

CHAPTER

Professional development; creating an arena for pedagogical reflections among academic staff

A hermeneutic phenomenological study among learning teachers at Nord University, Norway

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Abstract

The competence of academic staff plays a crucial role in the quality of the learning process and student success. There has been an increasing emphasis on pedagogical competence among university lecturers as a way to ensure the quality of university teaching. Pedagogical competence is intended to be developed through participation in different university courses.

In our study, we reviewed learning experiences among 48 university lecturers at Nord University, Norway during a three-month pedagogical course. The lecturers maintained a reflection diary, they logged the practical part of the course and completed digital evaluation at the end of the course. The course was delivered through blended, asynchronous teaching, synchronous lessons and practical parts. Our study focused on the lecturers self-reported learning experiences recorded in the diary, the logs and the evaluation form. Our findings showed that the lecturers felt a positive recognition of their experiences, they appreciated the colleague observation and learning dialogues with colleagues, demanded a more strategic and holistic approach to academic development and reflected on actions with intentions to learn from experiences.

Keywords

Professional development, pedagogical competence, academic development, blended learning, reflected practitioner

1 Introduction

In recent decades, enormous changes have occurred within universities worldwide, including a shift in focus to academic development for university lecturers. The quality of the learning process and student success cannot be separated from the role and competency of the teaching staff. The teaching competence of academic staff plays an important role in the delivery of lectures and contributes to improving learning performance (Hakim, 2015). Higher education institutions are entrusted with the responsibility of providing society with highly skilled professionals, citizen and leaders (Sugrue et al., 2017), and efforts to enhance the quality of education have grown considerably in recent decades. This greater focus on the university lecturers' professional development has increased the intensity of the debates and research on quality in higher education (Brooks, 2005; Harvey & Williams, 2010; Westerheijden, 2007). However, there is no one best way forward or simple answer to the question of how to improve quality in higher education. The teacher's role in higher education is changing quickly. To be able to respond to these changes, appropriate teacher professionalization is needed (Bos & Brouwer, 2014). In addition, reflection and related notions such as reflective practice and critical reflection have gained increasing importance across a great variety of academic disciplines (Van Beveren et al., 2018).

In this chapter, we present a study based on pedagogical courses for academic staff at Nord University, arranged both in 2020 and 2021. Our research question is as follows: *What measures must be taken or considered to create an arena for pedagogical reflections among academic staff?*

2 Quality in Higher Education

Findings from various studies on teaching quality have defined a range of key factors of 'good teaching' in higher education: concern for and availability to students, enthusiasm and interest of teachers, clear organization and goals, feedback on learning, the encouragement of student independence and active learning, an appropriate workload and relevant assessment methods, the provision of a suitably challenging academic environment (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Damşa & de Lange, 2019; Gibbs, 2016). These key factors must also be included in an introduction program for novice lectures at the university. Like Ramsden (1991) claimed, it is impossible to become a good teacher by taking a course in how to lecture; rather, aspiring instructors must think about their entire teaching. They must aim for deep rather than surface learning, holism rather than atomism and context rather than an unreflective collection of facts. This view of learning complies with both a phenomenological philosophy and a pragmatic and constructive understanding.

Ramsden (1991) defined good teaching as

Good teaching encourages high quality student learning. It discourages the superficial approaches to learning represented by 'imitation subjects' and energetically encourages active engagement with subject content. This kind of teaching does not allow students to evade understanding, but neither does it bludgeon them into memorizing; it helps them respectfully towards seeing the world in a different way. (Ramsden, 1991, p. 86)

In recent decades, the higher education sector has moved toward requiring all lecturers to have teaching qualifications such as a teaching certificate. Among a variety of initiatives and actions, universities have begun to emphasize professional development in academic staff at universities, all with intention of providing high quality teaching (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

