

Doctoral Preparation Influence on New Faculty's Perception of Role Transition

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Context: Teaching, scholarship, and service are required of all faculty in order to earn tenure. Faculty members hired directly from doctoral programs may not be adequately prepared to face the responsibilities of a full-time position in the professoriate.

Objective: To explore what mechanisms as part of doctoral education influenced the perceptions of junior faculty development while transitioning postgraduation.

Design: Qualitative phenomenological study.

Setting: Fourteen higher education institutions.

Patients or Other Participants: Sixteen junior faculty (7 male, 9 female, age = 32 ± 3.5 years) representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association districts participated. At the time of the interview, participants were within their first 3 years of a full-time faculty position. All participants earned doctorates from residential programs and had an assistantship position.

Main Outcome Measure(s): All participants completed a semistructured telephone interview. The interview guide was focused on the experiences of junior faculty within their first 3 years in a tenure-track position. Questions were grounded within the literature and purpose of the study. We analyzed the interviews through a psychosocial developmental lens using a general inductive approach.

Results: Two themes of doctoral preparation emerged that influenced the perceptions of junior faculty transitioning into a faculty role: *breadth and depth of the doctoral assistantship* and *doctoral coursework related to academia*. Doctoral assistantships with breadth and depth helped participants develop competence, while doctoral coursework related to academia provided content expertise.

Conclusions: Doctoral education is the platform for transition into academia. Our findings suggest that doctoral program assistantships that provided both breadth and depth of experience facilitated transition. Coursework related to academia influenced perceptions of transition into the faculty role by exposing participants to pedagogy and higher education infrastructure.

Key Words: Doctoral programs, higher education, professoriate

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Full Citation:

Kilbourne BF, Mazerolle SM, Bowman TG. Doctoral preparation influence on new faculty's perception of role transition. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2018;13(4):340–347.

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KEY POINTS

- Doctoral assistantships provide experiences that serve as a platform to prepare doctoral students for the professoriate.
- Doctoral assistantships that provide both breadth and depth of experiences, and incorporate a variety of faculty responsibilities may ease the transition for junior faculty members.
- Doctoral coursework specific to higher education, such as courses related to pedagogy and administration, help mitigate the challenge of transitioning into a faculty role.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from doctoral student to full-time faculty member has been frequently studied in higher education research^{1–3} and has recently become a topic of interest in the field of athletic training education.^{4,5} The interest has likely been a response to the shift in the professional program from the bachelor's level to the master's level. Specifically, the shift will put an emphasis on programs being staffed with qualified faculty who have obtained a terminal degree to meet institutional accreditation standards. Additionally, the new standards for professional programs at the master's level recently released for open comment by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education require all program directors to hold a doctorate.⁶ Moreover, faculty hired must be retained in order to reduce the cost of recruitment and maintain continuity within programs.⁷ Research across academic disciplines related to the topic of new faculty satisfaction has suggested that some constructs may be similar across academic departments, while there are times where discipline-specific issues may influence faculty outcomes (eg, job satisfaction and rate of scholarly activity).⁸

Although previous work^{4,5,8} has provided valuable insight into the transition process of new faculty members from doctoral students, it may not be providing a full picture of transition. To this point, the analysis of previous data focused on how new professionals are taught the social norms of the field and thus gain role understanding; however, this conceptual framework focuses on professional development and may be potentially missing extraneous factors that influence perception. Specifically, a professional socialization conceptual framework fails to consider how factors (eg, conflict and self-reflection) experienced prior to and during professional socialization influence an individual's larger sense of identity and in turn the perception of the transition experience. Without the knowledge of how these socialization tactics influence the perception of transition, findings are difficult to translate into institutional action (ie, changes to doctoral curriculum and/or assistantship format, changes to new faculty orientation, and onboarding). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore what mechanisms within doctoral education

influenced the perceptions of junior faculty development while transitioning postgraduation through a psychosocial developmental lens.

METHODS

Research Design

Our qualitative study used a phenomenological approach⁹ to better understand what factors affect junior faculty transition from student to professor. Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that investigates individuals' perceptions of the meaning of a particular event or life experience.⁹ We purposefully selected this design to appreciate what the faculty members valued about their doctoral preparation as they engaged in role transition from student to professor.

