

Effect Of Learner-Centered Professional Development On Teaching Behaviors In Qatari Elementary Math And Science Classrooms

[10.5339/qfarc.2014.SSPP0031](https://doi.org/10.5339/qfarc.2014.SSPP0031)

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Abstract

In late 2002, Qatar established key elements of educational reform, known as "Education for a New Era", including curriculum standards, emphasis on problem-solving through student-centered teaching; standards-based assessment; and extensive professional development for teachers. Qatari education reform emphasizes student-centered teaching and learning where teachers are facilitators and students actively engage in learning through systematic inquiry and problem solving. Classrooms characterized by these elements should emerge as more successful on Qatari standards-based assessments, but little research has been done to determine whether these elements can be promoted through specifically designed professional development programs. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of learner-centered professional development on teaching behaviors in math/science classrooms in Qatari independent elementary schools.

The present study is a part of a three year QNRF funded research project which involved two major phases. The first phase of the research project was primarily descriptive and involved a sample of 67 teachers and approximately 1150 students randomly selected from 17 independent schools. The research in this baseline phase depicted the classroom instructional strategies implemented in response to Qatari educational reform goals, and described the extent to which students in Qatari Independent elementary schools engaged in self-regulated learning. The second phase of the research which is the focus of the present study used a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effect of specifically designed learner-centered professional development modules, which were developed based on the initial baseline data, targeting improvement of student-centered teaching behaviors (including perceived teaching efficacy). The study sample consisted of 47 math and science elementary teachers whose classroom teaching practices were assessed, pre and post intervention, using the teacher Attributes Observation Protocol (TAOP), teachers were also administered the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) pre and post professional development training. Overall, the results in this study show that student-centered teaching behaviors increased significantly post intervention for both intervention and control groups. The implications of the study findings for the implementation of reform and provision professional development training for teachers in Qatar were discussed.