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Towards a conceptual framework of professional development: a phenomenographic study of academics' mindsets in a business school

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ABSTRACT

Business education has had limited discussion on professional development for academics. Given the increasing focus on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, we investigate how academics conceptualise professional development. This has important implications since one's conceptions of a phenomenon can influence subsequent approaches. Few phenomenographic studies have investigated academics' conceptions of professional development. Our study asked business academics a typical phenomenographic question: what does professional learning and development mean to you? Our participants conceptualised it in four qualitatively different ways: continual growth mindset; student-centric mindset; knowledge-sharing mindset; and purpose-oriented mindset. We discuss the implications of these mindsets for designing professional development in higher education.

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Phenomenography; academics; professional development; business education

Introduction

Researchers in higher education (HE) have written extensively about universities' transition online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With greater attention being paid to the quality of teaching and the transition to teaching in new contexts, more academics have sought professional development to upskill and overcome the associated challenges. Against this backdrop, important questions to ask are how academics conceptualise professional development, why they engage with it, and what forms of professional development to engage with. This paper focuses on these questions: the what, why, and how of professional development for academics.

To date, few phenomenographic studies have investigated academics' conceptions of professional development. By academics, we refer to those involved in teaching and/or research in HE organisations. According to Marton (1986), 'phenomenography investigates the qualitatively different ways in which people experience or think about various phenomena' (p. 31). As researchers, we are therefore interested in how academics think about professional development. We asked twelve academics from eight different business disciplinary fields a typical phenomenographic question: 'What does professional learning and development mean to you?'

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This study has important implications for professional development because our conceptions of a phenomenon can influence how we approach it. For instance, the way academic development is conceptualised can restrict the variety of approaches to the development of academics (Golding, 2014). This issue becomes even more important as different stakeholders can hold incongruent expectations of what professional development should focus on, increasing the risk of professional development initiatives failing to improve quality in HE (Silander & Stigmar, 2021).

The format, scale and components of professional development may differ across HE (Boylan et al., 2018) but the basis remains the same. There is the teaching component, the research component, and a third component which usually covers governance, leadership, engagement, and related activities (Sutherland, 2018). Research is widely acknowledged as prominent for most academics' career progression. Teaching has often been considered the 'poorer' cousin of research, and yet the number of professionally accredited teachers in HE is growing and the need for and importance of quality teaching cannot be underestimated (Daniels, 2017). A more holistic view considers professional development as a process of transforming the self and a process of becoming (Dall'Alba, 2009).

In this paper, we begin by reviewing phenomenographic studies exploring conceptions of professional development in HE. Studies in this area seem scarce. We then look at the literature broadly focusing on professional development for teaching in HE followed by a narrower exploration of studies in business and management education. Following the traditional presentation of phenomenographic studies, we first present categories of description with reference to comments made by participants followed by a description of the ways in which categories are related to each other in the outcome space. We then follow with a discussion of the results with a broader exploration of the meaning of our findings for professional development of academics in HE.

Academics' conceptions of professional development

Since earlier work by Åkerlind (2003, 2005), there has been little attention paid to investigating academics' conceptions of professional development in HE. In these two papers, Åkerlind reported a phenomenographic study where 28 academics reflected on their teaching and what it means to grow and develop as a university teacher. The resulting categories of description were related to their comfort with teaching, knowledge and skills, and learning outcomes for students.

Zou (2019) investigated academics' conceptions of community-based professional development in a university. The participants focused on how professional development facilitates knowledge sharing and the development of skills required for problem solving. Zou (2019) also conceptualised professional development as involving mentoring and modelling good practice and as an ongoing journey transforming learning and teaching. Stein et al. (2011) interviewed 20 academics and discovered that professional development for e-learning is mainly conceptualised in terms of its usefulness for learning how to use tools and technologies. They conceived of professional development as a collaborative exercise that should be relevant and have a purpose. Gurney's (2015) study conducted in Australia with eight tertiary-level teachers of English for Academic Purposes categorised professional development across three broad themes: person-oriented (for wellbeing), skills-oriented (for teaching), and career-oriented (goal-setting).