The social constructivist interpretive paradigm⁹ was used to inform this design selection in addition to the interpretation and writing. A social constructivist interpretive paradigm also recognizes that experiences and background of the researchers shape the interpretation of the current literature, design, and data analysis and thus should be disclosed.⁹ Researchers analyzing the data have previous experience using psychosocial development theory in educational research related to persistence to degree. The psychosocial development theory conceptually posits that identity development is the result of interactions that alter the structure through which individuals make meaning out of experience.^{10,11}

Participants

Using the guidelines suggested when developing a study grounded in the phenomenological framework,⁹ we established the following inclusion criteria at the onset of our study: (1) athletic training faculty appointment within a higher education institution sponsoring a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education-accredited program, (2) 1 completed year of full-time employment in their faculty appointment, but (3) not more than 3 years of experience in a full-time faculty position. The use of a purposive sampling technique⁹ led to participants who all met the inclusion criteria, and in the case where a potential participant did not meet that criteria, they were excluded.

Sixteen junior faculty (7 male, 9 female) representing 7 National Athletic Trainers' Association districts participated. The average age of the junior faculty members was 32 ± 3.5 years. Twelve were in tenure track and 4 had nontenure-track positions. At the time of the interview, each was within his or her first 3 years of a full-time faculty position. Data saturation was reached within our sample of 16 faculty members. The Table illustrates individual demographic information for our 16 junior faculty members.

Table. Participant Demographics, N = 16 (7 Male, 9 Female)^a

Name	Age	Sex	Years Certified (Board of Certification)	Years in Current Faculty Role	Tenure Status	Years of Clinical Practice	Doctoral School Classification	Employer Institutional
Emma	29	F	8	1	NT	6	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Olivia	34	F	12	2	T	4	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: larger programs
Ava	30	F	8	1	T	2	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Sophia	34	F	12	1	T	3	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: larger programs
Isabella	29	F	7	2	T	2	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: larger programs
Mia	32	F	10	0.5	NT	4	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: medium programs
Charlotte	34	F	12	2	T	5	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Amelia	32	F	10	1	T	5	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Harper	30	F	8	1	T	2	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Liam	30	M	8	1	NT	2	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Noah	32	M	9	1	T	3	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Ethan	43	M	20	2	NT	18	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Caden	29	M	7	2	T	3	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: highest research activity
Mason	33	M	11	1	T	6	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: larger programs
Bryson	28	M	6	1	T	2	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Master's college/university: larger programs
Aiden	32	M	10	2	T	5	Doctoral university: highest research activity	Doctoral university: moderate research activity

Abbreviations: F, female; M, male; NT, nontenure; T, tenure.

^a Mean \pm SD for age and sex = 31 ± 3.5 ; years of certification and years in current faculty role = 9.9 ± 3.3 ; years of clinical practice = 4.5 ± 3.9 .

Data Collection Procedures

Recruitment of junior faculty members began after receiving institutional review board approval. A purposive sampling strategy was used that allowed us to contact individuals whom we believed met our sampling criteria. Consent for participation was gained prior to the interview sessions. Each semistructured phone interview was captured on audio recording and transcribed immediately following completion. Interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Interviews were facilitated by 1 researcher throughout the data collection procedures to ensure consistency with each session. The interview protocol was crafted prior to data collection using current literature^{4,5,12} to guide question development. The researchers involved are trained in the framework used, and experts in the field of faculty development, socialization, and transition to practice. Specific questions that were the primary focus included: “Reflecting back, did your doctoral studies prepare you for your current position?” “What aspects of your doctoral studies were helpful in your transition to a faculty role?” “What could have been done to prepare you more for the faculty role?” “Reflecting back on entering your first faculty position, what did you wish you knew?” and,

“After completing your doctoral work did you feel prepared to assume your current position?”

