

**Mònica FEIXAS (Barcelona, Zürich)<sup>1</sup>, Gerlese ÅKERLIND (Canberra), Georgeta ION (Barcelona) & Ann STES (Antwerp)**

## **Editorial: Development and Socialization of Academics**

### **1 Entrance into the academic profession**

Entrance into the academic profession entails an intensive process of induction into the sociocultural, disciplinary and professional norms of academia, as well as a demanding development of attitudes, conceptions and competencies with regard to teaching and research functions. It is also a lengthy process, beginning with study as a doctoral student, then attaining a first academic appointment as a teacher and/or researcher, and reaching a first permanent or tenured position.

To a great extent, the motivation, satisfaction, professionalism and effectiveness of academics is dependent on how higher education institutions (HEI) address the process of development and socialization. Aware of this significance, most HEIs, schools and departments design specific programmes and support arrangements intended to smooth and facilitate the process of socialization and development of, especially, new and novice academics. Integration into the collegiate life is undoubtedly a pre-requisite for the success of other attempts to support teaching and research of full-time and part-time academics (GIBBS & COFFEY, 2004).

The analysis of the process of socialization and development is crucial to understand how academics adapt to and learn about their work and academic/disciplinary culture; to capture the importance of establishing membership with a particular group of academics and their disciplines; and to recognize and work within specific

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<sup>1</sup> email: [monica.feixas@uab.cat](mailto:monica.feixas@uab.cat)



teaching and research micro cultures (MÅRTENSSON, 2014), as well as to understand the forms of agency – understood as the ability to identify and implement choices (ARCHER, 2008) – that academics employ to circumvent constraints and attain career progress.

A considerable body of research, approaching the topic of academic development from various perspectives, emphasizes the importance of academics' socialization and enculturation in higher education. The sociological perspective has often used MERTON's (1957) definition of socialization – understood as “*the processes through which [a person] develops [a sense of] professional self, with its characteristic values, attitudes, knowledge and skills ... which govern [his or her] behaviour in a wide variety of professional situations*” (p. 287) – to frame the research of this topic in higher education. Other scholars have contributed to its development suggesting that socialization “*is a learning process through which the individual acquires the knowledge and skills, the values and attitudes, and the habits and modes of thought of the society to which he/she belongs*” (BRAGG, 1976, p. 3). TIERNEY & RHOADES (1994) question the assumption of rationality and constancy of culture embedded in the previous definition because it ultimately contributes to assimilation and homogeneity, and suggests a non-linear, serial progression through a set of specified activities. Differently, THORTON & NARDI (1975) describe the stages through which novices move toward the goal of role acquisition, and WEIDMAR, TWALE & STEIN (2001) identify the core elements of socialization (knowledge acquisition, investment and involvement) that map onto the stages and constitute a model of doctoral student socialization.

Elaborating upon the interactions between academics and students as a significant frame, BAIRD (1993) examines the organization of the practices and processes of doctoral education, and TINTO (1997) and TIERNEY (1997) explore the link between doctoral persistence and socialization. Research on the experiences of socialization and development of underrepresented groups, namely women and doctoral students of colour (ANTONY & TAYLOR, 2004) argue for a better clarity of what successful socialization entails, assuming the distinction between “*developing an awareness of, versus developing a personal acceptance of, a field's content, values*

*and norms*” (ANTONY, 2002, p. 373). BOURDIEU (1990) extends this discrepancy by emphasizing the experiences that students bring to doctoral education and how the efficacy of socialization practices can fluctuate across doctoral students and contexts. BECHER & TROWLER (2001) and BIGLAN (1973) also discuss the significance of disciplinary culture as a distinguishing variable.

