,* 1–12. doi:10.14221/ajte.2014v39n1.6

Gordon, C., & Debus, R. (2002). Developing deep learning approaches and personal teaching efficacy within a pre-service teacher education context. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 72,* 483–511. doi:10.1348/00070990260377488

Gregory, J., & Jones, R. (2009). 'Maintaining competence': A grounded theory typology of approaches to teaching in higher education. *Higher Education, 57,* 769–785. doi:10.1007/sl0734-008-9175-8

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Halstead, M. (2004). An Islamic concept of education. *Comparative Education, 40,* 517–529. doi:10.1080/0305006042000284510

Hanbury, A., Prosser, M., & Rickinson, M. (2008). The differential impact of UK accredited teaching development programmes on academics' approaches to teaching. *Studies in Higher Education, 33,* 469–483. doi:10.1080/03075070802211844

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times. Teachers' work culture in the postmodern age*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Hashweh, M. [Maher], Hashweh, M. [Mazen], & Berryman, S. (2003). *An assessment of higher education needs in the West Bank and Gaza.* Retrieved from: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnacw688.pdf

Hsieh, H-F., & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277–1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687

Kemp, S. J. (2013). Exploring the use of learner-focused teaching approaches in different academic disciplines. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 37,* 804–818. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2012.684041

Kennelly, R., & McCormack, C. (2015). Creating more 'elbow room' for collaborative reflective practice in the competitive, performative culture of today's university. *Higher Education Research &*

Development, 34, 942–956. doi:10.1080/07294360.2014.911259

Korhonen, V. (2007). Individualistista vai kollegiaalista työkulttuuria yliopistoyhteisössä [Individualistic or collegial work culture in academic community]. In V. Korhonen (Ed.), *Muuttuvat oppimisympäristöt yliopistossa* (pp. 25–40). Tampere, FI: Tampere University Press.

Kreber, C. (2009). The modern research university and its disciplines: The interplay between contextual and context-transcendent influences on teaching. In C. Kreber (Ed.), *The university and its disciplines. Teaching and learning within and beyond disciplinary boundaries* (pp. 19–32). London, UK: Routledge.

Liakopoulou, M. (2011). Teachers' pedagogical competence as a prerequisite for entering the profession. *European Journal of Education, 46,* 474–488. doi:10.1111/j.1465-3435.2011.01495.x

Lindblom-Ylänne, S., Trigwell, K., Nevgi, A., & Ashwin, P. (2006). How approaches to teaching are affected by discipline and teaching context. *Studies in Higher Education, 31,* 285–298. doi:10.1080/03075070600680539

Loughran, J. J. (2014). Developing understandings of practice: Science teacher learning. In N. G. Lederman & S. K. Abell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on science education* (Vol. 2, pp. 811–829). London, UK: Routledge.

Meyer, J. H. F., & Eley, M. G. (2006). The approaches to teaching inventory: A critique of its development and applicability. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 76,* 633–649. doi:10.1348/000709905X49908

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2017). *Education sector strategic plan 2017-2022*. Ramallah, PS. Retrieved from http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/palestine_education_sector_strategic_plan_2017-2022.pdf

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2018). *Facts and figures 2016/2017*. Retrieved from https://www.mohe.pna.ps/moehe/factsandfigures

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (OECD). (2013). *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/school/TALIS-2013-Teacher-questionnaire.pdf

Olivier, D. (2001). *Teacher personal and school culture characteristics in effective schools: Toward a model of a professional learning community* (Doctoral dissertation). LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses, 303. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/303

Postareff, L., Lindblom-Ylänne, S., & Nevgi, A. (2008). A follow-up study of the effect of pedagogical training on teaching in higher education. *Higher Education, 56,* 29–43. doi:10.1007/s10734-007-9087-z

Ramahi, H. (2015). *Education in Palestine: Current challenges and emancipatory alternatives*. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Regional Office Palestine. Retrieved from http://www.rosaluxemburg.ps/?publications_years=2015

Sabani, N., Hardaker, G., Sabki, A., & Salleh, S. (2016). Understandings of Islamic pedagogy for personalised learning. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology, 33,* 78–90. doi:10.1108/IJILT-01-2016-0003

Sadler, I. (2012). The challenges for new academics in adopting student-centred approaches to teaching. *Studies in Higher Education, 37,* 731–745. doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.543968

