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Chapter 3. Developing higher education pedagogy as a pioneer: A case study from Finland

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Starting my path to be a scholar in university pedagogy

My personal journey to be a professor of learning and teaching in adult and higher education started after high school, when I worked for a year in an insurance company as an assistant, and learnt that these types of organizations have specific staff training needs. I observed their work and became interested in particular in the staff professional development. My interest in educating adults guided me to study educational sciences and finally to undertake doctoral studies in university students' learning.

Alongside undertaking my Master's degree at the University of Turku, I also took courses at the University of Helsinki, the biggest Finnish university. There I participated in a short university pedagogy course in 1996. After the course, I contacted the teacher and joined her research team, and worked for a while as an assistant at the Medical Pedagogy Centre that she led. That was the first, and, in those days the only, university pedagogical unit in Finland. There I also met a researcher who later became the leader of the University of Helsinki Centre for University Teaching and Learning, and later the Vice Rector of the University of

Helsinki. I also met other researchers who later became known as some of the most influential researchers in Finland, and worldwide, within the area of higher education pedagogy research. It is via these colleagues, I have been able to follow the development of this area in another university in addition to my own university, University of Turku. Meeting these people and my experiences in Helsinki were very crucial for my development. They have influenced my conceptions about what university pedagogical education and research should be at the university level.

After finishing my Master's degree in 1997, I returned to the University of Turku in my hometown, where I continued to do my doctoral studies under the supervision of a professor who was to become a longstanding teacher and precious mentor in my journey in academia. I continued my university pedagogical studies by participating in a short, basic university pedagogy course in 1998–9, following which I started to teach on the course. At that time there were no long courses on higher education pedagogical training available. However, I realized that in order to teach the university staff, I would myself need the official teacher training of 60 ECTS (The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, about 27 hours of work per 1 credit) required by Finnish law. Thus, I completed the official teachers' pedagogical studies programme, offered by the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences.

The actual path to becoming a scholar and later a leader in higher education pedagogy started in 2006, when the University of Turku decided to offer more elaborate courses in higher education pedagogy instead of the 10 ECTS basic course that had been available to staff wanting to train in higher education teaching. I was selected to plan, organize and deliver the 60 ECTS programme for higher education pedagogical training to university teachers, and alongside this do research on the topic at the Department of Teacher Training at the Faculty of Education. This was a position and work I was very keen and motivated to undertake.

My visit to the University of Helsinki had made it clear to me that university pedagogy was a new and growing area, and in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, the research area of university learning and teaching was growing rapidly. Thus, I believed my own institution, University of Turku, might also be keen to develop it and to invest in its growth. However, things did not go as smoothly as I had anticipated.

Towards high quality teaching in Finnish universities

Finland is a country with a population of 5.5 million people and with a limited number of universities. Currently, there are only thirteen universities, and they all operate under the Ministry of Education and Culture's administrative branch. They are located across the country in main cities, with the biggest universities in the capital, Helsinki. Owing to the limited number of universities and regulation by the law and the ministry, all universities are quite similar in their quality and operation.

Finland has a very high educational status because of its success in the elementary school level PISA tests (e.g. Sahlberg, 2011; Simola, 2005). This, together with the goals of higher education policy by the European Union (European Commission, 2016) have set high ambitions for Finland to also succeed in higher education. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture states in its 'Vision 2030 and Roadmap' the goals of 'Becoming a nation with the most competent labour force' and 'A higher education community with the skills to deliver the best learning outcomes and environments in the world' (Minedu, 2020). Distinctive also is the fact that Finnish university education is free of charge and all students receive a monthly study grant to pursue their studies.

All Finnish universities state in their strategy that they aim to offer high-quality teaching and learning. However, many Finnish university teachers lack any pedagogical training for teaching at university level. This is in strong contradiction with the universities'

quality goals as outlined in their strategies. Only a few universities require their teachers to undertake any obligatory pedagogical training to teach in higher education, and if they do, it is usually a short 10 ECTS course. In Finnish universities of applied sciences, the training is more extensive; there, the teachers are usually required to undertake a more elaborate 60 ECTS pedagogical programme.

