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HELEN BROWN

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY GOVERNANCE FROM AN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE LENS

ABSTRACT: Empirical research on faculty governance effectiveness from an organizational culture perspective is limited and is especially needed due to the increasing internal and external pressures on higher education institutions today. Increased accountability demands for higher student success and retention require effective and participatory governance processes. Two research questions were examined, the effectiveness of the governance process on a mid-sized Northwest university and the utility of exploring effective governance using an organizational culture theoretical framework. In-depth case study interviews were conducted among six faculty of various ranks in one college. The study findings indicated that trust and transparency, competing expectations, lack of influence and hierarchal decision making impacted perceptions of governance effectiveness which negatively impacted faculty climate perceptions.

Keywords: Faculty governance, organizational culture, shared governance, governance perceptions, faculty climate

Introduction

The 21st century University is an increasingly complex organization challenged to meet seemingly conflicting expectations and demands from of an ever expanding and changing diverse stakeholder group. Historical perspectives of who speaks for, leads the charge, and is responsible for the university is changing. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Committee on College and University Governance first emphasized the role of faculty decision making in 1920 (Leach 2008). Once held notions of the centrality of faculty roles in governance are often found in conflict with new political, social and financial realities requiring expedited administrative decisions. (Tierney 2008). These decisions may collide with the long held values of the academy for academic freedom, shared governance and protections. These are values deemed foundational to the academy and to the development of an educated populace. To university faculty and administrators alike, sharing governance to meet the challenges and conditions of higher education today can feel like a clash in mission, values, and core principles (DeBoy, 2015). The issue is further complicated by changes in faculty composition with nearly 70% of faculty across the nation composed of part-time and full-time non-traditional tenured track faculty (NTTF) and over 50% NTTF at research institutions with varied degree of opportunity, interest, expectation and welcome to participate in faculty governance (Kezar & Maxey 2013).

Robust, engaged and visionary shared leadership is needed for higher institutions to thrive and excel in their preparation of students given the myriad of challenges and changes afoot. Conversations about faculty governance quickly devolve into ‘us and them’, lowering moral, impacting climate, fueling mistrust, and detracting from and derailing the mission of the institution. Research elucidating the underlying factors and conditions of effective governance is greatly needed.

The empirical basis for understanding the underlying issues impacting effective faculty governance is slim with the abundance of governance research focused on organizational structures (Kezar & Eckel 2004; Leach 2008). Tierney

(1989, 2008) and Schein (2010) offer organizational culture as an approach to better understand the underlying shared assumptions, symbols, values, and beliefs that impact behavior and ultimately the health and effectiveness of faculty governance. Case study approaches to faculty governance are limited but have yielded important findings (Tierney 2008).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify recurrent and complex patterns and explanations for the opportunities, expectations, challenges and barriers inherent in faculty governance among North West University faculty from various ranks and tenure status of one college. This paper will explore faculty governance attitudes and perceptions and the impact of these attitudes on governance participation from an organizational culture perspective. (Tierney, 1988, 2008). The paper will move beyond organizational and structural descriptions of governance with an underlying framework that governance effectiveness is predicated less on organization and structure and is more of a function of human interactions (Schein 2010).

This qualitative case study offers empirically-derived data to better understand factors related to effective faculty governance and the particular challenges rapid change imparts on governance processes. The study provides faculty governance leaders and administration with information to impact shared governance culture and offers recommendations for attending to organizational culture concepts to improve governance effectiveness and to empower shared decision making participation.

Literature Review

The literature selected for this analysis focused on the topic of faculty governance engagement with the overarching perspective that challenges and changes in the academy result in new internal and external pressures and tensions that impact governance perceptions and participation. Research gaps and suggestions for recommended theoretical approaches are analyzed to better understanding faculty governance engagement and adaptations that are needed to sustain shared governance.

Internal and External Governance Challenges

A growing literature outlines a number of changes in the academy that call to question the health of faculty governance. (DeBoy 2015; Foster, 2006; Kezar and Eckel 2004; Kezar, Hartley & Maxey 2012; King 2013; Leach, 2008; Schuster & Finkelstein 2008; Shinn 2014). Limited faculty participation, the growing number of professional versus academic administrators, and growing numbers of non-tenure and nontraditional faculty (NTTF) with limited or no access to faculty governance signal a diminishment of active decision by faculty across American colleges and universities (Kezar & Maxey 2013; Schuster & Finkelstein 2006; Burgan 2006). Pressures to grow and maintain enrollment, expand on-line education, increase revenue in the face of decreased public funding, complete for scarce research dollars, meet high tenure and promotion expectations, increase numbers of NTTF are listed among present day challenges to effective governance (Bary 2013; Foster 2006; Kezar & Maxey 2013; Leach 2008; Schuster & Finkelstein 2008). Despite these changes and challenges, authors argue that faculty must exert their traditional power of governance oversight to preserve the culture of shared governance and to model civic engagement and democratic discourse for the campus community (Burgan, M 2009; Kezar, Hartley & Maxey 2012). Much of the governance literature begs a common question: who is it that the university 'belongs to' and who is it beholden to? (Leach 2008). There exists little understanding and support for shared governance outside of the university (King 2013) and public support for faculty governance will be limited unless the link between governance and education quality is understood (Jaschik 2010).

