

# Developing a Teaching Philosophy: An Exercise in Futility or a Means to Transforming Teaching Practice?

K. Dørum, R. Sandvoll, and M. Solberg, *UiT The Arctic University of Norway*

**ABSTRACT:** An essential part of academic development involves identifying and articulating ones' own beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, and relating these to own teaching practices through critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991; Kreber & Cranton, 2000). This forms the core of the Programme for Basic Pedagogical Competence at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Over the course of this programme, university teachers are introduced to learning theories, normative pedagogical perspectives, and current research on effective teaching and learning. They are also required to write a 3-5 page teaching philosophy statement, presenting and discussing their teaching practice as well as personal and theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning. In a currently ongoing study, we perform semi-structured interviews with 15-18 academics who participated in the programme 2-3 years ago. We ask them to describe the process of writing the teaching philosophy text, and to reflect on the extent and ways in which the work has contributed to transforming their teaching practice since. We also ask them to describe the nature of the collegial interaction concerning teaching and educational development in their group or department. Measuring the effect of academic development is a challenging task. However, by exploring teachers' perceived understanding of the impact a specific SoTL-oriented programme has had on their teaching practice, and relating this to their views on the microculture of their collegial community, we will gather knowledge about how a SoTL approach can be regarded as contributing to developing and changing teaching in a set of cultural contexts. The present research seeks to connect two central assumptions of SoTL: firstly, that development and change of teaching practice should draw on pedagogical theories in order to deepen and broaden teachers' understanding, and that such reflective work has an impact on how university teachers change and develop their own teaching practice (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999); and secondly, that developing good individual teaching practice can be enhanced by teachers working in collegial communities that provide an arena for discussing teaching and learning and promote an experience of shared responsibility for an educational practice (Roxå, Mårtensson & Alveteg, 2011, Roxå & Mårtensson, 2015).

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