Increasing the Validity of a Needs Assessment for Faculty Development

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How does a faculty needs assessment connect to SoTL?
Introduction

- Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986)
- Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000)
- Pedagogical Reasoning (Schulman, 1987)
- Reflective Practice (Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 1995)
Key Questions

- Should faculty development efforts pursue closed-ended approaches?
- Can open-ended faculty reflections on practice be codified into a knowledge base for faculty development?
- What are the similarities and differences between closed and open-ended approaches?
Assess the efficacy and thereby increase the validity of a faculty needs assessment using closed and open-ended questions in a college of agriculture, consumer and environmental sciences.
Objectives

- Compare faculty and academic professionals’
  - Perceptions of their roles as instructors to what motivated them as teachers;
  - Roles as instructors to what they thought they did well as teachers;
  - Teaching needs and specific challenges as instructors.
Methods

242 Faculty and Academic Professionals

- Instructors in College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences 2002-2003 academic year
  - Land-grant mission - engagement
  - Microcosm of a university
- Survey, Fall semester 2003
- 50% \((N = 122)\) completed web-based survey
- 45% \((N = 109)\) usable surveys
Survey Questions

- **Closed-Ended**
  - Rank the roles in the order you value most
  - Rate your professional development needs as teachers

- **Open-Ended**
  - What motivates you as a teacher?
  - What do you do well as a teacher?
  - What are your greatest challenges you have about teaching?
Description of Participants

Average Years of Teaching Experience

- 10 at UIUC
- 14 in Higher Education
- 2 as TA/Post-Doc
- 1 outside of the academy

Average Teaching Load

- 8 contact hours/semester
- 36 students
Findings
Faculty Roles as Instructors

- Develop student thinking at higher levels
- Fostering student development
- Teaching facts and principles of the subject
- Help students develop basic learning skills
- Career preparation
- Being a role model for students
What motivates you as a teacher?

- Student engagement with the content
- Passion for the content
- Student success
- Interacting with students
- Professional responsibility
- Developing student thinking & life-long learning
- Teaching students to contribute to society
- Investigating teaching as a scholar
- Creating interest & motivating students
- Teaching as a higher calling
- Other professional motives
What do you do well as a teacher?

- Organize & explain content
- Engage students
- Care
- Make learning relevant
- Plan
- Foster thinking
- Technical expertise
- Enthusiastic/Entertaining
- Create a positive environment
- Accommodate needs
- Use multiple teaching strategies
- Teach 1-1
- Motivate students
- Use technology
- Reflect
Teaching Needs of Faculty

Greatest Professional Development Needs

- Teaching for thinking
- Motivating students
- Using a variety of approaches/strategies
- Using instructional technology

Faculty Didn’t Need

- Accommodating student differences
- Dealing with problems
- Developing assessments
- Syllabus/course design
What are the greatest challenges about teaching?

- Student motivation
- Time
- Student diversity
- Current content
- Communicating content
- Extending student thinking
- Lack of support
- Inspiring life-long learning
- Self-improvement
- Teaching concepts for understanding
Roles---------
Motivation

- Teaching for thinking ≠ Engagement
- Teaching facts and principles ≠ Content
- Student development = Student success
Roles------Perform Well

- Teaching for thinking ≠ Communicate facts
- Student Development = Caring for students
Needs
Challenges

- Motivating students = Motivating students
- Teaching for thinking ≠ (Time, content, diversity)
- Developing technology ≠ (Time, content, diversity)
Summary

Questions

- Are open or closed-ended questions more valid?
- Which is more valuable in faculty development---the products or the processes of reflection?