Positionality

Differences and tensions between faculty and administrators faculty governance positions are evident in the literature (Bahls 2010; McConnell & Mortimer 1971; Palm 2006; Pope 2004; Shinn 2004; Shinn 2014). Faced with rising public and political pressure for accountability and effectiveness, pressure exists for administrators to make strategic and rapid decisions that can conflict with the more deliberative and reflective process of traditional governance (King 2013; Leach 2008) and can lead to decreased trust and cooperation (Birbaum (2004). Concerned that

governance is eroded when the institution begins to mirror the market, Birbaum sounds a warning against “backward looking processes” (soft governance) rooted in the culture and tradition of shared governance as outlined by the 1967 Joint Agreement (American Association of University Professors 2001) being replaced by “forward looking processes” (hard governance) based on rational choice, structures and policies (Birbaum 2004 p.6). Birbaum challenges the very assumption that hard governance leading to expeditious decisions is helpful for the institution, but rather deliberation and backward looking processes of faculty governance are what is critically needed to preserve the institution. (Birbaum 2004).

Roles and Responsibilities

The literature contains a mix of faculty and administrative perspectives on the roles and responsibilities inherent in faculty governance. Miller, McCormick and Newman’s study (2000) found agreement between faculty and administrators for faculty authority for curriculum and other academic matters and the faculty senate as the primary governance method for participation. Faculty strongly felt a need for authority and a well-defined process to question administrative decisions. Foster (2006) argues that the academy is “two closely articulated organizations” (p. 49) and that academics and administrators operate under different assumptions and values given their unique roles and responsibilities. A common theme in the literature is that traditional models of shared governance erode when administrators are forced to respond to a myriad of external demands in a timely and strategic manner that does not appear transparent and that governance is further challenged when faculty have competing demands for the interests of their own discipline, college or department (Kezar and Eckel 2004). Other authors lay at least partial responsibility for the erosion of governance at the feet of the faculty, urging more governance participation to prevent the eroding values of the academy (Burgan, 2009).

Governance Commitment

How faculty weigh decisions to participate in faculty governance is an emerging field of study and findings about participation satisfaction are contextual and not easily generalizable. Important governance participation factors include: valuing shared governance, opportunities to participate, role definition, clear charges, and belief that opinions are valued. (Birbaum 2004; Diamond, 1991; McConnell & Mortimer 1971; Williams 1986). Competing demands and pressure on faculty for tenure and promotion, research, publications and obtaining external funding, staying abreast of current technologies, etc., along with lack of governance skill and opportunity, and participation restrictions by rank or tenure status are identified as governance barriers. (Schuster & Finkelstein 2006; Waltman, Bergom, Hollenshead, Miller 2012). Deeper insight into the complexities impacting faculty decisions to engage in governance is needed. Some authors suggest that the answers to do not lie in the structural organizational theories but that human, social and cultural theory can help explain motivators, rewards and barriers to fuller shared governance participation (Birbaum 2004; Miller et al 2000; Bahls 2014).

Trust and transparency

Trust and transparency are discussed as critical governance participation factors and an indicator of the status of the organizational culture (Pope (2004; Tierney 1988; Birbaum 2004). Faculty fault successful governance to lack of transparency and trust, and lose faith in a system that is increasingly perceived as a corporate, top-down model. Senior faculty stepping into administrative positions relate perceptions from faculty that they have compromised their academic values (Foster 2006; Palm 2006). The changing role of the Presidency from an historic Academic President versus a Corporate President is offered as a barrier to trust and transparent governance. (DeBoy 2015). Decreased expenditures for tenure lines and perceptions that higher paying administrative positions are on the rise also build suspicion (Shinn 2004). Shared leadership and decisionmaking, foundational tenants of faculty governance, is related to trust and cooperation. (Drescher, Korsgaard, Wiepe, Picot, & Wigand, 2014).

