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RESEARCH

In terms of the activities contemplated in my sabbatical application, I began with the development of the research instrument. My intention was to develop a survey using Q methodology. The research questions typically come from one of two possible sources: literature or pilot study. After a thorough search of the literature, I discovered that while much research related to faculty perceptions on a variety of topics is readily available, the pragmatic, ethical and moral dimensions of decision-making practices of faculty are largely absent in the literature, and particularly so in regards to M.Ed. graduates. While this confirmed for me the gap in the literature, it was also a challenge to locate suitable sources in which to situate my study. After contemplating the next option for developing the survey, a pilot study, I discovered another obstacle. Q methodology relies on a small population sample, typically 7-12 subjects. The SFU M.Ed graduate population of TRU faculty I had chosen to study is small and therefore ideal for a Q study. However, a pilot study would exhaust my pool of subjects for the study since I could not use the population again, nor does a larger population exist.

My dissertation supervisor suggested that one way around this difficulty would be to craft the questions for the concourse myself. After several weeks of trying to create scenarios suitable for pragmatic, ethical and moral decisions required for the Q-sort, and testing these myself, I was unable to create what I needed to satisfy the dimensions of decision-making as they relate to Habermas' theory, which I intended to use in the dissertation.

This was definitely a low point in the process as I was well into the sabbatical only to discover what appeared to be an insurmountable problem. While I was examining solutions to the problem, my supervisor suggested alternative approaches to the research study. Reluctantly, I began to look at other options and after much discussion with my supervisor it was decided that the best course of action was to substantially rework the research topic and question, so that while the study is still built around the constitutive self-understandings of faculty, it does so in a more applied manner that makes possible the use of Habermas, not as an over-arching theory, but as one of several philosophers from which the potential results of the study could be analyzed. In addition, I have had to abandon Q Methodology in favour of a case study approach more suited to creating a dialogue around issues of importance to trade faculty members' professional concerns. Although this was a difficult decision to make since I had invested a significant amount of time familiarizing myself with Q Methodology, it has actually been time well spent since it is an ideal vehicle for conducting research on student populations at TRU once my dissertation is complete. And despite my initial reluctance to alter my research study, my supervisor assures me that change in one's expectations and research agenda is part of the dissertation process. Having followed his suggestions and further immersing myself in the revised topic, I now feel that I have, in fact, a more researchable and applied study thanks to his guidance.

The title of the revised research study is *Changes in Roles and Status Perceptions of Trades Faculty Members in Construction, Mechanical and Welding Programs at TRU from 1971-2010*. I have obtained approval from the SFU Office of Research Ethics, have submitted my proposal to TRU Ethics, and expect

a response from them shortly. Additionally, I presented the idea of the study to the Trades Faculty Council who are in full support of the project. The goal of this study is to explore the key thematic elements of trades' faculty members experience and understanding in regard to their institution's evolution to a comprehensive university. During my research into the topic, I have discovered a source of literature in studies from an emerging field that deals with what are called dual-sector universities. Currently, these studies are largely taking place in the United Kingdom and Australia. My supervisor has indicated that my study will be one of the first of its kind to emerge in the context of the BC post-secondary education system. Further, Trade faculty at TRU are an understudied population in terms of the impact of a university model of governance and structure on their professional lives. The research topic is therefore timely, and is intended to provide increased understanding of how academic structures, such as promotion and tenure, may or may not serve the interests of trade faculty members at TRU.

Due to the evolution the dissertation has undergone since I received sabbatical approval, the activities contemplated in the application have of necessity changed to accommodate the new parameters of my study.

What follows is a list of research activities I have engaged in during my sabbatical:

- read to familiarize myself with the principles of case study methodology
- redesigned the research study
- familiarized myself with Nvivo and prepared for manual coding in anticipation of the data entry stage of the research study
- wrote draft of the introductory chapter, excluding the results, which will follow once data has been coded and analyzed
- wrote draft of research context/literature review chapter of the dissertation
- wrote draft of the methodology section of the dissertation
- made a presentation to the Trade's Faculty Council at TRU to inform them of the proposed study and seek their approval and support
- made ethics application to SFU which has been approved
- made ethics application to TRU (pending)
- met with supervisor regularly

Once I have TRU ethics approval I will send an invitation to trade faculty members to participate in the study. Data collection will take place in May and I will have the summer to code, analyze and begin to write-up my findings.

I would like to thank the Sabbatical Committee both at the departmental and institutional level for granting me a sabbatical.

Yours Sincerely,

Deborah Huber

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