Carrots not Sticks: Applying Motivation Theories to Faculty Development to Encourage Sustained Engagement

Sessions on Medical Education
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Session Plan: Medical educators provide programs, workshops, and events to develop faculty, yet engagement in these efforts is consistently challenging. While needs assessments help us understand the content and preferences of faculty, medical educators still struggle to understand what motivates faculty to engage in their own professional development. Tailoring faculty development to individuals motivation can encourage persistence in professional development efforts and productivity in desired outcomes. Ignoring faculty motivation, however, may not only increase attrition but could also deplete employees psychological resources for self-regulation, leading to exhaustion. (1) In other words, it could contribute to burnout.

In this session, we will guide participants to critically review their faculty development efforts from the lens of motivation theory, specifically self-determination theory (SDT) (2) and prosocial motivation (3).

Prosocial motivation (4,5) is the desire to persist towards a cause or benefit others. Many clinicians engage in healthcare out of prosocial motivation and persist in this challenging line of work because of this benefit and their interest in the outcomes of that work. Intrinsic motivation is defined as being naturally drawn towards work because the process is internally rewarding or satisfying (1). High intrinsic motivation results in satisfaction and meaning derived from the process of working, not necessarily from the outcomes of that work. Opposite to intrinsic motivation is extrinsic motivation, or the desire to act based on some external incentive (2). Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation exist on a scale (2), as detailed through SDT, and we can increase our intrinsic motivation by leveraging autonomy, relatedness, and competence (or self-efficacy). When individuals act out of high prosocial motivation and high intrinsic motivation, they experience the best opportunity for persistence and positive outcomes (1).

Current faculty development efforts are largely designed within parameters of limited resources, and often rely on the most bang for the buck philosophy. While large workshops, lectures, or conferences are traditionally efficient modalities, these efforts do not always draw on the intrinsic or prosocial motivation of faculty. In fact, some faculty may participate based on external incentives or rewards (e.g., enhancing their CV, faculty appointment requirements, or in reaction to leadership mandates). For these faculty, professional development may become a burden. Of course, there are many faculty who are motivated to participate in professional development because they receive satisfaction from the process or because they believe these activities benefit others.

Ultimately, the goal for medical educators is to create and implement professional development aligned with the prosocial and intrinsic motivation of faculty, in order to best support their sustained and successful participation in such programs. In this session, we encourage participants to creatively review professional development programs to leverage the prosocial and intrinsic motivation of faculty.

The Session Plan below is designed to introduce participants to the concepts of prosocial and intrinsic motivation as encourage them to think about these constructs in their faculty. Then, we encourage them to think creatively about molding faculty development to align with the prosocial and intrinsic motivation of their faculty.
Session Agenda:
5 min Introduction: Presenters and Facilitators will introduce themselves. Because participants are going to be asked to think differently about faculty development, they will be given a brief exercise designed to foster creative thinking.

10 min Through didactic presentation, presenters will introduce prosocial motivation and self-determination theory, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

10 min Participants will be asked to introduce themselves at their tables, and then 1) list 1-2 of their faculty development programs, 2) top reasons why their faculty choose to participate, and 3) top reasons why their faculty choose to drop out or choose not participate.

15 min Presenters will then introduce ways to increase prosocial and intrinsic motivation based on the literature. For prosocial motivation, this may include connecting faculty to beneficiaries of their efforts, emphasizing collective or group goals, or relying on transformational or deeply inspiring leaders who connect faculty goals with institutional priorities. For intrinsic motivation, this includes maximizing autonomy (or volition of faculty), relatedness (including relevance), and competence (or promoting faculty's self-efficacy in the professional development). Then, they will give an example of a faculty development program and how it could be modified in light of this understanding of motivation.

25 min Tables will select one participant at the table. The full table will then: 1) review this participants faculty development and their motivators for participating (or not participating), 2) Map faculty motivators to the elements of SDT and prosocial motivation that were just introduced, 3) Draw on creative thinking to brainstorm different opportunities to modify the faculty development program based on SDT and prosocial motivation.

10 min Wrap-up by facilitators and Q&A, including a report-out from one table.

NOTE: Participants will be given a handout with key points regarding prosocial motivation and SDT, along with examples of opportunities to increase both through faculty development.

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe prosocial motivation and intrinsic motivation, particularly through the lens of self-determination theory, including ways to increase motivation.
2. Describe how our current professional development programs - including academies, junior faculty development programs, workshops, grand rounds, etc. - align with prosocial and intrinsic motivation of faculty, using a case example as a guide.
3. Apply concepts of prosocial and SDT to faculty development at participants institutions in ways that may increase the prosocial and intrinsic motivation of faculty.