Although outside of the HE context, the study by Rogers et al. (2007) is relevant to our research because they followed a phenomenographic approach to explore school teachers' conceptions of professional development. They compared the conceptions of 72 science and mathematics teachers and 23 educational development providers who participated in the programme by training the teachers. Teachers conceptualised professional development as skills that could be readily applied in the classroom and as an opportunity to experience training as a student, while also being able to network with teachers from other schools. Educational developers shared similar conceptualisations: professional development as establishing a collegial relationship with teachers and improving their knowledge.

Professional development for academics in higher education

An abundance of literature explores the ways in which professional development is approached in HE. Here and in [Figure 1](#), we provide a broad summary of common themes, rather than an extensive review of the research on professional development in HE.

Whilst professional development is known to be multi-dimensional (Evans, 2014), one of the main themes of the professional development literature in HE relates to the format of programmes offered, categorising them as formal versus informal. Many institutions offer formal programmes at postgraduate level, such as the Graduate Certificate or Masters of Higher Education, as well as foundation programmes on learning and teaching (Harvey & Solomonides, 2014). These programmes introduce educational philosophies and theoretical underpinnings; however, some believe that taking a wholly theoretical approach can scare some academics away from a deeper understanding of educational approaches (Korthagen, 2017). Formal professional development programmes often focus on new academics and may overlook the need for continuous learning (Jacob et al., 2015). Conversely, there are multiple informal opportunities for professional development that emerge and develop often organically in HE (Boud & Brew, 2013). Learning through communities of practice (Crick et al., 2021; Reilly et al., 2012) where academics share their practice in facilitated sessions and collaboration through 'on the job training' seems to be a prevalent form of professional development in HE (Kyndt et al., 2016), with new academics benefitting most from this approach (Jawitz, 2009).

With the recent shift towards online and blended modes of delivery brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, many professional development programmes had to move to online delivery (Ahadi et al., 2021). This may challenge some academics to question their own belief systems and frames of reference (Loads & Campbell, 2015).

Professional development in HE can occur through a variety of approaches, *inter alia* mentoring, peer-observation of teaching, publishing in learning and teaching journals, presentation in conferences, teaching fellowships, and awards (Sambell et al., 2017). Other techniques include individual counselling services, podcasts, white papers on latest technology trends, and access to the latest hardware and instructional software (Jacob et al., 2015).

