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THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN CURRICULUM INTERNATIONALISATION: INSIGHTS FROM SLOVENIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Katarina Aškerc Zadravec | Assistant Professor, B2 Ljubljana School of Business, Slovenia, katarina.askerc@vspv.si; ORCID 0000-0003-4710-2066

Živana Kljajić | Assistant Professor, Pan-European University Apeiron, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, zivana.m.kljajic@apeiron-edu.eu; ORCID 0000-0001-7510-6852

Abstract: *This article examines the role of professional development in enabling academic staff to effectively internationalise university curriculum, focusing on higher education institutions in Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The primary objective is to analyse how pedagogical training courses enhance the ability of university teachers to integrate global and intercultural dimensions into teaching practices. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study uses semi-structured interviews and responses and content analysis to gather and interpret insights from 22 university teachers across various academic disciplines. Findings highlight the significance of professional development programs in fostering teachers' global competencies, enhancing intercultural awareness, and improving teaching methodologies. Participants reported increased self-confidence, the incorporation of international elements into syllabi, and refined assessment practices. Key challenges identified include institutional resistance to change, insufficient resources, and cultural and linguistic barriers. Despite these obstacles, the study underscores the transformative impact of internationalisation-focused trainings on both university teachers' pedagogical approaches and students' preparedness for a globalised world. The article provides valuable insights for policymakers and higher education institutions seeking to develop inclusive, internationally oriented curriculum. It emphasizes the necessity of cohesive national and institutional strategies to overcome existing challenges and advance global competencies in higher education.*

Keywords: *Professional Development, University Teachers, Curriculum Internationalisation, Strategic approach, Training Courses*

JEL classification: *I23, M5*

INTRODUCTION

Developing staff is essential for any organisation's growth and success. It encompasses various activities aimed at enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities. For higher education academics, staff development often focuses on professional pedagogical development and training, which includes adopting the latest teaching methodologies, integrating digital technologies in the classroom, designing innovative curriculum, and incorporating contemporary and relevant topics into course content. In recent decades, the academic workforce has become increasingly diverse due to the expansion of the higher education sector. This expansion is characterised by mass enrolment, the impacts of internationalisation and globalisation, a broader range of academic disciplines, new management approaches, technological advances, and other contemporary trends, policies, and strategies that have reshaped the higher education landscape (Sursock, 2020; Hudzik, 2011; de Haan, 2014; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007).

To meet current labour market demands, a globally interconnected environment, and modern educational approaches, curriculum internationalisation is vital for preparing future graduates with intercultural competences, international perspectives, and global awareness. Thus, the professional development of academic staff is crucial for effectively enhancing their teaching skills to implement an internationalised curriculum (Aškerc Zadravec, 2021; Aškerc Zadravec & Kočar, 2024; Green & Whitsed, 2015; Leask, 2015; Carroll, 2015). As educational institutions aim to equip students to thrive in a globalised world and become global citizens, there is a growing emphasis on strengthening the global competencies of educators and providing them with pedagogical approaches that support the delivery of an internationalised curriculum.

Through targeted pedagogical training, supported by international, national, and institutional policies and strategies, higher education institutions can address the challenges associated with curriculum internationalisation and create a more inclusive, globally-oriented educational environment. It is crucial that these policies and strategies allocate sufficient resources for the professional pedagogical development of academics (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Kirk, Newstead, Gann & Rounsaville, 2018; ElKaleh, 2021) and cultivate a supportive teaching-learning environment from technological, content, financial, and human resources perspectives. This enables educators to experiment with and incorporate international perspectives into their teaching practices, which involves embedding global perspectives in learning outcomes, learning-teaching activities, and assessment practices, with a focus on fostering long-term impact and developing students' intercultural and global competencies in alignment with a constructively aligned internationalised curriculum (Aškerc Zadravec & Kočar, 2024). To implement this approach effectively, academics must be suitably supported and trained.