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2001). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Templeton, G. F. (2011). A two-step approach for transforming continuous variables to normal: Implications and recommendations for IS research. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, 28.* doi:10.17705/1CAIS.02804

Thomson, J. M., & Holloway, D. G. (1997). Staff development procedures and a culture of collaboration in a primary school. *Teacher Development, 26,* 309–326. doi:10.1080/13664539700200017

Trigwell, K., & Prosser, M. (1996). Changing approaches to teaching: A relational perspective. *Studies in Higher Education, 21,* 275–284. doi:10.1080/03075079612331381211

Trigwell, K., & Prosser, M. (2004). Development and use of the approaches to teaching inventory. *Educational Psychology Review, 16,* 409–424. doi:10.1007/s10648-004-0007-9

Tynan, B. R., & Garbett, D. L. (2007). Negotiating the university research culture: Collaborative voices of new academics. *Higher Education Research & Development, 26,* 411–424. doi:10.1080/07294360701658617

Wheelahan, L. (2010). *Why knowledge matters in curriculum: A social realist argument*. London, UK: Routledge.

Yong, A. G., & Pearce, S. (2013). A beginner's guide to factor analysis: Focusing on exploratory factor analysis. *Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology, 9,* 79–94. doi:10.20982/tqmp.09.2.p079

PAULIINA ALENIUS is University Instructor at the Faculty of Education and Culture in Tampere University, Finland. Her research interests and teaching relate to multicultural and transnational education, learning spaces, and informal learning of migrants. She received the Best Doctoral Dissertation Award in Educational Sciences in Finland in 2016. Her publications appear in international and national journals, such as *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, and Nordic Journal of Migration Research*. She is a co-author of book entitled *Internationalisation and Transnationalisation in Higher Education* published by Peter Lang in 2018.

TAHANI Z. ALDAHDOUH is a researcher and Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Education and Culture in Tampere University. Her main interests include professional growth, technology acceptance, innovativeness in higher education, and quantitative analysis. She is a member of Higher Education in Transition (HET) research group and e-training FinPal project.

VESNA HOLUBEK is a Ph.D. student and a researcher in Tampere University, Finland. She is a member of HET research group at the Faculty of Education and Culture and her research interests include internationalization, policy reforms, and teaching and learning in higher education. She graduated from an international Master's program in Research and Innovation in Higher Education, and she is working on her PhD research related to student identities in the context of neoliberal reforms in higher education. She has been involved as a researcher in several international projects.

NAZMI ABDEL-SALAM AL-MASRI is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Arts, the Islamic University of Gaza, Palestine. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, UK in 1994. His main research interests are teacher training and using technology in teaching foreign languages. He co-published several education related research papers in international journals. He is a co-investigator in several international research and teacher development projects. He was a member of the Palestinian National Team for the development of the first English language curriculum and textbooks currently used in all Palestinian schools: The English for Palestine Series published by Macmillan Publishers.

ALYAN ABDULLAH EL-HOLY is a Professor of Education at the Islamic University of Gaza. He obtained his Ph.D. in Education in 1996. He has published more than 30 research papers in the field of higher education, quality of education, and economics of education. He served in a number of senior administrative positions at IUG including Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty of Education, Chairman of the Quality Unit, and Assistant Vice -President for Planning and Development. He is also the President of the Palestinian Society for Educational and Psychological Sciences, as well as the editor-in-chief of *Quality in Higher Education Journal*. He has supervised more than 50 master and doctoral theses and chaired several scientific conferences. Additionally, he is a member of the Editorial Board of IUG Educational and Psychological Sciences Journal, National Authority of Quality in Palestine and the Development Studies Institute in Gaza.

JYRI LINDÉN is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Culture in Tampere University. He works in a team that is responsible for faculty training and mentoring to support teachers' pedagogical development and curriculum work. His research focuses on curriculum in higher education and the changing nature of the teaching profession. He is a steering group member in a HET research group.

VESA KORHONEN is Research Director and a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Culture in Tampere University, Finland. He is a leader of the local Higher Education in Transition (HET) research group. His interests cover different areas of higher education related research such as student engagement and learning pathways within higher education, university teachers' identities and development in scholarly communities, and questions of internationalization in higher education. He has extensive experience over the years from several national and international research and development projects in the areas of higher education, cross-cultural lifelong learning, and online education.

Acknowledgements

The eTraining FinPal project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland through its Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument (HEI ICI).