

Professorships Increase Research Productivity

Hospitality and tourism programmes with a high proportion of professors amongst their senior researchers have the greatest research productivity, according to the SHTM's Dr Andy Lee and Professor Rob Law. In a recently published article on the role of institutional characteristics in research productivity, the pair find that faculty size was also a significant factor in the world's top 100 hospitality and tourism programmes. "There is", they note, "little doubt that institutions need to improve the productivity of their research", so their findings have major implications for programmes seeking to enhance the research basis of their educational offerings.

Research Productivity Factors

Although universities are assessed by the quality of their research output, the researchers suggest that "little is known about institutional characteristics and their influence on research productivity". They thus set out to determine whether there are "any characteristics that are common to the research productivities of the top 100 universities" offering hospitality and tourism programmes, focusing on the significance of "faculty composition, supporting staff, and the availability of a PhD programme".

Faculty composition could be important, reason the researchers, because some universities are more focused on teaching than research. The overall size of a department or institution may be less important than the composition of the faculty, particularly the ratio of research-oriented to teaching-oriented faculty members.

In addition, given that research performance is a requirement for promotion, the opportunity to advance a career should itself increase productivity. Assistant professors who are striving for tenure and promotion are thus likely to be highly active in research. Conversely, it could also be argued that "intrinsic motivation such as an interest in research" plays a more important role "than extrinsic motivations such as promotion or rewards".

A university department or school that has more resources should be able to employ more administrative personnel to provide support for the academic staff so they can

concentrate on research. However, the researchers point out that the relationship between the size of a department and productivity is unclear because, even though larger departments may enjoy economies of scale, they may still suffer from "inefficiencies in communications and formalisation that hinder initiative and innovation."

Research productivity could also be affected by the presence or absence of a PhD programme. As people have a tendency to "gravitate toward organisations that reflect their norms and values" and organisations tend to recruit individuals whose values match their own, departments that offer doctoral programmes are more likely to employ faculty members who are interested in research, and should be more productive in that direction.

Websites Analysed and Publications Counted

The researchers set out to examine these factors in relation to research productivity in hospitality and tourism departments. Their efforts involved analysing the content of the websites hosted by the world's top 100 research institutes in hospitality and tourism, although only 74 provided sufficient information from which to draw reliable conclusions.

Information was collected on the composition of the faculty, the ratio of supporting staff to faculty members, and which hospitality and tourism programmes were offered. The researchers then examined the relationship between these factors and research productivity, measured by the number of articles that faculty members had recently published in leading hospitality and tourism journals, such as the *Annals of Tourism Research* and the *Journal of Travel Research*, amongst others.

Faculty composition was categorised into four groups, with Band 1 comprising full professors, Band 2 comprising associate professors or the equivalent, Band 3 comprising assistant professors or the equivalent, and Band 4 comprising other teaching staff. The programmes offered by a department were classed as PhD/doctoral programmes, Masters and other non-doctoral postgraduate programmes,

and undergraduate/sub-degree programmes.

The researchers also considered the organisational structure of the universities offering hospitality and tourism programmes. Although some schools are affiliated with colleges, and colleges are normally considered “a higher organisational hierarchy than a school”, others operate independently. This could influence research productivity because autonomous departments appear to be larger and better resourced.

Professors and Promotion

As indicated by both the websites and publication counts, research productivity did indeed increase with the proportion of faculty in Band 1. The researchers suggest that those in Band 1 may be more productive because “professors might be more likely to supervise graduate students” and “graduate students often help faculty increase their research performance by contributing project-related research”. Professors are also “usually academic leaders in universities” and are “motivated by the social reinforcement provided by publications”.

The expectation that the prospect of promotion to professor would motivate associate professors – those in Band 2 – to be more productive was not borne out by the results. This, argue the researchers, suggests that “individual attributes are more influential than extrinsic motivations in increasing research productivity in hospitality and tourism”. In other words, the prospect of promotion is not sufficient to drive the productivity of those in Band 2 above that of the more experienced professors in Band 1.

Doctoral Programmes, Support and Autonomy

The researchers also find that universities offering doctoral programmes have higher research productivity. Faculty members who are more research-oriented are likely to be attracted to work in universities that offer doctoral programmes, which tend to be more focused on research and provide a more supportive environment for associated activity. This is consistent with the observation that “the more Band 1 faculty members an institute has, the more likely that institute is to offer a doctoral program”.

Highly research-productive departments are also characterised by “more supporting staff and research-

oriented surroundings”, according to the researchers. Their analyses show that productivity increases with a higher ratio of supporting staff to research faculty, because those staff “may allow researchers to concentrate more on research by reducing their administrative workload”.

The final factor associated with higher research productivity is autonomy. The researchers highlight that “the institutional productivity of autonomous schools/colleges was almost twice as high as that of their counterparts”. They observe that because autonomy relates to institutional size, and “institutional productivity tends to be higher in larger institutions”, it is reasonable to “suggest that the autonomy of a hospitality and tourism programme has a significant influence on research productivity via larger faculty size with more supporting staff”.

The Importance of Research-Friendly Environments

Considering their findings as a whole, the researchers show that there is a reciprocal relationship between an institution’s environmental characteristics and high research productivity. A hospitality and tourism department that values and provides support for research is likely to attract research-active faculty members. As the researchers succinctly observe, “faculty who have access to a research environment tend to be more productive”.

Points to Note

- A high proportion of professors increases hospitality and tourism research productivity.
- Larger departments with doctoral programmes and administrative support are more productive.
- Autonomous departments are more productive than affiliated departments.
- Ultimately, research friendly environments enhance productivity.

Lee, Hee Andy and Law, Rob (2011). “Research Productivity and Institutional Characteristics of Hospitality and Tourism Programs”, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 28, pp. 432-450.