This article aims to highlight the significance of academic staff's professional development in supporting the internationalisation of the curriculum. The authors first present a theoretical overview of professional staff development within higher education, with a focus on pedagogical development tailored to equip academics for implementing internationalised university teaching. Subsequently, the article explores academic perspectives on the importance of professional pedagogical development and training in curriculum internationalisation, drawing on trends and practices from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE: A GENERAL BACKGROUND

Higher education institutions are facing challenges posed by rapidly evolving fields of academic knowledge, driven by advanced research, technological progress, and the demands of a globally connected world. Consequently, there is a significant need for ongoing professional development for academic staff to maintain and enhance the quality of education and research, while effectively preparing students for life and work in an ever-changing, globalised world (Fernandes, Araújo, Miguel & Abelha, 2023; Helms & Brajkovic, 2020; Sursock, 2020). The importance of staff development in higher education was emphasised in 2007 by the Council of Europe in *Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6*, recognising it as a public responsibility vital for improving education and research quality and fostering innovation within institutions (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 5).

In 2013, the European Commission published recommendations on the pedagogical development of academics, under the auspices of *EU High-Level Group: Train the Professors to Teach* (European Commission, 2013). Additionally, the European Commission's 2013 communication European Higher Education in the World highlights the importance of professional staff development in enhancing teaching and learning quality in higher education. It stresses that continuous professional development for academic staff is critical for fostering innovation in teaching and research and for integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the curriculum. The communication advocates for targeted training programmes that support academic staff in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in international collaborations, emphasising the need for supportive frameworks and training that improve pedagogical skills, thereby preparing educators to meet the demands of a globalised educational landscape (European Commission, 2013, p. 12, 14).

Professional development is essential in higher education for maintaining academic excellence and ensuring that institutions can adapt to shifting educational demands. The successful internationalisation of higher education institutions depends significantly on the active involvement and commitment of faculty. Faculty members play a central role in this process as they are responsible for integrating international perspectives into their teaching, research, and service activities. However, as stated by Stohl (2007, p. 360), challenges such as limited institutional support, insufficient resources, and resistance to change can hinder faculty engagement in internationalisation initiatives.

Effective professional development programmes help academic staff to improve their teaching practices, stay current with the latest pedagogical trends, and incorporate innovative approaches into their classrooms (Fernandes, Araújo, Miguel & Abelha, 2023). The latter includes integrating international perspectives into the curriculum, which is essential for preparing students for a globalised world. In this context, cross-border online professional development provides opportunities for enhanced pedagogical practices, where educators from diverse cultural backgrounds report professional growth and improvement as a result of international collaboration within online development programmes (Rienties, Divjak, Eichhorn, et al., 2023). Additionally, according to Fernandes, Araújo, and Miguel (2023), academics emphasise the value of adapting pedagogical training programmes to various cultural contexts, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance on a global scale. International collaboration and ex-

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change within professional learning communities bring diverse perspectives, enriching the professional development experiences of educators (Su, Zou & Wang, 2023).

In this context, the concepts of *internationalisation at home* and *internationalisation of the curriculum* are essential. Internationalisation at home is an inclusive approach that incorporates "international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 69). Unlike traditional forms of internationalisation, often focused on student mobility, internationalisation at home seeks to provide global learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their ability to travel abroad. This approach requires a comprehensive strategy involving curriculum design, teaching methods, and institutional policies that support the development of intercultural competencies. A related concept is the internationalisation of the curriculum, which, according to Leask, refers to "the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a programme of study" (Leask, 2015, p. 9). The result of both concepts is an *internationalised curriculum* which "helps to distinguish between the means and the end" (Leask, 2015, p. 9).

Successfully implementing an internationalised curriculum requires targeted professional staff development in higher education, focusing on contemporary educational approaches, where it is essential to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate global perspectives into their teaching practices and foster an inclusive, globally aware educational environment.

PERSPECTIVES FROM SLOVENIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ON PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION
The Higher Education System in Slovenia with a Focus on Internationalisation

National policies, guidelines, standards, and strategies in higher education internationalisation, which recognise the professional development of teaching staff as essential, are crucial for incorporating international and intercultural elements into academic programmes, following high quality teaching standards. These policies also promote the use of new technologies and innovative practices in human resource development within higher education (e.g., Moshtari & Safarpour, 2023; Alexiadou & Rönnberg, 2023; Aškerc Zadravec & Kočar, 2024).

