

# All stakeholders matter in faculty development

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# Impact Paragraph

In this impact paragraph, we briefly explain the rationale and objective of this PhD project, followed by a short summary of the conclusive findings of each study. Afterwards, we explain the scientific and societal impact of the research that has been reported in this dissertation. Within these scientific and societal impact sections, we explicitly explain for whom our results are relevant and how they might benefit from this project.

## **Project Rationale, Objectives and Findings**

Small group pedagogy is continuously gaining popularity in health professions education due to the growing focus on active and self-directed learning. Teaching in small groups is a more challenging task than often perceived. Stimulating critical thinking and facilitating constructive discussions among students is difficult and teachers sometimes struggle in effectively facilitating small group sessions. To help teachers improve their facilitation skillset, faculty development programs play a vital role. Faculty development refers to all activities that teachers pursue to advance their teaching knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can positively influence student learning. A contemporary challenge in current faculty development programs is the lack of a training framework that can help in designing structured training and in assessing the impact of training on small group facilitation. Entrustable professional activities (EPAs) have been suggested as a plausible approach to systematically design faculty development programs and to entrust teachers.

The concept of entrustment is derived from the word 'trust'. Entrustment is confiding trust in a person that s/he is eligible to conduct the professional task (EPA) independently in an expert fashion without supervision. EPAs are professional tasks which can be entrusted to a trainee once s/he demonstrates the necessary competence to execute it. Unlike competencies, these holistic professional tasks represent the work and not qualities of a person. Moreover, for any task to qualify as an EPA, it should have a definite beginning and end. It should be observable in process and measurable in outcome. It should also represent the work of a professional domain and should be suitable for entrustment.

Although EPAs for several clinical domains have been described in the literature, an EPA framework dedicated to small group facilitation was missing. In this PhD project, we aimed at developing and validating a comprehensive EPA framework for small group facilitation by involving all stakeholders relevant to faculty development. To achieve this goal, we conducted five studies, including one literature review, three empirical studies and one perspective study.

Study 1 demonstrates that the utilization of EPAs for teacher training is a novel concept and there is a need to design EPAs for specific teaching roles such as small group facilitation. To fill this gap, Study 2 was conducted in which we used a co-creation approach to design the EPA framework by recruiting students and teachers. Co-creation is a close collaboration of students and teachers where they actively interact with each other to design educational processes and/or products to

improve teaching and learning. In this study, three workshops (orientation, design and consensus) were conducted that resulted in a framework consisting of 9 EPAs and 12 competencies.

Since co-creating EPAs was a novel method, we explored the perceptions of participating students and teachers in Study 3 regarding their co-creation experiences. The interviewees mostly reported a positive and productive co-creation experience. However, some negative experiences were also reported which limited the active contribution of the participants. The study concluded that engaging students and teachers in the design process nurtures diversity and rigor, and therefore their inclusion should be ensured in future educational initiatives as co-creators.

In addition to students and teachers, the third important stakeholder group in the context of faculty development are expert health professions educationalists who are primarily responsible for designing faculty development programs. In Study 4, we recruited international health professions educationalists and conducted a modified Delphi study to validate the previously co-created EPA framework. After three rounds, we achieved a consensus on 3 EPAs, followed by mapping of 9 competencies against the agreed-upon EPAs. The final framework also provided a detailed description of each EPA, including its context, specifications, entrustment resources and an entrustment scale. The complete framework can be consulted in Tables 2 and 3 of Chapter 5.

After developing and validating a comprehensive EPA framework, we proposed a task-based training model in Study 5. In this study, we suggested that complementing EPAs with the Four Component Instructional Design (4C/ID) model might help in structuring the training programs more effectively. 4C/ID is an evidence based instructional design model that helps in designing a blueprint for an educational training program. It comprises of four components: learning tasks, supportive information, procedural information and part-task practice. In our proposed task-based faculty development, EPAs would define the training outcomes and 4C/ID would orchestrate the instructional design of the training program.

