

A National Assessment of Perceived Instructional Needs For Professional Development of Part-Time Technical and Occupational Education Faculty in the Community Colleges in The U.S.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of occupational education officers concerning the instructional skills professional development needs for part-time faculty members within the community colleges in the U.S. The types of instructional help part-time faculty members were perceived to need most were concentrated in the following areas: (a) identifying the learning characteristics of students; (b) alternating teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles; (c) participation in web-based instruction, and; (d) participation in distance learning.

Introduction

The context for higher education has changed dramatically in recent years with reduced funding, increased emphasis on technology, internationalization of the curriculum, and greater competition for students. The range of courses offered by colleges and universities and employer expectations of graduates has also changed with higher education being asked to produce a more flexible and higher qualified workforce to respond to changes in society (Watters & Weeks, 1999). Both public and private institutions, facing escalating costs and a heightened public awareness and sometimes criticism of the high cost of tuition, have viewed the hiring of part-time faculty as one source of flexibility in budgets dominated by fixed costs (Ostertag, 1991; Gappa & Leslie, 1997; Leslie, 1998).

In fulfilling their missions and in many cases mandates of knowledge generation, preservation, and transmission, colleges and universities rely fundamentally upon their faculty. Great institutional energies have been, and still are, focused upon the analysis of faculty needs, criteria and standards for appointment and advancement, and the processes for recruitment (Rajagopal & Farr, 1992). However, past attention has been typically directed to addressing the faculty resource represented by full-time appointees with part-time faculty largely overlooked or simply ignored. Although part-time faculty contribute

substantially to the teaching load, the expenditure of resources to support them has been trivial (Rajagopal & Farr, 1989). Because the use of part-time teachers has increased and, "The quality of education depends largely on what happens when teachers meet students in the classroom" (Cross & Angelo, 1989, p. 24), postsecondary and adult education institutions may need to develop guidelines to ensure the availability of support services for part-time teachers. Although community colleges have found part-time faculty attractive and necessary because of their flexibility, convenience, and lower rate of pay, college administrators have been concerned that part-time faculty may not be well-qualified, at least in the pedagogical context (Kelly, 1991). Brown (2000) found that these industry-based teachers have the technical skills required in the workplace of their particular discipline, but many lack the instructional background and experience that enable them to manage the classroom and inspire learning.

Theoretical Base/Conceptual Framework

In the last 20 years, community colleges have been confronted with an increasing number of part-time adult students and course offerings along with diminishing budgets (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990; Levine, 2001). In response to these trends as well as other factors, segments of higher education and especially community colleges, have resorted to utilizing part-time or adjunct faculty to a greater degree. This contingent workforce has provided institutions the flexibility to adjust to enrollment changes, fill temporary vacancies, teach specialized courses, and reduce faculty costs (Levine, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2001^b). The use of part-time faculty has also helped two-year institutions keep tuition costs as low as possible which helps fulfill their primary mission of maximizing access to higher educational opportunities (American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), 1995). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2001^a) indicated that in 1997, fully two-thirds (64%) of the faculty at public community colleges were part-time employees; this, in contrast to 1992 figures of 42%, demonstrates an increase of 22% in just five years.

Although reliance on part-time faculty has been a fact of the community college system in the United States, a question which has begun to surface and will no doubt persist: "Are part-time faculty properly trained, credentialed, or otherwise prepared to teach?" Past evaluation results indicated that part-time teachers often lack an understanding of the concepts of curriculum, teaching methods, student assessment, and many of the theories behind the science of pedagogy such as teaching and learning styles (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990). This has been compounded by the fact that a sizeable portion of the typical community college student body is comprised of older students (Selman & Wilmoth, 1986), most part-time faculty are employed for their professional competence rather than their pedagogical training (Pedras, 1985) and, community college faculty are commonly involved in instructing adult learners.

