



Responding to Change, Assessing Difference: A Review of the Literature on Professors at Canadian Universities

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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The following literature review examines the current state of scholarly research on university faculty in Canada, or the *Canadian professoriate*. Since the 1970's

Introduction

The higher education landscape in Canada continues to shift and evolve as institutions and stakeholders respond to societal change and government policy. The changes are many: massification and student diversity; internationalization and global competition; heightened research culture and the knowledge economy. University professors are at the center of these changes. In Canada, the professoriate is a heterogeneous group that takes on a *mélange* of roles. Professors are at once autonomous intellectuals, university employees, instructors of young minds and producers of new knowledge and critical analysis, distinct roles which promise to shape our understanding of the world, and the next generation of professionals, scientists, advocates, and educators. In this vein, a growing number of scholars have sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of Canada's professoriate, a population that is shaped and altered by societal changes as it shapes and influences society.

In the study of Canadian higher education, focused research on the professoriate emerged in the 1970's and has increased steadily over the past 40 years. Like many aspects of Canadian higher education, however, this literature on Canada's professoriate has been developed by scholars, at

2016). Efforts are currently underway to distribute an updated version of the latter survey, with a new focus on Canada's professoriate in the knowledge economy. On the eve of this project it seems important to undertake a systematic review of current literature, clarifying the distinct features of Canada's professoriate and their changing perceptions and practices. Accordingly, this review centers on the question:

What is the current state of literature on university professors in Canada?

This review was conducted in three phases: a) search of the literature, b) classification of themes and, c) synthesis of the data (Hart, 1998). For the first phase, the main sources of literature were books and scholarly articles on *Canadian professors*

Background: The Development of Scholarship on Professors at

in the form of biographical memoirs of professors or university histories. Although the latter are given less attention in this review, there is certainly room for a comprehensive study of professor's memoirs; they offer an historic portrait of Canadian professors and their universities.

In contrast, quantitative data collection grew steadily during this era and focused on the number of university professors in each province and their demographic characteristics. This data was primarily collected at individual universities and many institutions created offices for institutional research specifically mandated to collect statistics for the university, such as student enrolment and faculty demographics. Starting in 1956, the federal government also began to collect data on, what were termed, university teachers (Scafe & Sheffield, 1977)

This interest in large scale data collection was directly related to the growing public concern in the 1950's about an impending increase in student enrolment that would require new professors. The year 1956 saw the National Conference of Canadian Universities (NCCU) host a conference on the pending enrolment "crisis" in higher education (Jones Weinrib, Gopaul, Metcalfe, Fisher, Gringas, & Rubenson, 2014) To address this concern, more federal money was committed to the higher education sector and data collection on faculty and student numbers became an essential strategy to understand, plan and

absent. Robson (1966)

Scarfe and Sheffield can be noted as a first attempt to compile the disparate literature on university professors as they bring together ~~Statistics~~ ~~Car~~

Current Themes in Scholarship

The number of studies on the Canadian professoriate has continued to increase in recent decades and so has the scope of this research, often in response to the changes faced by universities. Since the 1980's the emergent literature has addressed the following themes:

- experiences of women and historically underrepresented groups
- political actions and attitudes of professors
- employment policies including unionization, tenure, sessional instructors and academic freedom
- ongoing changes in the academic profession related to the nature of work and faculty satisfaction

Many of these themes are closely related to one another, often emerging as parallel responses to two overarching shifts in higher education: massification and global competition. For example, the

Figure 2: The main themes in scholarship on Canadian university professors.

Equity amid Diversity: Historically Under-represented Groups

In the decades following World War Two, Canadian higher education expanded rapidly. Groups that had previously been underrepresented at universities were admitted, increasing the diversity of students

this theme rapidly and in 2017 approximately 20 percent ~~of~~ overall research on the Canadian professoriate examined the experiences and working conditions of Canada's women faculty.

Figure 3 Scholarship on women faculty's experience is the largest research area in studies on the Canadian professoriate

Despite the current volume of research, this line of scholarship on the position of women did not really

hierarchy and still faced the same pressures as their male counterparts in the 1980's such as underfunding and enrolment increases. Breslauer notes that women's career trajectories often preclude them from consideration by hiring committees because of "merit syndrome" as evidenced by gaps in employment due to childbearing or moving locations for spouses' jobs.

