pod NETWORK To Improve the ACADEMY
A Journal of Educational Development

Roads to change: Exploring the lived experiences of be(com)ing among faculty who participated in educational development

Jacob Kelley

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of be(com)ing among faculty members who participated in educational development. It aims to contribute to our knowledge on be(com)ing, a portmanteau of *becoming* and *being* that emphasizes that these two processes are often interconnected. I generated data for this study using semi-structured interviews with eight faculty members who participated in at least one program through the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Auburn University. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, I identified five themes in the data: (1) Reimagining Faculty Identities in the Academy, (2) Embracing a Culture of Experimentation, (3) Thriving Amid Constraints, (4) Building Transformative Communities, and (5) Cultivating Spaces for Equity and Inclusion. The findings of this study not only shed light on the complex landscapes that faculty members navigate but also demonstrate the potentialities of educational development to enable them to shape their professional growth in meaningful ways.

Keywords: identity, growth, organizational culture, faculty learning communities, phenomenology

https://doi.org/10.3998/tia.7488

Introduction

Faculty members in higher education navigate complex and evolving roles as they balance varied configurations of teaching, research, and service within institutional structures that often prioritize scholarship over pedagogy. While traditional academic pathways tend to emphasize expertise in a given discipline, faculty identity is not static; it is shaped by ongoing engagement with new pedagogical approaches, professional communities, and institutional cultures. Educational development provides a unique space for faculty to critically reflect on their teaching, experiment with innovative practices, and cultivate a sense of professional belonging (Beach et al., 2016). The process of faculty growth, however, is not solely about acquiring new skills. It is a deeply ontological journey of transformation, where faculty continuously negotiate their professional identities and aspirations. Understanding this process requires an exploration of not just who faculty are, but who they are becoming as they engage in educational development.

This study seeks to illuminate the lived experiences of faculty members who participated in educational development by examining how they make sense of their evolving identities within the academy. Drawing on interpretative phenomenological analysis, this study explored how faculty members reimagine their roles, embrace pedagogical experimentation, and navigate institutional constraints while fostering transformative communities and cultivating spaces for equity and inclusion. By centering faculty experiences, this study captured the fluid and relational nature of be(com)ing—a concept that bridges both *being* and *becoming* and emphasizes their entangled nature. Through this lens, the study offers insight into how faculty members construct meaning from their participation in educational development and how these experiences shape their professional trajectories. This study contributes to broader conversations on faculty identity, pedagogical growth, and institutional change, mapping the many roads to change that faculty traverse as they experience be(com)ing in educational development.

Literature Review

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is conceptualized as the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge across the lifespan, extending beyond formal education to encompass individual, professional, and civic development (Candy, 1991; Field, 2006; Jarvis, 2004). It is driven by the need to adapt to changing social, technological, and economic conditions that position learning as an iterative and dynamic process rather than a finite achievement (Merriam & Bierema, 2013; Poquet & de Laat, 2021; Schuller & Watson, 2009). Scholars distinguish between formal, non-formal, and informal lifelong learning, recognizing that learning occurs in structured educational settings, workplace environments, and self-directed explorations (Billett, 2014; Kyndt et al., 2016; Jarvis, 2007). Furthermore, lifelong learning is not solely about acquiring new knowledge; it involves reflection, unlearning, and the transformation of existing perspectives to foster adaptability and critical engagement with the world (Hoggan & Higgins, 2023; Jensen et al., 2012; Mezirow, 1991). One manifestation of lifelong learning is educational development, which provides faculty members with structured opportunities to engage in reflective practice, experiment with new pedagogical approaches, and cultivate a scholarly approach to teaching and learning (Schroeder, 2015).

Educational Development

Educational development has evolved as a crucial practice and profession aimed at enhancing teaching effectiveness, faculty growth, and institutional change (Felten et al., 2007). Defined broadly, educational development encompasses initiatives that support faculty members in improving their teaching practices, integrating innovative pedagogies, and fostering student engagement (Beach et al., 2016; Sorcinelli et al., 2006; Stefani, 2011). The field has expanded significantly over

the past several decades, moving beyond its early focus on instructional improvement to encompass broader issues of curriculum design, assessment, and faculty identity formation (Boud & Brew, 2013; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2017; Winstone & Carless, 2020). Centers for Teaching and Learning have played a key role in this expansion through providing structured opportunities for professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflective practice (Cruz, 2018; Kelley et al., 2017; Wright, 2023). Recent research also highlights the increasing role of educational development in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments, particularly through initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and justice in higher education (Hakkola et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2020; Trigwell & Prosser, 2020). Of course, it is important to note that there are institutional, national, and international differences as to what educational development encompasses (Leibowitz, 2014).

One of the foundational aspects of educational development is its emphasis on reflective teaching and faculty identity formation. Research suggests that engaging in structured educational development activities allows faculty to critically examine their teaching philosophies and pedagogical approaches, which contributes to professional growth and identity shifts (Clegg, 2003; Gregory & Burbage, 2017; Steinert et al., 2019). Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner has been influential in shaping educational development programs, which emphasizes the iterative process of reflection and practice as a means of fostering teaching excellence (Brookfield, 2017; Kreber, 2010; Roxå et al., 2011).