2.1 A course for university lecturers at Nord University

At Nord University, we ran a 3-month pedagogical courses mainly for new and temporary or native university lecturers. Our research was based on this course model and run in 2020 and 2021. The course model consisted of digital seminars (asynchrony and synchrony), individual preparations, pedagogical peer observations and guidance, reflection diaries, group work and discussions. In developing the course, we chose to use blended learning to combine online, face-to-face and self-paced learning. Like Serrano et al. (2019) stated, blending significant elements of the learning environment leads to better learning experiences and outcomes if combined appropriately. Due to limitations and restrictions related to COVID-19, we ran most of the course digitally. Only the peer guidance (pedagogical observations and guidance) part of the course could be conducted face-to-face in the classroom.

This was a short, basic course primarily aimed at new and temporary employees. The intention was to give this group a basis for understanding the framework and prerequisites for teaching in higher education and to give them an arena to discuss and further develop their teaching competencies. The course itself was also a modelling of course completion through which we wanted to 'walk the talk'. The courses were intended to promote the teachers' formation awareness and to further develop their critical reflection. To facilitate these goals, we chose the following four guidelines for the course:

1. Participants must be given an opportunity to discuss their teaching experiences with each other. One purpose of the course was to highlight the participants' practice experiences and to make them aware of the more tacit knowledge upon which their own teaching practice can be based.
2. Use teaching experiences that are close to them. It was important for us to prepare a course with speakers/presenters who were close to the participants in working life. Consequently, we largely chose speakers from our own university, meaning that most of presenters were colleagues of the participants. We believed that this closeness would create a greater opportunity for experience

sharing, a greater degree of perceived closeness and thereby more opportunities for teaching development and future collegial cooperation.

3. Include a practice portion during which the participants receive authentic learning experiences. The participants should plan a lesson, observe each other teaching lessons and give and receive supervision. This practice part was mainly self-governed. Peer observation is not a new tool for academic development (Bell & Thomson, 2018; O'Leary & Savage, 2020), however, the term observation has been used in different ways in theory and research (Warren, 2021). We wanted to clarify that observation is a way of forming a disposition of openness and of having an interest in learning from others (McPherson et al., 2015). This must be reinforced by giving teachers the autonomy to manage the process themselves while we as academic developers provide a framework and space for shared conclusions (Warren, 2021).
4. Prepare a learning path for the course along which participants were to experience teaching and to learn through experiencing (Dewey, 1916/1997). As academic developers, we are responsible for leading good practice in teaching and learning and for supporting staff to implement the strategic directions of our university (Gibbs et al., 2000). We modelled practice as an underlying strategy for introducing academic staff to the possibilities and problems of student-centred flexible learning. This practice was modelled through a flexible delivered learning path facilitated for learning. Modelling is a powerful learning tool in any professional discipline (Edwards et al., 2000), and we wanted to adopt it for the course.

The course model was based on a pedagogical understanding rooted in pragmatism and socio-cultural theory, mainly Dewey's experience concept (Dewey, 1910/1997, 1916/1997, 1930/1998). Dewey's pragmatism was based on human qualitative experience, though which considered any existing phenomena to be an event (Dewey, 1934/2005). It was important for us to include this and to ensure that the participants gained learning experience by both reflecting on earlier experiences and by gaining new experiences through which they could support and guide each other.

The scholarship on reflection generally refers to John Dewey, who defined reflection as a mode of thought that is systematic and grounded in scientific inquiry (Dewey, 1910/1997). Dewey's holistic perspective requires certain attitudes such as open-mindedness, whole-heartedness and responsibility from the reflective thinker (Van Beveren et al., 2018). It cannot be reduced to a simple logical and rational problem-solving procedure or a set of techniques for teachers to use (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). The study of reflection was further developed through Donald Schön's (2017) reflection-in-action as a new epistemology of practice that values the knowledge gained through everyday practice and that critiques technical rationality as the dominant epistemology of professional practice. A variety of education scholars have developed new notions of reflection founded on the theories of Dewey and Schön. Our understanding is founded on the practical form of reflection to facilitate professional development and awareness. The reflective practitioner is one of the foundations of professional learning communities (Fullan, 2001). Land (2001) place the reflective practice in the middle of the academic development landscape, identifying it as a political, critical, system and individual-oriented. In this way, academic development can occur through reflective practices on both a personal and interpersonal level. Systematic reflection on a person's own teaching activities can initially be useful for the individual's development. In the next round, systematic reflection can be brought into the pedagogical conversation in a local context such as a professional group or department (Allern, 2011; Prosser, 2008).

