Project Scope, Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The literature review encompases academic research conducted between 2010 and 2020, including peer-reviewed articles and higher education articles examining openness, equity, diversity, and inclusion within the promotion and tenure process. Articles were chosen to encompass the experiences of both tenure and non-tenure faculty. Articles regarding general diversity within academic institutions were excluded from the literature review.

Headings

Articles are organized by category: Diversity and Inclusion, Equity, Openness, COVID-19, and Other. An article fitting more than one category is placed in the category that best matches its primary subject.. If an article elaborated on more than one category more equally, then it was put in the Diversity and Inclusion category.

Diversity and Inclusion

There are a total of 28 articles under this category. These articles elaborate the status of diversity work done within academic institutions, specifically as it relates to the promotion and tenure process. This includes the current processes for faculty to be considered for tenure. Much of the literature talks about how faculty members' careers are essentially shaped so that they can get tenure- this includes deciding what to research and how to disseminate it. Several articles specifically talked about minority faculty members, both tenured and non-tenured; those who were tenured had to find a way to navigate an academic culture that is less inclusive, and more focused on traditional ideas and processes. Proposed solutions range from a complete overhaul of institutional faculty hiring processes, to evaluations of institutional values, and how those can connect to the community.

Openness

There are 10 articles in this category. Openness within the literature on the RPT process includes how openness might be evaluated, open access to published work, and simply openness within the process itself. Many articles in this category address the public dimensions of faculty work, and how important it is to the community and society at large. This includes the accessibility of published articles, and how many faculty members feel pressured to publish in more traditional, less open avenues, avoiding open access journals. Another part of this includes the leadership above the faculty-- they must be invested in what their faculty are doing, and they must be trained to guide them toward being successful, all while being transparent and inclusive.

Equity

There are 14 articles in this category. Equity relates to creating an academic culture where all ideas can be shared, valued and heard. Much of the reviewed literature revealed that many institutions' processes do not formally mention equity. The literature also mentions that there is a common theme of unequal expectations of those who take on more than what is necessary for tenure work. Moreover, tenure requirements can hinder those who have extra responsibilities, and this must be addressed. Many articles suggest that certain ideas are favored over others, including harder categories such as racism. Some progress in increasing equity within academia has been happening, but it is not as simple as promoting a certain number of diverse faculty members at a time.

Covid 19

There are 10 articles in this category. Seven are related to promotion and tenure processes, while the other three concern general issues with academia during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this unprecedented time, many faculty members feel held back. This includes how faculty have been forced to take on new responsibilities while still expected to go through the traditional tenure process, and how communication is lacking regarding policy changes. Another aspect is how many faculty struggle with their personal lives while having to keep up with policies that reflect a different time. Lastly, the global pandemic has threatened any improvements made to improve diversity and equity-- this must be prevented, and institutions need to acknowledge that diverse, inclusive and equitable processes are still valued within their institutions.

Conclusion

The general agreement within the reviewed literature is that many current promotion and tenure processes limit the ideas and contributions of those who don't follow traditional ways of conducting academic work. The three parts of academic work include service, teaching and research- the literature points to the fact that many institutions devalue service and teaching, and only value research. In essence, what an institution values in their tenure faculty is reflected in their academic culture; it drives the types of education, the dissemination of ideas, the research produced. This literature review provides a glimpse into different perspectives on the current state of promotion and tenure processes with indication that there are opportunities for improving the role and consideration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and openness within those processes.