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Faculty Perceptions to Imposed Pedagogical Change: A Case Study

Mary L. Sinclair and Sarah R. Faltin Osborn

Abstract

In higher education, professors are seen as the subject matter experts, yet many pedagogical decisions are made by administrators. This leaves teaching professionals without a voice in the reform process and in some instances without the resources necessary for implementation of change, yet still responsible for enactment of change. This case study describes the issues for faculty who are adopting imposed changes to pedagogical course design at a postsecondary institution. It examines how faculty express concerns, as well as how they interpret administration responses to those concerns. The findings reveal four key themes in faculty resistance to imposed pedagogical change: Fear and Anxiety, Encouragement without Support, Insufficient Training, and Student Resistance to New Pedagogy. It is clear that administration and faculty at the study site recognize the significance of, and the necessity for, changes in pedagogy. Multiple changes to practice have been incorporated at this institution such as an increase in the number of graduate and undergraduate online course offerings and a significant increase in the use of collaborative learning strategies, team teaching, and other alternative pedagogical practices. It appears that administration and faculty have developed a culture that is open to continuous pedagogical change using evidence-based research to engage faculty and students.

Key words: *collaborative learning, online education, higher education, imposed pedagogical change, pedagogical reform, team teaching.*

Introduction

Professors in higher education are subject matter experts yet many pedagogical decisions are made by department administrators. This diminishes faculty voice in the reform process, and in some cases leaves them without required resources yet still responsible for enacting the changes. This lack of voice can often lead to resentment and shortsightedness. Faculty feel that they have, or should have, control over what happens within their classrooms, and when pedagogical change is required by their administration, they feel they are losing control and that their professional expertise is being challenged (Ginsberg, 2011).

According to Felder and Brent (1996), and others more recently (Doyle, 2011; Reynolds, Stevens, & West, 2013; Weimer, 2013), there has been a shift in preferred instruction in higher education from the traditional teacher-centered to a more student-centered, collaborative techniques such as problem based learning, team-based learning, and others. These changes are made to address shortcomings seen by those outside of higher education regarding inadequate higher-level learning. Therefore, the problem, according to Fink (2003), is that “although faculty members want their students to achieve higher kinds of learning, they continue to use a form of teaching that is not effective at promoting such learning”(p. 3), as it is largely based on the tradition of lecture-based instructional practices. Fink explains that lectures are less effective in helping students to retain information after a course is finished, to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, and to develop the ability to transfer knowledge from a course to other situations. That is to say, it often diminishes student motivation to continue learning.

The paradigm shift to the newer collaboratively-based approach to college teaching facilitates co-construction of knowledge amongst teachers and students, assists in the development of student abilities to create connections between course content and other areas of learning and experience, increases motivation for learning and empowers students through inquiry-based learning (Fink, 2003). It also provides the students authority in their acquisition of subject matter and focuses on assisting students in the process of developing competencies and talents.

A great concern for instructors who are required to make this transition is one of time. Because this approach requires considerable training, teachers are asked to become experts not only in their domains but also in pedagogy (Fink, 2003). Teachers and students alike face a steep learning curve related to the implementation of student-centered approaches, which Felder and Brent (1996) refer to as “navigating the bumpy road to student-centered instruction” (p. 1). Within the classroom, there is concern that using this approach may make it difficult for completion of the course syllabus as time must now be devoted to activities that promote active learning and interaction with course content rather than presentation of important concepts. As these changes require a shift in mindset for all involved, teachers fear that they will lose control of the students in their classrooms and that students will react negatively to these changes. Many also fear that student reactions may negatively impact performance evaluations completed at the end of the term. However, as interdepartmental collaboration amongst teaching professionals often occurs in relation to sharing ideas on course design and content outside of the classroom (Devlin-Schere & Sardone, 2013; Major & Palmer, 2006), this same philosophy can and should be applied to students within a classroom regarding their learning.

