

# Enhancing Teacher Professional Development through Effective Needs Assessments at Zuyd Hogeschool

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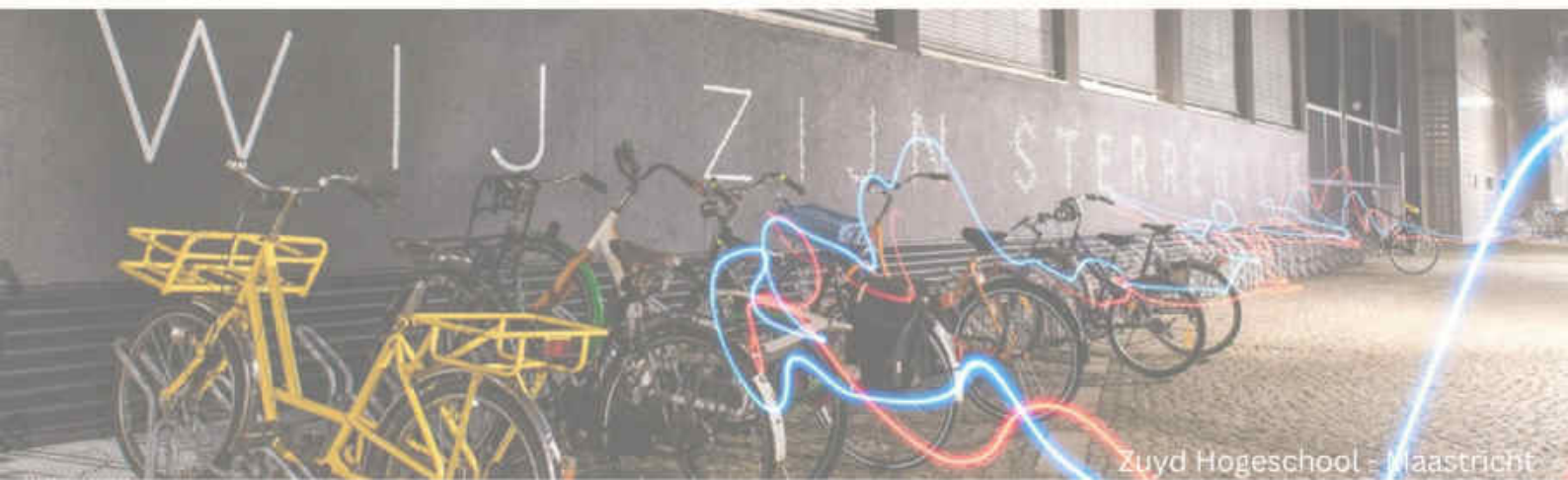
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# 1. Executive Summary

Zuyd Hogeschool is an educational institution with different study programs spread over various campuses in Sittard, Heerlen, and Maastricht. The university focuses on improving education, making it crucial that teachers contribute to their professionalization by engaging in lifelong learning. Teachers do recognize the importance of continuous professional development, but current usage of their professional development offerings may suggest that Zuyd Hogeschool might need to improve their method for assessing professional development needs. This project aims to identify and explore the best needs assessment method, or a combination of multiple methods, that can facilitate teachers in achieving their desired professionalization.

A two-step approach was conducted during the course of this project. Step one involved analyzing literature on different needs assessment methods, while also researching other organizations' current practices for analyzing the needs of their employees. The results of this analysis were reviewed and with the context of Zuyd Hogeschool taken into consideration, was able to generate four most suitable needs assessment methods for Zuyd Hogeschool. Step two involved the use of a qualitative research analysis which was conducted via interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. Open-ended questions were asked to better understand the stakeholders' opinions and preferences about the different methods and to gather other potential insights. Data was analyzed using inductive and deductive coding, and the results were compiled and consulted in order to provide practical advice for implementing a customized needs assessment method.



The insights from step one showed that surveys, advisory committees, interviews, and performance appraisals were the most suitable methods for Zuyd Hogeschool. Elaborating on this information in step two, the results indicated that the ideal needs assessment method would entail a combination of a survey, interview, and performance appraisal. The insights collected from key stakeholders at Zuyd Hogeschool highlighted the needs for better support and training for program managers to facilitate effective needs analyses, clear and streamlined communication on CPD, as well as the need for informal learning. Based on these insights, the following five recommendations have been established:

## Next Steps



Create a needs assessment method involving a survey for reflection (goal setting) and a performance appraisal.



Provide opportunities for teachers to take advantage of optional interviews with learning specialists.



Create a communication plan for when and what to communicate in CPD newsletters.



Provide training for program managers (e.g., to enhance skills for conducting performance appraisals)



Create kick-off events based on relevant CPD topics (e.g., how to spend your 40 hours of learning or informal learning)

Our insights demonstrate that Zuyd Hogeschool has the potential to enhance its continuous professional development for teachers by implementing these recommendations. By doing so, Zuyd Hogeschool optimizes its needs assessment method to ensure lifelong learning for their educators.

## 2. Introducing the Project Team



### **Yella Dirks**

Was born in Haarlem, The Netherlands, completed her Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management, and has experience in the field of learning in hospitality.

### **Laura Geuijen**

Was born in Roggel, The Netherlands, completed her Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management, and has experience in the field of coaching and training.

### **Carmen Ijpelaar**

Was born in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, completed her Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management and has experience in the field of Recruitment, Training, and Sales.

### **Sanne Thorborg**

Was born in Purmerend, The Netherlands, completed her Bachelor's degree in Learning Sciences and has experience in the field of training.

### **Erin Wake**

Was born in Ottawa, ON, Canada, completed her Bachelor's degree in Communications with a minor in Gender Studies, she has 10 years of experience in the field of program coordination and event planning at various non-profits in Canada.

### 3. Company Summary

Zuyd Hogeschool is a University for Applied Sciences offering higher professional education in the south of The Netherlands with locations in Heerlen, Maastricht, and Sittard. The institute is divided into 29 Academies which all focus on the institute's vision of education: "Passion for development." This means that their goal is to educate students so that they have the best knowledge, insights, skills, and attitude required for their professional careers. Zuyd Hogeschool has 1,750 employees, and together they offer education to 14,000 students. Zuyd Hogeschool consists of 27 Research Centers, each led by a professor (lector). The workforce of each Research Center includes a mix of teachers and researchers, where practice-oriented and socially relevant research is conducted. They contribute to innovations and developments in the field and connect practice and research with education. In their vision, Zuyd Hogeschool promotes student growth through engaging methods that use the most current technology to support instruction. Their course content stays current due to the incorporation of research and practice-oriented for the professional field, inclusive in connection, and highly adaptable to meet individual needs.



Zuyd Hogeschool - Heerlen



Zuyd Hogeschool fosters a work environment that highlights the importance of diversity, inclusiveness, and gender equality, they value ensuring that all employees and students feel included and appreciated. This company culture includes employees at all levels, but for the purpose of this project, the key stakeholders outlined below represent the sample of employees involved in the data collection and eventual recommendations that will be outcomes of this project:

## Key Stakeholders Involved

### Teachers

The teaching team at Zuyd Hogeschool is the target stakeholder of this project and is responsible for conveying new knowledge to students.

### Educational Innovation and Continuous Professional Development Research Centre

Miriam Goes-Daniëls is a Senior Researcher and is one of the direct contacts and clients.

Peggy Lambriex is a Senior Researcher and an Educational Manager at the Academy of Speech Therapy and is one of the direct contacts and clients.

Marcel van der Klink is a Research Director and one of the direct contacts and clients.

### Human Resources Department

The Human Resources (HR) department is responsible for the learning and development of employees, facilitating training offerings, and providing /outsourcing training and is one of the contacts and clients.

### Program Managers

Program managers are the link between the teachers on their team and the direction of Zuyd Hogeschool. They do not only act in a supervisory capacity and facilitate needs assessments and performance appraisals for their team but are also responsible for the budget.

### Educational Advisors

The educational advisors advise educational staff, management, and board members on how to effectively change the educational organization. The focus here is on vetting educational structures and following and implementing new, innovative educational developments.

## 4. Project Background



Zuyd Hogeschool - Sittard

This chapter will explain all the background information that is relevant to understand the project. There will be an explanation about continuous professional development and how this theme is currently addressed within Zuyd Hogeschool. Also, the needs assessment topic will be introduced by giving a definition, showing the need, and explaining multiple methods for assessing the needs of employees.

The project originated from the Research Centre; Miriam Goes-Daniëls, Peggy Lambriex, Marcel van der Klink and the Human Resources Department initiated the project. They ensured that the necessary information, guidance and support were provided at all times to make the project run smoothly.

### **Continuous Professional Development at Zuyd Hogeschool**

‘Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is essential for upgrading and updating teachers as the rate of social and educational change makes pre-service training an inadequate basis for long-term professional competence’ (Luneta, 2012, p.360). Based on the definitions of Jovanova-Mitkovska (2010) and Mukan et al. (2019), professional development for teachers can be described as a continuous, daily process of professional and personal development of teachers through new knowledge, skills, abilities, and strategies. As such, CPD creates lifelong learning; opportunities for acquisition or renewal of knowledge/skills; and inclusion of different sectors; gives room for implementing tasks by providing information and support; affects student learning; and improves teamwork between teachers (Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010).

Teachers, program managers, the human resources department, and educational advisors represent parts of the organization that are involved in both the facilitation of and receiving of CPD policies and programs offered by Zuyd Hogeschool. To provide CPD, Zuyd Hogeschool is consistently supporting teachers' professional development by offering various training courses. Teachers receive an allotment of 40 hours of training time per year to work on their professionalization.



Zuyd Hogeschool notes that the training time is currently not being utilized at a level that they would prefer, as the participation rate in training courses is low. According to the information obtained from HR regarding the participation of teachers in the offered training modules from 2018-2022, it can be observed that teachers mainly participate in the (mandatory) Basic Didactic Competence training. The information also shows an upward trend in teachers' participation in training modules, indicating that teachers are becoming more aware of the importance of professionalization. However, Zuyd Hogeschool hopes in the future that an even larger portion of the teacher population will participate in professionalization activities. A reason for the relatively low participation rate of teachers in professionalization activities could be the fact that teachers currently experience a tremendously high workload, making it difficult to see the added value of professionalization or being able to find the time to do so.

