

## The Ideal and the Experienced: University Teachers' Perceptions of a Good University Teacher and Their Experienced Pedagogical Competency

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This study explores how university teachers perceive the features and characteristics of a good university teacher and how they self-evaluate their experienced pedagogical competency. Furthermore, this study explores how the experienced pedagogical competency and perceived features and characteristics of a good university teacher are related. The data were collected by a questionnaire (N=73) from two groups of university teachers: the participants and non-participants of an educational development project. The results showed that the teachers perceived a good university teacher as having a wide knowledge base, having versatile professional roles, and continuously developing their professional competency. They also self-evaluated social reflection, emotions, and active participation in teaching development as core areas of their pedagogical competency. The university teachers perceived ideal of a good university teacher was mainly consistent with their experienced pedagogical competency, however, an emotional aspect was not perceived to include the ideal of a good university teacher. Comparing the two groups revealed differences in how the university teachers experienced their expertise as teachers. It seems that strategic educational development projects can act as gateways to develop teaching skills through systematic development of teaching for university teachers who may not find formal university pedagogy courses suitable for them.

A rapidly changing world and globalization are presenting new challenges for higher education. The society also sets new requirements for university graduates such as 21st-century competencies as they are entering working life (e.g., Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Due to these changing demands, there is a need to develop teaching in higher education. Questions, such as “What characterizes a good university teacher?” and “What competencies should a good university teacher have?”, have raised considerable interest in higher education in recent decades. This study aims to explore how university teachers perceive the features and characteristics of a good university teacher, as well as how they self-evaluate their experienced pedagogical competency. Furthermore, this study aims to explore how the experienced pedagogical competency and perceived features and characteristics of a good university teacher are related. These perspectives are investigated in two different university teacher groups in order to explore whether there are differences in the perceptions between a group of teachers, who have decided to participate in a strategic educational development project and a comparative group of university teachers who are not participating in the project.

While researchers have provided a variety of definitions of the characteristics and competencies required, a good university teacher is often described as a subject field expert with pedagogical skills (e.g., Biggs & Tang, 2011; Duță, G. Pânișoară, & I. O. Pânișoară, 2014; Hirsto, Lampinen, & Syrjäkari, 2013; Su & Wood, 2012). This suggests that the research-teaching nexus is characteristic of expertise in university teaching (e.g. Annala & Mäkinen, 2011; Weller, 2016). University teachers usually begin their academic careers as researchers, and teaching is a duty

that comes along with their academic profession as a researcher. In their work as “teachers-as-researchers”, university teachers need to have an understanding of how knowledge is created in their professional area (Annala & Mäkinen, 2011; Weller, 2016).

Although the connection between research and teaching is elementary in universities, the relationship is not simple in terms of academics' development in the expertise of research and teaching. The notion of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) was introduced by Boyer (1990) to highlight the apparent disregard of teaching skills in the academic context, and the notion has since been explored by many scholars. Healey (2000), for example, argues that, in order to enhance the appreciation of teaching, both disciplinary research and teaching should be systematically investigated, and university teachers' pedagogical skills in teaching should be open to collegial peer review, as is their research expertise. Weller (2016) agrees with this by suggesting that becoming scholarly in teaching requires rethinking teaching through the lens of pedagogic inquiry. Kreber and Cranton (2000) approach teachers' expertise and the development of SoTL by considering different domains of knowledge in teaching, namely instructional, pedagogical, and curricular knowledge. Knowledge in each domain is created through three forms of reflection: content, process, and premise reflection, leading to nine components of SoTL. They suggest that the development of SoTL is a process including reflection on experience-based knowledge and research-based knowledge about teaching.

The SoTL model by Kreber and Cranton (2000) was influenced by Shulman's (1986) model of special

types of knowledge required in effective teaching: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. Extending Shulman's idea, the "technological pedagogical content knowledge" (TPACK) framework by Koehler and Mishra (2008, see also Koehler, Mishra, Kereluik, Shin, & Graham, 2014) attempts to identify the nature of knowledge required by teachers for effective technology integration in their teaching while addressing the complex and situated nature of teacher knowledge. Even though the TPACK model has not been specifically developed in the context of higher education, it has also been used and studied in higher education (e.g., Dysart & Weckerle, 2015; Kushner Benson & Ward, 2013).

Besides considering university teachers' expertise as mastery of a body of knowledge (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006), it can also be perceived to be collective in nature, offering a framework to approach expertise as an experiential phenomenon, meaning that expertise is seen as contextual and created socially in certain social and historical contexts (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008). According to Isopahkala-Bouret (2008), expertise as an experiential phenomenon includes relevant knowledge, a context-dependent way of acting, and a sense of confidence and trust. Experiencing one's expertise depends on the situation and thus, the way academics and teachers experience themselves plays a crucial role in how they are as teachers (Ashwin et al., 2016; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008; Weller, 2016). Furthermore, experience of expertise is influenced by the disciplines in which one teaches, for example, how knowledge is seen, what kind of social value we attach to this knowledge, and how to teach in certain fields (Ashwin et al., 2016; Fraser et al., 2014). Considering expertise as an experiential phenomenon means that expertise is not a stable status or a personal characteristic (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008).

### **Competence, Competency, and Pedagogical Competency**

When discussing expertise, skills, knowledge, and characteristics, the concepts of competence and competency are often used, sometimes also as synonyms (cf. Mäkinen & Annala, 2010). Defining the concepts of competence and competency is, however, a challenging task, and currently there is no consensus among scholars on how to define them. The two main approaches to competence/y are the European and American traditions (Garavan & McGuire, 2001; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Mäkinen & Annala, 2010). In the European tradition, competence is defined as what people can do (skills) rather than what they know, which can be described as an "outcome-based" approach (Hogg, 2013; Mäkinen & Annala, 2010). The American tradition approaches

competency as a process rather than merely as an outcome (Mäkinen & Annala, 2010). As a concept, competency captures skills beyond cognitive ability, such as self-regulation and social skills, and takes the behavioral aspects lying behind competent performance into account (Hogg, 2013; McClelland, 1998). This approach can be described, according to Hogg (2013), as a "strengths-based" approach.