While current research focuses on collaborative learning in higher education, it largely looks at how this approach can be implemented through technology. There is significant emphasis on creating opportunities for student-centered structures in online courses (Hennessy, Ruthven, & Brindley, 2005; Hlpanis & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007; Lofstrom & Nevgi, 2008; Schneider, 2010). Other research has focused on the use of classroom-based collaborative learning and how it impacts student learning and achievement (Jones, 2007; Michaelsen, Bauman Knight, & Fink, 2004; Millis & Cottell, 1998). However, most of the research provides few opportunities to look at the challenges faculty face when transitioning to different teaching methods especially when required by administrators to implement these pedagogical changes, whether the changes are in the physical classroom or the online classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to describe the issues for faculty who are adopting imposed changes to pedagogical course design. The research for this study is guided by the central question: “How do faculty members at a postsecondary institution in the Midwest perceive the challenges that accompany implementation of required changes

in pedagogical practice?” To expand on this question, we have also established and framed our research around the following sub-questions:

- 1) How do faculty members make administrative personnel and other faculty aware of any displeasure with respect to the required change?
- 2) Are there differences in how faculty members express concerns depending on their audience?
- 3) Do faculty members respond, and if so, how, to administration's acknowledgment and feedback regarding expressed concerns?

The intent of this research is to provide beneficial information for administrators and for teachers who are subject to imposed changes in pedagogy. Administrators, particularly those involved with faculty development and teaching, should understand what imposed change does to the individuals enacting it, as well as see how these changes could affect recognition of problems. These findings can inform administrators so they may approach change in a manner that allows for increased comfort for educators especially by making changes less threatening and more attainable for all involved. For teaching professionals, we hope that this provides a metacognitive function, as the research provides an insight to reflect on how changes impact those involved.

In order to effectively determine the impacts of administratively-imposed pedagogical change on college faculty, the researchers felt that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for collecting and analyzing data and for presenting results to aid in the understanding of this phenomenon. Imposed pedagogical change often leads to an emotional response from the faculty impacted by this change. In order to elicit these emotional responses, a more detail-oriented, open-ended qualitative study is necessary. In addition, since the goal of the research is to promote an understanding of the emotional and professional reactions to imposed change, qualitative research allows for the researcher to be the means of data collection, because the human instrument is “immediately responsive and adaptive, [which seems] to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 19).

Tradition of Inquiry: Case Study

The case study method was selected because it would allow researchers to look at specific examples of faculty members who were faced with imposed pedagogical change and to compare these cases to determine significant themes that appeared across them. Case study research focuses on how actors within a case “function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus” (Stake, 1995, p. 1), while looking at both the similarities and unique traits that coexist within that case. In this study, the phenomenon of emotional reactions to imposed change is situated within the bounded context of a small college of nursing and allied health. Because imposed changes and their implementation can vary depending on the department and institution in which they take place, the researchers wanted to ensure they could compare reactions to a shared experience. The data collection procedures in case study incorporate descriptions of the contexts of the research that allow the reader of the research to ‘develop *vicarious experiences*, to give them a sense of “being there”’ (Stake, 1995, p. 63, emphasis in original), and this attention to description was well suited for the unique case.

Participants

This study used criterion-based selection to ensure that both participants had the necessary attributes needed to inform the researchers about the phenomenon. The criteria used for the participants in this sample were to be: (1) an assistant, associate, or full professors at an institution of higher learning; (2) an individual who experienced significant pedagogical changes; (3) someone who felt that these changes were imposed; and (4) a person who felt concern with these impositions. These criteria were important to the study in order to make sure that participants were comparable in terms of their experiences.

Participants were drawn through accidental sampling from a conveniently positioned population. To maintain the responsibilities of confidentiality to the participants of this study, especially in relation to the emotional and personal nature of the phenomenon studied, their names and positions, as well as institutional affiliation, will not be referenced in this research study.

In order to collect data from these participants, the researchers completed two 30-45 minute interviews with each of the participants. These interviews were semi-structured and each was recorded and transcribed verbatim. One researcher completed the first of the two interviews with both participants, and this data was used to inform areas of interest for the second researcher to explore during the second interview, which was completed within two weeks of the initial interview. Upon completion of all study interviews, the participants reviewed the transcripts to ensure that their responses were accurately recorded.

Data Analysis

After all data was collected and transcribed, the researchers began the analysis of data. The data were coded by both researchers using open coding, and all coding was completed by hand rather than with qualitative analysis software. Each transcript was reviewed independently of the others in order to keep researchers from looking for codes that existed across the cases in this initial phase. Any word or phrase that appeared 6-8 times was considered to be important.

