Education Scholars' Motivations, Approaches, and Practices toward Open Access Publishing

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Introduction

Although OA publishing has been available since 1998, we know little regarding scholars' perceptions of and motives for publishing in OA outlets. Among the disciplines using OA, education has been relatively slow to adopt OA, yet the potential impact of OA could make it one of the most important innovations in education in the past few decades. Thus, education scholars were surveyed using a 48-item survey that targeted views and approaches to OA publishing. The survey contained subscales focusing on contemporary OA themes—issues identified through a comprehensive analysis of the major outlets for scholarly news in education. Through open and axial coding, 9 themes were extracted, such as ease of access, costs, support from colleagues and administrators, and perceived quality of OA outlets.

Literature

John Willinsky commented, "[the] open-access, online format gets us to places we would otherwise find inaccessible" (Schmidt, 2010, February 14, para. 15). Additionally, OA publishing is a more flexible and dynamic method of publishing due to its accommodating nature to media and graphics (Bailey, 2005).

OA is not without its controversies, given that OA publishing competes with traditional print journals and challenges the views of those who hold traditional print journals as the prestigious and only acceptable way to publish research for tenure and prominence (Burdman, 2004, June 26; Losoff & Pence, 2010; Abeles, 2005, April 8). However, Coonin & Younce (2010) indicate, "Open access publishing is now an accepted method of scholarly communication. [Although] penetration of open access publishing has been much slower among the social sciences" (p. 118).

Furlough (2010) further notes the slow penetration in the social science by commenting that, "more research is needed in the attitudes and behavior of research in specific fields, especially education researchers, to understand how open access can support their needs as an author" (p. 2623). My research aims to discover the attitudes, motivations, and practices of education scholars and why these scholars choose to publish in OA outlets.

Methods

Creating the Survey
A pre-pilot survey was created and vetted before solidifying the final survey (created using online survey software) in which to send to the targeted population for collecting data. The foundational basis for the pre-pilot and finalized survey questions resided in research on current and past information published about OA publishing.

Survey Content
The finalized 48-item survey contained clusters of questions focusing on nine themes found in literature that surround OA publishing. The 9 themes were: rights of access (α = .525), ease of access (.789), cost (.613), gate keeping (.416), freedom (.630), support (.647), benefits/drawbacks (.400), promotion (.592), and quality (.589). Ten survey items targeted demographics.
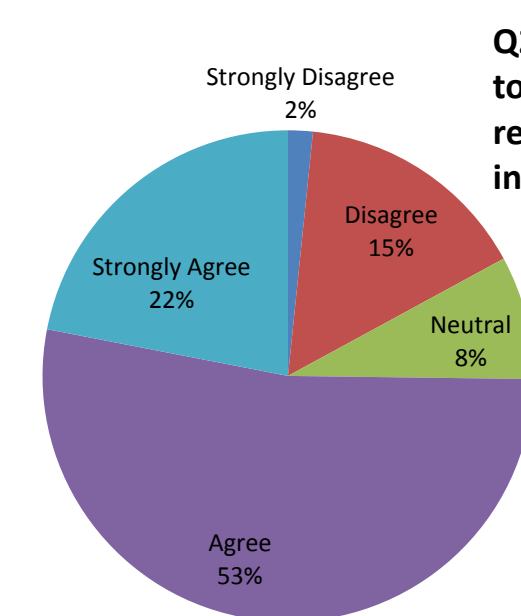
Survey Distribution, Sample Size, & Response Rate
The survey was distributed via email to a sample comprising published authors between the years 2007-2010 at two U.S.-based OA journals. 126 individuals participated (56% response rate).

Results

Responses were examined according to the previously-identified themes and also according to the demographic information collected. Tenured vs. non-tenured scholars' views of OA publishing were of interest. Additionally, results for scholars' novice vs. seasoned publishing experiences were considered in addition to views of those at public vs. private universities.