Pedagogical training for university teachers in its current form, based on constructivist learning theories, started in the 1990s in Finland. Earlier, in the 1970s, there was some training based on behaviourist teaching theories, but teachers did not consider this training useful (Järvinen, 2007). The increased focus on research on university learning and teaching in the 1990s probably speeded up the development of higher education pedagogical training. In most universities, some type of pedagogical training for staff became an established practice during the 1990s. The training was usually about 10 ECTS credits and lasted from half a year to one year.

The universities which do not offer the obligatory training in higher education teaching follow the Humboldtian ideal (Simons and Elen, 2007) of a teacher being qualified to teach if they have the subject/disciplinary expertise and knowledge. As per the Humboldtian approach, all skills required for teaching are learnt by ‘education through research’. This approach to university teaching is typical in many universities across the world. However, many universities have developed higher education teacher training programmes, and there is already evidence to suggest that such pedagogical training is proving effective (e.g. Chalmers and Gardiner, 2015; Rienties and Hosein, 2015; Rienties and Kinchin, 2014). In addition, staff are becoming increasingly aware of the need to undertake such pedagogical training to support them with their teaching practice (Murtonen and Vilppu, 2020).

Offering voluntary pedagogical courses has been a success, and many universities have found their courses have been so popular that they have not been able to accommodate the

growing demand for such courses and not all applicants can be accepted. The typical selection criteria have been the length of experience as a teacher and the amount of teaching responsibility. This has meant that novice teachers often cannot access such training, and this has led to the situation where these novices have to start their teaching career without any pedagogical training. This situation is not ideal, because studies have demonstrated that experienced teachers may change their teaching views very slowly (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi, 2007), and that experienced teachers without pedagogical training are not always willing to develop their teaching practices (Murtonen et al., submitted). This creates a complex situation as when these teachers are novice, they do not have access to the training, and as experienced teachers, they become so established in their ways of approaching teaching that they are reluctant to change their practices when they finally have access to such training. A study by Vilppu et al. (2020) shows that even short training can have remarkable effect on novice teachers' views of teaching. Thus, pedagogical training should not be optional and left to the later years of teachers' careers.

Establishment of higher education pedagogical education in Finland and Turku

At the University of Turku, training was organized by the central administration as 'staff training' from the middle of the 1990s until 2006, following which the University gave the task of offering pedagogical education to the Faculty of Education. The move to giving the Faculty of Education responsibility for pedagogical training was driven by two reasons. First, the goal was to offer a more elaborate 60 ECTS pedagogical studies programme, which, according to Finnish law, offers formal qualification to work as a teacher. Second, to be accepted and respected by the other faculties, the pedagogical education needed to be research-based. Consequently, two specialist positions for senior researchers became

available within the Faculty of Education. Although both positions had a research focus, they were accompanied with a very heavy teaching load.

Establishing university pedagogical education in Finnish universities was not always an easy job, and the development has not been straightforward. In many universities, there were tense negotiations between the faculties of education, who were able to award the 60 ECTS pedagogical studies required by Finnish law, and the educational development units, who in many universities organized these studies leading to the credits. These units were often placed under the university central administration, and often they had not collaborated before with the faculty of education at their university. Nowadays, the faculties of education in most universities are responsible for developing and researching university pedagogy, and in many cases also responsible for delivering the courses.

At the University of Turku, there were many negotiations in the beginning as to how pedagogical education would be organized. The Faculty of Education's Head of Studies wanted to offer only the whole 60 ECTS education, not smaller packages, because all other pedagogical studies offered by the faculty were organized in that way. Usually these pedagogical studies require participants to study pedagogy full-time for one year. That kind of a model had been tested at the University of Eastern Finland (former University of Joensuu). The experience was that many teachers wanted to participate in smaller bitesize courses rather than undertake the whole 60 ECTS education, because many were doubtful of their ability to complete (or did not want to undertake) the whole 60 ECTS package (Meriläinen, 2006).