Once coding was completed, the researchers met to compare and discuss codes to ensure inter-coder reliability. The researchers developed themes that existed across the cases, and significance was given to any theme occurring across two or more interviews. Themes were then considered for their relatedness, and overarching themes were determined. According to the data collected in this study, four themes were present: (1) Fear and Anxiety; (2) Encouragement without Support; (3) Insufficient Training; and (4) Student Resistance to New Pedagogy.

Verification Procedures & Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (1995), in our search for both accuracy and alternative explanations, we need discipline, we need protocols” (p. 107), and these protocols are called triangulation. This need for validity in the presentation of the research is also an ethical consideration to “minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (p. 109). To accurately depict

the interview data, member checking was used with the interview transcriptions, as described above. Triangulation of participants was also used to make sure that the data collected was an accurate representation of the phenomenon studied, so data were collected from more than one participant, and this data was used to develop the themes in the analysis process. In addition, to maintain an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon, both of the participants in the study were interviewed separately by both of the researchers. Due to the small sample size, and in order to increase reliability, the researchers used many of the same questions in the interview process. In this way, the second researcher was able to ask for any needed clarification or elaboration.

Finally, it is important to note the researchers' biases in relation to this study. Both of the researchers of this study are doctoral students of education and formal teacher training, and this study is situated in a domain where limited formal teacher training is required to receive a faculty position in higher education. This is particularly important because this study looks at pedagogical change within this institution and the participants' affiliated departments.

Research Site

The research site for this study is a college of nursing and allied healthcare professions located in an urban area in the Midwest of the United States. This college offers classroom-based instruction in nursing, clinical and classroom courses for allied health professions, and short certificate programs in other fields of health care. The institution is accredited to offer courses toward master's degrees in nursing and graduate level courses in such fields as health promotions and administration. These graduate programs were designed to be offered solely in the online environment. Administrative support for and/or recognition of the need for targeted faculty development in online teaching pedagogies was minimal. When the participating faculty was assigned by administrators to teach online courses, the faculty thought erroneous assumptions were being made regarding the ease with which effective pedagogical practice could be transferred from the physical classroom to the online classroom. As with most postsecondary institutions, this college is attempting to ed-

ucate the increasing technologically advanced students who are the consumers of education today. According to the college website, less than one quarter of the students educated at this institution is traditional college students. Therefore, the predominance of non-traditional students requires that the institution be aware of and stay current with the needs of these students. To address the needs of the diverse student population across institutions of higher education, it is necessary that these institutions employ alternative teaching and learning methods or pedagogies, alternative tools and means of delivery, and that the offerings are provided using multiple platforms in ways that ensure availability and access to all students.

It is clear from our investigation and interviews that administration and faculty at the study site recognize the significance of, and the necessity for, incorporating changes in pedagogy. Multiple changes to practice have been incorporated at this institution. Examples of this include increased numbers of online course offerings (with all five graduate programs entirely online), undergraduate online courses, and classroom changes that include a significant amount of collaborative learning strategies, team teaching, and other alternatives. It appears the college administration and faculty have used evidence-based research and developed a culture of continuous pedagogical change to engage both faculty and students.

Results

Anne has been teaching at the institution for almost six years. Although most of her teaching experience previously related to clinical interaction and instruction, she had some classroom teaching experience as an adjunct instructor and guest lecturer at a large university in the Southwestern United States. Previous experience with more progressive teaching and learning techniques was gained when she served as a facilitator for problem-based learning courses. As a result, she was excited to learn of the administrative support for faculty growth and development when she first began teaching at the institution. This was illustrated by her statement, "It felt exciting to me to come to a place where there was this openness to new ideas in teaching and not just acceptance but pur-

suance of excellence in teaching in that sense.” Anne’s responsibilities at the institution include teaching an undergraduate combined laboratory and lecture course. Most of the efforts put forth by Anne, that could be considered alternative pedagogies, have related to her classroom interactions with students and teaching.

Janet was trained as a nurse and has been involved in health care education for four decades. While she has been teaching at this particular institution for many more years than Anne, Janet seems to have experienced a similar feeling of excitement and the same encouragement for change: “I believe we’ve been encouraged to try things. No one’s ever said you have to do it, or you must do it, there’s never been any mandate but we have been encouraged to try things.” This would indicate that faculty not only had the autonomy to implement change but that the institution would be encouraging and supportive of it.

