

University Student Trainers' Experiences of Facilitating Science Workshops for School Students

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Abstract

In this presentation, we share our findings from a study based in a leading university in the United Arab Emirates. Undergraduate science students (termed 'science trainers') were coached and supported to develop large-scale science workshops and teach these in an engaging, hands-on manner. We then invited high school students to attend the university workshops. One of the project's aims was to develop trainer capacity as science communicators, through one-to-one and group training sessions to develop this skill and competency. Their experiences of having responsibility for planning and delivery of the sessions were explored through in-depth individual interviews following the training, including their narratives around aspects of developing and teaching workshops for school students that they found both most enjoyable and challenging. Teaching can provide huge levels of internal satisfaction, some of which is intrinsic, such as the sheer joy of teaching. These experiences may be extremely important for the science trainers in their science career path, not only in formalized teaching routes, but also in informal teaching ways, such as peer teaching and science communication in general. The student trainers involved in the research study found that the experience of interacting with school-age students and managing the planning and delivery of the sessions had a profound personal and professional impact on them, improved their self-confidence, altered their professional identities and in some cases made them reconsider future career plans to include working in academia.

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