This indicates to Zuyd Hogeschool that they are not promoting and enabling their offerings in a way in which teachers will take advantage of the professional development opportunities that are available to them. Therefore, the Research Centre at Zuyd Hogeschool is interested in assessing precisely what their teachers need in order for Zuyd Hogeschool to facilitate their professional development. At this moment, there is not one centralized method being used by Zuyd Hogeschool to assess the needs of teachers regarding their professional development. Therefore, the large number of program managers working at Zuyd Hogeschool all have their own way of dealing with the professionalization of their employees. Also, there is no clear communication plan when it comes to informing program managers and teachers about training opportunities. Currently, teachers receive many emails about training and courses that can be taken, but this seems to be a bit of an overkill, resulting in teachers losing the overview or clear idea of where to begin.

## CPD at Zuyd Hogeschool



Teachers mainly participate in the mandatory *Basic Didactic Competence* training.



Current participation rate in training courses is low.



There is an upward trend in teachers' participation in training modules.

For CPD to be effective, there are certain features shown to be crucial. Important factors, according to the literature, are; high applicability, a step-by-step process provided by trained experts, clearly stated and communicated goals, a combination of theory and practice, relevant topics (for example, inquiry, collaboration, coaching, observation, and networks), and internal and technical support (Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2010). Also, according to Hartnell et al. (2011), CPD can only be effective within a learning culture that matches the following core values: belonging, mutual trust, and cooperation, with teamwork, participation, and human relations. Cameron and Quinn (2011) add to this that these values are vital for organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and learning processes.

According to a study conducted by Paor and Murphy (2018), the most important feature of CPD, indicated by teachers, is relevance. They explained that when CPD was based on their needs, school, or students and involved practical and applicable research, it worked best for them. Relevancy in professional development activities helps with getting teachers more engaged (De Paor & Murphy, 2018) and motivated (Salas et al. (2012). They feel more confident about their own knowledge/inquiries and are, therefore, more able to actively engage with knowledge from others (Hall, 2009). The other way around, it was also shown as one of the biggest failure factors of unsuccessful CPD.

*"...the most important feature of CPD, indicated by teachers, is relevance."*



## Needs assessment defined

The needs assessment process for professional development at Zuyd Hogeschool is an essential aspect of ensuring the success of CPD and the strengthening of a learning culture. Research indicates that learning is more likely to result in a change in practice, at least in terms of CPD, when a needs assessment has been done, training is linked to practice, a personal incentive drives the effort, and there is some reinforcement of the learning (Grant, 2002). In fact, there have been practical examples of professional development systems in the education sector that have failed due to a lack of proper needs assessment. These examples reinforce why it is essential that Zuyd Hogeschool investigates the best method for a needs assessment as a starting point for redeveloping its professional development program, process, and policies.



## Why are needs assessments necessary?

A need has been defined as the gap between an individual's expectations and the current situation (Moeini, 2008). There are several categories of needs that have been published, including felt needs (what individuals say they require), expressed needs (expressed in action), normative needs (what experts describe as needs), and comparative needs (group comparison) (Brown, 2002). Additional distinctions include those between individual and organizational or group needs, between administrative and clinical needs, and between subjective and objectively measured needs (Brown, 2002).

To provide training that will assist the organization in achieving its goals, a needs assessment is necessary to support the proper delivery of training options. A needs assessment is a continuous process of gathering data to identify training needs (Brown, 2002). It is also the first step of any learning activity, according to Salas et al. (2012). Organizations frequently create and implement training without first analyzing the needs. These organizations run the danger of over-training, under-training, or totally misunderstanding the goal (Brown, 2002). According to Brown (2002), there are four main outcomes of a needs assessment; 1) Identifying specific problem areas in the organization, 2) Obtaining management support, 3) Developing data for evaluation, and 4) Determining the costs and benefits of training. Additionally, Salas et al. (2012) include expected learning outcomes and design guidance to that list.

There are different components in needs assessments; organizational, task, and individual assessments (Brown, 2002; Salas et al., 2012). An organizational assessment is focused on the strategic alignment and environmental readiness of the organization, while a task assessment looks at what to and what not to include in the training and which knowledge, skills, or abilities are necessary. The last component looks at the participants and whether they have the prerequisites for the training that were determined in the task assessment.

The landscape of CPD is constantly changing, and organizations need to evaluate their employees' needs in a sufficient and efficient way to retain staff and remain competitive in the labor market. As Zuyd Hogeschool re-establishes its method and process for assessing the training and development needs of its employees, there are some singular or mixed method approaches that they can take into consideration:

### Training Needs Assessment Methods Table - Brown (2002)

Method	Method Explained
Assessment Centers	<p>For management development.</p> <p>To identify areas for improvement, have participants finish a series of exercises.</p> <p>Gauge potential by having employees work in simulated management situations.</p>
Focus Groups/ Discussion	<p>Can be formal or informal.</p> <p>Widely used method.</p> <p>It can be focused on a specific problem, goal, task, or theme.</p>
Document Reviews	<p>Organizational charts, planning documents, policy manuals, audits, and budget reports.</p> <p>Include employee records (accidents, grievances, attendance, etc.).</p> <p>Also includes meeting minutes, program reports, and memos.</p>

*Note.* Brown, J. (2002). Training needs assessment: A must for developing an effective training program. *Public Personnel Management*, 31(4), 569–578.

<p>Advisory Committees</p>	<p>Secure information from people who are in a position to know the training needs of a particular group.</p> <p>Supply data gathered from consultants by using techniques such as interviews, group discussions, and questionnaires.</p>
<p>Surveys/ Questionnaires</p>	<p>Maybe in the form of surveys or polls of a random or stratified sample or an entire population.</p> <p>Can use a variety of question formats: Open-ended, projective, forced-choice, and priority ranking.</p>
<p>Interviews</p>	<p>Can be formal or casual, structured or unstructured.</p> <p>It may be used with a representative sample or whole group.</p> <p>It can be done in person, by phone, at the work site, or away from it.</p>
<p>Performance Appraisals</p>	<p>May be conducted informally or systematically.</p> <p>Conducted by manager appraisal developed by HR.</p> <p>It should be conducted on a regular basis and separately from merit discussions.</p>
<p>Observations</p>	<p>Can be technical, functional, or behavioral.</p> <p>Can yield qualitative or quantitative feedback.</p> <p>It may be unstructured.</p>
<p>Tests</p>	<p>Can be functionally oriented to test a board, staff, or committee member's understanding.</p> <p>It can be administered in a monitored setting or 'take home'.</p>

Note. Brown, J. (2002). Training needs assessment: A must for developing an effective training program. Public Personnel Management, 31(4), 569-578.



This chapter outlines the challenges that this project is facing through an explanation of the problem statement, key objectives, and deliverables.

## **Problem Statement**

Because Zuyd Hogeschool is an educational institution and the employees are expected to continuously develop and professionalize, it is essential that the needs of employees can be properly inventoried. Hence, a needs assessment method should be tuned to Zuyd Hogeschool.

Currently, there are multiple needs assessment methods being used at Zuyd Hogeschool, but not one seems to be used consistently across all teams. It was observed that teachers make relatively little use of the current training offerings and opportunities. It was also noted that there is currently no (appropriate) communication plan on which professionalization opportunities are offered. Another challenge is that teachers are very busy and have little time to devote to their professionalization due to their busy teaching schedule. Furthermore, program managers often do not consider teacher professionalization frequently in conjunction with all of their other tasks.

Thus, several improvements are possible in the field of professionalization at Zuyd Hogeschool, with the first important step being to identify the best needs assessment method appropriate for teachers at Zuyd Hogeschool.

The question that will be answered is: What is the most appropriate needs assessment method for Zuyd Hogeschool? To gain insight into what needs to be achieved during this project, key objectives and deliverables have been drawn up.



Zuyd Hogeschool - Sittard

## Key Objectives

The first objective concerns a review of the needs assessment methods and indicating current practices of other organizations. The review is based on academic literature and describes suitable methods. The current practices for engaging teachers in needs assessments that align with their professional development will be assessed by contacting other Universities of Applied Sciences. Based on the literature and insights from practice, conclusions on the four most appropriate needs assessment methods will be drawn.

The second objective concerns data analysis for the most appropriate method for Zuyd Hogeschool and consists of several steps. The first step involves establishing the current situation. How are Zuyd Hogeschool employees experiencing the current situation? Next, it will be determined what the most appropriate method is according to the employees and what the advantages and disadvantages of that method are according to the employees. Finally, they will determine the ideal needs assessment method. The ideal scenario will be based on the literature and the current practices of other Universities of Applied Sciences, but especially on the data collected from the interviewees.

## Deliverables

Three key deliverables will be achieved in this project: Firstly, an infographic that offers the key findings in a visually attractive picture. Secondly, a final report that offers a comparison of the various methods for needs assessment, resulting in recommendations and a conclusion regarding the most suitable method according to the stakeholders. Finally, a presentation for the Research Centre and HR staff members will take place.

# 6. Methodology



Within this chapter the methodology that is being used for the conducted research will be described. The used two-step approach for analyzing the literature, current practices of other organizations, and qualitative data analysis will be discussed in detail.

## Our Approach

To support the basis for which Zuyd Hogeschool will be building its needs assessment process, as it relates to professional development, this project will make use of a two-step approach and focuses on 1) what kind of needs assessment methods exist in the literature, and in other organizations and 2) which methods are best suited, according to different stakeholder groups within Zuyd Hogeschool.

### **Step 1: Literature and Current Practices Analysis**

To achieve the objectives, the following approach was used. First, the most appropriate four needs assessment methods for Zuyd Hogeschool were selected based on an analysis of the literature and insights gathered during initial discussions with the client. Nine methods were outlined and reduced to four methods that were most suitable for Zuyd Hogeschool in the context of what obstacles had been described to the project team in the initial exploratory discussion. This was done by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of every method in combination with the context of Zuyd Hogeschool.

Further analysis of the methods took place during qualitative data analysis.

In addition, a market research sampling of current methods was conducted to find out what methods other organizations use to determine their employees' continuous professional development needs. We contacted several Universities of Applied Sciences from the Netherlands to share their needs assessment approach. During the conversations, notes were taken by a second person. These notes were then reviewed with the entire group. After discussing with the group the main outcomes of the interviews, they were summarized and written down in the report.



