

Coaching of Higher Education Faculty: Quality and Timeliness of Feedback

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Introduction

- Within higher education, faculty play an essential role as an extension of the university.
- Universities depend on faculty to continuously support the mission and vision of the university, and in some instances conduct research, while teaching students.
- Faculty are evaluated on a regular basis within their institution to ensure their role and responsibilities are upheld to the standards set forth by the department and university.
- Transparency in the evaluation procedures of faculty in most universities is clear; while support services required after a performance review are not.

Problem

To support faculty, timely and constructive feedback is needed from department chairs or lead faculty that goes beyond an email with an attached performance review.

Faculty may require personalized coaching services which are conducted in a timely manner to support their professional development.



Purpose

Little is known as to the impact, timeliness, and quality of feedback that is provided to higher education faculty.

How, when, and by whom feedback is provided to higher education faculty may affect their ability to improve their professional practices both in and outside of the classroom.

The purpose of this literature review was to systematically explore, categorize, disseminate, and graphically represent the available research related to quality feedback provided to higher education faculty by lead faculty or department chairs at their respective institutions.



Research Questions

Research Question: What is the impact of the quality and timeliness of feedback for higher education faculty for coaching opportunities to improve their professional development and personal growth?

Sub Question 1: How does the timeliness of feedback affect a faculty member's ability to positively impact their teaching practices in the classroom?

Sub Question 2: What coaching opportunities arise for faculty based on the type and quality feedback provided by their department chairs or lead faculty from their respective higher education institutions?

Sub Question 3: What are the gaps in practice between universities in the timeliness and type of feedback provided to faculty that may allow for coaching opportunities to improve faculty teaching practices?



Significance of the Study

- Faculty are the lifeblood of any university. Attracting and retaining quality faculty is a challenge for universities due to the timeliness of meaningful feedback.
- When faculty do not receive feedback in a timely manner to improve their teaching practices, faculty members may not practice the competencies or employ the mission and vision of the university during their interactions with students.
- As a result, students may not be receiving the best classroom learning experiences possible.
- Updating coaching programs to include adjunct as well as tenure track faculty may lead to better relationships and collegiality among faculty within departments, colleges, and the university.
- Additionally, the acknowledgement of updates to faculty coaching programs may help universities increase faculty professional development and academic competencies.



Conceptual Framework

The scoping literature review design allows researchers to develop a conceptual map of the current literature and to define well and poorly developed areas of research team collaboration (Anderson et al., 2008).

Cooper (1988) was employed as the conceptual model for analysis of the literature. Several additional assumptions were established in developing a framework for the study.

Boyer (1996) envisioned multiple forms of scholarship that could work together synergistically and included the scholarship of discovery, integration, application and teaching.

The Scholarship of Discovery is most closely associated with developing new knowledge through research, but the other forms of scholarship may be valued that fosters greater and deeper knowledge of how systems interact and engage during times of crisis.

Literature Review

- The initial review of the literature revealed the vastness of research in the area of faculty feedback and coaching.
- A deeper dive may be needed when formulating the specific problem since the topic focuses on higher education faculty.
- The initial review revealed four major categories
 - Coaching, technology, targeted goals, and professional development
- More research may be needed to fully understand how the efficacy of feedback and coaching could be affecting the retention of faculty and the delivery of course content to students in higher education.



Formulating the Problem

The focus of the present study was on the relationship between quality and timeliness of feedback provided to higher education faculty to improve coaching practices within the university.

Formulating the problem was conducted by completing a broad, cursory review of the literature consistent with Cooper's Step A (1998).

The initial review of the literature revealed the extent to which evaluation and coaching practices are executed within various US-based universities whose faculty teach in-person or online.

A deeper dive into the literature was needed when formulating the specific problem since the topic of understanding faculty evaluation and coaching practices within universities was solely delegated to the faculty's respective department or was handled generally by the university's human resources department.

Method

The literature review was organized using procedures developed by Cooper (1988) to synthesize the literature.

Cooper provided structures to develop the problem, collect data, and evaluate the fit of data to the purpose of the study.