Purpose

Numerous community college courses have been taught by part-time faculty whose primary job responsibilities center outside the field of teaching. Many of these

instructors have had no formal preparation in teaching skills prior to their employment as part-time career and technical educators (Pucel, Walsh, & Ross, 1978). If higher education is to maintain a balance between theory and practice, the professional skills, contemporary experiences, and "real-world" focus of part-time academic staff needs to be identified and subsequently applied in concert with the ability to effectively teach (Watters & Weeks, 1999). Professional development needs of part-time occupational and technical community college faculty have not been known or available in a college by college, statewide, or comprehensive national perspective or format. The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of occupational education officers concerning the part-time faculty instructional professional development needs.

Procedures

This study used descriptive survey research to assess the perceptions of occupational education officers concerning the instructional professional development needs of part-time community college occupational and technical program faculty. The target population for this study was the occupational education officers at community colleges in the 50 states of the U.S. The frame for the study was the AACC's list of community college occupational education officers. It was assumed that the occupational educational officer would be in the best position to provide current and relevant information concerning the part-time occupational and technical faculty within their community college as other administrative positions, such as president, chancellor, or provost, although more numerous, were considered to be too far removed from, or unfamiliar with the kinds and types of data sought by this study. Choosing the less frequently occurring occupational education officer position over another more prevalent administrative position was deemed appropriate in that the data would be less distorted and a more complete response set would be attainable from an administrative level closer to the actual occurrence of part-time faculty instruction and student contact. It was recognized that even at his level of full-time and part-time faculty interaction proximity that the respondents many not have either officially or informally evaluated the part-time instructors concerning some, many, or all of the attributes contained in the survey instrument or, if an evaluation had been conducted it was done using a specific institutional format not fully aligned to the survey instrument used in this study and as such their perceptions would be assumed rather than actual. The accessible population was comprised of 101 individuals and all were included within this study.

The survey instrument was a modification of a questionnaire developed by Pucel, Walsh, and Ross (1978). The research conducted by Kelly (1991), Selman and Wilmoth (1986), Goetsch (1978), Cross and Angelo (1989), Van Ast (1992), and Danielson (1996) provided additional support to the functionality and appropriateness of using the six teaching competency domain areas and their contents of the Pucel et al. (1978) survey instrument.

The survey instrument consisted of 58 classroom teaching skills that occupational education officers may perceive that part-time occupational and technical program faculty need to develop. They were grouped into six categories: (a) course planning, (b)

instructional skills, (c) classroom/student management skills, (d) implementation of media, (e) evaluation, and; (f) interaction skills. An anchored five point Likert-type scale with a sixth category of "Does Not Apply (NA)" was used to assess the degree of perceived instructional professional development needed by part-time faculty. Content and face validity were established using a panel of experts (n=11) chosen based on their knowledge and experience in descriptive survey research design, survey instruments and/or data collection, and the intricacies of the part-time faculty phenomenon in postsecondary community college education. For reliability, thirty-two occupational education officers or their equivalents were selected from the National Council for Occupational Education's membership directory to participate in a pilot study to establish the reliability of the survey instrument ($\alpha = .94$).

The total response rate was 51% of the population and data obtained from a sample of nonrespondents were compared with the data received from the respondents and no differences were found between nonrespondents and respondents, so the findings of this study were deemed to be fit to generalize to the target population.

Findings

Data were treated as interval and means and standard deviations were calculated for items on the survey. Following are the ranges of the scales used to present the data: 1-1.49 = Need No Help; 1.50- 2.49 = Need Slight Help; 2.50-3.49 = Need Some Help; 3.50-4.49 = Need Moderate Help; and 4.50-5.0 = Need Much Help.

The perceptions of occupational education officers of the needed teaching skills for part-time faculty related to course planning is provided in Table 1. Three items fell in the need "moderate" help category: identifying the learning characteristics of the students for which instruction will be developed (M=4.26, SD=.90); identifying appropriate ways to teach (M=3.89, SD=.98), and; aligning instruction/course materials with other instructors of corresponding courses/programs (M=3.85, SD=1.12). The summated mean for respondents' perceptions toward part-time faculty professional development needs related to course planning was 3.66 (SD=.84) indicating that "moderate" help was perceived to be needed in the area of course planning.

