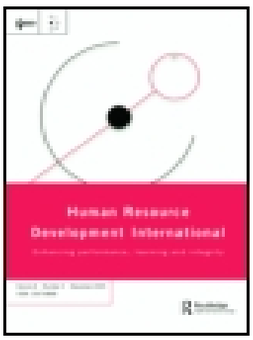

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University president perceptions of part-time faculty engagement

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ABSTRACT

Research regarding engagement has received the attention of researchers for the past 30 years. However, research associated with the concept of faculty engagement and its effects on higher education are still recent. This qualitative study examined how faculty engagement was conceptualized in a higher education context where the majority of professors were hired as part-time adjuncts. Analysis of data gathered from interviews with 9 presidents of private universities in Panama revealed that university presidents had incomplete and varied conceptualizations of faculty engagement, framed by their low expectations of part-time adjunct faculty. The analysis also illustrated how the four areas of faculty engagement (teaching, research, outreach, and administration) contained the three sub-dimensions for employee engagement (behavioural, emotional, and cognitive). Practical implications for higher education decision makers, including the improvement and/or implementation of faculty hiring and promotion policy, as well as leadership development for faculty supervisors, were discussed.

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Faculty engagement; employee engagement; part-time faculty; adjunct faculty; higher education

Introduction

Thirty years ago, Kahn (1990) first conceptualized engagement as the 'harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances.' Kahn's work inspired researchers to explore engagement in its various forms (employee engagement, work engagement, organizational engagement, among others). Research since then has also focused on related factors (Breevaart et al. 2016; Osam, Shuck, and Immekus 2019), drivers (Lesener, Gusy, Jochmann, and Wolter 2020), roles (Kataria, Garg, and Rastogi 2013), mediators (Lee, Idris, and Tuckey 2019), and antecedents and outcomes (Shuck 2010) of engagement.

Studies of engagement have also been conducted in a wide range of industries and countries, demonstrating that the concept could be successfully applied across a variety of contexts. However, research regarding engagement in the context of higher education, specifically the engagement of faculty is scarce (Raina and Khatri 2015). Studies of the engagement of faculty hold great potential relevance to higher education decision

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makers, who are faced with constant change and stressful work environments (Osam, Shuck, and Immekus 2019).

This study contributes to the literature through its exploration of university president perceptions regarding faculty engagement and seeks to build on engagement literature in the context of higher education. Furthermore, this study responds to calls for more international work and sampling of higher education employees from other countries (Osam, Shuck, and Immekus 2019). Although studies in employee engagement have been conducted around the world, they do not necessarily imitate what occurs in Panama because countries may exhibit variations in human resource management and organizational development policies, as well as differences in culture and political context. This study also contributes to the literature by providing a new cultural lens to engagement research. The word engagement, for example, does not have a literal translation to Spanish, creating a challenge in its conceptualization towards the Latin American culture.

Conceptualizing engagement, employee engagement, and faculty engagement

As mentioned previously, Kahn's work gave rise to engagement as an area of study, and inspired researchers seek ways to measure engagement across cultures and industries. The subsequent work and additional conceptualizations that have been introduced since then have built upon or recognized Kahn's contributions in the field. For example, Schaufeli et al. (, 74) defined work engagement as a 'positive fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.' Similarly, Saks (2006) explored the conceptualization of organizational engagement, defined as the 'extent to which an individual is psychologically present in a particular organizational role.' Shuck, Adelson, and Reio (2016) explored employee engagement and defined it as 'an active work-related positive psychological state, operationalized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural energy.'

