HELPING FACULTY BUILD THEIR EXECUTIVE EDUCATION SKILLS

A UNICON Research Report

Elizabeth Weldon, PhD

OVERVIEW

In this report, I outline various programs that might be developed to help faculty build their executive education skills, including self-study programs, learning from others, and a formal classroom program. These programs would be designed to a) help faculty understand executive development and the business of executive education, b) learn how to use effective teaching tools and techniques, and c) build design, presentation and facilitation skills. The rationale for these programs is presented in two UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature From 2001-2011* and *What Makes you Successful: Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Professors*.

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In this document, I report the results of a UNICON research project designed to answer this question:

- Research Question: What can UNICON members do to build strong pools of executive education faculty?

To answer this question, I conducted two lines of research. First, I reviewed articles about executive education published in the last 10 years covering these elements of executive education: client needs, the participant experience, effective classroom techniques, and the characteristics of successful executive education teachers.[1]

Second, I interviewed eleven successful executive education teachers, working at business schools in South America, Mexico, Europe and North America. The appendix provides details about the research.

I used this research to answer two additional research questions. Answers to these two questions provide the information we need to design faculty development programs.

- Research Question 1a: What are the key success factors for executive teaching? What knowledge, skills, and tools do faculty need to succeed in executive education?

- Research Question 1b: How do successful executive education faculty develop their skills?

In this document, I answer these three research questions. In Part 1, I describe the key success factors for executive education. In Part 2, I describe the ways that successful executive education faculty develop their skills. In Part 3, I outline various programs that might be developed to help faculty build their executive education expertise. These development programs include self-study programs, learning from others, and a

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[1] I did not review articles about distance learning, e-learning and blended learning, because a recent UNICON research project covered these topics.
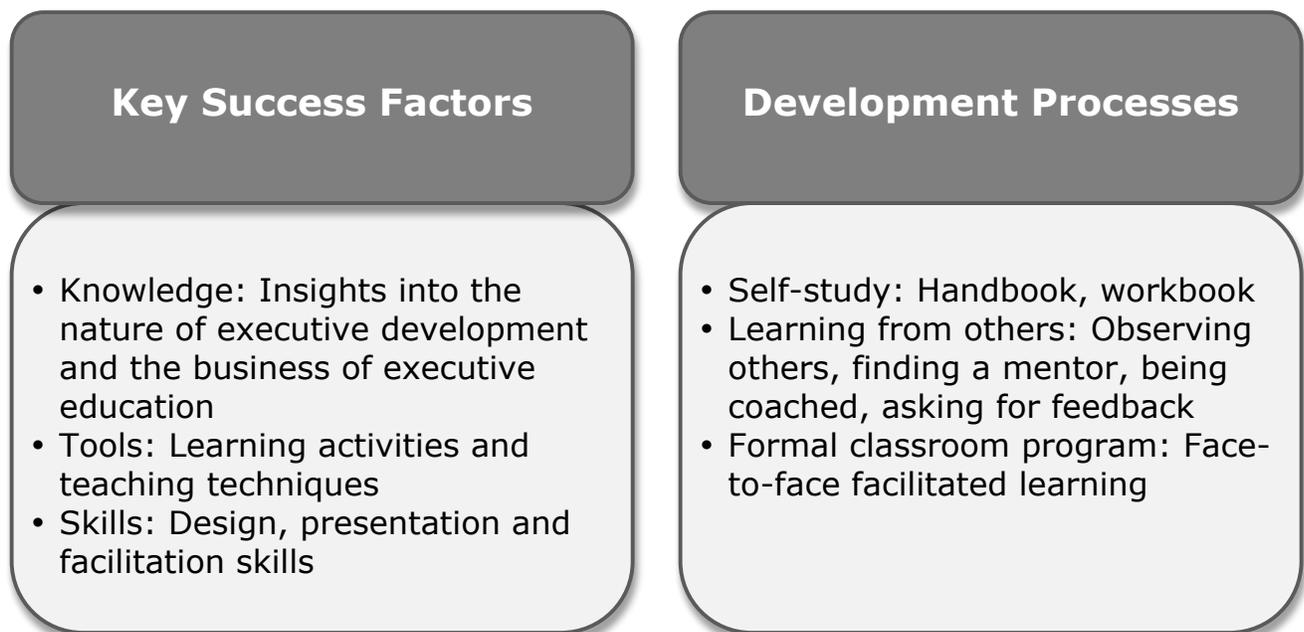
classroom development program much like the ones we offer our clients. Figure 1 provides an overview.

FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW

DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE EDUCATION FACULTY

Development processes should be designed to help faculty acquire the knowledge, tools and skills they need.

Key Success Factors	Development Processes
• Knowledge: Insights into the nature of executive development and the business of executive education • Tools: Learning activities and teaching techniques • Skills: Design, presentation and facilitation skills	• Self-study: Handbook, workbook • Learning from others: Observing others, finding a mentor, being coached, asking for feedback • Formal classroom program: Face-to-face facilitated learning

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PART 1: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS.

Following a standard model of job analysis, I identified the knowledge, tools, and skills that faculty need to succeed in executive education. Faculty development programs should focus on these success factors.

a. Knowledge

Table 1 lists 35 key points of knowledge that faculty need. Together, these points provide the insights into executive development and the business of executive education that faculty need to design and deliver successful executive education learning experiences. These insights should be covered in any development program designed to help faculty build their executive education skills. You will find complete descriptions of each item in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

b. Tools and Techniques

Table 2 lists 73 tools and techniques that faculty can use to deliver successful executive education experiences. A development program should help faculty become familiar with these tools and techniques and help them learn to use them successfully. You will find descriptions of these tools and techniques in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

c. Skills

Table 3 lists the design, presentation and facilitation skills that faculty need for successful executive teaching. They are listed according to their importance -- those appearing at the top of the list are fundamental to successful executive teaching and those later on the list are more specialized skills. These skills should be included in development programs designed to help faculty build their executive education skills. Descriptions of these skills can be found in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

PART 2. HOW SUCCESSFUL FACULTY DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS.

I identified fourteen ways that faculty can develop their executive education skills (see Table 4). For more information, you can refer to *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty,* a UNICON research report.

PART 3. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In this section, I outline various programs that might be developed to help faculty build their executive education skills, including self-study programs, learning from others, and a formal classroom program. These programs are based on the learning processes described in Part 2.

In each case, the program should be designed to build the success factors described in Part 1. In other words, these programs should be designed to a) help faculty understand executive development and the business of executive education, b) learn how to use effective teaching tools and techniques, and c) build design, presentation and facilitation skills.

a. Self-study

Handbook. A Handbook of Successful Executive Education similar to PDI's *Successful Executive's Handbook (www.pdinh.com)* could be developed. This handbook would include an overview of each success factor, a list of readings and a set of activities the reader can use to build each success factor.

Workbook. A workbook with guidelines and checklists could be developed to help faculty design and deliver successful executive learning sessions.

b. Learning From Others

Watching others teach. Executive education faculty can be encouraged to watch others teach. To help them learn from this experience, an observation guide and reflection questions could be developed to help faculty formalize their learning. For example, the observer's guide might ask faculty to "Watch for a time when participants are energized and note what is happening".

Participating in an open-enrollment program. Faculty can be encouraged to enroll in a program as a participant. This would help them understand executive education from the participant's point-of-view and let them experience various learning activities and teaching techniques. An observation guide and reflection questions could be developed to help faculty formalize their learning.

Seeking feedback from others. Faculty can be encouraged to ask others to watch them teach. An observer's guide and feedback form could be developed.

Finding a mentor. Faculty can be encouraged to find a mentor who can give advice, explore teaching ideas and share teaching material. A mentoring guide could be developed for faculty who don't know how to mentor others.

Working with a coach. Faculty can be encouraged to work with an executive education coach.

Shadowing an executive. Faculty can be encouraged to shadow a manager. This would help faculty understand the problems and challenges that managers face.

Attending conferences. Faculty can be encouraged to attend conferences focused on practical problems in their areas of expertise (eg., a Conference Board conference on marketing).

c. Formal Development Program

Classroom program focused on the key success factors. A classroom program could be taught by successful executive education faculty. This classroom program would provide an opportunity see successful faculty in action; experience a program as a participant; and experience effective learning activities and teaching techniques. It would also create networks that faculty can draw on later for advice and support.

CONCLUSION

These programs will help business school faculty build their executive education expertise by helping them to a) understand key elements of executive development and the business of executive education, b) learn how to use effective teaching tools and techniques, and c) build design, presentation and facilitation skills.