Other Finnish universities were offering smaller packages (10 or 25 ECTS), so in my role as the senior researcher who was assigned to oversee the development of this programme, and who knew the situation in other universities, I suggested the University of Turku should adopt a more flexible approach. I believed university staff would not leave their

job for one year to study pedagogy. Instead, as I suggested, the studies should be offered in smaller packages of 10, 15 and 35 ECTS, which would be possible to complete in around three to four years. As a compromise, the faculty started to offer 25 and 35 ECTS packages which together formed the 60 ECTS pedagogical studies. However, most of the teachers were keen to only undertake 10 ECTS packages, so the university central administration continued offering this smaller package alongside the larger packages being offered by the Faculty of Education. This resulted in a situation where the participants had many types of study rights, i.e. some had a right to study only 10 ECTS, while other had applied directly to the 25 ECTS package. This caused problems for us as organizers, because we needed to keep several different records on different type of students' credits. After a few years, the faculty started to offer all three packages, 10, 15 and 35 ECTS. Today, there are even smaller packages of 5 ECTS, and the participants can collect their first 25 ECTS in many ways, and these comprise both obligatory and optional courses. We still have developmental issues with issuing the credit points, and hope that micro credential or badge systems will help us in the future.

My rocky road to becoming a leader

When looking back to 2006, when I was selected as a university researcher, I see a naive belief in me, in trusting that there would soon be a pedagogical centre at the University of Turku like the one I had seen at the University of Helsinki. There, we would have sufficient resources to offer high-quality pedagogical courses for staff, and there I could do research on the pedagogical topics alongside a motivated research group. Looking at the situation now, that is about what has actually happened, and where I am now. However, the journey has not been as straightforward as I believed it would be, and it has taken fifteen long years.

The two things which have kept me driven in these turbulent times, are my passion to work with university staff, and conducting research on higher education pedagogical issues.

In my journey, I have faced the typical problems of any working community, such as differences in goals and conceptions from my colleagues and sometimes even the institution about the work (Laack, 2021; Maier and Brunstein, 2001), and lack of sufficient resources and help (Clarke and Reid, 2013; Stupnisky, Weaver-Hightower, and Kartoshkina, 2015).

The cultures in different Finnish universities have been different in relation to, for example, how much and in which phase of the career, responsibility was given to staff. I had seen at the University of Helsinki many kinds of leadership positions being given to early career academics, but this was not the case at my university, faculty and indeed my department. I was myself not interested in leadership positions in the beginning, which probably was a mistake. Later I realized that such a position was the key to the functions I wanted to do, namely, organize high-quality teaching and do research on it, so with time this desire sparked my interest in leadership positions. In practice, I was the leader of the entire university's staff pedagogical training from the beginning of 2006. I was responsible for negotiating resources that would ensure the best learning experience for students, was responsible for the curriculum and most of the teaching, wrote applications to request funding from university leaders to support pedagogical interventions and research, and would finally report on the success of such initiatives. At times I have been, and currently am, supported by great colleagues with whom I share this responsibility, but there have been changes in personnel and this has sometimes even led to increased workload.

When I compare my tasks at the time when I began as a researcher with focus on university pedagogy, and now, having become a leader of the University of Turku Centre for University Pedagogy and Research (UTUPEDA), my tasks were actually more demanding in the early years. Then the whole area of university learning and teaching was new and required several negotiations with university central administration, the Faculty of Education and its two Departments, all other faculties, and the doctoral school. I had, of course, some

support in this task; for example, the Vice Rector of the University was interested in pedagogical studies, the Dean of the Faculty was supportive, and my former supervisor was a great help, but there were actually not many who had a complete understanding of the area.

It has been the most burdening thing both in terms of time and emotionally in the whole path, that not many understand and appreciate the tasks running the university's pedagogy education entails. This has led to the situation where I have often needed to fight the corner for pedagogical education, having to explain the whole thing over and over again to different and changing actors and working hard to convince them of the need to act in a certain way. Sometimes I have felt like it was my own idea and wish to offer university pedagogical courses instead of the university hiring and asking me to do this job.

Placing the university pedagogy education under the Department of Teacher Education was, on the one hand, suitable for the education and research tasks, but on the other hand, organizationally a compromise. The departments of teacher education in Finland have a long tradition of focusing only on elementary school teacher and subject teacher training. As the university pedagogy education task is quite different to the massive task of training teachers for schools, university pedagogy has not always been at the top of the priority list of departmental decisions.

