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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how scholarship was viewed by 16 faculty members with varying years of experience and publication rates. In-depth interviews were conducted with randomly selected faculty from four departments within the school of education. The study found that faculty members with lower rates of publication indicated that the current view of scholarship, centered on research and publication, was problematic, regardless of their years of experience. They also thought that the role of scholarship was at odds with teaching. In contrast, faculty with higher rates of publication, regardless of years of experience, were of the opinion that the current view of scholarship is appropriate. The results suggest the need for mentoring programs for junior faculty members, the need to explore issues related to faculty morale, and the need to explore the perceived lack of confidence in the current system to adequately evaluate scholarly merits. (Contains 35 references.)
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FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP
AND ITS MEASURES AT ONE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study investigated how scholarship was viewed by faculty with varying years of experience and publication rates. Results indicate differences in the perceptions associated with both years of experience and publication rates. However, there is an association between these differences in perceptions among faculty with similar rates of publication, regardless of years of experience.

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP AND ITS MEASURES AT ONE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Introduction

Research on faculty scholarship has traditionally been grouped into two categories: studies associated with identifying predictors of research productivity; and studies demonstrating a correlation between research productivity and teaching effectiveness. These two sources of research have produced information which has proven valuable in understanding the independence of teaching effectiveness and research. However, these studies did not, nor were they intended to, delineate education's view of scholarship and its measures as perceived by faculty. Therefore, the author of this article embarked upon a study to obtain information which would fill the gap in this area for the field of education by focusing on how faculty with varying levels of experience and publication rates view scholarship in one school of education.

The study was based on the premise that faculty members with varying levels of experience and publication rates will differ in their perceptions about scholarship. The findings of his study support this premise for this group of faculty members in this school of education. Information specific to the study was gathered by examining responses obtained during an indepth interview with 16 faculty members with varying level of experience and publication rates in a professional school of education at a research university.

The article is organized into five sections. Each of these sections corresponds to a substantive area that was shaped by the study's research questions that were identified from the literature. The first section discusses the differences found between the perceptions of faculty members about their view of scholarship. The second section examines the

relationships found between the differences in perceptions of faculty members on the role of scholarship. The third section analyzes how the perceptions of faculty members differed regarding their opinion of the indicators of scholarship. The fourth section compares and contrasts the relationships found between the perceptions of faculty members on the practices used to evaluate scholarship. The last section presents implications for further research and identifies some weaknesses of the study. Before presenting these sections, a brief description of the study's methodology follows.

Methodology

The views of faculty members were obtained by qualitative methods. These methods were selected because they were thought to be an appropriate starting point to identify and understand the range of perceptions and meanings which are held by a diverse group of faculty in the school of education. In-depth interviews of 16 faculty members were conducted. These subjects were randomly selected and represented four departments within the school of education. All faculty were full-time tenured, and/or tenure-track, and selected according to both their years of experience and publication rates. It was through this method that the researcher obtained a variety of views held by faculty in this school of education on scholarship and its measures, and their rationales for these views.

View of Scholarship

The purpose of this question was to identify if there were differences in the perceptions faculty with varying levels of experience and publication rates have about scholarship. The results indicate that faculty members in the study were of the opinion that scholarship is currently viewed as research and publication. This view was held by faculty

members regardless of years of experience or publication rates and is consistent with findings in the literature [5, 7, 11, 17, 23, 32, 33]. However, this is where the similarity ended.

Faculty members with lower rates of publication indicate that the current view of scholarship was perceived as problematic, regardless of years of experience. In contrast, faculty members with higher rates of publication, regardless of years of experience, were of the opinion that the current view of scholarship, as research and publication, is appropriate. In the opinion of the researcher, the primary reason for the difference in these perceptions is centered in what faculty members considered to be the purpose of a professional school at a research university.