Besides these two main approaches, Le Deist and Winterton (2005) argue for a multi-dimensional and holistic approach drawing from research traditions in Germany and France. This approach gives the opportunity to align educational and work-based provision and enables exploitation of the synergy between formal education and experiential learning in order to develop professional competence/y. The holistic approach has brought the concepts of competence and competency closer together (Mäkinen & Annala, 2010). According to Le Deist and Winterton (2005), all the aforementioned approaches can be called "rationalistic approaches". Although these approaches differ in how they define competence/y, they all regard human competence/y as being constituted of a specific set of attributes that workers use to accomplish their work, and these attributes are primarily seen to be context-independent (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005).

The main critique of the rationalistic approaches concerns the way that different attributes of work are operationalized into quantitative measures (Sandberg, 2000). In the context of higher education, efforts to define the competencies and characteristics of a good university teacher often result in general, simplified and overly narrow lists or sets of distinctive characteristics and features (Winterton, 2009). The "interpretative research tradition" provides an alternative to the rationalistic approaches to competence/y by suggesting that skills and competencies are based on, and formed in relation to, a person's perceptions and understanding of their work, defining competency as more of a social construction that results from the interaction between the individual and the environment in certain contexts (Sandberg, 2000). It is, therefore, not only the competencies themselves that are significant; the way that individuals experience work is also fundamental to their competency (Garavan & McGuire, 2001; Sandberg, 2000).

Pedagogical competence is a concept that has been used by a number of scholars in the higher education context. For example, Olsson and Roxå (2013, see also Olsson, Mårtensson, & Roxå, 2010) have studied and analyzed a system for rewarding excellence in university teaching, and they have presented a pedagogical competence model emphasizing a developmental aspect rather than a specific level of competence. They use the concept of competence referring to the European tradition. In their model, Olsson and Roxå (2013), however, consider that

becoming an expert and excellent teacher is a continuous process requiring continuous observations and reflection on the practice of teaching and its effects on student learning. Apelgren and Giertz (2010) also use the concept of pedagogical competence. They consider, however, that pedagogical competence is not just a static list of features and characteristics, but more of a process of showing the ability and will to regularly apply the attitude, the knowledge, and the skills that promote students' learning in the best possible way (Apelgren & Giertz, 2013). Both the pedagogical competence models of Olsson and Roxå (2013) and Apelgren and Giertz (2013) consider the concept of competence more comprehensively and widely than the definition related to the concept of competence in the European tradition.

In this study, we use the concept of pedagogical competency, and in defining the concept, we lean towards the interpretative research tradition. Furthermore, we understand expertise as an experiential phenomenon, and pedagogical competency is considered to be one aspect of university teachers' expertise. Thus, pedagogical competency refers here to university teachers' conceptions, reflections, evaluations, and experienced confidence as teachers (see also Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017). Experienced pedagogical competency is approached through self-evaluations and reflections.

### **Developing as a University Teacher and One's Pedagogical Competency**

There is a strong consensus among scholars that developing as a teacher requires reflection (e.g., Biggs & Tang, 2011; Brookfield, 1995; McAlpine, Weston, C. Beauchamp, Wiseman, & J. Beauchamp, 1999; Schön, 1983; Tynjälä, Virtanen, Klemola, Kostiainen, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2016). Reflection, however, is not something that automatically changes teachers' actions and approaches to teaching (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). In order to facilitate reflection turning into action and developing as a teacher, the concept and practice of reflection both need to be clear to the teacher, and it needs to be acknowledged that there are individual differences and preferences for using different reflective tools (Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017; Russell, 2005).

When considering the experience of expertise and competency as being contextual and created socially (Ashwin et al., 2016; Garavan & McGuire, 2001; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008; Sandberg, 2000; Weller, 2016), the role of peers and colleagues needs to be discussed. According to Olsson and Roxå (2013), informed pedagogical discussions among colleagues are important in achieving theoretical and personalized knowledge about teaching and learning (see also Boyd

& Harris, 2010; Pedrosa-de-Jesus, Guerra, & Watts, 2017). University teachers create and maintain their understanding of teaching and learning in significant networks by having meaningful and sincere private discussions characterized by mutual trust and shared intellectual intrigue (Pyörälä, Hirsto, Toom, Myyry, & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2015; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Significant relationships are at the heart of how teachers discuss their identities and how identity forms (Uitto, Kaunisto, Syrjälä, & Estola, 2015).

The role of emotions in learning and teaching has not been previously well recognized as learning and teaching in higher education are considered to be primarily cognitive and rational activities. However, some researchers consider that there is, besides cognitive (Schön, 1983) and social (Fleck & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Mälkki, 2011; Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017), also an emotional aspect of reflection (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). According to Boud and colleagues (1985), emotions can be considered elements of a reflective process whereby an individual recaptures, thinks about and evaluates one's experiences. In the recent decades, the role of emotions in learning and education (Arpiainen et al., 2016; Pekrun et al., 2007), in professional development (Heikkinen et al., 2011; Williams, 2009) and in development of a sense of expertise as a teacher (Ashwin et al., 2016; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008) has emerged in the research literature. There is an emotional aspect to the experience of expertise as an academic and a teacher: besides knowledge and skills, one must, for example, be able to experience confidence when acting as an expert (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008). When discussing teachers' experienced competency as a teacher, the concept of self-efficacy, originally introduced by Bandura (1977), has also been used (e.g., Henson, 2001, Trigwell & Prosser, 2004; Williams, 2009).

The perspective adopted in this article relates to the development of university teachers' pedagogical competency and the educational development processes of an institution. These relate to the core pedagogical development processes that are thought to support institutions in their educational development. These processes include strategic processes, curriculum processes, and the process of developing faculty members' expertise through the scholarship of teaching and learning (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Hirsto, 2013; Hirsto, Sointu, Valtonen, Saarelainen, & Team Ameba, 2018; Hubball & Gold, 2007). There is evidence that various kinds of pedagogical development programs and courses can have a positive effect on teachers and facilitate the development of teachers' pedagogical competency (Hirsto et al., 2013; Nevgi & Löfström, 2015; Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2007, 2008; Stewart, 2014). However, there seems to be a continuous discussion on the effectiveness of pedagogical development programmes

and courses, for example in terms of the amount of pedagogical studies completed (Postareff et al., 2008) or the length of engagement in tackling pedagogical issues (Nevgi & Löfström, 2015; Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017). Furthermore, the development of the pedagogical competency of university teachers can be supported by facilitating their participation in educational development projects (Hirsto et al., 2013).

### Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to explore how university teachers perceive the features and characteristics of good university teachers and how they self-evaluate their experienced pedagogical competency. Furthermore, the aim is to explore how the features and characteristics of a good university teacher and teachers' experienced pedagogical competency are related. This study was conducted including two teacher groups, the participants and the non-participants of an educational development project, in order to understand the possible differences in how the teachers perceive being a good university teacher and their pedagogical competency. There is only a little research on how participation in an educational development project can influence how the university teachers perceive good university teaching.

We posed our research questions as follows:

- (1) How do the university teachers perceive the features and characteristics of a good university teacher?
  - a) How do university teachers' perceptions of a good university teacher vary according to participation in the flipped learning project?
  - b) How do university teachers' perceptions of a good university teacher vary according to the amount of pedagogical studies completed?
- (2) How do the university teachers self-evaluate their experienced pedagogical competency?
  - a) How does university teachers' experienced pedagogical competency vary according to participation in the flipped learning project?
  - b) How does university teachers' experienced pedagogical competency vary according to the amount of pedagogical studies completed?
- (3) How are the university teachers' perceptions of a good university teacher and their experienced pedagogical competency related?

## Method

### Participants in the Study

The study participants ( $N=73$ ) consisted of university teachers representing two groups (Figure 1) according to their participation ( $n=26$ ) or non-participation ( $n=47$ ) in an educational development project. The first group – Participants in the Flipped Learning (PFL) educational development project – consisted of university teachers who applied to participate in a one-year educational development project in a multidisciplinary Finnish university. The project was designed to support the university teachers in adopting the flipped learning design in their teaching and in developing their teaching. Forty-three university teachers applied and were accepted to participate in the project, and 26 of them agreed to participate in this study. The second group – Non-participants in the Flipped Learning educational development project (NFL) – consisted of 47 university teachers from the same university who did not participate in the educational development project. The teachers in this group were voluntary participants in a larger survey related to teachers' pedagogical, digital, and technological competencies conducted at the university. Data were collected from both the participants and non-participants in the educational development project in order to gain more insights on the potential contextual variation of university teachers' pedagogical competency.

The participants (51 females, 22 males) in the study represented all faculties of the university: philosophy 28 (38%), science and forestry 10 (14%), health sciences 20 (27%), social sciences and business studies 10 (14%), and other university units 5 (7%). Most of the participants had ongoing studies in pedagogy or had completed pedagogical studies (Table 1), and in both groups nearly half of the participants had completed 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits of pedagogical studies. The PFL and NFL groups were thus quite similar in their profiles regarding pedagogical studies and gender.

### Data Gathering and Instruments

The data were gathered through an electronic questionnaire during the spring term of 2016. For the PFL group, data collection took place after the university teachers had started the flipped learning project. The NFL group also answered the electronic questionnaire at the same time but reflected instead on their current experiences regarding their pedagogical competency and their perceptions of a good university teacher.

The electronic questionnaire consisted of following parts: (1) questions on the respondents' demographic background, (2) open-ended questions focusing on how the university teachers perceive the features and

Figure 1  
*Participant groups of the study.*

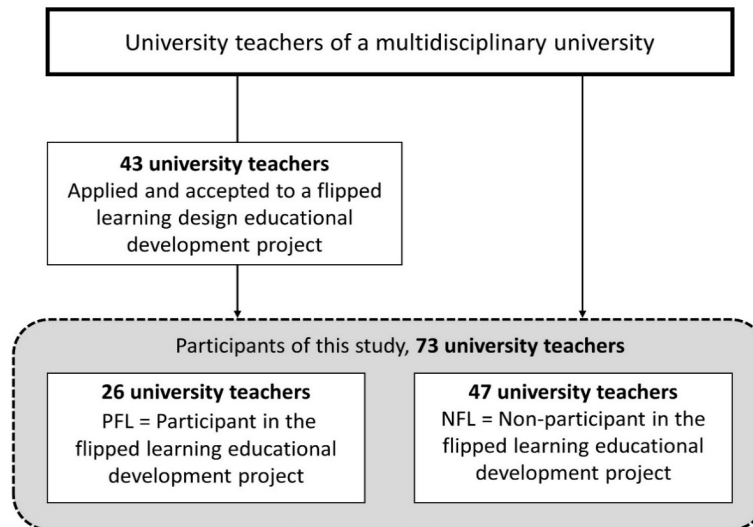


Table 1  
*Gender and the Amount of Pedagogical Studies in PFL and NFL groups.*

Background variable		PFL*	NFL*	Total
Gender	Female	18	33	51
	Male	8	14	22
Amount of pedagogical studies	No studies	2	6	8
	Some studies	3	10	13
	Ongoing studies	4	8	12
	Completed 25 ECTS credits	3	2	5
	Completed 35 ECTS credits	3	1	4
	Completed 60 ECTS credits	11	20	31
	Total	26	47	73

\*PFL = Participant in the flipped learning educational development project, NFL = Non-participant in the flipped learning educational development project.

characteristics of a good university teacher, and (3) two instruments, The *Pedagogical Competency and Professional Development Instrument (PCPD)* and The *Social Reflection and Emotions in Teaching Instrument (SRET)*, by the authors (Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017). The teachers answered the open-ended questions before conducting the self-evaluations via the two instruments.

The *PCPD* consisted of 22 items representing the following four sub-scales: (1) Teaching skills, (2) Student guidance and support, (3) Developing teaching and as a teacher, and (4) Expertise and scholarship of teaching. In developing the items for this instrument, we consulted the Pedagogical Competence model of Olsson and Roxå (2013), the

Scholarship of Teaching model of Kreber and Cranton (2000), the *TPACK* framework of Koehler and Mishra (2008), and the Integrative Pedagogy model of Tynjälä and colleagues (2016).

The *SRET* consisted of 11 items representing two sub-scales: (1) Peer support and social networks, and (2) Emotions in teacher's work. In forming the items for this instrument, we consulted the studies of Handal (1999), Pyörälä and colleagues (2015), and Roxå and Mårtensson (2009) regarding the social aspect of reflection and the role of peers and significant networks in developing as a teacher. Furthermore, the integrative pedagogy model (Tynjälä et al., 2016) highlighting the role of emotions in learning and professional

development, as well as the study by Isopahkala-Bouret (2008) which emphasized the emotional aspect of the experience of expertise, were consulted.

