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UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN SLOVENIA

ABSTRACT

Pedagogical training programmes for university teachers have been quite discussed and widespread trend in recent years in many countries. Many university teachers consider pedagogical training as a valuable tool in their teaching practice. In Slovenia, there is very little evidence of teachers' opinion and beliefs about pedagogical training (PT)¹. Many authors consider the effect of teachers' training in higher education (HE) on their teaching questionable, but there are also some evidence about positive impact of PT on university teaching. The results of this survey showed, that there are statistically significant differences in teachers' opinion on initial and sustained PT regarding different variables. Formal education for teaching in primary and/or secondary schools is often considered as appropriate for teaching in HE. The respondents with higher titles attributed the lowest importance to sustained PT. Those who were involved in PT attributed less importance to PT, as well as to submission of the certificate of participation in PT programme in comparison to respondents who were not involved in PT; but on the other hand the respondents with the highest participation (51 hours and more) in PT are more in favour with PT programmes. The latter confirms the preliminary findings, that courses of longer duration ensure more possibilities to affect teachers' pedagogical thinking and conceptions of teaching and learning in comparison to shorter programmes.

Key words: Initial pedagogical training; Sustained pedagogical training; University teaching; Promotion procedures

Introduction

Quality and effective university teaching has paid attention in recent years. Consequently, training of university teachers has recently become a widespread trend in many countries (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne & Nevgi, 2007). In Slovenia, initial (and sustained) training programmes for university teachers are becoming more common in recent years too, but there is very little evidence of teachers' opinion and beliefs about PT programmes and their placement in the promotion procedures in Slovenia. In this context assessment of pedagogical qualification of an individual is also of importance, wherein student evaluations of teaching (SET) *can be* considered as an important source of information. This study attempts to explore higher education PT with an emphasis on university teachers' opinions and beliefs on initial and sustained PT. Although in Slovenia as well as in most European countries teachers are not required to obtain a certificate of teaching competencies in the promotion procedures, this study presents, what importance teachers attribute to PT, "probationary lecture" and SET in process of appointment to positions.

In the traditional view it is research that counts in universities, while teaching is being a secondary preoccupation of the teaching staff (Leitner, 1998; Pleschová et al., 2012). Consequently, professional development in teaching practice was not a priority for new university teachers (Lisewski, 2005). Yet, quality teaching is vital for student learning in HE, but university teaching staff in Europe is not as good prepared for their teaching career as for research (Pleschová et al., 2012). However, through proper steering, simulation, and evaluation of the learning process of students teaching becomes increasingly important, wherein teacher

¹ In this paper, when talking about PT, higher education pedagogical training (programmes) is (are) meant.

is defined as a “facilitator”, stimulator and supporter of student learning (Leitner, 1998). Fry (2006) writes, that in the last decade of the 20th century there were two factors (in UK) that pushed government towards taking greater interest in teaching quality, i.e. increased pressure on resources and rising student numbers in universities. Maybe the latter factor is the reason that “initial training programmes for university teachers are now widespread in many institutions both in the UK and internationally” (Coffey & Gibbs, 2000, p. 385). In Leitner’s opinion (1998) quality can be achieved and high standard of academic education can be assured only by using pedagogical and in-service training.

Background

Nowadays there are efforts to make PT a standard part of the required qualifications of university teachers (Leitner, 1998)². To do a professional job that met student needs and academic standards, teaching was historically “perhaps regarded as mainly the preserve of the individual” (Fry, 2006, p. 96). Nowadays training of university teachers is essential to do an excellent job (High Level Group ..., 2013), since without PT teaching decisions are based on the know-how accumulated during teaching career and by imitating those with more experience (Rosado Pinto, 2008). If the university should educate better graduates and reduce the drop-out rates of students, it should appropriately encourage teachers to improve their teaching, not just research (Marentič Požarnik, 1998b).