## Step 2: Qualitative Research Analysis

After the literature and current practices analysis, qualitative research took place in which various stakeholders of the organization were interviewed. This process included a data collection portion through a focus group and interviews with three groups of stakeholders: a representative from the human resource department, educational advisors, and teachers.



To gain insights into the most appropriate needs assessment method for teachers at Zuyd Hogeschool, a specific interview strategy, and guideline was created for each stakeholder group (Appendix A). One of the goals for the interviews was to research the current situation regarding CPD at Zuyd Hogeschool. Another goal was to get background information on how teachers communicate their professionalization needs at this moment in time. The four methods that were found to be most appropriate for Zuyd Hogeschool, according to the conducted literature analysis, were discussed with the interviewees. They were asked which method would be their preference, taking the context of Zuyd Hogeschool into account. The interviewees were also asked which method was least suitable and what the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen method were according to them. The last goal of the interviews was to find out what the interviewees thought would be the ideal situation for expressing their needs. The interviewees were allowed to combine multiple methods and come up with completely new ideas; this semi structured approach allowed for them to think outside the box.

Mostly open-ended questions were asked in which interviewees could share and explain their opinions. Follow-up questions were also asked to delve deeper into topics and discover the motivations behind the responses. This way, respondents had the chance to express their feelings and emotions about the current situation of what is required in order to share their needs at Zuyd Hogeschool. They could also recommend adjustments to the current situation, mention the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, choose their preferred and least preferred method, and even give an ideal scenario about how they would like to express their needs in the future.

Eight teachers were interviewed during data collection; these interviews lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and took place via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Furthermore, a focus group with seven members of Educational Support was conducted; this lasted approximately 50 minutes and was face-to-face at the location in Heerlen. Lastly, a 40-minute interview with a representative of HR took place via Microsoft Teams.

For the qualitative data analysis, an informed consent agreement was drawn up, describing in detail that the interview results would be treated anonymously and confidentially and that the interviewee could withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. In this way, the aim was to ensure that the interviewees could freely share their views and that anonymity would always be guaranteed.

During the interviews, notes were taken by a second project team member who was not leading the interview. After all the interviews, the project group reviewed the notes alongside the academic information collected about different needs analysis methods and created a coding scheme (Appendix B). By using inductive coding, the current situation, described by the respondents, for expressing their needs was coded. The thoughts about the different needs assessment methods and about whether they were suitable for Zuyd Hogeschool were coded based on the advantages and disadvantages from literature. Also, the most and least preferred methods were coded with the use of descriptives that were collected in focus groups/interviews. These descriptives involved the four discussed methods (interview, survey, performance appraisal, and advisory committee). Furthermore, the ideal scenario described by every respondent was coded based on a combination of literature and inductive coding. Lastly, if an interview still got important information that needed to be coded, a code was created for this information through inductive coding. Due to the accurate notes that were collected, specific coding could be done based on the prepared codes. It was chosen to have the data coded by the person who had taken the notes of that particular interview. In this way, we made sure that the notes were interpreted in the right way. Then the person conducting the interview coded the interview for the second time so that that coding could be done as accurately as possible. The coding scheme was constructed based on the themes of the interview questions, namely: current situation, preferred method, least preferred method, advantages and disadvantages of the methods, ideal scenario, and other important information. Subsequently, coding was done using sub-codes that expressly indicated what was meant by the code. From the coded data, results were compiled and described. Data was coded based on the number of participants in each group and the frequency with which a code was mentioned.

The value of using literature, practical examples, and direct feedback from those impacted most by the needs assessment process means that the results and conclusions have been thoroughly explored. Finally, based on all information and data collected along with the appropriate and practical advice that was noted, recommendations are offered so that Zuyd Hogeschool can implement its own customized needs assessment method to optimize teacher professionalization.

## Zuyd Hogeschool Needs Assessments Evaluation Process Flow

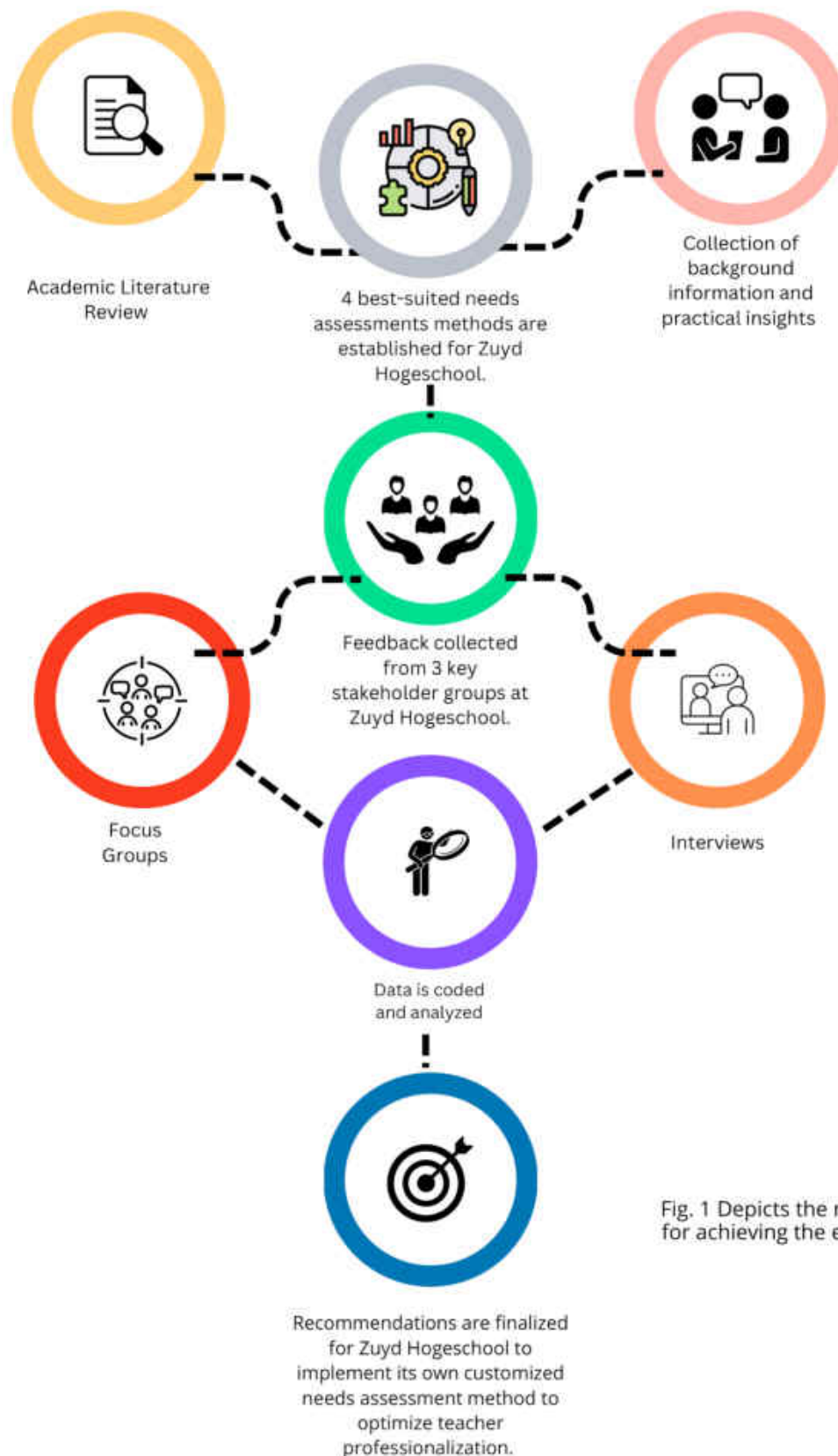


Fig. 1 Depicts the methodology and process for achieving the end results of this project.



Zuyd Hogeschool - Maastricht

This chapter will detail the two-step approach that was described in the Methodology chapter. First, the insights from the literature review of the various needs assessment methods will be discussed. Also, in this section, the insights gained from the market research on needs assessment methods used by other organizations can be found. Then, the insights from the qualitative data analysis will be discussed.

## **Insights from Academic Literature and Current Practices**

### **Insights from Academic Literature**

#### Surveys/Questionnaires

Surveys are a method of research that enables the gathering of data from a sample by request. Surveys can be conducted via interviews, questionnaires, or data collection via technology. Surveys are a cost-effective method of conducting a needs assessment but come with a specific step process for conducting them correctly, which ranges from developing the survey goals to analyzing the data. Surveys need to be designed intentionally to reduce measurement errors and to collect essential data (Mutepfa & Tapera, 2019). Surveys allow for diverse input from participants from various groups in which comparisons and conclusions can be made. It can also be accomplished in a quick and low-cost manner, which is beneficial when the desired outcomes of the survey need to be implemented (Bell, 1978). For these reasons, Surveys/Questionnaires are an ideal method worth further investigation at Zuyd Hogeschool.

### Advisory Committees

Organizations sometimes utilize advisory committees as a method for collecting information on certain internal matters. An advisory committee is a team of volunteers that get together regularly to offer guidance and assistance to an organization (Schaeffer & Rouse, 2013). Advisory committees can be used to evaluate every facet of a program and establish recommendations for improvement and can also be an important part of getting support for program implementation from fellow employees (Schaeffer & Rouse, 2013). In practice, advisory committees are able to be more adaptable in their approach and are not restrained by the same guidelines as a board, for example (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). When developing an advisory committee, there are important factors that should be considered: clearly describe the committee's mission and guidelines, and committee composition; ensure diverse thinking members with the proper knowledge and experience for the subject at hand, ensure group equity and not assigning leadership, and finally establishing advisory timelines and meeting frequency (Knotts, 2022; Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). As it relates to the case of Zuyd Hogeschool's needs assessment process, advisory committees can act in the best interests of teachers while also directly involving them; their expertise on this subject matter is invaluable and is why they are a method worth considering (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

### Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are the practice of evaluating an employee's individual performance over time (DeNisi & Smith, 2014). Performance appraisals can change over time according to the shifting goals and needs of an organization (Narkunienė & Ulbinaitė, 2018). Previous applications of performance appraisals were strictly to measure employee productivity and improvements, while modern performance appraisals now take into account elements like behavior, abilities, competencies, and teamwork during the evaluation period to find ways to grow (Narkunienė & Ulbinaitė, 2018). The use of performance appraisal data was taken into consideration by Herbert and Doverspike (1990) as a technique for person analysis and, consequently, a needs analysis in general. In practice, performance appraisals must be approached intentionally by management or training directors to gather the relevant information, which in turn impacts the future choices for the creation, implementation, and evaluation of training programs based on the needs assessment performed during a performance appraisal (Narkunienė & Ulbinaitė, 2018; Herbert & Doverspike, 1990). Using a performance appraisal method can lead to making more accurate assessments of individual employees' strengths and weaknesses, and training & development needs. This conversation will take place between two parties who are both familiar with the organization. Another advantage of this method is that it fits into an already existing employee management function that is in use at Zuyd Hogeschool, which makes it both time and cost-efficient to implement (Narkunienė & Ulbinaitė, 2018).