Over the past twenty years, the largest number of publications on the position of women

A recurring theme, and one that has received attention in several large, national studies, examines the political actions and attitudes of Canada's university professors. This research has some similarities to the research on faculty attitudes toward unionization below, but tends to be more concerned with professors as public intellectuals and instructors rather than public employees fighting for improved working

up in further studies exploring the relationship between professors, the state and law enforcement
(Hewitt, 2002; Owram, 1986)

Large-scale Data Collection

Other Disciplines

Although much of the literature on university professors is produced in education faculties, it is fairly common to find a professor in almost every other discipline who has paused briefly from their traditional, discipline-based

Other studies have sought to understand the shifting attitudes of faculty to unionization. (Butovsky, Savage, & Webber, 2015; Leda, 1990; Nahkaie, 1999) In 1984 Ponak and Thompson embarked on the first pan-Canadian study, surveying 1400 unionized faculty at six Canadian universities. They found professors valued collective bargaining for the protection it "provide[s] against a

broader social struggle to combat neoliberalism.... [however] mounting austerity will undoubtedly continue to push faculty unions and their members out of their traditional comfort zones as they confront challenges related to government funding cuts, threats to autonomy, and the growing precarious nature of academic labor," (Butovsky et al., 2015, p. 262)

Salaries

Research on the salaries of Canadian faculty has been one area in which empirical data has been collected for decades. Unions and professional associations have claimed a stake in salary scholarship in relation to their advocacy. Comparisons are common in such studies, either between institutions, departments or with other countries. The salaries of professors in both Ontario and Quebec have been the subject of repeated study (Conseil, 2009; Martinello, 2009; McAdie, 1985). Pan-Canadian data was collected for the 2007 Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey (Weinrib & Jones, 2012). Jones & Weinrib (2012) used data collected by Statistics Canada to show Canadian faculty are remunerated well for their work, particularly when compared with their international colleagues. However, there are still noticeable salary gaps between universities, institutional types, gender and region. Although the majority of advocacy related to salaries is the purview of the unions, some are calling for merit-based salaries to increase research production in response to the pressures of the knowledge economy (Chamty 2005). In 201

While universities have long employed part-time faculty on contract, by the 1980's, this category of

who hope for a full-time job and teach sessionally while they wait. The unionization of sessional instructors has increased in recent years. Sessional instructors are represented in different ways by the unions or faculty associations at their institutions; some institutions have distinct bargaining units for their sessional instructors while others are represented in their faculty associations. In a later study, Field and Jones (2016) conducted the most systematic research on this topic in the Canadian context. Their mixed method study examined the experiences of sessional faculty at universities across Ontario, conducting 164 surveys and 52 interviews. They found that the more than 60% of sessional instructors are women and the majority hold PhD's, a shift from Rajagopalan's earlier research. Their findings also suggest that basic faculty are less likely to have a PhD than precarious faculty. Their work emphasizes many of the challenges faced by sessional faculty and the process of "giving up" on the idea of ever receiving a full-time faculty job.

Two helpful doctoral theses have also been written exploring the motivations and experiences of sessional instructors (Burge, 2016; Cope Watson, 2013). This topic is of continued importance to many institutions, unions and professional associations. Canadian data is needed to explore the distinct features and experiences of sessional instructors in across provinces and chart a new path towards equitable hiring practices.

Academic Freedom

In the occasional circumstance that Canadian professors are at the center of controversy, the most contentious are when academic freedom is in question (Lexier, 2002; Turk, 2014). In the firing of Harry Crowe to the censuring of Nancy Olivieri, threats to academic freedom, more than any 2.77.910.7(n

Smyth (2012) position tenure as part of a broader culture of managerialism and accountability in which tenure is, “an apparatus of regulation” (744). They argue that academics are constantly under evaluation and the authors detail the severe anxiety this fosters

In addition to these studies on the nature and impact of tenure, Gravestock (2011) argues that tenure evaluation needs to consider teaching performance not just research production. She provides a detailed analysis of tenure policies within collective agreements at English universities across the country and highlights important differences in how institutions address the assessment of teaching. She provides concrete recommendations on how to improve this key component of the tenure process. Apart from these studies there is currently very little research on tenure policy and procedure in the Canadian context.

Ongoing Changes in the Academic Profession: Prestige, Satisfaction, Teaching & Research

In the late 1990's the research on Canadian professors made a noticeable shift from a focus on data collection and demographics to examining more deeply how professors at Canadian universities perceived their experiences in the midst of institutional and societal change. Foremost among the drivers of change is globalization with its ascendancy of a wide knowledge economy. This shift from the production of goods and services to the production of knowledge, has repositioned universities as engines of economic growth and heightened the pressure for their professors to engage in knowledge production. Canadian professors have certainly not been immune to these changes and several key studies have examined the changing nature of academic work in light of these global trends. These studies are particularly helpful in understanding how the prestige of full-time faculty in Canada has increased at the same time as institutional definitions of who a successful professor should be, have become narrower.

