

April 2014

An Exploratory Multi-Case Study of the Perceptions and Views of Academic Faculty Union Members Relative to Online Distance Education, Collective Bargaining & Related Policy

Dianne A. Wright
Florida Atlantic University

Damon A. Davis
Florida Atlantic University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Labor Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wright, Dianne A. and Davis, Damon A. (2014) "An Exploratory Multi-Case Study of the Perceptions and Views of Academic Faculty Union Members Relative to Online Distance Education, Collective Bargaining & Related Policy," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*: Vol. 0 , Article 26.

Available at: <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss9/26>

This Proceedings Material is brought to you for free and open access by The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy by an authorized editor of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

An Exploratory Multi-Case Study of the Perceptions and Views of Academic Faculty Union Members Relative to Online Distance Education, Collective Bargaining & Related Policy

Dianne A. Wright, Ph.D. & Damon A. Davis, M.Ed.



Introduction

- Today's college and university faculty are faced with increased challenges and apprehension in light of the increasing existence and opportunities of online distance education.
- Further, according to some (Dooley and Murphy, 2000, et.al), with increased opportunities come the potential for increased full-time tenure-track faculty retrenchment, stress and tension.
- As such, online distance education obviously raises new issues for collective bargaining.

Purpose

- The purpose of this presentation is to share the results of a multi-case study conducted in two selected sites in the State of Florida and to consider the following three broad questions:
 - (1.) What is the interplay of **FORCES** that are **INFLUENCING** the changing role of the American academic faculty union?
 - (2.) What is the **VOICE** of the academic (faculty) union in light of the ever increasing existence of online environments in U.S. higher education?
 - (3.) How have online distance education environments in higher education influenced academic faculty union **POLICY** with regard to the professoriate?

Significance

- This study is significant in that it explores the perceptions and views of academic faculty union members in terms of the intersections between Online Distance Education (ODE) and Collective Bargaining.
 - Many faculty believe that ODE undercuts the skills and status of the faculty; thus reducing faculty power, and thus has weakened faculty unions.
 - In many respects, according to others, the ODE issue has gotten away from the academic faculty union.
-
- However, little research to date has been conducted to test these assumptions.

Methodology

- Mixed Method Multi-Case Study Design
 - Qualitative Approach
 - Document Review
 - Open-Ended Electronic Survey Questions
 - Quantitative Approach
 - Closed Ended Electronic Survey Questions

Methodology Cont'd.

- **Sampling Plan**

- Convenience Sample

- Two Selected Sites/HEIs

- (One 4-yr. Public Institution; One State College)

- **Data Analysis**

- Document (Content) Analysis

- Survey (SPSS)

Results

Document Analysis:

- **According to the results of the researchers' content analysis of documents reviewed (i.e., selected HEI Statewide Union Faculty Senate meeting minutes between February 2010 – September 2013, and the most recent current Collective Bargaining Agreements of the selected study institutions:**
 - There were no mention of ODE until February 2012 with the mentioning of Western Governor's University as a threat (cited in the President's Address).
 - Distance learning and continuing contracts for college faculty was discussed during the February 2013 Faculty Union Senate Meeting.
 - A workshop presentation was given in September 2013, describing Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Results (Cont'd.)

Document Analysis:

- Following are Articles pertaining to ODE language in selected study institutions' Collective Bargaining Agreements:
 - Discussed under:
 - Article 10 (Intellectual Property)
 - Article 12 (Work Hours)
 - Appendix B Compensation (Distance Learning)
 - Discussed under:
 - Preamble to Appendix G BOT-Union Policies
 - Assignment of Responsibilities:
 - Item #10 – Instructional Technology

Results (Cont'd.)

Response Rate – 74 union members

Demographics:

- Eleven Chapter Presidents
- 42% - Undergraduate Level
- 11% - Graduate Students
- 47% - Both
- 52 % - Tenured; 12% Tenure-Track
- Years Taught = 3 – 41 Years
- 81 % - 9 Mo. Faculty; 16% Twelve Mo. Faculty
- Salary Range = \$41K – \$98K+

Results Cont'd.