## Interviews

Interviews are an effective method for gathering specific data in qualitative research, and this method is one that can be altered to align with participant characteristics, the research question, or to match with the preference of the researcher/facilitator (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Unstructured interviews help to capture participant experiences in their own way, whereas semi-structured interviews concentrate on capturing key areas but still also allow participants the freedom to share their own perspectives. While an open method necessitates the researcher to keep attention without restricting debate, a structured strategy is simple to administer and assess but may limit participant expression (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). According to Flick et al. (2004), there are several points to consider when conducting an interview; First, it is important to explain the subject in a 'briefing' at the beginning of the interview; What will be talked about and why, what will the information be used for, and how this will be accomplished. Second, the interviewer should create a good, relaxed atmosphere during the conversation. Third, the interviewer should give their counterpart room to open up: retain an independent interest, and show the capability of getting at the truth. Fourth, the 'drama' should have an opportunity to develop: speak in plain language and ask short and intelligible questions to stimulate the interviewee to give more details. Lastly, the interviewer should not want to discover theoretical ideas but the lived experience of the interviewee. Some advantages of this method include getting a clear picture of the current situation as it relates to the problem and capturing verbal and non-verbal observations from participants (Flick et al., 2004). When deciding on the preferred method for needs assessments at Zuyd Hogeschool, these advantages are invaluable.

"Interviews can give a clear picture of the current situation as it relates to the problem."



### Assessment Centers

Assessment centers are a series of tests and simulations orchestrated to assess the suitability of the actual needs in roles, tasks, training, or competencies for current or potential employees (Woodruffe, 2000; Afsouran et al., 2022). While these types of assessments help people develop their competencies (Afsouran et al., 2022), they are specifically designed to help organizations make decisions about their people (Woodruffe, 2000). By carrying out the tests and simulations required of an assessment center for the purpose of establishing competencies, organizations can ensure that their human resources department has the required means and methods for development (Woodruffe, 2000; Afsouran et al., 2022). Assessment centers are thought to be an effective tool for corporate strategy and talent management, and as it relates to Zuyd Hogeschool specifically, a tool for diagnosing developmental needs. Assessment centers that look directly at development may also be referred to as Development Centres or Developmental Assessment Centers (Thornton, 2014). A useful tool when implementing assessment centers has been the involvement of a 'champion' in an organization who can sway perspective and encourage participation when new practices for needs assessments and development are being introduced. Ideally, this champion is not a part of HR but instead is a representative that embodies the interests of the entire organization (Thornton, 2014). Besides, this method is based on the idea that evaluation and development must be connected to get the best results. (Afsouran et al., 2022). While assessment centers are a valuable resource for collecting accurate data, in terms of a preferred method for Zuyd Hogeschool, it doesn't rank as high as it is a highly time-consuming practice. As indicated by the main contacts for this project, time/availability issues are a barrier for teachers as to why they are not able to complete their professional development, so the added time pressure of this method would add to their already increased capacity barriers.

Focus groups are a popular and well-established method of obtaining data by gathering information through the diverse perspectives of a group of participants. Through candid discussions and being able to build on the answers/perspectives of other participants, focus groups provide an opportunity for facilitators to create purposeful questions to collect the data required to support the research question. Participants may feel more inclined to share and 'piggyback' on the shared experiences of a homogenous group, which is at times listed as both an advantage and disadvantage. (Leung & Savithiri, 2009; Barbour, 2005; Brown, 2002). A facilitated discussion in a focus group allows for the collection of data related to the intended research goals, in relation to Zuyd Hogeschool, these focus groups would be based on the topic of needs assessments and held at purposely timed intervals in order to understand and find ways to support employee needs for professional development. When conducting focus groups, there are many details that need to be executed correctly to ensure the quality of results, so while they are useful for collecting data, many key factors need to be taken into consideration during preparation. Some of these factors include interpersonal influences, environmental influences, structure, recruitment, properly trained moderators, and many more (Leung & Savithiri, 2009, Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). When looking at how Zuyd Hogeschool plans to routinely implement its needs assessment method, this method is more suited to targeting specific problems in an ad-hoc manner rather than a regularly executed practice. This is due to the time-consuming preparation and execution it requires, especially as it can be a personal and sensitive discussion topic and will require expert facilitation to be done properly (Leung & Savithiri, 2009).

### Tests

Tests are a method of assessment that focuses on measuring knowledge or comprehension levels of a certain topic. Tests in the space of needs assessments specifically are useful in highlighting the gap between the current level of knowledge and skill and the desired or required knowledge and skills of participants/an organization (Brown, 2002). Testing as a method for need assessment allows for an evaluation of the current level of need but may not provide the insights required for improved facilitation of CPD at Zuyd Hogeschool. While testing can be a useful assessment tool that could be easily combined with current employee management processes in practice at Zuyd Hogeschool, it is not an ideal method for assessing and analyzing what needs need to be addressed in order to ensure that employees are actively participating in the training offerings available to them (Salas et al. 2012; Cedaka, 2010).



## Document Reviews

In using a document review to assess the needs of teachers, the process will use a significant number of resources that a human resources department can provide to pinpoint the areas of concern on this topic. The types of resources used in this method include employee records, organizational charts, audits, planning documents, and more (Brown, 2002). Document reviews hold valuable information with the potential to observe trends or obstructions that may be preventing employees from getting what they need in terms of professional learning and development. However, it is limited in terms of the representing accuracy of the employees' experience. Document reviews are better suited when used as a part of a mixed methods approach (Cekada, 2010). There are varying methods for accomplishing a document review process, but one consistent characteristic of thorough document reviews is that they require multiple levels of individuals, teams, and specialists in order to ensure a proper analysis (Bernhardt, 2003). This is why document reviews can often lead to being a long, tedious, and time-consuming activity. For effective document review practices, Bernhardt (2003) outlines the following key recommendations:

- Work on a project plan for document development.
- Use staged reviews.
- Structure the review session itself.
- Improve the quality of review commentary.
- Exploit electronic tools.

Document reviews can provide an opportunity to discover and measure the effectiveness of programs, policies, and methods but also require a specific skill set to ensure it is a worthwhile process. The large amount of data it produces require expert analysis, a process that can be inefficient and difficult to manage. And as Zuyd Hogeschool is looking to better support their teachers, this method does not provide the perspectives of the target group that is necessary to better reflect their current needs (Bernhardt, 2003; Brown, 2002).

## Observations

An additional method for gathering information during needs assessments is observation. The application of observation as a method creates opportunities similar to interviews, in which the collection can be done in a structured or unstructured manner. Observations allow for a more malleable approach in which during the outlined time-frame the method can begin as unstructured and once first impressions are built, move into a more structured approach (Gupta et al., 2007). Observations can be used as a way to measure and assess procedures and their effectiveness, however, in an office-style workplace, they tend to leave gaps in identifying specific skill or training needs (McClelland, 1994). Observation is more suited to physical and task work in which gaps can be easily identified visually. Zuyd Hogeschool's needs assessments require a more thorough investigation than observation can provide.



## Needs Assessments Methods used in Other Organizations

A lot of organizations have implemented different types of needs assessments, some based on the literature described above and others relatively different. A theory-based example is the use of surveys like the Werkonderzoek (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020) and TALIS (OECD, 2019) where the training needs were asked.

To improve the literacy level in the Philippines, there was a Training and Development Needs Assessment System (TDNA) conducted to enhance the teachers' skills and knowledge (Depedkoronadacity, 2012). The TDNA consists of job analysis, personnel analysis, and gap analysis. The job analysis was done by analyzing nationally set standards, while the personnel analysis was used to measure the current skills/knowledge of teachers. The last phase is the gap analysis which looks at the discrepancies between the two previous steps. There are certain standards they implemented for the TDNA to be effective: competency-based, efficient, integrative and unified, collaborative, quality-assured, and validity and reliability.

Partners of the SMART project (Second Chance School Working with Systematic Measurement of Outcomes) used a quantitative and qualitative assessment at different schools in different countries through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and feedback sessions (Jensen, 2016). By using these methods, they were able to identify the current knowledge/skills of teachers; existing measures for success factors at the organizational level, and identify gaps between the teacher and organizational level.

The Driestar Hogeschool used the Borich Needs Assessment Model to study the professional development of Christian teachers (De Kloe & Boele – de Bruin, 2013). By using this model, they were able to find out what kind of activities teachers think of as important and what their needs are for their professionalization. The Borich Needs Assessment Model is a methodological model that was created to use specifically for teachers as part of a follow-up study after teachers followed a certain training (Borich, 1980). It consists of 5 steps:

1. List competencies that represent program objectives.
2. Survey in-service teachers who followed training where they are (1) asked to evaluate the relevance of competency and their own current level on a Likert scale. A second method is to ask the teachers to evaluate competency in knowledge (how much they can remember from the training), performance (are they able to perform and use the learned skills in the classroom), and consequence (does it have the wanted effect in the classroom) competence.
3. Rank competencies based on the ratings obtained in the previous step. For each competence, the difference between the perceived relevance and the three dimensions of competences are calculated and called the discrepancy score.
4. Compare high priority competencies with the content of the training program.
5. Revise the program or revise competency based on the results.

Dutch higher education institutions similar to Zuyd Hogeschool are using so-called Learning Labs. The learning labs are meeting places where teachers work together on shaping personal, flexible, and challenging educational opportunities. These meetings can also provide insights into the training needs of teachers. Other examples of current practices of other Dutch higher education institutions are Woodclaps (an interactive teaching tool) during days that are focussed on teacher development or project groups with teachers where they are part of the development of the education.



