

## Getting Them Fresh: How to Cultivate New Teachers into Becoming Self-regulated Learners in Their Role as Teachers

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**Abstract:** Research matters more than teaching when it comes to tenure and positions, which makes it difficult to engage faculty in developing their teaching practice. In this paper, we raise the question of whether we are able to engage our faculty in professional development; if we intervene when they are new as teachers (Lueddeke, 2003), and if we use the sustainable feedback approach (Carless et al., 2011). Our goal is not only to engage faculty but also to turn the min to lifelong self-regulated learners who will later seek advice and pursue further development when needed. The sustainable feedback approach, with dialogue at its core, has been used in a part of a new teacher program involving mentoring. The mentor has observed and videotaped one or more teaching sessions, which can later be accessed by the participant at anytime.

We have used a survey to explore these issues. Our results are inconclusive, but we believe there are still preliminary insights to be gained. We have not previously seen studies where the sustainable feedback approach has been used in professional development, and we think there is more research needed before it can be concluded whether this is a fruitful approach. Further research should also take into account questions regarding motivation, the duration of a new teacher program and the involvement of Departments.

**Key words:** professional development, sustainable feedback, self-regulating learners, scholarship of teaching, changing instructional practices, new teacher

### 1. Introduction

At BI Norwegian Business School (henceforth: BI) it is a challenge to engage faculty in professional development with regard to teaching. Courses in teaching and learning have been offered, and the number of participants is decreasing. Our research question in this article is whether a sustainable feedback approach towards new teachers can counter this development. The sustainable feedback approach has never, to our knowledge, been applied to professional development in a higher education context.

In line with the findings of Lueddeke (2003), we started up a new teacher program in 2013. Lueddeke found that — in the beginning of their careers and in the end of their careers — faculty was more likely to engage in professional development. Our thought was that if we could engage these new teachers, maybe we could see a lasting impact. Instead, they would keep on developing themselves as teachers and participate in courses and

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seminars after being part of the new teacher program.

As pedagogical senior advisors, we are well aware of the literature on how to give feedback to students in order to turn them into self-regulating learners (Carless et al., 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Our idea and contribution to the research field was to apply the same principles when dealing with new teachers, with the intention of turning them into self-regulated and lifelong learners who would later return to us or others to further develop themselves as teachers.

## 2. Background

BI is a private specialized university college situated in Norway. It is the third largest higher education institution in Norway, with approximately 20,000 students and approximately 420 faculty staff. Ours is an institution where research matters more than teaching with regard to tenure and rewards. At all levels, from the head of our school to each department, we find that focus primarily is put on research and publications. Research is important both in our strategy to become a leading European business school and for the professional standing of faculty. As a sign of this, the number of publishing points the School has accumulated annually has increased during the last two years by 22 percent (BI, 2015b). Meanwhile, as a private institution, 85 percent of our income is from student fees and it is students who benefit most directly from good teaching. Concomitantly, the competition for external accreditation has put pressure on the School to emphasize quality assurance and professional development for teachers. BI also has a new strategy from 2015 to 2018, as there will be a strong focus on student learning experience and the importance of teaching excellence (BI, 2015a).

At BI, all professional development concerning teaching is more or less voluntary. Learning Lab, the competence centre for teaching, learning and ICT is responsible for offering courses, support and training for teaching. Some of these offers are open to all faculty, some are customized to a particular research department and some, like the new teacher program, are offered individually to each new faculty member. While participation in our open courses is low, all of those who have been offered the new teacher program have accepted. Nonetheless, it is our impression that willingness to devote time and energy to teaching declines as the new employee realizes the emphasis their department puts on research.

Our model for professional development is incremental. Newly appointed staff are supposed to start by attending our new teacher program, then attend our Teaching Excellence Series (courses in teaching and learning), and subsequently become an experienced teacher who will share his or her own experience with other teachers — both best practice and failures — in order to promote organizational learning.



Figure 1 The Teaching Excellence Model at BI

## **2.1 New Teachers at BI**

We have (at least) three goals with the new teacher program. The first and most important goal is that we do not want new teachers to come into a classroom one morning at 8 am without knowing the room, the equipment or anything about our students. Consequently, all new teachers meet up with an assigned mentor who shows them around our lecture halls and our facilities in Learning Lab. The second goal is to capture the new teachers while they are “fresh”, in order to implement changes in the teaching culture at BI. Our third goal is to recruit participants for our “Teaching Excellence Series” and other pedagogical seminars, workshops and courses. The focus of this article is the second goal; the two other goals will not be further addressed in this article.