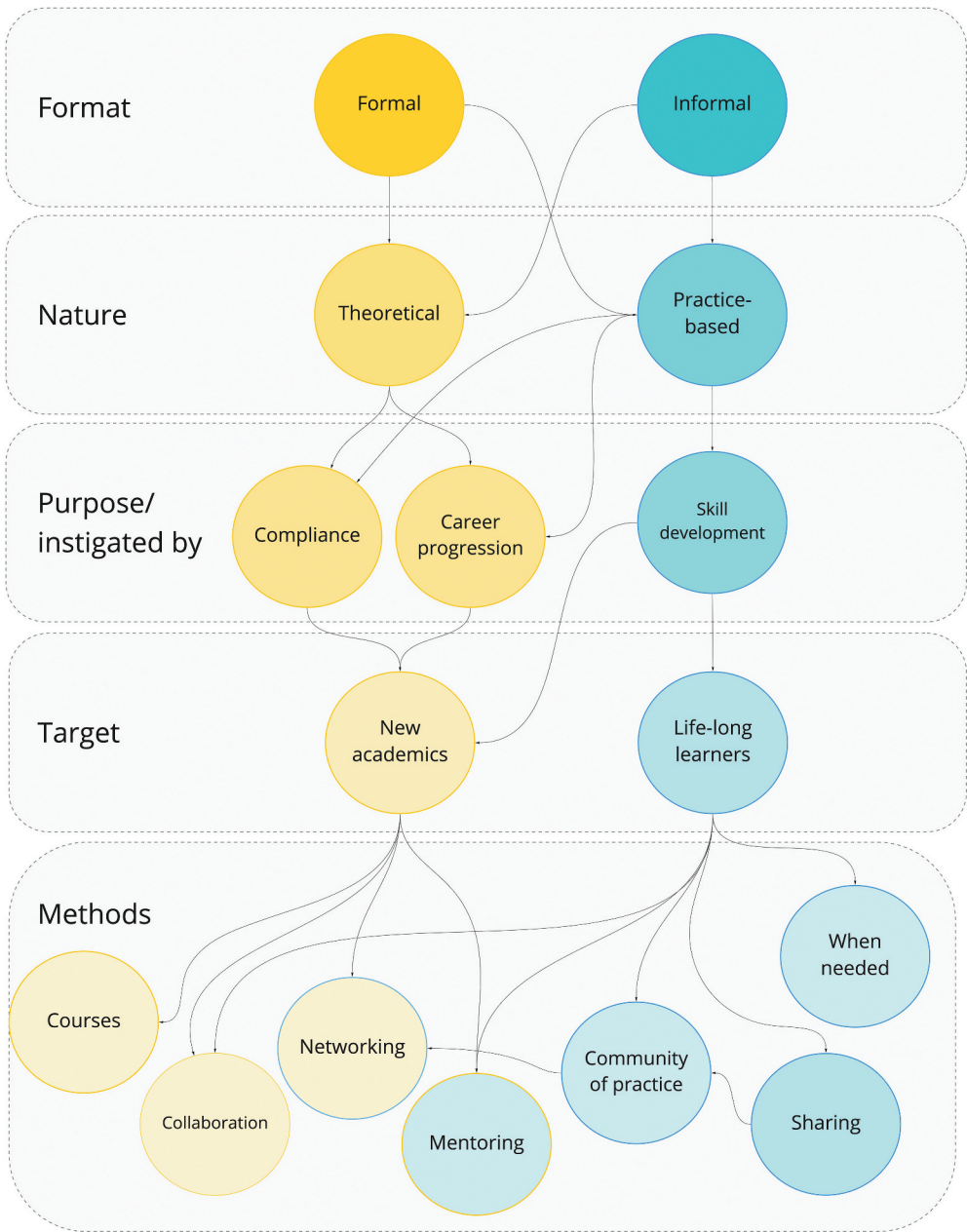


Figure 1. Summary of the themes in the literature on professional development in higher education.

Professional development for business educators

There has been limited and scattered discussion regarding professional development in business education. Studies appear critical of the rigidity of practices. Most of these studies were conducted pre-COVID and hence, there is a need for up-to-date

exploration of the area. Trkman (2019) observed that despite major changes in the sector, business schools have struggled with integrating professional development into course design. Trkman (2019) argues that methods of teaching and research remain similar to those used 30 years ago. Recent pre-COVID studies indicate that professional development in business education requires epistemic and ontological change. Business educators are encouraged to seek opportunities to enhance their teaching and curriculum design skills (Hrivnak, 2019). Another emphasis in this domain is on seeking the integration of more adult and experiential education practices. It is assumed that business schools develop future management leaders and scholars; those utilising only traditional means, however, may leave their students' learning and experience in jeopardy (Wright et al., 2016).

Methodology

Phenomenography

Phenomenography is concerned with the ways people see, understand, comprehend, apprehend, and conceptualise a phenomenon in the world around them (Marton & Pong, 2005). In phenomenography, 'an individual cannot experience without something being experienced' (Marton & Pang, 2008, p. 535). In terms of research, phenomenography is a second-order perspective. This means that phenomenographers do not examine the phenomenon itself, (first-order perspective), but rather how people describe what they think about and how they experience the phenomenon – or their conceptions. As such, this study did not investigate what professional development is, but what academics in a business school think about or how they experience professional development.