The methods outlined in this section all have varying advantages and disadvantages for Zuyd Hogeschool when examining their current policies/procedures for needs assessments in relation to their professional development and training offerings. The current situation outlined in the exploratory phase of this project highlighted the present experience of all those involved in the needs assessment process at Zuyd Hogeschool. Based on these insights, together with the insights from the conducted market research, four methods that were most suitable for Zuyd Hogeschool were chosen. These methods are **Surveys/Questionnaires**, **Advisory Committees**, **Performance Appraisals**, and **Interviews**. By narrowing down these methods for the data collection portion of this project, a more streamlined approach is created to gather the data best suited for the outlined concerns that need to be addressed.

Surveys	According to Literature
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written data allows for drawing conclusions and comparing groups (Bell, 1978).</li> <li>• It can make comparisons within and between groups (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• It provides an opportunity for diverse input from the target audience and allows the target audience to express preferences about a variety of areas. (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Filling in a survey can be completed quickly and independent of place and time (Ball, 2019)</li> <li>• Less influence of social desirable answers (Nayak &amp; Narayan, 2019)</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a representative and sufficiently large sample (Bell, 1978; Nayak &amp; Narayan, 2019)</li> <li>• An opinion expressed on a questionnaire may not reflect a commitment on the part of the respondent to support a particular education offering (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Usually does not allow for open-ended questions (Bell, 1978; Ball, 2019)</li> </ul>
Advisory Committees	According to Literature
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides guidance that helps staff solve day-to-day problems (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> <li>• It supports and represents the interests of a program within a more prominent agency, such as a mentoring program operating within a multi-purpose social service organization (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> <li>• It offers a forum for program stakeholders (school and community partners, business supporters, youth parents, government workers, and volunteers) to communicate their opinions, share their expertise, and coordinate services (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> <li>• It acts as a link between program operations and the board through a member who serves on both groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> <li>• It provides the opportunity for input from representatives of target audience groups (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• It can provide collective insight and expertise for the subject matter (Zhu, 2014)</li> </ul>

Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It interrupts the workflow and takes time to develop, implement and process the system (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> <li>• It can create supervisor's bias by enabling managers to manipulate results to justify pay raises (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Appraisals</b>	<b>According to Literature</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicates individual strengths and weaknesses in skills, and identify training and development needs that is discussed with a familiar employee in the organization (Narkunienė &amp; Ulbinaitė, 2018)</li> <li>• Can be easily included in the already existing performance appraisals as it does not cost a lot of time/money. (Narkunienė &amp; Ulbinaitė, 2018)</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be costly to develop the system, implement the appraisals, and process the results (Narkunienė &amp; Ulbinaitė, 2018)</li> <li>• May enable managers to manipulate results to justify pay raises which may cause supervisor biases (Narkunienė &amp; Ulbinaitė, 2018)</li> <li>• Interrupts the workflow and take time (Narkunienė &amp; Ulbinaitė, 2018)</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>According to Literature</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Gives a picture of the current situation (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Can be used for formal or informal data collection (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Captures verbal and non-verbal emotions and behaviors (Oltmann, 2016)</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming, and costly (Bell, 1978; Barrett &amp; Twycross, 2018)</li> <li>• Some individuals may have difficulty identifying and articulating their needs (Bell, 1978)</li> <li>• Quality of data depends on the skills of the interviewer (snapsurvey Susan E. DeFranzo)</li> <li>• Interviews also present the problem of bias: the researcher must take care not to ask leading questions or give nonverbal cues that could influence the participants' answers (Barrett &amp; Twycross, 2018)</li> </ul>

## Insights from Qualitative Data Analysis

### Current Practices and Experiences with Needs Assessment

During the interview process, interviewees shared current experiences in expressing their needs towards professionalization at Zuyd Hogeschool. Almost all participants from the individual interviews and the focus group indicated that there is a method to express their needs, but not one policy. Different employees or departments within the institution may take different approaches to assessing the teachers' needs. Only two participants said that there is no method for expressing the teachers' needs.

The biggest part of the interviewed participants explained that it is possible to work on professionalization, but mentioned that it is essential to initiate your needs by taking your own initiative to professionalize. Some interviewees mentioned that they converse their needs with the manager. For all of this to work employees need to feel like program managers are trained to effectively have these types of conversations. The results suggest that this leads to different expectations between the participants and their program manager, as the participants hope to have a manager that thinks along. In contrast, the program manager expects participants to show their own initiative. As a final example, the participants indicate using the internal platform Zuydnet as a method for professionalization, as training opportunities can be found there. On Zuydnet, teachers can find opportunities to subscribe for training, courses, masters, and other development options. The three methods were mentioned by half or more than half of the teachers but were not mentioned by the educational advisors or the HR representative. According to one teacher, newsletters are used at Zuyd Hogeschool to inform employees about the newest professionalization opportunities.

There was an overlap of current methods in use, this was observed in comments made by participants two different groups of stakeholders. The first one is a performance appraisal that was mentioned by two participants from the teachers and two participants from the educational advisors. During the performance appraisals, questions were asked about what courses teachers want to do and how they want to develop themselves. The second one is the use of surveys as a method to indicate the need for professionalization. One teacher and the HR representative mentioned this method. The participants mentioned that surveys are used among teachers every two years where the needs for professionalization are indicated. Besides, there was an overlap between participants of the two groups telling that there was no method. One teacher and one educational advisor mentioned this. Both participants gave a very short answer by saying that there was no method without elaborating on it.



The HR representative at Zuyd Hogeschool also included task analysis and feedback on training as part of the expression of the needs. The representative explained that teachers' responsibilities and accompanying needs had been well investigated for the task analysis. Specific training programs have been created as a result of these findings. Evaluations are done for every training session to get feedback, and one of the questions is regarding any additional needs or demands that teachers could have.

Although there are a lot of different examples of current practices given during the interviews, there is not one method that all three groups named. This also shows that there is no official policy in the school.

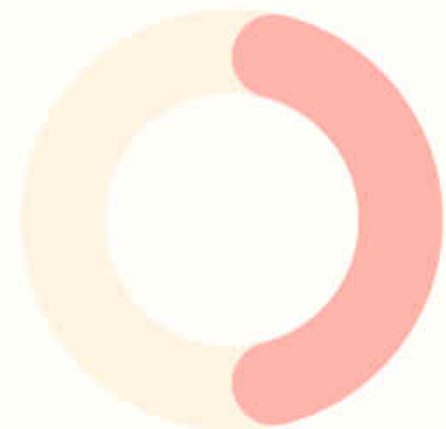
Teachers have voiced their discontent with the content of training programs, as they do not always match their needs; one other stakeholder supported this view. It has been reported that not all employees use their given professional development hours to the fullest.

## The Four Methods

During the interviews, all the participants were asked to share their most and least preferred method out of the four methods introduced. Some participants did have difficulty choosing a single best option because they believed that there is no single best method. This was the case for teachers, educational advisors, and the HR representative.

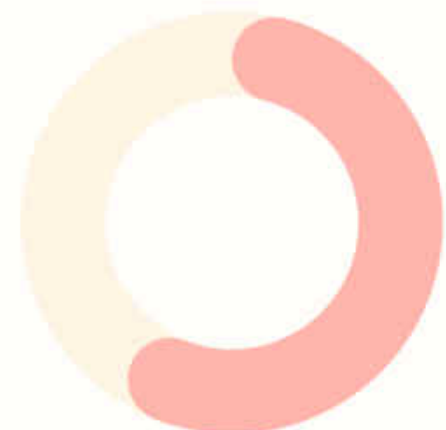
For both questions, two of the four methods were mentioned by the participants, see the pie charts for the distribution. The interview and performance appraisal were considered as most preferred and suitable for Zuyd Hogeschool, and the surveys and advisory committees were consistently named as the least preferred or suitable methods. The opinion of teachers was equally divided between the different methods. For the most preferred method, the majority of the educational advisors chose for the performance appraisal.

In addition to answering the question of which method was least or most preferred, an explanation was asked. The reasons to choose or not to choose a certain method were gathered in the tables below, next to the disadvantages and advantages additional literature research revealed.



Least Preferred Method  
(All Participants)

● Surveys  
● Advisory Committees



Most Preferred Method  
(All Participants)

● Interview  
● Performance Appraisal

<b>Surveys</b>	<b>According to employees of Zuyd Hogeschool</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting general info</li> <li>• Gives a broad needs overview of the whole organization</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have the ability to manipulate the results</li> <li>• The information is already in the employees file</li> <li>• It limits the different possibilities for teachers</li> <li>• No follow-up questions</li> <li>• No personal contact</li> <li>• Low response rate due to lack of time</li> </ul>
<b>Advisory committees</b>	<b>According to employees of Zuyd Hogeschool</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong on long term projects</li> <li>• It has expert knowledge on the specific area and can advise on professionalization</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It makes simple tasks seem very big</li> <li>• It is not effective</li> <li>• It limits the different possibilities for teachers</li> <li>• It is an unnecessary link between program manager and teachers</li> <li>• Time-consuming</li> <li>• Bureaucratic</li> </ul>



<b>Performance Appraisals</b>	<b>According to employees of Zuyd Hogeschool</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives pressure to participate in trainings</li> <li>• A form of acknowledgement of teachers</li> <li>• Stimulates informal learning</li> <li>• It can give an overview of team professionalization needs</li> <li>• Gaining new insights</li> <li>• Guidance</li> <li>• Individual contact</li> <li>• The system performance appraisals are already implemented</li> <li>• Assessing needs from both perspectives (school and teachers)</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It limits the different possibilities for teachers</li> <li>• It is influenced by extrinsic motivation</li> <li>• It depends on the managers perspectives on lifelong learning</li> </ul>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>According to employees of Zuyd Hogeschool</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used for Assessing needs from both perspectives</li> <li>• It is a good way to make needs insightful</li> <li>• Personal contact</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not objective</li> <li>• It limits the different possibilities for teachers</li> <li>• It is labor-intensive</li> <li>• It can create false promises/hope</li> <li>• It is not possible to speak with all the teachers, there is not enough time</li> </ul>

By comparing the insights from both the literature and data collection, we described for each method the most important advantages and disadvantages, see the table below.