Leitner (1998, p. 342–343) presents Elton’s recommendation (1993, p. 69): teachers, who have never been taught how to teach have to receive some PT and “if good teachers work with institutions of academic pedagogy they will improve their work. The results will be known and will also influence those who perhaps are not so good”. However, if teachers should carry out PT, it should be clearly defined, what kind of a programme they have to carry out (Marentič Požarnik, 1998b). Besides, pedagogical competencies are subject to evaluation, this is why there must be possibilities to acquire them (Leitner, 1998). Leitner (ibid.) writes, that a university or college should offer an adequate pedagogical qualification and adequately structured in-service training courses to *each* young teacher to help fill in the gaps that have been found as a result of an evaluation process. Otherwise the data obtained through the evaluation can be nothing more than “the construction with data of a tower of Babel” (ibid., p. 342). Ajibade et al. (2010) report, that in Nigerian Obafemi Awolowo University teachers were ready to start immediate training, they were mindful of the individual and collective benefits and had positive attitude to PT. However, not only PT as such, but also documents or certificates of a participation in PT programme should be recognized as an important element of assessment of pedagogical qualification in the process of appointment to teaching positions (Marentič Požarnik, 1998b). This is why programmes and certificates have to be properly assessed and graded. The authorities in charge have to adopt and confirm PT programme and higher education institutions (HEIs) are to enable individual’s participation.

On the contrary, in Slovenia attending PT to improve teaching and thus the submission of the certificate of pedagogical qualification in the process of appointment to position does not confer any benefits or it is allocated only minimal points. Only one out of four Slovenian universities requires concrete document or certificate of participation in the PT for university teachers in the process of appointment to teaching positions. Two universities allocate only 1 point for attending PT programmes, which is far the least among all categories within the pedagogical activity; the other two universities in Slovenia do not contain a category for participation in PT within the pedagogical activity in their institutional criteria. The most important evidence required is the obligation for new teachers to have a »probationary lecture« (OG RS, 2010; UL, 2012; UM, 2012; UNG, 2013a; UPR, 2014a; UPR, 2014b; UPR 2014c). However, we do not have the data, whether a specially appointed commissions for accessing one’s pedagogical skills have ever rejected a candidate if the »criteria« for passing »probationary lecture« were not met. Considering that *only* »probationary lecture« as

² Leitner (1998) mentions the publication of the Working Group for Academic Pedagogy about evaluation an improvement of teaching quality (1993), in which only three authors deal principally with the pedagogical and in-service training on university teachers (i.e. Berendt, 1993; Elton, 1993; Marentič Požarnik, 1993). Slovenian author is noteworthy.

such is certainly not adequate for assessing pedagogical skills and even less for improving teaching activity, below the impact of PT on teaching is presented.

The impact of PT programmes on university teaching

Although many authors consider the effect of teachers' training in HE on their teaching activity questionable (Coffey & Gibbs, 2000; Norton et al., 2005; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne & Nevgi, 2007), there are some evidence about positive impact of training on teaching. Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007) found out, that there are positive effects of training on teachers approach to teaching and on their teaching methods. Sustained, i.e. 1-year long or at least 30 ECTS, programmes of longer duration ensure more possibilities to affect teachers' pedagogical thinking and conceptions of teaching and learning in comparison to shorter courses, which may make teachers' more uncertain about themselves as teachers. Besides, teachers mentioned only positive effects of PT on teaching, but it is possible that more pedagogical courses were taken by teachers who were more motivated to improve their teaching and »their wish to become better teachers might lead to better teaching outcomes, not participation in pedagogical courses alone« (ibid., p. 569). Gibbs and Coffey (2004, p. 98) found out that teachers became more student-centred and less teacher-centred after a period of 4 to 18 months PT and their teaching skills were judged by students to be improved significantly. Besides, students took a surface approach to a significantly lesser extent after their teachers had been trained. However, authors state that »we are still not in a position to demonstrate that it was the training that resulted in the positive changes, merely that those institutions that had training also had teachers that improved«. Norton et al. (2005) found out, that there was no significant difference on teachers' beliefs and intentions between the group of UK's teachers, who had taken the institution's programme on teaching and learning in HE and the group, who had no PT, besides »an effect of training was masked by an effect of lack of experience« (ibid., p. 560)

Nevertheless, Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007) found out, that the PT enhances a shift from the »information transmission/teacher-focused« approach, to the »conceptual change/student-focused« approach. Teachers with most PT, scored highest on scales measuring the student-focused approach to teaching and self-efficacy beliefs, but they scored lowest on a scale measuring the teacher-focused approach. Teachers who adopted a »student-focused approach« used a wider repertoire of teaching methods in comparison to teachers with a »teacher-focused approach« (Coffey & Gibbs, 2002). At the same time, students were more likely to show a deep approach to learning if their teachers adopted student-focused approach and vice versa (Trigwell et al., 1999). After one semester of two- and three-semester long initial training programmes UK's university teachers showed significant improvements in scores measuring learning, enthusiasm, organisation and rapport (Coffey & Gibbs, 2000); again, among other things the problem with the difficulty of distinguishing the effects of training from the effects of experience of teaching has to be highlighted.