Although a phenomenon is experientially inexhaustible, 'whatever phenomenon people encounter they experience in a limited number of qualitatively different ways' (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 101). This means that the focus of phenomenographic investigation is not solely on individuals' conceptions, but on the variety of conceptions within a group. These conceptions are grouped into categories of descriptions, which are then organised hierarchically in relation to each other where some ways of experiencing may illustrate more advanced forms of understanding and comprehending the phenomenon than others. This is called the 'outcome space' of the phenomenon investigated (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Our approach in this study can be termed as 'hermeneutic' phenomenography where 'analysis is geared to interpreting texts or statements not originally made for the purpose of a phenomenographic analysis' (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997, p. 198). Marton (1994) suggests asking directly about the phenomenon under investigation, while J. A. Bowden (2000) recommends discussing shared topics or problem questions. Our approach combined these two. While we investigated academics' experiences of professional development, we also asked what professional learning and development means to them, followed by probing questions as common in phenomenographic interviews (J. Bowden, 2005).

The study context and participants

This study took place at a large Australian metropolitan Business School consisting of ten disciplinary fields with over 11,000 students and 500 staff. This study was run by three lecturers – educational developers at this school.

As a research-intensive university with a deep-seated history, the focus for academic work and hence promotion has very much been on research activity and less so on teaching. However, in recent years, the Business School has gradually moved towards increasing the number of education-focused positions and redesigning the reward and recognition systems related to teaching. More teaching ‘experts’ now sit on promotion panels, and teaching-focused workshops, training, and support have increased. Current professional development opportunities for academics include a centrally delivered, Graduate Certificate in Higher Education programme (offered free to staff), a programme of professional development modules, and an online community for sharing teaching practice. Within the Business School, professional development includes drop-in sessions for help and discussion of teaching ideas, a targeted programme of workshops aimed at known teaching issues, and opportunities to share practice within each disciplinary field. Whilst the structural aspects are beginning to change within the School, changing culture and mindset is a much slower process, particularly in such an elite institution known for its research achievements and where the pressure to publish takes precedence over the time required for professional development (Leibowitz et al., 2015). As a first step in instigating that change, the study reported here is part of a larger project investigating academics’ experiences of professional development (Zeivots et al., 2022).

We invited the participants through an announcement sent through the faculty email list. Twelve participants (six men and six women) from eight disciplinary fields volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews conducted through Zoom. Approval for this study was granted by the institution’s ethics committee (Protocol#2020/641). The participants were from four academic levels (A – associate lecturer; B – lecturer; C – senior lecturer, D – associate professor). Table 1 indicates the codes we used to keep the participants’ details anonymous.

Table 1. Participants and their disciplines within the Business School.

| Business Discipline | Participant (code) | Academic Level |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Finance | P1 | D |
| Business Analytics | P2 | B |
| International Business | P3, P12 | A, A |
| Work and Organisational Studies | P4, P9, P11 | D, A, A |
| Accounting | P5, P8 | A, B |
| Marketing | P6 | A |
| Business Information Systems | P7 | C |
| Institute of Transport and logistics Studies | P10 | B |

Data analysis

In phenomenography, categories of description should emerge from the data. It is thus important to reduce the risk of fitting the data into pre-determined categories. In the

study reported in this article, we followed Marton's (1986, 1994) approach where all the interview data were pulled together to create a 'pool of meanings'. Analysis started after all interviews were completed and transcribed. All the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. In step one, the first author extracted relevant utterances from specific parts of the interview separately (Prosser, 2000). Most of the data at this stage came from the responses to the question, 'What does professional learning and development mean to you?'. In step two, the first author scanned the transcripts to identify and extract relevant statements that illustrated a way of experiencing professional development. This step is known as reducing the data (Marton, 1986, 1994). Step three involved identifying initial distinct ways of experiencing professional development. In this stage, the data pool was reviewed and 36 initial ways of experiencing professional development were identified based on the specific theme expressed in the utterances. This 'pool of meanings' was then shared with the second and third authors for further data reduction and categorisation. In step four, the three authors analysed the quotes iteratively, first individually and then coming together as a group. They discussed the themes until a stable set of distinct categories was identified. With each iteration, there was a decreasing rate of change until the whole system of meaning stabilized (Marton, 1994).

In the final step, the outcome space was constructed comprising four categories of description and a common dimension of variation demonstrating a logical relation between three of the four categories. The categories of description and the outcome space are described in the next section.