The social constructivist interpretive paradigm is characterized by questions that are broad and general in order to better generate meaning.⁹ Thus, a semistructured interview protocol^{9,12} was used by the researcher conducting phone interviews, which allowed participants to be probed in order to clarify responses and gain greater insight. The researchers conducting this study drew from their backgrounds as experienced qualitative researchers and professors in accredited athletic training programs. Moreover, the researchers relied on their experience and knowledge of the psychosocial development theory and its application in educational settings and research.^{10,11} As such, this theory served as a conceptual lens for this study design and interpretation, a theory that to this point has never been applied to this body of literature.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness Measures

We followed the stepwise approach for phenomenological analysis.⁹ Investigators discussed and agreed upon the data analysis plan prior to analysis. Investigators followed the data

analysis plan independently before comparing results. Two researchers coded the data independently before comparing the findings. Both researchers have qualitative methodology training and experience and discussed the procedures before engaging in the analyses.

We used a holistic read of the data as a means to become familiar with our participants' experiences. After the holistic read, labeling and coding of each transcript was performed. A constant comparison approach¹² was used with each subsequent read of the raw data, and codes were placed upon the margins of the transcripts to identify the meanings of the participants' experiences. Common codes and experiences were grouped together and defined. Upon completion, the researchers exchanged coding schematics and 2 coded transcripts for discussion. The exchange produced the findings discussed next and were agreed upon during this process. The coding completed was identical. We were then able to use that information to identify the common experiences of the junior faculty members as it related to doctoral preparation.

We intentionally selected 2 primary measures of trustworthiness to establish the rigor of the study: (1) researcher triangulation and (2) peer review. Triangulation is a critical component of phenomenology,¹² and thus, we selected 2 specific aspects of the triangulation process to verify our findings. Data analysis was independently completed by the first 2 authors (B.F.K., S.M.M.); the authors are content experts with the socialization framework as well as the theory of psychosocial development. Second, a peer review was performed as a means to confirm the final presentation of the results. We shared the coding structure, 2 coded transcripts, and the presentation of the results to a peer-scholar in the area of socialization to review and verify the accuracy of the analysis and presentation of the results. All suggestions from the peer review were discussed until agreement was achieved.

RESULTS

Two themes or mechanisms related to doctoral preparation were found to influence the perception of transition of junior faculty members. Specifically, participant perceptions of the transition experience were influenced by the *breadth and depth of the doctoral assistantship* and their *doctoral coursework related to academia*. It is important to note that the themes influenced the experience by the presence of the theme or by the absence of the theme. The themes were mentioned as exerting influence when present, but were mentioned as desired or needed when absent. Below, these themes are demonstrated and supported through participant responses.

Breadth and Depth of the Doctoral Assistantship

Participants within our study repeatedly noted the influence their doctoral assistantship had on their transition. Interestingly, participant data revealed that their perceptions were influenced beyond the authentic nature of the experiences; the breadth and depth of the experience facilitated transition.

Breadth refers to the comprehensiveness of an experience, while depth refers to the extent to which the individuals were allowed to participate in the experiences. Given the great breadth of professoriate responsibilities and expectations, an ideal doctoral assistantship would have both breadth of

exposure and depth of involvement. Assistantships may not offer both breadth and depth, which is critical to understanding how the assistantship later influences the perception of new faculty transitioning into the faculty role. For example, Bryson described an assistantship that provided breadth, but not depth and how it influenced his transition. When asked what experiences prepared him for his current role, Bryson responded:

I think my PhD [doctor of philosophy] program offered a really good opportunity... it definitely wasn't what I'm dealing with now, but getting a little bit of—working with colleagues and seeing what it takes to be in academia... I got a little bit of exposure to everything while I was a graduate student.

When asked to clarify what he was dealing with now that his assistantship did not prepare him for, he stated:

I guess the volume side of it was what I wasn't prepared for. The amount of time that I would spend sitting in a department college meeting, program meetings every week, the amount of time definitely was that volume I wasn't prepared for, but I had seen a little bit of that.