### Data Analyses

A mixed methods approach and method triangulation were applied in the data analyses involving both quantitative and qualitative data. First, with the quantitative data, the structures of instruments were examined by explorative factor analysis using the Principal Axis (PA) extraction method with Varimax rotation. For the PCPD instrument, the solution of the four-factor model was selected. However, for the SRET instrument, the two-factor model was not supported by factor analysis (PA), and so the one-factor model was selected. Items that did not load on the factors were investigated as single items. Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) were calculated to test the internal reliability of the scales (Table 2).

The differences between the groups were investigated by the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests, which are nonparametric alternatives to one-way ANOVA and the independent samples *t*-test (Cohen et al., 2011; Field, 2009). Nonparametric analysis methods were used due to non-normal distributions of the data. Effect size was calculated using Pearson's *r*, as this is recommended for nonparametric tests (Field, 2009; Rosenthal, 1991), and the interpretation by W. Lenhard and A. Lenhard (2016), which is modified from those suggested by Cohen (1988) and Hattie (2009), was used to interpret the effect size as follows: (*r*): <.05 no effect, .05 to .23=small effect, .24 to .36=intermediate effect, and >.37=large effect.

The qualitative data consisted of answers to the open-ended questions of the electronic questionnaire. The answers varied from a few words to half-page-long writings (total 23 sheets, Times New Roman 12 pt., 1.5 spacing). Qualitative content analysis (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gibbs, 2007; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) with open coding was used as the analysis method, and Atlas.ti 8.0 was used as a tool in the process. The analysis unit was a conceptual theme identified in the answers (sometimes being only a few words). The analysis included several rounds of reading and coding of the data. In addition to the data-driven, inductive approach, the data were also compared to research literature after the first rounds of coding, moving back and forth between both sources, hence also making the analysis concept-driven and using a deductive process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Gibbs, 2007). This type of approach relates closely to theory-guided content analysis (e.g., Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 2009). After coding the data, the codes were grouped into different themes, categories, and sub-categories. The analysis was

conducted principally by the first author, and the second author confirmed the analysis. An intercoder reliability test (Cho, 2008; Gibbs, 2007; Miles et al., 2014; Neuendorf, 2002) was conducted comparing the authors' individual categorizations of the data. The authors reached 90% intercoder agreement and continued discussing the coding and categories until a shared understanding was reached.

After completing the analysis, the total number of mentions of the different themes and categories were calculated. Each respondent could have several mentions per category. Furthermore, the number of respondents mentioning each theme and category were calculated. The Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests (Cohen et al., 2011) were calculated in order to find out the possible differences in the university teachers' perceptions of the features and characteristics of a good university teacher between the two participant groups and according to the number of pedagogical studies. Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to investigate how the university teachers' perceptions of a good university teacher related to their experienced pedagogical competency. For the analysis, the sum variables were re-scaled from five-step scales to two-step or three-step scales, merging answer categories to increase the answer frequencies in order to be able to conduct the analysis.

## Results

### Features and Characteristics of a Good University Teacher Perceived by the University Teachers

Four main themes were identified from the university teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of a good university teacher. These included the following: 1) Domains of Knowledge, 2) Professional Roles, 3) Continuous Professional Development, and 4) Personal Characteristics.

Domains of Knowledge (148 mentions) was the most common theme, and five knowledge domains of a good university teacher were identified. *Pedagogical knowledge* (52 mentions) was the most mentioned domain of knowledge. The university teachers perceived pedagogical knowledge as an understanding of students' learning and of how a teacher can facilitate student learning. According to the participants, pedagogical knowledge consists of pedagogical skills and abilities, such as being able to motivate and inspire students, being able to recognize one's approach to learning and teaching, supporting students' active role and their critical thinking, considering different learners, guiding large student groups, and giving feedback: "The most important goal in being a university teacher is that the teacher is able to encourage and motivate the students to think creatively and critically and develop their thinking in the future" (Teacher 112).

Table 2  
*Sum Variables and Items Describing Different Areas of Pedagogical Competency*

Sum variables and their items	Total n = 73 M (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Teaching skills<sup>1)</sup>(PCPD)</b>	3.78 (.70)	.85
1. To plan teaching and use different teaching and assessment methods		
2. Identify my conception of learning and apply it to my teaching		
3. Influence the construction of a positive and supportive learning environment		
4. Utilize ICT in my teaching		
5. Give individual feedback to students		
6. Effectively utilize pedagogical literature in developing my teaching		
7. Identify ethical questions in my work as a teacher		
<b>Student guidance and support<sup>1)</sup>(PCPD)</b>	4.00 (.71)	.84
8. Guide student groups		
9. Support and guide different learners		
10. Guide the students to take responsibility for their own learning		
11. Operate in different teaching and guidance interaction situations		
<b>Developing teaching and as a teacher<sup>1)</sup>(PCPD)</b>	4.09 (.64)	.80
12. Utilize my experiences (e.g., working life) in my teaching		
13. Recognize my development needs as a teacher		
14. Recognize my strengths as a teacher		
15. Develop my teaching based on student feedback		
16. Utilize collegial and peer feedback in developing my teaching		
17. Systematically collect student feedback on my teaching		
<b>Expertise and SoTL<sup>1)</sup>(PCPD)</b>	3.77 (.79)	.78
18. Recognize the strengths of my subject field expertise in my teaching		
19. Utilize the research or art of my own subject field or my other expertise in my teaching		
20. Consider students' learning outcomes in relation to the research literature on teaching and learning		
21. Seek support for planning and implementing my teaching from my own subject field's professional literature		
22. Publish the pedagogical practice of my teaching and my own subject field by, e.g., writing pedagogical articles or participating in pedagogical conferences		
<b>Social reflection<sup>2)</sup>(SRET)</b>	4.32 (.86)	.90
1. Discuss with my colleagues the material and choices of teaching methods when planning my teaching		
2. Discuss my teaching with one or more colleagues		
3. Ponder my teaching and the challenges of it together with my colleagues		
4. Cooperate with students, colleagues and other experts when planning my teaching		
<b>Single items: (parts of SRET)</b>		
Experiencing joy when succeeding in teaching <sup>2)</sup>	4.44 (.73)	
Active participation in teaching development in one's work community <sup>2)</sup>	4.26 (.93)	

1) Scale: 1= completely disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= not disagreeing or agreeing, 4= somewhat agree, and 5= completely agree.