TABLE 1. WHAT FACULTY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND THE
BUSINESS OF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

This list covers key insights about executive development and the business of executive education. Faculty working in executive education should understand each of these issues. You will find complete descriptions of these points in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

- A good faculty is at the heart of the business school executive education value proposition.
- Faculty are increasingly expected to have broad multidisciplinary knowledge.
- Faculty must establish credibility while demonstrating humility and mutual respect.
- Clients who work with business schools want programs grounded in research.
- Custom program clients want faculty to understand their business strategy and the challenges they face.
- Some custom clients want the faculty to be involved from the beginning to the end of the design and delivery process.
- Clients want their programs to have a tangible impact on business results.
- Participants want practical ideas, models and frameworks that they can use to solve their immediate business problems.
- Clients want their programs to increase engagement by re-energizing participants and increasing their confidence in their ability to meet the challenges they face.
- Clients want their programs to build lasting relationships among participants.
- Some clients want support before and after the formal learning experience.
- Some clients want comprehensive and integrated solutions.
- Faculty are the key motivators in the learning process.
- How executive education is delivered is as important as what is being taught.
- Reflection is essential to executive learning.
- Executive learners should be active participants in the learning process.
- Executive learners can and should learn from each other.

- Participants like faculty who use a variety of learning methods.
- Executive education is different from MBA teaching.
- Successful faculty focus on the participants learning needs. They "teach people, not stuff".
- Successful faculty have a clear sense of their mission. They "know their gig".
- Successful faculty focus on process as much as on content. They recognize that pedagogy is as important as concepts and content.
- Successful faculty encourage participants to implement what they have learned when they get back to work.
- Successful faculty present their topics from the participants' points-of-view.
- Successful faculty respect executives' knowledge and experience.
- Successful faculty respect executives and what they do.
- Successful faculty know what executives care about and how they talk about it.
- Successful faculty are interested in the practical challenges that managers face and the practical challenges of getting things done in companies.
- Successful faculty listen to what participants have to say.
- Successful faculty have a genuine interest in their areas of expertise and enthusiasm about the topics they teach.
- Successful faculty are flexible, with the ability to adjust and adapt. They are willing to experiment and to cede control.
- Successful faculty are good listeners.
- As practiced today, executive education programs come in five forms which are variations on two basic types: 1) performance enhancers and 2) transformational experiences. The five forms are: 1) *Performance enhancement for individuals*; 2) *Performance enhancement for teams*; 3) *Facilitated workshops to enhance performance*; 4) *Facilitated workshops for transformation*; and 5) *Transformation programs for individual leaders*.

TABLE 2. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES THAT FACULTY CAN USE TO DESIGN AND DELIVER SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

Faculty should become familiar with these tools and techniques and learn how to use them. You will find descriptions of these tools and techniques in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

Tools

Analogically Situated Experiences	Round Robin
Service learning	DeepDive
Arts-based learning	Participant led sessions
Case analysis	Participant experts
Learning journals	Volunteer intervention
Reflection paper	Curious learner exercise
Reflection session	Social networking tools
Managerial exchange	Program website
Organization assessment questionnaires	Need to know groups
	Goal setting
Individual assessment tools	Alumni presentations
Action learning projects	Reports to coworkers
Study trips	Impact diaries
Simulations and role plays	Provocation
Peer consulting on a personal case	Team teaching
Stories	Buzz groups
Guided visualization	Buzz boards
Imagining the future leadership self	Breakout/learning groups
50-50 rule	Personal coaching
Five tricks card game	Team coaching
SEWA Beats drumming	

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

- Use real and practical examples.
- Link ideas, principles, concepts and theories to practical problems.
- Take 5 minutes to present a model; then use the rest of the hour to discuss examples of how the model can be applied.
- If you are strong on theory, co-teach with someone who knows the practical aspects of the topic.
- Use research based frameworks to structure the issues and the discussion.
- Teach topics that interest you; topics that you are enthusiastic about.
- Design differently for different audiences.
- Focus on a few main points, at most 4 or 5, and show only a few slides.
- Use a variety of learning methods, including short lectures (30 to 40 minutes) to clarify and formalize the learning and simulations.
- Provide evidence from your own country if possible.
- Design sessions that are problem-driven.
- Add a bit of salt; be provocative and encourage people to discuss conflicting views.
- Use humor and make the classroom fun.
- Prepare by researching the company and the industry.
- Tell interesting stories and tell them well.
- Co-teach in custom programs and workshops so that your partner can provide feedback and help you adjust your plan and react to the group.
- Teach cases, because even the most experienced people can learn from cases.
- Teach practical topics, but ground your sessions in research.
- Don't assume you're right, only that you have another point of view. You can say, "How about a different perspective"?
- Use simulations to reduce resistance to change. Telling people that things need to change doesn't work. A simulation will help participants realize what needs to be done.
- Help participants overcome organizational challenges of applying what they have learned. Don't let people say "I can't", or "They won't let me". Instead ask them to focus on "How could I?". Ask them to think about why someone would say "No"?
- Be willing to adjust and adapt.

