

Blackburn, Robert T., & Lawrence, Janet H. (1995). *Faculty at work: Motivation, Expectation, Satisfaction*. Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. xviii-389.

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The focus of this book is the motivation of faculty and how it is expressed in the work faculty do, specifically in the three required areas of research, teaching and service. The majority of the book is devoted to a theoretical framework of faculty motivation and productivity, and the survey studies conducted to validate the framework and a discussion of the results of the survey studies. The authors, Robert Blackburn and Janet Lawrence, challenge the validity of some common perceptions such as: the quality of academic publications has decreased in the last two decades; faculty publish less once they are promoted; and women prefer teaching to research more often than men because of its nurturing role. The authors are to be commended for the thoroughness with which they treat every aspect of their work. Replication of these studies would certainly not be a problem. The comprehensive review of the relevant literature alone makes this a very useful reference book. On the other hand, this book is not an easy read precisely because of the detailed manner in which it is written.

The authors suggest that the theoretical framework they propose “models both immediate and future productivity as affected by ongoing interactions between individual faculty members and their work environments” (p. 26). The framework is made up of several constructs which are related in more direct or less direct ways: environmental conditions, environmental response, socio-demographic characteristics, career, self-knowledge, social knowledge, behavior, social contingencies and products. Most of these constructs are self-evident; however, the meaning of two of them, self-knowledge and social knowledge, may not be obvious. Self-knowledge according to the authors contains a number of variables including faculty interest in and preference for a particular role, commitment to various aspects of faculty work, and efficacy or competence and influence. Social knowledge is described by the authors as “perceptions of various aspects of the work environment” (p. 99). They go on to

explain: "Faculty form beliefs from experiences with colleagues, administrators, committee decisions . . . These beliefs constitute their social knowledge" (p. 99). In the framework, socio-demographic characteristics and career aspects have a major influence on self-knowledge. Self-knowledge in turn has a major influence on social knowledge. Environmental response also has a major influence on social knowledge. The authors explain, "We conceptualize social knowledge as the key link between self-referent thought (self-knowledge), the other individual variables, and behavior" (p. 27). Behaviour or faculty activity is, of course, directly linked to the products of work. In Chapters 2 and 3, the authors further define the constructs and associated variables of the framework and discuss the relevant literature. In the three chapters that follow, the authors present the procedures, analyses and results of several large survey studies which they conducted to test the framework in terms of productivity in research (Chapter 4), teaching (Chapter 5), and service (Chapter 6). To the authors' credit, they discuss the limitations of survey data, in general and specific to testing a framework which is inherently longitudinal. Some of the overall findings of these studies are briefly discussed below.

Research

The variables in the framework predicted over fifty percent of the variance in two-year publications rates in the various institutional types. However, the variables which produced significant changes in the explained variance were not identical for all institutional types, suggesting "that one needs to take into account where faculty members work when making inferences regarding their motivations toward research and publishing" (p. 143). Generally, self-knowledge and social knowledge variables were better predictors of faculty behaviours and research products than socio-demographic or career variables. In addition, of course, past performance emerged as a strong indicator of productivity.

The study conducted to determine gender differences in research productivity was limited to a small sample of faculty in the sciences and showed few significant findings. Effort directed toward research (men reported more) and past publication records (men were stronger here)

contributed significantly to the comparison of men with women. However, the authors suggest that what this study implies is:

“... if one wants to understand better what explains the productivity of female academics, one must investigate female academics as female academics, not in comparison with men. It is time to set aside the notion that the existing, essentially male model is the standard to measure women by . . . We have also learned that many male attributes do not predict for women” (p. 163).

Teaching

The authors turn next to exploring how well their framework explains faculty and the teaching role. They use the widely accepted argument that the outcomes of teaching are not as easily determined as the outcomes of research to justify their use of the variable “effort given to teaching” as their principal outcome measure. This chapter was a disappointment even though the authors readily admit that measuring the effort given to teaching probably will not lead to further understanding of quality in teaching. There does exist a small, but growing literature concerning expertise in teaching which the authors might have consulted.

While it is true that the bulk of this literature focuses on the training of elementary and secondary teachers, there are several frameworks which seek to describe the evolution of teaching expertise (thinking and actions) in higher education (see, for example, Sherman *et al.*, 1987; Schulman, 1987; Ramsden, 1992; Kugel, 1993). Efforts to test systematically these frameworks is only beginning; however it would have been interesting to base at least some of the outcome variables on concepts from these frameworks. For example, all of the frameworks view the most evolved level of teaching as one in which the instructor is most concerned about what students have to learn in relationship to how it should be taught. In other words, “the content to be taught, and the students’ problems with learning it, direct the methods he or she uses” (Ramsden, 1992, p. 114). This may seem like common sense, yet consider how removed this mode of operating is from the professor who considers teaching to be the transmission of information from expert

(him/herself) to the largely passive student. A more evolved position, but still well removed, would be the professor who considers her/his role to be the facilitator of student activities driven by the belief that active students are better than passive students, rather than knowledge of what will encourage the desired learning. To create an outcome measure from teaching thoughts and actions would be, admittedly, a challenge and would require that not only behaviours but reasons for behaviours be surveyed. Certainly professors who expend a lot of time on teaching change their syllabus often, and read books on teaching. Some of the outcome measures used in the Blackburn & Lawrence studies reported in this book might correlate with higher quality teaching.

In terms of effort given to teaching, the framework accounted for 54% of the variance explained. The authors conclude that:

“. . . personal beliefs matter, especially commitment to teaching (personal preference for teaching and scholarship), dedication to teaching (concern for students), and the importance of content and process (transmitting the discipline and demonstrating a scholarly process)” (pp. 216-217).

Service

The authors consider the service role of faculty in terms of their public, professional and institutional service. The framework did not explain much of the variance in quantity of service, the primary outcome measure. The one predictor of service involvement which was significant in all institutional types was being a male full professor. Reassuringly, faculty's belief that they could have an influence on unit decisions was a significant predictor of time given to service in seven of the institutional types.

The final study focused on the comparison of faculty and administrative views concerning, for example, the characteristics of valued faculty members, the influence of faculty on departmental and institutional decisions, and conditions for student learning. In research and doctoral type institutions, there were significant differences in the perceptions of the two groups. The authors' discussion of why these differences exist is interesting reading.

In the last chapter, the authors return to their initial discussions of various theories relevant to faculty motivation and discuss how their framework might be improved. They also return to the limitation of survey data and the need for longitudinal data in all areas of faculty work. They do claim initial success with their framework and state:

“Behavior variables were strong predictors, as would be consistent with our theory. Faculty do what they believe they are good at (self-competence), devote energy to what interests them (interest and percentage of effort preferred), engage in activities in which they can influence outcomes (efficacy). It is not surprising then, that the corresponding behavior – say, doing research – results in publications” (p. 281). 🍁