Janet began to teach at this institution twenty years ago and has seen many of the changes occur in the program offerings. However, it seems she has had previous experiences with teaching at the college that have led to some apprehension about using some platforms and in some formats: “We’ve been through a lot of changes over the last couple of years with moving from classroom to online education. [...] It was a very bad experience and since then I’ve really not wanted to try online teaching again.” So even though Janet felt supported with respect to ‘trying things’, when changes were implemented institutionally by administration, the support seemed to be absent.

Our interviews with the participants revealed that many factors contribute to faculty reluctance to adopt imposed pedagogical change. These factors included faculty fear and anxiety about embracing change, insufficient administrative support for required changes, unavailable support for these changes, administrative requirements for online teaching and learning, and student resistance to pedagogical change. The overall consensus from participants in this study was a hesitance to embrace change because of prior negative experiences.

Fear and Anxiety

At this institution of higher education, there has been a shift in the dynamics of faculty that has led to an increased fear and anxiety regard-

ing the expectations for change by administration and the support of faculty work. When Anne began teaching here, she felt “it was an exciting place to be, where change was embraced, and people were excited to be moving forward.” Over the past year however, “the spirit has been dampened.” She felt that there was a change in the direction the institution was taking and that she did not receive “the full explanation for why it occurred.” Unfortunately, this has caused her to question the institution’s direction and where its motivation lies. While she still feels like she is able to change and grow, she isn’t sure if there is adequate support for the changes she would like to make or for those that she has already put into place.

Anne was recently approached about a change in her teaching techniques. While the college has advocated and supported a pedagogical shift to team-based learning, she was asked to remove this strategy from her courses. When asked to change, Anne “wasn’t really given any specific guidance on how.” Being told that she needed to stop using the method she was using, Anne feels less comfortable making these, or other, changes in her classroom and has expressed her concern to her program director. However, because she feels the need to do what is asked, Anne has not expressed concern with anyone in a higher position. She feels that the methods she was incorporating into her classroom instruction were effective, but they were not as appreciated by students. Anne also discussed that she felt there were many colleagues who were willing to embrace change, which would require educators “to really explore what might work and how it might work.” However, with Anne’s example of her administration’s reaction to incorporation of new pedagogical strategies, it can be seen how the necessary time, space, and support for experimenting with new techniques may be more idealistic than realistic.

For Janet, feeling comfortable was an important component of embracing and enacting change. While working on her graduate studies at a Midwestern university, she had her first classroom teaching experience. Because of her discipline, she felt that she learned a more “classical” mode of teaching, “Where the professor is the god or end all and be all of everything.” She calls her teaching style old-fashioned, stating that she really likes “the old ways of doing things,” such as lecture-based instruction. While she understood that “the teacher certainly doesn’t have all the answers,” she still felt that this was an effective technique for teach-

ing, especially when used along with large and small group discussion.

Both Anne and Janet have anxiety related to enacting changes in their classrooms and teaching. Their fears have evolved out of negative previous experiences with administration's reactions to the enactment of imposed change. For Anne, the experiences that have hindered her interest in change arose from her administration's limitations of her implementation of a suggested teaching technique. Janet, however, felt discomfort and anxiety toward adopting imposed changes because of previous experiences with insufficient support for the incorporation of these changes.

Encouragement without Support

The participant faculty members were willing to adopt the changes being introduced at the college and anticipated that support and encouragement would be provided. However, this was not always the case. Janet has been teaching at the institution for a number of years and her experiences with administrative support are generally good, although limited. When asked to teach courses online, she felt very much on her own, however. Technical support was not in place and neither was the pedagogical training that faculty needed. During this period in early online education at the college, administrators and faculty both believed that teaching online required taking lecture notes in some form and putting them online where the students could access. Some discussion boards were introduced and maintained, writing and other assignments were placed in a Dropbox for review and grading and the students were distant from the instructor.

Janet believed overall that "it was a very bad experience and since then I've really not wanted to try online teaching again." She also felt that true teacher-student and student-student interactions were outside of the scope of the online courses in which she was involved. She thought her colleagues' experiences were the same as hers. "In the online situation, the entire program was an online program and so there really wasn't a lot of discussion," the implicit meaning being that faculty had no say in whether they would teach the courses, let alone in what pedagogical direction the courses were to be taken. Faculty were told "this is the online

program you'll be teaching and we'll [the administration] give you the support. Unfortunately, the support piece never happened." She thought some of her colleagues were more technologically capable, and she felt "a little more challenged and their [other faculty] experiences weren't necessarily negative, but as a whole we really were not given a lot of support."