There is a need to increase research that explores engagement in a context of higher education (Osam, Shuck, and Immekus 2019). Although engagement received the attention of many researchers in the past decades (Bakker and Schaufeli 2008), the concept of faculty engagement and its effects on higher education are still very recent (Raina and Khatri 2015). Livingston (2011) suggested that higher education research views the constructs of engagement and faculty engagement differently. Some research literature reduced faculty engagement to a professor's participation and involvement within the community. For example, faculty engagement had been described as 'attendance at events' and 'continuity of involvement' (Gehrke and Kezar 2019, 845), demonstrating that faculty engagement wasn't usually conceptualized from a human resource management standpoint. Furthermore, much of the existing research had focused on concepts that were different, but related to faculty engagement, such as faculty motivation (Blackburn and Lawrence 1995; Daumiller, Stupnisky, and Janke 2020) and faculty satisfaction (Eagan, Jaeger, and Grantham 2015; Hagedorn 2000).

Some recent studies explored engagement in higher education using a wide scope of participants, including staff members who were not faculty (Daniels 2016; Hossen, Chan, and Hasan 2020; Ndoro and Martins 2019; Sharafizad and Redmond 2020). Other recent studies examined engagement in higher education but opted to use Schaufeli et al.'s () conceptualization of work engagement (Mercali and Costa 2019).

Table 1. Alignment between faculty engagement (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003; Livingston 2011) and employee engagement (Shuck, Adelson, and Reio 2016).

Sub-dimensions of employee engagement (Shuck, Adelson, and Reio 2016)	Faculty engagement (Livingston 2011)	Faculty engagement (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003)
Cognitive	Perpetual focused attention; Individual finds purpose, feels congruence with personal values and talents.	Values . . . the ends it is meant to serve.
Emotional	Enjoyment and enthusiasm for the activities associated with faculty work	Enjoy and deeply care about the work they do, and wholeheartedly value the people.
Behavioural	Is challenged to use knowledge and skills, and experiences productivity even during difficult times.	They are most likely to aspire to excellence and principled conduct.

Faculty engagement is when faculty 'enjoy and care deeply about the work they do, and wholeheartedly value the people and ends it is meant to serve, and that they are most likely to aspire to excellence and principled conduct' (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003, 61). There are four areas in which faculty engagement occurs: the education of students; research or the advancement of knowledge in a particular discipline; supporting the administrative needs of the institution; and actively serving the needs of the community (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003). Additionally, Livingston (2011, 11) defined faculty engagement as: 'Perpetual focused attention, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for the activities associated with faculty work through with the individual finds purpose, senses congruence with personal values and talents, is challenged to use knowledge and skills, and experiences productivity even during difficult times.

The definitions for employee engagement and faculty engagement suggest it is important to consider engagement as a conduit to achieving the goals of any organization. Employee engagement tends to have a significant positive effect on employee task performance (Obuobisa-Darko 2020). Harter et al. (2020) confirmed a link between employee engagement, customer loyalty, business growth, and profitability. Therefore, leaders – university presidents, in this context – who have been tasked with the goal of creating sustainable institutions, should seek ways to increase faculty engagement. The few existing conceptualizations of faculty engagement (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003; Livingston 2011) aligned well with Shuck, Adelson, and Reio's (2016) conceptualization of employee engagement (see Table 1).

Taking into consideration the conceptual alignment between employee engagement and faculty engagement, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) four dimensions of faculty engagement were used as an interpretive lens to analyse presidential perceptions. The Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) framework adapted well to part-time faculty and provided a evidenced-based lens to view the data.

Higher education and faculty engagement in the context of Panama

Panama has been an independent and sovereign nation since 1903, and its higher education system is relatively young. The *Universidad de Panamá* (UP), the primary state university for the country, was established in 1935, late in comparison to other Latin American countries (Montoto 2013). The *Universidad Católica Santa María la Antigua*

(USMA), Panama's first private university, opened 30 years later. UP and USMA were the only two universities in Panamanian territory until the 1980's when more private and public universities were created. Similar to other countries in Latin America, a multitude of private universities in Panama emerged in the 1990s (Montoto 2013).