Table 1
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Course Planning	M	SD
1. Identifying the learning characteristics of the students for which instruction will be developed	4.26	.90
2. Identifying appropriate ways to teach	3.89	.98
3. Aligning instruction/course materials with other instructors of corresponding courses/programs	3.85	1.12
4. Identifying individual students needs	3.81	1.08
5. Identifying information/activities to supplement instruction	3.74	1.11
6. Preparing course objectives	3.68	1.27
7. Selecting appropriate instructional materials	3.55	1.04

8. Organizing what is to be learned in the course	3.49	1.12
9. Dividing the course into instructional units	3.38	1.11
10. Sequencing the instructional units of a course	3.32	1.09
11. Understanding the difference between adult vocational and other adult educational programs	3.26	1.34
Summated Mean	3.66	.84

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

Table 2 provides data on occupational education officers' perceptions of needed pedagogical skills for part-time faculty specific to 18 items related to the category of instructional skills. Four items were identified as areas where part-time instructors need moderate help. These items include: alternating teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles (M=4.13, SD=.97); adjusting instruction to accommodate for students with different paces of learning (M=3.89, SD=1.05); employing simulations/models to demonstrate what students will find in the world of work (M=3.53, SD=1.14); and directing students in applying problem solving techniques (M=3.51, SD=1.12). The remaining items fell within the need "some" help category. The summated mean for this category was 3.10 (SD=.74) showing that the respondents had an overall attitude that "some" help should be provided to part-time faculty in the area of specific instructional skills.

Table 2
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Instructional Skills	M	SD
1. Alternating teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles	4.13	.97
2. Adjusting instruction to accommodate for students with different paces of learning	3.89	1.05
3. Employing simulations/models to demonstrate what students will find in the world of work	3.53	1.14
4. Directing students in applying problem solving techniques	3.51	1.12
5. Employing means of providing positive feedback to students	3.47	1.04
6. Directing individualizing instruction through the use of learning packets, modules, etc.	3.44	1.33
7. Directing students on how and what to study	3.17	1.17
8. Conducting group or panel discussions	3.17	1.31
9. Planning and directing individual or group field trips	3.17	1.58
10. Directing student shop or laboratory experiences	2.89	.96
11. Directing students in the initiation/completion of projects	2.87	.99
12. Assisting students to make immediate on-the-job application of what they have learned	2.83	1.03
13. Demonstrating a concept or principle to be learned	2.79	1.06
14. Summarizing a lesson	2.72	.99

15. Introducing a lesson	2.64	1.01
16. Demonstrating how to do a task, step by step	2.62	1.09
17. Relating classroom instruction to the job experiences of adult students	2.54	.99
18. Presenting information by bring in a subject matter expert as a resource person	2.52	1.08
Summated Mean	3.10	.74

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

Data addressing the perceived level of need of part-time faculty for teaching skills related to classroom and student management is presented in Table 3. This teaching skills category contained five items in which all responses fell in the need "some" help category.

Table 3
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Classroom/Student Management	M	SD
1. Familiarity with student conduct rules and policies	3.32	1.22
2. Identifying and using appropriate ways of monitoring student progress	3.30	1.25
3. Establishing and maintaining a filing/record keeping system (e.g., grades, attendance, etc.)	3.30	1.32
4. Identifying, locating, and obtaining necessary supplies, equipment, and teaching aids	2.96	1.18
5. Providing a safe and healthy classroom/lab environment	2.53	1.23
Summated Mean	3.08	1.00

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

Table 4 discloses the information provided by occupational education officers responding to the perceived needs of part-time faculty for teaching skills related to nine items in the implementation of media category. Respondents perceived that part-time faculty needed at least

Table 4
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Implementation of Media	M	SD
1. Participation in web-based instruction	4.52	.85
2. Participation in distance learning	4.20	.92
3. Connecting to the Internet for webcasts or on-line discussions	3.91	1.20
4. Using multi-media techniques for instruction (e.g., computers, presentation software, etc.)	3.74	.99

5. Locating, ordering, and evaluating audio-visual instructional materials	3.48	1.28
6. Connecting to the Internet for information searches and data base retrieval	3.39	1.28
7. Preparing and presenting information with television and video tape equipment	2.98	1.34
8. Preparing and presenting overhead transparency materials	2.87	1.15
9. Presenting information using chalk or dry erase boards or flip charts	1.94	1.05
Summated mean	3.45	.79