Faculty Composition and Inclusion

Almost 60 percent of faculty on American campuses today represent part- or full-time non tenure track faculty (NTTF) and the majority of new faculty positions are not tenure track lines. (Gappa 2008; Kezar & Maxey 2013). Many authors decry this situation and believe that strong governance is not possible with this composition of NTTF faculty due to their heavy teaching demands, lack of governance training, limited opportunity and incentive for

governance engagement, job instability, fear of recrimination, lack of interest, and perceived lack of status and respect. (Schuster & Finkelstein 2006; Smith 2015; Waltman et al. 2012). Rhoades (2008) raises concerns about the lack of governance participation among NTTF based on their lack of academic freedom and job security. Kezar and Sam (2014) emphasize the importance of including NTTF in governance to increase perceptions of professionalism, reduce negative stereotypes and to have important conversations about the curriculum NTTF's deliver and teach. NTTF view participation in governance as critical to change policies and practices to improve professional benefits and obtain better salaries and greater stability (Kezar and Sam 2014). Gaining insight into variations of attitudes, perceptions, efficacy toward faculty governance among NTTF requires future investigation (Kezar and Sam 2014).

Governance Research Approaches

A body of research explores approaches for studying the characteristics and effectiveness of governance (Birnbaum 2004; Cohen & Mark 1986; Schuster & Finkelstein 200, Tierney, 2008). The literature does not support changes in organizational governance structures as the path toward improved governance, but that human, culture and social factors are what matter and contribute most to efficient and effective governance (Schuster et al. 1994 & Kezar & Eckel 2004). More theory driven research to understand these human, cultural and social cognitive factors is needed.

Research discussing improved faculty governance practice linked to educational improvements is limited and essential. McGrew and Untener (2010) describe how a university-wide "statement of practice" was established to improve climate and offer expanded governance opportunities for NTTF. Their work was fueled by the belief that supported faculty produce better learners. Tiede, Gerber, Turket and Kreiser (2014) presented a statement by a subcommittee of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) outlining effective communication practices between faculty and college governing boards. They argued that communication must be regular, open and unmediated and that greater representation of faculty is needed on governing boards (Teide, et al., 2014). The Association of Governing Boards released five practical steps for improvement governance focusing on new concepts of integral versus shared governance. (Bahls 2014). Research is needed to assess current governance conditions and to understand the impact of implementing these sorts of concrete steps for improved governance.

Governance and Organizational Culture

Most faculty governance research has focused on historical, organizational, structural and political approaches (Birnbaum, 1988; Leach 2008; Tierney 1988, 2008) with less attention to the symbolic and constructed meaning underlying governance culture (Schein 2010). Schein (2010) offers important definitions of culture, leadership and organizational culture relatable to faculty governance. Schein relates that organizational culture is, "...created, embedded, evolved and ultimately manipulated by leaders" and that with maturity, the culture of the organization offers stability and meaning to the members of the group which then determines organizational norms and views on acceptable leadership (Schein 2010, p. 3). Understanding the underlying assumptions and the values and the beliefs of the leaders shaping the institution is vital and warrants further research. Tierney (1988, 2008) built on the work of Schein's definitions of culture, leadership and organizational culture and developed a framework to understand, diagnosis and surmount problems in higher education institutions based on organizational culture models. Understanding that institutions are influenced by rapidly changing and challenging external factors, Tierney posits that they are also strongly shaped by strong cultural positions within the institutions. As he notes, "An organization's culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and a symbolic level (Tierney 1988, p. 3). Tierney (1998) argued that understanding the "codes and conventions" of organizational culture is imperative to avoid crisis and to address the challenges and complexities facing higher education in productive and healthy ways. (p. 4).

Tierney offered an early framework for studying environmental cultural to diagnosis an institution's health, including: the constructs of: a) environment; b) mission; c) socialization; d) information; e) strategy and f) leadership (Tierney, 1998). Later, Tierney focused his attention on organizational culture of faculty governance and offered a theoretical framework that expanded traditional research exploring governance structure and organization (Tierney 2008). Believing that strong and effective organizational culture is shaped by both symbolism and socialization which require interpretation, Tierney offers what he calls a "different vantage point" (p. 165) and provides five interconnected precepts in need of interpretation and definition: a) decisional outcomes and purpose; b) venues of decision making and units of analysis; c) core identity; d) communicative process and e) effectiveness of governance processes in enabling decisions to occur (Tierney 2008, p. 164-169). Tierney (2008) lends further support for an organizational cultural lens noting that current change and cultural shifts require an understanding of the connectedness and dynamic nature of an institution's culture to make needed and acceptable leadership and governance adaptations. This research was framed by the organizational culture work of Schein and Tierney to query, analyze and interpret faculty governance engagement, attitudes and perceptions.