Teaching is said to be a part of a culture of closed doors (Drew & Kloppe, 2014), and our intention is to develop an open and peer reviewed process. In order to meet this goal, we have arranged both mentoring and more informal “meet-ups” between teachers from different research departments and with different backgrounds. The purpose of the meet-ups has been to create a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The interest in such meet-ups seems to be decreasing. The mentoring has, however, been more successful and everybody who has been signed up by their head of department has participated in at least some part of the mentoring. The mentoring part of the new teacher program is therefore the subject of this study.

An important part of our new teacher program is to be observed by a mentor when teaching in an actual teaching situation with students. The mentor has a first meeting with the new teacher where they discuss which aspects of the teaching the mentor should give special attention. Subsequently, the mentor is present during a lecture and the lecture is videotaped for future use. After the lecture, the mentor and the new teacher meet again to discuss what was observed and suggestions are made for the future development of the new teacher. The mentor can return later and observe the new teacher again to see what progress has been made. The new teacher is also encouraged to watch the video to improve his or her teaching, and also to show it to colleagues for feedback purposes in order to keep on learning after the mentor no longer plays an active role.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

### **3.1 Getting Them “Fresh”**

In Lueddeke’s (2003) study, he found — consistent with previous literature — that there is greater interest in professional development regarding teaching for those who are early in their career or late in their career in contrast to those who are in the middle of their career. He defines early in their career as those with less than 5 years of experience. This is the background for the idea that we should reach out to the new teachers, believing that they would be more interested in participating in our professional development offer, “the new teacher program”. We have designed the new teacher program in accordance with effective feedback principles in order to help new teachers become lifelong learners in their teaching role while hoping they will continue their professional development after the mentor is no longer active.

### **3.2 Feedback**

Feedback theory has been applied in analyzing peer observation in higher education. Gormally, Evans, and Brickman (2014) and Shortland (2010) refer to the feedback research done by Timperley (2001) and Hattie and Timperley (2007). Emphasis here has been on how to provide the best feedback in order to improve performance and close the gap between observed performance and wanted performance; the concept of self-regulated learners

is not mentioned. In our new teacher program we are not looking for an ideal teaching performance or teaching situation; we see professional development as an ongoing process in a never changing world. Instead of closing a performance gap, our feedback should provide the tools and mind-set that set the participants on a career-long journey during which they keep on developing as teachers. This is why we see the sustainable feedback approach as more in line with the goal of our work.

What Carless et al. (2011) add to this is an emphasis on the ongoing process after the mentor is no longer active, where the learners seek to continue improving their own teaching. In a context where time is a scarce resource, it is valuable to provide feedback that gives the learner the tools to keep monitoring his or her own learning process without the mentor present and to keep on regulating and continuing their own learning processes. The research and theory of Carless et al. (2011) has targeted feedback given to students, whereas we try to apply this kind of thinking for teachers who are in a learner role.

### **3.3 Self-regulated Learners**

As we understand from Gormally et al. (2014), the mentor is the one who identifies what is good teaching. The mentor defines what comprises the gap between the performance of the new teacher and the wanted performance. The mentor is the one who suggests improvements. We do not see ourselves as “truth-keepers” of excellent teaching; we view the participants in the new teacher program as competent peers, and hence see dialogue as a central tool for discussing further improvement and professional development for our teachers. At the same time there is an element of closing the performance gap also in our mentoring, but the mentor and the new teacher together identify both the desired performance, the nature of the gap and possible improvements through dialogue.

At the heart of feedback as a sustainable practice (Carless et al., 2011) lies the dialogue and the internalization of the feedback dialogue as a means to continue to assess oneself after the mentor no longer plays an active role. The purpose is to help the new teachers to be able to assess their own teaching practice at all times during their teaching career, and to be able to recognize when to invite mentors or colleagues into the classroom again, or seek advice or competence from the teaching and learning competence centre.

The definition of self-regulated learners put forward in the article is “...an active, constructive process where by learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition...” (Carless et al., 2011, from Pintrich & Zusho, 2002, p. 250). For our purposes, we would like to know if the videotape from the observation in the classroom, especially, has been a tool for the new teachers to monitor and regulate their own teaching.

Effective feedback practice is characterized by three principles (Carless et al., 2011, p. 403):

- (1) The enhancement of student self-evaluative abilities through activities such as question-raising and the promotion of self-directed learning.
- (2) dialogic interaction usually incorporating both peer and lecturer critique.
- (3) technology-assisted dialogue with the aim of promoting student autonomy and reflective interaction.

Our new teacher program is designed in accordance with these three principles. The mentor both raises questions (1) and has a dialogue with the new teacher (2) about what is going on in the classroom. The dialogue is based both on observation in the classroom and on watching the videotape from the classroom together. The videotape is subsequently available for the teacher to watch at anytime their own computer to promote autonomy and reflection (3).