Our course content was based on didactical categories for education where didactics are embedded in almost all professional activities related to teaching (Gundem, 2000). We chose five core didactical subjects: educational policy, lesson planning, flipped classroom, peer guidance and formative and summative assessment. For each subject the participants received the following:

1. Asynchronous material including videos, articles, papers, presentations, book chapters and directions to review prior to the session
2. Synchronous seminars delivered by colleagues from Nord University or other universities. Academic staff presented their experience as teachers as it related to the specific

subject of the seminar. During the presentation, they had discussions with participants.

3. Reflection diaries, written by participants to reflect their own thoughts, experience, learning and further ideas for their own teaching. These notes were published on a digital platform, and the participants could comment on each other's notes.

Due to the theoretical fundament, we also outlined the following principles for the course:

- Have a practical approach – in other words, primarily focus on what a teacher can do and place less emphasis on theory
- Focus on the most common forms of teaching in higher education and show some examples of further development
- Make teaching competence at Nord University visible
- Create an arena for reflection and discussion about teaching and learning
- Provide an example of structure of content and structure for learning using the chosen learning management system (LMS)
- The offer must be online and have a scope equivalent to 40 hours

The course consisted of five synchronous meetings, several asynchronous parts and peer guidance, adding to a total of 40 hours. The participants gave and received guidance and feedback from colleagues who observed their lectures. The guidance was meant focus on different aspects of planning (learning outcome, content, working methods, interaction, and formative assessment). The academic developers of this course came from Nord University and from The Arctic University of Norway (UiT). Since UiT has been preparing for the national regulations and has experience with and understanding of the intentions of the regulations, it was important for Nord university to initially co-create the course with UiT.

Based on the guidelines and principles for the course and the theoretical framework, we chose to avoid the linear perspective used most often in the context of higher education. Instead, we provided an interactive perspective (Bos & Brouwer, 2014), designing a course for which practicing teaching skills, discussion, and reflection on learning activities were core areas. We also

wanted to emphasise reflection and further development among the participants; a large part of the course was used for reflection on teaching and learning activities. Even if the participating lecturers could benefit from simple survival tips on lecturing, we wanted to explore beyond such simple tips and support a deeper learning of and understanding for teaching. Like Ramsden (1991) wrote that:

we are not talking about a few survival tips on lecturing and assessment presented in a one-day staff development workshop (...) but about a lengthy and demanding progression towards professional competence” (1991, p. 250).

Furthermore, like Dewey wrote many decades ago,

Nothing has brought pedagogical theory into greater disrepute than the belief that is identified with handing out to teachers recipes to be followed in teaching (Dewey, 1938/2005, p. 170).

3 Method

This was a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological study focusing on university lecturers' self-reported learning experiences when participating in a pedagogical course for academic staff. The participants also wrote reflection diaries from the synchronous portions and logged the practice part of the course; altogether, they produced five different mandatory reflection submissions and a three-part practice log. In addition, the participants were sent a separate questionnaire at the end of the course. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions for the participants in a digital format. The questionnaire focused on their reflections and thoughts regarding the course – its content, structure and the participants' own learning experiences.