Results

Phenomenographic analysis of data reveals categories of description and the relationship between the categories – or the outcome space. In our study, four qualitatively different ways of conceptualising professional development were revealed. One dimension of variation encompasses and runs across three of the categories. Here we introduce the four categories and the dimension of variation, which are illustrated with direct quotations from the interviews. We then describe the relationship between the categories and present the outcome space.

Categories of description

Category A – continual growth mindset

This category describes *what* the participants thought professional development was about. In this category, professional development was conceptualised as a process of continuing growth and learning throughout one's career. This mindset is a stance towards, or a way of thinking about, professional development that is different from the other categories. Although there is a purpose for engaging in professional development, it must happen continually to keep up with innovations, research, and what everyone else is doing.

To me, professional learning and development is a philosophy or way that you approach your work. I mean, it's not necessarily something that just applies to academics, or to a unit

of study, it applies to a sort of an ethos of continual improvement, and it's something that to me, has always been something that I carried with me, right when I was working [at McDonald's], you know, what do I do well, what do I need to improve, repeat what I do well, change what I need to improve. It's an approach to continual improvement. (P6)

[F]or me it's about continual evaluation of what you're doing and trying to incorporate the latest findings of others. (P2)

Category B – student-centric mindset

This category describes *why* the interviewees engaged in professional development. In this category, professional development was conceptualised as something that would help them become better educators. The main objective here was to enhance student learning.

It's about [...] increasing my skills and motivation, I'm better able to provide a quality learning and teaching experience to my students, and further enhance their learning outcomes. (P4)

This was the largest category with numerous participant quotations expressing a student-centric view. Some interesting variations were observed here. For instance, it was the first time participants P12 and P11 had explicitly thought about what professional development meant to them. The following quotations are valuable, as the participants did not have a lot of time to think about the question, so their comments are unfiltered conceptions. These two participants' comments are perhaps exclusive to a business context. While P12 considers students as customers and engages in professional development with the customer in mind, P11 disagrees with this and considers students as co-creators of knowledge.

I was going to think more deeply about my answer, but I think this is sometimes good to just speak. Because what came to mind immediately is anything that allows one to sharpen their ability to deliver in their role ... Anything that better equips me [...] with a focus continually on not actually me, but my objective [...] my students. Because that's with the end user – the customer – in mind. Entirely customer-centric. Our customer is the student. (P12)

I never thought about that specifically. But now that I'm thinking about that I think that to me first of all that would be understanding what students need [...] I wouldn't say customer orientated because all my nature entirely disagrees with perceiving students as customers and I'm very explicit with them about that – that I do not see them as customers, I see them as co-creators of their learning. (P11)

Category C – knowledge-sharing mindset

This category describes the methods or *how* the interviewees engaged in professional development. While some interviewees mentioned attending workshops and conferences for professional development, there was a clear and often explicit reference to networking, talking, and discussing when academics share knowledge and ideas with others. For instance, P4 stated, 'I talk to colleagues and seek their advice. I did this year attend a conference, I presented at it, but I also learned a great deal by attending a conference'. P3 further added:

[N]etworking is very important as part of that professional learning and development. A lot that I've learnt throughout my years of teaching have come from sharing with colleagues or from learning and teaching initiatives or professional development [...] sharing, sharing success and failures across [...] just sharing knowledge and ideas. (P3)

P2 discussed how, after giving a presentation, the ensuing conversation and dialogue became a valuable part of professional development.

[the presentation] opened up a bit of a dialogue with a couple of people that were watching and I think the back and forth with the people who were actually engaged and asking questions. I think that was the bit that I actually, in terms of development, got the most out of because I heard from other people [...]. (P2)

Category D – purpose-oriented mindset

Similar to Category B, student-centric mindset, this category describes *why* the interviewees engaged in professional development; however, the purpose is different. In this category, professional development is discussed for purposes other than enhancing student learning. For instance, P3 conceptualises professional development as a means of establishing oneself, stating that 'from a professional development point of view as a presenter, it was also good to establish myself, if you like, making contacts'. P1 engaged in professional development to improve leadership skills that would be useful for dealing with difficult personalities in the department.