Methods

Context

This research is positioned in a mid-sized (12,000) Land Grant University in the North West region. Of particular interest are issues of administrator and faculty turnover, increased faculty productivity and research expectations, declining internal and external funding support, and institutional pressure to increase student enrollment and retention. For context, the institution has had five Presidents in the last 10 years (including two interim presidents) and great turnover of administrative staff. Governance research questions were based on questions posed by the instructor of Theory, Application and Design of Qualitative Research at the University of Idaho. Additional questions and prompts were developed from faculty governance literature.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a clinical faculty member and formerly worked in a highly bureaucratic government, non-independent work environment. The researcher acknowledges their personal stance as a NTTF and their perceptions of experiencing job insecurity, heavy teaching demands, unremunerated work, and experiences of bias from traditional tenured faculty. The researcher acknowledges the impact this stance may have on their construction of meaning throughout the research process (Savin –Baden & Major, 2013) and they practiced reflection and critical introspection to help avoid bias and judgement. (Mezirow, 2006).

Participants

This study examines faculty governance perceptions, attitudes and experiences from six faculty from one college comprised of four departments. Fifteen invitations to participate in the study were equally extended between gender, tenured, tenure eligible and NTTF, including faculty born outside the United States. On average, participants responded after three email contacts. No full professors responded nor participated. Faculty offered time constraints as the primary reason they postponed or refused the interview. Faculty interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview approach over the course of one month. Interviewed were male ($N=3$) and female ($N=3$) faculty of differing ranks (senior instructor, instructor, and four associate professors; two faculty were ineligible for tenure based on rank and one participant identified as international faculty member. All faculty considered themselves in an applied field with limited opportunities for research funding but abundant opportunity to apply their discipline in environments external to the university. Five of the six faculty had served more than four years in their position and one member formally served administratively.

Ethical Concerns

Institutional Review Board approval was granted for this exempt study. Participants were identified and recruited via email from a publically available faculty directory. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim

and all identifiers in the recorded interview were redacted during the transcription process. The recordings were deleted upon transcription.

Data Collection

A case study approach was used to guide this research utilizing semi-structured interviews. This is a well-documented approach for gaining perspectives and insight into faculty governance (McConnell & Mortimer 1971; Yin 1981). The semi-structured, conversational interview process was used to generate descriptive narrative and detailed, rich information (Creswell, 2014), (Merriam, 2009), Yin (1981, 2009). Data collection consisted of three main approaches: 1) one-on-one semi structured interviews; 2) non-verbal observations and 3) field notes taken during the interview. Participant interviews were scheduled via email and were conducted in faculty offices.

Interview Instrument and Procedures

The interview instrument consisted of five questions generated by the course instructor related to faculty governance perceptions, faculty climate, retention, institutional fit and the relationship between effective governance and trust. The researcher added additional questions related to faculty governance challenges, need for adaptation to external pressures and changes, barriers, challenges and opportunities for governance participation. The research questions were asked sequentially and prompts were included to capture richer content with limited clarifying questions to ensure comparability of responses. Interview length ranged from 30-60 minutes and was dependent on the length of the responses provided.

Data Analysis

All but one interview were transcribed verbatim and analyzed inductively following the 6-phase guide to thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) to, “unpick and unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (p. 9). Repeated readings and a recursive approach was used for the coding process to identify themes. A contact code summary sheet was created, including reflective remarks to enhance inductive coding processes and to identify codes and sub-codes. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes were then subjected to constant comparison and some codes were rejected, sub-codes created and new codes created (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To test for accuracy, each transcript was reviewed individually and compared to the others to confirm codes and emerging themes. The researcher used a latent versus semantic level of analysis to create data themes (Braun and Clark, 2006). In the first level of analysis, the researcher identified themes related to effective governance perceptions, attitudes and participation based on the literature review. In the second level of analysis, the researcher evaluated how these themes corresponded to Tierney’s (1998, 2008) theoretical framework of organizational culture in higher education and faculty governance.

Trustworthiness

To maintain trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) the following steps were taken: 1) Interview questions and a detailed protocol was developed based on governance literature review, discussions with faculty colleagues and lived experience as a faculty member; 2) Interview questions were asked sequentially and in identical order for each participant; 3) Interviews were transcribed verbatim including oral and non-verbal utterings within 1-2 days of the interviews. Because responses were obtained from faculty of one college, the results have college generalizability but the in-depth interview and the thorough literature review prior to the development of the interviews increases generalizability to other faculty, especially those from applied disciplines.

Limitations

Limitations to this methodology include the size of the sample from one college and the researchers familiarly with two of the six participants. Although a few of the participants voiced comments such as, “I can say this because of confidentiality”, there remains a concern that some faculty might have been less forthcoming due to the sensitive nature of research.

