PEER-GROUP MENTORING FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS SUPPORTS THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

BACKGROUND
University teachers' challenges:
- No pedagogical qualifications required
- Teaching competences less valued than research competences.
- Individualistic culture where teachers have to manage challenges alone.

Peer-group mentoring has been effective in school context in supporting teachers professional development. However, no research on peer-group mentoring supporting university teachers professional development exists.

WHAT IS PEER-GROUP MENTORING (PGM)?
- Facilitates participants' learning from each other by sharing experiences and reflecting on them.
- Utilizes group of fellow colleagues as valuable resource.
- Group facilitator is also a member of group.
- Based on socioconstructivistic theory of learning, 1)

AIMS OF STUDY
1. How did the peer-group mentoring work at university context?
2. Did the programme have effects on participants, and if so, what kind of effects?

METHODS AND PROCEDURE
Nine month facilitator training
- Participants 13 senior lecturers from different disciplines
- Face-to-face meetings
- Peer-group meetings for facilitators
- Reading materials about PGM
- Facilitating monthly meetings of 4-6 teachers group

Eight Peer-Mentor Groups (30 participants)

RESEARCH METHODS
Interviews of facilitators (N=12)
Questionnaire for participants of peer-mentor groups (N=28)
Inductive content analysis

CONCLUSIONS
- PGM proved to be excellent social practice for developing university teachers professional development.
- PGM supports informal and equal learning culture.
- PGM makes good use of academics' immense resource.
- PGM strengthens the identity, self-confidence, and well-being both facilitators and group members.