Within the school I have been taking part in those personality courses [...] we did personality type tests and how to deal with difficult personalities [...] so I feel like I have to try and exert some kind of leadership or help people along the way. (P1)

For several participants, professional development was about satisfying formal requirements for career progression or for accreditations. P1 exhibited this conception in the following statement:

[I]n some ways it's part of the career plan for an academic. It comes up importantly in ... the process of career development and the evaluation that we have every year when you're actually supposed to think of a development plan, helps you reach your goals in teaching, research and governance for leadership. So it's got to fit in to that overarching plan. ... it would mean that you consider: what are your goals? Do you want to be a top researcher? Do you want to be a prize-winning teacher? And then you set some goals how you can reach there. (P1)

Here, P1 mentioned how this formal professional development process covers different areas for academics, including teaching, research, governance, and leadership. In this sense, academics can choose to engage in professional development with a specific focus that helps them reach their goals. P10 acknowledged that professional development may have different purposes for academics stating that '[t]here's so many different aspects to what academics do. Professional learning and development in the context of research is different from that in the context of teaching'.

Dimension of variation – relevance mindset

Through the iterative process of data analysis, a dimension of variation was noticed (Marton & Pong, 2005). This dimension labelled 'relevance mindset' describes the

circumstances under which the interviewees engaged in professional development. The participants expressed that they would engage in professional development *only if* relevant.

Initially this dimension was labelled as a category, however; with more iterative analysis, this idea was observed in three of the four categories (Categories B, ‘student-centric mindset’; C, ‘knowledge-sharing mindset’; and D, ‘purpose-oriented mindset’). In Category A, ‘continual growth mindset’, this dimension was *implied* rather than *focused on* (Marton & Pong, 2005) because professional development was conceptualised as an integrated process where the academic continually evaluated their needs (P2) with the aim of continual improvement in all aspects of their professional lives (P6).

Relevance was an overarching idea varying slightly across the other three categories. In Category B, relevance was expressed as ‘anything that better equips’ (P12) an academic for teaching their students. For example, P11 engaged in professional development ‘to find something that would be the most relevant for this particular course and these particular students at their particular stage of development’. In Category C, relevance was about sharing ideas with colleagues. For instance, for P5, professional development was useful only if it provided opportunities to discuss ‘common issues that we have faced and are facing in this time of change’. In Category D, relevance was anything serving a purpose. This included ‘compliance exercises’ (P4), workshops to learn about best practice (P3), and learning technical skills like how to use Zoom (P5). In this category, professional development had to be relevant to the purpose for which the academics engaged in the activities. For instance, P8 engaged in professional development for the purpose of licencing and accreditation, stating:

[I]t is a self-interest thing. And only those who are truly interested will go. So [...], what I’ve been thinking, you know, I’m a member of the Chartered Accountants of Australia and New Zealand. And when I pay my ridiculous membership fee every year, [...] I’ve got to sign that I’ve done so many continuing professional education hours, right. I’ve got to sign that and say, ‘Yep, I’ve done 30 hours this year’. (P8)

The outcome space

In the outcome space, we organised the categories hierarchically based on the relationship between them. [Figure 2](#) visually represents the outcome space. At the top is Category A, which represents the more holistic conception of professional development. A mindset of continual improvement is more integrative and combines major aspects of an academic role. There was no clear link between the level or position of an academic and the type of conception they held.

Although Category B is a less holistic mindset than Category A, it is still a more integrative mindset compared to Category D because the purpose is to improve student learning rather than to satisfy a requirement or to promote oneself. Category C is also a more holistic mindset than Category D because knowledge is often shared for the purpose of learning and improving student outcomes. The relevance mindset runs through Categories B, C, and D and acts as a dimension of variation connecting the three categories.