Results

Interview Themes

Five major themes were identified in the data analysis: 1) Boundaries and borders; 2) Responsibilities and rewards; 3) Power and hierarchy; 4) Trust and transparency; and 5) Changes and challenges. This research is part one of a two part study of faculty governance perceptions and will focus on the findings central to the themes that most impact faculty trust and organizational climate.

Boundaries and Borders.

Overall, the participants had a common understanding of the larger frame of faculty governance and an appreciation for the historical and present benefits of shared decision making for students, faculty, and the institution. One participant stated, "It's important to participate...you have the academic side and the non-academic side coming together to discuss what the issues are...what the potential solutions are...". The most widely shared concept of faculty governance was shared decision making, academic rights, and freedom over academic matters such as, "...teaching, grading, assessing and academic responsibilities." Participants voiced clear concern for maintaining academic freedom and shared examples of administration exerting negative influences over interdisciplinary fields of study. Another participant stated,

...things like curriculum development and it is up to us to maintain control of our ability to govern ourselves and develop our own curriculum, I don't see it as good guys and bad guys. I think it's kind of on both sides. Faculty governance is an appropriate ideal and goal, but it becomes ineffective based on personalities, situations and enthusiasms.

Most faculty expressed some ambiguity over the boundaries and borders of faculty governance, regardless of their rank or years of service with statements such as, "I'm not sure if this is a faculty governance issue." Younger and untenured faculty were not alone in voicing training and mentorship needs. One junior faculty, self-identified as an international faculty, reported that training would improve governance effectiveness,

I don't have a big picture around understanding of faculty governance... We may need some more information and support and training to help us to get the whole support of resources, that we can use, and techniques we can get help with.

Mid and late career faculty also expressed need for more governance role clarity; one participant stated, "You don't get any orientation to faculty governance so I think it would be helpful. It would make people feel more welcome to participate." Faculty understood governance as one of their many roles, and experienced faculty expressed value in passing knowledge to junior faculty, "I think we need to guide new folks at the table, that is the value of seasoned folks." Younger faculty expressed difficulty in having access to decision makers and offered suggestions for opportunities to share ideas and concerns with colleagues and leaders. The governance borders and boundaries were most clear for departmental governance.

Responsibilities and Rewards

Participating in governance was hampered by the number of roles faculty balance, institutional expectations, and the perceived lack of rewards for participation. Issues of time, competing responsibilities and values, work life balance, pressures of tenure, promotion and annual evaluation factored into prioritizing faculty governance involvement. As a senior lecturer stated, "It is important to participate. But time, time is the big challenge. Everyone is so busy, so darn busy." Another stated, "On a daily basis, the barriers and challenges are about time and the demands put on me." A tenured participant said, "...the demands never go down" and,

The expectations put on us as faculty are high... and that means we are limited in how much time we can devote into running the ship when we are all trying to do our own things. I have a full plate. As much as I care about how things happen here ... there are simply times I am not going to be available as much as I would like to be. Until you arrive at tenure and are successful with your tenure case, it's pretty obvious you generally want to keep your head down. You know what you are up against, how you are expected to perform, not to make waves, you are counting on the support of the people above you.

One member discussed their focus on teaching, research and engagement over governance, "We are here to teach and we are not the administration." The small percentage of the position description allocated to service was a common theme, "My desire to be a voice is eclipsed by my desire to do a good job with the rest of my job description."

Participants shared that any participation in governance was allocated under service, which was already a thin portion of their position description and it was not well recognized, nor rewarded.

Participants faulted people, not the organizational structure of governance, for any shortcomings and the fault was distributed among administration and faculty. One senior faculty stated,

I think the issue is more to do with the people than the governance. I would like more people willing to participate more equally and not have 75% of faculty sit around complaining not doing anything and the 25% involved. So, no matter what the governance is, that won't make the difference. I think you need people who value being involved with faculty governance for anything to happen.

Faculty noted lack of rewards, perceptions of ineffectiveness, and limited respect for their role in governance. Open communication, opportunities to serve, the socialization and community building of governance were all mentioned as motivators to governance participation. One participant mentioned, "Social professional mixer events communicate that people care about what is going on in different parts of the university." One younger faculty voiced motivated to participate in governance to lend new ideas and to gain access to leadership.

Participants discussed seeking and finding recognition, rewards, and remuneration outside of the university, "For better or worse, I have decided to focus my time outside the institution. I find that uniformly I am rewarded better in terms of prestige, the value of what I am bringing ... is effusive when it is outside the institution and often non-existent within the institution.