Survey Item	Demographics	M	SD
I find it easier to use research published in an open access journal than in a traditional print journal.	Tenured Faculty	3.28	1.039
	Non-Tenured Faculty	3.68	0.989
It is easier to get published in an open access journal than it is in a traditional print journal.	Tenured Faculty	2.69	1.03
	Non-Tenured Faculty	3.08	0.829
I am attracted to open access journals because I can publish my research without cost.	Scholars with 0-5 articles	3.43	0.997
	Scholars with 16+ articles	2.89	1.171
I am reluctant to submit my own research for publication in open access journals.	Scholars with 0-5 articles	4.07	0.842
	Scholars with 16+ articles	3.64	0.963
I am more likely to use research published in an open access journal than research published in a traditional print journal.	Public University Scholars	3.1	2.5
	Private University Scholars	2.5	0.857
I am attracted to open access journals because I can publish my research without cost.	Public University Scholars	3.33	2.5
	Private University Scholars	2.83	1.232

Q25. I am reluctant to submit my own research for publication in open access journals.
Strongly Disagree 2%, Disagree 15%, Neutral 8%, Agree 53%, Strongly Agree 22%

Q12. I favor having free access to research even though it means that the cost of publishing open access research must be absorbed elsewhere.
Strongly Disagree 1%, Disagree 3%, Neutral 26%, Agree 55%, Strongly Agree 15%
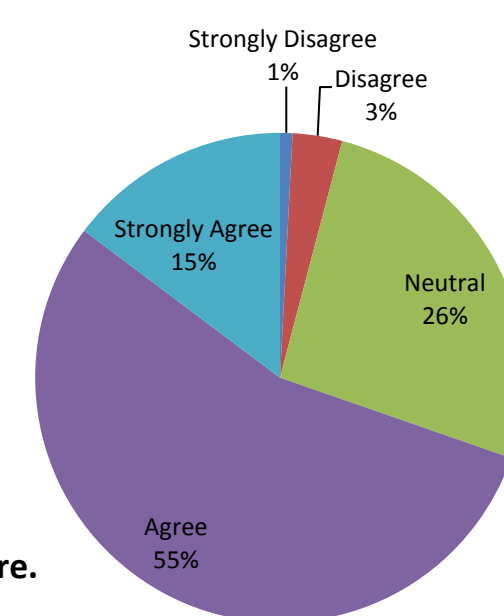
Q4. Research published in open access journals is of the same quality as research that is published in printed journals.
Strongly Disagree 1%, Disagree 15%, Neutral 27%, Agree 40%, Strongly Agree 17%
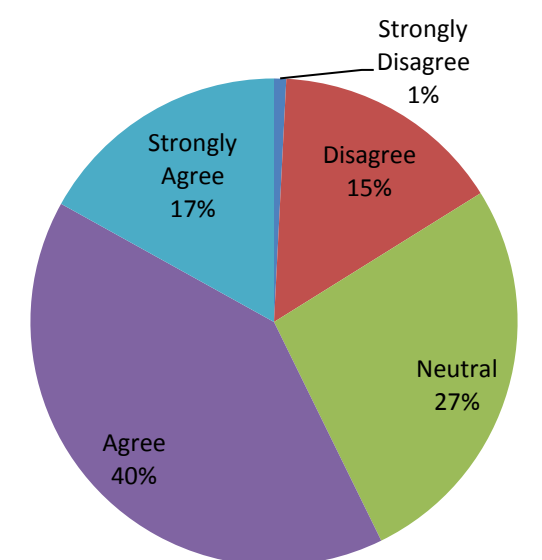
Conclusions

(1) Non-tenured faculty find it easier to use OA journals as opposed to print journals.
(2) Non-tenured faculty believe it easier to get published in OA journals.
(3) Scholars with 16+ publications and scholars at public universities find OA attractive because of low publication costs.
(4) Compared to private institutions, scholars at public universities are more likely to read OA journals.
(5) Scholars with less than 5 publications expressed hesitation to publish in OA journals.

Acknowledgements

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