Constructing A Framework for Assessing Teacher Development: from theory to application

This article discusses the development of the measurement constructs for research on faculty professionalization (FP) in polytechnic universities in the Netherlands. Professionalization of faculty, or faculty development (FD) as it is also called, is an important point on the agendas of many Dutch polytechnic universities. However, a review of the literature does not point to any singular definition of the concept within higher professional education, nor a consistent conceptualization of what FP actually is. Because of this, FP programs differ between the various institutions. These factors combined lead to difficulties in coming to measure constructs when assessing FP programs. As part of a study on how communities of practice can be used as forums for faculty professionalization, I needed to develop these constructs in order to design an instrument to measure actual progress in individual lecturers' development.

First I developed a theoretical framework for professionalization in general by reviewing literature about human resource development within the private sector, and the literature on faculty development in higher education. My next step was to test the theoretical framework in the field to see if it reflected actual practice. I also wanted to find aspects of the framework that were either common between, or specific to, the two sectors. The field testing went as follows: I interviewed national educational leaders, educational leaders within several different polytechnics, lecturers at these institutions and human resource development professionals from the business world. I also analyzed the curriculum of several universities offering training for lecturers in polytechnic universities. I then compared the field data with the theoretical framework. I used this comparison as the basis for a synthesized conceptual framework of faculty professionalization, upon which I based the measure constructs. Finally, I operationalized the constructs into a quantitative survey used for assessing the results of a faculty development initiative based on community of practice theory.