Lack of equity dampened the female participants' enthusiasm and motivation to engage in governance. Participants voiced dismay over wage gaps between administration, faculty and staff, underrepresentation of women and minorities in administration, and unequal access to decision makers and governance opportunities based on rank and tenure status. A mid-career participant stated, "There are people here who do not even make a livable wage and that does not make anybody trust anybody...it sets a tone that the university does not care for you." Another woman discussed the undue burden placed on young faculty, particularly minority faculty, "People who are minorities tend to have to do more than people who are not minorities...like affirmative action work, it's bogus." It was most often women who shared that their values and beliefs were in conflict with perceived institutional values.

Power and Hierarchy

Issues of power and hierarchy dominated the faculty governance conversation for all but one participant. Participants offered heated comments, told stories of abuses of power, and recalled remembrances of well-liked, non-hierarchical administrators. Participants acknowledged that the complexity and the challenges of the present day university require different decision making structures among administration, faculty and staff. One participant stated, "I think we need a blend, we need to understand what both sides bring to the table." Another said, "We are all responsible, it's not that we are all responsible for every decision. We need to let talented people do their work." Participants recognized that administrators face unique challenges that were different from their own and that can lead to misunderstandings,

Each part of the institution has different goals and sometimes when you are trying to go out and build support for something at the state level, it might seem that it doesn't make sense at a department or program level, until you dig in and figure out where the overlap is. For that understanding to happen there has to be trust. If there's no understanding, then we're not all working together for the same thing.

Longer term participants lamented that the institution seemed to increasingly adopt a 'top down' or hierarchical framework and voiced concern that this decision making structure was motivated by money and efficiency, rather than student interests. Faculty cited examples of administration undermining effective programs, overturning faculty decisions, and, "ignoring the basic rules that are in place," as evidence of eroding faculty governance and a misuse of power. Across all ranks, faculty shared concerns that administrators did not value and uphold shared governance highly. One mid-career member stated,

But if administration made it clear they value faculty governance as much as we do, oh my god, things would change overnight because the systems, the rules, the ways of working with each other, the Faculty Staff Handbook, the stuff is all there, the fact is that it gets ignored.

Administrator turnover and change was linked to governance issues of power undermining governance effectiveness. And they put us through big exercises where we analyze ourselves and what we are doing, what, couple three years, and spend a bunch of time doing that? Ah, and to what end? So they can undermine what we have been doing and doing effectively.

Some participants mentioned the impact the State Board of Education played on governance and felt voiceless to impact decisions made on a statewide level; others offered that competing priorities: sports, enrollment goals, and money, etc., detracted from governance.

Trust and Transparency

Participants were animated talking about trust and transparency, “Lack of trust creates a lot of disharmony and work does not get done...it slows down what we can accomplish.” Another offered that frequent turnover of administrative staff impacted trust, causing faculty to take a cautious “wait and see attitude” before trusting, “I think we tend to give a person a year or so to determine if we trust them as a leader, if not there is a lot push back and it is unpleasantness.”

For several participants, trust was preceded by transparency. A mid-career faculty offered a definition of transparency, “... the gap between what people say and what they mean...and follow through.” Perceived misappropriation of the word trust was a frustration of many of the participants, including this mid-career participant, I think trust is a word used by administration to get us to do what they want us to do... Trust to me is a word that is used to defer... disclosure, I mean, ‘trust me, and therefore I can do whatever I want, and somewhere down the line, maybe, or maybe not, I’ll disclose what I’ve been up to. Sorry, but it is bullshit in this kind of a context... a professional context, there is no need for words like that.

Half of the participants mentioned fear of retaliation and the need to, “...be free to speak without fear of repercussion.” A late career participant shared, “So there’s a pecking order, a person can get penalized if they don’t follow the right process.” The youngest faculty member provided a utilitarian perspective on trust, discussing cultivating the trust of administration as a means to securing needed resources and advancement opportunities.

Changes and Challenges

Most participants expressed concern and anxiety around the internal and external challenges and changes facing the university. One participant framed the challenges as opportunities for new vision and growth,

I think a lot of the evolving landscape ...presents challenges to faculty governance and some of it doesn’t...but it doesn’t mean that a group of smart people won’t need to come together and talk about it. The sense of community still needs to exist so that we can inter-rely on each other for building a perspective.

Participants shared the perspective that faculty governance is needed to, “look at dynamic shifts”, “and solve wicked problems” and to define problems carefully to carry forth a vision for what is best for students and the university. The issue of change undergirded most themes identified. Pressures to increase enrollment, reduce tenure lines, increase external funding, and expand on-line education were all viewed as rapidly changing dynamics in need of careful and deliberate discussion and decision making. Participants raised concerns that rapid responses to external pressures could impact the quality of decisions and have negative consequences.