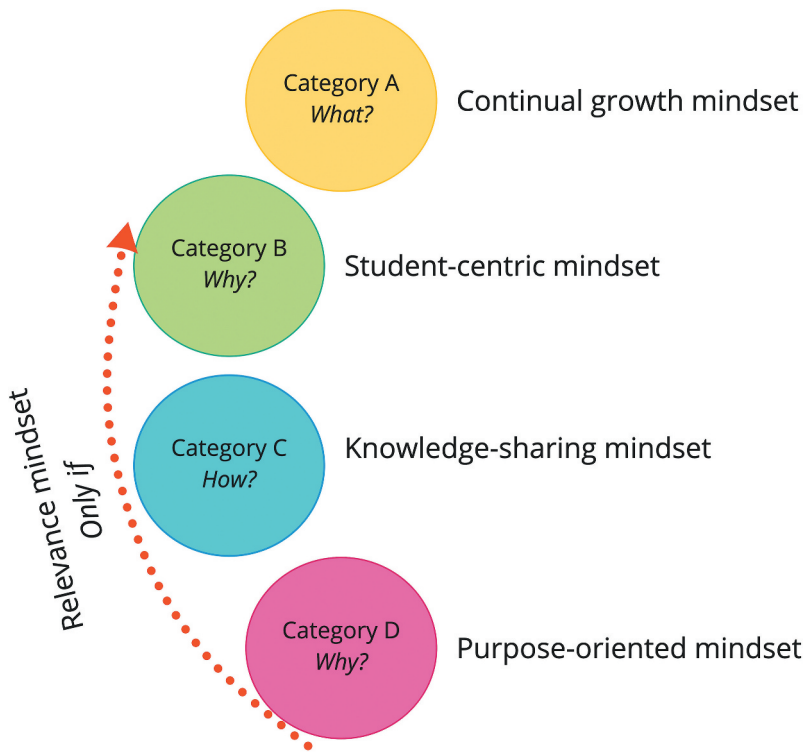


Figure 2. A conceptual framework of the mindsets of academic professional development.

Discussion

What, how and why in professional development design

Our findings suggest that academics perceive professional development across three dimensions: what (it is), how (to engage with it), and why (to engage with it). The overlap between the three dimensions was evident, and instead of perceiving them separately, they were discussed as embedded and interrelated. We argue that the design of professional development should be underpinned by what, how, and why as mutually and collectively entangled, rather than exclusive, dimensions. This approach to design can enable academics to integrate facets of the three dimensions, such as ‘What is expected from me?’, ‘How do I approach my/university work/development?’, ‘How is this helping my/student/university learning?’, ‘How do I seek feedback on my/university work?’, and ‘Why is professional development relevant?’. The integration of the three dimensions contributes to the finding that participants engaged in professional development only if it was relevant. This leads us to suggest that those involved in roles influencing professional development design and policy should prioritise usefulness and relevance to professional development learning experiences which align with institutional and policy expectations (Daniels, 2017). However, identifying what academics find relevant will require a deeper understanding of how they conceptualise professional development. Our results align with the study by Stein et al. (2011) in that relevance is

about tailoring professional development to suit individual needs. Failure to see relevance in professional development would result in lack of engagement.

Epistemically, considering 'praxis' as an integral part of professional development's philosophical underpinning can enhance the sense of relevance. Praxis, as Kemmis (2012) argues, is 'making' action while facing uncertain situations in which academics find themselves technically, morally, socially, and politically. Praxis typically encourages considering 'multiple perspectives before reaching the decision of conscience about how to act, with others' (p. 96).

Complexity and multidimensionality of conceptualising professional development

In the literature, we came across a tension between two different notions of professional development: engaging with formal (Harvey & Solomonides, 2014) or informal activities (Boud & Brew, 2013). In our data, however, we noticed a more complex and multi-dimensional aspect of professional development, much along the lines of Evans's (2014) work which defines dimensions of attitudinal, intellectual, and behavioural change. When we asked P6 what they thought about professional development, they responded, 'for myself personally, or for the university?'. P8 gave a similar response stating, 'I see it [professional development] on two levels, external and the self'. This prompted us to explore these two interview transcripts further and see how they differed. For P6, personal professional development involved activities such as sharing with colleagues, while professional development for the university involved attending courses or training sessions. One was instigated for self-development, to be better in all aspects of the academic career (Category A), while the other was to comply with requirements mandated by the university (Category D). For P8, professional development for 'self' involved having a conversation with like-minded colleagues (Category C), while external professional development involved formal courses, such as the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, to become better at teaching students (Category B). This aligns with Gurney's (2015) study where professional development was conceptualised to exist on a continuum between person-oriented and career-oriented. Korthagen (2017) distinguishes this further and proposes viewing professional development in the connection between person, practice, and theory.