Prestige and Satisfaction

In Canada, the relative prestige of professors has changed dramatically as have ~~sig~~ground conversations about the desirability of academic work and the merit of those who conduct it..3(IITd [(i)-71 [(c

affiliation although many described a process of secularization. Most faculty who spoke French also had a strong knowledge of English while few of those who spoke English were proficient in French. Overall, faculty were very satisfied with their jobs and much of this satisfaction was attributed to their autonomy in research and teaching. Although faculty indicated a high level of satisfaction with their professional activities, 60% critiqued their departments for declining morale. Negative interactions between faculty

Publications from this study have compared data provided by Canadian faculty to ~~panel~~ data from other jurisdictions and found that Canadian professors work 50.7 hours per week, a longer work week than any other country included in the dataset except South Korea

this relationship between teaching and research is often critiqued in the scholarship on teaching, the

research production is enhanced by funding from research councils, dedicated time to pursue research and a position working in a top tier university. On a smaller scale, Ito and Hoge (2007) surveyed 47 professors at their institution to determine what factors are predictive of research productivity. They suggest that professors who have a strategic research plan and actively pursue funding see higher rates of publication.

The role of research funding on the academic profession has been the subject of a few studies. Godin (2003) found that researchers who received NSERC grants produced 12,000 papers annually and these grants had an even bigger impact on young researchers. There are of course variations across provinces. For instance, following a political push that started in the 1960s, Quebec created its own research councils and invested more heavily in academic research. Tellingly, its GERD, which calculates the percentage of GDP spent on Higher Education Research and Development is 0.93 compared to 0.66 in the rest of Canada (Gingras, Godin, & Foisy, 1999)

The importance of research, dedicated time, and corresponding teaching loads, was also demonstrated in a study conducted by Jonker and Hicks (2014) for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). Based on publicly available data, the authors examined teaching workloads, research volume and impact, as well as the remuneration of associate and full professors, to analyze factors related to research productivity. Based on their data, the authors estimate that about 27% of faculty members in economics and 7% of faculty members in chemistry have neither published in peer reviewed journals nor received a Council grant in a three year period," (p.4). These "non-active" faculty members teach an average between 0.5 and 0.9 courses more than their "active colleagues".

In the knowledge society, research production (especially in the biomedical and engineering sciences) increasingly involves collaborations with the private sector. In 2007, Canadian universities conducted over \$10 billion in sponsored research, 8% funded by industry. This is slightly higher than the

USA in which only 5% of sponsored research was funded by industry (Sá & Litwin, 2011). The Federal Government has elaborated multiple instruments to foster such collaborations, including grants, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, the Networks for Centers of Excellence, and the strategies for partnerships of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. The CAP data however suggest that Canadian academics seem disengaged from the private sector and resistant to commercial activities.

Service

Research, teaching and service have long been the triad of faculty responsibilities in the Canadian academic profession (Rosser & Tabata, 2010). Presently, however, there is almost no research on service. The 2007 CAP survey asked a small number of questions related to faculty's service activities, defined as "services to clients and/or patients, unpaid consulting, public or voluntary services," (Weinrib, Jones, Metcalfe, Fisher, Gingras, Rubenson, & Snodgrass, 2012). The CAP respondents reported spending "19.6 h on teaching, 16 h on research, 4.3 h on service, 7.9 h on administration, and 2.8 h on other academic activities," (p.348). Scholars have made the call for review processes that reward service (Bernatchez, 2009; Metcalfe, 2009) but little else has been written in the Canadian context discussing this third aspect of academic work.

Internationalization

Many of the above areas of inquiry host a handful of studies which explore the international or global component of faculty in some facet. The recruitment and experiences of international faculty at one university were explored by Barbaric and Jones (2016) and the specific experiences of Chinese Canadian faculty at Canadian universities were described by Fu (2014). Fu's article is particularly helpful in understanding the position of professors as high demand contributors to national development, as

China seeks to recruit their own expatriates. The study concludes that cultural factors override everything else in shaping the leave or stay decision and brain exchange behavior of these Chinese scientists,” (Fu, 2014, p. 1) as the majority decide to stay in Canada. Several other studies consider instead, the role of Canadian faculty in adopting or resisting their institutions’ call to internationalize curriculum and programs (Friesen, 2012; Larsen, 2015; Odgers, 2009; Schlemmer, Laws, Van Gyn, & Preece, 2007) Considerably more research could be done in this area exploring the mobility pathways of Canadian academics, their perceptions of global events and interactions with international students.

Current Challenges: Marketization, Corporatization and Globalization

Conclusion: The Canadian Professoriate in the Knowledge Society

While Canadian universities resist or respond to the heightened pressures of globalization, they also face a parallel transformation related to the ascendancy of knowledge as the centre of the global economy. Universities are uniquely positioned as producers, repositories and disseminators of knowledge. As their position continues to grow in importance to national and regional development goals, it can be expected that this position will have implications for faculty work. The development of this literature review is the first phase of a research project examining *Canadian Academic Profession in the Knowledge Society*. This study will collect pan-Canadian data on each theme above, with particular emphasis on the evolving features and working conditions of the knowledge society. However, the broad-reaching nature of this study precludes it from in depth examination of specific thematic areas. This review has identified several areas where further research is warranted, including:

a) Distinct features of the Canadian context

- o Faculty position and work conditions

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