From a broader perspective, research has addressed the topic of academics’ development of skills, competencies, conceptions and attitudes throughout their academic career, and the role of academic developers in improving it. In fact, for many years, academic developers have worked actively to develop an informed, worthwhile and robust initial professional development agenda for new academics. Programs on ‘teaching and learning in higher education’ or ‘academic practice’ are usually voluntary (mandatory in a few countries as part of probation), mainly organized within individual institutions. They either focus on preparation for, and professionalizing of, the teaching role (GIBBS & COFFEY, 2004) or on the promotion of a holistic socialization to academic practice (BREW & BOUD, 1996).

In this regard, ÅKERLIND (2003) argues that individual academics experience the world of teaching, and of holistic academic practice (ÅKERLIND, 2005) differently and, therefore, have different conceptions of it. With regard to teaching in particular, academic development programmes might influence changing conceptions of teaching, with consequential changes in teaching practice and student approaches to learning (STES, 2008; STES et al., 2010). Moreover, academics’ teaching approaches and conceptions can change and develop towards a learning-centred approach if the provision of academic development programmes fits the teachers’ particular needs and concerns at the different phases of their professional development as teachers (FEIXAS & EULER, 2013).

However, although academic developers can facilitate and contribute to educational development, they cannot do it on their own; teachers’ engagement must also come from within. In thinking systematically about teaching and learning, and the conditions under which teaching and learning are embedded in our institutions, academic development has the potential to influence organizational development

(EULER, 2015). MÅRTENSSON (2014) suggests to stimulate the number of signification relations within micro cultures, as well as between them, so that academic teachers are mutually influenced by, and can influence, their collegial context. BOUD & BREW (2013) maintain that the most powerful influence is not the provision of learning opportunities but changing work demands to drive learning. In sum, this scope of institutional programming is needed to continue addressing emerging issues as articulated by students, academics and institutions, as it may encourage new academics' professional development and retention.

Meanwhile, the development of university league tables and global competition between universities are putting increasing pressure on the development of the research aspect of academic roles (LUCAS, 2006). Yet literature on academics' development and socialization as a researcher beyond doctoral studies is not yet very well addressed (BREW & LUCAS, 2009; McALPINE & ÅKERLIND, 2010). As much as with the world of teaching, the world of research is also experienced differently by different academics (BREW, 2001; ÅKERLIND 2008a), though with clear signs of integration between experiences of teaching and research (ÅKERLIND 2005, 2008b; PROSSER et al., 2008).

## **2 Development and socialization of novice academics**

In this issue, we aim to expand knowledge of the experiences and needs of academics at the beginning of their career, the professional learning taking place at universities and how academics develop competencies as they become socialized into academic life. Contributions to this issue were asked to focus on the socialization and development of novice academics, including particular groups of academics such as part-time, international, and female academics and academics from minority groups, and how they negotiate institutional cues and adapt to the institution in ways that shape their professional role. The focus is inclusive of both the teaching and research role of academics, though papers on the teaching role dominate. Ex-

cluded topics in this issue are processes of faculty selection, evaluation and promotion in academia, and the administration, service and leadership roles of academics. Using evidence from research (by means of scientific contributions) and from practice (by means of workshops' reflections), this issue aims to:

- (1) contribute to the state of the art about the process of development and socialization of academics, the construction and development of academic identity and the forms of agency academics employ to attain career success;
- (2) highlight approaches supporting the development of academics as teachers and researchers that positively impact professional growth during their academic career.

On analysis, the contributions to this issue can be grouped into two main topics, namely 1) identity building and induction into the academic profession, and 2) professional learning of academics and the impact of academic development programmes and networks on academic careers.

### **Starting out as a new academic: identity building and induction into the academic profession**

Starting out as a new academic is an overwhelming experience, where effective socialization involves coming to understand the professional workplace or habitus. This special issue includes contributions deriving from the analysis of workshops and scientific contributions where participants experience and reflect on identity building, agency and development as academics, and are assisted in their socialization into university culture. Integration into the academic community is seen as supported by various institutional practices, including academic development programmes and activities which have been lauded for their contribution to changing conceptions and approaches to teaching and learning, to adoption of a student learning approach and to the development of teaching skills. Academic development practices appear to be more successful if they are based on reflection, which

has been acknowledged as important in the induction of novice academics and doctoral students into the academic profession.