In Slovenia, the *Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers, Scientific Staff, and Higher Education Staff at Higher Education Institutions* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 95/10, last amended version No. 163/21, Article 23) emphasise the importance of assessing teaching competencies. Among other criteria, it proposes evidence-based teacher training through general teacher-training programmes or institution-specific programmes. Furthermore, *inter alia* associate and full professors must demonstrate active engagement as researchers or educators at a high-quality foreign university or research institution continuously for at least three months (Articles 25 and 28), an important component in Slovene national standards supporting the internationalisation of university teaching. In 2024, new *Minimum Standards* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 44/24) were adopted, set to take effect in 2025. These new standards require associate

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and full professors to demonstrate pedagogical achievements with an international dimension, which may include participation in international training at least five times over the past three years. These activities encompass internationalisation of the teaching process, development of international study programmes, collaboration in joint study programmes, teaching foreign students in a foreign language, or involvement in authorship and management of European and international educational projects. Each higher education institution must align its internal criteria for title appointments with these national minimum standards. Although institutional criteria may be more rigorous than the national minimum, they cannot be less stringent.

In 2022, Slovenia adopted the *Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme 2030* (ReNPVŠ2023; Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 49/22), mandating that qualitative and quantitative indicators of teaching performance hold comparable weight alongside scientific excellence indicators in faculty appointment and promotion procedures. In the context of internationalisation, the National Programme specifies that the strategic internationalisation of curricula will be implemented through intensive pedagogical collaboration. Following this resolution, the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Slovenia until 2030* (Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2023) was adopted, which underscores the importance of comprehensive professional training for academics to encourage curriculum internationalisation in higher education.

The Higher Education System in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a Focus on Internationalisation

Bosnia and Herzegovina's higher education system operates within a complex and fragmented framework, reflecting the country's unique post-conflict identity and decentralised governance structure. Unlike many European countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks specific national regulations or guidelines for higher education internationalisation. This absence of a unified national strategy has resulted in varied approaches to internationalisation, primarily driven by the autonomy of individual institutions (Markovic, Bokonjic, & De Lepeleer, 2021). Without national directives, universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have independently developed their own strategies for engaging with the global academic community, influenced by each institution's specific resources, capacities, and priorities. Consequently, internationalisation efforts vary significantly, with some universities more actively pursuing international partnerships and academic mobility than others. The higher education system also reflects the country's complex socio-political landscape, mirroring societal divisions that have characterised Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the 1990s conflict (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). These divisions are evident in the multiple identities and varied educational policies that complicate efforts to create a cohesive approach to internationalisation

In this context, Bosnia and Herzegovina has established regulations to support the ongoing professional development of academic staff in pedagogical skills. The 1996 *UNESCO Report on higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: historical development, present state, and needs assessment* (Srebren & Bakarsic, 1996) analyses the historical development and current challenges of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing the critical need for professional development among academic staff to rebuild and enhance the education system post-conflict.

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Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically in the entity of Republic of Srpska, the standards for appointing higher education teachers and staff reflect the country's layered governance structure. Unlike Slovenia, which has a unified national framework, Bosnia and Herzegovina's educational standards are influenced by both state-level and entity-level regulations, resulting in a diverse and sometimes fragmented approach to higher education policy. At the state level, the *Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 59/07) establishes general principles for higher education, including academic staff appointments. However, detailed criteria for academic titles are largely delegated to the entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska – and to cantonal governments within the Federation. This decentralised approach results in varied standards across the country.

The process of academic appointment in Bosnia and Herzegovina typically prioritises both teaching competence and research activity. The *Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation*, issued by the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018), underscores the significance of continuous professional development, teaching experience, and research output as key criteria for such appointments, with emphasis on international dimensions. These guidelines encourage institutions to integrate evidence-based teacher training and international collaboration into their evaluation processes. While the guide highlights the importance of curriculum internationalisation, it does not currently provide detailed or specific recommendations for achieving this within university curricula.

In Republika Srpska, the *Law on Higher Education* (Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 67/20) outlines specific criteria for the appointment of higher education staff. The evaluation of candidates for academic titles includes an assessment of their teaching competencies, scholarly work, and professional development. Importantly, in the context of internationalisation, the law requires that associate and full professors demonstrate active engagement in international research or teaching activities, such as participation in international academic projects, publications in internationally recognised journals, and attendance at international conferences or training programmes.

Furthermore, the *Minimum Standards for Appointment to Titles of Higher Education Teachers and Scientific Staff in Republic of Srpska* are defined in Official Gazette of Republic of Srpska (No. 69/36) since 2023 and they underscore the importance of international exposure and collaboration. To qualify as an associate professor, a candidate must fulfil several conditions. These include serving at least one term as an assistant professor, publishing at least five scientific papers in their field—two of which must be in journals or conferences of international significance—and having authored a scientific monograph or university textbook. Candidates must demonstrate teaching abilities through positive evaluations and have participated as a mentor or committee member for master's or doctoral defences. Additionally, they must meet supplementary requirements, such as contributing to scientific, artistic, or professional projects, or participating in academic and community initiatives like drafting strategic acts or promoting science. Active collaboration with other institutions, including international academic exchanges, joint study programs, or plenary lectures at international conferences, is also required, including achieved international cooperation with other universities and relevant institutions in the field of higher education, culture and art.

