

B. Abstract

Adult education faculty are often concerned with the well-being of our students, but how often do we consider our own quality of work life? The purpose of this discussion session was to provide a safe space for participants to “Gripe and Grow.” Participants were invited to share issues (gripe) that negatively affect their quality of work life with the intent to, as a collective group, identify strategies to address the issue (grow).

The Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is a leading organization in research and practice on adult students in higher education. I requested funding to cover travel expenses to the 2018 AHEA national conference being held in Orlando, Florida on March 8 – 9, 2018, where I presented on the quality of work life for educators of adult students. In this presentation, participants learned about the impacts of quality of work life on teaching effectiveness and engage in a directed conversation on how to enhance one’s quality of work life. The best practices gleaned from this presentation were used to inform my own practice in design and delivery of instruction for adult students. I also published a paper on the topic in the conference proceedings.

C. Review of the Professional Enhancement Activity

The purpose of this presentation was to discuss issues that affect the quality of work life of adult education faculty. The quality of work life concept became prominent in the United States during the 1970’s as manufacturing companies opened up to the idea of addressing worker involvement in decision making and worker satisfaction, and more women entered the workforce (Guest, 1979; Latz & Rediger, 2015). In more recent years, research on faculty work life has become more prevalent, although the body of literature is not as robust as it is in other professions. According to Enders et al. (2015), faculty who are considered “burned out” are more likely to report a poor quality of work life, a feeling that work is done in crisis mode, quantity of work is valued over quality, and a lower sense of job satisfaction. Welch et al. (2011) found that dissatisfaction with workload, availability of support, and low salary affected quality of work life and undermined faculty teaching capacity.

Faculty are commonly evaluated using three categories: a) teaching, b) scholarship, and c) service. Each category affects the work life balance, and work life balance can affect faculty effectiveness in each category. Although studies show that in general, faculty adore students and love their work (Latz & Rediger, 2015; Levin,

Kater, & Wagoner, 2006; Levin et al., 2013), interactions with students can negatively influence faculty quality of work life. Similarly, an incongruence between expectations in productivity/scholarship and instructional/research support negatively affects the quality of faculty work life. Lastly, faculty are required to provide service to the institution (e.g., committee work) and the profession, which can create time demands that strain the work-life balance.

Outline of Session:

I. Introduction

- a. Welcome
- b. Purpose of the presentation session (why faculty work-life balance is important)

II. Discussion of Faculty Work-Life Balance in Three Areas

- a. Teaching (issue, change, learn, implement)
- b. Scholarship (issue, change, learn, implement)
- c. Service (issue, change, learn, implement)

III. Achieving Balance

- a. For Yourself
- b. For Students
- c. For Colleagues

IV. Implementation

V. Conclusion

- a. Question/Answer Session

D. Summary of the Experience

I presented a review of research and best practices on faculty work-life balance at the 2018 AHEA national conference in Orlando, FL. I also facilitated a “Gripe and Grow” session in which participants introduced an issue, discussed changes they made to address the issue, what they learned from the changes, and how they would implement what was learning into their professional practice. Approximately 15 individuals were in attendance at the presentation. The presentation began with an overview of past research on work-life

balance, and specific research on work-life balance for faculty. This was followed by an in-depth discussion of issues related to work-life balance in teaching, scholarship, and service. Lastly, best practices for implementing change in professional practice were discussed. Based on discussions that took place after the presentation, I was able to compile a list of best practices for attaining (or at least attempting to) work-life balance.

Additionally, I was able to publish a narrative description of the presentation in the conference proceedings

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED590245.pdf>