The path to quality university teaching

Pleschová et al. (2012) describe how to best prepare academics to teach and enhance teaching and learning in universities: i) an important role is given to professional educational developers, who work with individual teachers, whose interaction with colleagues is also essential. Professionals with qualifications in primary and secondary education may not be the right candidates for educational developers (Pleschová et al., 2012). »The expert in academic pedagogy who conduct initial and in-service training should ideally be a university teacher who stands in the lecture hall every day and who interacts with students through the elaboration of their graduation papers. Additionally, he or she needs to have earned an adequate pedagogical qualification with a serious focus on academic pedagogy« (Leitner, 1998, p. 347); ii) academics have to be encouraged to experiment with student-centred curricula and teaching methods, wherein educational developers carry information and innovations in teaching across disciplinary boundaries in HE; iii) SET as a way of ensuring student input into teaching enhancement is of importance, while educational developers can help with

corresponding interpretation and action planning; iv) regular evaluation of educational development programmes for their impact and their restructuring accordingly is also essential (Pleschová et al., 2012).

Marentič Požarnik (1998) presents seven models of *didactic training* of university teachers, i.e. i) the initial training programmes for assistants with at least one year teaching experience, ii) a mentorship of an experienced university teacher to the novice, not only in research but also in teaching, iii) (mono)thematic seminars and courses of various fields, iv) pedagogical workshops, v) action research projects, vi) network of experts and vii) peer training or »dyadic training«. The training for professional educational developers, who should be organised in teaching and learning centres or in human resource units, establishment of educational development programmes and creation of educational development units, which offer teacher's development programmes are also of great importance (Pleschová et al., 2012). High Level Group on the Modernisation of HE (2013) among other things recommends the establishment of a European Academy for Teaching and Learning, continuous professionalization and development of HE teaching staff with mandatory certified training – in 2020, all teachers should have received certified PT –, decisions on entrance, progression and promotion should take into account an assessment of teaching competence, besides researchers should be given the opportunity to gain professional teaching qualifications. Last but not least, HE institutions (HEIs) should encourage student feed-back for faster and more effective improvements.

Linkage between SET and PT

The quality of teaching is inseparably linked to the quality of study – the reputation of a university is to a great extent based on the quality of its graduates. Thus, the final goal of academic pedagogy is not to satisfy the teacher, but to satisfy the student (Leitner, 1998). »In many countries, universities have introduced SET as a way of ensuring student input into teaching enhancement« (Pleschová et al., 2012, p. 17). SET are seen »as a valuable tool to improve teaching and student learning outcomes« (Kogan et al., 2010), assuming that students learn more from good teachers (Cohen, 1981) and that they know best, whether the teaching they receive is adequate for them (Clayson & Haley, 1990 in Kogan et al., 2010).

But Kogan et al. (2010) write, that there have been several studies arguing that SET do not actually evaluate teaching, this is why they should not be used for career decisions. It is an open issue, whether the students' or teachers' characteristics are the main factors in determining students' opinion of the teacher and »whether students have a higher opinion of teachers under whom they have achieved higher grades« (Lumsden & Scott, 1984, p. 648). Cohen (1981, p. 281) adds, that »the most critical question about student ratings of instruction is whether /.../ they actually measure teaching effectiveness«; if so – there should be a strong positive correlation between the students' learning and SET. But the correlation is not valid – inter alia – due to external influences, i.e. the students' abilities and motivation, physical environment, teachers' personality and age, even teachers' dressing style, etc. The question of reliability, validity and usability of student evaluations appears and what exactly students evaluate (Cohen, 1981). Evaluations, for example, can be »purchased« with the grades and are unrelated to learning (Clayson, 2009). Zabaleta (2007) claims, that higher grades have a weaker connection with SET in comparison to lower grades. Consequently, a small average relationship exists between learning and the SET, besides the more objectively learning is measured, the less likely it is to be related to the evaluations (Clayson, 2009).

Irrespective of the above-written findings, in our opinion SET are a valuable tool for improving teaching and learning outcomes – however, just the collection of data is not sufficient, as information on the quality of academics' teaching should be collected also from other sources (Pleschová et al., 2012) or SET should be combined with other methods, i.e. teaching portfolios, student interviews for elimination of anonymity and introduction of students' accountability, class observations and unbiased peer evaluations, and self-evaluations (Zabaleta, 2007). In order to create educational change, Pleschová et al. (2012, p. 17) also stress, that teachers need access to and the »opportunity to discuss evaluation results to consider how to address

weaknesses and build on strengths«. Educational developers can play an important role in interpretation and action planning.