- Be willing to be something of a performer.
- Avoid falling into a routine.
- Recognize that different types of programs require different skills. Open enrollment requires presentation skills, custom is more about facilitation, provoking a discussion.
- For open-enrollment, polish your presentation skills. Get very good at teaching a specific content. Learn how to make effective presentations and communicate assertively.
- Let more of the learning come from the participants.
- Be provocative to energize discussions.
- Build all possible connections among participants.
- Move people around.
- Be animated.
- Move around the room.

TABLE 3. SKILLS THAT FACULTY NEED TO DELIVER SUCCESSFUL EXECUTIVE EDUCATION EXPERIENCES

These are some of the skills (beyond expertise within a discipline) that faculty need for successful executive teaching. They are listed according to their importance -- those appearing at the top of the list are fundamental to successful executive teaching and those later on the list are more specialized skills. These skills should be included in any development program designed to help faculty build their executive education skills. Descriptions of these skills can be found in these UNICON research reports: *Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature from 2001-2011* and *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty*.

- Perspective taking.
- Session scripting.
- The ability to facilitate conversations in the classroom.
- The ability to close a session effectively.
- The ability to create provocative questions and identify interesting dilemmas.
- The ability to manage study/discussion groups.
- The ability to facilitate action learning projects.
- The ability to debrief an Analogically Situated Experience (AES) and other simulations.
- The ability to design an effective AES.
- The ability to coach.
- The ability to design and facilitate study trips.

TABLE 4. HOW SUCCESSFUL FACULTY BUILD THEIR SKILLS

These are the ways that successful executive education faculty develop their expertise. For more information about these modes of development, please refer to *What Makes You Successful? Interviews with 11 Highly Effective Executive Education Faculty,* a UNICON research report.

Successful faculty build their skills by:

• Watching others teach.
• Finding a mentor.
• Working with a coach.
• Attending an executive program as a participant.
• Asking others to watch them teach and provide feedback.
• Looking at evaluations from previous modules and/or previous years.
• Starting small.
• Learning the logic of program design.
• Developing sessions on topics they have a genuine interest in and they are enthusiastic about.
• Building broad multidisciplinary knowledge.
• Keeping their knowledge fresh and up-to-date.
• Learning from the participants in their classrooms.
• Gaining experience with executives and the practical issues they care about by reading, consulting or going to industry conferences.
• Practicing.

APPENDIX: ABOUT THE RESEARCH

I conducted two lines of research.

First, I reviewed articles about executive education published in the last 10 years covering these aspects of executive education:
- client needs,
- the participant experience,
- effective classroom techniques, and
- the characteristics of successful executive education teachers.[2]

I organized this literature into 3 categories:
- Knowledge: what faculty need to know about executive development and the business of executive education to help them design and deliver successful executive education learning experiences,
- Tools: learning activities and teaching techniques that executive education faculty can use to deliver successful executive education experiences, and
- Skills: the skills that faculty need to design and deliver successful executive education learning experiences.

The complete literature review is reported in Developing Successful Executive Education Faculty: A Review of the Literature From 2001-2011, a UNICON Research Report, 2012.

Second, I interviewed 11 successful executive education teachers, working at business schools in South America, Mexico, Europe and North America. All of the interviewees have PhDs. Six had experience working fulltime outside academia before becoming professors, and most of the others had some consulting experience as academics. The interviewees were identified as successful executive education teachers by their Directors of Executive Education.

I asked each interviewee these three questions:
- Looking back over your career, can you identify events that had a significant impact on the way you design and deliver Executive Education? What were those events, and what did you learn?
- In your own view, what makes you successful as an Executive Education professor?

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[2] I did not review articles about distance learning, e-learning and blended learning, because a recent UNICON research project covered these topics.

- In your own view, what can be done to help other professors develop the skills they need to be successful in Executive Education? What advice would you give them?

I organized their responses into three categories:
- characteristics of faculty who are likely to succeed at executive teaching,
- specific tips and techniques for designing and delivering successful classroom sessions, and
- how these successful executive education teachers developed their skills.

A complete analysis of the interview responses can be found in *What makes you successful? Interviews with 11 Successful Executive Education Professors*, a UNICON Research Report, 2012.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Weldon is an expert in leadership and management development with 20 years of experience teaching in MBA, EMBA, Executive Education and custom leadership development programs in North America, Europe and Asia. Most recently, Professor Weldon has served as Professor of Management Practice at the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) in Shanghai, the H. Smith Richardson, Jr. Visiting Fellow at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), and Professor of Leadership and Management at IMD International in Lausanne, Switzerland.