Another source for stress has been the limited possibility for conducting research. Although my title was a senior researcher, which in Finland is a good position and should allow the worker to conduct research, in practice I had almost no time to do research. In my work, I was either alone or accompanied by one colleague, and the task was to offer the 60 ECTS education for the whole university, comprised of six faculties. This left me with no time for research.

In personal life, becoming a mother to three children (in 2003, 2008 and 2010) made conducting research even more difficult, since there was less time in the evenings, weekends

and holidays to do research. Luckily, my husband has always shared the household chores with me and shared responsibilities for childcare. He also stayed at home with the children for some years, allowing me to return to work after my maternity leave. Without his support, being a mother, a researcher and developing as a leader in teaching and learning would have been impossible. According to a study by Prinz et al. (2020), supporting partners are a necessity for many women to succeed in academic life.

The most important positive development in my research career was funding that we secured from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in 2017 to develop and study a digital pedagogical solution for university teachers and doctoral students. Within this **University Pedagogical Support (UNIPS)** project, I was finally able to have some help to conduct research. The outcomes of this project gave me sufficient credibility to apply for professorship and thus to progress in my career. Another instance that has been very important for both my personal development and for the whole Finnish higher education pedagogy development has been the network of educators and developers called Kouke.

Table 1. Development of Finnish University Pedagogical Education and my Personal Career Path since the 1970s.

Year	Pedagogical staff training in Finnish universities	My career path
1970s	Some training - Emphasis on behaviouristic theories - Faced criticism among staff	
1980s	Almost no training	
1990s	Short training courses (about 10 ECTS) offered by many universities	- Studying in Turku during 1993–6 - Visit to Helsinki in 1996–7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expansion of research based on constructivist theories on university learning and teaching - Staff very interested in participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree 1997 and starting doctoral studies, University of Turku
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of trainings - Many universities start to offer longer trainings (20 to 60 ECTS) - Strengthening pedagogical research on the basis of trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected in 2006 to university researcher position to plan, organize and research the new 60 ECTS pedagogical studies at the University of Turku
2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidation of trainings - Departments of teacher education approving university pedagogy trainings as official pedagogical training regulated by the Finnish law. - Some universities requiring obligatory pedagogical training (usually 10 to 25 ECTS) - Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture funding the development of research based higher education pedagogy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected as a professor of higher education pedagogy at Tampere University in 2018, starting in 2019
2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing consolidation - Even stronger emphasis on pedagogical training in many functions, such as strategies of universities, work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected as a professor of higher education pedagogy at the University of Turku in 2020

	plans of staff, new workers' selection processes, etc. - Plans about continuing pedagogical education paths for staff	- Selected as director of the University of Turku Centre for University Pedagogy (UTUPEDA), starting in 2021
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Finnish Kouke support network for educators and developers of higher education pedagogy

As one of the pioneers in university pedagogy teaching, there were not many models or much help available to me, when designing and creating pedagogical studies courses. It was typical that those who designed and organized university pedagogical training in Finland were themselves not educated in higher education pedagogy. The developers of such courses usually came from other departments than teacher education, such as psychology of general education. The developers of university pedagogy thus themselves suffered from the same lack of pedagogical training and help as other university teachers (e.g. Brownell and Tanner, 2012; Kane, Sandretto, and Heath, 2002; Murtonen and Vilppu, 2020; Remmik et al., 2011). Absence of pedagogical guidance combined with limited teaching preparation time has been found to drive many new teachers to copy their former teachers' style (Knight, 2002). However, lack of models could sometimes be considered as a good thing, as in this case it forced us develop something new together and really consider justifications for all choices.

In the beginning of creating the University of Turku pedagogical programme, we benchmarked all Finnish, the available Scandinavian, and some other pedagogical education programmes. However, we also needed other colleagues to discuss the more complex problems and get support for our ideas. While feeling a bit lonely in leading the

developmental task, a support network was more than welcome. In Finland, a network called Peda-Forum has been in operation since the early 1990s. The network is well known in universities and has been engaged in organizing pedagogical conferences each year in some Finnish university. Many higher education teachers present their developmental pedagogical innovations and research at this conference.