For the Slovenian HE system, we agree with Marentič Požarnik (2009), that the introduction of compulsory SET may represent one of the most important developments in recent years in the field of teaching. Despite of shortcomings, indicated by different authors, we believe that SET have been an important complement to *other conditions* of assessing the pedagogical qualification in the process of appointment to the higher teaching position in Slovenia, i.e. mentoring and co-mentoring, number and quality of master and doctoral theses, preparation of textbooks and similar materials, initial and sustained PT etc. in the process of first appointment to teaching position the important role is given also to the »probationary lecture«. Minimum Standards for the Appointment of HE Teachers, Researchers and Faculty Assistants at HEIs (OG RS, 2010) in Slovenia in their Article 11 stress, that in every appointment of teachers or faculty assistants to a higher position or reappointment to a position currently held, the candidate must submit an opinion of the student council based on the results of a student survey or other instruments for verifying pedagogical work. Despite Kogan's et al. (2010) opinion, results of SET are obligatory in the process of appointment to position in all four Slovenian universities; conversely, in promotion procedures only two Slovenian universities require the submission of a certificate of participation in PT programmes. There are different opinions and beliefs of university teachers about the importance of initial and sustained PT, SET in the process of appointment to positions and »probationary lecture« as a way of assessing ones pedagogical qualification.

Method

Data collection instrument and data collection methods

In our quantitative empirical research, carried out in 2013, the online *Questionnaire on PT of HE teachers and associates in Slovenia* was prepared as data collection method. Teachers' opinion and beliefs were collected by using 5-point Likert scale. The initial questionnaire was tested on a sample of 24 university teachers and associates. By univariate statistics, the results and findings were used in a sensible transformation of the questionnaire.

Population and sample

An online questionnaire was sent by link to 5,650 e-mail addresses of units (nearly 70 percent of the population). 513 respondents from all four Slovenian universities and some private HEIs, of different academic titles and different ISCED groups of the work answered the questionnaire. The sample consisted of 14.4 percent of *full professors*, 16.6 percent of *associate professors*, 30.0 percent of *assistant professors*, 8.6 percent of *senior lecturers*, 7.0 percent of *lecturers*, 2.3 percent of *lectors (language teachers)*, 20.7 percent of *assistants* and 0.4 percent of *instructors*. The variable *field of work*, in which respondents work most of the time, was created by thematic grouping of individual fields of ISCED classification³. The majority of respondents works at *University of Ljubljana* (UL, 54.2%), followed by *University of Maribor* (UM, 20.9%), *private HEIs* (13.6%), *University of Primorska* (UPR, 8.2%) and *University of Nova Gorica* (UNG, 3.1%).

Results

³ International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 1997 (UNESCO 2012) has 25 fields of education organized within nine broad groups. In the survey, nine groups were merged into six as follows – the percentages of the respondents are added: 1) Education – 10.7% (14 Teacher training and education science), 2) Humanities and Arts – 15.6% (21 Arts, 22 Humanities), 3) Social sciences – 26.1% (31 Social and behavioural science, 32 Journalism and information, 34 Business and administration, 38 Law, 81 Personal services, 84 Transport services, 86 Security services), 4) Natural Sciences – 19.3% (42 Life sciences, 44 Physical sciences, 46 Mathematics and statistics, 48 Computing, 6 Agriculture, 62 Agriculture, forestry and fishery, 64 Veterinary, 85 Environmental protection), 5) Engineering, manufacturing and construction – 18.3% (52 Engineering and engineering trades, 54 Manufacturing and processing, 58 Architecture and building) and 6) Health and Welfare – 9.9% (72 Health, 76 Social services).

The data were analysed by a statistical programme SPSS software (version 12), mostly by making comparisons of calculated uni- and bivariate statistics and using ANOVA analysis and Chi-square test.

Firstly, respondents answered questions about their prior pedagogical education and their participation in PT programmes and if they were included in these programmes – to which extent. Further on, they ranked the following statements: a) in my opinion, all university teachers should be given initial PT at the first appointment to the position of university teacher; b) the initial PT (at the first appointment to the position of university teacher) should be given by all university teachers, who have no prior pedagogical education and/or adult education; c) all university teachers should be given sustained PT, i.e. on every 5 years; d) in my opinion, proofs/certificates of completion of PT should be a compulsory part of the documentation in the process of appointment to teaching positions.