Janet was happy with the opportunities provided for development in, and exposure to, pedagogical alternatives. At "the beginning of every semester we have an opportunity for continuing education for faculty and we actually had one of the professors that wrote the textbook come and do an all-day seminar for us." She continued to describe this seminar, explaining that:

"We [the teachers] got the opportunity to work in groups and actually utilize it [...] Then several other faculty got together after the fact that are very interested in team-based learning to actually try those things in their class and they were able to go for continuing education not in the college but outside of the college where they actually travel to some of the conferences on [Team-based Learning]. They're available to assist faculty who feel more comfortable with it, they're available to help faculty that aren't as comfortable, if they're interested."

Development opportunities for interested faculty are available and utilized. The long term expectation of faculty is that encouragement and support for change would be sustained.

The breadth of opportunities provided for development, Janet felt, did not correlate with the breadth of support once the opportunity is taken: "... really for the most part, people aren't too resistant to trying things. I think what they are most fearful of is that if I do, am I going to get the support that I need or am I going to be left out there to fend for myself?" Janet believed that this was where faculty resistance came in when faculty began to question the administrative support: "Am I going to have ample time to learn it? Am I going to have plenty of opportunity to have someone help me if I need help?" She felt that "[faculty] are fearful of the trial and error just because I think the biggest issue is not that they don't want to try [new pedagogies] but the support piece."

Initially, Anne felt encouraged that there seemed to be ample support for investigating and introducing new teaching and learning strategies into courses at the institution. She was very excited because “when I first got here I felt like, and maybe it was just the honeymoon period, but I felt like it was an exciting place to be where change was embraced and people were excited to be moving forward. I felt like people shared a vision of what the college was about.” However, recently she was asked to change and return to the more traditional teaching methods and to discontinue her use of team-based learning: “I wasn’t given any specific guidance on how, how to change it. I was told that the students weren’t happy and I need to stop using the method that I was using.” To receive the continued support of administration, Anne would have had to first gain support for change from the students:

“I’ve discussed concerns with my program director and I feel that she has the students’ best interests at heart and is trying to do her best to make sure they are learning what they need to know. Unfortunately, I feel like I need to learn how to build a better relationship with the students and get them more interested in supporting a different type of pedagogy and that may take a while.”

Anne recognizes the need to engage students but is disappointed that her ability to facilitate learning does not seem to be understood or supported by administration.

Insufficient Training

When new changes were suggested and required by the administration and support was offered, these resources did not always meet faculty needs. In particular, their institution offered training courses called faculty interest groups which are intended to provide faculty driven development opportunities. However, faculty were only allowed to participate in one at a time, which was particularly unsatisfactory to Anne, who stated that “one thing that concerns me, that I don’t really understand, is why they’ve limited the number of groups that you could join.” This was chal-

lenging for Anne because prior to her membership in a faculty interest group, she was working on her doctoral degree, where she took as many as two doctoral courses in addition to her teaching and supervisory duties, which were more time-consuming and required more effort than the interest groups. She continued that there is not a huge workload required for these groups, and that she didn't even "want to hazard a guess as to why they've limited that." Anne elaborated on the content of these faculty interest groups and expressed concern about the design of the course. Due to their name, Anne believed that "the ideas had come from faculty," but she is no longer sure if this is true. When she first arrived at the institution, she felt change was fairly faculty driven, but she continued to say that she has "lost some of that sense that they [the] faculty are really driving changes."

Janet also expressed concerns about the training and support provided by the institution, stating that she wants "to learn how to do [new] things, but I'm skeptical on making sure that we have the support we need to make sure that it works." While she has seen some support available to faculty who are making pedagogical changes, she "would like to see the administration really embrace [change] if we are going to do it, and then provide everything that's needed from the bottom all the way to the top to make sure that we're really going to do it."

Janet was very concerned with continuity of support for all involved in the reform process. She expressed feeling that both faculty and students would be angry because without support, outcomes will not be what they are desired to be. She discussed that having support would make her feel more comfortable, and that without this level of comfort being addressed through resources and support, "I'd just as soon not do it."