Noteworthy is that, while Bryson indicated that he was unprepared for the time required for service and/or administrative tasks, this was not true of other faculty roles. Specifically, Bryson's response to a later prompt asking him to describe what he felt the most helpful part of his doctoral studies was to the transition process, he replied, "the teaching experience." Bryson learned through his teaching experience as a lab instructor and an instructor of a course with a high enrollment how to "[deal] with undergraduate students." The depth of the experience allowed Bryson to learn the "time management of prepping the courses during the day when there's so many other things you need to do," and went as far as to call the experience "the biggest learning opportunity that prepared me for what I do."

The doctoral experience described by Bryson was mirrored by many participants, with each participant's transition being influenced by the breadth and depth of his or her assistantship experience. Amelia initially shared how the experiences provided as part of her doctoral assistantship positively influenced her experience of transition as a new faculty member. She specifically discussed the importance of her doctoral experience in preparing her for her position as clinical education coordinator. She said:

Part of my assistantship was really helping out with the [athletic training program]. So, being a part of running ATrack, going on site visits, doing mentor meetings with the students. So part of a lot of what I did there ended up being my job as a [clinical education coordinator]. So that aspect absolutely prepared me because, if I had come in completely blind and not knowing anybody, that would have been extremely difficult. So that hugely prepared me for it.

Amelia was also provided breadth of experience as her assistantship position involved teaching. Amelia described the experience and its influence on transition:

It was kind of scary being thrown into the fire, teaching your first semester, but having to do course preparation on my own and really develop my courses over my 4 years at [institution name] really helped me [transition into my current position].

Of note is Amelia's description of teaching her first semester of transition as "scary" and "being thrown into the fire." Her negative perception of transition despite exposure during her assistantship was due to the lack of depth in teaching experience, ultimately resulting from an absence of formal teaching evaluation during her doctoral studies. Amelia stated:

[T]here really wasn't any kind of formal/informal feedback on teaching or teaching methodology. Even if they observed our classes and gave us feedback, that would have been amazing because there was zero.

The experience of Harper's doctoral assistantship also demonstrated the influence that both breadth and depth of assistantship experience had on the transition experience. Harper described the strengths of her administrative experience stating that she was "given a lot of autonomy" within a "well-funded lab" as "the only doctoral student," which allowed her to "have a lot of real administrative laboratory responsibilities that were difficult at first, but really beneficial." Despite that experience, Harper did not realize the full responsibilities of running a lab, which she equated to "running a small business." Harper still finds "handling money to be a little stressful," and believed that exposure to budgets would have provided her with a better picture of what was required.

Caden described the most beneficial portion of his "research-heavy" doctoral experience as "the amount of stuff we're able to accomplish... whether that's teaching a lecture lab course to undergraduate students or... pecking away at the different tasks." Later, however, Caden expressed the stress experienced during transition related to advising students when he was presented with issues he had not been exposed to during his doctoral assistantship. Caden stated:

I guess we've all taken the psychology courses. We've all gone through those competencies in our clinical education, but until you're honestly—you're faced there with a student extremely upset and emotional over a situation whether it's academic related or not, we all know the number to call. We all know what steps to properly take, and I think we're able to do that, but it's still just something that it's tough.

Doctoral Coursework Related to Academia

Didactic coursework taken as part of the doctoral curriculum was discussed as a mechanism that eased the transition. Specifically, participants identified coursework related to pedagogy and higher education structure/culture. Olivia discussed a series of courses within the curriculum of her doctoral program called "preparing future faculty." She detailed:

... when I was at [doctoral degree granting institution name], I took this preparing future faculty series of courses, and I took a course on—it was literally called preparing future faculty, and I had faculty members from other institutions at all different levels, research one, regional masters, private, community college, all come in and talk to us about what their life was like... And then I also took a class on the administrative organization of higher education. Those 2 classes alone helped me prepare for where I'm supposed to sit in the role of higher ed at my institution.

Isabella shared a similar experience, stating that her coursework related to higher education administration "helped with my [understanding of] administration and finance of higher education... Learning the structure of academia helped." Isabella went on to explain exactly how didactic classes related to curriculum and instruction translated into the confidence needed to actively impact the program in which she was employed:

As far as coursework, there were some different courses that really helped out with that. One of them was a student development theory course, where they looked at the theories of student development and the different theories, and I think that did help because I could see, okay, why are we teaching research to sophomores when they are not ready, when they do not have the cognitive abilities? That's when I really worked [at my employing institution] to say we need to get the research class out of this. They shouldn't take it as sophomores. They're not successful. Wait until they're seniors. There's a huge difference.