Interplay of Forces Influencing the Changing Role of the American Academic Faculty Union:

- Budget Cuts
- Technology vs. Brick & Mortar
- Education "On the Cheap"
- Corporate Mentality of HEI Administrators
- Legislative Agendas
- Contingent Faculty

Results

- Most of the study participants indicated they were not sure whether ODE has had any **influence** on academic (faculty) union policy.
- Other survey participants described ODE as:
 - Sometimes more concerned with financial and administrative issues, rather than teaching issues.
 - Having made legislators think that they can deliver **education “On the Cheap”** and do more with less.
 - Increasing the quantity of students by decreasing the quality of the education.
 - Expectation of/Pressure for **“High Enrollments”** in Online courses.
 - Money/Incentives For More Students.
 - **Eroding Academic Freedom and,**
 - Making Education a Commodity.
 - Expands the reach of the university [administration] to obtain adjuncts to do the teaching work.

(Results Cont'd.)

Influence of ODE Environments on Academic Faculty Union Policy (*Policy Questions*):

- **Work Conditions**
- **Academic Freedom**
- **Time Accountability,**
 - Work and Student Contact
 - Office Hours
 - Credit for Work from home
- **Autonomy**
- **Course Creation & Delivery**
- **Intellectual Property**
- **Obligation To Teach on Line**
- **Compensation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Academic Quality & Integrity**

Results Cont'd.

Voice [view] of the Academic Faculty Union [role] in Light of the Ever Increasing Existence of Online Environments in U.S. Higher education...

- Role should be the same as for F2F class faculty.
- E.G., should:
 - pursue and advocate for equitable rights and treatment of ODE faculty.
 - defend academic freedom & protect autonomy.

Results Cont'd.

View of Role Cont'd.

- In addition:

- Negotiate ODE Work Conditions (e.g., office hours, respectable load credit/pay for work done

- Ensure the courses provided in the ODE belong to the institution's faculty.

- Promote the idea that work from home associated with **ODE = duty hours.**

- Demand accountability for quality standards & outcomes.

- Resist attempts to corporatize higher education.

- Make sure profits are shared with faculty.

- Advocate for Choice in whether to do online teaching.

Summary/Conclusion

- **Online distance education brings with it, new issues to take under consideration and, according to some, make faculty work more complicated as well as making it harder to bargain.**
- **This issue has, in many ways, gotten away from both the university and the union.**

Summary/Conclusion (Cont'd.)

- **Online Distance Education Has Not Been Dealt with Sufficiently in terms of academic faculty union policy development and advocacy.**
- **Faculty unions need to take a more active leadership role in the development of online distance education policy.**

-
- There are still a lot of warts to be exorcized in terms of online distance education policy.
 - Consideration of dialoguing with some of the high-ranked institutions, e.g., MIT and Stanford, in terms of how they address related issues, and in particular promotion of forward-thinking approaches to use online distance learning in advantageous ways rather than to undercut the value of traditional coursework.

Recommendations for Further/ Future Research

- **Expand The Current Study to Increase the Response Rate.**
- **Continued Study and Research to Determine Whether ODE classes are as Instructive as In-Person Classes.**

References

- Dooley, K.E. & Murphey, T.P. (2000). How the perspectives of administrators, faculty and support units impact the rate of distance education adoption. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*. Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/winter34/dooley34.html>.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political*.
- Maguire, L.L. (2007). Developing distance education policy within a state system of higher education: the faculty perspective. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania.
- Polsby, N. (1984). *Political innovation in America: The politics of policy innovation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Maguire, L.L. (2009, Spring). The faculty perspective regarding their role in distance education policy making. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12, 1 University of West Georgia, Distance Education Center.