2) Scale: 1= competency is not recognizable, 2= insufficient competency, 3= developing competency, 4= good competency, and 5= excellent competency

The second most mentioned knowledge domain was *social knowledge* (42 mentions). Social knowledge is perceived as skills and abilities related to interpersonal interaction with other people, including competencies such as being able to communicate and interact with colleagues and students, and being able to network and cooperate, and share and engage in collegial collaboration: “A good university teacher is willing to share their teaching with other teachers, collaborate, and even step into a totally new field of expertise” (Teacher 58). Furthermore, a good university teacher has *Content knowledge* (32 mentions), indicating that a university teacher should master the subject content of the field in which they teach: “[A good university teacher] manages the subject in an excellent way” (Teacher 15).

Closely related to pedagogical knowledge, a good university teacher should also possess *Instructional knowledge* (18 mentions), that is, for example, know how to plan their teaching, choose suitable teaching and assessment methods, and create different learning environments. Instructional knowledge is thus perceived as knowledge of how to plan and design one’s teaching: “The core of all teaching should be well aligned and high-quality teaching that supports student learning. This includes teaching methods, assessment of learning and the whole variety of learning environments” (Teacher 143).

In addition, there were four mentions articulating that a good university teacher should have *Technological knowledge*. The teacher should be able to utilize ICT and digital tools in teaching: “... [A good university teacher] possesses abilities to utilize new digital tools in teaching” (Teacher 1).

Professional roles (88 mentions) was the second most mentioned theme in the university teachers’ answers, and six different roles of university teacher were identified. *Subject field expert* (36 mentions) was the role mentioned most often. Related to subject field expertise, the university teachers emphasized that a good university teacher is also a *Teacher-as-researcher* (10 mentions) who actively conducts research and utilizes research in their teaching: “Being a good university teacher includes expertise in the subject field taught and the possibility to conduct related research (Teacher 140).” The second and third most mentioned professional roles of a university teacher were *Pedagogical expert* (15 mentions), which highlighted the importance of pedagogical knowledge, skills and training, and *Facilitator and advisor of learning* (14 mentions) describing a good university teacher as an enabler of learning: “Being a good university teacher involves being a pedagogical expert (knowledge, skills, attitude, and ethicality) in order to guide, facilitate and develop different possibilities of learning” (Teacher 141). Furthermore, a good university teacher was perceived to be an *Expert in the practice of one’s field* (11 mentions), emphasizing that, besides subject field and pedagogical expertise, practical work experience and

knowing the practice of one’s field also offers valuable aspects in one’s teaching: “Being a good university teacher includes planning teaching based on science and theory, but it is also an ability to apply theory to practical questions. Having practical experience in one’s subject field is not a bad thing” (Teacher 46). There were also two mentions of university teachers as *Administrative experts*.

Continuous professional development (69 mentions) was the third theme that emerged from the data. In their answers, the university teachers highlighted that a good university teacher is a continuously developing expert possessing a *Positive attitude and interest* (32 mentions) towards teaching, their own subject field, and learning: “A good university teacher has a positive attitude towards the subject taught and this enthusiasm also shows in their teaching” (Teacher 9). “A good university teacher is interested in teaching and especially guiding student learning” (Teacher 150).

Furthermore, according to the participants, *Goals for developing one’s expertise and competencies* (30 mentions), whether considered in general or more specifically to developing subject field expertise or pedagogical expertise, need to be identified and reflected on. In addition, the university teachers perceived that to be able to develop as a university teacher, a good university teacher should recognize the *Prerequisites for developing one’s expertise and competencies* (7 mentions), such as organizational support and the importance of collecting and utilizing feedback: “A good university teacher is a creative expert who is able to reflect on their own teachership and subject field expertise and aims to continuously develop their expertise.” (Teacher 8) “[A good university teacher] continuously keeps their teaching up-to-date, develops their teaching, collects feedback systematically and utilizes the feedback in developing their teaching.” (Teacher 147)

Personal Characteristics of a good university teacher (54 mentions) was the fourth theme. A good university teacher was perceived to possess *Characteristics related to others*—empathic and social (32 mentions)—that is, characteristics enabling and facilitating interaction with others, such as being empathic, approachable, supportive, and social:

“[A good university teacher] is approachable and warm-hearted” (Teacher 131). A good university teacher should be able to listen actively and be creative, that is, to have *Characteristics related to cognitive functions*: active and creative (12 mentions): “A good university teacher is creative, tries new things and is professional” (Teacher 106).

Furthermore, a good university teacher should possess *Characteristics related to self*: open-minded and flexible (10 mentions), that is, a teacher should be



flexible, patient, and open-minded: “[A good university teacher] is flexible, patient...” (Teacher 120).

When exploring the number of respondents mentioning each theme and category (Table 3), the results were similar to those of the total number of mentions of the themes and categories presented above. However, Content knowledge and Goals for developing one’s expertise were mentioned by a few more respondents than Social knowledge and Positive attitude and interest, whereas, in terms of the total number of mentions, Social knowledge and Positive attitude and interest were mentioned more often.

In order to examine how the university teachers’ perceptions of a good university teacher varied between the PFL and NFL groups, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was conducted. The teachers in the PFL group mentioned statistically significantly more often characteristics related to the theme of Continuous professional development, that is, Positive attitude and interest ( $U=438.00$ ,  $Z=-2.40$ ,  $p=.016$ ,  $r=.28$ ), Goals ( $U=464.00$ ,  $Z=-2.01$ ,  $p=.044$ ,  $r=.24$ ), and Prerequisites for developing one’s expertise and competencies ( $U=519.50$ ,  $Z=-2.07$ ,  $p=.039$ ,  $r=.24$ ) than the teachers in the NFL group. Furthermore, the possible differences between groups based on the amount of pedagogical studies completed were examined. For the analysis, the amount of pedagogical studies was re-grouped into three categories as follows: no studies, less than 25 ECTS credits (includes some or ongoing studies) and 25–60 ECTS credits (includes 25 ECTS, 35 ECTS, and 60 ECTS credits). University teachers with 25–60 ECTS credits of pedagogical studies mentioned statistically significantly more often Social knowledge ( $U=357.50$ ,  $Z=-2.25$ ,  $p=.024$ ,  $r=.28$ ) as a domain of knowledge of a good university teacher than teachers with less than 25 ECTS credits of pedagogical studies. The effect sizes of the found differences were intermediate (M).

