



Book Review of Jiangang Cheng, Wei Han, Qian Zhou, & Shuyan Wang (Eds., 2024). Handbook of Teaching Competency Development in Higher Education. Springer.

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Introduction

The appearance of digital technologies such as 5G, blockchain, big data, and artificial intelligence has brought about a profound transformation in production and the way human societies live. The rapid progression of digital industrialization and industrial digitalization has created a demand for enhanced skills, knowledge, and workforce capabilities across various countries. The expansion of the Internet has facilitated knowledge dissemination in virtual spaces, distributed cognition, digital thinking, and interpersonal communication, resulting in fundamental changes in educational methodologies, strategies, and organizational frameworks. The digital revolution in higher education is crucial for adapting to these transformations and meeting emerging requirements. The digital revolution in higher education paves the way for a more flexible, personalized, and inclusive learning environment that can better prepare students to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the digital era. It is essential for universities and colleges to embrace these changes and adjust their approaches to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in preparing the future workforce.

This book, available as an open-access document, comprises five chapters intended as a valuable resource for higher education stakeholders such as government administrators, institution administrators, and instructors. Its primary objectives are to enhance the quality of teaching, improve higher education standards, facilitate the transition to digital education, and advance the connotative development of higher education. Interested readers can easily access the book through the Springer website (<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-6273-0>). The handbook delves into topics such as the historical context of digital transformation in education, reforms in higher education, and the role of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, it outlines the evolution of teaching competencies, examines existing theoretical frameworks and research paradigms, introduces a novel higher education framework, suggests strategies for implementing the framework and assessment tools, and

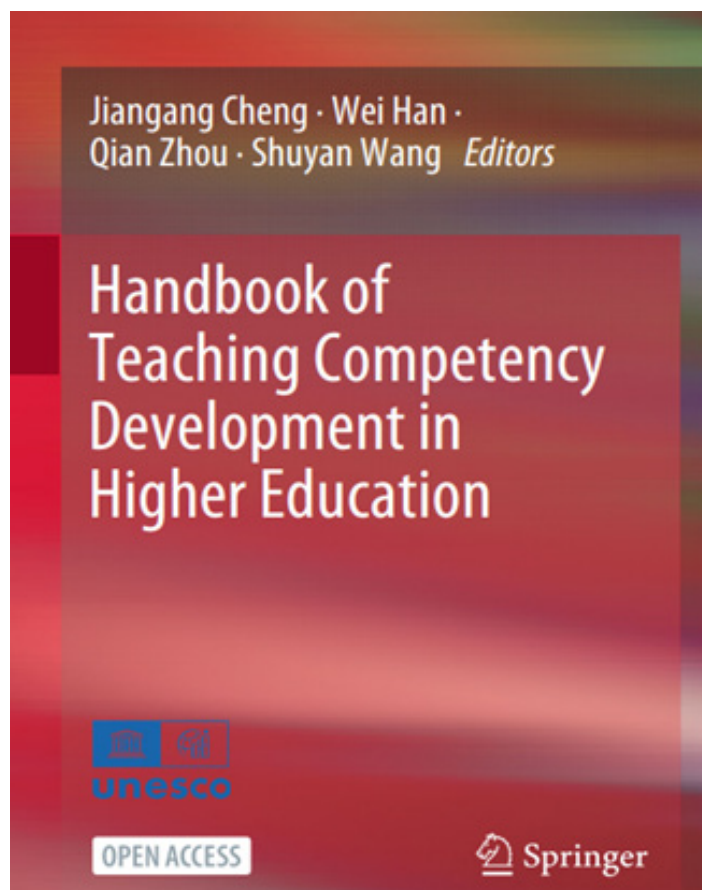


Figure 1: Book cover.

presents methods for enhancing teaching competencies across different levels. Additionally, the book showcases real-world examples of effective teaching competency development initiatives.

The editors of this book have strong backgrounds in education, innovation, and teaching competence. Jiangang Cheng holds the position of Professor at the Institute of Education at Tsinghua University in China, with a research focus on online education and educational technology.

