

## **Importance of Needs Assessment**

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### **Importance of Needs Assessment**

A well-structured curriculum aims to keep content relevant and engaging while maintaining alignment with learning objectives and organizational goals. Future instructors must learn to implement curriculum changes that fix existing gaps and improve instructional delivery effectiveness. The identification of performance gaps and instructional misalignments must precede any modifications to the curriculum, as understanding the root cause is essential before changes can occur. The crucial role of needs assessment emerges at this point in the process where the needs assessment functions as a structured foundational method which evaluates differences between actual conditions and the desired results. The assessment identifies individual learning requirements while clarifying educator instructional goals and organizational strategic objectives (Kaufman & Guerra-Lopez, 2013).

Through this structured approach, instructional designers and educators can determine the necessary elements for learners, professionals, and institutions to achieve optimal performance outcomes. This paper analyzes various articles that use needs assessment approaches, frameworks, instruments, findings, and recommendations. Each study has a different purpose, from evaluating faculty development in online learning to university students' sustainability awareness. The paper contrasts between the models and approaches used, critically appraises the strengths and weaknesses, and presents main themes and insights. By identifying commonalities and gaps, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of effective needs assessment practices and their implications for future research and application.

### **Article Summaries and Analyses**

#### **Online Education – Needs Assessment for Faculty Development**

Ali et al. (2005) conducted a needs assessment study to evaluate the needs assessment requirements of faculty development for online education. To understand faculty competencies and training priorities, a shift was needed in the market from traditional classroom teaching to digital learning. To structure the study, the authors employed Benner's five stage transformation model of expert development, and categorize novice to expert (Ozdemir, 2019). The researchers were able to examine the faculty perceptions of faculty members' online teaching skills and the most important skill needing development.

A descriptive comparative survey design was used to study and question the faculty of a Midwestern university with 20 items questionnaires distributed to the appropriate sample of faculty. The survey evaluated faculty expertise in terms of their knowledge of the pedagogical dimensions of online teaching, including knowledge of instructional design, communication strategies, and technological proficiency. The participants rated their competence levels on a Likert scale derived from Benner's model. The questionnaire included an open-ended question for the faculty to list any other training needs.

Results showed that the faculty members who had prior online teaching experience rated themselves as competent to advanced beginner levels. In contrast, those who had no prior online teaching experience rated themselves as novices. The highest-ranked priority for faculty development was redesigning and reconceptualization faculty roles in the online environment. Other salient needs included training in technology integration, time management in teaching online courses, and strategies for facilitating student engagement in online learning environments.

While Ali et al. (2005) provided valuable data on faculty needs, the study's reliance on self-report data was a limitation as far as perceptions may not accurately reflect actual competencies. The study also lacked an evaluation of the impact of training interventions on teaching

effectiveness. Student feedback and direct measures of instructional quality need to be incorporated into future research to allow for a more comprehensive needs assessment model.

### **Sustainability in Higher Education – Needs Assessment on a Course “Education and Awareness for Sustainability”**

Erdogan's (2010) study evaluates the needs of university students for sustainability education according to the DIPO model, which includes Determining Needs, Implementing, Processing, and Outcome evaluation. The study employs a needs assessment questionnaire (NAQ) consisting of qualitative and quantitative items, which sustainable education experts validated. Results illustrate that students view education as key to developing sustainability awareness. Students like pedagogical methods that are interactive in nature, for example, discussions and brainstorming, and highly value visual and digital instructional media. Results also indicate that students expect sustainability education to have explicit relevance to their professional and personal lives.

One of the key strengths of this study is that it includes the perspective of the students so that curriculum design is parallel with learner expectations. The omission of the opinions of faculty members is a limitation because the success of sustainability education depends on both student interest and instructor expertise. A longitudinal study that assesses long-term behavior change among the students would also be more insightful.

### **Medical School Curriculum Needs Assessment for Massive Open Online Courses**

The study, conducted by Farhadi et al. (2024), explores the educational needs of medical students for the integration of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in their curriculum. The study follows a three-step approach: an initial open-ended questionnaire, a Likert-scale priority survey, and a focus group discussion. Findings indicate that the most significant instructional needs

include pharmacotherapy, electrocardiography interpretation, clinical examination skills, and imaging diagnostics. While students are supportive of MOOCs as a supplement to traditional learning, faculty members doubt their efficacy in clinical education. This study is admirable in its rigorous methodology, with multiple rounds of expert feedback to refine its outcomes. Its scope is limited to a single university, however, which reduces the generality of its outcomes. The study also neglects to evaluate the sufficiency of existing MOOCs to address perceived needs, which would be a helpful indicator of their potential impact.