The results showed statistically significant differences between the above mentioned statements (a–d) regardless different ISCED groups, academic titles and whether the respondents were included in PT or not (Table 1). The respondents attributed greater importance to (b) initial PT in the case of no prior pedagogical education and less importance to (a) initial training for all university teachers (private HEIs and lectors/language teachers (N = 12) are excluded). At the same time, respondents (lectors/language teachers (N=12) are the only exception) attributed less importance to (c) sustained PT on every 5 years, than to initial training (a and b).

It is interesting, that in the field of ISCED groups most of the teachers from Health and Welfare attributed the greatest importance to (a) initial PT (4.10), (c) sustained PT (3.40), and to (d) the mandatory submission of certificate on PT (3.44). At the same time the respondents from Health and Welfare group are to the greatest extent involved in PT programmes⁴. Teachers from Education field (who are likely to have finished the pedagogical study programme for teaching in primary and/or secondary level of education) are most likely to consider initial PT as obligatory only for university teachers, who have no prior formal pedagogical education. However, it should be re-emphasized that formal education for teaching in primary and secondary schools is not appropriate for teaching in HE. It is also interesting to note that respondents with higher titles (full professors, associate professors and assistant professors), attributed the lowest importance to sustained PT on every 5 years (c).

Table 1. *University teachers opinions on PT.*

		a	b	c	d
Total		3.70	4.01	3.14	3.19
HEI	UL	3.74	4.08	3.13	3.14
	UM	3.48	3.87	3.09	3.04
	UPR	3.76	4.17	2.95	3.43
	UNG	3.44	3.94	2.94	3.38
	Private HEIs	3.90	3.89	3.40	3.44
	Significance of mean differences (HEI)		0.085	0.307	0.262
ISCED FIELD	Education	3.89	4.44	3.40	3.45
	Humanities and Arts	3.45	4.00	2.99	2.95
	Social Sciences	3.93	4.04	3.47	3.38
	Natural Sciences	3.36	3.84	2.61	2.87
	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	3.63	3.74	3.05	3.11

⁴ Respondents' participation in PT programmes according to ISCED groups (percentage and mean): total (31.4 %, 37.4); Education (21.8%, 53.8); Humanities and Arts (26.3%, 42.1); Social Sciences (40.3%, 42.1); Natural Sciences (21.2%, 40.7); Engineering, manufacturing, construction (20.2%, 28.1); Health and Welfare (66.7%, 24.6).

	Health and Welfare	4.10	4.33	3.43	3.57	
	Significance of mean differences (ISCED fields)	<0.001**	0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	
ACADEMIC TITLE	Full Professor	3.39	3.80	2.97	3.18	
	Associate Professor	3.74	4.01	2.92	3.05	
	Assistant Professor	3.56	3.94	2.96	2.96	
	Higher Lecturer	4.14	4.18	3.66	3.59	
	Lecturer	4.28	4.39	3.72	3.81	
	Lector (language teacher) (N=12)	4.58	4.42	4.42	3.75	
	Assistant	3.61	4.01	3.13	3.19	
	Instructor (N=2)	4.00	5.00	3.50	4.50	
		Significance of mean differences (Academic titles)	<0.001**	0.085	<0.001**	<0.001**
		Participation in PT	3.48	3.91	2.94	2.99
	No participation	4.18	4.24	3.58	3.64	
	Significance of mean differences (participation)	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	

** the ANOVA model is statistically significant at 0,01 level

As it can be seen from Table 1, the respondents who were involved in PT attributed less importance to initial (a, b) and sustained PT (c), as well as to submission of the certificate of participation in PT programme (d) in comparison to respondents who were not involved in PT. This could be somehow related to the findings of Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007), who found out that shorter courses (less than 30 ECTS) may make teachers more uncertain about themselves as teachers. Our study shows, that respondents, on average, participated in PT only to the extent of 37.4 hours (footnote 3), which we consider very little, taking into account that 1 ECTS equals on average between 25 to 30 working hours of study.