Again, the theme of doctoral courses in pedagogy and higher education administration influenced participants' perceptions of the transition even when participants were not able to take such courses. In these cases, the theme was expressed as a desire or perceived need of those courses. For example, Isabella experienced similar desires related to higher education administration. When asked what she would change about her doctoral experience, Isabella stated:

I would have learned more in my doc program. How to communicate with deans and chancellors and provosts, how to develop those relationships, how far do you go? Do you communicate directly to your dean? Do you communicate through your chair? That line of command and how to form those relationships with the higher ups.

It should be noted that, while some participants took coursework related to pedagogy and higher education administration, it was not a reflection of the curriculum or institutional advising, but rather out of initiative and peer advice. Mia recalled:

I had 1 class at [institution name] where it was all about classroom discourse. It was not a class that I needed to graduate, but someone had recommended it to me, and it was amazing. You know, because I feel, so often in your graduate work, there's not a lot of pedagogy that you learn. And so the opportunity to have that class is just a real eye opener to me... And because I had that class, it actually opened me up to other classes in that department. So I actually ended up taking other classes in pedagogy that were not required for me to graduate, but I had room in my schedule for them.

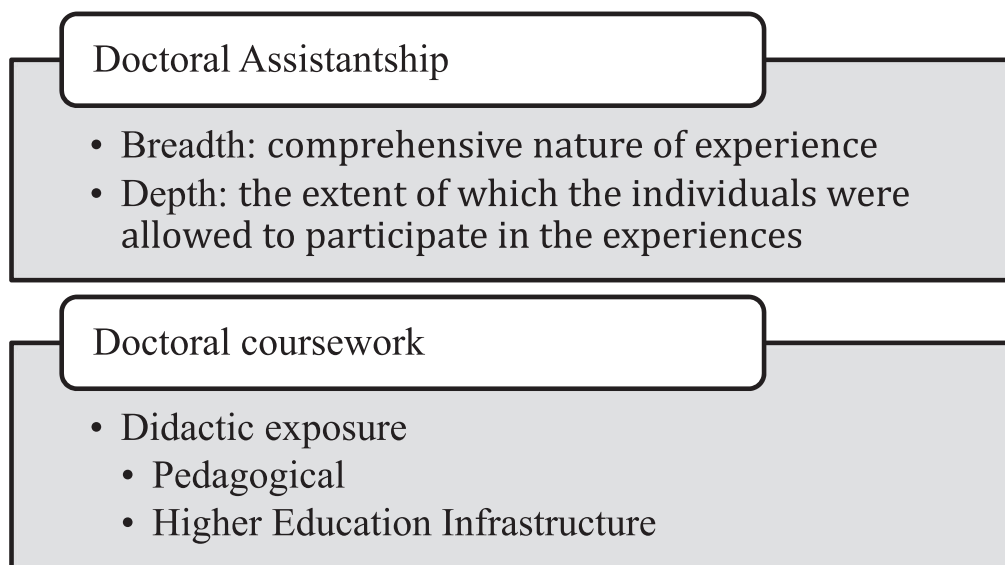
Emma expressed a similar experience. Emma said:

I think we could have had some better education [pedagogy] based classes. We had the opportunity to take a few, but none of them were required. So if you wanted to take them, you could; if you didn't, it was fine. But most of them we found by looking up on our course catalogue and being, "That 1 looks interesting, and it's at a time that I can do."

She went on to explain:

I think a lot of—for me, a lot of classroom management would have been really helpful. And so just the basics of how to start out your class as far as laying out your daily

How does doctoral education influence the transition experience?



objectives and keeping kids engaged and proper assessment tools.

findings of the current study differ, suggesting that breadth and depth of doctoral assistantship experiences, rather than authenticity, influence new faculty perceptions of transition.

