

Title: Accountability in Higher Education: Perceptions
from Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Faculty and Administrators in Pennsylvania's State
System of Higher Education

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Institutions of higher education are facing serious challenges as they cope with decreasing resources, intensifying demands for accountability, and a world that requires increasing job skills from its graduates. The purpose of this study was to compare faculty and administrators' perceptions of educational accountability in postsecondary education to discover what similarities and differences exist.

The methodology for this study consisted of a self-designed survey that included survey questions, open-ended questions, and demographic information. In addition to the survey, documents found in the public domain were also used for further interpretation and analysis of the study. Various reports, studies, and policy statements were reviewed to help understand what types of commonalties and challenges are facing higher education in general.

The participants for this study consisted of faculty and administrators within Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The two groups of participants included in this study were selected based on the following criteria. Because of their long standing historical roots in Pennsylvania, faculty from Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education Departments were invited to participate. Administrators serving as Presidents, provosts, graduate deans and/or leadership position of graduate education, College of Education deans, and College of Education associate deans were invited to participate.

The results of this study indicate that overall faculty members and administrators differ in their perceptions about educational accountability in higher education. These findings have implications for higher education in general, and for Pennsylvania's State System in particular. Pennsylvania's State System has developed policy and planning strategies premised on learner centered environments where communication, collaboration, and cooperation are the norm. Communities of learners that foster shared purpose, shared knowledge, and shared commitment.

These findings suggest that Pennsylvania's State System and the individual institutions will be challenged

to find effective and productive ways to bridge the gap that presently exist between faculty members and administrators regarding their perceptions about educational accountability, leadership, culture, assessment practices, and future initiatives.