In this context, we verified if the respondents' opinion vary depending on their extent of hours participated in the PT. Due to small amount of respondents' time (hours) dedicated to PT programmes, we were unable to verify the differences in respondents' opinion at such a high level of participation in PT as it is one year long training programme (ibid.). Consequently, for calculating differences we placed the limitation at the extent of 50 hours, wherein one group consisted of the participation under 50 hours and the other at 51 hours and more (Table 2). The respondents with the participation of 51 hours and more (23.6% of the respondents who were involved in PT) are more in favour with PT programmes – the ANOVA results showed that there are statistically significant differences between these two groups in the case of initial PT for all university teachers (a) and in the case of mandatory submission of certificates of training (f). Maybe this could mean that teachers with greater participation in PT have already gained greater confidence in their own teaching and in PT programmes as such.

Table 2. University teachers' opinion on the importance of PT according to the extent of their participation in PT.

	a	b	c	d
Total				
1–50 hours of PT	4.08	4.18	3.52	3.55
51 and more hours of PT	4.59	4.47	3.81	4.00
Significance of mean differences (institutions)	0.003*	0.151	0.184	0.037*

* the ANOVA model is statistically significant at 0,05 level.

Considering that SET should not be used for career decisions, because according to Kogan et al. (2010) they do not evaluate (only) teaching, we tried to picture, what is respondents' opinion on the following statements (Table 3): e) all university teachers, whose SET show poor results, should be included in sustained PT; f) SET

are an appropriate tool for assessing pedagogical qualification of an individual in the process of appointment to teaching positions. The ANOVA revealed that there are statistically significant differences in the case of respondents with or without participation in PT programmes, wherein those without participation in PT believe to the greater extent, that in the case of poor results in SET the university teachers should be included in sustained PT.

Table 3. *University teachers' opinions on SET in the context of PT and process of appointment to positions.*

	e	f
Participation in PT programmes	3.76	2.83
No participation	4.09	2.81
Significance of mean differences (participation)	<0.001**	0.831

** the ANOVA model is statistically significant at 0,01 level

Since pedagogical qualification of university teachers is often assessed through »probationary lecture« in Slovenia, we were interested in what is the respondents' opinion on the following statements (Table 4): g) »probationary lecture«, which is a condition for the first appointment to the teaching position, is crucial in assessing the pedagogical qualification of an individual; h) the members of a specially appointed commission at »probationary lecture«, which I passed in the process of first appointment to position, did their job quality. In the case of statement (g) all the respondents were included in the analysis (N=513), while in the case of statement (f) only data of teachers who gave a »probationary lecture«, (N=407) were analysed.

Table 4. *Teachers' opinion on »probationary lecture«.*

	g	h
Total	3.25	4.01
UL	3.23	3.93*
UM	3.05	3.84*
UP	3.21	4.03
UNG	3.44	3.93
Private HEIs	3.63	4.34*
Significance of mean differences (HEIs)	0.026*	0.04
Education	3.16	4.15
Humanities and Arts	3.40	3.87
Social Sciences	3.22	3.96
Natural Sciences	3.21	4.00
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	3.16	3.97
Health and Welfare	3.43	4.11
Significance of mean differences (ISCED fields)	0.615*	0.544
Full Professor	3.49	4.01
Associate Professor	3.01	3.83
Assistant Professor	3.29	4.04
Higher Lecturer	3.34	3.93
Lecturer	3.50	4.17
Lector (language teacher) (N=12)	3.58	3.67
Assistant	3.03	4.20
Instructor (N=2)	4.50	3.99
Significance of mean differences (Academic	0.029*	0.286

* the ANOVA model is statistically significant at 0,05 level

Table 4 shows statistically significant differences in the importance that respondents attribute to »probationary lecture«. In the case of private HEIs the respondents' opinion about the importance of the »probationary lecture« is the highest (3.63). They also attributed the highest rate to the quality of the commissions' work (4.34), while the respondents of UM gave the least importance to »probationary lecture« as well as to the work of the commissions. It is interesting that more than 48% of the respondents from private HEIs work in the field of health, besides respondents from health and welfare consider »probationary lecture« as the most important in comparison to the other ISCED groups. The results also revealed that a total of 2.0% of the teachers did not give a »probationary lecture«, although they are by law obliged to give it⁵. This is undoubtedly worrying, taking into account, that completion of the PT or any other method of assessing one's pedagogical qualification is also not a prerequisite for being appointed to the university teaching position. Therefore the question arises about an individual's pedagogical qualification, since there are only 31.4% of respondents (however, the percentage is surprisingly high), who completed PT programme (footnote 3). In this context a shortcoming of our survey has to be pointed out, since the data about one's own acquisition of knowledge was not collected.