Additionally, a number of scholars have sought to understand how faculty members experience significant shifts in their perspectives and professional identities through educational development (Gregory & Burbage, 2017; Land, 2013; O'Sullivan et al., 2021a). The scholarship on faculty learning communities further reinforces the idea that professional growth is best supported through collaboration and ongoing dialogue, as faculty members benefit from sharing experiences, challenges, and strategies for teaching improvement (Cox, 2001; Tinnell et al., 2019; Tomkin et al., 2019).

Educational development has also increasingly focused on institutional transformation, recognizing the interconnectedness of individual growth and systemic change in higher education (Boud & Brew, 2013; Buckley & Nimmon, 2020; Kezar, 2018;). As universities face growing demands for pedagogical innovation, digital learning, and student-centered teaching, educational developers play a key role in facilitating these transitions (Chism, 1998; Littlejohn & Margaryan, 2014; Simpson et al., 2019). Scholars argue that sustainable institutional change occurs when educational development is embedded within broader strategic initiatives, aligning individual professional growth with institutional priorities and cultures (Kezar & Holcombe, 2019; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2017; Winstone & Carless, 2020). Furthermore, educational development has become central to equity-driven reforms, with an increasing emphasis on inclusive pedagogies, anti-racist teaching practices, and decolonial approaches to curriculum design (Hakkola et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2020; Trigwell & Prosser, 2020). As educational development continues to evolve, future research will need to address the complexities of faculty engagement, institutional structures, and the ever-changing landscape of higher education (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Schroeder, 2015; Simpson et al., 2019).

Be(com)ing

The concept of be(com)ing highlights the dynamic and interwoven nature of *being* and *becoming*, emphasizing that identity is not static but continuously evolving in response to personal, social, and institutional influences (Barnett, 2009; Dall'Alba, 2009; Phelan, 2016). Traditional views of professional identity often frame being as a stable state and becoming as a linear progression toward a defined role. However, scholars argue that these processes are deeply interconnected, as individuals are constantly negotiating and redefining their identities within shifting professional landscapes (Clegg, 2008; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Scanlon, 2011). Within higher education, faculty members experience be(com)ing through the tension between

continuity and transformation, as they balance established academic roles with ongoing learning, adaptation, and change (Åkerlind, 2011; Kreber, 2010; Tight, 2020). This fluidity challenges traditional notions of a fixed faculty identity, instead framing academic work as a continuous negotiation of pedagogical, epistemological, and institutional demands (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008; Quinlan, 2014).

Be(com)ing is particularly relevant in educational development, where faculty are encouraged to reflect on their teaching, experiment with new pedagogical approaches, and engage in collaborative learning (Beach et al., 2016; Boud & Brew, 2013; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2017). Educational development programs serve as sites of identity transformation, where educators critically examine their teaching philosophies and navigate shifts in their professional roles (Dall'Alba, 2009; Clarke et al., 2013; Land, 2013). This process is not merely about acquiring new teaching strategies; it also involves ontological shifts. Faculty must reconcile past experiences with evolving perspectives on teaching and learning (Clegg, 2008; Quinlan, 2014). The literature underscores that be(com)ing is relational and contextual, shaped by institutional expectations, disciplinary norms, and faculty learning communities that foster collective identity formation (Bloom-Feshbach et al., 2024; Motulsky et al., 2021; O'Sullivan et al., 2021b). Through educational development, faculty members actively construct and reconstruct their academic identities, reinforcing the idea that professional growth is a lifelong, iterative process rather than a destination (Barnett, 2009; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Tight, 2020).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of be(com)ing among faculty members who participated in educational development. I enacted interpretivism as the paradigm of this study, which suggests that the truth is many and that reality is subjective (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Interpretivism, then, aims to interpret

and understand our social world (Crotty, 1998). Drawing on principles of interpretivism, I used interpretative phenomenological analysis as the methodology for this study to make sense of how the participants make sense of their lived experiences (Larkin et al., 2006). Interpretative phenomenological analysis, as described by Smith et al. (2022), "recognizes that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about their experience and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience" (p. 3). In accordance, I crafted the following research question to guide this study: How do faculty members who participated in educational development make sense of their lived experiences of be(com)ing?

Setting

Auburn University is situated in a metropolitan area of the southeastern United States. It is classified as a doctoral-granting university with very high research activity by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. At the time of this study, there were a total of 28,856 full-time students (25,204 undergraduate, 2,647 graduate, and 1,005 professional) enrolled at Auburn University. Likewise, there were approximately 1,500 faculty members across all classifications employed by Auburn University. The Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is comprised of four interconnected units and has a combined staff of 85 people, including the students who contribute to its mission. It offers a variety of educational development programs and services for faculty members, ranging from one-on-one consultations to full-year learning communities.

Positionality

As a PhD student and graduate student partner in the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Auburn University,

I occupied a complex and dynamic positionality in this study. My dual role situated me as both an insider and an outsider in ways that influenced my interactions with participants and my interpretations of the data. As an insider, I had direct experience with educational development programming, an understanding of the institutional culture, and a shared commitment to faculty growth and pedagogical innovation. This allowed me to establish rapport with participants and engage deeply with the themes that I identified in the data. My familiarity with the Center for Teaching and Learning and its programs also meant that I had prior knowledge of the broader context in which faculty were participating in educational development, which shaped the ways I approached the research question.

