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Book Reviews

**Faculty at Work:
Motivation,
Expectation,
Satisfaction by
Blackburn &
Lawrence**

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Blackburn, Robert T., & Lawrence, Janet H. Faculty at Work: Motivation, Expectation, Satisfaction. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, Pp. xvii+389. ISBN 0-8018-4942-X (cloth only).

Those who are interested in the subject of faculty work and like to see a subject treated in great detail and complexity will find a lot to sink their teeth into in this book. On the other hand, this is not a book for those who have a more passing interest in the subject and want only to come away rather quickly with a few key findings. The authors state at the outset that their goals are to draw together the empirical evidence on faculty at work, develop and test a theoretical framework, and provide suggestions for practice. To accomplish these goals, they take close to four hundred pages, 85 tables, 38 charts, and nine appendices. In their extremely valuable and well organized literature review, they cite over five hundred sources.

The orientation of the book could be described as modified behaviourist. Their ultimate interest is in behaviour, but substantial attention is devoted to various perceptual and attitudinal constructs. In both the literature review and their own empirical analysis, the authors are interested in the influence of a large number of independent variables upon faculty performance in research, teaching, and service.

The main dependent variable used in the examination of research is number of faculty publications, which the authors refer to as research productivity. They acknowledge that quantity of publication is not a surrogate for quality, but they don't probe very deeply into the problems and implications of making number of publications the focal point of their analysis. They regard quality as a "social construct" which "no doubt will always have a debatable element" (p. 119), and they justify their dependent variable on the grounds that "even those who complain the loudest acknowledge the importance of research and our need for new knowledge" (p. 115).

However, when looking at teaching and service, the authors could find no quantitative indicator of performance to use as a dependent variable. They reject the use of student evaluations as a teaching performance indicator, arguing that students are too easily influenced by the instructor's personality characteristics. In support of this, they cite the autobiographical narrative of an allegedly tireless and dedicated teacher who continually got poorer student ratings than a colleague whom he knew "to be a fraud, a pretender to expertise that is both dated and false" (p. 178). Instead, they settle on faculty self-reports of effort given to teaching, as measured by the percentage of their work time that faculty say they spend on teaching. It is interesting that while the variable indicating percentage of time spent in teaching is titled "teaching effort", the corresponding variable denoting percentage of time spent in research is labeled "research involvement". The book thus perpetuates the view that teaching is work while research is pleasure, and that teaching performance is more difficult to measure than research performance.

The theoretical framework which guides both the literature review and the empirical analysis is intricate, and the independent variables are many. The authors view faculty performance as being influenced by several sets of variables, including: sociodemographic variables, such as sex, age, and ethnicity; career variables such as career age and rank; self-knowledge variables such as perceived competence, commitment, and efficacy (meaning perceived influence over outcomes); and social knowledge variables such as perceptions of colleague's commitment, intellectual climate, and institutional preferences for various activities. The authors give the most attention to the self-knowledge and social knowledge variables. One might quibble with these terms, as they seem to indicate perceptions more than knowledge. In any event, in general, variables in these two sets show the greatest influence on faculty performance.

It is difficult to summarize key findings, because results vary depending upon which data sets and dependent variables are used, and by type of analysis and by institutional category. Also, more than 40 independent variables are tested, and many of them turn out to be statistically significant in some runs. While the different aspects of the empirical analysis are very well organized and documented, an exception has to do with the data sets. There is no table or appendix which lists the different data sets or samples along with the characteristics of those samples. In the chapter on faculty research, there is a statement about the "data for the first study described here" (p. 121). These data are from a sample of 4,240 faculty conducted in 1987 and 1988 by the National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning. In some places elsewhere in the book, reference is made back to this sample, but it is very difficult to follow what data came from other samples and what those samples were. Also, it would have been helpful to have more information than the authors provide on the sample referred to above (for example, response rate and cross tabulations of rank by discipline), and to have it in tabular form.

From the way the findings are presented one gets the impression that the authors do not want the reader to scan the book for highlights. Discussion of the influence of any particular variables is heavily embedded in surrounding text rather than isolated under convenient headings. Apparently it is the entire—broad and complex—theoretical framework which the authors wish to highlight, not any particular factors. This is perhaps laudable from a scholarly perspective, but doesn't work well when it comes to providing policy implications. The problem is that the theoretical framework is so all inclusive that it would be surprising if it didn't explain a lot of the variance in faculty performance. A difficult work which shows that a great multitude of factors influence a few arguable measures of performance, and that they do so through some highly complex interactions, is not likely to be an especially helpful guide for most administrators.

Here is a sample of what seem to this reader to be the major findings of the empirical analysis. The factors which exert the strongest influence on publication rate are percentage of time spent on research, grants obtained, self perceptions of competence and efficacy, and preference for research over other functions. The implication is to hire faculty who have a lot of self-confidence and desire to do research, give them low teaching loads, and help them get grants. For teaching, the main finding seems to be that faculty who feel that they are good at teaching, who are genuinely interested in teaching, and who feel that their institution values teaching will spend a lot of time on teaching. The results point to a convenient strategy for institutions in stratified systems of higher education. Institutions that value research most highly should recruit faculty of like mind and support them well in that endeavor; those which value teaching more highly should select and support faculty in such a way as to enhance that activity. This is pretty close to a description of how the US system of higher education works. The study's implications are less helpful for a more homogeneous system like Canada's in which institutions are expected to excel at both teaching and research.

This book challenges some fairly widely held beliefs about gender differences. A number of studies have reported that women put more effort into teaching than research, and consequently women publish less than men (Park, 1996). This difference is commonly attributed to women's preference for nurturing activities and avoidance of competition, and gender bias of male administrators which results in women being given greater teaching loads than men. Blackburn and Lawrence report that while more than 50 studies show that women publish less than men, more recent studies report "near or exact equivalence between the sexes" (p. 49). And in their own multiple regression analysis, gender failed to predict publication rate, except slightly in one of nine institutional categories. Gender also failed to predict effort given to teaching. However, it is difficult to reconcile some of Blackburn and Lawrence's claims with Park's literature review. When Blackburn and Lawrence say that "more recent" studies show little or no difference in publication rates between the sexes, they refer to four US studies between 1985 and 1990. Park buttresses her statement that there are gender differences in publication rates with seven citations between 1989 and 1994. None of the five sources from 1990 or later which Park uses are in Blackburn and Lawrence's bibliography. Apparently, the jury is still out on gender differences in faculty role performance.

This book is obviously the product of enormous and painstaking effort, and it is chock-full of information. Although I have concerns about some aspects of it, for example the choice of outcome variables and presentation of findings, I think it

would be a very useful acquisition for anyone interested in scholarship on the subject of faculty work.

Reference

Park, Shelley M. (1996). Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count? *The Journal of Higher Education* 67(1), 46-84.

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