Conclusion and discussions

Pedagogical qualification of university teachers is often taken for granted in academic culture. Why someone would need professionalization if he or she is already a professional? Academic culture includes specific rules of behaviour and conduct of members of the academic community, which is maintained and transmitted to younger academic generations (Kump, 1994, 23). However, the preservation of old habits, i.e. in the field of pedagogical skills and competences should not be (strictly) maintained under the influence of modern changes in HE. If in the past university teachers used to teach a handful of talented students who had quite similar interests to professors (Marentič Požarnik 2009, p. 342), nowadays teachers are faced with mass of students with less academic interests, knowledge and talent. However, if graduates should achieve at least the minimal academic level and if an appropriate level of students' knowledge, skills and competences should be maintained, but on the other hand we fail to affect the quality of input (i.e. students who massively enter HE), it has to be done "something" in the interim phase – this is, during the study – so that the highest possible quality of the output (i.e. graduates) could be achieved. Barnett (1992) states that from the perspective of students the research is quite irrelevant, but on the other hand quality teaching with high-quality, modern and appropriate methods and approaches to pedagogical work can lead to quality students and graduates. Namely, through students' eyes, in the undergraduate level more emphasis should be given to teaching, rather than research. In this context, the important role could be given to quality PT of university teachers and to the assessment of their pedagogical qualification, using "probationary lecture" or SET. However, SET mean post-festum feedback on teachers' work, while PT offer the possibility of improvements in advance.

Professional PT is still not assumed as a requirement for entry into the teaching academic career in Slovenia (and in Europe), since almost 70% of our respondents never participated in those kind of trainings. Respondents attributed less importance to initial PT for all university teachers (Table 1: 3.70) in comparison to PT intended only for those without prior formal education for teaching in primary or secondary level (Table 1: 4.01). It is not surprising, that those who finished pedagogical study programme, are (wrongly) regarded as fully qualified for teaching in HE, which was pointed out also by Pleschová et al. (2012). Besides, teachers with the highest academic titles (full professors, associate professors and assistant professors) attributed the lowest importance to sustained PT and also to initial training for all university teachers. It could be most likely concluded that respondents of higher academic titles feel adequately pedagogical qualified (primarily) because of their longstanding teaching experiences. Namely, the study showed no statistical differences in

⁵ Assistants on their first appointment and instructors do not need to demonstrate pedagogical qualification (OG RS 2010), but there were 9.4% of assistants who had already given a lecture, which could be a result of being reappointed to the same position.

participation in the PT programmes regardless different academic titles. At this point, it would be reasonable to further verify teachers' approaches to teaching and their students' approaches to learning according to Coffey and Gibbs (2000, 2002) and Trigwell et al. (1999). We re-emphasize that Pleschová's et al. (2012) pointed out the problem of perpetuation of old teaching methods; younger teachers often follow and imitate older and more experienced colleagues in their teaching practices. A question is whether more experienced teachers' pedagogical approaches are still adequate and responsive to the needs of contemporary massive HE with extremely heterogeneous population of students.

However, respondents from the Health and Welfare group have to be pointed out, since they positively stand out with their responses in terms of both – initial and sustained PT –, as well as with their opinion on submission of documents and certificates in the promotion procedures. At the same time the results showed, that these respondents were in the largest percentage involved in PT (66.7%), although to a lesser extent of hours (24.6) and they mainly participated in informal courses of short duration, offered mainly internally at private HEIs. Despite low number of hours, respondents' awareness on the importance of acquiring pedagogical knowledge for teaching in HE maybe rose. As Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007) found out, only positive effects of PT on teaching were mentioned by teachers, but authors also emphasized that longer training process cause more positive effects on teachers' pedagogical thinking and conceptions of teaching and learning (ibid.). Our survey cannot be placed in the context of their findings, since the respondents were involved in PT programmes in too small extent – i. e. only 14 participants attended PT to the extent of more than 100 hours (8.7% of those who participated in PT), which amounts to approximately 5 ECTS. Nevertheless, the group with larger amount of hours that were spent for training (51 hours and more), prefer PT programmes and submission of certificates on training in promotion procedures.