On the other hand, my positionality also introduced outsider perspectives, particularly in relation to faculty experiences within the academy. As a graduate student, I do not hold a faculty position, nor do I navigate the same institutional constraints regarding tenure, promotion, and workload expectations that shape faculty engagement with educational development. While I share an investment in teaching and learning excellence, I do not experience the pressures of full-time faculty work, which means that my interpretations of faculty insights were necessarily shaped by an external vantage point. My disciplinary identity also differed from that of most participants. This dual positionality required me to remain reflexive throughout the research process, ensuring that my interpretations remained grounded in participants' lived experiences rather than my own assumptions about faculty engagement with educational development.

To navigate these complexities, I engaged in reflexivity throughout the study (Finlay et al., 2002). I actively acknowledged the ways in which my roles as both an emerging scholar and an educational developer influenced my interactions with participants, my framing of questions, and my analytical approach. I employed strategies such as memo-writing, member checking, and peer briefing to challenge my own assumptions and interpretations (Mathison, 1988). My goal was to position myself as an active yet self-aware researcher who

could leverage insider knowledge to enhance depth of analysis while maintaining the critical distance necessary for rigorous phenomenological inquiry. As such, my dual positionality enriched this study by allowing me to engage with faculty experiences from multiple perspectives, balancing both empathy and critical analysis in making sense of be(com)ing through educational development.

Participants

The participants for this study were eight faculty members who participated in at least one program through the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Auburn University in the last three years prior to data collection (See Table 1). I recruited and selected participants through purposeful sampling in which the researcher selects "information-rich cases strategically and purposefully" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Specifically, I employed maximum variation sampling, a strategy that involves selecting a wide range of cases to capture diverse perspectives and identify common patterns across variations (Patton, 1990). I intentionally sought participants from multiple disciplines, ranks, and levels of participation. This approach aligns well with phenomenological inquiry, which seeks to understand the essence of participants' lived experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Rank	Discipline	# of Programs
Alexandra	Woman	Professor	Liberal Arts	Three
Diego	Man	Assistant Professor	Liberal Arts	Five
Heather	Woman	Associate Professor	Health Professions	Eight
Joseph	Man	Lecturer	Science and Math	Three
Lauren	Woman	Assistant Professor	Education	One
Maya	Woman	Lecturer	Science and Math	Four
Mei	Woman	Associate Professor	Engineering	Five
William	Man	Senior Lecturer	Business	Two

Data Generation

I generated data for this study using semi-structured interviews with eight faculty members. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) described the interview as a "construction site of knowledge" in which the researcher and the participant discuss a topic "of mutual interest" (p. 2). The interviews were approximately 45 minutes and were conducted via Zoom. I asked the participants questions that addressed either *being* or *becoming* in connection to their participation in educational development. Examples include "Tell me about your motivations to participate in educational development" and "Tell me about a time when you felt inspired through your participation in educational development." I recorded and transcribed the interviews to ensure the authenticity and consistency of the data generation (Minichiello et al., 2008). I also used member checking with the participants to add trustworthiness to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

For this study, I used interpretative phenomenological analysis to investigate and understand the lived experiences of the participants. Smith et al. (2022) noted, "There is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis" (p. 76). Analysis is meant to be iterative and inductive. I began by reading and re-reading the transcripts as a way of entering the participants' lifeworlds (Smith et al., 2022). I also made notes about topics of interest that had a phenomenological focus—that is, moments where participants described meaning-making, emotional responses, embodied sensations, or significant personal interpretations of events. After focused reading and exploratory noting, I then moved into constructing experiential statements that were meant to capture the essence of lived experiences through description and interpretation using codes (Smith et al., 2022). It is from these experiential statements that I identified connections and developed themes that emphasized both convergence and divergence among the participants' lived experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards to ensure the protection of the participants. Prior to data collection, the study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Auburn University, affirming that all research procedures complied with ethical guidelines for human subjects research. Each participant was provided with an informed consent letter, which outlined the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. I assured participants of their confidentiality and anonymity, with all identifying information removed or altered in transcripts and findings to protect their identities. Additionally, they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To further uphold research integrity, I employed member checking, allowing participants to review and clarify their interview responses to ensure accuracy and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I compensated participants for their time with a book on teaching, learning, and scholarship of their choice. By centering these ethical considerations, this study maintained a commitment to respect, transparency, and autonomy throughout the research process (Josselson, 2013).

Findings

Reimagining Faculty Identities in the Academy

Educational development often serves as a transformative force in shaping identities, encouraging faculty members to view themselves not just as experts in their disciplines but as facilitators of learning, mentors, and advocates for pedagogical change. Rather than perceiving teaching as a static set of skills, faculty members engaged in educational development described their identities as evolving through continuous reflection and engagement with new teaching philosophies. The process of reimagining faculty identity involves

questioning long-held assumptions about what it means to be an educator and embracing a more integrated view of teaching, research, and service. This theme underscores how faculty members shift from seeing teaching as an isolated responsibility to viewing it as a scholarly and collaborative endeavor within the academy.

Heather captured this shift in identity when she reflected, "It has helped me see myself as a more intentional and reflective faculty member. I now identify as someone committed to lifelong learning and the continuous improvement of my teaching." Her experience illustrates how educational development fosters a sense of purpose beyond content delivery by encouraging faculty to critically engage with their teaching philosophies. Similarly, Diego noted, "It has given me a clearer sense of purpose as an instructor. It's helped me see myself as someone who is not just delivering knowledge but shaping students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills." These statements reveal that faculty identity is not static; rather, it is continually shaped through experiences of professional development and reflection.