### University Teachers’ Self-evaluations of Their Experienced Pedagogical Competency as Teachers

In the university teachers’ self-evaluations, *Experiencing joy when succeeding in teaching* (single item, mean 4.44), relating to the positive emotions of teaching, and *Active participation in teaching development in one’s work community* (single item, mean 4.26) relating to teaching development (Table 4) were scored highly. In addition, the university teachers evaluated to actively engage in *Social reflection* (mean 4.32), that is, discussing and pondering their teaching and the challenges of their teaching with colleagues, and cooperating with their students, colleagues and other experts when planning their teaching.

In addition, the university teachers evaluated their competency to be high in *Developing teaching and as a teacher* (mean 4.09) and in *Student guidance and*

*support* (mean 4.00). They evaluated themselves as being well able to utilize their experiences (e.g., working life) in their teaching and to systematically collect and utilize student feedback to develop their teaching. Furthermore, they perceived that they could recognize their strengths and needs to develop as teachers. Regarding student guidance and support, the university teachers evaluated themselves as being most competent in operating in different interaction situations and in guiding student groups.

The university teachers scored mediocre on *Teaching skills* (mean 3.78) and *Expertise and scholarship of teaching and learning* (mean 3.77). Regarding teaching skills, they evaluated themselves as being able to give individual feedback to students and to influence the construction of a positive and supportive learning environment. Furthermore, they evaluated themselves able to identify ethical issues regarding their teaching. The university teachers evaluated their competency to be lower in utilizing pedagogical literature and ICT in their teaching and in developing teaching, these being evaluated at a developing level in general. The self-evaluations related to expertise and SoTL show that the university teachers evaluated themselves to be well able to utilize research in their teaching and recognized their subject field expertise as a strength in their teaching. Publishing and writing pedagogical articles and considering student learning in light of the research literature on teaching and learning were not scored highly, and the university teachers evaluated their competency in these respects to be at a developing level in general.

Statistically significant differences ( $p<.05$ ) were identified according to participation in the flipped learning development project and the number of pedagogical studies completed. The PFL (mean 3.44) evaluated their competency in Expertise and scholarship of teaching and learning statistically significantly lower than the NFL (mean 3.95,  $p=.017$ ). On the other hand, the PFL (mean 4.69) evaluated themselves to participate more *Actively in teaching development actions* in their working communities than the NFL (mean 4.02,  $p=.003$ ). The effect sizes of the found differences were intermediate (M). In addition, statistically significant differences in Teaching skills ( $p=.002$ ) and in Student guidance and support ( $p=.044$ ) were identified according to the number of pedagogical studies completed. Further investigation of the differences between the groups (Mann-Whitney U test) revealed that university teachers with 60 ECTS credits of completed pedagogical studies (mean 4.10) evaluated their teaching skills statistically significantly higher than teachers with no (mean 3.50,  $p=.009$ ), some (mean 3.42,  $p=.006$ ) or ongoing (mean 3.33,  $p=.000$ ) pedagogical studies. The effect sizes of the found differences were intermediate and large.

Table 3

*Number of Respondents Mentioning the Main Themes and Categories Describing the Features and Characteristics of a Good University Teacher According to Participation in the educational Development Project and the Amount of Pedagogical Studies.*

Themes	Categories	All N=73 F	PFL* n=26 f	NFL* n=47 f	No studies n=8 f	Less than 25 ECTS credits f	25 - 60 ECTS credits n=25 f	25 - 60 ECTS credits n=40 f
Domain of Knowledge	Pedagogical knowledge	35	14	21	1	13		21
	Social knowledge	29	14	15	2	6		21
	Content knowledge	32	12	20	2	11		19
	Instructional knowledge	15	8	7	1	3		11
	Technological knowledge	4	0	4	0	1		3
	Total	115	48	67	6	34		75
Professional Roles	Subject field expert	36	11	25	2	11		23
	Pedagogical expert	15	8	7	0	3		12
	Facilitator and advisor of learning	14	6	8	0	4		10
	Expert in the practice of one's subject field	11	6	5	1	1		9
	Teacher-as-researcher	10	3	7	0	2		8
	Administrative expert	2	1	1	0	1		1
	Total	88	35	53	3	22		63
Continuous Professional development	Positive attitude and interest	26	14	12	3	9		14
	Goals of developing ones' expertise and competencies	28	14	14	2	8		18
	Prerequisites for developing one's expertise and competencies	7	5	2	0	2		5
	Total	61	33	28	5	19		37
Personal Characteristics	Characteristics related to others: Empathic and social	25	6	19	1	8		16
	Characteristics related to self: Open-minded and flexible	8	3	5	2	2		4
	Characteristics related to cognitive functions: Active and creative	12	4	8	1	4		7
	Total	45	13	32	4	14		27

\*PFL = Participants in the flipped learning design educational development project, NFL = Non-participants in the flipped learning design educational development project.

Table 4

*University Teachers' Self-evaluation of Pedagogical Competency Areas, and statistically Significant Differences ( $p < .05$ ) According to Background Variables.*

Pedagogical competency area		Mean total	Background variable	
			Statistically significant difference (p<.05)	
Experiencing joy when succeeding in teaching (single item)		4.44	No statistically significant difference between groups according to background variables	
Social reflection		4.32	No statistically significant difference between groups according to background variables	
			Participation in development project	
			Participant (PFL)	Non-participants (NFL)
Active participation in teaching development in one's work community (single item)		4.26	(mean 4.69, U=371.00, Z=2.92, p=.003, r=.34)	(mean 4.02)
Developing teaching and as a teacher		4.09	No statistically significant difference between groups according to background variables	
			Amount of pedagogical studies	
			No studies	
			(mean 3.50, U=59.00, Z=-2.48, p=.013, r=.29)	
Student guidance and support		4.00	Ongoing studies	Completed 60 ECTS credits
			(mean 3.75, U=114.50, Z=-2.25, p=.024, r=.26)	(mean 4.23)
			Amount of pedagogical studies	
			No studies	
			(mean 3.50, U=61.50, Z=-2.61, p=.009, r=.31)	
			Some studies	
Teaching skills		3.78	(mean 3.42, U=102.50, Z=-2.73, p=.006, r=.32)	Completed 60 ECTS credits
			Ongoing studies	(mean 4.10)
			(mean 3.33, U=76.00, Z=-3.60, p=.000, r=.42)	
			Participation in development project	
			Participants (PFL)	Non-participants (NFL)
Expertise and scholarship of teaching and learning		3.77	(mean 3.44, U=373.00, Z=-2.38, p=.017, r=.29)	(mean 3.95)