Faculty members with lower rates of publication see the current view of scholarship as problematic because scholarship is perceived as more important than teaching or service. Their reason for this perception was centered in their opinion that scholarship was not more important than teaching or service because the primary purpose of a professional school is to prepare teachers. In contrast, faculty members with higher rates of publication were of the opinion that the current view, rating scholarship as the most important criterion, was appropriate for a professional school at a research institution. These faculty members considered research to be the primary purpose of a professional school of education at a research university, and preparing teachers and other education professionals as secondary.

Second, faculty members with lower rates of publication considered the current view to be narrow, limited, and needs to be expanded because it failed to value activities that they were involved with and perceived as scholarship. Some of these activities included: curriculum development, grant-writing, course revisions, textbook writing, qualitative studies,

program planning related to practice, and collegial seminars and debates. These activities were considered to contribute to knowledge because they synthesized, integrated, and shared developments that improved teaching. For example: course revisions done for the purpose of incorporating new technologies through the development and use of computer software programs could improve teaching methodologies; obtaining a grant to study the learning needs of groups of students could improve practice by identifying methodologies that could be explored to meet these instructional needs. They believed these types of activities should be valued because they directly related to and complemented what they perceived to be the primary mission of a professional school, that being the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals.

This disparity in perceptions about how scholarship is viewed in relationship to the role of a professional school supports the findings of Centra [10] and Miler [23]. Their findings indicate that while the definition and view of scholarship depends on institutional type, purpose, and discipline, faculty within disciplines and schools differ in their opinion about what is the primary purpose of professional school. This difference in opinion about the purpose of professional schools underlies the differing views of scholarship among faculty within schools and disciplines.

The findings in the literature report that the majority of faculty were of the opinion that the view of scholarship as research and publication was narrow, limited, and needed to be expanded [7, 23, 26, 29, 32]. The findings of the present study was contrary to those reported in the literature. The results of this study indicate that the majority of faculty were not of the opinion that the view of scholarship as research and publication was narrow. It

found that faculty members with higher rates of publication, regardless of years of experience, felt the current view of scholarship was appropriate for a professional school at a research university because of the School's obligation to contribute to state and national education using taxpayer funds. Faculty members with lower rates of publication, regardless of years of experience felt the current view was inappropriate for a professional school whose primary purpose was to prepare practitioners.

Role of Scholarship

The purpose of the aspect of the study was to determine the perceptions that exist among faculty with varying years of experience and publication rates about the role of scholarship. The study was intended to explore perceptions about what scholarship is, and should be, in a school of education.

The data revealed that these faculty members, regardless of publication rate or years of experience, were of the opinion that contributions to knowledge through scholarship was the most important criterion in a professional school. Teaching and service were not as highly valued as scholarship because they were not perceived as making significant knowledge contributions in the same manner as scholarship. For example, research producing new instructional methodologies were considered a more valuable contribution than teaching those methodologies to students in order to improve practice. The rationale for this perception was rooted in the belief that the new instructional methodologies resulted from original thought and were subjected to systematic inquiry. Whereas, the teaching of new methodologies was simply passed on as new content. This was consistent with previous

studies done in this area [9, 24, 25, 29, 32]. However, there were differences in the reasons given by the faculty members as to why scholarship was the most important criterion.

Faculty members with higher rates of publication, regardless of years of experience, felt that the importance of the role of scholarship related to scholarship's ability to contribute knowledge in the field. Their reason for this opinion was grounded in their belief that knowledge contributions resulted in enhancing the quality and reputation of a department, school, and university through prestige and notoriety. This is consistent with the findings in the literature that suggest that this may be a reason for the perceived importance of scholarship [2, 14].

Those with lower rates of publication believed that the importance given to the role of scholarship is because administrators and department chairs think quality and reputation are enhanced through research and publication. These faculty members based their rationale for this belief on their perception that administrators and department chairs distribute rewards according to who helps enhance quality and reputation through research and publication.

However, faculty members with lower rates of publication were of the opinion that quality and reputation are not enhanced by research and publication to the degree thought by administrators and department chairs. Their reason for this belief was because they felt that quality and reputation of older, established institutions is already in place. The opinions of faculty members with lower rates of publication support the findings of Baird (1980). His results indicate that scholarship's ability to enhance prestige and notoriety is questionable at best.