For many faculty, engaging in educational development not only transforms their perceptions of teaching, but also solidifies their role as mentors within the academic community. William, for example, stated, "I now view myself as part of a larger movement to prioritize teaching excellence in higher education." This collective framing of identity emphasizes the role of faculty not only as individual educators but as contributors to broader institutional change. Similarly, Lauren remarked, "I used to think of teaching as something separate from my research, but now I see it as deeply interconnected." This suggests that faculty who engage in educational development begin to view their roles holistically, rather than compartmentalizing their responsibilities.

Yet, this evolving sense of identity is not always met with institutional support. Lauren acknowledged, "Sometimes, it feels like my efforts to improve as a faculty member are undervalued or seen as secondary." Alexandra also observed, "Some colleagues see educational development as something extra rather than integral to academic work." These reflections indicate that while faculty may personally embrace

their evolving identities, institutional cultures often lag in recognizing the value of teaching development. Despite these challenges, faculty members continue to redefine their roles in ways that integrate teaching, scholarship, and mentorship, reinforcing the transformative power of educational development.

Embracing a Culture of Experimentation

Educational development fosters a culture of experimentation through encouraging faculty to step beyond traditional teaching methods and explore innovative strategies. Rather than adhering to rigid pedagogical models, faculty engaged in educational development described teaching as an iterative process of trial, adaptation, and reflection. This theme highlights the importance of risk-taking in teaching as well as the willingness to embrace failure as part of the learning process. Experimentation is framed not as an isolated endeavor, but as a communal practice supported by colleagues, programs, and shared reflections.

Lauren illustrated this mindset shift when she said, "I see educational development as a way to push myself outside my comfort zone and explore new approaches to teaching." This willingness to take pedagogical risks is echoed by Heather, who explained, "I feel more confident experimenting and adapting to the diverse needs of my students." By positioning teaching as an evolving practice rather than a fixed skill set, faculty members develop resilience and adaptability. Maya, too, expressed initial hesitation, stating, "Sometimes, the challenge is simply getting out of my own head. I tend to second-guess myself, especially when trying new teaching methods." These reflections suggest that while the process of experimentation can be daunting, educational development provides faculty with the tools and the confidence to navigate it.

Mei, who incorporated project-based learning into her engineering courses, described the initial challenge of introducing a new approach: "The planning involved was immense, from redesigning the syllabus to

coordinating with industry partners for real-world problems . . . There were moments when I questioned whether it was worth it." Similarly, William recalled feeling overwhelmed by balancing multiple initiatives:

> "I was juggling a SoTL project, a grant proposal, and a new course design all at once. Each of these required significant time and energy, and I worried that I wasn't doing any of them justice . . . The experience taught me the importance of setting realistic goals and seeking support from colleagues. And I've since learned to pace myself and prioritize projects that align with my long-term goals."

These experiences highlight that while experimentation is often rewarding, it also requires faculty to navigate logistical, emotional, and institutional hurdles. The process of integrating new pedagogical strategies is rarely seamless, as faculty must contend with time constraints, resource limitations, and the uncertainty of student reception.

Yet, despite these challenges, faculty who persist in experimentation often develop greater resilience and confidence in their teaching, ultimately fostering more dynamic and engaging learning environments. Diego reflected on his experience incorporating case-based discussions, stating, "It was amazing to see how much deeper their engagement with the material became." Likewise, Lauren noted, "I implemented team-based learning after attending a workshop, and it transformed the dynamics of my classroom." These examples demonstrate that while stepping into the unknown carries risks, the outcomes can be profoundly rewarding, reinforcing the value of educational development in fostering a culture of pedagogical innovation.

Thriving Amid Constraints

While educational development provides faculty with new pedagogical insights and tools, institutional constraints often pose challenges to implementation. Faculty members frequently cite time limitations, a lack of institutional recognition, and competing research obligations

as barriers to fully engaging in educational development. Despite these obstacles, faculty members persist, finding ways to integrate new teaching strategies within existing structures and advocating for greater support from their institutions.

Lauren articulated a common frustration, stating, "The most challenging part has been navigating the institutional priorities that often place research above teaching." Similarly, Joseph explained, "As much as I value educational development, it can be hard to carve out time for workshops and implementation." These statements reveal that while faculty members are motivated to engage in pedagogical growth, institutional structures often do not fully support these efforts. The pressure to meet research expectations, secure funding, and fulfill service commitments often leaves little room for sustained engagement in faculty development programs. As a result, many faculty members are faced with difficult choices about where to invest their time, frequently relegating teaching innovation to the margins of their professional responsibilities despite their intrinsic commitment to student learning.

Faculty also experience resistance from colleagues who remain skeptical about the value of educational development. Heather observed, "Navigating resistance to change among some colleagues has sometimes been challenging. There's also the fear of failure." This reflection suggests that faculty members engaging in educational development often find themselves advocating for the legitimacy of their work in environments that still prioritize traditional academic metrics. This resistance can create additional emotional and professional labor for faculty who must justify their commitment to teaching innovation while balancing the demands of research and service.