### **Needs Assessment in Continuing Education: Designing a System That Works**

The research Bell (1986) examines the essential needs assessment function for developing effective continuing education programs. As opposed to general education, continuing education tends to serve working professionals who desire to enhance their skills, so it is imperative to create a system that best captures their changing needs. The research employs interviews and questionnaires with working professionals who participate in continuing education programs.

Results emphasize the necessity of employing a variety of assessment methods, gaining stakeholder commitment, and altering approaches based on emerging trends in education. Recommendations provide practical advice on how to structure needs assessment processes for maximum relevance and efficiency. One key strength of this study is that it emphasizes systematic planning and recursive evaluation. However, it lacks empirical validation as it does not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed system in real-life settings. Future research must attempt to apply and evaluate these recommendations to determine their actual feasibility in practice.

### **Needs Assessment Procedures for Occupational Education Programs at Illinois**

#### **Community Colleges: An Analysis**

Harriman (1981) addresses the needs assessment processes utilized by Illinois community colleges in evaluating occupational education programs. The study acknowledges the increased demand for continuing education and the necessity for community colleges to align their programs with local labor force needs. The primary objective was to identify the techniques colleges use to assess such needs and their effectiveness. The study utilized an exploratory, descriptive research design in which interviews and surveys of program administrators, faculty members, and community respondents provided an in-depth insight into the assessment process.

Among the study's key findings is the challenge of engaging community members in the needs assessment process. Most colleges employed surveys to ascertain demand for occupational programs, but these had low response rates, and it was difficult to obtain representative information. As per Harriman (1981), community colleges recorded as low percentage response rates in certain instances, significantly limiting their findings' validity. The study also found that many institutions did not systematically incorporate employer perceptions, and this opened the potential for a mismatch between educational programs and the needs of the labor market.

While these issues are raised, the study focuses on describing current practices rather than offering innovative solutions. Harriman (1981) suggests regular assessment and stakeholder engagement as central to effective program development but does not offer alternative methods of facilitating participation. Future research should investigate whether interesting topics for future work include industry partnerships, labor market analytics, or focus groups to improve the accuracy of needs assessments in community colleges. Real-time workforce data could be integrated and used by the institutions to develop a better insight into how to alter occupational programs to remain relevant and responsive to new jobs being created.

### **Discussion and Synthesis**

## Common Themes

A prevalent theme throughout needs assessment studies is the importance of stakeholder involvement in identifying and prioritizing needs. Across the studies reviewed, faculty work with students, administrators, and community members to have needs assessments that are accurate and relevant. In their study on online education by Ali et al. (2005), faculty members rated how much they knew about online education and who among them have developed skills in that area. It is unlikely the study would have succeeded without faculty participation, as it had to capture the unique challenges and concerns that teachers have when shifting to the online realm of education.

Similarly, as stated by Erdogan (2010), educators should also consider fostering sustainable education through students' participation because student's expectations and preferences contribute to the structure and instructional methods of course education. The study included students in the needs assessment process to ensure that the course content would be relevant to what students aspire to do in their careers and what values they care about in their lives. Nevertheless, the study by Harriman (1981), regarding the community college reveals a challenge to stakeholder engagement due to low response rates, as well as the inability to make comprehensive assessments. This points out an important limitation of needs assessment research that stakeholders' participation is necessary but difficult to make sustainable. Response rates could be based on alternative engagement strategies, like focus groups or even interactive surveys, thus broader participation.

Another point of similarity across these studies is the reliance on survey-based data collection as the primary method of collecting information. Since surveys are a very efficient way to collect large masses of data, Ali et al. (2005), faculty development study uses a structured 20-item questionnaire for assessing expertise and training needs. Erdogan (2010) also developed a

needs assessment questionnaire, both open and closed, to determine students' expectations toward sustainability education. The study by Farhadi et al. (2024), in medical education used the Delphi technique using multiple rounds of surveys to narrow down the instructional priorities for MOOCs. This multi-round survey process facilitated building consensus, ensuring the most important needs were identified with accuracy.