The first step in the analysis was to review the reflection notes, the practice logs (memo) and the written answers to open-ended questions. Then, from those sources, significant statements or sentences that best described how the participants experienced the phenomena were extracted (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The next step was to combine the statements into overriding themes. The statements were used as a basis to form a description of what the

participants experienced. We analysed the data through direct interpretation, where we sought patterns in the material. For this part, we used abstraction (to group together similar statements from participants), subsumption (underlying recurrent themes in statements that deserve a separate status), polarisation (differences between the statements), frequency (how often they occur) and function (whether the statement has an underlying meaning) (Smith et al., 2009). In this last level of analysis, we developed a theoretical discussion of the main tendencies in the material in line with interpretative phenomenology (Webster-Wright, 2010).

The course is mainly for novice lecturers, but both novice and experienced university lecturers participated in 2020 and 2021.

TABLE 1

The participants were academic staff from four faculties: Faculty of Education and Arts, Faculty of Nursing and Health Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Business School.

3.1 ***Ethics***

As researchers, we provided the participants written information about the research and its purpose, about who will have access to their information, the intended use of the results and the consequences for participating in the research project. The participants gave written consent to use their reflection diaries, logs and evaluation forms for research purposes. The research followed the guidelines for research ethics outlined by NESH (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities). To secure anonymity, no names or course classes were mentioned.

To maintain anonymity, confidentiality and COVID-19 regulations, we used a digital questionnaire. We used the web form called *Nettskjema*. This is a solution for collection data developed by The University of Oslo, Norway. The web form does not store any IP addresses, usernames, or other information about the participants, thereby securing anonymity.

4 Findings

The main findings are presented by theme and in combination describe the reflection themes and self-reported learning experiences the lecturers encountered throughout the course. The following five themes emerged from the data.

4.1 *Recognition of their teaching experiences*

The aim of the course was not to teach something radically new but to acknowledge and further develop the participants' competencies as teachers. We wanted to highlight their teaching experiences, put words to them, share them and help them become more aware of their tacit teaching knowledge. The reflection diaries, logs and evaluation forms showed recognition of participants' experiences, including adapting and developing their teacher competencies, was one of the success criteria in the course model.

The participants highlighted the course as a development of their own competence. Some already had considerable lecturing experience, but they nonetheless appreciated the course and reported a learning process with new motivations. One of the participants wrote in the evaluation that

...all discussions with you as responsible and other participants gave me new impulses to evaluate my own teaching and see it in a new light”.

This is supported by Dewey's reflection on experiences for learning (1910/1997).

The participants reported becoming more aware of their own role as university lecturer and as facilitators of learning. They reported that the course gave them the opportunity to further reflected on learning processes in general and on their own practice specifically. One also stated that this reflection was not just wanted but necessary:

I felt I reached the goal of further developing myself as a professional university lecturer, mostly because the course force you to reflect, assess and discuss your own practical.

Most participants remarked that sharing experiences in the course group and in smaller groups in break-out rooms were important aspects of their own learning processes. One quote from the reflection diaries stated that

All the discussions with you course supervisors and the other participants has given me impulses and inspiration to assess and see my lecturing in a new light.

Another noted that

It's been interesting to listen to experiences from colleagues at the university. I think this has been the most useful part of the course so far in terms of what I can take with me further in my own teaching.

Ramsden (1991) emphasised deeper learning among university lecturers, that allowed teachers to think about their teaching in terms of a changed understanding and holism. This adaption of experiences can occur through reflection (Dewey, 1910/1997). The participants stated that the course gave them the opportunity to reflect upon what they wanted the students to learn and how to facilitate this learning using planning, structure and different types of assessment.

Due to the holistic approach, the participants had different ways experiences of and reflections on the notion of a more holistic view as learners. The participants added some comments regarding their own feelings as employees and appreciated the possibility to learn. To exemplify, one participant wrote the following:

I felt taken care of as an employee at the university, and that they see me as a teacher.