Wei Han serves as the Deputy Executive Director of the International Higher Education Innovation Center under UNESCO, concentrating on higher education theory and policy, university governance and reform, talent training innovation, and modern university residential systems. Qian Zhou works as a Senior Engineer at the Institute of Education at Tsinghua University in China, specializing in e-learning environments, institutional education reform, and innovation through technology in higher education and vocational education. Shuyan Wang is a Tenured Professor of Instructional Technology and Design at the University of Southern Mississippi, USA, with expertise in integrating technology into the curriculum, distance education and development, assessment, and electronic portfolios. The various experiences and expertise of these editors ensure the depth and richness of perspectives in this work.

Overview

The first chapter serves as an enticing and enlightening entry point towards the fundamental concept of this book. The author adeptly establishes the context by providing a comprehensive overview of the main ideas, objectives, and scope of the research. They skillfully convey the importance of the subject matter, constructing a unique framework for readers to understand the broader implications of enhancing teaching skills. The introductory section offers a comprehensive view of the growing accessibility of emerging technologies, which present both opportunities and obstacles for higher education instruction. It underscores the significance of equipping educators with fundamental teaching abilities to effectively tackle these challenges in the age of digital advancements. These various perspectives ensure a comprehensive and unbiased understanding. Furthermore, this section effectively engages the reader by highlighting the importance of the book's content, fostering a positive environment for readers to learn the intricacies of practical frameworks for developing teaching competencies across diverse levels and integrating real-life instances of present-day approaches.

The second chapter provides a detailed analysis of the definition and theoretical principles related to the concept of teacher competence development, including teaching competence, digital teaching competence, and teaching competence components. Additionally, proficient writers examine the theoretical underpinnings of teacher competency enhancement, encompassing teacher knowledge organization, TPACK framework, personal practical knowledge, teaching scholarships, teacher learning theories, teaching expertise in academia, and models for developing teaching competence. The authors offer a clear explanation of key terms, providing a strong foundation for understanding the complexity of the topic. This chapter also serves as a comprehensive literature review, consolidating relevant theories and frameworks to support further studies. The collaboration of various authors presents diverse perspectives, enriching the content. By combining theoretical insights with practical considerations, this chapter establishes a solid foundation for educators, researchers, and practitioners interested in effective professional development strategies in the era of technology. Overall,

this chapter enhances the scholarly quality of the book by introducing readers to the theoretical frameworks that shape teacher competence development.

Chapter 3 contributes significantly to our understanding of the development of teaching competencies in higher education. The authors begin by examining current research on the established framework of teaching competencies, and subsequently introduce a novel framework for teaching competencies in higher education, along with recommendations for using the proposed standard framework. The collaborative work of the authors ensures a comprehensive and thorough approach, combining theoretical ideas with practical tools. This section additionally provides details regarding assessment tools, such as digital teaching competency questionnaires, behavioral observation scales, self-assessment scales, and single-item knowledge skill assessments for teaching competencies. This chapter serves as a significant resource for educators and policymakers, focusing on the Standard Framework and Evaluation Instruments. Chapter 3 serves as a crucial resource for those looking to grasp the fundamental structure of teaching skills and assessment tools necessary for practical application. It acts as a link between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the real world.

Chapter 4 offers an extensive and practical manual for proposing a structure to enhance teaching skills in higher education. This chapter is well-known for its methodical approach, presenting a structure for improving teaching competencies that encompasses action targets, action subjects, action objects, action content, action methods, and action evaluation. The writers subsequently skillfully examine methods to enhance teaching competencies on a global scale to illustrate how international collaboration can be conducted to improve teaching competencies in higher education worldwide. Furthermore, the authors present ideas on developing teaching competencies at the government level, societal level, institutional level, and individual level. The collective efforts of many authors ensure a comprehensive perspective, enhancing discourse with various experiences and perspectives. Chapter 4 is a valuable resource for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking practical solutions to enhance teaching competencies in the world of higher education. Its aim is to develop a competent and flexible workforce in the continuously evolving and changing field of higher education.