Under the Peda-forum network, there has been a sub-network for teachers and developers of university pedagogy education called Kouke (In Finnish *Kouluttajien ja kehittäjien verkosto*). At the same time as when we developed the higher education pedagogical programme at Turku, other Finnish universities were also developing their university pedagogical training programmes. The network has offered the participants both collegial support and ideas on how the training should be organized. With the Kouke network we, for example, created together the central learning outcomes for a 10 ECTS basic university pedagogy course.

In recent years, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has emphasized collaboration between the Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences. In line with this emphasis, the higher education pedagogy developers have started to collaborate, and the Peda-forum network has been replaced by KoPe (Higher Education, in Finnish *Korkeakoulupedagogiikka*) network.

In most Finnish universities, like at Turku, the number of staff dedicated to running the university pedagogy education programmes has been limited, with typically one to three persons, so those engaged in developing and running such programmes have all felt the need for and benefited from the help from this network. The network has been important for me personally and for the development of pedagogical education at the University of Turku. However, the times have changed now, and we could say that the Finnish university pedagogy education is not in its early years anymore, but has become an established

educational programme. This also means that new members of the educators and developers group need new kinds of support. This type of network will probably offer that support also in the future.

UNIPS - the Finnish innovation for organizing pedagogical training together

One of the innovations that originated in the Kouke meeting during early 2000 was the idea of organizing pedagogical education together through digital devices. Most universities suffered from limited resources in organizing the training and high number of applicants to courses. Foreign workers and doctoral students, in particular, were asking for courses in English. With a limited number of personnel, it was hard to offer courses for all who were willing to participate, and simultaneously in many languages, whilst also ensuring high quality content.

I presented the idea of small digital pedagogical courses to the University of Turku, and we got strategic funding for a project called the **University of Turku Pedagogical Support (UTUPS)** in 2015. I was the main designer and hired a project researcher to develop the digital environment alongside me. We were able to offer short pedagogical modules in English for international staff and doctoral students via UTUPS. In 2016, the vice rector encouraged us to submit an application to the Ministry of Education and Culture for getting funding to collaborate with other Finnish universities in creating these digital modules. The application was informed by the work of the UTUPS, and in collaboration with the members in the Kouke group who expressed a desire to participate. The ministry allowed a key funding project for the University Pedagogical Support (UNIPS) for years 2017–19 (Murtonen et al., 2019). With this funding, the UNIPS solution was developed in collaboration with eight (out of thirteen) Finnish universities (see unips.fi). I was selected as the leader of the project, and

this position allowed me to develop a further understanding of Finnish university pedagogy education.

The funder, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture has declared often that all development and decisions in educational solutions should be evidence-based. The UNIPS-project was thus research-based, meaning that we not only had feedback from the participants in the end saying that they enjoyed their studies in the UNIPS environment, but also that developments and changes were informed both by student evaluations and research evidence. We secured rich and rigorous research data with quantitative evidence from questionnaires, qualitative data from open-ended questions, and eye-tracking data on watching videos on teaching-learning situations. These data showed that these short pedagogical modules were able to change participants' conceptions and ideas of teaching (Murtonen et al., submitted; Vilppu et al., 2019). For me personally this was a very important step in my career: finally, I had an opportunity to do research, hire someone to help me with data collection, analyses and writing, and publish in high-quality journals. This also offered me recognition in the promotion process by being appointed as the Professor of Higher Education Pedagogy based on the outcomes of this research.

The UNIPS modules are currently offered in many Finnish universities, and new modules are constantly developed. The main idea of UNIPS is to develop module content in collaboration with other universities, ensuring collaboration also in the future. The modules can be used by the teachers for self-study, or the universities can offer them as guided studies with a possibility to earn 1 ECTS per module. The future goal is to develop discipline-specific modules and to work together with universities from other countries in order to give teachers the opportunity to develop their pedagogical expertise in collaboration with their international colleagues. I believe international collaboration between teachers in pedagogical issues would raise the quality of teaching in higher education.