The article from *Helga Dorner* and *Joanna Renc-Roe* focuses on the construction of reflective “academic professionalism” (KREBER, 2013, p. 61) through the creation of online teaching portfolios in the institutional context. In particular, they explore doctoral students’ conceptions of online teaching portfolios, that is, how they define them for themselves and how academic professionalism is reflected in these conceptions. The final programme artefact is an online teaching portfolio that documents doctoral students’ teaching philosophy, teaching materials and reflections on their development as novice teachers. Based on a qualitative analysis, Dorner and Renc-Roe identify four main conceptions of online teaching portfolios, as: (1) a digital professional profile; (2) a professional teaching history; (3) an archive of teaching artefacts; and (4) a personal thinking lab. Doctoral students’ conceptions can be seen to follow a pattern of variation from the more simple and static (online portfolios seen as a digital professional profile) to the more developed and dynamic (online portfolios seen as a thinking lab), and from the more externally-oriented to the more internally-oriented. The former conceptions may be generally judged as less reflective and less long-lasting as a vehicle for on-going professional development of doctoral students, whereas the latter hold a promise of becoming a relevant tool in reflective practice of novice university teachers (DORNER & RENC-ROE, 2016).

Studies on professional development and the construction of teaching identities in Higher Education point to the need to reflect on the induction process for novice academics and to establish programmes that support their inclusion in the university. *Idoia Fernández-Fernandez* and *Clemente Lobato Fraile*’s article analyses such a programme, focusing on strategies to construct an academic teaching identity. They reflectively examined the university’s educational model to outline the identity of each novice academic, a point of departure that later was combined with the processing and implementation of active methodologies within their teaching practice. Constructing an academic teaching identity was tied in a meaningful way to the university’s explicit educational model, to its institutional goals and its public

and social commitments. The results allowed participants to feel included, to construct rational guidelines for teaching, and to construct clear scenarios for understanding their tasks within the institution. However, the results also highlighted the need to integrate the research side of academic practice into the programme, thus helping novice academics to construct a global academic identity that integrates the teaching self and the investigating self.

Aspects of ‘the investigating self’ were addressed in *Victoria King and Jennie Billot’s* article on a workshop on ‘*Essential Skills for Disseminating Your Higher Education Research*’, intended for those new to educational research and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). It was designed to support academics who wish to turn a teaching innovation, or other educational initiative, into publications. King and Billot build on BOURDIEU’s concepts of ‘field’, ‘habitus’ and ‘capital’ (BOURDIEU & WACQUANT, 1992, p. 160) to explore the issues which make this aspect of academic practice mystifying to many academics. The ‘essential skills’ which participants encounter in the workshop are to: a) *Recognize educational research as a ‘field’*; b) *Play the educational research game* according to its unwritten rules (‘habitus’), and c) *Recognize what is valued in the educational research field* (‘capital’). The authors acknowledge the difficult nature of the academic workplace and the challenges this brings to new academics’ socialization. They argue that the underlying strategy of using Bourdieu as a framework to demystify the academic workplace is transferable to other aspects of academic practice. For example, it could underpin workshops which help those new to teaching, disciplinary research or academic management gain a more professional habitus.

Similarly, *Lisa Scheer, Gudrun Salmhofer and Eva Seidl* present a pilot “Teaching Portfolio” project, consisting of two two-day workshops, one concentrating on the elements of a teaching portfolio, the second introducing the scholarship of teaching and learning. The question addressed in their study is how teaching portfolios contribute to and support the process of development of academics, academic identity, and professional growth. Instruments such as a teaching portfolio are seen as a key for a future-oriented change of teaching culture and represent an opportunity to

launch developments from the individual up to the institutional level (SCHEER, SALMHOFER & SEIDL, 2016).