	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Performance Appraisals</b>	<b>Surveys</b>	<b>Advisory Committees</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	A way to assess the needs of both perspectives and gain additional information by personal contact	It doesn't have high implementation costs because they already exist and are able to gain insights into needs from both perspectives. It can also act as an extra pressure to participate in professionalization because of the individual guidance	It can provide a broad overview of a certain topic spread over a large target group	It creates a knowledgeable guide where both the school and the teachers can ask questions
<b>Disadvantages</b>	It is time-consuming and not objective; it depends on the skills and perspectives of both the program managers and teachers	The perspectives of the managers have a large impact on the effectiveness of the system	It does not look for explanations behind the answers and has a lower possibility of necessary responses for the results to be representative	It is not an effective way due to its time-consuming and bureaucratic elements



The final question of all interviews was to describe the ideal scenario with regards to a needs assessment policy. The interviewees were told they could think as big as they wanted and also combine multiple methods.

Almost half of the teachers interviewed felt like the ideal scenario would be a combination between a survey or a platform in which you can fill in your interests and an interview with an independent person to speak about the outcomes of the survey/platform. A quarter of the teachers interviewed mentioned the combination between interview and performance appraisal as the ideal scenario for expressing their needs.

Two of the eight teachers that were interviewed discussed that they want to express their professionalization needs within the performance appraisal conversation with their manager. They both mentioned that in the ideal scenario, they would get a bonus, in the form of money, to reward the time they invested in their professional development. Both find it unfair that they do not receive rewards for working on their professional development because their colleagues are less motivated and are not affected by this. One of the two teachers that participated in the research who wanted a bonus mentioned that this idea is not really sustainable, as it influences the extrinsic motivation of teachers instead of the intrinsic motivation. One of the teachers mentioned a combination between performance appraisal and an advisory committee as the ideal scenario.

Within the focus group with the educational advisors, a combination of interview and performance appraisal was most often named as the ideal scenario. The HR representative we spoke to also indicated this as the ideal situation. A single person also mentioned the combination between performance appraisal and advisory committee.

The use of a combination of different assessment methods was described in all the interviews. But as is shown in examples from other organizations, it is also commonly implemented.



## The Current Learning Culture at Zuyd Hogeschool

Based on inductive coding, some crucial aspects became visible to create a learning culture. The first aspect is communication. Participants mentioned that there are newsletters and emails that give information about learning opportunities, but they are unclear, or there are too many. The HR representative agreed that there is a need for an effective communication plan since the teachers are difficult to reach. It was thought that this was due to the large size of the organization, which could make it very difficult to impossible to reach every member of the organization. Teachers explained that they did not do anything with the newsletter or emails because they did not feel the need to search for further information.

The second aspect is a knowledgeable program manager or independent person. Some of the participants have indicated that they expect their managers to have the ability to recognize their employees' needs by actively listening during conversations. This involves talking about training choices that can specifically address requirements. Besides, program managers are expected to be aware of the training programs and resources available within the organization. Participants indicated that this knowledge enables managers to match the suitable training to the employee. Other teachers feel like an independent person, that is specialized in professionalization opportunities, can help them find the appropriate training. These respondents think their managers are not aware of all the possibilities that are there, but they also don't expect their manager to be. A popular solution given by teachers and the HR representative was to be able to talk about your professionalization needs with an independent person first and then with your program manager. According to the educational advisors, a program manager will think more in the interest of the organization and the team rather than in the interest of the individual.

The third aspect is informal learning. The participants have indicated seeing the need not always to base their learning on formal learning but also base it on informal learning. They cited a need for learning options that incorporate informal learning techniques in addition to formal education. Particularly, it was emphasized how important informal learning is to beginning teachers' professional growth.

The final aspect indicated by the interviewees for the creation of the learning culture is (intrinsic) motivation. Most teachers claim to be self-motivated, but they worry that others might not share their outlook or appreciate the value of intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, it was indicated by the participants that the autonomy of the teachers must be taken into account while implementing a learning culture, and excessive extrinsic motivation should be avoided since it might reduce the efficiency of the training.

# 8. Recommendations

Zuyd Hogeschool - Maastricht

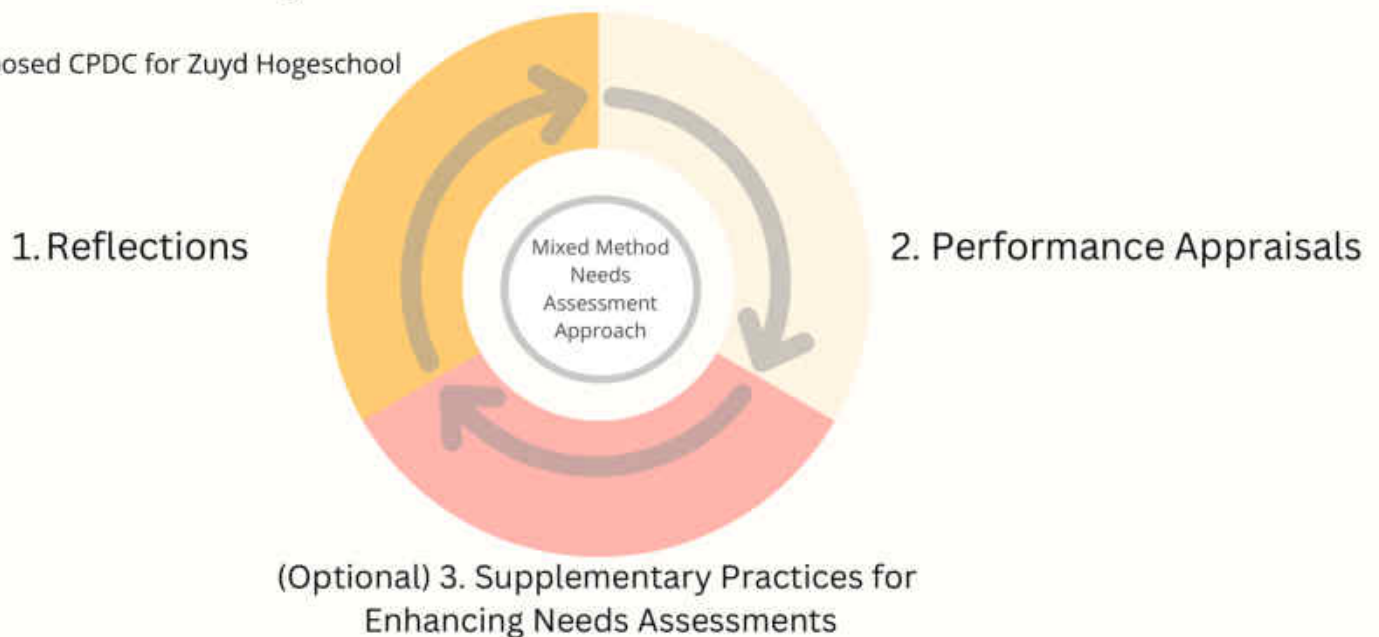
This chapter uses the insights from literature, current practices, and qualitative data analysis to come up with recommendations for handling the main challenges Zuyd Hogeschool faces regarding the continuous professional development of their employees.

## General Problem & Outline

Teachers make limited use of existing offerings, and their busy schedules hinder their ability to focus on professional development. Besides, teachers indicated during the interviews that they aim for more guidance from their program managers. However, the insights also indicated that program managers are not familiar with all the learning opportunities within Zuyd Hogeschool. The final challenge discovered was the unstructured communication about professionalization opportunities throughout the year. Zuyd Hogeschool aims to identify the most appropriate needs assessment method. As there is currently no centralized method to identify and address the professionalization needs of teachers.

To address all of the above-stated challenges, the recommendations will provide practical solutions in the form of a Continuous Professional Development Cycle (CPDC). By implementing the recommendations, Zuyd Hogeschool will be able to create a learning culture which is necessary for the needs assessment method to have the intended effects.

Fig. 2 - Proposed CPDC for Zuyd Hogeschool



Above the CPDC is visualized. In this cycle, the needs assessment method is centralized since this is the foundation of the recommendation. Next to the assessment method, there are also a few additional recommendations. These are divided into need-to-haves for the needs assessment and nice-to-haves for the CPDC.



## **Most Appropriate Method: Goal Setting Reflection and Performance Appraisal Conversation on Professional Development**

Based on the literature and interviews with various stakeholders, it was decided not to choose one specific method but a combination of the best elements from different methods. This combination will now be explained in further detail.

### **Problem & Outline**

It emerged from the interviews that there currently is no centralized approach to gauging teachers' professional development needs. It was indicated that not all program managers pay enough attention to professionalization. The following interventions attempt to clearly encourage the identification of professionalization needs and provide clear direction for the professional development process among teachers.

### **Intervention: Needs Assessment Method**

#### **1 - Goal Setting Reflection for Professional Development**

The first step in the CPDC entails teachers reflecting on their professionalization. This involves the teacher considering what he or she has done in the past year regarding professionalization, how they have fared, where the teacher would like to go in the coming year, and what development is needed to do so. According to Griggs et al. (2018), reflecting consists of being able to learn goal-oriented within a changing and demanding professional environment. Reflecting allows for deeper learning and applies critical thinking to the teacher. By asking questions, awareness for further development can be created (Griggs et al., 2018).

The teachers will be asked to reflect on their professionalization through a survey with targeted questions. The questions encourage teachers to think more deeply about their professional development needs. The following target questions will be asked in the Goal Setting reflection:

- What have you undertaken in terms of professionalization in the past year?
- What did you want to achieve with the professionalization actions?
- Did you achieve the desired development you wanted to achieve?
- What development needs do you currently have?
- What do you need to be able to start working on these development needs?

## 2 - Performance Appraisal Conversation

During the annual performance appraisal, an element will be added in which professionalization will be discussed. The answers to the survey questions will be discussed in detail. In this way, the program manager is helped by having a guide to conduct the professional development conversation. Griggs et al. (2018) indicate that it is necessary to apply various reflection techniques, both to reflect individually as well as verbally, through a conversation where encouragement can be given to be able to reflect on CPD in various ways. In-depth feedback of one way to improve development (Griggs et al., 2018). The professionalization needs can thus be discussed in more depth, creating a clearer picture of the following steps to achieve the desired professionalization goals. From there, an action-oriented plan can be drawn up that sets out the steps to achieve the development for the teacher. This action plan outlines specific actions the teacher should take in professional development activities to achieve the desired situation. Lambert (2003) confirms that this method can work effectively and indicates that it is crucial in teacher leadership that the one-on-one conversation creates a dialogue, is engaging, and coaching questions are asked. Conversations are most effective when the leader is a good listener (Lambert, 2003). The conversation is therefore done by a manager who is trained for it. In the program managers' training intervention, it will be explained in more detail what this entails. The program manager should know how to conduct a conversation to gain insight into professionalization needs and how to anticipate the next steps. For this method to be effective, the manager should take on a coaching role in which asking detailed questions is central to clearly identifying professionalization needs.