With the study it was also found, that (only) 31.4% of respondents in Slovenia was involved in PT, which is still a surprisingly high proportion in accordance to Marentič Požarnik (2009), who found out, that only approximately 5% of eligible staff have attended formal kind of trainings on the Centre for Educational Development at the Faculty of Arts, UL. It has to be emphasized, that in our study the expression PT (programme) includes various forms of HE trainings, i.e. rhetoric, teamwork, e-learning for university teachers, SET etc. Since a low participation in PT was expected on the basis of the existing practice and its unclear definition in the national Minimum Standards and institutional criteria, it was verified, what percentage of respondents passed a "probationary lecture", which is the most important evidence required by new teachers in minimum standards and criteria. The total of 2% of the respondents has not given the "probationary lecture", even though it is a condition for appointment to the teaching position in accordance with the law. Although at this point the question of internal and external evaluation and control arises, we were also interested in what importance respondents attribute to "probationary lecture" in the context of assessment of one's pedagogical qualification. In teachers' opinion the "probationary lecture" is of great importance – the statement, that it is crucial in assessing the pedagogical qualification of an individual, was scored 3.25. The quality of the commission's work in the "probationary lecture" was also scored high (4.01), which is definitely very positive finding, since informal comments about unsystematic and unprofessional work of the commission often appeared. We believe that quality implementation of "probationary lecture" is definitely crucial in the assessment of pedagogical qualification. However, it cannot and should not be the only tool of assessing university teachers' pedagogical qualification. The combination of the initial PT, followed by the "probationary lecture" (or vice versa), could lead to better qualification for university teaching. Even higher quality of teaching may could be achieved with sustained PT programmes on every few years.

Different kinds of HE pedagogical courses, seminars and programmes have been organized since the late seventies in Slovenia (mainly) by the Centre for Educational Development at the Faculty of Arts, UL. However, they were voluntary and without official accreditation until 1999, when the course 'Foundations of teaching in HE' was accredited (Marentič Požarnik 2009). In 2012, the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency accredited

renewed training study programme 'The Basics of HE Didactics'⁶, which comprises 10 ECTS and is purposed primarily for Assistant Professors at their first appointment to the teaching position. The enrolment number in one implementation of the study programme is 16 participants. Until July 2014 the programme was implemented three-times and it was attended by 47 participants, who fulfilled all obligations (Marentič Požarnik 2014). The multiple implementations of the programme were approved in the context of the project, 'Quality - University of Ljubljana', 2012–2015 (UL 2013), which offers also other courses for HE teaching staff, i.e. rhetoric and e-learning for HE teachers, SET, teamwork, etc. All obligations are fulfilled, when participants draw up the final application thesis⁷ and have the final interview based on the submission of the academic portfolio. After that a certificate of completion of training is received. From September till December 2014 the re-implementation of the programme is provided (FF UL 2013). However, as Marentič Požarnik (2009) writes the submission of the certificate do not conferred any benefit or (at some HEIs) it is only allocated a minimal percentage of points in the promotion procedures.

On the contrary, in the process of appointment to teaching positions all Slovenian universities on the basis of their institutional criteria take into account SET, which according to Marentič Požarnik (2009) represents important progress in university teaching in Slovenia. Consequently, we were interested in what importance is attributed to SET by university teachers. Respondents who were not included in the PT, statistically significant largely consider, that university teachers whose SET show poor results, should be involved in sustained PT programmes. Again, these results could be the consequence of respondents' participation in PT programmes of short duration (on average 37.4 hours), which according to Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007), may make teachers more uncertain about themselves as teachers and consequently it can also affect their opinion on the effectiveness of PT programmes. However, all respondents – those who did and did not participate in PT – attributed slightly more than 2.8 points on 5-point Likert scale to SET as being an appropriate tool for assessment of pedagogical qualification in the promotion procedures. This undoubtedly indicates that teachers are aware of and they already experienced the impact of other factors on students' opinion about the quality of one's university teaching, which is stressed also by Cohen (1981).

With respect to the existing practice and adopted Slovenian HE Minimum standards and institutional criteria, which require "probationary lecture" and SET in the promotion procedures, it is interesting, that university teachers do not attribute greater importance to the last two obligations in comparison to different kinds of PT programmes. We believe that adequate and well-balanced combination of various factors, that may affect quality of teaching, is the most sensible: in addition to the "probationary lecture" and SET it would be reasonable to introduce at least the required initial PT for all novice university teachers. In addition, sustained PT on every few years could not only maintain an adequate level of quality university teaching, but additional high-quality theoretical pedagogical knowledge, competences and skills acquired after several years of one's own practical teaching experience could also mean an effective added value in quality teaching practice of every university teacher.

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⁶ Slovenian: Osnove visokošolske didaktike.

⁷ Slovenian: zaključna aplikativna naloga.

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