For us, it was important to meet the participants in their own developing zones (Vygotsky, 1978) in which they had potential to develop further based on prior experiences. Like the Danish existentialist Søren Kierkegaard stated: If one truly wants to succeed in leading a person to a specific position, one need to find his/hers location and start from there (Kierkegaard & Kierkegaard, 1946). For further development, both individually and intuitively,

it is essential that those involved appreciate the experiences of others. This appreciation can affect the motivation for development (Deci & Ryan, 2012). What someone owes to every person is the recognition of and respect for their status as a person capable of acting on the basis of reason (Honneth, 1996). Honneth's (1996) theory of recognition means that recognising people's qualities and ability to contribute to the community will help them value themselves. To create successful pedagogical development among academic staff in higher education, the process must have a light touch, be embedded in a supportive environment and encourage reflection (Curzon & Harding, 2002).

4.2 Collegial supervision

In addition, the part of the course that focused on the implementation and supervision of a person's own teaching session received good feedback. The following quotes from the evaluation form exemplified this:

I think it was a good exercise and gave room to think through what you actually do in teaching in a new way. It was also nice to be able to see what others are doing, and how I can use what they do.

This is something I could have imagined more of daily. It was useful with input from a colleague, at the same time as we also played on each other in the teaching. It gave a dynamic that the students were also involved in.

Meaningful and educational. I think we should create more such situations, where we try to develop each other's skills.

The reflection phase of peer learning, in particular the verbal debriefing, is an essential part of the learning process (Boud et al., 2014). The many practitioners who have implemented peer learning practices in higher education have demonstrated that the difficult issues must be addressed in peer learning (Boud et al., 2014). For instance, peer learning can significantly aid the development of required knowledge and skills, but the design of the peer learning program must vary among faculties to reflect the local context in which it is conducted (Boud et al., 2014). To ensure that ours accomplished this, we wanted to make space for

autonomy to allow participants to make their own adjustments regarding the peer learning sessions. Teachers are rarely given the opportunity to see each other “in action”. Furthermore, thinking and talking about teaching can become descriptive and narrow (Warren, 2021). Peer observation can be a valuable tool for addressing this narrow perspective (Warren, 2021). For some participants, it was their first time being observed by a colleague.

It was new for me to get direct feedback on how the teaching worked in terms of, for example, voice use, tempo and interaction with the students. It was valuable to get such concrete feedback.

This quote is linked to another important experience from the observation: teachers can learn from each other even if they are from different academic fields. Teachers are a unit and have much in common, and factors driving the fragmentation of universities may challenge academic development.

The autonomy part again contributed to more critical thinking and a reflective lifelong learning approach. For novice teachers in particular, the usefulness of conceptions of teaching and learning must be proven in order for them to function in their educational practices and then adjusted to fit their own personal contexts (Bos & Brouwer, 2014). Teachers must be facilitated to build upon their own personal theories within their own specific contexts, and the guidance part of the course was meant to contribute and support this practice. Teachers’ self-reported learning experience indicated that the peer learning session specifically – though the entire course more generally – helped participants professionally.

4.3 *Modelling a learning path*

We established a course model orientation where we emphasize the course as a modelling to inspire the participants to imitate some of the practices we illustrated to help them learn by experience without intentions of best practice. The learning path for the course (the course’s structure in terms of order, participant requirements for the participants, etc.) allowed experiences for reflection, which means functioned as intended. Comments from the participants included:

I like to have such concrete examples of structure and not just hear 'you should have structure'.

Smart! I liked the learning path on Canvas!

Preparing for the gatherings involved handling out asynchronous learning material a maximum of two weeks before the synchronic lectures. It was important for us to include this type of blended, asynchronous teaching in the course. We wanted to provide an example of structure of content and structure for learning using the chosen learning management system (LMS). One of our aims was to give the participants experience with ideas like a flipped classroom in order to inspire them to apply these techniques in their own learning activities. The flipped classroom has an initial blended-learning approach because it capitalizes on the flexibility of online learning (Ng, 2021).