Discussion

This research endeavored to clarify conditions and factors related to faculty governance effectiveness through an organizational culture lens. This framework assisted the researcher to look beyond external factors of governance structure, process, and function to examine how university symbols, values, and beliefs impact governance climate, participation, and overall effectiveness (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). According to Schein (2010 p. 24), organizational culture is, “easy to observe and hard to decipher.” Data analysis grounded by Schein’s organizational culture framework: what is observable, the espoused beliefs and values, and the basic underlying

assumptions, offers a more holistic approach to attend to governance health and effectiveness (p. 24). Tierney's (2008) five organizational culture and shared governance precepts offer a framework for analyzing or diagnosing effective governance. This discussion, part one of a two part study, will explore the utility of three of the Tierney's five precepts to describe faculty governance perceptions with a focus on issues that impact trust and transparency. The discussion will also identify any cultural perspectives inherent in the data that were absent or not explicit in Tierney's framework.

Precept 1- "Define Decisional Outcomes and Purpose"

The concern faculty expressed over roles and authority, disempowerment, ill-defined or seemingly capricious rules for engagement, poor governance training and most damaging, violations of codified faculty governance policies and procedures are well supported in the literature (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Tierney, 1988). Tierney (2008) addressed this issue in his first organizational culture precept, "Define Decisional Outcomes and Purpose" (p. 164). He posits that governance is not an end to itself but is symbolic and warrants, "...on-going reflective dialogues and debates...over who is involved in what format with how much authority..." (p. 165). From this perspective, governance is not a static enterprise with unbendable strictures, but a process designed to best serve the institution and the shared decision makers.

The need faculty expressed for more deliberative and organic processes to address the needs of the university resonated with Tierney's call for a cultural model that accepts and adopts, "the notion of creative conflict" (p. 165) and Stensaker and Vabø's (2013) urging for the creation of a "social contract" (p. 271) between the academy and administration to clarify norms and values. This call for creative and fluid decision making resonates well with the data. Participants expressed eagerness to engage in creative and deliberative processes to meet the demands of a changing environment. The participants saw themselves as "smart people" with much to offer, but felt the speed required to make certain decisions comprised efficiency for effectiveness and that expeditious decision disallowed a deliberative process with sufficient faculty representation. All faculty ranks expressed the value of interdisciplinary governance opportunities outside of their department and college as central to the health of the institution. This does not so much require a shift in governance organizational structure but a shift in shared values and assumptions, and a commitment to support and empower decision making teams with the necessary skills and authority to reach effective outcomes for well-defined tasks. (Dill, 1999 & Tierney 2008).

Faculty of all ranks offered practical solutions for clarifying governance outcomes and purpose including governance training, mentoring, and opportunities to interact with administrators in causal and professional settings. To build trust and improve faculty climate, more attention is needed to identify faculty governance decision making roles, including NTTF, define processes for questioning administrative decisions and to delineate protections for faculty when governance roles are not respected or violated. Including oversight to ensure that governance policy is consistently and fairly adhered to is an important indicator to include university wide planning, goal setting and evaluation efforts.

Precept 2-"Define Venues of Decision Making and Units of Analysis"

Tierney's second precept, "Define Venues of Decision Making and Units of Analysis" (2008, p. 165) discusses the "domain of influence" (p. 166) as the level of influence and power faculty possess on issues of particular concern to them. Consistent with the literature (Birbaum 2004; Leach 2008 & Tierney 1988) participants responded that unrelenting expectations and pressures for research, funding and teaching trump expectations for faculty governance participation, particularly when they perceive low levels of influence and power. Most respondents added fear of retaliation and reprisal for speaking out on controversial issues or for being on the "wrong" side of an issue as reasons for governance disengagement. This hesitancy to assume a leadership role in governance speaks to culturally engendered assumptions of roles faculty need to abide by to "keep their head down."

Without greater equality in decision making and clearer understandings of influence, faculty voiced reluctance to engage in governance processes. As it is, none of the faculty interviewed were fully satisfied with their ability to influence shared decision making beyond the department level and none but one voiced confidence in their influence in university wide governance. Tierney (2008) and Shein (2010) suggest that understanding the sphere of power and influence and the underlying assumptions upfront is essential for a culture supportive of effective governance. The impact on governance culture from the perceived lack of influence was particularly notable when respondents discussed the sensitive issue of teaching and work performance. At all rank levels, faculty voiced strong negative

reactions to existing processes used to assess their performance and felt they had limited influence in the final evaluative decisions made by higher administration that held dire implications for them professionally. Tierney's (2008) supposition that universities often revert to "old notions of power" that leave faculty out of shared decision making processes. (p. 168) resonated well with the data. The participant's strong reactions to issues of power, authority and hierarchy were coupled with their self-identification as governance cynics, pessimists and non-participants. These findings support Tierney's view that perceptions of dominance of a hierarchical top down structure undermines organizational culture and diminishes morale (1998, 2008). Clarifying decisional domains of power between administration and faculty, articulating processes for questioning decisions, and a greater emphasis appreciation of the different but equally vital roles of faculty and administration could improve trust and organizational climate.