However, while surveys are convenient for gathering quantitative data, they are not without limitations. Bell (1986) notes that surveys alone may not be able to capture the richness of participant perspectives, suggesting the employment of a mixed-methods design involving interviews and focus groups. This is seen in Farhadi et al. (2024), who supplemented their survey data with focus group discussions to validate priorities in medical education. Despite surveys being a staple of needs assessment research, supplementing qualitative methods can enhance the richness and usability of results.

A third critical theme needs prioritization to guide resource allocation accordingly. Needs assessments surface several areas of need, necessitating a systematic process for prioritizing their relative importance. In Ali et al.'s (2005) study of online education, for instance, the faculty needed help in a few areas, with the most pressing need being redesigning and rethinking faculty roles. Farhadi et al. (2024) utilized a systematic ranking procedure through the Delphi technique to determine the most critical instructional needs of medical students, which were pharmacotherapy, ECG interpretation, and diagnostic imaging.

Erdogan (2010) also utilized prioritization mechanisms in sustainability education through analysis of student feedback to determine the most effective instructional methods. However, the challenge in prioritization is in ensuring that the process remains representative of true needs rather than perceived desires. Harriman (1981) warns that assessments in community colleges sometimes



prioritize based on administrator perceptions rather than direct input from students and faculty, leading to program offerings misaligned with true needs. This underscores the importance of transparent, data-driven decision-making in prioritization efforts.

Lastly, implementation challenges are a major concern when used in all these studies. The first step is identifying needs, but taking this and seeing it through as an actionable program is a larger obstacle. In Ali et al. (2005), while their study was successful in the identification of faculty training needs, effecting the establishment of targeted professional development programs had to happen under institutional commitment and resources. In the study of medical education, Farhadi et al. (2024) encountered the same problem: even though faculty felt there was an instructional need for MOOCs, they resisted adoption due to faculty skepticism toward them. As stated by Erdogan (2010), Students supported sustainability education; however, because the learning opportunities were not direct enough, the course did not prove effective. The challenges associated with the implementation of continuing education programs are discussed by Bell (1986), who indicates that while needs assessment may not be fully realized, continuing education programs do face financial constraints as well as administrative hurdles. Likewise, Harriman (1981) observes that even though community colleges realize that occupational training programs are needed, they may have procedural difficulties in initiating new courses because of budget constraints and small enrolment.

### **Differences in Methodologies**

The studies reviewed here employ a variety of needs assessment approaches of varying strengths and weaknesses. The Delphi technique, used by Farhadi et al. (2024), is an iterative, systematic process for building expert consensus. Through several rounds of data collection, it refines responses through successive surveys and focus groups. The strength of the method is

systematically ranking instructional needs for medical education MOOCs, with both faculty and student input contributing to decision-making. One weakness of this approach, though, is that it is time-consuming and relies on expert input, which may limit more widespread participation. Ali et al. (2005), on the other hand, employ a descriptive comparative survey design, gathering self-reported faculty perceptions of online teaching competencies. While an effective method that suffices to collect faculty views, there is no external validation of reported skill levels, which may be enhanced by direct performance appraisals or student feedback.

Another model utilized is the DIPO model, as applied by Erdogan (2010), which involves four steps: Determining Needs, Implementing, Processing, and Outcome evaluation. This model offers a comprehensive approach that goes beyond gap identification to the actual utilization of assessment results in instructional planning. Its utility lies in its cyclical nature, which allows ongoing evaluation and revision of sustainability education curricula. The research, however, focuses on student perceptions, overlooking the role of instructors in shaping sustainable learning experiences. Harriman (1981) employs an exploratory, descriptive research design to assess Illinois community colleges' occupational education needs. This study makes liberal use of surveys and interviews but identifies an inherent challenge: low community involvement in needs assessments. In contrast to Erdogan's (2010) iterative model, which ensures ongoing stakeholder feedback, Harriman's (1981) study acknowledges difficulties in securing consistent participation.