A disadvantage of adding an element of professionalization to the existing performance appraisal could be that a performance appraisal also has an evaluative function, and those two parts of the conversation should be separate. To tackle this, there should be a clear separation in the conversation so that the performance appraisal is not linked to the professionalization component.

## Impact

By completing the reflection questions, teachers are challenged to think more deeply about where they want to go professionally and about the associated professionalization needs that are required. More in-depth and personalized attention can be placed on each teacher and their professional development. Because the program manager works specifically with the answers to the reflection questions during the performance appraisal to identify the professionalization needs, the program manager has the tools to steer the conversation in the right direction. By having a direct conversation, the program manager has immediate insight into the professionalization needs of the teacher.

In addition, after all the interviews, the program manager has a clear overview of the professionalization needs of all his team members so that this can be addressed at **the team level**. This is beneficial because several staff members have indicated that it is of undeniable importance that teachers learn from each other through informal learning. Expertise and development needs can be clarified per team, making it clear which teachers can learn from each other. Teachers can benefit from each other's strengths and their own weaknesses. In this way, informal learning can be facilitated in an accessible way.

Through this approach, at **the organizational level**, a streamlined process can be created in which well-considered choices are made so that teachers can continue to professionalize and learn. In this way, an attempt is made to create an organization with professionals who can achieve quality teaching now and in the future, remain employable, and continue to guarantee good education.



## Additional Recommendations - Needs to have for the needs assessment

Below we will describe two additional recommendations that we think are important to have for the needs assessment to work effectively.

### Problem & Outline

Based on the interviews conducted with the different stakeholders at Zuyd Hogeschool, it was mentioned that talking with the program manager is not always sufficient when there is a need for professionalization. Different reasons were given to this challenge, including the need to express professionalization needs with another employee within Zuyd Hogeschool. Teachers indicated that the bond between teacher and program manager is sometimes not optimal, and there is a need to speak with a professional due to the lack of knowledge a program manager has about the learning opportunities within Zuyd Hogeschool. To address these needs, Zuyd Hogeschool requires optional interviews with independent employees that have expertise in the professionalization opportunities of Zuyd Hogeschool.

### Intervention: Voluntary Interviews

The same approach as the approach for the performance appraisal is used when conducting the voluntary interview with a training specialist (an example of how this could look is featured below). Having conversations with a third party is valuable for gaining extra insights into the needs of the teachers (Granek & Weingarten, 1996). This independent person should be someone working within or outside the organization and should not be familiar to the teacher as it can decrease objectivity (Boswell & Boudreau, 2002).

**Example Scenario:** Zuyd Hogeschool selects or recruits Educational Advisors to receive the program manager training (explained in detail in the next section) which creates neutral space for interviews for teachers to discuss their professionalization needs outside of their performance appraisal and separate from their relationship with their Program Manager.



## Impact

By implementing optional interviews with an independent person, **teachers** will get the opportunity to reach higher levels considering their professional development. As it is not mandatory, the perspective the individual has on the conversation will be very different as it is not something to tick off, but it is because someone has a request for help with their professionalization. However, the counterpart is that the employees that will need this conversation the most, will not use it as they do not see the need of developing professionally. **Teachers and program managers** are given more help and direction throughout the professionalization process when a third party, such as an HR or educational adviser, is involved. When the manager and instructor don't get along well or when the program manager notices that the desired degree of growth might not be reached, this independent person can be helpful. They provide insightful advice and support in identifying appropriate tactics to optimize the teacher's professional development, ensuring that their full potential is realized. The requirement to make a free independent individual available for these interviews has an impact on **the organization**. Using this extra resource enables teachers to become more professionally specialized in a larger variety of learning opportunities, leading to improved employee skill sets for the organization.

## Problem & Outline

Next to the importance that the teachers work on professionalization, insights indicated that the knowledge and skills of program managers are just as important. So, there is a need for program managers to assist the teachers in their professional development during performance appraisals and other conversation between the program manager and teachers. Currently, the stakeholders indicated that program managers are not specifically trained in having these conversations making the differences between different program managers large. Program managers require training to help teachers converse with their program managers and to mitigate the gap between the different program managers.

## Intervention: Program Managers Training

Training is an important aspect to contribute to lifelong learning for teachers, as relying on formal education is not sufficient enough (Park & Kim, 2020). Salas et al. (2012) indicated that training is effective for lifelong learning. So, for the improvement of the learning culture at Zuyd Hogeschool, the training for program managers should focus on increasing the skills for conducting conversations (during the performance appraisals). To succeed in this training, three stages are important. The first stage is to find out the needs per program manager through a training needs analysis (TNA) (Salas et al., 2012). Every person has their own set of skills that they bring, so that means that general training might not be effective for each manager. Tailoring is key in setting up the training to meet the needs of each program manager. Specifically, Salas et al. (2012) indicate three different analyses:

- a job-task analysis
- an organizational analysis
- a person analysis

The second stage is during the training, where the design of the training should be based on what is aimed to be reached. The correct explanation, correct and specific content, and having background information about the participants (Salas et al., 2012). In addition, clear communication about scheduling, attendance, and notification should be prepared (Salas et al., 2012).

The final stage is the transfer to the work setting. To make sure the training is as effective as possible for the program managers and for the teachers, trainers should make sure to monitor the transfer and if the training is implemented correctly (Salas et al., 2012).

By implementing these stages, Zuyd Hogeschool can increase the effect of the training. One of the stakeholders indicated that currently, training is created but is not yet given to the program managers.

## Impact

By addressing this need, the skills of the **program managers** might increase as they specifically get to learn how to conduct a performance appraisal that can also be useful in other aspects of their work. This also impacts **the teachers** as they can receive assistance from their program manager on a higher level. On a **team level**, all different teams will receive guidance from their program manager that is more aligned to other approaches to mitigating the large gap between these skills. For **the organization**, this might result in higher-skilled program managers that might use their skills to better support the teachers and together, this improves the quality of the whole organization.

## Additional Recommendations - Nice to haves for the CPDC

As final additional recommendations, two interventions are described which are nice to have. This means that they are not a prerequisite for the other recommendations to work but examples of other activities to include in the continuous professional development of teachers and for the enhancement of the learning culture.

### Problem and Outline

Both in the interviews and in the earlier meetings it became clear that the professionalization opportunities are not fully used by teachers and/or program managers. Mostly due to time constraints and high work pressure.

### Intervention: Kick-off Event



Fig. 3 - An example of a potential development day schedule.

### Impact

Host a professional development day for the teachers as a kick-off day to start the new academic year with inspiration and as a tool to keep the topic in the teacher's minds. Organizing a professionalization-themed event is already a current practice, as we learned from similar organizations. By organizing a specific event for professionalization, **the teachers** can not only learn from being there but also have an opportunity to learn from each other (Grodsky & Gamoran, 2003). By including team-building activities during this day, this effect can be further improved (Michinov & Juhel, 2017).

Hearing from colleagues and learning from their examples has a positive effect on the intrinsic motivation of **teachers** (Peeters et al., 2014). Teachers showed this to be very important for their participation in professionalization opportunities.

Another part of this event is to organize a meeting about informal learning and how to recognize it. Teachers mentioned the importance of the use of informal learning and a tool to implement it in their professionalization. By making teachers more aware of their own informal learning, they can better recognize it. This can lead to feeling accomplished and confident with their learning (Denson et al., 2015). On **the organizational level**, better recognition of informal learning opportunities and experiences can help with improving the learning culture (Crans et al., 2021).

## Problem and Outline

From multiple sources came to the observation that the communication about professionalization, whether it is about opportunities or policy, was unstructured. There are sometimes too many emails or notifications and too many different sources. This then also led to teachers not looking at or using the communication because it would lead to more work.

## Intervention: Newsletter

Dedicate a small part of the current newsletter to professionalization. Opportunities can be described and advertised, or teachers who had an interesting experience with training can write a blog.

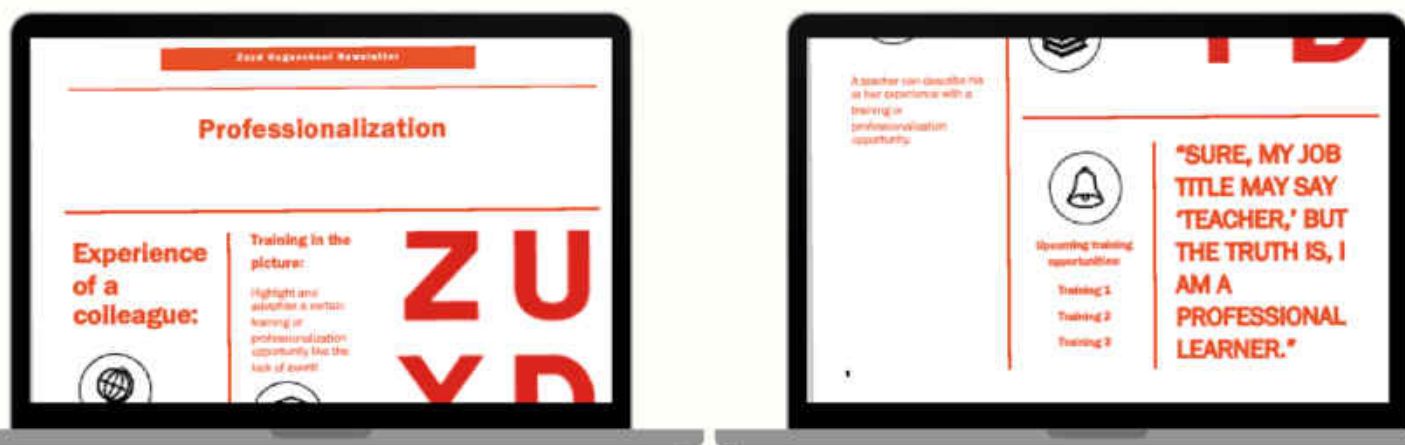


Fig. 4 - A mock-up of what a potential 'Professionalization' feature could look like in a Zuyd Hogeschool letter.

