

Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Bennett, John B. (1998). *Collegial Professionalism: The Academy, Individualism, and the Common Good*. Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press, American Council on Education, Series on Higher Education 7193. Pages: x, 171. Price: \$38.20 US (hardcover).

Reviewed by Kerry S. Webb, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, Texas

Collegial Professionalism is a book that takes a candid look at the present condition of the academy, the faculty, and the community that comprise the American system of higher education. It is not often that one encounters a book that calls for such healthy self-examination. John B. Bennett, the Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Quinnepiac College in Hamden, Connecticut, has produced a solid effort that identifies many of the struggles in academe. Bennett provides a clear call for change in the attitudes, behaviors, and relationships within the academic community.

Collegial Professionalism begins with a nine-page prologue which is written in response to a joint conference of the American Council on Education and the American Association of University Professors to discuss post-tenure review. This introductory essay summarizes the failure of the academy to conduct self-evaluation and its neglect of structures for promoting professional responsibility and the common good. Bennett reviews the benefits of the academic life, yet cites studies which point to growing faculty malaise, isolation, and fragmentation.

Chapter one, "Assessing the Academy," reviews current criticisms of higher education from both within and without the academy. It serves as a brief but sufficient platform upon which the remaining chapters will present ample evidence, as well as scenarios for addressing these criticisms. It is an excellent summary of the present ills within our academic culture, yet it offers hope for the future. I enjoyed this chapter greatly and it whetted my appetite to read the remainder of the book.

Chapter two, "Self and Community in the Collegium," develops two contrasting models within the academy. The first model supports "insistent individualism, privatism, isolation, and fragmentation of effort," which seem to account for much of the malaise among the academic community. The second model emphasizes the concept of relationality and "stresses intellectual community and cooperation as essential to the mission of higher education and to individual satisfaction." Hospitality and thoughtfulness are presented as primary virtues that reflect the inherent relationship between the intellectual and the moral dimensions of humanity. At the same time, Bennett's presentation of a relational model embodies the kind of community that most academic colleagues truly desire.

In chapter three, "Professionalism: Academic or Collegial," the author returns to an inquiry of the current disquietude reported by faculty. Upon examination, academic professionalism appears to breed a sense of alienation and a lack of personal integration, which are fostered by insistent individualism. Bennett reviews relations between professors, colleagues, students, and institutions and exposes the self-serving attitudes that characterize so many of these relationships. This chapter may serve as a "wake up call" to faculty. Educators would benefit by reading this section with one eye fixed firmly on the mirror of self-evaluation.

Chapter four, "Institutions: Fragmented or Connected," takes a deeper look at insistent individualism in academe. Much of chapter four seems merely an extension of the prior chapter. Its one redeeming section is Bennett's argument concerning the establishment of a national standard for accreditation and a common code of ethics to ensure high standards of academic consistency and professorial behavior.

Chapters five and six return to focus on the virtues of the relational model for the academy. Chapter five, "Relationality in Teaching and

Scholarship,” considers the value of the relational model for teaching and scholarship. The author proffers the idea that teaching presupposes scholarship, and furthermore, that scholarship requires the public expression of teaching. Bennett produces a lengthy discussion of teaching and learning and offers the metaphor of constructing dwellings along with the metaphor of a dance to provide visual images of the processes of teaching and learning. These metaphors are mildly interesting, but serve only as the beginning to a chapter filled with idealistic thinking about such matters as: “holding open discussions with older faculty to assist them in acknowledging their declining contributions and the need to make room for more energetic junior faculty.” I do not foresee these conversations becoming common place on college and university campuses in the near future. The author presents the virtues of hospitality and thoughtfulness with such repetition in this chapter that the reader may grow weary of reading about these ideals well before the chapter ends.

Chapter six, “Creating and Nourishing Communities of Hope,” examines various resources within higher education for establishing the kind of intellectual community proposed by the relational model. Bennett identifies the key roles that deans and department chairs play in enhancing the integrity and cultivating the value of a collegium. This chapter offers an insightful look into the challenges of faculty leadership within academe. Bennett also offers some very practical thoughts on the recruitment, orientation, and mentoring of new faculty. He proposes a cooperative model of leadership that deals forthrightly with faculty who are chronic complainers, isolated individuals which Bennett terms dead wood, and the truly disaffected known otherwise as rotten wood. I found this to be a positive, action-oriented approach to changing and improving the current situation of the academy.

The “Epilogue” to *Collegial Professionalism* is an excellent essay on the current situation of academic malaise, the challenge promoted by the telecommunications revolution, and several possible scenarios for the future of higher education. While the author’s perspectives appear a bit dramatic, they are certainly thought-provoking and interesting. He acknowledges the academy’s resistance to review and reticence toward change. However, Bennett gently reminds academic leaders that the

pressures brought on by rising financial costs and the increasing impact of technology in higher education will force institutions to take a closer look at themselves and the academic community sooner or later. The lesson to the academy seems to be: take proactive steps now toward building a relational, intellectual community or face the possibility of a significant decline in the traditional collegial community in the future. Bennett presses for institutions of higher education to provide a relational model that addresses the need in individuals to feel connected to one another with a higher purpose. Otherwise, students may choose the convenience of internet and distance education courses as their primary source of content delivery, rather than the university campus and classroom.

Collegial Professionalism is recommended reading for faculty and administrators in higher education, particularly deans and department chairpersons. All university leaders would benefit by considering the thoughts and warnings presented by Bennett. Bennett succeeds, I believe, in painting a perceptive portrait of the relational crisis in higher education and in pointing the way toward a more positive, productive model.



Donald Bligh. (1998). *What's the Use of Lectures?*, 5th ed. Exeter, England: Intellect. Pages: 289. Price: \$24.95 US (paperback).

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What's the Use of Lectures? is a valuable updating of a popular book first published in the 1970s. The book contains an interesting combination of academic research and practical "how to" tips. Some of the more academic sections (e.g., Factors Influencing Memory) are likely to be of more interest to education and psychology faculty than to those who are looking for less analysis. However, *What's the Use of Lectures?* also has many valuable suggestions and tips, backed in many instances by research results, for anyone who lectures as part of their teaching. As a result, *What's the Use of Lectures?* may not be a book everyone reads cover to cover, but it should appeal to a wide spectrum of readers.