Finally, Bell (1986) employs a mixed-methods design, combining interviews and surveys for continuing education needs assessment. While the method contributes data richness, the study fails to implement proposed changes, limiting its applicability. Across these studies, a shared limitation is the need for longitudinal impact assessments because most methodologies focus on proximal needs without following up on long-term impacts.

## Gaps in Literature

Despite the valuable information provided by these studies, several gaps in literature remain, particularly regarding the long-term impacts of needs assessments, cross-institutional comparisons, and the application of technology in data collection and analysis. One notable gap is the lack of longitudinal studies assessing the effectiveness of interventions based on needs assessment findings. Most studies, including Ali et al. (2005) and Farhadi et al. (2024), focus on needs identification and prioritization but do not assess whether proposed solutions lead to meaningful change over time. For instance, Ali et al. (2005) assessed faculty development needs in online learning but did not investigate whether faculty who received training improved teaching effectiveness or student engagement. Similarly, Farhadi et al. (2024) ascertained instructional needs for MOOCs in medical education but did not ascertain whether the MOOC implementation was effective in meeting these needs. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insight into whether needs assessments lead to effective interventions.

Another significant gap is the lack of comparative studies across multiple institutions or environments. Erdogan (2010) conducted a needs assessment of sustainability education, but the study was done within a single university, so it is difficult to determine whether the findings are transferable to other learning institutions. Similarly, Bell (1986) offered best practices in continuing education needs assessments but failed to provide comparative data from different institutions to contrast effectiveness differences. Comparative studies across institutions might help determine whether needs assessment models are universally applicable or need to be tailored to specific environments.

In addition, there is little consideration of how technology can be used to improve needs assessment practice. Harriman (1981) reported on the challenges of engaging members of the

community in occupational education needs assessments, with low survey response rates being a major barrier. However, the study did not address how emerging digital technologies such as real-time labor market analysis, Artificial Intelligence driven surveys, or online focus groups could improve data collection and engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This analysis points out the differences in the methodologies of assessment employed, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The studies highlight the need to involve stakeholders, data-driven prioritization, and iterative feedback loops. While gaps persist in assessing long-term outcomes, comparing results across the institutions, and using technology to provide reports on the same day on the needs. Need-based interventions could be evaluated in future research to determine if they are used effectively. Cross-institutional comparisons should be made to evaluate the efficacy of needs-based interventions. Advanced analytics should be integrated with the needs assessment process. Delivering on these needs, needs assessment can be further streamlined and used as an even more powerful tool for optimizing educational, medical, and occupational training programs.

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## Appendix

The following conversation was inputted into Perplexity AI to determine if the articles selected met the criteria for the needs assessment. Link to the conversation is provided in the reference section.

### Conversation with Perplexity AI

Do the following articles meet the following requirement: You should select at least three articles focusing on needs assessments or front-end analysis. These articles should be from reputable sources and describe the needs assessment process. There are several ways to frame the selection of articles. (1) Look for articles that use specific types of tools, such as needs assessments that use surveys or needs assessments that use interviews. (2) You may want to look for articles that focus on the use of specific FEA Models (this can be more difficult). (3) needs assessment/front-end analysis in a specific context (e.g., such as athletics or health care.)

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Answer

Sources

37

4 steps

Sustainability\_in\_higher\_educa-1

Sustainability\_in\_higher\_educa-1.pdf

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1.pdf

Sustainability\_in\_higher\_educa-1

Sustainability\_in\_higher\_educa-1.pdf





+34

sources

Based on the provided search results, the article "Sustainability in higher education: A needs assessment on a course 'Education and awareness for sustainability'" by Mehmet Erdogan meets one of the requirements for the selection of articles focusing on needs assessments. However, this single article does not fulfill the requirement of selecting at least three articles on needs assessments or front-end analysis. Here's an analysis of how this article partially meets the criteria:

1. The article describes a needs assessment process for a university course on sustainability education.
2. It uses a specific tool for needs assessment:
  - A needs assessment questionnaire (NAQ) was developed and used for data collection<sup>5</sup>.
  - The NAQ included both open-ended and closed-ended items on a Likert-type scale<sup>5</sup>.



3. The article is from a reputable source:

- It was published in the Asia-Pacific Forum on Science Learning and Teaching, which appears to be a peer-reviewed journal<sup>1</sup>.