Anne and Janet were both active in their faculty professional development programs, which existed in the forms of large group faculty senate meetings and small group faculty seminars. However, Anne in particular has found that the faculty seminars are often poorly designed and do not take into consideration teacher input and needs. Janet felt that the pedagogical practices, which were introduced in the larger faculty seminars, did not receive long-term, continuous administrative support among those involved in the education process.

Participants felt there was insufficient training for online education. They expressed that online learning has become more important at their

institution. Anne believed that administration provided information sessions for online learning only “because they are developing the programs.” She understood the push for online teaching and learning, especially in terms of “competitiveness in a broader area, rather than just locally,” and accepts that it is a way for the institution to “bring in more students and increase their revenue.” However, she did express concerns that many of the courses in her program may not be a strong fit for this type of instruction because “the model we are using for teaching [our] students, online learning isn’t really useful because we need them to be here to show us the hands-on skills.”

While Anne was somewhat open to teaching online, Janet had significant concerns. When Janet began teaching at the institution, she taught an online course. She expressed that she had no idea what she was doing, and she did receive initial support, as “there was someone that helped to put the content on.” However, she was left alone to conduct the course, and stated, “I didn’t know how to manage the course.” Thus, this first course was “a really terrible experience,” especially because of issues of support. She felt that the teachers offering this first group of online courses “did not really have the support to provide the class[es].” This experience was equally unpleasant for her students. Because Janet “was lost all the time,” her students were frustrated with her inexperience as evidenced through course evaluations. Thus, she has “really not wanted to try online teaching again.” However, she hoped to enroll in an optional course on teaching online that would offer her some comfort as she faced the online teaching requirement at her institution.

Anne and Janet both understood the value that online education could offer to the students at their institution. While Anne was more willing to explore the online education requirement, Janet was hesitant. Both participants, however, felt that there were limitations to online course offerings and that these issues were not being considered by administration as they require implementation of courses on a digital platform.

Student Resistance to New Pedagogy

Both participants in this study discussed that student perception and reaction to pedagogical change was a concern. In particular, they refer-

enced the importance of teacher evaluations. Anne was a strong proponent for team-based learning and used it in many of her courses as a primary teaching technique. According to Anne, she was asked to “decrease the amount of team-based learning [she] was using in the classroom” by her program department head as a result of student evaluations. However, she was not surprised, as she stated “I knew that the students didn’t like it.” Unfortunately, Anne did not receive departmental support on how to rectify this situation. She believed that this teaching technique is effective, so she would have preferred being approached “to help figure out how to make it more student friendly, helping the students to understand better why I feel it is important to use.” While she felt that she had previously had administrative support by stating, “I was able to do whatever it was that I wanted to do to teach in the classroom,” she found out “that’s not always the case.”

When she initially learned that students did not find value in this approach, she looked for a way to elicit student feedback earlier in the semester. Using another professor’s tool for student evaluation of teaching midway through the semester, she was “hoping to get some comments that would lead [her] to make some changes before they filled out the [final teacher evaluation] form.” However, she found that students were not willing to make many comments, but “there weren’t any that were particularly negative.” Therefore, she did not have any reason to modify her teaching until after the final evaluations, which led to the mandate that she discontinue the use of team-based learning.

In contrast, Janet, who has adopted only some components of team-based learning in her classroom, has found student acceptance of some aspects of team-based learning. She incorporated readiness assurance tests (RATs), which involved groups of students completing assessments together. She used these to test students on readings completed outside of class, where “[students] still get points even if they didn’t get the first answer right. They lose a little bit every time they have to make another attempt.” She felt that this aspect of team-based learning has “worked really well with the students” and that “they really like that.”

There were many more traditional techniques that Janet kept in her classroom, such as lecturing and providing her students with notes and outlines from her lectures. She stated that it was important to keep these aspects because “our students here [at this institution] are very science-

based” and they came into the institution’s programs “because they are science-based programs.” In her experience, Janet felt that “students get really ticked off sometimes when we have them doing things that aren’t lecture-based.” Her students were “resistant to trying other [techniques]” and were “almost more resistant to trying things than the faculty are.” They often had negative reactions to collaborative learning because “they don’t see that as teaching.” Students believed teaching requires lecture and have expressed to Janet that this is how they learn best.

With the importance placed on faculty evaluations, and the previously discussed impact of student dissatisfaction, it was apparent that administration clearly considered student perceptions when reviewing pedagogical changes. These student opinions, as well as faculty fear and anxiety about adopting change, administration’s encouragement of change with limited or insufficient support, and institutional requirements for online teaching and learning, have implications for both faculty and administration.

