Reframing research on faculty development

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Abstract: Research on faculty development has focused primarily on individual participants and has produced relatively little generalizable knowledge that can guide faculty development programs. In this article, the authors examine how current research on faculty development in medical education can be enriched by research in related fields such as teacher education, quality improvement, continuing medical education, and workplace learning. As a result of this analysis, the authors revise the old model for conceptualizing faculty development (preferably called professional development). This expanded model calls for research on educational process and outcomes focused on two communities of practice: the community created among participants in faculty development programs and the communities of teaching practice in the workplace (classroom or clinic) where teaching actually occurs. For the faculty development community, the key components are the participants, program, content, facilitator, and context in which the program occurs and in which the faculty teach. For the workplace community, associated components include relationships and networks of association in that environment, the organization and culture of the setting, the teaching tasks and activities, and the mentoring available to the members of that academic and/or clinical community of teaching practice. This expanded model of faculty development generates a new set of research questions, which are described along with six recommendations for enhancing research, including establishment of a national center for research in health professions education. Copyright © 2011 by the Association of american Medical Colleges.

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