Furthermore, teachers with 60 ECTS of pedagogical studies (mean 4.23) evaluated their competency in student guidance and support higher than teachers with no (mean 3.50,  $p=.013$ ) and ongoing (mean 3.75,  $p=.024$ ) pedagogical studies. The effect sizes of the found differences were intermediate and large.

There were no statistically significant differences in how the teachers evaluated their competencies in Developing teaching and Social reflection or in Experiencing joy when succeeding in teaching with respect to participation in the flipped learning development project or amount of pedagogical studies completed.

### **Features and Characteristics of a Good University Teacher in Relation to Experienced Pedagogical Competency of the University Teachers**

Our results show (Figure 2) that those university teachers who evaluated themselves as more actively engaging in Social reflection with their colleagues and peers more often mentioned *Social knowledge* as a domain of knowledge of a good university teacher ( $p=.045$ ). *Pedagogical knowledge*, in turn, was mentioned more often by university teachers who self-evaluated their Teaching skills as good or excellent ( $p=.043$ ).

Teachers who evaluated their competency to be good or excellent in Developing teaching and as a teacher more often mentioned the role of *Subject field expert* ( $p=.019$ ) as one of a university teacher's professional roles, *Goals for developing one's expertise and competencies* ( $p=.027$ ) in relation to continuous professional development, and university teacher's personal *Characteristics related to others*, such as being empathic and social ( $p=.009$ ). Furthermore, teachers who considered themselves to *Actively participate in teaching development in their work communities* more often mentioned the roles of *Pedagogical expert* ( $p=.034$ ) and *Facilitator and advisor of learning* ( $p=.043$ ) as professional roles of a university teacher, as well as *Positive attitude and interest* towards own subject field, teaching and learning ( $p=.008$ ) in relation to continuous professional development. The effect sizes were intermediate (M).

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

### **A Good University Teacher Has a Wide Knowledge Base and Various Professional Roles**

The findings of this study show that the "ideal" of a good university teacher is multifaceted: a good university teacher has a wide knowledge base including different domains of knowledge, has various professional roles, and possesses versatile personal characteristics. Pedagogical and instructional knowledge have been similarly identified as domains of

a university teacher by Kreber and Cranton (2000). In their TPACK framework, Koehler and Mishra (2008; see also Koehler et al., 2014), in turn, identified content, pedagogical and technological knowledge domains. Their definition of pedagogical knowledge is, however, wider than in our study, also including some aspects of instructional knowledge. In our study, technological knowledge was also recognized, but only by a few respondents. We propose three reasons for this. First, the university teachers might take technical knowledge for granted as a self-evident aspect of their everyday teaching environment. Secondly, the university teachers might feel that the technological environment is under such a rapid and constant change that the primary role of the teacher with respect to technology is merely to adjust themselves to the specific technological contexts in which they have to teach. Thirdly, the discourse of student-centered teaching and learning currently focuses so strongly on interaction and interactive learning that technology is perhaps seen to be marginal with respect to good teaching. Whatever the reasons for not perceiving technological knowledge more strongly may be, further attention to this is required in the future research.

The university teachers perceived a good university teacher as having various professional roles. Even though the role of subject field expert was by far the most recognized professional role, it was evident that being solely a subject field expert with deep content knowledge is too narrow a perspective for a good university teacher. Our findings reveal that the university teachers perceived a good university teacher also to be a pedagogical expert and facilitator of learning among others. In this respect, our findings are in line with previous research concerning the characteristics of a good university teacher (e.g., Duřa et al., 2014; Hirsto et al., 2013; Su & Wood, 2012).

### **Social Knowledge and Social Reflection are Central to Developing and Experiencing Pedagogical Competency as a University Teacher**

One of the main findings in our study is that social knowledge was perceived as one of the domains of knowledge of a good university teacher. Compared to previous studies regarding the domains of knowledge in teaching (e.g. Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Kreber & Cranton, 2000; Shulman, 1986) and pedagogical competence/y models of a good university teacher (e.g. Apeltgren & Giertz, 2010; Olsson & Roxå, 2013), this is new, as social knowledge has not been previously identified as a domain of knowledge of a university teacher, as perceived and defined by the university teachers in our study. Tynjälä and colleagues (2016) suggested in their integrative pedagogy model that sociocultural knowledge is one of the key components

Figure 2

*Statistically significant relations between the characteristics of a good university teacher perceived by the university teachers and their experienced pedagogical competency.*

Experienced pedagogical competency <sup>1</sup> Insufficient/developing - good/excellent <sup>2</sup> Agree - not agreeing or disagreeing - agreeing	Statistics Mann-Whitney U-test, significance (p) and effect size (r)	Characteristics of a good university teacher Has mentioned - Has not mentioned
Social reflection <sup>2</sup>	$U=519.50, Z=-2.01, p=.045, r=.24$	Social knowledge
Teaching skills <sup>1</sup>	$U=505.00, Z=-2.02, p=.043, r=.24$	Pedagogical knowledge
Developing teaching and as a teacher <sup>1</sup>	$U=471.50, Z=-2.34, p=.019, r=.28$	Subject field expert
	$U=453.00, Z=-2.21, p=.027, r=.27$	Goals for developing one's expertise and competencies
	$U=408.00, Z=-2.62, p=.009, r=.32$	Characteristics related to others
Active participation in teaching development in one's work community <sup>1</sup>	$U=301.00, Z=-2.11, p=.034, r=.25$	Pedagogical expert
	$U=286.00, Z=-2.02, p=.043, r=.24$	Facilitator and advisor of learning
	$U=437.00, Z=-2.66, p=.008, r=.31$	Positive attitude and interest

of expertise. However, their model is a theoretical construction and does not represent teachers' perceptions about the components of expertise.