Second, the perceptions about the role scholarship held by faculty members with fewer publications and less experience caused frustration and pressure. They felt frustration because they were of the opinion that scholarship is at odds with teaching and that it is difficult to strike a balance between teaching and scholarship. They felt pressure because of a perceived expectation to conduct and publish research in the traditional, accepted ways.

These results supported the findings of previous studies [26]. However, they do not support the results of studies conducted by McShane and Douzenis [21], Blackburn et al [5], or Lucas and Harrington [20]. Those studies reported that the majority of faculty are of the opinion that too much emphasis is placed on research and publication. They contend that this results in faculty feeling pressured and frustrated. The findings of the present research indicate that feelings of frustration and pressure were limited to the faculty members with lower rates of publication and experience. The results of this study indicate that faculty members with fewer publications and less experience felt that they would be better teachers without these pressures and frustrations.

The disparity in the results of this study and those of previous studies regarding faculty members' feelings of pressure and frustration may be grounded in the fact that the present study was conducted with a small sample using a qualitative approach. In other words, a large scale quantitative study exploring whether faculty felt frustrated and pressured because of the requirement of scholarship may yield results closer to the studies identified in the literature that indicated the majority of faculty members felt frustrated and pressured.

Third, the data of this study indicated that faculty members with lower rates of publication felt that the role of scholarship was also at odds with teaching. This view was

held regardless of the years of experience of the faculty member. The primary reason given by subjects in these categories was that time spent on research and publication was time robbed from the function of teaching. Contrary to this perception, faculty members with higher rates of publication, regardless of levels of experience, were of the opinion that scholarship and teaching were integral to each other. They believed the classroom was an opportunity to relate, refine, and test their research by incorporating it into the classes they taught.

The data from this study marginally support the findings of Fox [16] which suggested that faculty in the social sciences do not perceive that scholarship and teaching are different aspects of a single dimension. The data of this study suggest that faculty members with lower rates of publication, regardless of experience, perceive scholarship and teaching to be separate and distinct criteria for the reasons previously cited. The data of this study obtained from faculty members with fewer publications also marginally support the findings of others that assert that too much emphasis on scholarship adversely affects teaching [6, 9, 26, 28, 34].

Fourth, the results of the study did not support the findings of other studies that indicated the majority of faculty were of the opinion that administrators rarely provided guidance on what was expected of the role of scholarship [27, 35]. The data from this study revealed that faculty with higher publication rates found administrators to be instrumental because they assisted with shaping and supporting their agendas and themes. The results of this study support those of Creswell and Brown [13] suggesting that administrators were in a position to enhance and facilitate scholarship.

Finally, the data of the study may also provide one possible explanation as to why faculty members with lower rates of publication are less involved with research and publication and are more pressured and frustrated. If these faculty members are not rewarded for what they perceive as scholarship, such as teaching that results in facilitating changes at local and state levels, and continue to not be provided with incentives to do research and publish because their work is not perceived or rewarded as scholarship, they may be less motivated to conduct research. Conversely, faculty that are actively involved in research continue to be rewarded for so doing. Faculty members with higher rates of publication, regardless of years of experience, become confirmed in their ambition to conduct more research. An examination of how rewards are distributed, and how these distributions are perceived by faculty members may play a key role in involvement, or lack of involvement, with research-related activities.

In summary, the results of this study seem to indicate that the perceptions of faculty members with similar publication rates, regardless of level of experience, were similar. However, there are differences in perceptions of faculty members about the role of scholarship. These differences appear to be related to what faculty members perceive as the primary purpose of a professional school at a research institution. They also seem to be related to what activities are perceived as valuable and relating to this purpose by both faculty and administration. Finally, differences in perceptions also appear to be grounded in the reward system. How rewards are distributed, and the messages communicated by administration through this distribution of rewards, influences faculty members' perceptions not only about scholarship but also about themselves as individuals and professionals.