Chapter 5 presents a persuasive approach to the practice of teaching competence development. By using various examples, the author explains how teaching competence offers strategies, practices, and practical rules for guiding teachers in ways to enhance teaching that improve student performance and the quality of the work experience. This chapter provides educators, administrators, and policymakers with examples of current teaching competence development practices, including international, institutional, and individual practices. The authors emphasize flexibility and various techniques in different situations by showcasing successful practices. This encourages a better understanding of the complex difficulties and opportunities in teaching competence development in Higher Education.

Collective efforts ensure a comprehensive collection of experiences, which form a valuable asset that recognizes great achievements and offers insights into reproducible methods to enhance the quality of Teaching Competence in Higher Education. Chapter 5 offers valuable perspectives and hands-on advice for those interested in reimagining the enhancement of teaching competence in higher education and implementing them autonomously.

Strengths

This book is a comprehensive guide that provides educators in higher education settings with valuable insights and practical strategies to improve their teaching competence. A key strength of this book is its focus on the significance of continuous professional development for educators. The authors highlight the importance of teachers reflecting on their teaching methods, soliciting feedback from colleagues and students, and participating in training and ongoing development opportunities. With its practical approach, providing step-by-step guidance on how to integrate digital tools into teaching practices and create interactive and engaging learning experiences for students. This handbook also emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development and offers resources for instructors to enhance their digital competencies further. The focus on self-improvement and growth is highly relevant in today's rapidly changing educational landscape.

Another important aspect of this book is its practical approach to teaching competencies. The authors provide concrete examples, case studies, and exercises that help readers apply the concepts and strategies discussed in this book to their own teaching practices. This direct approach makes the book a valuable resource for both novice and experienced educators. Additionally, this handbook offers various resources and tools teachers can use to enhance their skills, such as lesson planning templates, assessment rubrics, and reflective exercises. Presenting common practice case studies in teaching skill development in various countries also highlights the diversity of perspectives from different educational viewpoints around the world. Several prior studies have also supported the notion that effective teaching is crucial in the realm of higher education, and proficiency in digital skills is identified as a critical competency for educators in contemporary society (Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al., 2022; Cebrián et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2022).

A critical evaluation

This book provides a comprehensive exploration of teaching competency development, including insights into theoretical foundations, evaluation instrument standards, and the practical application of teaching competency practices in real-world contexts, making it an essential resource for educators in diverse fields. However, one potential limitation of this book is its somewhat narrow focus on certain aspects, such

as the validity of evaluation instruments and the challenges of developing teaching competencies that may occur in the field. A more in-depth and comprehensive discussion of the validity of evaluation instruments and the challenges of developing teaching competencies would strengthen the content. Additionally, while the strategies and techniques presented in this book are certainly applicable to face-to-face learning, these strategies and techniques may not fully address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by online or blended learning environments. Educators looking to develop their competencies in this area may need to supplement the information provided in this book with additional resources and training. It is also worth criticizing the use of repetitive phrases, which can make the reading somewhat monotonous. Sharper introductions and stronger conclusions in each chapter may have enhanced the reader's framework of understanding. Therefore, suggestions for improvement include enhancing specific details, varying language expression, and strengthening the introduction and conclusion sections to enhance the overall impression and appeal of the reading.

Overall, the "Handbook of Teaching Competency Development in Higher Education" is a valuable resource for educators looking to enhance their digital competencies and improve their teaching practices in an increasingly digital world. With its practical approach and emphasis on continuous learning, this handbook serves as a useful guide for instructors who want to remain relevant and effective in the ever-evolving higher education landscape.

Conclusion

This book covers relevant theories and approaches to teaching competency development in higher education. It critiques existing theories and teaching competency frameworks, defines key concepts, and provides a standard framework and assessment tools for teaching competencies. It also proposes strategies to enhance teacher competencies and presents case studies of common practices in teaching competency development in various countries. With a practical approach and emphasis on continuous learning, this handbook serves as a useful guide for instructors who aim to remain relevant and effective in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education.

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