In her article, *Sarah Weber* reflects on the consequences of the understanding of scientific work as project work. In her article, she is critical about the qualifying strategies for early career researchers. She analyses the approach based on project orientation used to organize scientific careers and develop research competencies in PhD candidates and makes recommendations on which aspects could be discussed in training in the early academic socialisation phase, in order to minimize the risk of getting lost in management rhetoric.

*Andrea Handsteiner* reflects on how novice academics begin to build an academic career, and she identifies three dimensions that need to be part of the introductory socialization phase: 1) knowledge of intra-organizational structures and processes, 2) knowledge of cultural norms and values, and 3) the realization of one's role within the institution. The article portrays two practical examples for the professional onboarding and socialization of academic faculty at different career levels. A 'Training Passport', intended to assist all newcomers during orientation, and an academic leadership course within a moderated peer learning setting, intended to guide newly appointed professors through the introductory phase. Although individual ideas and instruments within the article might not be new, the author shows that each institution of higher learning should carefully consider an effective method for developing and socializing academic faculty within their respective cultural and environmental conditions.

## **Professional learning and the impact of academic development programmes and networks on academic careers**

Academics in higher education differ widely from one another because of their disciplinary backgrounds and experiences. *Marion Lehner* explores the individual development pathways of novice academic teachers to show how a particular academic environment influences an individual's conception of teaching. Her longitudinal mixed methods study involving 37 trainee teachers at a Swiss Business



School identified three types of conceptual development. It also demonstrated how using visualization methods, like metaphors and sketches, can help to externalize teachers' unconscious conceptions of what good teaching is and facilitate the design of individually tailored learning environments where conceptual development is visible and may thus be steered.

*Yvonne Kreis* and *Kira Nierobisch* address academics' socialization via joining academic networks and the (perceived) impact of networks on academic careers. They conducted guided interviews with researchers at German higher education institutions (HEIs) working in the field of social sciences or STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). In these interviews, they addressed individual researchers' careers, the perceived impact of networks thereon, and the perceived influence (and/or relevance) of networks in academia. The article provides new insights into network perception and the impact networks have on academic socialization, with implications for the development of academic networks at higher education institutions.

*Roxana Acosta*, *Mònica Feixas* and *Carla Quesada-Pallarès* show the impact of pedagogical training in developing teachers' teaching conceptions and practices, improving students' learning and in changing institutional learning culture in Latin-American universities. Their article presents part of the outcomes of research aimed at examining teachers' motivation towards training, the training's impact on changing conceptions and practices, and its transfer potential. Showing that the impact of development programs cannot be assumed, their results show that teachers are highly motivated for being trained, but no fundamental changes in their approaches to teaching take place after the training program. Challenges to transfer are encountered in the teachers' individual capacity to transfer and in the institutional recognition (ACOSTA, FEIXAS & PALLARÈS, 2016).

Digital technologies as an aspect of pedagogy has developed its own research focus and literature. *Claude Müller*, *Flavio Di Giusto*, *Sandra Gross* and *Stefan Koruna* argue that digital competencies are of key importance in the successful institutionalization of e-learning, but lecturers' pedagogical skills and knowledge of digital

technologies are often rudimentary. There exist competency gaps in academics' development of digital technologies, and addressing these should be a key goal in the process of socialization and development of new university lecturers. In their article, the authors describe their institution's e-learning strategy and how they work to fulfill the requirements that have been specified for its lecturers (ZHAW SML, 2015): *Lecturers need to have a) the necessary technical ICT skills for teaching (ICT literacy), and b) profound knowledge in the area of media pedagogy for the design of e-learning (e-learning competencies).*

### **3 Key points and further research**

This special issue addresses the development and socialization of academics at the early stages of their careers. Through the contributed papers, the reader has the chance to reflect on a multiplicity of aspects affecting entrance into the academic profession: from strategies and methods for introducing academics to institutional values and dynamics, training in the first phases of academic development and agents involved in this process, to the obstacles and challenges socialization implies. The wide variety of topics addressed in this issue demonstrates that the academic profession is complex and that socialization represents an important step in academics' professional life.