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Both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska are progressively advancing their standards for higher education staff appointments, placing increasing emphasis on international collaboration and continuous professional development. Although the decentralised nature of Bosnia and Herzegovina's education system leads to varied approaches across the country, a common trend is emerging: a growing recognition of the importance of internationalisation and pedagogical excellence in higher education; this includes a gradual shift towards the development of an internationalised university curriculum.

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Building on the theoretical background that highlights the significance of professional pedagogical staff development in higher education—supported by various scholarly contributions and policy documents advocating for the integration of internationalisation in the curriculum—this article seeks to present the perspectives of academics from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, it explores their opportunities for professional development in curriculum internationalisation and its impact on their pedagogical performance and overall professional growth.

Due to the limited sample size of participants responding to open-ended questions, a comparative analysis between the two countries is not included, as no relevant or comparable conclusions could be drawn. Instead, the article focuses on providing a general overview of the perceptions of the academics involved in the study concerning selected parameters.

In this context, the following research question is addressed:

What are university teachers' views on the importance of their professional development in pedagogical work with a focus on internationalisation, and what impact do they observe in this context?

METHODOLOGY
Process of Data Collection

This research employed a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions on predetermined topics, conducted in a combination of oral and written formats. This flexible approach allowed for the modification of question sequences or the addition of new questions as needed. In some cases, questions were adapted to align with the specific national and institutional contexts of the respondents and the focus of the addressed topic. The collected data were analysed using content analysis methods, following the approach of Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007).

The initial round of interviews was conducted in 2020, prior to and during the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic. To deepen insights into the research topic, additional responses were collected in 2024. Data collection was conducted both in person and/or online, depending on participants' availability and time constraints, utilising a combination of oral and written formats.

Characteristics of the Respondents and the Process of Data Collection

Participants were selected deliberately, focusing on individuals who are at least somewhat familiar with the internationalisation of university teaching or actively involved in internationalisation initiatives at their respective universities. In total, 22 university teachers from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the study.

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The participants represented the following academic disciplines: Political Science, Public Relations, Management, Entrepreneurship and Marketing, Traffic and Transport, Health Sciences, Geography, Education, Business Mathematics, Technology, Mechanical Engineering, Informatics, and Foreign Languages. They held academic titles including Full Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Language Instructor, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, and Assistant. However, the impact of academic discipline or academic title on individual responses is not analysed in this article and, consequently, is not included in further evaluation.

In the study, there was the option to either have the responses recorded for verbatim transcription or to provide open-ended written responses to the questions. All transcripts and responses are securely stored for long-term preservation. Anonymity was prioritised by designing the questions to ensure complete confidentiality, in line with research ethics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Qualitative Analysis of the Responses

For this article, we performed a qualitative analysis of data obtained from the interviews/open-ended responses using text analysis and tentative theory formation, following the methodology of Glaser and Strauss (as described in Kordeš & Smrdu, 2015, p. 53). The coding process involved categorising units/responses of qualitative material, with codes serving as markers to identify the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences.

The use of codes allowed us to merge semantically related sections/responses efficiently. We began with concrete summaries of selected material units (such as terms, concepts, or lower-order categories) and gradually moved towards higher levels of generality and abstraction (higher-order categories). During the coding analysis, we systematically broke down and synthesised data from participants' responses. This approach ensured that our analysis was data-driven, allowing higher-level categories and theoretical formulations to emerge organically from the responses.

RESULTS

This section presents the results, following the steps outlined in the coding process used to analyse the transcripts. Although participants' responses were collected in Slovene, Serbian, and English language, they were all carefully proofread or translated into English to preserve the original meaning of the responses. The analysis in this section is structured in English, providing high-level categories with examples. Reasonable units of text, in the form of sentences or short paragraphs, were identified that directly relate to the research question. Subsequently, related concepts were grouped into higher-order categories, with comparisons made to identify common themes that address the research questions. Categories and subcategories were organised hierarchically to reflect their relationships.