As a final point, faculty members consistently viewed service as the criteria with the least importance. This reflects the shift from service to scholarship which is referenced in the literature [4, 8, 31]. Faculty members in the study were of the opinion that service was not valued and difficult to measure or quantify.

Those with lower publication rates, regardless of years of experience, were of the opinion that the importance given service would be increasing and needed to increase. They were of the opinion that service to the community was more of an obligation of the school and university than scholarship. They cited as their rationale the demand for accountability placed on the school and university by the local and state community who provide tax support. This demand was evidenced by what they perceived dissatisfaction with the service provided by the university. Two examples of dissatisfaction becoming evident through the media include cuts in funding and complaints from students regarding the use of teaching assistants and a lack of available required classes resulting in delays in degree completion [24].

Indicators of Scholarship

This area of the study was conducted to determine faculty perceptions regarding the current indicators of scholarship. The following is a listing of the findings of this study as these relate to the literature.

The results of the study indicate that the practices of citation index and citation analysis as indicators of scholarship were perceived to be problematic. This finding was consistent with, and supports the studies in the literature that arrived at the same conclusion [1, 4, 12, 29, 30, 32, 33]. As a result, faculty members were of the opinion that these indicators should not be used as the sole methods of evaluating scholarship. This supports

findings of other studies, such as Centra [10], Seldin [29], and Arlin [1]. In addition, faculty members favored developing other indicators of scholarship to be explored as adjuncts to citation index and analysis, such as peer review and faculty representation on merit review committees. This is consistent with similar findings [3, 10, 18, 19, 22, 29, 32].

The primary method perceived by faculty members in this study that could serve as an alternative to citation index and citation analysis was peer review. However, there were differences in the perceptions of faculty members about the peer review process. Faculty members with less experience, regardless of publication rates, suggested an internal peer review system for the purpose of ensuring a critical review of their scholarly work. Subjects with more experience and lower publication rates recommended the development an institutional network of outside experts who would agree to serve this function.

The differences between these perceptions indicate a lack of confidence and trust in the present system to provide a quality review of scholarship. Faculty members with less experience cited the potential threat to a quality review rooted in their opinion that administrators and department chairs may not be able to evaluate outside their areas of expertise. Faculty members with more experience who suggested this alternative believed that their colleagues had developed political associations, personal biases for or against certain types of thought and methodologies, and made professional decisions based on personal feelings.

Evaluation Practices

The purpose of this part of the study was to determine the perceptions of faculty members about the practices that are currently used, and those that should be used to

evaluate scholarship. The following is a listing of the results and how these results are related to the literature.

The results of the study indicate that evaluation of scholarship was conducted against the backdrop of the reward structure. In other words, faculty members only discussed methods that either are used, or that should be used, to evaluate scholarship for the purpose of reward, rather than evaluate scholarship as an academic pursuit for the purpose of knowledge contributions. This is consistent with the literature that situates discussions of the evaluation of scholarship in the context of reward [7, 9, 10, 33].

The danger highlighted by faculty responses indicate that scholarship evaluated in the context of a reward structure threatens an accurate appraisal because appraisals of scholarship grounded in the reward structure are limited to a quantitative review, not a qualitative one. This supports the findings of Seldin [29] who indicates that the practices used to evaluate scholarship need to go beyond those associated with reward. Centra (1989) also reports that accurate appraisal of scholarship hinges on both qualitative and quantitative information beyond that used for the purpose of reward.

The implications of the findings of this study should suggest to faculty members and administrators alike that scholarship is one, but certainly not the only important element upon which rewards should be based. In addition, reward should not be the only reason for which scholarship is reviewed and evaluated. Scholarship should be reviewed and evaluated outside of the reward structure for the purpose of determining if knowledge contributions are significant to the field. Faculty members were concerned that scholarship was becoming a piece of evidence one uses to substantiate requests for, or decisions made about, reward.