The social aspect was also evident in the university teachers' self-evaluations of their own pedagogical competency, as social reflection was evaluated highly, indicating that the university teachers actively engage in social reflection with their colleagues and peers. Teachers who evaluated themselves actively engaging in social reflection also more often mentioned social knowledge as a characteristic knowledge domain of a good university teacher. According to our results, it seems that social reflection is central to how the teachers construe, experience and develop their pedagogical competency. This is in line with previous research recognizing, that significant networks and meaningful conversations are important in how teachers create and maintain their understanding of teaching and learning (Boyd & Harris, 2009; Olsson & Roxå, 2013; Pyörälä et al., 2015; Pedrosa-de-Jesus et al., 2017; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009) and perceive their teacher identity (Uitto et al., 2015).

Furthermore, our results suggest that awareness of social knowledge and reflection develops in line with

the number of pedagogical studies. This idea is supported by previous research by Nevgi and Löfström (2015), who identified university teachers' reflection on pedagogical issues and on teaching to be related to the development of teacher identity as a university teacher during long-term participation in pedagogical studies. It might be that teachers who are engaged in pedagogical studies become accustomed to reflecting on their teaching with their colleagues (e.g., Hirsto et al., 2013; Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017). This may have influenced their perception of a good university teacher as reflective and able to collaborate with colleagues, and thus having social knowledge and related competencies.

### Continuous Professional Development is Characteristic of a Good University Teacher

In our study, a good university teacher was perceived to be a developing expert continuously reflecting and developing one's expertise. This perception was especially highlighted by the participants in the educational development project on flipped learning. Similar findings were found with the

university teachers' self-evaluations of their pedagogical competency. The university teachers evaluated their own ability to develop their teaching and as teachers to be high in general and evaluated themselves to be active participants in teaching development in their work communities. The participants in the educational development project, however, evaluated their ability and activity more highly than the non-participants. Interestingly, although the participants in the educational development project evaluated themselves to be active in teaching development, they evaluated their expertise and scholarship of teaching and learning to be lower than the non-participants. One possible explanation for this is that the participants in the project are more critical of their own teaching than non-participants and, in order to improve their teaching, they have participated in a teaching development program.

In addition, the university teachers perceived that developing one's expertise and pedagogical competency should be target-oriented and that a good university teacher benefits from collegial collaboration in developing their teaching and as a teacher. Personal characteristics, such as being social, empathic, and approachable, were perceived to facilitate this collaboration. These findings are in line with the pedagogical competence model by Olsson and Roxå (2013), in which becoming an excellent teacher is described as a continuous process requiring continuous observations and reflection on the practice of teaching, and a competent teacher is seen to involve promoting cooperation and engaging in pedagogical discussions with colleagues in order to develop his or her own teaching.

Based on our findings, educational development projects seem to attract teachers who already have a positive attitude towards teaching and learning and are interested in developing their teaching. As participants and non-participants of the development project differed in how they considered their expertise as teachers, it seems that these kinds of educational development projects can act as gateways to developing teaching skills through developing teaching. This seems to apply especially to those teachers who did not recognize their pedagogical competency and expertise and who had not systematically developed their teaching prior to participating in the educational development project. Furthermore, educational development projects are potentially important not only for developing one's teaching and as a teacher, but also for facilitating the development of a scholarly teaching and learning culture at the university and department level while also supporting the development of the scholarship of curriculum practice, as active developers can act as change agents in their teaching communities (cf. Hubball et al., 2008).

### **The Ideal of a University Teacher Lacks an Emotional Aspect**

Our study shows that the university teachers perceived the features and characteristics of a good university teacher mainly in consistence with their self-evaluations of their own pedagogical competency. The ideal of a good university teacher seems, however, still quite cognitively defined. One of the main findings of our study is that the university teachers did not perceive emotions or emotional aspects among the characteristics of a good university teacher, yet when reflecting on their own pedagogical competency, they reported positive emotions.

Despite the fact that the role of emotions has been recognized in the recent research literature on higher education (e.g., Arpiainen et al., 2013; Tynjälä et al., 2016), it seems that the ideal of a good university teacher does not include an emotional aspect when defined and perceived by university teachers themselves. The teachers' self-evaluations in our study support the idea that emotions are important in experiencing one's pedagogical competency and developing as a teacher. This is in line with the idea that, besides knowledge and skills, a teacher has to be able to experience confidence in their expertise when acting as a teacher and that emotions affect how teachers experience themselves as teachers (cf. Boud et al., 1985; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008).

### **Limitations of This Study**

One limitation of our study is that the study participants had completed a considerable amount of pedagogical studies and, consequently, they represent largely pedagogically aware university teachers. Thus, the findings of our study may not be generalized to reflect typical university teachers' perceptions of a good university teacher. However, the amount of pedagogical studies completed was similarly high in both participant groups. Furthermore, the study was based on self-assessments and limited to the early phases of the educational development project. In future studies, a follow-up study would be needed to examine the perceptions and evaluations at the end of the educational development project. In addition, further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the role of social reflection and emotions in developing as a teacher and in pedagogical competency.

### **Conclusion and Practical Implications**

In examining the features and characteristics of a good university teacher as perceived by university teachers and how the university teachers self-evaluated their own

pedagogical competency, this study offers important insights for understanding, defining, and evaluating university teachers' pedagogical competency. The results of this study are relevant especially for universities in designing their strategical academic development processes, for example, when planning supportive actions for university teachers' development as teachers and for developing their pedagogical competency in different formal and more informal contexts. Furthermore, the results of this study may be relevant when considering the assessment of pedagogical competency, for example, in tenure and lecturer track processes.

When planning pedagogical training and development actions, such as educational development projects, the possibility to collaborate, have meaningful conversations, and form networks with peers should be strongly considered, as social reflection and social knowledge were perceived and reflected to be central to experiencing and developing one's pedagogical competency. Furthermore, emotions seem to play an important role in how university teachers experience their pedagogical competency and engage in the development of teaching and teaching skills; educational development projects therefore need to be designed so that teachers find it easy to enjoy the changing pedagogy along the process of developing their teaching.

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