


**RESEARCH
SNAPSHOT**
Instructional Development for Teachers in Higher Ed.

Stes, A., De Maeyer, S., Gijbels, D., & Van Petegem, P. (2012). Instructional development for teachers in higher education: Effects on students' perceptions of the teaching–learning environment. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(3), 398-419.

Summary

In this investigation involving over 1,000 students, Stes, De Maeyer, Gijbels and Van Petegem looked at the impact of a one-year, beginning teacher development program on students' perceptions of the higher education teaching and learning environment. Although past studies on teacher instructional development in higher education have been shown to have positive impacts on the teaching and learning environment, the authors intended to conduct a deeper study that took into account student differences and factors influencing these impacts. The researchers found variations in impact including “some positive impact,” “no impact,” and “negative impact,” when using three different models of analysis. This illustrates the difficulties involved in measuring teacher development, and also indicates that implementing a teacher development program does not inevitably result in positive student experiences—additional factors must be taken into account such as the number of students and the level of students. Moreover, in reconsidering the design of their research, the authors ultimately suggest, “it would be worthwhile to determine the intended outcomes of instructional development in collaboration with the participants and to elaborate a more needs-based format of instructional development: What do the participants want to achieve and how?” (p. 416).

The Teacher Development Program

The teacher development program at the center of this study was implemented to encourage competence-based student-centered teaching, and the four modules included the following: “Activating teaching methods: what, how, and why?; Assessing students; The ‘Blackboard’ electronic learning environment; and Curriculum development” (p. 402). All participants were volunteers, and the group was limited to 25 participants to encourage active participation. The program last over one year (140 hours). (The pre-test—a survey regarding the teaching and learning environment—was given out to the students of participating instructors (both the test group and the control group), before the instructional development program began. The post-test was given out three months after the one-year program ended. Therefore, the students in the pre-test and the students in the post-test were not the same individuals.)

Models of Analysis and Results

The first model of analysis used no explanatory variables. Results showed that the test and the control group did differ in terms of student ratings, indicating that further analysis was worthwhile (but the difference between students of the same teacher was greater than the difference between teachers). The second model, “the gross model,” used no control variables and no effect was shown. The third model, “the net model,” tested a hypothetical, mean context, mean teacher, and mean student; this resulted in instructional development having a negative effect on the factor of teaching for understanding. Overall, the most significant negative impact on the teaching and learning environment was large class size.