DISCUSSION

Transition from doctoral student to a new faculty member is a time of development for young professionals. Development occurs throughout the lifespan in stages that are a function of the conflict that arises between individual psychological needs (ie, psycho) and the needs of the society/culture/environment (ie, social).¹¹ These conflicts, or developmental crises, are a turning point induced through situations in which new encounters have to be managed within a given period of time (eg, transitioning into a new role and/or job).¹¹ Specifically, Erikson¹¹ states that development is a series of renewed internal identity conflicts resulting from changes in the quality and quantity of drive, expansions in mental capacity, and differences in social demands that render previous developmental adjustments insufficient. Our results suggest that there are mechanisms provided through the process of doctoral preparation that can minimize the developmental crises that occur in new faculty transition (see the Figure).

Breadth and Depth of Doctoral Assistantship

Our findings support previous findings that doctoral assistantships influenced the transition for new faculty members.⁵ Mazerolle et al⁵ performed a retrospective qualitative study to gain a better understanding of how athletic training faculty are socialized. Using a sample of both tenured and nontenured faculty, they found that faculty are socialized into role understanding through both professional socialization (ie, doctoral training) and organizational socialization (ie, employer training). Participants identified 2 mechanisms within the professional socialization process: (a) authentic experiences that engaged participants as doctoral students in roles of future faculty members and (b) mentoring. The

Graduate assistantships serve as financial aid for students, but also as “educational” work experience that serves the institution as well as the students. In other words, assistantships serve as an opportunity for students to achieve competence and experience the tasks they will one day perform within an authentic employment position. Since experience has been found to alter perception,^{13,14} it is logical to assume that assistantship experiences that mirror those of faculty members would influence perceptions during the transition. A graduate assistantship, however, does not necessarily offer both breadth and depth of experience.

Doctoral assistantships by nature provide authentic experiences, allowing doctoral students to apply knowledge and skills in a real-life context. This authenticity provides opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful, but frequently, the authentic experience is limited in scope and does not span the entirety of the roles and responsibilities of a faculty position. Moreover, many times, the roles and responsibilities of assistantships are surface level. Given the nature of the doctoral assistantship, authenticity may not be adequately descriptive of how assistantship experiences affect transition. The distinction between our findings and those of previous research was that the participant responses suggest that it is both the breadth and depth of the assistantship that influences transition.

As suggested within our findings, participants frequently discussed confidence in job roles when their assistantship provided breadth, depth, and feelings of uncertainty related to aspects of their job that they were either not exposed to or lacked depth of experience. As the roles and responsibilities of faculty members have great breadth and depth, it is not

surprising that this theme emerged in addition to authenticity given the psychosocial development lens used to interpret the data. Previous research^{5,9} identifying authenticity used a sociological lens. The theoretical framework underlying the psychosocial developmental lens highlights conflict between the internal and external world.¹² Within the context of transition into a full-time faculty position, this conflict arose even within the context of an authentic experience when it did not provide breadth and depth.

Assistantships with breadth and depth allowed participants to begin achieving competence in a variety of tasks related to faculty members' responsibilities related to teaching, research, and service early on during their junior faculty positions. Specifically, perceptions were negatively influenced when exposure was limited and the complete breadth of faculty roles and responsibilities was not experienced (eg, teaching assistantships versus research assistantships, advising/college student development, navigating the organizational culture/bureaucracy). Additionally, assistantships that provided breadth and not depth limited the understanding of the gravity certain faculty responsibilities carry (eg, fiscal responsibility, course development, curriculum sequencing). Confidence through exposure positively influenced the perception of transition for our participants. Thus, it could be suggested that, by exposing participants to these experiences, the transition shock and role overload that can negatively influence job satisfaction may be reduced.¹⁵

Doctoral Coursework Related to Academia

Doctoral coursework was also identified as a theme that influenced the perceptions of transition. Specifically, coursework that helped inform participants on the components of education, classroom management, and the structure and culture of the higher education setting particularly assisted in easing transition.^{15,16} These findings expand previous findings, which again is likely related to the use of a psychosocial developmental lens to analyze the data. A core assumption of psychosocial development theory is the influence of previous experiences on perceptions.^{12,13} As such, the analysis focused not on the perception, but rather on what factors influenced the perception. Given the limited hours allowed by doctoral assistantships, coursework can provide students with information that will help them navigate academic situations they are unable to experience.