Based on conversations with each faculty member, scholarship also needs to become subject to critical reviews not associated with the reward structure. Collegial seminars, faculty debates, and other forums might serve this purpose and contribute to an intellectual environment that promotes scholarship. Some of the faculty members viewed the intellectual environment to be in a state of decline.

Lessons Learned from the Study

This study has provided knowledge about the variety of perceptions that exist among a selected group of faculty members in one School of Education. Implications for the use of the study's results in practice and for future research are identified in this chapter. However, future research may benefit from learning of the weaknesses associated with this study. The following are areas that were either a part of the study, or discovered during the research process that could improve further study in this area.

First, the results of the study are based on the responses of 16 faculty members at one School of Education using a single interview approach. According to Firestone (1992), the strength of this type of an approach is that it provides the reader with a rich, detailed description of each case which enables the reader to transfer findings from one case to another. Since the researcher cannot know the situations that the reader is considering to apply the study's results, enough information has been provided for the reader to assess a match between the situation studied and their own situation.

However, in order to gain a broader understanding of the perceptions about scholarship that exist in schools of education, it would be important to interview and explore the perceptions of faculty members responsible for evaluating scholarship, such as those on

promotion and tenure committees, deans, and department chairs. In addition, while the study and its approach provided valuable information about the differences in faculty perceptions of scholarship, generalization of the study's results is limited because of the small select group of faculty members interviewed.

Second, faculty members involved in the study needed to be assured that the tape recorded interviews, verbatim transcriptions, and direct quotes would not be used in the writing of the results or shared by the researcher. This was one procedure that was not considered "a priori." However, it became clear to the researcher that these assurances needed to be included and provided orally before each interview would take place. It would have been helpful to have informed faculty of this prior to the interview by including a statement to this effect in the letters sent to potential subjects.

Finally, there were issues associated with how potential subjects for the study were identified that were encountered by the researcher and the Office of the Dean of the School of Education. These issues centered around confidentiality of records, and an inability on the part of school administration to share records that would be used to identify subjects. Confidentiality of records is an understandable obligation of administration and a right of protection of each faculty member to privacy. However, as a result, additional time to explore alternatives that would not compromise confidentiality added to the time necessary to conduct the study.

This could have been identified, and additional time built in to the study for this purpose, by exploring issues of confidentiality and how to effectively work with these issues without circumventing them. One possible solution might be to send a questionnaire to all

potential subjects inviting their participation. Those that agreed to be part of the study could then be contacted and asked permission to review records necessary as part of the study. This would have enabled the researcher to establish the necessary categories of subjects involved without either breaching the confidentiality of the Office of the Dean or infringing upon the privacy of the subjects.

Implications for Practice

The results of the study provided information and suggestions that should benefit the practice of administrators and faculty members in schools of education. This includes the need for a mentoring program for faculty members with less experience, the need to explore issues related to faculty morale, and the need to explore the perceived lack of confidence in the current system to adequately evaluate scholarly merits.

The Need for a Mentoring Program

The results of the study indicate that faculty with less experience perceive a lack of definitional clarity of the policies, protocols, and procedures associated with the practices used for promotion, tenure, and merit reviews. These faculty also believed that there were inconsistencies between practices associated with merit and those associated with promotion and tenure. In addition, they perceived a lack of guidance and support from administrators and department chairs necessary for them to achieve success. These issues signal the need for the development of a mentoring program. Such a program would assist in developing faculty with less experience by providing them with assistance from more experienced peers who could help them to integrate their research agendas with their responsibilities for teaching and service. The development of such a program might improve practice.

Issues Related to Faculty Morale

Conversations with faculty members in the study revealed a lack of agreement with what was perceived as the primary mission of a professional school, and what constituted scholarship. This lack of agreement appears to be interfering with faculty morale as evidenced by faculty members who expressed feelings of frustration, pressure, and alienation. The results of the study seem to indicate that a "queen bee" and "worker bee" mentality exists among faculty members. Therefore, the need for administrators to examine the perceptions of faculty regarding the role of a professional school of education may not only be indicated, but may be necessary.