A further multidimensionality of conceptualising professional development was observed in two responses belonging to the same category. P11 and P12 both expressed conceptions of professional development related to a student-centric mindset as in Category B. However, while P12 conceptualised the student as a customer, P11 strongly rejected this notion. While this way of thinking might be related to the context of a business school, there have been broader debates in HE about this issue. The ways that educators see their students have implications for the ways in which they engage with them. From a student-as-customer perspective, education can be seen as a commodity prioritising student satisfaction rather than emphasising teaching for establishing well-rounded citizens who think critically (Clayson & Haley, 2005). This exemplifies how a student-centric mindset in HE can have multiple dimensions – while one academic engages in professional development to satisfy the 'end user', seeing education as a product, the other engages in professional development to 'co-create' knowledge with students.

Teaching versus research

Finally, our data exposed the duality of academic work priorities where teaching competes with research (Leibowitz et al., 2015). As illustrated in the comment by P10 in Category D, ‘professional learning and development in the context of research is different from that in the context of teaching’. We observed this tension in relation to the research/teaching dichotomy in several accounts. Institutional support such as funding opportunities, recognition and awards, career progression, and promotions are often tied to success in research. Historically, this separation may have roots in the early 19th century when the purpose of HE moved from educating well-rounded students to a model where both the educator and students were conceptualised as serving learning itself (Clayson & Haley, 2005). In this model, the educator became the scientist and the student the research assistant. Consequently, teaching bestowed so little priority that educators with teaching awards were denied tenure. The availability of professional development opportunities for teaching is therefore important (Hrivnak, 2019). We believe this is a principal consideration when designing professional development activities for academics, and we must move towards presenting professional development activities within the frame of research-enriched teaching (Fung, 2019) to help academics understand the synergies of both.

A broader conceptualisation of professional development should go beyond the teaching-research dichotomy. One focus could be the development of the whole academic role (Sutherland, 2018). Alternatively, and as our Category A (the continual growth mindset) illustrated, professional development can be conceptualised as continually learning throughout one’s career, incorporating learning with others and from the literature.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Dewa Wardak with a background in Learning Sciences, Dewa currently leads the design, development, and evaluation of large units of study at the University of Sydney Business School. Working as part of the multidisciplinary Business Co-Design team, Dewa collaborates with academics at the Business School to transform the learner experience through co-designing engaging and authentic activities and assessments. Combining her passion for technology-supported learning with educational design, she explores broad areas of research including networked learning, pattern languages, meaningful learning experiences for students in higher education, multimodal approaches to the analysis of learning and teaching, and research supervision and mentoring.

Elaine Huber has been designing curriculum and teaching adults for over 20 years and is currently the Academic Director of the Business Co-Design team at The University of Sydney. Elaine leads this multiskilled team of educational developers, learning designers, media producers, and research associates, working together with discipline staff, students, and industry partners on a large strategic project called Connected Learning at Scale. Elaine’s philosophy of teaching takes

a student-centred approach and incorporates active and collaborative learning to improve the student experience.

Sandris Zeivots is a Lecturer in Educational Development with Business Co-Design unit at the University of Sydney Business School. He investigates how to design innovative learning experiences that are engaging, meaningful, and purposeful. With a professional background in experiential learning, Sandris explores impactful educational events through learning spaces, experiential education, and emotional engagement. Prior to this, Sandris built and enhanced education, research, and learning design credentials by leading learning programmes in higher education, non-government, and government sectors in Australian and European contexts.

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