

Professional Development of Faculty: Social Justice, Self-Concept, and the Challenge of Aligning the Responsibility to Accommodate

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Creating an Inclusive Culture: Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

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Why talk about disability?

Higher education has a role in shaping outcomes for people with disabilities

Kessler Foundation and National Organization on Disability, 2010

National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>

Why talk about disability?

- People with disabilities are more than twice as likely as people without disabilities to report that they have a household income of \$15,000 or less (34% versus 15%).
- Among *all* working-age people with disabilities, only 21% are **employed full or part-time**, compared to 59% of working-age people without disabilities
- 19% of people with disabilities have reportedly graduated from college compared to 27% of their non-disabled counterparts.
- National Center for Education Statistics states that in 2011, average salaries for those with a college degree were nearly twice as high as those without.

Why talk about disability?

Faculty have an impact on students.

Reasons students with disabilities report leaving prior to degree completion:

- Inconsistent accommodations
- Lack of faculty awareness of disabilities and disability resources
- Negative attitudes or perceptions of faculty and instructors

Faculty Attitude

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY?

Gender

Leyser et al. (1998) found more favorable attitudes in male faculty and posited that differences between attitudes of female and male faculty were perhaps more related to greater experience in teaching students with disabilities due to greater length of time in their position.

Similarly, Murray et al. (2008) suggested that gender effects in their study may be related more to differences noted by academic discipline.

Discipline

Prior studies found faculty in Education were significantly more willing to provide accommodations than other faculty (Schoen et al., 1987; Nelson et al., 1990; Lewis, 1998; Rao & Gartin, 2003; Skinner, 2007; Murray, Wren & Keys, 2008; Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

Previous studies had found less favorable attitudes and less willingness to accommodate in faculty from science, engineering, and business (Schoen et al., 1987; Kennedy, 1996; Lewis, 1999; Rao & Gartin, 2003; Skinner, 2007).

Experience with Disability

The results of most previous research suggest there are no effects from one's experience teaching students with disabilities (Rao & Gartin, 2003; Schoen, Uysal & McDonald, 1987; Vogel, Leyser, Wyland & Brulle, 1999).

Faculty Rank

Although higher levels of rank were associated with greater levels of experience teaching students with disabilities Leyser et al. had found no effect of faculty rank on attitude or willingness to accommodate.

How does that help faculty development?

There is a need to identify variables such as social justice attitude that can be utilized in faculty development as well as effective means of fostering positive attitudes and willingness to accommodate students with disabilities in the postsecondary environment (Murray, Lombardi, Wren, & Keys, 2009).

My Research Study

Independent Variable

Social justice attitude as measured by the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012).

Dependent Variables

Dependent variables:

- Faculty attitude toward students with disabilities as measured by the fairness in providing accommodations, willingness to invest time, and performance expectations factors of ExCEL instrument (Lombardi & Murray, 2011).
- Willingness to provide accommodations to college students as measured by the combined score of adjustment of course assignments and requirements and accessibility of course material factors of the ExCEL instrument (Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

Covariates

academic discipline

gender

years of experience teaching postsecondary education

academic rank

knowledge of disability law

prior experience with disability

Research Question 1

How much variation in faculty willingness to provide accommodations to college students with disabilities is explained by their social justice attitude after controlling for academic discipline, gender identity, years of experience, academic rank, knowledge of disability law, and prior experience with disability?

Research Question 1

Covariates alone did not account for a statistically significant amount of variance

Addition of social justice attitude was statistically significant.

All covariates and social justice attitude combined accounted for 22.2% of variance in faculty willingness to accommodate with social justice attitude accounting for 10.6% of the variance

Research Question 2

How much variation in faculty attitude toward college students with disabilities is explained by their social justice attitude after controlling for academic discipline, gender identity, years of experience, academic rank, knowledge of disability law, and prior experience with disability?

Research Question 2

Neither the covariates alone or with social justice attitude accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance.

All covariates and social justice attitude combined accounted for 12.2% of variance in faculty attitude toward disability with social justice attitude accounting for only 1.3% of the total variance

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between faculty knowledge of disability law and social justice attitude?

Research Question 3

This question was addressed through bivariate correlation using Pearson's r . Analysis revealed no relationship between knowledge of disability law and social justice attitude with

$$r = .003, p = .972.$$

What about the covariates?

The present study found no effects of:

- rank on attitude or willingness (although higher levels of rank were associated with greater levels of experience teaching students with disabilities)
- experience teaching students with disabilities on attitude or willingness
- gender on attitude or willingness
- academic discipline on attitude or willingness

Sample

The participants in the current study are more representative of the faculty than many prior studies (Matthews, Anderson & Skolnick, 1987; Nelson, Dodd & Smith, 1990; Rao & Gartin; Schoen, Uysal & McDonald, 1987)

In much prior research faculty from education are often overrepresented whereas responses from engineering and physical sciences have been somewhat under-represented.

As with several prior studies, participants were disproportionately female.

So what does this mean?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REINVIGORATING
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT



Expanding Faculty Development

- utilize professional development opportunities to establish an ongoing relationship with faculty in order to create the interdependence that underlies a just society (Rutherford, 2011)
- professional development opportunities must seek to change the individual beliefs of faculty regarding disability (Zhang, Landmark, Reber, Hsu, Kwok, & Benz, 2009)
- focus on particular policies and practices that faculty may perceive as being non-problematic but may be perceived negatively by students with disabilities (Pincus, 2000)

Expanding Faculty Development

- Draw a connection between accommodating students with disabilities and social justice
- Less emphasis on the law and more on the role of the faculty member, SAS, student
- Clearly address academic rigor and integrity
- Address difference between fair and equitable

Reasonable Accommodation

An alteration to remove a barrier to full participation in programs or services

Institutions need to have clear process to receive and respond to requests

What is "reasonable"?

- Does not create an undue burden to the institution
- Does not create a direct threat to the safety of the student or others
- Does not fundamentally alter the nature of the program

Accommodation is an interactive process...

Faculty bring knowledge of the course content, methods, and essential requirements;

Accessibility Coordinators understand what accommodations are appropriate and most likely to address functional impairments caused by disabling condition;

Students understand their own limitations and how their disability impacts learning in a classroom;

Flexibility is essential to meeting needs of the student, their classmates, and the instructor

Questions, Thoughts, Quiet Time