There was an ongoing alteration between the participants' lecture role and their role as a student in the course. Several of the participants managed to make this process explicit and reflected on the learning related to it. Nearly all participants emphasised the enriching effect of experiencing what it is like to be a 'student' in the context of the course meeting. Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen (2007) noted the important role of modelling by the teacher educator. The equivalent question of what we wanted our students to know in the case of academic staff was as follows: what do we want our teachers to know about teaching? (Ramsden, 1991, p. 220). For both students and teachers, it is all about the goals of teaching. The goals must be properly defined; a well-defined goal helps the learner understand what is expected of them. Course objectives and assessments of whether they have been achieved are not separated elements but are instead closely related to teaching itself and its planning (Ramsden, 1991).

The asynchronous material gave the learners opportunities to become prepared in different ways for the subjects and synchronous lessons. This design of a flipped classroom builds on a particular blend of e-learning and face-to-face teaching. It is a special type of blended learning, whereby the learners are presented with web-based lectures prior to classroom sessions (Thai et al., 2017). One participant of this course wrote that it was

I liked that I could come prepared to the lessons and be able to decide for myself when to do the preparations myself. To come prepared was also expected, hence flipped classroom was a central topic during the course.

Prior research has indicated that a flipped classroom helps students learn at their own pace; they spend more time in preparatory work and become more involved during classroom activities (Johnson, 2013; Kong, 2014). For example, one participant remarked that

The way we have been working during the course, I need to be better at doing with my own students.

A key competence for a professional teacher is their ability to reflect upon their own practical experience (Klafki, 1998; Schulman, 2004). One of the participants reported that

The biggest a-ha experience with this teaching session was the use of the video lecture as flipped classroom. After we had flipped classroom on the course, I decided to test this out. A clear difference from previous lectures was that I experienced that the students were much more "connected" and active from the start of the lecture.

They emphasized the pedagogical development they experienced even those with experience in the pedagogy field. One of the participants from the field of pedagogy wrote in the evaluation that

The course has been great. Even if I have worked in the field of pedagogy at the university for nearly 30 years, I still got impulses for new ideas and input, so it was great to participate.

Thus, though several participants had backgrounds in teacher education and/or pedagogy as a discipline, they felt they learned more by participating in the course.

4.4 Learning from each other

In a learning organization, there should be a continuous focus on learning from each other and learning together (Senge, 2014). The participants demanded continuous learning paths and communities in the university, in particular communities of practice. Through pedagogical observations and conversations, they found ways to notice their tacit knowledge and actions, enabling them to shape and reshape their emerging academic identities (Warren, 2021). Understanding academics' beliefs is essential to improving educational practice (Pajares, 1992) to the point where individuals' epistemological beliefs greatly influence their conceptions of teaching and research (Brew, 2003). One of the participants wrote

Thinking forward, it will be important to build network within our own organization. In addition, I would like to inspire my colleagues to build a culture for sharing by doing so myself. Having a conscious mindset about one's own continuous professional learning process, should be a topic on every Nord employee now and then. Hence the team of colleagues will be important to facilitate such a process.

Stensaker (2018) discussed the notion of academic development as cultural work and linked it to a trend within academic development that calls for a more holistic approach to the field. The different aspects of academic work – research, teaching and administration – must be closely related through a better understanding of practice (Boud & Brew, 2013; Stensaker, 2018). The participants appreciated the parts of the course that focused on the link among politics, teaching and research. They valued the holistic approach to quality in higher education.

Land (2001) presented the reflective practitioner as one orientation to academic development practice. This orientation seeks to foster a culture of self- and peer evaluation and critical reflection among colleagues to help them cope with uncertain and ambivalent organisational environments. Communication with other teachers from different backgrounds contribute to the formation of academic identity (Warren, 2021), and can open up new possibilities for conceptualizing learning and working (McPherson et al., 2015). Reflection is central to the activities of a community of practice and identity are worked on through participation in the community (Wenger, 1998).