The dialogue between the mentor and the participant is a dialogue between competent peers, as we try to avoid the authority commonly found in a feedback dialogue between a teacher and a student. We also try to avoid a failure-based feedback dialogue, since this kind of feedback can be said to ascertain authority (Utell, 2013). A failure-based feedback dialogue is further characterized by a predominantly focus on what you did wrong and your weaknesses. Our feedback dialogue is better described as a facilitative feedback dialogue, with a predominantly focus on building skills and creating opportunities for growth. The mentor and the participant together explore both strengths and weaknesses, which should enable the participant to set their own goals and continue their further development as teachers and self-regulated lifelong learners.

### **3.4 The Rationale of the Study**

Our research question is whether a sustainable feedback approach towards new teachers can counter the development of decreasing interest in participating in professional development regarding teaching.

In accordance with Lueddeke (2003), we think that the teachers with no previous teaching experience will have more positive responses overall than the teachers with previous teaching experience from other workplaces. This is part one of our research question.

Since our new teacher program is designed in accordance with the principles for effective feedback, we expect to see that the new teachers who have attended all parts of the new teacher program have also used the videotape and discussed it with others — after the program — as a sign of them being self-regulated learners in their role as teachers. This is part two of our research question.

## **4. Sample and Data Collection**

Our target group was new teachers who had participated in the new teacher program since we began offering the program in May 2013. We developed a survey both in Norwegian and in English and sent an email with a link to the survey to 41 new teachers. We also sent one reminder email. The survey was anonymous.

The survey consisted of two parts. The first part was about attitudes to teacher development, where we measure whether teachers with no previous experience were more positive than teachers with previous teaching experience from other work places. Participants were asked to estimate the extent to which they found various topics important. One topic was questions concerning what kind of teacher they were and how they prepared for their teaching, another about how students learn, a third about what to expect of students, how to treat students and how to conduct classroom management. Finally, how to evaluate students and how to evaluate their teaching were addressed.

The second part was about sustainable feedback. It consisted of both mentor observations and recordings of teaching sessions. The purpose of this part was to try to determine whether our initiative had promoted any change in their teaching practice.

Due to the low number of participants and the exploratory nature of our study, we have described a few profiles and some tendencies, but we do not aspire to give them any statistical significance.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

In total, we received 16 responses, which is a response rate of 37 percent. Nine were male, six were female, and one did not answer this question. The average age of the respondents was 36 years. All of them had attended a

first meeting and a tour with their mentor. Ten out of sixteen had also been observed and videotaped while teaching, which is what we defined as participating in the mentoring part of our new teacher program, a focus area for this article. On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being very useful and 5 being not very useful, their overall rating of the new teacher program had an average score of 2.9.

First our finding was that new teachers are not necessarily new as teachers. They might be new teachers at our business school, but only 5 out of 16 respondents can be described as new as teachers, with an average of 0.6 years of previous teaching. The mean years of experience for the 11 participants who had previous teaching experience was 6 years. The participants were therefore already conditioned by a certain teaching culture, and with regard to our efforts to change their view of teaching and turn them into self-regulated learners, their previous teaching experience was an obstacle that we haven't addressed. It is not yet clear how a new teacher program can address such a challenge.

### 5.1 Attitude of New Teachers

The first part of the survey comprised the teachers' attitude towards the importance of different topics to discuss with a mentor (Table 1). If we compare the five most inexperienced (average 0.6 years of previous teaching) with the eleven more experienced (average 6 years) the ranking was totally different. The question "What kind of teacher are you" was ranked as the most important question by the inexperienced, while it was ranked last by the more experienced (2vs2.6). The question "What do you expect of your students" also got the highest score in the ranking by the inexperienced. For the more experienced teachers, the questions "How do students learn" and "How do you conduct you students" got the highest score with regard to importance. Among the less important questions in both groups, "How do you prepare your teaching" came first and "How do you treat your students" last, along with questions on how they evaluate their students and their teaching.

**Table 1 Average Attitudes of Experienced and Inexperienced Teachers on A Scale from 1 to 5**  
(Where 1 Is Very Important and 5 Is Not Very Important)

Attitude questions	Inexperienced (n = 5, average teaching experience 0.6 years)	Experienced (n = 11, average teaching experience 6 years)
What kind of teacher are you?	2.0	2.6
How do students learn?	2.2.	1.9
How do you prepare your teaching?	2.2	2.2
What do you expect of your students?	2.0	2.1
How do you conduct your students?	2.3	1.9
How do you treat your students?	2.5	2.3
How do you evaluate your students?	3.0	2.3
How do you evaluate your teaching?	2.4	2.3

Of the sixteen respondents, ten participated in both the introduction part and the follow-up with the mentor and video recording in class. Based on the feedback, we have compared the three least experienced (average 0.6 years previous teaching) with the seven more experienced (average 6.5 years) (Table 2). On average, the inexperienced were less happy about the usefulness of the first meeting for exchange of information and touring auditoriums than the experienced (2.7vs2.0). The inexperienced were also less pleased than the more experienced with the program overall (3.3vs1.7). The inexperienced did not consider the video part to be as useful as the other group (2.5vs1.7) and they did not change perception of their own teaching after having watched the video

(4.5vs3.6). Of all the ten, there were only two of the experienced who had shown the video to others. It was also only among the more experienced we found participants who said they had tried to change their teaching practice retrospectively (6 out of 7).