"Precept 5. Effectiveness of Governance Process in Enabling Decisions to Occur"

Tierney's fifth precept, "Determine the effectiveness of governance processes in enabling decisions to occur" (2008 p. 169-170) is an overarching organizational culture precept. The data resonant with Tierney's (2008) suggestion that a typical reaction to uncertainty and mistrust is more structure, which he believes is at odds with a "dynamic system" that does not ascribe to, "one best system for decision making...but draw[s] on multiple venues... to garner responsible input." (p.170). Each participant expressed their desire for transparent shared decision making that is welcoming of active participation of faculty time and talents. In reflecting on change, the participants shared thoughts closely related to Kezar and Eckel (2004) that change and challenge requires greater deliberation, sound reasoning and shared decision making, not less.

Perceptions of hierarchical decision making and the "business-fication" of the academy diminished trust and governance participation. The data support the primacy of transparency to trust, both in governance processes and in administrative decision making. (Birbaum 2004, Hoppes & Holley 2007, 2014 & Pope 2004). Honoring commitments, building consensus, shared decision making and "open and honest conversations" were all offered as building blocks of trust, themes in concert with the work of Drescher, Korsgaard, Wiepe, Picot, & Wigand (2014). Each participant but one shared an incident of failed trust and those experiencing the most disappointment with trust and transparency were the least engaged in governance. This lack of engagement is understandable given Schein's view that the human mind needs stability. As he states, "... any challenge or questioning of basic assumptions will release anxiety and defensiveness." (2010, p. 29). Schein recommends analyzing the congruence of beliefs and values that are communicated from those that, "provide meaning and comfort to the group," (2004, p. 27). Incongruence of faculty and administration values and beliefs was a repeated refrain and bears further investigation as to why most faculty communicated a disappointed resignation that the governance processes provided little influence to impact the dominant values of the institution.

Participants were in agreement that the rapidly changing environment presented issues that did not always require deliberation and shared decision making (Kezar, Hartley & Maxey; Leach 2008) but they did express consternation that issues considered under the domain of the faculty (dissolution of academic programs, tenure and promotion policies, etc.) were not always transparent and did not include the deliberation of those most knowledgeable about and impacted by the issue. Their comments resonated with the writings of Birnbaum (2004); Kezar & Eckel (2004) and Dill (1999) that precluding governance is at times an efficient but not an effective approach for addressing challenges, and that the redundancy, often disdained in governance, fosters better decisions.

The value of equity expressed by female participants is not explicit in Tierney's model. Understanding the organizational culture of faculty governance requires a deeper look into equity issues of fairness, inclusion, impartiality and justness to better understand governance effectiveness and participation. This is increasingly important as the number of women, minorities, other under-represented groups and NTTF join the ranks of the university.

Conclusion

This research offers insight into perceptions of governance on faculty climate and the compatibility of exploring faculty governance effectiveness from an organizational culture framework (Schein 2010 & Tierney 2008). Tierney's precepts provided an effective framework for analyzing governance perceptions and offering insight into improved governance effectiveness. Including equity as an important analytical construct comprised of issues of inclusion, fairness, impartiality and justness will further add to the needed investigation of effective governance culture.

Interweaving socio-cultural constructs of trust (Hoppes & Holley, 2014) into his organizational culture framework would provide an important lens for this oft reported and pressing governance issue.

Although governance excellence is contextual, the challenges, tensions and changes facing the modern day academy present a pressing need for systematic and theoretically driven faculty governance research. This case study approach offered rich perspectives and insights on the strengths, threats, and challenges to effective governance at one mid-size institution and supports Kezar and Eckel's (2004) call for more governance research that is empirical versus theoretical, focusing on organizational culture and people, not structure and processes. Exploring links between governance, organizational climate and educational improvement is critical.

The governance literature is at times polarized and nearly apocalyptic, foreshadowing the death of shared decision making in higher education. Delineating the values, beliefs and shared assumptions among faculty and administration seems imperative for the continuation of this rich and important deliberative, and potentially, community building institution.

AFFILIATIONS

Helen Brown, RD, MPH, is Clinical Associate Professor of Public Health and Nutrition, Exercise Science and Health at the University of Idaho. She teaches, researches and works at the community level to increase healthy active living in communities through active travel, nutrition, and health promotion.

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