This process would have as its goals the identification of methods for clarifying expectations for scholarship for all faculty, an exploration of the use of a differentiated staffing model, and the development of techniques to assist faculty to integrate the responsibilities for research with those of teaching and service. The information gained from developing these areas related to practice would provide administrators, faculty members, provosts, and legislators with clues as to whether or not everyone has the same understanding of what is expected in the area of scholarship, how people feel about those areas, how work and professional relationships are affected, and how practice could be improved.

The Perceived Lack of Confidence in the Current System

It is apparent that there is a perceived lack of confidence in the current system to adequately evaluate scholarly merits in the School of Education used in this study. However, whether this perception is real or imagined is not the real issue at hand. The real issue

directly relates to perceptions on the part of faculty members who believe that the merit of one's scholarship cannot be evaluated properly because of either a lack of perceived expertise on the part of administrators and department chairs in annual merit reviews, or a lack of trust in colleagues' ability to render an objective evaluation for promotion and tenure decisions.

In addition, the perceived lack of trust and confidence in the practices used to indicate and evaluate scholarship expressed by faculty members in this study signals a need to further explore the reasons for these feelings, and what can be done to improve them. For example, investigating how to involve peers in the annual review process, developing methods to incorporate merit reviews in promotion and tenure decisions, and revising policies to include feedback from students and clients for the purpose of evaluating a faculty member's scholarly work. This type of information would improve practices related to the professional relationships that exist among faculty in a professional school.

The results of this study suggest ways administrators and department chairs might re-examine issues related to practice. These results also suggest to faculty members either concerned with, or responsible for, how scholarship is defined and evaluated, some of the methods and procedures that require attention. Improving practice in these areas can be instrumental in assisting both faculty members and administrators alike in the process of re-examining and re-evaluating scholarship and the role it plays in schools of education. Exploring these areas of improving practice may serve both groups well as a starting point from which to engage in a dialogue about these issues. Through this dialogue a better

understanding of the range of talents, diversity of opinion, and possibilities for improving practice could result.

Implications for Further Study

Previous studies identified in the literature provided valuable information on scholarship, its role, indicators, and methods of evaluation for disciplines other than education. Faculty perceptions according to varying years of experience and publication rates were not a part of these studies. This study described perceptions among faculty in a school of education about scholarship. It provided information that should benefit administrators and faculty in schools of education who are re-examining and re-defining the role of scholarship, and who might be interested in ways that practice could be improved. However, there are areas that were not delineated, or the focus of this study that may need to be explored.

First, the results of the study indicate that faculty members are in agreement that scholarship contributes to knowledge in the field. However, there is a difference in the perception of faculty members about what constitutes scholarship. An area of interest that might narrow the gap in this difference could include a study of what constitutes a contribution to knowledge, specifically what are the qualities and characteristics of a contribution to knowledge.

Second, based on conversations with faculty members in the study, it appears that being classified as a scholar (or not) affects how a faculty member is perceived in areas other than scholarship. It would be interesting to explore how perceptions of being, or not being classified as a scholar affect all areas of a faculty member's work.

Finally, the results of the study indicate that faculty members expressed a perceived difference in the value of reviews conducted for merit and those conducted for promotion and tenure. It would be interesting to study the relative value of both methods of evaluating a faculty member's work for the purpose of identifying how this impacts faculty work.

Conclusion

It was not the intention of the researcher to present differences in the perceptions of faculty about scholarship so that these differences could be used as arguments to support or refute particular positions about scholarship in a professional school. Nor was it the intention of the researcher to draw distinctions between or among various groups of faculty. It was the intention of the researcher to relate the perceptions of faculty members in one School of Education without associating names or faces to these perceptions and to identify commonalities and differences in these perceptions. The researcher is of the opinion that providing the information obtained from these faculty members will inform faculty members and administrators interested in knowing the differences of opinion on scholarship and why they exist. It is only through such knowledge and discussions of these perceptions that an understanding about these issues can be reached.

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