**Table 2 Average Responses from Experienced and Inexperienced Teachers on Questions Regarding Usefulness and Change after Participating in the Program**

Survey questions	Inexperienced (n = 3, average teaching experience 0.6 years)	Experienced (n = 7, average teaching experience 6.5 years)
How useful do you consider the first meeting and the tour to be? (1 is very useful, 5 is not very useful)	2.7	2.0
Survey questions	Inexperienced (n = 3, average teaching experience 0.6 years)	Experienced (n = 7, average teaching experience 6.5 years)
How useful do you consider the new teacher program to be overall? (1 is very useful, 5 is not very useful)	3.3	1.7
How useful do you consider the video part to be? (1 is very useful, 5 is not very useful)	2.5	1.7
To what extend did you change your perception of your own teaching after having watched the video? (1 is to a large extend, 5 is to a little extend)	4.5	3.6
Have you shown the video to others? (Yes/No)	All answered “no”	5 answered “no” and 2 answered “yes”
After watching the video, have you changed your teaching practice or asked others for advice about how you could change your teaching practice? (Yes/No)	All answered “no”	1 answered “no” and 6 answered “yes”

Lueddeke (2003) found in his research that the teachers most likely to develop themselves as teachers are the ones with less than 6 years of previous experience and the ones with more than fifteen years of experience. This is at odds with our findings: The ones with an average of six years of teaching experience actually were more positive to elements in the new teacher program than the teachers with less than one year experience. We could therefore not replicate this finding and our hypothesis was not supported.

## 5.2 Sustainable Feedback

Our new teacher program is designed in accordance with the principles for sustainable feedback (Carless et al., 2011). Ten of our respondents participated in the full mentoring program in which they were videotaped in the lecture hall and had a feedback dialogue with a mentor. Three out of the 10 later watched the videotape, but only 2 had shown the videotape to others. When we asked them whether they had made changes in their teaching after watching the videotape, 4 answered no and 6 answered yes. This can indicate that they actually are on a journey towards becoming lifelong learners.

On the other hand, there are data outside this study that make the picture more complex. After the new teacher program, we also arranged “meet-ups” for our new teachers and we arranged pedagogical courses. We had to cancel two meet-ups due to low interest. Out of the 41 new teachers who participated in our new teacher program, only 3 of them had later participated in the pedagogical course “Teaching Excellence Series”. More research is therefore needed to establish whether a sustainable feedback approach in a new teacher program is useful for turning new teachers into lifelong and self-regulated learners.

There are of course variables, which we have not taken into account in our study, which should also be subject to further research. We have not measured the motivation of our participants, nor the culture or pedagogical development in the departments the new teachers belong to. Henderson, Beach, and Finkelstein (2011) reviewed 191 journal articles and found that long-term intervention and support from the department were the two

most important variables for promoting change. Our participants are recruited from their head of department, but there is no systematic follow up after the program at the department level. This is closely linked to the emphasis that is put on research for tenure tracks. We can propose long term interventions in which mentoring lasts at least a teaching semester, but on the other hand if this is seen by the department as taking too much time from research, then we will have to settle for mentoring over a shorter period of time. These are possible obstacles for reaching our goal with the new teacher program with a sustainable feedback approach. We see this as a challenge where we need to work even closer with the research departments on the long run.

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, the experienced teachers who participated in the whole program had a more positive attitude towards pedagogical issues than the inexperienced teachers had. This is contrary to findings in previous studies, but the number of participants is low, and we do not propose to contradict previous results.

Our contribution to the research field of professional development is the sustainable feedback approach, which we have not found in previous studies. Our study does not conclude that our new teacher program — which is designed in accordance with the principles of sustainable feedback — succeeds in turning the new teachers into self-regulated lifelong learners, nor does it conclude that it does not. Working with sustainable feedback and creating cultural change takes time. It is therefore too soon to conclude whether this actually is a fruitful approach for working with professional development for new teachers.

There are several variables we have not taken into account in our study that might be influential and which would be interesting to research further, such as motivation and the involvement of the departments.

We are going to redesign our new teacher program after having conducted this research although the results are inconclusive. The theoretical reflections of this study lead us to believe that we need deep reengagement from the departments in addition to continuing work with the sustainable feedback approach. We would also like them entering to bean intervention that lasts longer than it does today. Whether we are in a position to influence the heads of departments to prioritize pedagogical development in a culture where research is main priority remains to be experienced.

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