We acknowledge that the groupings could be further refined or developed with greater precision. Due to the complexity of the open-ended responses, the statements could be organised in alternative formats or with a more detailed structure. However, for the purposes of this article and to address the research question, we believe that the structure presented in this chapter is sufficiently detailed to provide clear answers to the question addressed.

Relevance, Identified Drivers, and Challenges

This section presents academics' perspectives on professional development in the internationalisation of university pedagogical work, focusing on the relevance attributed to professional development, as well as the identified drivers and challenges in implementing internationalised university teaching. Initially, first-order responses were identified that directly relate to the addressed topic, and subsequently, related concepts were grouped into higher-order categories, as presented in Table 1, which includes key examples and excerpts from respondents' responses. However, only responses that directly support the research problem and focus on the relevance of professional development in this field were included in the analysis.

Table 1. Categories with Statements – Relevance, Drivers, and Challenges for Professional Development in the Field of Internationalisation of University Pedagogical Work

Higher-Order Categories	First-Order Categories (Codes)	Respondents' Statements
General Importance and Relevance	Awareness and Importance	• "I gained broader perspectives in this field; I am more aware of why [internationalisation] is important /…/" (Health Sciences). • "This [internationalisation] is an extremely important element of the [pedagogical] process." (Foreign Language). • "[Professional development] is effective; academics are more aware of /…/ of [curriculum internationalisation]" (Health Sciences). • "[Curriculum internationalisation] is useful; training made it easier to understand [its importance]." (Mechanical Engineering). • "[This training] made me more integrated into the European and beyond European space." (Health Sciences). • "[Training on curriculum internationalisation] is important because we are connected with the international world." (Health Sciences).
	Value and Necessity	• "These types of trainings are definitely useful." (Management). • "This [curriculum internationalisation] is crucial for good and up-to-date delivery of the subject." (Management). • "/…/ I'm sure it's a useful upgrade." (Informatics). • "For example, the last training I attended was from Prof. […]; it was a very good lecture on student-centered teaching and internationalisation." (Health Sciences). • "[Internationalisation] significantly enhances education /…/, though its effectiveness depends on application and support." (Technology). • "I think that's good [important]." (Traffic and Transport). • "This kind of training is definitely useful." (Public Relations).
	Complexity and Trends	• "[It is] important to understand the complexity [of teaching] from perspectives beyond only the scientific." (Informatics). • "/…/ to make education more inclusive and relevant." (Management). • "/…/ more training is needed for any changes to occur." (Management). • "[Curriculum internationalisation] is necessary to meet the needs of complex modern times." (Management).

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Drivers and Support Mechanisms for Implementation	Financial, Technical, and Strategic Support	• "Support mechanisms like financial aid, Erasmus mobilities, and training courses may be offered by universities /…/. Their effectiveness depends on accessibility, relevance, and how well they are integrated into institutional practices." (Management). • "/.../ our university offers mechanisms such as Erasmus mobility programs to support the integration of international elements into the curriculum /…/, and these are effective /…/; they provide essential financial support and opportunities for global exposure." (Technology). • "Each of these [international] activities could be conducted to a greater extent, but when it comes to [financial] support, we are offered significant support." (Mechanical Engineering). • "[This is] recorded in the strategic documents of the institution; we are provided with such training /.../ and encouraged to include these contents in our subjects /.../." (Education). • "/.../ drivers can be the growing global education demands and support from universities and government." (Technology).
	Encouragement for Internationali-sation	• "[Our institution] encourages the inclusion of international, global, and intercultural aspects in the study process." (Mechanical Engineering). • "University encourages Erasmus mobilities and international projects; we had training on internationalisation of the curriculum." (Health Sciences). • "It is good because our university and country support internationalisation activities." (Health Sciences).
Challenges and Obstacles in Implementation	ICT, Regulatory, and Legal Barriers	• "We have to pay attention to certain [regulatory, legal] restrictions, because in certain countries they are much further along, compared with Slovenia." (Health Sciences). • "Barriers /.../ may include lack of resources and resistance to change." (Technology). • "ICT support is not as we need /.../, constrained by limited financial resources." (Mechanical Engineering).
	Resistance to Change and Institutional Support	• "Challenges /.../ include resistance to change, lack of resources, and insufficient training, which hinder effective integration." (Management). • "There is a natural resistance to new approaches and innovations that need to be introduced to increase quality." (Informatics). • "/.../ varying levels of institutional support may pose significant obstacles." (Management).
	Language and Cultural Challenges	• An obstacle can be insufficient knowledge of a foreign language." (Traffic and Transport). • "Cultural differences and language barriers /.../ may pose significant obstacles." (Management). • "/.../ we have home students but almost no international students." (Health Sciences).