Reading the papers in this special issue, three main points and questions for future developments arise:

Firstly, that construction of an academic identity is a long term and multifactorial process. Identity development depends on a complex intersection of individual, group and institutional factors and involve different agents: the individual academic, their colleagues and institutional leaders. The success of academics' work at university is dependent to a large degree on the interaction and balance between these factors. Some of the individual and organisational aspects (ION, 2014) are analysed in this special issue, but more research is needed into the role of institutional leaders in the different phases of academics' development, as institutional

leaders play a critical role in transferring knowledge related to intra-organizational structures and processes, cultural norms and values, and their realization within the institution.

Secondly, some of the papers in this special issue discuss the role of training and induction in the initial and early phases of academics' career. However, the impact and transfer of what has been learned during training into daily teaching practice is still under investigated. Many instructional development programs require, either for individual sessions or the program as a whole, reflective statements from participants. These statements often give evidence of reflection and change. Though, this evidence is often not underpinned in a conceptual and methodological rigorous way. The difficulty in gathering learning evidences supports the idea that better planning for impact where individual and organizational factors are aligned towards a vision of "transfer of learning" (FEIXAS & ZELLWEGER, forthcoming) is needed. Further research on the factors involved in the transfer process is desirable (STES & VAN PETEGEM, 2015), thereby focusing on both individual and organisational aspects. Longitudinal studies following the impact of training and induction programmes on academics' practice (including students' learning) in the mid and long term would be particularly worthwhile.

Finally, as the papers in this special issue highlight, the literature addressing the topic of the development and socialization of academics pays substantial attention to academics' role as teachers, with a relative neglect of other aspects of academic work. This may be a product of the fact that many researchers in this area are located in institutional educational development units, thereby encouraging a focus on academic teaching. But the very fact that most institutional academic development units are focused on educational development in particular rather than academic development holistically reflects a common higher education culture in modern times that separates teaching, research, and academic administration and service. The potential impact on developing academics of this 'fragmentation' of academic work (ÅKERLIND, 2011) deserves further investigation, particularly further research focusing on the integration of teacher and researcher development.

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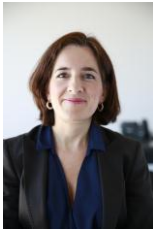
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## Editors



Prof. Dr Mònica FEIXAS || Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,  
Departament de Pedagogia Aplicada || Edifici G6/245,  
ES-08193 Cerdanyola del Vallès  
Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich, Zentrum für Hochschuldidaktik  
und Erwachsenenbildung || LAA-L010, Lagerstrasse, CH-28090  
Zürich

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3608-3982/>

[monica.feixas@uab.cat](mailto:monica.feixas@uab.cat)



Prof. Dr Gerlese S. ÅKERLIND || Australian National University,  
Emeritus Faculty || Canberra ACT 0200 Australia  
University of Canberra, College of Adjuncts, Canberra ACT 2601-  
Australia

[www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

[gerlese.akerlind@anu.edu.au](mailto:gerlese.akerlind@anu.edu.au)



Prof. Dr. Georgeta ION || Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,  
Departament de Pedagogia Aplicada || Edifici G6/248,  
ES-08193 Cerdanyola del Vallès

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9915-0698/>

[georgeta.ion@uab.cat](mailto:georgeta.ion@uab.cat)



Dr. Ann STES || University of Antwerp, Centre for Excellence in  
Higher Education || Venusstraat 35, BE-2000 Antwerp

[www.uantwerpen.be/nl/faculteiten/antwerp-school-of-  
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[ann.stes@uantwerpen.be](mailto:ann.stes@uantwerpen.be)