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

"moderate" help in the four items including: participation in web-based instruction (M=4.52, SD=.85); participation in distance learning (M=4.20, SD=.92); connecting to the Internet for webcasts or online discussions (M=3.91, SD=1.2), and; using multimedia techniques for instruction (M=3.74, SD=.99). The item of presenting information using chalk or dry erase boards or flip charts had a mean of 1.94 (SD=1.05) signifying that respondents perceived this to be a pedagogical skill that is only slightly needed by part-time faculty. Overall, part-time teachers need "some" help (Summated M=3.45, SD=.79) in the area of implementation and use of media.

Information collected concerning the five items in the evaluation category of the perceived needed teaching skills of part-time community college faculty is displayed in Table 5. All items achieved means scores in the category of need "some" help.

Table 5
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Evaluation	M	SD
1. Developing objective criteria to evaluate lab performance	3.44	1.12
2. Evaluating student performance according to entry level occupational performance standards	3.42	.97
3. Developing a written test/quiz to determine student knowledge of course materials	3.02	1.07
4. Scheduling and using tests/quizzes	2.80	1.10
5. Determining student grades for the course	2.57	1.08
Summated mean	3.05	.94

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

Table 6 presents the figures for the average perceptions of respondents concerning the perceived degree of need of part-time community college faculty for teaching skills related to 10 items in the category of interaction skills. Two of the items were indicated by occupational officers that part-time instructors need "moderate" help in. The two items are understanding what motivates students to participate (M=3.55, SD=1.06) and understanding the effects of past educational successes or failures upon learners (M=3.53, SD=1.02). The summated mean for the perceptions of the respondents addressing

interaction skills was 3.00 (SD=.89) signifying that part-time faculty need "some" help in this category of teaching skills.

Table 6
Perceptions of Needed Teaching Skills

Interaction Skills	M	SD
1. Understanding what motivates students to participate	3.55	1.06
2. Understanding the effects of past educational successes or failures upon learners	3.53	1.02
3. Identifying and using appropriate ways of interaction to assist students	3.22	1.10
4. Understanding the conditions and forces, cultural, social and economic, which influence student learning	3.21	1.02
5. Maintaining an open mind concerning the ideas and opinions of student	2.87	1.12
6. Understanding the importance of teacher enthusiasm and support	2.79	1.12
7. Identifying positive and negative student verbal and non-verbal reactions to instruction	2.77	1.03
8. Understanding the importance of establishing respect between teacher and student	2.77	1.15
9. Applying non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and silence	2.67	1.18
10. Respecting each students' feelings and ideas	2.66	1.03
Summated mean	3.00	.89

Note: 1 = Need No Help; 2 = Need Slight Help; 3 = Need Some Help; 4 = Need Moderate Help; 5 = Need Much Help; 6 = Does Not Apply

Conclusions

The summated means for the six teaching skills categories indicate that attention should be given to designing professional development programs and activities in course planning, instructional skills, classroom/student management, implementation of media, evaluation, and interaction skills. Special emphasis should be placed on professional development which addresses teaching and learning styles, teaching methods, and distance learning using the Internet and web-based technology. This finding is similar to research conducted by Galbraith & Shedd (1990) who indicated that part-time teachers often lack an understanding of the concepts of the science of pedagogy such as teaching and learning styles. Identifying the learning characteristics of students and identifying appropriate ways to teach were important course planning skills. Finally, based on the summated mean for all 11 items in the course planning skills category, any part-time faculty professional development program should provide assistance in course planning.

Alternating teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles and adjusting instruction to accommodate for students with different paces of learning were areas deemed important in addressing part-time faculty instructional skill needs. These

two items, along with the previously discussed item of identifying learning characteristics of students in the course planning category, appear to overlap one another in that they address student learning styles. Penner and Price (as cited in Pucel, Walsh, & Ross, 1978) included teaching and/or learning styles as one of the seven categories used in their survey instrument to identify teaching habits or patterns considered characteristics of effective vocational teachers. In the opinions of the respondents, identifying student learning styles, and subsequently employing and adjusting what is known to both the pace and style of teaching, were topics in which part-time instructors need assistance.