The Cooper organizational structure included directions on how to

- (a) formulate the problem,
- (b) collect data,
- (c) judge data for fit or alignment to the purpose of the study,
- (d) appraise and interpret the data determined to be relevant, and
- (e) categorize, assemble, and present the products.



Data Collection

Articles were evaluated for relevancy defined as related to the study intent and research questions as the search process evolved.

Focus was on current (2020-2021), peer reviewed scholarly publications, and pertinent to the purpose of the study.

The original search terms included:

Higher Education Faculty, Higher Education Adjunct Faculty, Higher Education Tenured Faculty

Feedback, Quality Feedback, Higher Education, Higher Education Faculty, Faculty Job Performance Reviews, Coaching, Coaching Higher Education Faculty Job Performance, Student Feedback of Faculty, Adjunct Faculty Reviews, PD Asynchronous, PD Synchronous, Faculty Coaching Frameworks

Faculty Evaluation Models, Teaching Strategies, Virtual, Synchronous, Asynchronous,, Faculty Development Model, Faculty Online Training, Best Practices, Online Faculty, Online Adjunct Faculty, Professional Development in Higher Education

Data Evaluation

The study reviewed 89 articles that included articles based on first-hand experiences, empirical evidence, and best practices implemented within higher education to effectively coach faculty.

The criteria related to the study's intent and research questions served as a guidepost in the selection process of evaluating each of the articles collaboratively examined.

The facilitation of higher education faculty performance reviews, coaching, and feedback was revealed in each of the studies evaluated.



Overall Results

89 initial articles

16 final articles

Descriptive Categories and Themes

- Feedback
- Professional Development
- Higher Education
- Faculty Coaching
- Performance Reviews
- Timeliness
- Teaching Outcomes



Findings: Research Question

What is the impact of the quality and timeliness of feedback for higher education faculty for coaching opportunities to improve their professional development and personal growth?

Annual: summative; evaluation; disincentive to the faculty member's internal motivation to improve, Meet/Needs Improvement are antithetical to growth mind-set.

Frequent: goal is to identify what needs to improve, formative, forward facing; faculty can figure out where to focus time

- Three times a year - faculty satisfaction in focus group study
- More frequent - mentor; peer
- Continuous - good leader gives constant feedback

Findings: Subquestion 1

How does the timeliness of feedback affect a faculty member's ability to positively impact their teaching practices in the classroom?

- Annual Performance Reviews & Reliance on them can make educators more productive
- Covid-19 pandemic introduced too many challenges to train and retrain educators on new methods & best practices.
- Verbal communication between students and educators versus paper helps the educator be more productive and understanding of students' "needs".
- On the "Flip Side" Getting rid of performance reviews all together; many are too complex, take too much time versus face-to-face communication.
- Coaching Methods and Professional Development is critical to enhancing teaching in a higher-level academic environment, especially those that are "junior" to the teaching environment within higher education.

Findings: Subquestion 2

What coaching opportunities arise for faculty based on the type and quality of feedback provided by their department chairs or lead faculty from their respective higher education institutions?

- Encouragement to focus on the coaching gap and mid- level faculty leaders in higher ed. Coaching is perpetual and supportive, with positivity as key.
- Suggestions for overcoming difficulties offer ideas to help faculty to overcome common problems sometimes manifesting in this educational arena.
- Coaching emphasis deals with situations and behaviors.
- Strategies include integrating current sources, visible coaching, and useful feedback.

Findings: Subquestion 3

What are the gaps in practice between universities in the timeliness and type of feedback provided to faculty that may allow for coaching opportunities to improve faculty teaching practices?

Gaps in Practice

- Timeliness of Feedback (Piazza & Rizzari, 2020)
 - Immediate feedback is more effective

- Types of Feedback
 - Peer Review of Teaching (Piazza & Rizzari, 2020)
 - focused on task/objective, not the person
 - specific rather than generalized
 - detailed instead of vague
 - corrective instead of non-corrective

Recommendations

- Faculty value prompt feedback that is provided by an individual whom they trust
- Receiving an email with a performance review or the results of student end of course surveys does not have impact on faculty and their teaching practices
- Synchronous or 'live' faculty coaching has greater impact on supporting faculty
- Coaching should be continuous and timely to support faculty in real-time.



Questions



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