## Scientific Impact

This project contributes to three scientific domains: faculty development, entrustable professional activities and co-creation. This project provides a comprehensive framework for training and entrustment of small group facilitators which might cater to some of the challenges in faculty development. The proposed task-based training model might provide additional support to structure the training program. The project also widens the scope of EPAs beyond undergraduate and postgraduate clinical training programs by adding an additional teaching domain to it. Lastly, by using a co-creation approach to EPA development, the project not only advances the literature on co-creation but also adds a novel method to the existing EPA design approaches (surveys, interviews, expert meetings, Delphi). Additionally, the active involvement of all stakeholders in the design process might help in generating a higher level of acceptance, understanding, and utility of the resulting framework.

As an additional outcome of the project, we foresee multiple potential utilities of the EPA framework for program developers, trainee teachers, educational leaders and students.

#### **IMPACT ON PROGRAM DEVELOPERS**

Achieving an observable improvement in teaching through faculty development activities has always remained a challenge for program developers. The framework might help program developers to ensure effective training that could result in an actual change in teaching practices. Next to defining the training outcomes, the essential purpose of EPAs is to assess performance and grant entrustment. To support the teacher entrustment process, a three-level entrustment scale has also been proposed. Entrusting the trainee teachers after their repeated competent performance might also help in developing trust between faculty, lower and higher in the organizational hierarchy.

#### **IMPACT ON TRAINEE TEACHERS**

Instead of learning on the job by observing peers and/or using the trial-and-error method, trainee teachers could use our descriptive framework as a learning guide that can help them understand the training outcomes and the expected work. The EPA framework might help trainee teachers in indicating areas of strengths and deficiencies in their teaching practices and might also help them in building their academic portfolios. Another potential implication of our framework is instigating the transfer of training to the workplace. EPAs-based training might help teachers effectively transfer the acquired small-group facilitation competence to their actual teaching sessions. The integration of 4C/ID with EPA-based faculty development might provide additional support to ensure the transfer of training to teaching.

#### **IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERS**

Administrative authorities (Deans, Department Chairpersons, and/or Directors) could use the framework to allocate academic roles to newly recruited staff. A baseline assessment of teaching performance might be conducted, and based upon the performance of trainee teachers, entrustment decisions could be made as per our proposed entrustment scale. In case the trainee teacher does not perform as desired, s/he may improve his/her skillset via structured training, practice, and mentoring. Adding the concept of entrustment in the professional portfolio of teachers might help the faculty to internalize the value of being an entrusted teacher. It might also support administrative bodies to regulate academic recruitments and promotions of the faculty.

#### **IMPACT ON STUDENTS**

In educational settings where peer tutoring is practiced, the students could use our framework as a learning guide to perform their tutoring roles proficiently. Our project also endorses students as partners while co-creating the framework, which might help in normalizing student participation in other educational development programs.

## Societal Impact

The social contract between health professionals and society derives the social accountability of the medical profession. Social accountability suggests that the health concerns of the community and/or society should be the priority of all stakeholders that are directly or indirectly related to the health sector. Consequently, regulatory bodies, educational institutes, health professions educationalists, and policy makers throughout the world strive to produce competent care givers so that they can meet societal needs and expectations. At the level of implementation, the responsibility rests on the shoulders of teachers to design and conduct enriching educational experiences for their students. Considering the role that teachers possess in carving competent health professionals, it is not only important but essential to ensure competence of the teaching staff. As of Ernest Leroy, *“A poor surgeon hurts 1 person at a time, but a poor teacher hurts 130”*. Therefore, through both competent health professionals and competent teachers can the social contract between the society and the education system be perfected. Since competent teachers serve as one of the foundational pillars of a socially accountable healthcare system, it is the responsibility of the institutes to provide structured and effective training venues to their faculty. While planning such training programs, the educational leaders and programs developers could use our framework to train and certify their teachers.