4.5 *The didactical content*

Based on the self-reported learning experiences of the teachers, the themes for the course appeared to work well. The participants highlighted several topics they particularly liked, but overall, they seemed satisfied with all topics. Quotes and results from the evaluation form included this one

I found all the topics had content interesting and meaningful, they all had aspects that I appreciate.

The participants were asked to rate their own learning outcomes on the different topics for the sessions in the course, with 1 being very low and 5 being very high:

TABLE 2

Nearly all participants emphasised the enriching effect of experiencing teaching techniques, of discussing good practices during the course meetings and of participating in peer learning. In the practical part of the course (the peer guidance), the findings indicated that the experimentation with new teaching and learning techniques were a key developmental opportunity. The teachers were stimulated to experiment with all kinds of pedagogical techniques not as a demand but as an explorative method of further development.

Dewey principally focused on thoughts and the meaning of thought for learning, viewing reflection as the type of thinking with learning value itself (Dewey, 1910/1997). Reflecting upon experiences allows people to find meaning. Furthermore, reflection plays an important role in making sense of experiences (Boud et al., 1993). Our findings supported this understanding of reflection on experiences, where the participants reported a learning value in this activities and processes:

It was good to write a reflection note to challenge oneself to formulate what one had thought and learned.

In the course, we chose to use presenters mainly from our own university. We thought it would be fruitful to gain inspiration from someone close to the participants in working life. This could also

contribute to further academic development as cultural work within the university.

5 Conclusions

In our research, we wanted to investigate how we could create an arena for pedagogical reflections among academic staff. Our findings indicated some factors to consider in academic development based on the experiences of the participants. Our participants expressed a feeling of being seen as university lecturers, an acceptance of and respect for their teaching experiences and an appreciation of the possibility to gain further development and understanding. To facilitate for further development through reflection became an important part of the course. Learning and development are interrelated (Vygotsky, 1978) and take place through reflection on experiences (Dewey, 1916/1997).

The participants requested learning networks and a sharing culture within the university. Academic development calls for a more holistic approach to the field and academic development as cultural work is linked to this (Stensaker, 2018). The participants appreciated colleague leaning, and our findings indicated the fruitfulness in mixing groups of employees, meaning mixing university lectures from different academical fields and different length of experience. The university lecturers who participated in the course had different lengths of experience in university teaching and came from four different faculties. Despite these differences, all reported experiencing the course as a learning support, which helped them develop as professionals and achieve different learning outcomes. In combination, themes, structure and the learning methods used were aspects that supported this development.

The course was modelling a learning path, where there was an ongoing alteration between the participants' lecturer role and their role as a student in the course. Several of the participants managed to make this process explicit and were able to reflect on the learning related to it. Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen (2007) emphasised the important role of modelling by the teacher educator.

The intention in academic development is to raise the quality of the university lectures given, to support more student active learning methods, and to raise the value of lecturing. Our research showed that by providing pedagogical programs and courses, universities can raise the pedagogical awareness and support the professional development among university lecturers. Without training in or knowledge of pedagogy, most academics have no reference point for their practice (Ortlieb et al., 2010). Prior research indicated the need for a more holistic approach to the field (Stensaker, 2018), and our findings supported this. The reflected practitioner is one of the foundations of learning communities, and academical development should evolve an ongoing holistic approach based on recognitions of the employees. Universities should facilitate for a mutual reflection in and over actions, including a common sharing of knowledge and experiences.

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Notes

TABLE 1 Years of teaching experience among the participants

Years:	
Less than 1 year	18,5%
1-3 year	21%
4-6 year	10,5%
7-9 year	10,5%
10-15 year	10,5%
More than 15 year	29%

TABLE 2 Self-reported learning outcome from various course topic (1 = very low, 5 = very high)

Course topic:	1	2	3	4	5
Educational policy	0%	21%	37%	29%	13%
Lesson planning	2%	16%	13%	40%	29%
Flipped classroom	5%	10%	25%	39%	21%
Formative and summative assessment	5%	0%	25%	45%	25%