Lessons learnt and future perspectives in university pedagogy

Now, after fifteen years since I was selected to plan and offer a university pedagogy 60 credit programme at the University of Turku, I am still partly struggling with the same issues that I was at the beginning, such as that the resources are not sufficient compared to the scale of the task. I know the situation is quite similar in most Finnish universities, but this does not offer an excuse for under-resourcing. Everybody seems to agree that these courses are important, and the participants are very satisfied with their training. In discussions with faculties and university leaders, it is typical that many new, important pedagogical ideas and development goals arise, but when it comes to the question of who pays for it, there are not anymore so many comments. I have found it quite hard to draw the line between important development tasks and research, since I would like to do both, but there is not enough time to do justice to either.

On becoming a professor, I have now managed to secure some more time to conduct research than what I had as a researcher, but rejecting an interesting teaching or development project due to limited time has not come easily to me. I often struggle with the syndrome of trying to do everything – I have tried to learn to say ‘no’, a skill that many of us try to learn, and to remember that I have my tasks listed in my work plan, and none can expect me to do all the extra work that comes up. I would say that this is the lesson to be learnt for new academic developers and researchers in this area, that the university defines which functions it wants to fund, and if there is no funding for something, it does not mean that you need to do it in your free time.

Being a pioneer in university pedagogy has been both demanding and rewarding. Having to work with a variety of stakeholders – the university central administration, the university vice rector of education, doctoral school representatives, the faculty of education

and its two departments, and naturally all other faculties at the university who are our ‘customers’ – the expressed wishes and requirements from all these actors has sometimes been overwhelming and even contradictory. The over twenty years history has been a constant process of explaining and justifying our activity for all instances, and when the representatives of these instances change, the whole process usually has to be started all over again. It feels almost like I have my own agenda to promote at the university, although the situation is that I have been hired to do work that the university wants me to do. This has all taught me a lot about a university and its functions, although sometimes this does become frustrating.

Maybe the biggest individual disappointment in my journey to a professor has been when I was not selected as a tenure professor in 2017 at the University of Turku. The challenging thing to accept was that although the domain was higher education pedagogy, the selection was made by emphasizing the h-index value (a research impact metric) of the applicants. Being burdened with a heavy teaching load during the years, I could not compete in that aspect very well. However, the person who was selected as a tenure professor was familiar to me and working with her in Turku was great. She brought to Turku just the kind of research-directed attitude that I had missed.

One year later, a higher education pedagogy professor position opened at Tampere University, a new university coalition of three former universities. I was selected for this position. It appeared to be a wonderful experience, because working in another university and seeing the practices of a new, innovative university coalition taught me a lot. I began to know many interesting people and began research projects and collaboration that are still ongoing. Working in Tampere, however, ended quite soon. The person who was selected as a tenure professor to Turku got another job and the professorship in Turku was opened again, and I applied for this, because my family still lived in Turku. This time I was selected. Working at

Tampere physically ended suddenly due to COVID-19. When I left my office for the last time in March 2020, I did not know that I would be selected for the position of a professor at the University of Turku and that I would not be able to access my Tampere office before June 2020, when I emptied my office.

As a conclusion, I would say that the actual work of interacting with university teachers and other staff from different faculties involved in teaching and supervising students has been very interesting and rewarding. The participants in pedagogical courses are usually very motivated and eager to develop their pedagogical expertise. Doing research with them and about them and their students has been very exciting and satisfying. In addition, collaborating with other pedagogical developers and researchers in the domain has been very motivating.

The future of university pedagogy in Finland seems to be in search for new directions. Processes such as lifelong or continuous learning, personalized learning environments and digitalization have already been shaping the education offered. Sudden changes in society, such as due to COVID-19, may have dramatic consequences for teaching and university pedagogy, which need to be addressed quickly. We need to offer our teaching and supervising staff the right support at the right time to be able to help them and in turn the learning of students. It is important that there is recognition that training in higher education pedagogy is a lifelong endeavour and should be ongoing and not delivered via one package of courses. We need much more research on both teachers' and students' learning to be able to develop the right kind of training and materials for them. Research is the way to ensure that university teachers' training will be proactive, not just reactive, meaning that we can offer them tools for their expertise development before they face the challenges and problems with their teaching. I am happy to be currently in a position where I hope to be able to lead this new direction of teacher development.

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