ANNOTATION

Hines, Susan. R. "An Investigation of Faculty Development Program Assessment Practices." EdD dissertation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, Winona, Minnesota, 2007. 140pp.

Dr. Hines conducted a study to explore "assessment practices associated with the attainment of intended outcomes of faculty development programs" (1), noting that "if faculty development programs are charged with the responsibility to continually improve the quality of teaching and learning on our college campuses, there needs to be solid evidence of appropriate assessment methods demonstrating their effectiveness" (1). Hines's literature review (7-39) revealed "minimal (published) evidence of the usage of appropriate evaluation strategies" (1).

The sample for this study was limited to the responses collected from staff in faculty development programs at twenty public and private two and four year undergraduate institutions in the same upper Midwestern state. The research questions set out to be studied were: 1. How prevalent is faculty development program assessment? 2. How do faculty development programs evaluate the outcomes of their program? 3. Are the practices being used to evaluate faculty development programs appropriate for assessing program outcomes? (3) Hines asserts that the study was justified by the rising use of faculty development programs in institutions of higher learning combined with the observation that "the vast majority of faculty development activities being reported as successful in the published literature are assessed using superficial measures with a heavy reliance on self-reporting" (3). This is particularly a problem for the ongoing evolution of faculty development programs because "superficial assessments lacking structure and formalization result in minimal evidence of effectiveness" (13).

The research conducted was a qualitative study "designed to determine the prevalence of program assessment and the practices currently being used to measure the intended outcomes of faculty development" (40). To collect data, researchers used "a one on one, semi closed and fixed response interview format" (40) with respondents being given opportunities to "provide a response outside the fixed response choices when the respondent felt the available choices were not representative of their program" (40). Data analysis occurred after all responses were recorded in writing, data was reduced by "converting isolated transcribed text of similar thought into meaningful chunks" (46), and then labeled with a code. All data were coded by two coders "and checked for inter-coder reliability" (46). Finally, data was displayed "using matrixes identifying the coded data" (47) and creating bar charts which allowed the researcher to compare frequencies and explore for patterns and connections.

In her study, Hines found that respondents from twenty sample schools reported the most common faculty development activities happening on their campuses to be "orientations, workshops, seminars, and brown bag meetings" (59) with lesser reports of "lectures or lecture series … conferences … Scholarship for Teaching and Learning programs, panel discussions, faculty retreats, special training programs, administrative forums, and … learning communities"

(59). There were also reports of consultation services, newsletters, websites and resource libraries. With regard to answering the first research question of whether programs are self-evaluating, Hines found that assessment was more likely to be conducted following a specific event such as a workshop and less likely to be conducted following consultation services or other "small, individualized one on one services" (63). When assessment occurred, the most common outcomes being assessed were 1. Program satisfaction 2. Impact services have on teaching 3. The impact services have on student learning (63). Even when assessment activity was reported, it was not conducted regularly or systematically. Hines relates, "the main reasons reported for lack of data collection … were many felt they lacked the time and resources or it was just not considered" (65). Some respondents "indicated it is very difficult to measure the impact on learning as a result of services offered" (66) while others noted that the presence of solid administrative support negated the need for them to justify their services through evaluative reports. Evaluation was more likely to occur when outside funding was used or at stake (90). With regard to the second research question asking how programs are evaluating their work, Hines found that the most commonly used methods for assessment were "satisfaction surveys, self-reported changes in teaching, and teacher reported changes in learning" (67). With regard to the third research question, which explored the appropriateness of the evaluation methods being used, Hines compiled a list of eight descriptors of quality assessment from her literature review, against which to compare her respondents' answers. The descriptors are: 1. Goal directed 2. Measurable objectives 3. Criteria for success established for each objective 4. Means of assessment measure the objectives 5. Multiple measures 6. Collects summative and formative data 7. Clear evidence of a causal relationship 8. Systemic (72). The majority of programs studied in this research were unable to meet these characteristics.

Hines argues "considering the purported importance of faculty development and the invested resources, evaluation of program effectiveness is of great value to provide evidence of the quality, merit and worth of these programs" (83). Hines found that on campuses where faculty development programs were active, they were perceived to be successful and that when assessment was happening, the focus was on satisfaction (84); however, measurements of teaching and learning outcomes were low (85). Hines states that the "overall lack of rigor in regard to program assessment is notable" and suggests that the main reasons for "inadequate program assessment" are because it "lacks clear goals, is underemphasized, time and resources are constrained; and it is perceived as difficult, a low priority, and possibly biased" (86). Overall, program directors were found to take a "service-oriented approach" and to "center their services on the needs of the faculty as opposed to the needs of the students and the institution" (87), which explains the copious use of user satisfaction feedback in assessment. Seventy five percent of Hines's respondents also "cited a lack of time and resources as a reason for assessment deficiencies" (91).

Moving forward, Hines suggests that faculty development program directors shift their focus from "program satisfaction outcomes to overall program effectiveness" (94). She offers six concrete steps for doing so: 1. Establish goals aimed at overall quality education 2. Establish outcome-based criteria for outcome reports 3. Assess for program improvement - not accountability 4. Develop program assessment skills and models 5. Create an organizational climate conducive to program assessment 6. Provide adequate release time and staff (94-96). Hines also notes that there is ample opportunity for future research in this vein, particularly in

looking at designing program assessment models, investigating the feasibility of measuring student learning outcomes, investigating assumptions about the role of faculty development, and researching the characteristics of effective faculty development directors (97).