In spite of these barriers, faculty members often find ways to thrive by leveraging peer support and personal motivation. Heather described how she overcame these barriers, stating, "Breaking changes into manageable steps and seeking support from peers has helped me overcome these barriers." Similarly, William emphasized the importance of community, explaining, "Collaborating with colleagues

across disciplines has provided fresh perspectives." These insights suggest that while institutional constraints remain, faculty members who engage in educational development build resilience by creating their own networks of support.

Building Transformative Communities

Educational development fosters the creation of transformative communities where faculty members can share experiences, refine pedagogical practices, and find support for their evolving identities as educators. Rather than working in isolation, faculty engaged in educational development describe themselves as part of a larger network of scholars committed to enhancing teaching and learning. These communities serve as spaces where faculty members can challenge assumptions, explore new methodologies, and find encouragement in moments of struggle. The presence of such communities helps faculty navigate institutional constraints, providing a sense of belonging and validation for their pedagogical efforts.

The power of community was evident in Diego's reflection: "Sharing ideas and learning from others always energizes me." He, like many participants, emphasized the role of collaboration in sustaining engagement with educational development. Lauren also described how faculty communities provided inspiration, stating, "I felt inspired during a community-building session where faculty shared how they overcame challenges in their teaching . . . Hearing about the creative ways others navigated obstacles reminded me that even small changes can have a big impact." The sharing of experiences and strategies within these communities creates a ripple effect, where faculty members not only refine their own teaching but also contribute to the professional growth of their colleagues.

This theme is particularly significant for faculty members who feel isolated in their departments or disciplines. Heather expressed how finding a pedagogical community changed her perspective: "I've developed meaningful relationships with colleagues across disciplines,

which has opened up opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary projects." Alexandra echoed this sentiment, explaining, "Some of my best ideas have come from conversations with faculty outside my discipline who see teaching from a completely different angle." These reflections highlight how transformative communities extend beyond immediate departmental or disciplinary boundaries, creating new possibilities for interdisciplinary learning and collaboration.

However, while transformative communities provide significant support, faculty still encounter institutional roadblocks that make sustaining these connections difficult. William noted, "Collaborating with colleagues across disciplines has provided fresh perspectives, but finding the time to nurture these relationships is challenging." Similarly, Maya expressed frustration with the sporadic nature of these communities, stating, "I wish there were more structured opportunities to keep these conversations going. Too often, they happen at workshops or conferences but then fade away." These insights suggest that while educational development fosters transformative communities, institutions must provide more sustained structures to support them.

Cultivating Spaces for Equity and Inclusion

For many faculty members, engagement in educational development is deeply connected to a commitment to equity and inclusion. Beyond improving teaching techniques, faculty described educational development as a means of creating learning environments that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of students. This theme highlights how faculty members use educational development to challenge traditional pedagogies, adopt student-centered approaches, and rethink assessment practices to ensure that all students feel valued and supported in their learning.

Heather articulated this motivation when she stated, "I left [a workshop on inclusive pedagogies] with a renewed commitment to making my classroom a space where all students feel valued and supported." Similarly, Mei, reflecting on her work in engineering education,

explained, "I also want to ensure that underrepresented students feel welcome and capable in engineering, which means rethinking how we teach to be more inclusive and supportive." These statements reveal that faculty members view educational development not just as a professional obligation but as a moral imperative to create equitable learning environments.

This commitment to inclusion often involves a process of unlearning traditional academic practices and embracing pedagogical flexibility. William, for instance, noted, "Conducting research on teaching requires time, effort, and a willingness to take risks in the classroom, which can be daunting when the stakes for student success are high." Faculty who prioritized equity often found themselves pushing against entrenched academic norms that favor rigid structures over adaptable, student-centered approaches. Maya, who has incorporated more inclusive assessment strategies, described this tension: "I felt overwhelmed when I first tried to overhaul my syllabus to make it more transparent and student-centered . . . And it felt like there were a thousand things to consider." These reflections suggest that cultivating spaces for equity and inclusion is not just about adopting new teaching strategies but about fundamentally rethinking academic structures.

Despite the challenges, faculty members remain committed to this work, often finding affirmation in student feedback and community support. Joseph, for example, shared how a workshop on kindness in the classroom transformed his approach: "I had never thought about what kindness might look like in my classroom, but the workshop made it clear how I could make that happen. And it was exciting to try some of the strategies out." Similarly, Alexandra found inspiration in a workshop on digital tools for inclusive teaching, stating, "The presenter demonstrated how virtual reality could transport students to immersive cultural experiences. It opened my eyes to how technology can make language learning more engaging and impactful." These experiences illustrate how faculty use educational development to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that inclusion is not just an abstract goal, but an everyday reality in their classrooms.

Discussion

The findings of this study addressed the research question by illustrating how faculty members experienced be(com)ing through their participation in educational development. The interconnected nature of being and becoming emerged in faculty experiences as they described both their current professional identities and the ways in which they were actively shaping and reshaping those identities. This aligns with Dall'Alba and Barnacle's (2007) argument that professional learning is an ontological process where faculty do not simply acquire new skills, but fundamentally transform their ways of being within the academy. The study also supports Åkerlind's (2011) assertion that faculty identity is not a fixed construct, but rather a continuous negotiation influenced by pedagogical experiences, institutional expectations, and professional communities. By engaging in educational development, faculty members not only refine their teaching practices—they also participate in the larger discourse of what it means to be an educator in higher education.