4. The needs assessment is conducted in a specific context:

- Higher education, specifically for a course on "Education and Awareness for Sustainability"<sup>3</sup>.

While this article is relevant and meets some of the criteria, it does not fulfill the requirement of having at least three articles on needs assessments or front-end analysis. To meet the full requirements, you would need to find at least two more articles that focus on needs assessments or front-end analysis, preferably using different tools or in different contexts.

Share

Export

Rewrite

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Answer

Sources

60

5 steps

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1.pdf



[School of Public Health](#)

[Community Needs Assessment Survey: Examples and Overview](#)



[wiley](#)

[Using interviews as a needs assessment tool - Wiley Online Library](#)

The article "Online Education: Needs Assessment for Faculty Development" by Ali et al. meets the requirements for selection as an article focusing on needs assessment. Here's how it fulfills the criteria:

1. Focus on needs assessment:

The study explicitly conducts a needs assessment for faculty development in online education<sup>1</sup>.

2. Reputable source:

The article is published in The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, a peer-reviewed academic journal<sup>1</sup>.

3. Description of the needs assessment process:

The study describes a detailed process for conducting the needs assessment, including:

- Use of a descriptive comparative survey design
- Development of a three-part questionnaire based on previous qualitative research
- Distribution of the survey to faculty in the College of Applied Sciences and Technology
- Analysis of responses to identify perceived levels of expertise and priorities for faculty development<sup>1</sup>

4. Specific type of tool used:

The study uses a survey as the primary tool for needs assessment. The researchers developed "The Needs Assessment for Faculty Development on Online Education" questionnaire, which included:

- A 20-item survey using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Benner's stages of expertise
- A rank-order section for prioritizing educational categories
- An open-ended question for additional input<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Specific context:

The needs assessment is conducted in the context of higher education, specifically focusing on faculty development for online teaching across various departments in a college<sup>1</sup>.

While this article meets the criteria for selection, it is important to note that at least two more articles would be needed to fully satisfy the requirement of selecting at least three articles focusing on needs assessments or front-end analysis. The search results provided only contain information about this single article, so additional research would be necessary to identify other suitable articles for the selection.

Share

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Answer

Sources

40

3 steps

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1

Online\_Education\_Needs\_Assess-1.pdf

Needs\_Assessment\_in\_Continuing-2

Needs\_Assessment\_in\_Continuing-2.pdf

sources

Based on the search results provided, I have identified three articles that meet the requirements for focusing on needs assessments or front-end analysis from reputable sources and describing the needs assessment process:

1. "Needs Assessment in Continuing Education: Designing a System That Works" by Eunice A. Bell<sup>2</sup>

This article, published in The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, describes a comprehensive needs assessment process for continuing education in nursing. It meets the criteria in the following ways:

- Focuses on needs assessment in a specific context (continuing education for nurses)

- Describes specific tools, including interviews with administrators and agency education directors, questionnaires for individual nurses, and data collection from professional organizations
  - Outlines a detailed methodology for conducting needs assessments in both healthcare agencies and educational institutions
2. "Front-end analysis as needs assessment" (PubMed article)[8](#)

This article discusses the use of front-end analysis as a needs assessment technique in staff development for nurses. It meets the criteria by:

- Focusing on a specific FEA (Front-End Analysis) model
  - Describing its application in a healthcare context (staff development in a large urban hospital)
  - Outlining the process of using front-end analysis to assess training needs
3. "Development and importance of health needs assessment" by J Wright, R Williams, and J R Wilkinson[7](#)

Published in the British Medical Journal, this article provides a comprehensive overview of health needs assessment. It meets the criteria by:

- Focusing on needs assessment in a specific context (health services)
- Describing various methods including epidemiological, qualitative, and comparative approaches
- Outlining the process of conducting health needs assessments, including data collection, analysis, and utilization of results

These three articles provide a diverse range of perspectives on needs assessment and front-end analysis, covering different contexts and methodologies. They all come from reputable

sources in the healthcare and education fields, and provide detailed descriptions of needs assessment processes.

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People also ask

What are the best practices for organizing a needs assessment committee

How can surveys and interviews be effectively combined in a needs assessment

What are the advantages of using a three-phase model for needs assessments

How can the results of a needs assessment be used to inform strategic planning

What are some examples of successful needs assessments in educational settings