Discussion

The findings from this study will be presented first in terms of their relationships with the distinct themes determined from the study and then in an overall format, which presents the larger picture of how these themes relate to one another. However, it is important to note that there is a general theme to our findings. It is clear that regardless of what kind of change is being required, the participants feel they need to be adequately supported by their administration. They want to feel comfortable with enacting the required changes, and an important component of this is the assurance of continued support both for themselves and for their students.

In examining faculty fear and anxiety for embracing change, we determined that the participants seemed excited about pedagogical changes and were passionate about their desires to help students learn. Therefore, they want to enable changes that allow for improved student learning. They recognize, as Fink (2003) noted, that traditional pedagogical methods, like lecturing, are less effective than progressive, student-centered pedagogy. However, for faculty like Anne, who work to imple-

ment these collaborative learning strategies in their classrooms, there is often limited administrative support when students do not support these techniques.

Negative prior experiences with administration's reactions to teacher-initiated change have led to faculty members' fear of change. They are unsure which changes are most appropriate for their classrooms and which changes administration will support in the long-term. Their experience has shown that when they do introduce change, support may not be available to the necessary extent. As faculty and administration introduce new ideas and pedagogical strategies through faculty development opportunities, they would receive significant initial training, as both Anne and Janet described about the large group faculty senate forum. They may also receive some funding for conferences so they might gain additional insight into these techniques, but long-term support is unavailable.

Fink (2003) proposed that teachers become experts of their domain and of pedagogy, so it is necessary they have resources and support in this process of professional development. Felder and Brent (1996) also discussed the steep learning curve related to implementing progressive pedagogical approaches, such as student-centered learning. This demonstrates the importance of space and time for teacher development of these strategies. However, at this institution, administration has not advocated for educators who are implementing these changes, particularly when Anne was asked to discontinue the use of team-based learning in her classroom.

The level of administrative support for innovative teaching is evident in the limited continued professional development opportunities offered by the institution. While there are multiple forums for addressing change in teaching and learning, faculty often feel that these are not designed with teacher need in mind. For example, Anne felt her administration-led faculty assessment-training course was not structured to encompass teacher needs. She had joined this group with a clear educational goal in mind: to find formative assessment tools that allow for accurate mid-semester student feedback on her pedagogical practices. It appears that the course developers of these faculty training seminars have created courses addressing what they perceive faculty want, not what faculty are actually seeking.

In this study, the interview data revealed an unexpected focus on the importance in considering the necessity of online education. As participants are required to offer more of their courses online, what is required of them throughout the process of adaptation is not being considered by the administration. Typically, administration feels that offering courses through the digital platform will be more convenient for educators, but administrators do not take into consideration the challenge in creating a properly designed, quality course. Rather, administration is of the assumption that online classes will be easier for teachers and students alike, which has not been the case for Janet and her students in her online courses. While there was technological support for transferring course content into the digital format, she did not receive pedagogical support that would assist her in offering an engaging course. The time she spent attempting to adjust to the new means of course presentation caused significant frustration for both her and her students.

The participants considered two forms of student reactions and resistance as important, those expressed in the face-to-face classroom and those on students' teacher evaluations. Institutions of higher education, particularly private colleges, have a need to maintain student satisfaction for new student recruitment and retention. The educational environment has evolved and adjusted to the consumerist society in which we live, and this requires "treating students themselves not as autonomous learners but as free consumers and not yet committed brand-shoppers" (Barber, 2007).

The participating faculty members in this study felt pressure from their students to balance student interests with their own professional understanding of teaching, evidenced by Janet's depiction of combining traditional teaching techniques with team-based learning. She has had to implement only aspects of this progressive pedagogical method because her students have verbally addressed their concerns about taking an active role in their education. They do not see the value in collaborative learning, so Janet has adjusted to incorporate their interests into her course design.

While both participants expressed concern about the end of semester teacher evaluations, these were of significant importance to Anne, whose evaluations directly impacted her teaching. After reviewing the students' negative opinions, Anne was asked by her administrator to change what

she was doing. It was particularly disconcerting that she was not asked to adapt her approach or offered assistance in how to make it more relevant to her students. Her students' input had such an immense impact that her own professional competency was challenged by her administration. The participants' experiences demonstrate the power that students have as consumers of higher education.

