Session 1 Assignment
Designing your Needs Assessment

Introduction

The design of a needs assessment requires a clear and thoughtful articulation of the Problem of Practice (POP) you plan to study, as well as the context in which it exists. You have spent the last semester refining your POP, and the organizational context in which it is situated. As you work through session 1, you will be learning about the purpose of a needs assessment and developing analytical thinking skills and techniques to develop research questions, define the concepts you wish to measure, identify the data you will need, and propose a basic approach to gathering these data. Much of this work will be informed by the literature review you are completing in the Contemporary Approaches to Educational Problems (CAE) course, which you will be writing in parallel to this assignment.

As you are exploring the literature, focus some attention on how past research:

- explains the focus of the study, in particular the identified problem;
- presented research questions for investigation;
- identified and measured concepts (variables);
- used specific instrumentation to gather the necessary data – was the instrumentation unique to this study or one used in other similar research;
- used methods to collect the data in each study.

Literature will inform how you should design your needs assessment. You will need to explain the problem, contextualize it in your organization, explain your methodology for investigating the problem, and ultimately draw a conclusion. The literature you are exploring in the CAE course will help inform this assignment. In addition, you will be drawing on this literature throughout this course as well as within your Year 1 project paper.

For this assignment, you are going to begin to articulate your needs assessment. This needs assessment will help you deeply understand and further refine a POP facing your organization. The goal of this research is to examine existing issues facing the organization with the ultimate goal within your Applied Dissertation of developing evidence-based recommendations for improving educational programs within the context of your organization.
This Session 1 Assignment: Designing your Needs Assessment should be approximately 7-10 pages in length and use appropriate APA format.

**Guidelines: (you may use subheadings to organize each section)**

1. Consider your POP and clearly describe this problem within the context of your organization.
2. Articulate your research question(s) for the needs assessment. Remember, the goal of this study is to deeply understand the POP through examining the issue(s) facing the organization. Thus, the question(s) should be focused on this goal of investigating the POP (NOT focused on solutions to the POP).
3. Describe the concepts that will help you study the research question(s). Consider how these concepts have been operationalized in the literature you have been reading and provide citations where appropriate.
4. Clearly describe the data that you would need to answer the research question(s). This can come in the form of a chart or table.
5. Articulate a plan to acquire these data. In this explanation, state data already in existence and data you will be collecting within your needs assessment study. Include a description of the potential population of respondents for this data collection.

Submit your paper to the Gradebook by Noon Monday following the end of Session 1 (2/23/15).

This paper is worth 20 points.