



**Teacher Development in Higher Education:  
Existing Programs, Program Impact, and Future  
Trends Edited by Eszter Simon and Gabriela  
Pleschová**

Hungarian Educational Research Journal  
2015, Vol. 5(2) 126–130  
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<http://herj.lib.unideb.hu>  
Debrecen University Press



DOI: 10.14413/herj.2015.02.09.

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The history of pre-service and in-service teacher education abounds with well-intended plans to improve and restructure the preparation of PreK-12th grade teachers with the stated goal of enhancing student engagement and achievement. So too have reform efforts of the last few decades dramatically increased expectations for university faculty and encouraged professional development to increase faculty effectiveness at Institutes of Higher Education (IHE).

This significant work edited by Eszter Simon and Gabriela Pleschová synthesizes quality research in the field of higher education regarding the preparation of and expectations for university faculty to utilize high impact practices in terms of pedagogy and assessment in the university classroom.

Carried out by researchers from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Singapore, Slovakia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the project provides an in-depth examination of university-level professional development in terms of its characteristics, impact on student learning, and potential future developments. The purpose of this book is to study systematically the impact of faculty professional development through the use of evidence-based research studies and contribute to the theoretical knowledge base on faculty development.

This volume is not merely an assortment of essays of the conventional kind, rather it is a well structured treatment of a diverse array of topics, such as preparing doctoral students for university-level teaching, professional development for lecturers in the area of assessment, and institutional factors influencing the design of faculty professional development, just to name a few. Collectively, the papers provide a comprehensive review of the state and impact of faculty professional development in Canada, Singapore, Estonia, and Hungary.

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In Chapter 1 “What We Know and Fail to Know about the Impact of Teacher Development,” Pleschová and Simon focus on timely topics in their literature review. They establish that evidence regarding the effect of faculty professional development on student learning is insufficient and incongruent though several researchers have concluded that having completed additional development programs, faculty members had higher teaching self-efficacy, utilized a student-centered approach, had better rapport with students, and were more organized, enthusiastic, and interested in students’ learning and well being. The first chapter also explores preferred types of research methods (mixed methods rather than the ubiquitous self-assessment) to control extraneous variables and measure more accurately the effects of professional development programs. The chapter concludes with the identification of gaps in the knowledge base regarding factors (e.g., program content and length) that need to be considered when studying the impact or success of professional development.

Following the introductory chapter, papers are grouped into four themes: instructional development for graduate students, program assessment for program improvement, top-down determinants of success in instructional development programs, and instructional development.

Part I entitled “Training for What? Instructional Development for Graduate Students” states that since the purposes for which graduate students are prepared are diverse, the evaluation of outcome measures needs to be adjusted accordingly.

This part includes Renc-Roe and Yarkova’s descriptive study of the effectiveness of a professional development course for doctoral students in Hungary as they are prepared to be self-renewing, highly engaging, and reflective practitioners by learning about innovative pedagogical content knowledge and the sociological, disciplinary, and departmental contexts in which they (will) teach.

Ishiyama, Cole, Nichols, Hamann, and Mealy state that the preparation of doctoral students in political sciences for undergraduate teaching is inadequate, but teaching effectiveness is not even a significant factor when hiring decisions are made. Rather, research productivity is the best predictor of faculty job placement. However, the authors advocate for evaluating the impact of development efforts to explicitly prepare doctoral students to be teacher scholars in the area of political science.

Knapper concludes that there is little evidence for the positive effects of teaching-related preparation at Canadian universities and then attributes this lack of success partly to the fact that faculty development is at best challenging as university teachers fail to recognize its importance and show resistance toward such efforts.

Part II entitled “Using Program Assessments to Improve Program Design” examines the usefulness of assessment, more specifically, how impact measurement can be used on

programmatic levels. Researchers in this section conclude that it is necessary to adjust the level of training to the professional needs of trainees.

Chng and Kit studied the impact of professional development on faculty reflection upon their teaching through survey research in Singapore. They found a positive shift in faculty members' thinking about their own teaching and the teaching preparation and noted that the program had also promoted a sense of community among faculty. The participants identified the practicum and mentorship as the most valued and meaningful components of the program. Through professional development, faculty were scaffolded to evaluate and reflect upon their own teaching, think innovatively, and espouse a research mode to teaching.

When describing professional development in Estonia, Karm, Remmik, and Hammer concur that limited evidence exists for the positive effect of faculty development and that effect depends on factors, such as program content, length, learning environment, and mentoring practices. However, they see faculty professional development as a way to foster faculty's use of learner-centered instruction, reflection, and transfer of high impact practices to their classrooms.