The themes of Reimagining Faculty Identities in the Academy and Embracing a Culture of Experimentation further reinforce the literature on faculty development and growth. Boud and Brew (2013) argued that educational development serves as a mechanism for faculty to develop new perspectives on teaching, moving away from didactic methods toward more student-centered and inquiry-driven approaches. The findings of this study support that claim, as faculty members described how engagement in educational development led them to critically reflect on their pedagogical approaches and take risks in their teaching practices. This aligns with Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner, which suggests that professional learning is most effective when faculty engage in cycles of experimentation, reflection, and refinement. The findings also extend this argument by highlighting the emotional and cognitive shifts that accompany these pedagogical transformations, reinforcing the idea that be(com)ing is as much about rethinking one's role as it is about implementing new strategies.

Moreover, the themes of Thriving Amid Constraints and Building Transformative Communities support existing research on the systemic challenges faculty face when engaging in educational development. Kezar and Holcombe (2019) emphasized that institutional cultures often prioritize research over teaching, making it difficult for faculty to fully invest in pedagogical growth. The findings of this study reflect this challenge, as faculty members described institutional barriers that limited their ability to engage deeply in educational development. However, the literature also suggests that faculty learning communities serve as powerful counterforces to these constraints by providing spaces for collaboration, reflection, and peer support (Bailey et al., 2021; Cox, 2001; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2017). This study supports this perspective by illustrating how faculty leverage professional communities to sustain their engagement in teaching innovation despite structural limitations. Additionally, the emphasis on Cultivating Spaces for Equity and Inclusion reinforces the argument made by Chism (1998) and Steinert et al. (2024) that educational development is not just about improving teaching practices, but also about fostering institutional change. Faculty members in this study positioned educational development as a critical tool for advancing inclusive pedagogies, demonstrating that their engagement was not only about personal growth, but also about shaping the broader educational landscape.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several key implications for the practice of educational development in higher education. Educational developers could design programs and services that explicitly acknowledge the process of be(com)ing. In many cases, professional development initiatives focus on skills acquisition without addressing the broader identity shifts that faculty undergo as they engage in pedagogical transformation. By framing educational development as an ongoing journey rather than a one-time event, educational developers can guide faculty to recognize the interconnected nature of being

and becoming, fostering a sense of continuity and sustained engagement (Gibbs, 2013; Sutherland, 2018). This could be achieved through reflective workshops, faculty learning communities, and structured mentoring programs that encourage faculty to explore their evolving roles in the academy.

The study highlights the need for institutions to create environments that support a culture of experimentation in teaching and learning. Educational development programs might continue to move beyond offering workshops on best practices and instead create spaces where faculty can actively test new approaches, receive formative feedback, and iterate on their teaching strategies. This aligns with Land's (2013) argument that faculty growth requires opportunities for risk-taking and sense-making within a supportive community. One way to facilitate this is through faculty innovation grants or teaching fellowships that provide both financial resources and institutional recognition for pedagogical experimentation. Additionally, Centers for Teaching and Learning could establish structured teaching observation programs where faculty receive peer feedback in a non-evaluative setting, reinforcing a mindset of continuous learning rather than performance assessment.

The importance of embedding equity and inclusion within educational development is also underscored. Rather than positioning inclusive pedagogy as a separate topic, educational developers should integrate discussions of equity across all programming, ensuring that faculty understand the systemic and structural factors that shape student learning experiences. This aligns with the argument made by Kelley et al. (2020) that social justice in teaching should be woven into the very fabric of educational development rather than treated as an add-on. For example, educational development programs could incorporate inclusive course design principles into broader conversations about assessment, active learning, and technology-enhanced pedagogy. Additionally, educational developers should create faculty learning communities specifically focused on addressing equity challenges within disciplines, providing structured opportunities for faculty to collaboratively address barriers to student success.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into faculty experiences of be(com)ing through educational development, several limitations must also be acknowledged. First, the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis introduces an inherent subjectivity in data interpretation, as findings are shaped by both the participant narratives and the researcher's analytical lens. While member checking enhanced trustworthiness, alternative interpretations could emerge from the same data. Second, the sample size and scope present constraints, as the study included only eight faculty members from a single research-intensive university with a well-established Center for Teaching and Learning. While maximum variation sampling aimed to capture diverse perspectives, the findings may not fully reflect faculty experiences at institutions with fewer resources or different expectations. Third, methodological constraints, including the use of Zoom interviews, may have impacted the depth of reflection due to limitations in capturing nonverbal cues and building rapport. Given these factors, future research should consider multi-institutional studies, longitudinal designs, or mixed-methods approaches to expand understanding of faculty participation in educational development across varied institutional contexts.

Conclusion

By connecting the findings of this study to existing literature and considering their implications for educational development, this article contributes to deeper understandings of how faculty experience be(com)ing through participation in educational development. The findings illuminate how faculty members engage deeply in be(com)ing through reflective practice, pedagogical experimentation, and community-building experiences facilitated by educational development.

Participants navigated shifts in their professional identities by critically examining their roles, experimenting with innovative teaching approaches, and collaboratively shaping inclusive learning environments. This active engagement highlights the dynamic interplay of being and becoming, demonstrating that faculty development is an ongoing, relational journey rather than a static outcome. Ultimately, the findings suggest that be(com)ing is not simply an individual process but a collective one that requires institutional support, professional networks, and an ongoing commitment to reflection and innovation. Future research should continue exploring how educational development can be leveraged to support faculty identity formation, particularly in relation to disciplinary cultures, equity, and long-term career trajectories in higher education.

