

# **A TAU Project: Developing a Community of Scholarly Engineering Educators at the North-West University**

**Topics:** Academic development

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## **Abstract**

### BACKGROUND

Engineering Education Research is a new area of interest at the NWU, and limited formal scholarship of teaching and learning has taken place in the past. This is however changing as the higher education context requires the Faculty to adapt to become more responsive, resilient, and relevant. An opportunity exists to open up conversations in the teaching and learning space and introduce academic staff to important and relevant education theory and research. The Centre for Engineering Education in the Faculty of Engineering at the NWU has been mandated with forming a research group to address this. There is, however, much uncertainty about where to start. Other than UCT, engineering education research is not well established at South African universities. The formation of this research group therefore provides a case study to explore how institutions can form and develop sustainable scholarly and research work in this space. My project, as a TAU fellow will be to assist the team to initiate and develop the research group and to observe and explore what works, what does not work, and what positive aspects evolve out of the sessions. This poster offers insight into the early development of this research group

### THEORETICAL FRAMING

Academics who make the transition from discipline-specific to Engineering Education research experience challenges related to identity, community, and a sense of belonging (Beddoes, 2014). Developing and refining their new identity is neither a straightforward nor a linear process (Gardner and Willey, 2018). One way to address some of these challenges is using a community of practice (Cuddapah and Clayton, 2011). This project adopts Wenger's communities of practice social learning model (Wenger, 1998) to describe the transition and relationship between the community and the forming of individual identities.

### APPROACH

This project aims to support the personal career development of staff in the Faculty using the research group as a reflective community that seeks to improve and share best practices and experiences. It is hoped that this will positively influence the student experience, success and retention rates and will provide an enabling space to discuss issues related to social justice and the current inequalities that exist in higher education in South Africa.

This TAU project will develop a strategy, documenting the approach that we adopt and making observations along the way.

## REFERENCES

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