Davies and Maguire describe institutional factors that have a crucial role in the design of development courses and discuss the impact of these factors in Northern Ireland. The authors recommend that universities first review their institutional needs before designing continuing professional development and advocate for professional development not only for faculty but also for staff from non-academic departments, such as librarians and technical staff.

PART III entitled "Top-Down Determinants of Success in Instructional Development Programs" examine the effect of policies on the development and enactment of teacher education courses and programs.

Quinlan and Berndtson discuss how novel professional development can serve interests beyond the university level and serve social and economic goals set by the European Commission. However, they caution that the evaluation of effectiveness must be aligned to the same goals and considered in the context of these policy agendas. They see professional development as a contributor to the knowledge base, which then can be used as information for policy making. The researchers review the effect of the Bologna process, the Lisbon Strategy, and the European Commission on the design of programs and address challenges related to increased student mobility and diversity for faculty. The authors also recommend the inclusion of issues of curriculum and contextual factors besides the psychological processes of learning in faculty development. Finally, they recommend the establishment of innovative professional development to facilitate mobility within the European Union.

Murphy outlines factors that facilitated the development of accredited professional development programs (on the postgraduate certificate, diploma, Master's, and Ph.D. levels) in Ireland and provides an overview of similarities and differences among these pathways in terms of their design, delivery, and evaluation. Besides the perceived positive impact of faculty development in terms of participants' pedagogical content knowledge, reflective practice, professional recognition, and increased recognition of the import of teaching practices on the university level, the author also identifies challenges of scant resources, time constraints, and the lesser prestige and import of teaching effectiveness.

Nevgi's longitudinal study from Finland examines a research-based model designed to enhance instructional development. Nevgi emphasizes the centrality of research in professional development, which allows faculty to see and utilize an integrated approach to teaching and research. Of course, including professional development as part of the promotion process helps raise its prestige. The author provides a detailed description of the professional development program, in which Finnish researchers teach and teachers research. Funds are allocated by the university to further this research-based teaching to inform best practices from which both faculty and students benefit. In this approach faculty may experience a more in-depth change in their beliefs, attitudes, and thinking in their practice.

Norton, Norton, and Shannon studied the long-term effects of faculty teaching programs on lecturers' assessment practices in the UK. The authors state that institutional, departmental, disciplinary, and personal variables, such as pedagogical and assessment philosophy may mitigate the impact of development on lecturers' assessment practices. Their study suggests that having completed the program lecturers' beliefs about assessment changed, but they still struggled to implement their newly acquired knowledge and skills. As a solution, the authors recommend that professional development utilize pedagogical action research.

Part IV entitled "Theorizing about Instructional Development" includes a detailed theoretical discussion of impact measurement.

Roxå and Mårtensson use a cultural perspective to study whether the positive effects of professional development reach beyond individual faculty to their local contexts and networks. The authors discuss program characteristics that influence effectiveness, such as a generic vs. discipline-specific focus, program duration, and program goals. The authors also describe what an IHE can expect from organizing professional development for faculty, and what faculty can expect from such training. Finally, they advocate for a united approach toward teacher training and management interventions in order to realize the positive effects of professional development.

Stes and Van Petegem discuss the nature and levels of impact of professional development on teachers, students, and the institution. The authors caution that research should emphasize behavioral outcomes of professional development, such as measuring changes

in performance rather than just self-reports. They advocate for quasi-experimental designs with pre-post tests, or mixed methods in order to obtain quality evidence for the impact of development programs.

Trigwell states that university teaching programs have a positive impact and examines various methodologies for studying how and why this impact exists so that programs can be further improved and transferred to other contexts.

Simon and Pleschová recapitulate the findings of the studies for those who wish to establish successful professional development programs. This chapter provides a thorough discussion of program effects, categorizes models, lists methods of measuring impact, and compares programs. It also provides suggestions for managers engaged in program design and implementation, and considers areas for future research.

This volume makes a novel contribution to the literature by addressing how various independent and dependent variables are related and under what conditions they provide answers to the stated research questions. The papers include theoretical and practical approaches to the study of faculty development and address in innovative ways the enduring constraints related to conducting research in this area in terms of asking appropriate research question, identifying and defining outcome measures, selecting appropriate data collection strategies, choosing the most suitable research designs, and making the right conclusions within numerous limitations.

More specifically, the contribution of this volume is fourfold. First, it discusses the goals and aims of teacher education beyond its stated objective to impact learning, including its influence on teaching behavior, job placement, and expectations for teachers. Second, the volume discusses stakeholders in professional development and desirable measures of program impact for various target audiences. Third, the studies utilize various research methods and data collection approaches to study the topic. Last, the compilation of studies use diverse outcome measures.

As a well thought out and researched treatment of faculty development, this important work will no doubt interest university administrators, university faculty, and policy makers.