These findings are of additional interest given that the requirement for most faculty positions is a terminal degree within the discipline, not pedagogical competence.¹⁴ Many doctoral degrees have discipline-specific coursework that fails to provide the information necessary to help doctoral students effectively impart discipline specific information to their future students.¹⁴ Thus, these findings suggest the need for required doctoral coursework related to pedagogy.

Additionally, doctoral curricula with a discipline focus fail to prepare students to navigate higher education institutions, which are not discipline specific,⁸ meaning many doctoral curricula may fail to provide students with the knowledge necessary to navigate the bureaucracy of higher education, including but not limited to effective pedagogical approaches to teaching discipline-specific information, navigating the infrastructure, assessing the organizational culture, managing

and/or using resources (eg, financial, human), etc. From this standpoint, doctoral students are unable to develop the competence necessary to navigate an institution that is new to them. Moreover, lack of knowledge related to administration in higher education, including roles and responsibility, prevents doctoral students from fully understanding the faculty members' purpose within the context of a higher education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From our findings, we make the following recommendations to doctoral students, doctoral advisers/mentors, and other higher education graduate program administrators. We make these recommendations as a reflection of the 2 stakeholder entities that must actively participate in the development of future faculty members.

Doctoral Students

1. Use the doctoral assistantship as a means to gain both breadth and depth of experience, which will aid in the understanding of what is and can be expected of faculty members that extend beyond doctoral expectations.
2. Attempt to match doctoral experiences with desired faculty position responsibilities as a way to improve the transition experience.

Doctoral Advisers/Mentors and Administrators

1. Doctoral advisers and mentors should facilitate opportunities for doctoral students to take coursework that reaches beyond content areas of expertise and into pedagogy, higher education, and organizational bureaucracy.
2. Doctoral advisers and mentors should consider finding opportunities that will provide skill and knowledge development in all aspects of higher education for doctoral students. These experiences could range from committee work, advising students, higher education bureaucracy, and curriculum planning.
3. Advisers and mentors should engage in discourse with doctoral students about the nonvisible aspects of higher education. By providing this exposure, doctoral students will be allowed to experience the breadth of faculty responsibility.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We present a focused qualitative study on the experiences of junior faculty in athletic training. We recognize that our findings may only speak to a small group of faculty members within higher education who were all full-time doctoral students who held assistantship positions. Therefore, we believe diversifying our sample to include other health care faculty, faculty within more liberal arts-based institutions, or faculty members who completed their doctorates on a part-time basis while holding a full-time job would be advantageous and may improve generalizability.

Our sample included athletic training faculty members who were in their positions less than 3 years, and although this is a critical period of time in their transition, future studies could

actively capture the transition process during the first year in higher education. Additionally, a longitudinal design may give a more accurate picture of the transition. We believe this could also provide more acute understanding of the transition process and what factors support this process.

Our data is qualitatively driven, and in the future, more description (eg, the courses and sequence of the curriculum, electives) would be helpful in understanding the experiences of faculty as they were prepared to transition into higher education. We also did not account for institution types; that is, expectations for faculty members vary based upon the university or college that employs them. Further, the comparability of the expectations of faculty within their doctoral programs and within their assistantships may vary from that of the faculty at the institution at which they are employed. We believe that future studies should investigate the influence that doctoral training can have on transition into a setting, which may be different than the focus of the doctoral program.

CONCLUSIONS

Doctoral education is a time when students invest in and complete training to become future faculty members. It is also a time when students must begin to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop professionally as faculty members within their discipline. Our results speak to the value of a doctoral assistantship that provides breadth and depth of experience and can serve as the platform for professional development. The doctoral experience, as evidenced by our participants, must be all encompassing and not be isolated to a specific set of tasks (ie, data collection, teaching). There is also value in didactic coursework that focuses on the tenants of higher education, organizational bureaucracy, and roles of faculty in higher education.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the University of Lynchburg for funding this study through a summer research grant.

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