Biography

Jacob Kelley is a PhD student in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University. His scholarship uses qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the complexities of adult education. In particular, he focuses on understanding three concepts relevant to theory and practice in adult education: effectiveness, engagement, and equity. His other interests are social justice, international students, civic education, and lifelong learning. He also contributes to the scholarship of teaching and learning through partnerships with faculty across institutions and disciplines. He currently works in the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Auburn University.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author has no conflict of interest.

References

Åkerlind, G. (2011). Academic growth and development: How do university academics experience it? *Higher Education*, *62*(1), 63–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-6345-1

Amundsen, C., & Wilson, M. (2012). Are we asking the right questions? A conceptual review of the educational development literature in higher education. *Review of Educational Research*, *82*(1), 90–126. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654312438409

Bailey, E., Le Vin, A., Miller, L., Price, K., Sneddon, S., Stapleton, G., & Wolfe, L. (2021). Bridging the transition to a new expertise in the scholarship of teaching and learning through a faculty learning community. *International Journal for Academic Development*, *27*(3), 265–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2021.1917415

Barnett, R. (2009). Knowing and becoming in the higher education curriculum. *Studies in Higher Education*, *34*(4), 429–440. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070902771978

Barnett, R., & Di Napoli, R. (2008). *Changing identities in higher education: Voicing perspectives*. Routledge.

Beach, A. L., Sorcinelli, M. D., Austin, A. E., & Rivard, J. K. (2016). *Faculty development in the age of evidence: Current practices, future imperatives*. Stylus Publishing.

Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge.

Billett, S. (2014). Mimetic learning at work: Learning in the circumstances of practice. *Springer Science & Business Media*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-09277-5

Bloom-Feshbach, K., Klimenko, M., Fluet, K., & Lang, V. J. (2024). Mentoring: Shaping the professional identity of the academic internal medicine hospitalist. *Journal of Hospital Medicine*, *19*(12), 1104–1112. https://doi.org/10.1002/jhm.13452

Boud, D., & Brew, A. (2013). Reconceptualizing academic work as professional practice: Implications for academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, *18*(3), 208–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2012.671771

Brookfield, S. D. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Buckley, H., & Nimmon, L. (2020). Learning in faculty development: The role of social networks. *Academic Medicine*, *95*(11S), S20–S27. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003627

Candy, P. C. (1991). *Self-direction for lifelong learning: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice*. Jossey-Bass.

Chism, N. V. N. (1998). The role of educational developers in institutional change: From the basement office to the front office. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *17*(1), 141–154. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2334-4822.1998.tb00347.x

Clarke, M., Hyde, A., Drennan, J. (2013). Professional identity in higher education. In B. M. Kehm & U. Teichler (Eds.), *The Academic Profession in Europe: New Tasks and New Challenges* (pp. 7–21). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4614-5_2

Clegg, S. (2003). Learning and teaching policies in higher education: Mediations and contradictions of practice. *British Educational Research Journal*, *29*(6), 803–819. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192032000137312

Clegg, S. (2008). Academic identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal*, *34*(3), 329–345. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701532269

Cox, M. (2001). Faculty learning communities: change agents for transforming institutions into learning organizations. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *19*(1), 69–93. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2334-4822.2001.tb00525.x

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. SAGE Publications.

Cruz, L. (2018). The idea of educational development: An historical perspective. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *37*(1), 159–171. https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20069

Dall'Alba, G. (2009). Learning professional ways of being: Ambiguities of becoming. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *41*(1), 34–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00475.x

Dall'Alba, G., & Barnacle, R. (2007). An ontological turn for higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *32*(6), 679–691. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070701685130

Felten, P., Kalish, A., Pingree, A., & Plank, K. M. (2007). Toward a scholarship of teaching and learning in educational development. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *25*(1), 93–108. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2334-4822.2007.tb00476.x

Field, J. (2006). Lifelong learning and the new educational order (2nd ed.). *Trentham Books*.

Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 209–230. https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410200200205

Gibbs, G. (2013). Reflections on the changing nature of educational development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, *18*(1), 4–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2013.751691

Gregory, K. H., & Burbage, A. K. (2017). Exploring faculty development identity through self-study: Teaching philosophies, reflective practice, and critical friendship. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, *12*(2), 110–124. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1257905

Hakkola, L., Ruben, M. A., McDonnell, C., Herakova, L. L., Buchanan, R., & Robbie, K. (2021). An equity-minded approach to faculty development in a community of practice. *Innovative Higher Education*, *46*(1), 393–410. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09540-8

Hoggan, C., & Higgins, K. (2023). Understanding transformative learning through metatheory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2023*(177), 13–23. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20475

Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult education and lifelong learning: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Jarvis, P. (2007). *Globalization, lifelong learning, and the learning society: Sociological perspectives*. Routledge.

Jensen, K., Lahn, L. C., & Nerland M. (Eds.). (2012). *Professional learning in the knowledge society*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-994-7

Josselson, R. (2013). *Interviewing for qualitative inquiry: A relational approach*. The Guilford Press.

