





## Curriculum indicators and components of the work environment of university professors: an approach to professional development

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The current research aims to identify the indicators and curriculum components of the work environment for university professors. The approach of the current research is qualitative meta-synthesis. The research community comprised all the articles (n=218) published from 2010 to 2023 regarding the curriculum indicators of the work environment for university professors. The research sample of 30 articles were purposively selected. The research data were collected from the qualitative analysis of the studied articles. Lincoln and Guba (1989) criteria were used to validate the findings. Data analysis led to the emergence of five dimensions, 16 axes and 59 indicators: the dimensions of educational strategies and programs, knowledge management, organizational dimension, central research and networking and creating organized learning communities. The results showed that the curriculum of the professors' work environment has different dimensions, which can facilitate their professional development if addressed well.

**Keywords:** Professional development, Work environment curriculum, Professors, Higher education, Meta-synthesis

### Introduction

Human capital that helps organizations achieve their long-term goals is the most important and valuable asset of any organization (Patidar, 2016). Organizations need talented, intelligent, competent and capable human capital in different fields to overcome challenges (Gold Smith, 2011). However, studies show that many organizations lack the necessary skills and ability to maintain their employees, as the assets of the organization, and even in developed countries, the waste of talent and abilities of the people has caused delays in achieving the long-term goals of organizations (Groves, 2019). Therefore, one of the characteristics of an effective organization is to address the cultivation and empowerment of human resources, which can lead to fruitful efforts in the organization (Chia, 2017).

Universities not only play a major role in the development of society through their publications, but they also participate in the intellectual life of the society by giving advice to the government and the industry sector, as well as promoting analytical and critical thinking by professors (Khajaei, Droudi, Moradi and Hosni, 2014). Therefore, the need to pay attention and empower human resources, especially its educational aspect, i.e. faculty members, is more important (Atafred and Samani, 2009). One of the effective ways to nurture and support professors and faculty members of universities is to pay attention to their professional development (Estepp, Roberts & Carter, 2012).

Professional development of faculty members of universities and higher education institutions is the key to improving the quality of higher education. In order for universities to succeed in the three areas of education, research and service delivery, they should strengthen the capabilities of faculty members. Such strengthening can be achieved through their professional development (Rahimi Kincha et al., 2019). Professional development is the outcome of the curriculum of the work environment and cannot be achieved without attending to it (Motamadi and Mousavi, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the work environment and curriculum in professional development. Therefore, the current research seeks to know the indicators and components of the work environment curriculum for university professors.

## Methodology

The present research method is meta-synthesis. Meta-synthesis or qualitative meta-analysis tries to analyze the relevant studies and resolve the contradictions, while integrating the results to identify the main issues for future research (Cooper & Hedges, 2009). One of its goals is to create generalizations by combining the results of experimental research. Content analysis was used for the synthesis of relevant scientific documents. The data obtained from this research were analyzed through open, axial and selective coding. In this research, in order to analyze the findings of the six-stage model of Roberts' research synthesis including the stages; 1- Identifying the need, conducting a preliminary search, clarifying the need, 2- Conducting research in order to retrieve studies, 3- Selecting, refining and organizing studies, 4- Developing a perceptual framework and adapting it to the information obtained from the analysis, 5- Processing, synthesis and interpretation to form tangible products, and 6- presenting the results (Gholampour et Al, 2019). Four evaluators were used to recode the findings through Scott's method to ensure the validity of the coding method (Scott, 2012). Inter-rater agreement was 81.77%, which is considered appropriate.

## Results

Data analysis led to the emergence of five dimensions, 16 axes and 59 indicators including the dimensions of educational strategies and programs (including indicators such as needs assessment, network learning, self-management, coaching and mentoring, paying attention to life-long learning skills and transformational leadership), knowledge management (increasing knowledge and acquiring knowledge, sharing knowledge, transferring and spreading knowledge), professional ethics (including indicators of attention to personality and cognitive characteristics), organizational and occupational commitment), research-oriented (valuing research findings and research results, giving quality to project programs and applied research and paying attention to the research spirit of professors) and networking and creating learning communities (including such axes as intra-university and external networking university).

## Discussion and conclusion

University professors are known as the most important element among organizational human resources in higher education. Addressing their professional development and modernization is one of the most important goals of human resources management in higher education because it directly and indirectly relates to all the goals of higher education. There have been various approaches for the professional development of professors, among which the curriculum of the work environment is considered by many international organizations as a new approach for organizational development. According to the results, paying attention to individual, organizational and educational indicators transforms the professional development of professors.

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