## Impact

On **the organizational level**, communication will be improved by having one main source. It also helps with improving the learning culture because it makes it clear where people can expect and find to learn certain information (Barry, 2022). There are a few other important aspects of communication to help with the learning culture (Barry, 2022). Starting each article in the newsletter by describing why professionalization is needed and why opportunities exist will keep the objective and purpose clear for all the stakeholders on an **individual level**. Clarity can be achieved by making sure the article is written in the same organizational language as the teachers. By having other teachers write about their experiences, this probably will not be an issue.

## 9. Conclusion

The goal of this project was to help Zuyd Hogeschool improve the participation of teachers in their professionalization. Currently, Zuyd notices almost no use of professionalization opportunities by the teachers. To try to support the teachers, Zuyd Hogeschool wants to implement a suitable needs assessment.

To find a suitable needs assessment method for Zuyd Hogeschool, multiple steps were taken. Next to a review of the literature and current practices at other organizations, interviews were held with teachers, and a representative from HR. An additional focus group was conducted with educational advisors of Zuyd Hogeschool.

Our results showed that the current professionalization opportunities were not clearly communicated, sometimes lacked relevance, and teachers did not feel they had the time to participate in training. But they are motivated to participate and would like to talk to someone about the possibilities.

Therefore our recommendation for a needs assessment is to combine it with the performance appraisal. We also made the needs assessment part of a larger cycle to help improve the learning culture necessary for teachers' professionalization.

We hope that this report provides new information and insights for Zuyd Hogeschool to implement a needs assessment method and further develop the learning culture.

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# 11. Appendices

## *Appendix A*

### **Interview Strategy**

This study aims to find the best needs assessment method to engage Zuyd Hogeschool teachers in working on their professional development. After indicating the (3-5) potential best needs assessment methods based on the literature review, data collection will take place. Data will be collected through a mixed method:

A focus group interview with members of the educational support. Two interviewers will do this, so notes can also be taken.

An interview will take place with an HR official. Again with two interviewers. Interviews with 8-10 teachers, possibly from various courses or departments. These interviews will take place 1-on-1.

The largest group to be interviewed will be teachers, so that the research sample will be a representative group for the entire school. We estimate a group of 8 to 10 teachers to be interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews will be used to better understand the best method for the teachers to engage in their development. Most employees of Zuyd Hogeschool are Dutch, so the primary language for interviews will be Dutch. There may be non-Dutch speakers in one of the key stakeholder groups that wish to participate in the interviews, so we will make sure the interviews can also be conducted in English. The interviews will take place online, so it takes little time for each employee to participate. However, the focus group will potentially take place physically. The interviews will take place in the week of 15 May.

As mentioned, the interviews will be semi-structured, indicating that questions will be established in advance to remain consistent within all the interviews. However, there remains room for asking questions during the interview, ensuring participants can share their ideas of the best needs assessment method.

From the different perspectives, conclusions can then be drawn from the interviews about what the interviewees think are the most appropriate needs- assessment methods. The reasons the interviewees gave for this will also be described.

## Interview Guideline Teachers and HR

Introduction:

Opening

- Thank you for participating in the interview and thus participating in the project.
- The interview will last about 20 to 30 minutes.

Practical

- During the interview, notes will be taken for analysis afterwards. At all times, the privacy rules of Maastricht University and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences will be followed, which guarantees, among other things, anonymity. We therefore hope that it will be possible to speak freely.
- You can leave the interview process at any time if you no longer wish to participate in the project.

Structure

- Explanation of the research: We are (names of interviewers) and from the master's program Learning and Development in Organizations, Maastricht University, we are doing a project with some fellow students on needs analysis for professionalizing teachers at Zuyd Hogeschool.
- To identify professionalization needs of teachers, we are conducting research to gauge what teachers need in order to participate in training/development opportunities. Hence, we are very curious about your opinion on different needs assessments and which one is most appropriate at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.

To get an idea of which needs analysis methods are focused on, these are briefly explained:

- Advisory committee: An advisory committee is a group of people who work as a link between the employee and the employer. On the one hand, the employer can approach the advisory committee with questions regarding professional development of the team. Conversely, the employee can also go to this committee with such issues. The advisory committee has knowledge about the possibilities and can link the right people.
- Interview: a conversation in which the needs for professional development are examined. This is done using open and closed questions (which may involve follow-up questions)
- Questionnaires: A quick way to collect and analyze a lot of data through a questionnaire with closed-ended questions looking at where the needs of the population lie.

- Performance Appraisal: an interview that reveals the status of an employee's current performance and the target level of performance. In this way, the gap between current and target performance can reveal what development opportunities are needed to achieve the target performance level.

#### Clarification

- Please let us know if you need more information on certain topics or questions or if you would like a question to be repeated.
- Take the time you need to respond to the questions.
- Are there any questions at this time? If not, we can begin the interview.

### **Interview Questions:**

#### Introduction

- Definition needs assessments
- What is your experience with needs assessment within Zuyd University of Applied Sciences?
- Explain different methods
- How do you learn about upcoming courses or how do you apply? (Do not ask HR this one)

#### Centerpiece

- Which needs analysis method is your preferred and why?
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?
- Which needs analysis method is your least preferred and why?
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?
- If you could create an ideal scenario for indicating professional development needs, what would it look like?

#### Conclusion/Conclusion

- Summarize
- We have now arrived at the end of the interview.
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thanks again for your time and effort, the interview has been very valuable

### **Interview Guideline Focus Group of Educational Advisors**

#### **Introduction:**

##### Opening

- Thank you everyone for participating in this focus group and thus participating in the project.
- The focus group will last approximately 45 minutes.

## Practical

- During the interview, notes will be taken to be analyzed afterwards. At all times the privacy rules of Maastricht University and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences will be followed, which guarantees, among other things, anonymity. We therefore hope that it will be possible to speak freely.
- You can leave the interview process at any time if you no longer wish to participate in the project.

## Structure

- Explanation of the research: We are (names of interviewers) and from the master's program Learning and Development in Organizations, Maastricht University, we are doing a project with some fellow students on needs analysis for professionalizing teachers at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.
- To identify professionalization needs of teachers, we are conducting research to gauge what teachers need in order to participate in training/development opportunities. Hence, we are very curious about your opinion on different needs assessments and which one is most appropriate at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.
- To get an idea of which needs analysis methods are focused on, these are briefly explained:
- **Advisory Committee:** An advisory committee is a group of people who work as a link between the employee and the employer. On the one hand, the employer can approach the advisory committee with questions regarding professional development of the team. Conversely, the employee can also go to this committee with such issues. The advisory committee has knowledge about the possibilities and can link the right people.
- **Interview:** a conversation in which the needs for professional development are examined. This is done using open and closed questions (which may involve follow-up questions)
- **Questionnaires:** A quick way to collect and analyze a lot of data through a questionnaire with closed-ended questions looking at where the needs of the population lie.
- **Performance Appraisal:** an interview that reveals the status of an employee's current performance and the target level of performance. In this way, the gap between current and target performance can reveal what development opportunities are needed to achieve the target performance level.

## Clarification

- Please let us know if you need more information on certain topics or questions or if you would like a question to be repeated.
- Take the time you need to respond to the questions.
- Are there any questions at this time? If not, we can begin the interview.

## Interview Questions:

### Introduction

- Definition of needs assessments
- What is your experience with needs assessment within Zuyd University of Applied Sciences?

### Centerpiece

- Explanation Wooclap (individual, multiple choice question): Which needs analysis method is your preferred and why?
  - Discuss which methods everyone chose
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?
  - Discuss advantages and disadvantages
- Which needs analysis method is your least preferred and why?
  - Discuss which methods everyone chose
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?
  - Discuss pros and cons
- Wooclap individually (Open question): If you could create an ideal scenario for indicating professional development needs, what would it look like?
  - Discuss answers

### Conclusion/Conclusion.

- Summarize: come up with perhaps one preferred and one least preferred method
- With the whole group, come up with one ideal scenario
- We have now arrived at the end of the interview.
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thanks again for your time and effort, the interview has been very valuable.



## Appendix B

### Coding Scheme

Sub-Concept Code	Sub Code		
Current situation	No needs assessment method		
	Performance appraisal		
	Supervisor		
	Zuidnet: professionalisering		
	Newsletters		
	Self-report		
	Surveys		
	Task analysis		
	Feedback on training		
	Self-initiative		
Preferred method	Interview		
	Performance appraisal		
		Appraisal linked	
		No appraisal linked	
		Only if good relationship with manager	
	Survey		
	Advisory Committee		
	Least preferred method	Interview	
		Performance appraisal	
		Survey	
Advisory Committee			
Advantages	Advisory committee	Advising on professionalization	
		Represents different stakeholders	
		Expertise	
	Performance appraisal	Pressure to do courses	
		Appreciation	
		Acknowledgement	
		Stimulate informal learning	
		Overview of team professionalization needs	

		Individual contact
		Initiative of teacher
	Interview	Assessing needs from both perspectives
		Verbal and non-verbal information
		Insightful
		Personal contact
	Survey	Getting general info
		Broad needs overview organization
		Quick
		Flexible in location
Disadvantages	Survey	Manipulate answers
		No follow-up questions
		Creating costs time
		Representative
		Low response rate due to lack of time
		Redundant
	Advisory committee	Conversation is better with your program manager
		Too time-consuming and bureaucratic
		Bias of program manager
	Interview	Time consuming
		Not completely objective
		Individuals difficulty identifying and articulating needs
		False hope
	Performance appraisal	Extrinsic motivation
Ideal scenario	Combination between interview and performance appraisal	
	Combination between performance appraisal and advisory committee	
	Combination between survey/platform and interview	

	Performance appraisal (linked with money reward)	
Other important information	Professionalization opportunities	Communication offer
		Need for someone to think along
		Work-related or not
		Large and small courses
		No interesting training supply
	Difference in approach conversations/not centralized	
	Manager	Must be capable to identify needs
		Must (not) be aware of training offers
		Are not trained on how to conduct such conversations
		Accepting
	Need for informal learning	
	Being careful with choosing one method	
	Frameworks can be helpful for development	
	Need for technology training	
	Colleagues not motivated for professionalization	
	Professionalization social importance	
	Area of expertise	
	Company specific growth	
	Teacher need for own choice of professionalization	
	Tailored professionalization	
	Intrinsic motivation needed for professionalization	
	Expert/trained coach/manager	