Kelley, B., Cruz, L., & Fire, N. (2017). Moving toward the center: The integration of educational development in an era of historic change in higher education. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *36*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20052

Kelley, J., Arce-Trigatti, A., & Garner, B. (2020). Marching to a different beat: Reflections from a community of practice on diversity and equity. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, *13*(3), 110–119. https://doi.org/10.26209/td.v13i3.505

Kezar, A. (2018). *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change*. Routledge.

Kezar, A., & Holcombe, E. (2019). *Shared leadership in higher education: A framework and model for change*. Stylus Publishing.

Kreber, C. (2010). Academics' teacher identities, authenticity, and pedagogy. *Studies in Higher Education*, *35*(2), 171–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070902953048

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publishing.

Kyndt, E., Gijbels, D., Grosemans, I., & Donche, V. (2016). Teachers' everyday professional development: Mapping informal learning activities, antecedents, and learning outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 1111–1150. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315627864

Land, R. (2013). *Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: A transformative approach to learning*. Routledge.

Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 102–120. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp062oa

Leibowitz, B. (2014). Reflections on academic development: What is in a name? *International Journal for Academic Development*, *19*(4), 357–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2014.969978

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

Littlejohn, A., & Margaryan, A. (2014). Technology-enhanced professional learning: Processes, practices, and tools. *Routledge*.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher*, *17*(2), 13–17. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X017002013

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2013). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., & Hays, T. N. (2008). *In-depth interviewing: Principles, techniques, analysis*. Pearson Education Australia.

Motulsky, S. L., Gammel, J. A., & Rutstein-Riley, A. (2021). *Identity and lifelong learning: Becoming through lived experience*. Information Age Publishing.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications.

O'Sullivan, P. S., Irby, D. M., & Bhavsar, S. (2021a). Faculty development in the health professions: Current and future directions. *Medical Education*, *55*(1), 74–84. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.14462

O'Sullivan, P. S., Steinert, Y., & Irby, D. M. (2021b). A faculty development workshop to support educator identity formation. *Medical Teacher*, *43*(8), 916–917. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2021.1921135

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Phelan, A. M. (2016). *Curriculum theorizing and teacher education: Complicating conjunctions*. Routledge.

Poquet, O., & de Laat, M. (2021). Developing capabilities: Lifelong learning in the age of AI. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *52*(1), 1695–1708. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13123

Quinlan, K. M. (2014). Leadership of teaching for student learning in higher education: What is needed? *Higher Education Research & Development*, *33*(1), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.864609

Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2017). Agency and structure in academic development practices. *International Journal for Academic Development*, *22*(3), 187–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2016.1218883

Roxå, T., Mårtensson, K., & Alveteg, M. (2011). Understanding and influencing teaching and learning cultures at university: A network approach. *Higher Education*, *62*(1), 99–111. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9368-9

Scanlon, L. (2011). *Becoming a professional*. Springer.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.

Schuller, T., & Watson, D. (2009). *Learning through life: Inquiry into the future for lifelong learning*. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Schroeder, C. (2015). Unpacking and communicating the multidimensional mission of educational development: A mission matrix tool for centers of teaching and learning. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, *34*(1–2), 20–62. https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20030

Simpson, D., Marcdante, K., & Souza, K. H. (2019). The power of peers: Faculty development for medical educators of the future. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, *11*(5), 509–512. https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-19-00613.1

Sipe, L., & Constable, S. (1996). A chart of four contemporary research paradigms: Metaphors for the modes of inquiry. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, *1*, 153–163. https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/taboo/

Smith, J. A., & Eatough, V. (2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (pp. 35–50). SAGE Publications.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2022). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Sorcinelli, M. D., Austin, A. E., Eddy, P. L., & Beach, A. L. (2006). *Creating the future of faculty development: Learning from the past, understanding the present*. Jossey-Bass.

Stefani, L. (2011). *Evaluating the effectiveness of academic development: Principles and practice*. Routledge.

Steinert, Y., O'Sullivan, P. S., & Irby, D. M. (2019). Strengthening teachers' professional identities through faculty development. *Academic Medicine*, *94*(7), 963–968. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000002695

Steinert, Y., O'Sullivan, P. S., & Irby, D. M. (2024). The role of faculty development in advancing change at the organizational level. *Academic Medicine*, *99*(7), 716–723. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000005732

Sutherland, K. A. (2018). Holistic academic development: Is it time to think more broadly about the academic development project? *International Journal for Academic Development*, *23*(4), 261–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2018.1524571

Tight, M. (2020). Student retention and engagement in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *44*(5), 689–704. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1576860

Tinnell, T. L., Ralston, P. A. S., Tretter, T. R., & Mills, M. E. (2019). Sustaining pedagogical change via faculty learning community. *International Journal of STEM Education*, *6*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-019-0180-5

Tomkin, J. H., Beilstein, S. O., Morphew, J. W., & Herman, G. L. (2019). Evidence that communities of practice are associated with active learning in large STEM lectures. *International Journal of STEM Education*, *6*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-018-0154-z

Trigwell, K., & Prosser, M. (2020). *Exploring university teaching and learning: Experience and context*. Palgrave MacMillian.

Winstone, N. E., & Carless, D. (2020). *Designing effective feedback processes in higher education: A learning-focused approach*. Routledge.

Wright M. C. (2023). *Centers for teaching and learning: The new landscape in higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.