Source: Author's work

Impact on Professional, Pedagogical, and Personal Development

This chapter presents academics' perceptions of the impact of professional development in the field of internationalisation of university teaching, focusing on its effects on their professional and personal development, as well as on their pedagogical

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work. Respondents' answers were initially grouped into first-order level and subsequently organised into higher-order categories, as shown in Table 2. Only responses directly supporting the research problem and specifically addressing the impact on the professional, pedagogical, and personal development of university teachers were included in the analysis.

Table 2. Categories with Statements – Perceived Impact

Higher-Order Categories	First-Order Categories (Codes)	Respondents' Statements
Professional Development	General Perception/ Effectiveness	• "This [training] has greatly influenced my teaching work." (Education) • "Yes, /…/ professional growth, /…/ expertise." (Education) • "But even through training, where it was not called internationalisation, if I look closely, I gained a lot from these experiences." (Foreign Language) • "I was always attracted to this, and I learned a lot." (Foreign Language) • "This type of training definitely affects my professional growth, as it also stimulates my desire for new knowledge and additional research work /…/." (Management) • "/…/ I have experienced significant /…/ professional development." (Technology)
	Pedagogical Improvement	• "Participation /…/ improved my ability to integrate diverse content into teaching." (Management) • "Yes, /…/ I get confirmation of the correctness of my own [pedagogical] approach, or /…/ I see its shortcomings." (Public Relations) • "/…/ [It] affected my views on why the international dimension in study is important /…/." (Health Sciences) • "This growth has enriched my teaching practices and deepened my engagement with students from varied backgrounds." (Management)
Impact on Academics' Personal and Intercultural Development	Cultural Awareness, Sensitivity, and Global Perspectives	• "/…/ helping teachers better understand cultural differences /…/." (Technology) • "These courses equip educators /…/ for diverse cultural contexts, fostering collaboration, equity, and engagement." (Management) • "Participation /…/ has enhanced my cultural awareness and broadened my global perspectives /…/." (Management) • "Interesting and useful are personal experiences that allow you to get to know /…/ different cultural environments /…/." (Geography) • "I have /…/ enhanced global perspectives /…/." (Management)
	Broader Perspective and Openness to Action	• "As a result of participating /…/ I have experienced significant personal /…/ development /…/." (Management) • "Yes, personally, I have become more knowledgeable in this area, open, tolerant. /…/ it has influenced my greater /…/ awareness, self-confidence, etc." (Education) • "/…/ I think differently now and react more appropriately when action is required." (Geography) • "Yes, I have a different, broader view of this issue, [perspective]." (Informatics) • "Greater breadth, [perspective]." (Entrepreneurship and Marketing)
	Increased Self-Confidence and Awareness	• "/…/ because of this, we are becoming more self-confident, well-informed, and I have many /…/ personal contacts abroad." (Education) • "Yes. Greater self-confidence." (Entrepreneurship and Marketing)

