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Patterns in Telephone Interviews about Professional Development Activities of Developers

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Study Design

*13 interviews from random sample of POD members with more than 5 year's experience
        conducted during spring 1996
*tape recorded, spot transcribed, and content analyzed
*used as basis for generating survey questionnaire for broader sample
^survey will be administered following revisions in late fall 1996 or winter 1997

Major Patterns

Most respondents indicated that their range of responsibilities and authority have expanded since they entered faculty development. These changes have been portrayed as "evolving," rather than radical, but their work does change.

An interest in organizational development and program administration has developed for many. Respondents continue to work with individual faculty but become more interested in strategic thinking about their work and its place in the organization.

When the professional developers in this sample experienced major role or scope of work changes, these were often occasioned by an external condition, such as a budget change, a resignation, or a response to a new need, such as the need to assist faculty with instructional technology. However, respondents reported that there is enough flexibility within their position descriptions for them to pursue directions of interest on their own, without external mandate or stimulus.

Respondents said that they think about their growth continually. This often goes on at a private, reflective level, although a few said it is occasioned by annual performance reviews and the like.

Most of the respondents said that they do not have office colleagues with whom they can talk about their own development needs. Some are the only practitioners on campus and some find that their colleagues are not helpful. Several said that their colleagues in POD are most helpful.

Most of the respondents reported that they are satisfied with their position, enjoying what they do, happy with accomplishments, finding fulfillment in their work. One talked about overload and one talked about the wear and tear involved in always serving others' needs first.

About half had considered leaving the field at sometime in the past and two were in the process of doing so presently (their "rotation" is over). When the others had considered leaving, they desired advancement and/or faculty life. They chose to stay because they could not move (did not get the position, etc.) or because they decided that their career as developers was more fulfilling in the long run.

Professional development needs that respondents identified included deepening their skills as developers, adding more variety to their work, and engaging in more extended research and writing.

Most found reading, networking, and attending conferences and workshops as the best sources of professional growth for themselves. Two cited sabbaticals and several indicated that the length of the activities was important, with more extended time being more helpful.

Time and funding are the biggest barriers to pursuing professional growth for these respondents. Encouragement from others is the biggest facilitator.

POD has been very important to the respondents' professional development. Publications, the listserver, and networking with colleagues have assisted most. Several respondents also mentioned how helpful AAHE publications and conferences have been to them.

Respondents said that POD could help with members' professional development by:
- organizing a literature base on different topics to help synthesize current literature
- holding regional workshops between conferences
- offering longer, skill-oriented workshops
- holding meetings for directors and sessions for experienced developers on organizational issues