



# SFDN 2023 CONFERENCE: “Going further together”

## **TITLE: Helping instructors improve their teaching via analogies**

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### **Abstract**

Many universities emphasize competencies such as problem solving and critical thinking in their teaching, and ideally educational developers would have a repertoire of tools and strategies to help faculty implement such teaching. However, there are few relevant, concrete, and evidence-based tools in the literature. In this presentation I will share a guide to planning and implementing instructional analogies and give evidence of its impact on early career instructors (PhD students) who participated in our professional development course. The guide was featured in course's module on analogies, and in our research on the impact of the course, we used qualitative content analysis to assess the quality of participants' analogies as an indicator of the fit of the guide to university-level teaching.

Our findings include that the guide, which was originally developed for the school setting, worked well at the university level and resulted in analogies which largely met recommendations of best practice from the literature (e.g., use of an everyday experience as the basis of comparison/analogue, inclusion of a student discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the analogy) (Petchey et al., 2023). And more important for the issue I used to frame this proposal, we found that 40% of instructors using the guide developed teaching plans for their analogies which involved higher order thinking, for example, extending the analogy to explain additional aspects of the target concept or creating an improved analogy.

The connections of my talk to the themes of the conference come from the fact that the analogy tool could be easily adapted for use by educational developers in their work with faculty. Our instructors found the tool helpful in its concreteness and surprising in its suggested use of analogies. Most had never planned their instructional analogies in advance or asked students to actively discuss/dissect their analogies during class. Being able to offer faculty such an easy-to-implement, evidence-based tool likely strengthens our partnership with them. And similarly, faculty could use the tool to improve their own teaching practices with analogies. In particular, the tool's recommendation of more interactive, open-ended teaching could shift faculty's teaching style towards being partners in learning with their students.