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Influence of Internationalization on Pedagogy	Incorporation and Application of International/ European Elements	• "The adoption of European elements /…/ improves teaching." (Traffic and Transport) • "I included some international examples in lessons /…/." (Health Sciences) • "/.../ teaching is improved by applying European standards." (Traffic and Transport) • "Especially in health, we have different international cases and situations in study and practice, and later in work." (Health Sciences) • "I try to include international elements in my professional practice and studies." (Health Sciences) • "I added case studies from abroad." (Management) • "[I include] international examples of materials, written and video content /.../." (Management)
	Broader Perspectives and Greater Output	• "/.../ where things are not completely standardised, we can consider them from different perspectives /.../. I see [internationalisation] as an extension or addition to that basic [study process] /.../." (Health Sciences) • "More effective teaching and greater pedagogical output." (Entrepreneurship and Marketing)
	Diverse and Improved Teaching Methods	• "I /.../ adopted diverse teaching practices to better engage students in a global context." (Management) • "I have incorporated changes into my teaching practice, including /…/ diverse teaching and learning strategies." (Technology) • "/.../ improved teaching methods /.../." (Technology) • "/.../ different learning-teaching practices." (Traffic and Transport) • "As a result /…/ I have experienced /…/ improved teaching methodologies." (Technology) • "[I use] activities for /.../ home and Erasmus students in my work /…/." (Management) • "/.../ more communication and opinion exchange activities with students during classes." (Informatics)
Impact on Curriculum Documentation	General Inclusion of International Elements in Syllabuses	• "I /.../ have /.../ enhanced [syllabus] with international elements /.../." (Technology) • "I include some components of internationalisation at home." (Geography) • "/.../ formally [I should] /.../ leave some mark on paper in terms of [internationalisation] in the curriculum [and not only informally in practice]." (Health Sciences)
	Updated Learning Outcomes, Content, Literature, and Assessment	• "I updated syllabuses by enhancing learning outcomes and refining assessments to include more global perspectives." (Management) • "I included some international elements, put additional international expressions and literature in the syllabus, and I try to implement it." (Health Sciences) • "/.../ here and there I supplemented the goals and learning outcomes of the course, the content and literature, examples, and to some extent the assessment /.../." (Education) • "I incorporated international elements into content." (Management) • "I included /.../ concrete international documents, foreign literature /.../." (Health Sciences) • "I am currently working on incorporating changes into the curriculum, such as improved learning outcomes and enhanced assessment methods." (Technology) • "I plan to include these contents in my pedagogical work." (Education)

Source: Author's work

CONCLUSION

This article underscores the critical role of professional development for academics in fostering internationalised university teaching and highlights its benefits, challenges, practical applications, and impacts within the educational landscapes of Bosnia and Herzegovina, part of the Western Balkans, and Slovenia, a Central European country formerly part of Yugoslavia. Professional development in curriculum internationalisation is essential as higher education institutions increasingly strive to prepare students for a globalised world.

The findings emphasise that, while professional development initiatives are essential for fostering international and intercultural perspectives in university teaching, inconsistencies in policy implementation and the absence of cohesive national frameworks can significantly limit their effectiveness. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the fragmented approach to higher education results in variable policies across regions, creating an inconsistent experience for academic staff. Research by Markovic, Bokonjic, and De Lepeleer (2021) highlights the challenges posed by this lack of regulatory cohesion, which often leaves institutions to navigate internationalisation efforts independently. Slovenia's approach is more structured, with defined national guidelines and a unified strategy that promotes internationalisation as a national priority—particularly with the adopted *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Slovenia*. However, challenges remain in effectively implementing internationalisation within university teaching practices. In this context, the article highlights the significance of structured, purpose-driven professional development for academics, not only in enhancing individual competencies but also in fostering an educational environment that supports cross-cultural understanding, development of intercultural competence, and incorporation of international and global perspectives. It is suggested that aligning institutional policies with national and international standards is crucial to maximise the potential of professional development initiatives in the context of curriculum internationalisation.

While the article presents responses from two different countries, it does not distinguish between respondents based on country of origin, academic discipline, or academic title. This represents a limitation of the study, but at the same time, no significant differences were observed in this context. Another notable limitation is the small and non-representative sample size, which restricts the generalisability of the results and limits the depth of comparative analysis. Future studies would benefit from a larger, more diverse sample that includes comparative perspectives across countries, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. This approach would also support a deeper exploration of regional perceptions across the Balkans, in addition to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia, to assess the role of professional development in higher education internationalisation, especially in regions facing unique socio-political challenges like the Western Balkans.

The article highlights the importance of the individual educator's role in advancing internationalisation, even within constrained policy environments. Academic staff frequently go beyond formal requirements, incorporating international elements into their teaching to foster global awareness among students. These individual efforts, as outlined by Klemenčič and Zgaga (2013), are particularly impactful in regions like the Western Balkans, where historical and cultural factors may influence partnerships

more than global academic trends. Encouraging staff autonomy aligns with research suggesting that educator-driven initiatives can catalyse broader institutional shifts towards internationalisation (Stohl, 2007). In this context, the article supports the notion that well-structured and consistently implemented professional development approaches are essential for empowering educators to engage with international perspectives

Furthermore, the authors suggest exploring the potential of collaborative networks that span national borders within the Western Balkans. Such networks could facilitate the exchange of best practices and resources for academic professional development, providing a cost-effective way to enhance global competencies in the absence of systematic national frameworks. Such initiatives could have significant impacts on the global readiness of higher education systems in the Balkans and similar regions.

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