It is evident that the greatest concern for faculty who are adopting imposed pedagogical changes is that there is a need for continuous support from administration for these changes. Faculty are willing to embrace change when they are well-informed about what is expected from them and when they have the resources to address all necessary aspects of the change. Whether online or face-to-face, faculty members are concerned about student receptiveness to change, sufficient training in the pedagogical approaches, and long-term support.

Recommendations

As evidenced by the findings of this study, we have determined that faculty have a strong need for administrative support throughout the process of developing, adopting and enacting changes to their teaching. It is hoped the recommendations that follow will be relevant to administrators, teaching professionals, and educational researchers or others investigating impediments to pedagogical change in postsecondary education.

For administrators the results from this study should help elucidate the need for initial and continuing support for faculty who are adopting pedagogical changes. This support should be provided regardless of whether the pedagogical changes are administration- or faculty-driven. Administrators should keep in mind when they require change, whether it be in response to economics, student course and teacher evaluations, or administrative evaluations of teaching, that the teachers, while they may seem reluctant, are generally willing to embrace changes if they can see and understand how these will benefit their students. However, the researchers recommend that faculty insight and input be sought early in the process. Faculty must also be assured they will have access to any necessary training and support, thus enabling the time and space to experiment with and implement these new changes more comfortably.

One of the themes that emerged from our study included student apprehension, reluctance and resistance to any change in pedagogy. It is equally important to faculty that they be confident of administrative support when changes are made in the classroom so that student sentiment does not impede progress. Administrators should not only provide faculty the means to educate students about the pedagogical changes but we recommend administrators be actively involved in student education, which will help students gain an understanding of the potential benefits of pedagogical change. When students voice concerns, administrators must advocate for the instructors. This advocacy, alongside continued training and support, will empower faculty, reduce their anxiety and reluctance, and provide an atmosphere in which faculty will be more willing to develop and introduce alternative pedagogical strategies.

For teachers who are implementing imposed changes, it is important they have the means to discuss concerns and difficulties that arise. It is necessary that faculty feel able to openly discuss problems and concerns with administration as issues arise. Teachers must be proactive in these discussions and must recognize the importance of having their voices heard by those people who may be in the position to offer support, assistance, and advice.

Faculty should also work collaboratively with one another when adopting and implementing change. By so doing they can open up collegial discussions of problems and concerns. These discussions may result in collective problem solving opportunities that will reduce apprehension and anxiety surrounding incorporation of change. The formation of faculty learning communities can be an important mechanism for discussing and coping with these issues. In addition, faculty should seek and share alternative pedagogical opportunities with which they are comfortable and that will be valuable in their teaching.

While this research was designed to investigate teacher perceptions of adopting imposed pedagogical change, it also provides the opportunity to consider required pedagogical change from the administration's perspective. Pedagogical changes and faculty openness to these changes may also be influenced by impediments or factors outside of faculty control. While student numbers, retention, budgetary concerns, space, additional resources such as equipment and technology, are all common considerations for administration when looking at providing support for fac-

ulty members, these are not variables that fall within the scope of the present study.

By examining these various factors and considering the administrative perspective, further investigation may provide significant insight into the issues that affect faculty. Researchers may learn much by studying the awareness that administrators may or may not have concerning faculty perceptions of pedagogical change, imposed or otherwise. They could also look at how faculty expressions of concern are perceived by the administration, and in turn, how administrators respond to these concerns. Administrators could be asked to describe the mechanisms that are in place to receive faculty concerns and complaints and provide examples of the provisions available for addressing these issues. Researchers could also look at a more quantitative approach of how effective these tools are at offering accurate feedback to the administration.

It may be discovered that at some postsecondary institutions, faculty are not provided any means of voicing concerns about, or displeasure with, imposed pedagogical changes. It would be beneficial in these instances to examine the intentionality of administration in avoiding or suppressing faculty concerns. Some postsecondary institutions do not consider faculty representation important in terms of developing and adopting innovative approaches to teaching. Information of significant interest may be gleaned by studying administrative perspectives about this intentional exclusion of faculty from the decision making process. In the continually evolving and dynamic post-secondary educational environment, it is more important that administration and faculty work in tandem to provide the learning environments necessary for the evolving and dynamic student population.

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