Part-time faculty were thought to need "some" help in the category of classroom/student management skills. Referring to the response levels for the five items in this category of teaching skills shows that perhaps they are viewed by the respondents as important teaching skills as they contribute to the collective idea of managing the logistics of teaching a course but, providing a professional development activity focused on any single item may not be needed or advantageous.

Concerning factors addressing the implementation of media skills, part-time faculty were indicated to need assistance to the greatest extent with participation in web-based instruction, distance learning and using the Internet for webcasts or on-line discussions. These items were related to distance learning technology, an endeavor which has received increased attention throughout secondary and postsecondary educational arenas. Perhaps an even greater emphasis on distance education exists in community colleges where non-traditional learning populations, flexible course schedules, high school graduation equivalencies, community and continuing education opportunities, workforce re-education, unique curriculum designs and, student separation from the college/classroom, among many other things, are some of the foundations upon which the community college philosophy rests. Based on the perceptions of the respondents in this study, providing distance education professional development opportunities to part-time faculty members is a need which deserves more attention.

In the area of evaluation teaching skills, the perceived level of needed part-time faculty professional development focused on three items. Developing objective criteria to evaluate lab performance, evaluating student performance according to entry level occupational performance standards and, developing a written test/quiz to determine student knowledge of course materials were items where "some" help was perceived to be needed by part-time faculty. The summated mean for this category demonstrated that "some" help was needed by part-time faculty concerning evaluation teaching skills.

The summated mean for the interaction skills category signified that, according to the perceptions of the occupational education officers involved in this study, part-time faculty need "some" help in this skill area. The two items of understanding what motivates students to participate and understanding the effects of past educational successes or failures reinforces the need for part-time faculty to spend time getting to know their students in ways that are meaningful to both the student and the teacher. Faculty should strive to discover possible student motivation strategies and avoid repeating the causes of previous negative interactions as well as reinforcing prior

successful circumstances in the lives of the students. Once again, the response levels for the 10 items in this category of skills may signify that, although they are viewed in the aggregate as important teaching skills by the survey participants, providing a professional development activity focused on any single item may not be necessary or warranted but certainly possible.

Recommendations

Community college administrators responsible for the design and delivery of part-time faculty professional development activities should review the current part-time professional development activities provided by their college and consider adapting, modifying, or completely re-designing them to include the salient findings addressing teaching skills discovered in this research. Although attention should be given to designing professional development programs and activities in course planning, instructional skills, classroom/student management, implementation of media, evaluation, and interaction skills, special emphasis should be placed on professional development which addresses part-time faculty teaching methods aimed toward student learning styles and distance teaching and learning competencies using the Internet and web-based technology. As such, it may be prudent to construct professional development activities with an emphasis on training in instructional skills, classroom management, and technical competency.

Community college administrators should assess the disparities and similarities between what professional development activities they currently provide and the recommendations provided in this research to determine if changes are warranted and/or appropriate. Professional development activities which address instructional/classroom management skills may need to be developed in equal consideration with activities designed to introduce part-time faculty to the policies and procedures of the college and/or department. To further enhance the application of these findings to the real-world, a part-time faculty evaluation instrument could be developed and administered by trained individuals to a sample of randomly chosen community colleges in order to make a comparison of data sets to provide further insights into this area of inquiry.

In alignment with an explanation provided by Brown (2000) concerning the professional development practices and activities which are most appropriate or effective for a division or college, the design and delivery of professional development depends on many factors, e.g., personal and professional goals, school mission, administrative policies and procedures, and the business community. These factors should also be taken into consideration by community college administrators and leadership when considering the logistics of what and how to provide professional development activities to their part-time faculty members.

Implications

Community colleges interested in discovering the perceptions of occupational education officers about the part-time faculty instructional professional development needs and their most effective methods of delivery within their own college, or perhaps their state or region, could replicate this study. The survey instrument developed for this research could be used to collect the needed data. Research should be conducted which collects data from part-time community college faculty of a prescribed frame concerning their perceived instructional needs and the best methods of professional development delivery.

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