Currently, there are 5 public universities, where University of Panama is the oldest and largest in student enrolment. There are 30 private universities in the country, of which 17 are accredited by the National Council for University Evaluation and Accreditation of Panama (CONEAUPA), and 13 are in process or have yet to enter the process of accreditation. The last official enrolment numbers for public universities was for the year 2017, where the five universities enrolled a total of 115,878 students. Private universities last reported enrolment numbers in 2018, of 67,784, which totalled approximately 183,662 students in the system (Instituto de Investigación de AUPPA (IdIA) 2019; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (INEC) 2020).

Regulation has been the main driver of change in higher education for the last fifteen years. Since 2006, Panamanian policymakers passed a number of laws regarding higher education and accreditation. These have been regulated, repealed and replaced, and the higher education law currently in place was regulated in 2018. These frequent changes are a product of politicization and increased government involvement in higher education regulation.

Different global indicators, such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) University Rankings, SCImago Journal and Country Rank, have classified Panama with low research output and productivity (QS n.d.; SCImago 2020; Svenson 2013). One of the factors driving low research productivity is the almost 'exclusive use of part-time faculty.' where the focus is on instruction rather than research. 'The model is similar to that of community colleges, but with less pay and job security for instructors' (Montoto 2013, 29).

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) four areas of faculty engagement align with the four factors upon which universities are measured in Panama: teaching, research, outreach, and administration (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación de Universidades de Panamá 2016). The teaching factor is measured through indicators such as teaching effectiveness, faculty performance, development, and satisfaction. Research is measured through indicators such as percentage of faculty who conduct research, number of research projects and publications, and alignment of research with the institution's mission and vision, as well as national reality. Indicators such as collaboration agreements with national/international institutions, as well as student and faculty mobility provide measurements for the outreach factor. Indicators such as organizational structure and culture, staff satisfaction, and performance provide measurements for the administration factor.

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) definition of faculty engagement and the accreditation standards for Panamanian higher education under CONEAUPA demonstrated that a cross-cultural alignment existed for the criteria of a good professor, and subsequently, a good university. In practice, not all higher education leaders in Panama understood or held views consistent with the definition of faculty engagement. This study took a closer look into university president perceptions of faculty engagement. Other studies used Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship to identify the areas in which faculty can apply their knowledge and be engaged with the institution and community (Braxton and Lyken-Segosebe 2015). Boyer's (1990) model suggested that the conceptualization of

faculty engagement through research should also include areas that are representative of faculty scholarship, such as application, integration, and teaching.

Statement of the problem

In Panama, the majority of faculty who teach at higher education institutions are part-time faculty (Castillo 2005; Montoto 2013). This situation is also prevalent in other regions. In Central and South America, for example, approximately 80% of faculty are employed part-time (International Labor Organization (ILO) 2018). In Europe, France has about 60% adjunct faculty and in the United Kingdom, Russell Group's 24 universities, (institutions that are top ranked in global higher education rankings) employ 59% of their faculty through 'insecure contracts' and lack assurance of continuity in their workplace (University and College Union (UCU) 2016). Part-time faculty are hired to teach, and they are usually not explicitly assigned tasks related to other components of a university's mission, such as research, engagement, and administration (Montoto 2013). Furthermore, part-time faculty tend to be less available to interact with students and prepare less for their courses, in comparison to their full-time counterparts (Umbach 2007).

There is no information in Panama regarding levels of faculty engagement, and a limited understanding of the conceptualization and relevance of faculty engagement. Without a clear definition of faculty engagement, decision makers in higher education will not understand the performance that an engaged professor can achieve within the institution. This gap may lead to the generation of organizational and national policy regarding faculty that lack the evidence required to reach high levels of faculty engagement.

Purpose of the study

This study seeks to expand research that applies employee engagement to different contexts, in this case the context of higher education and employee engagement of faculty, or faculty engagement. It stems from a pressing need to characterize faculty in a country context where part-time hires are predominant in academia. Furthermore, this study provides an opportunity to extrapolate findings to the Latin American region, where many countries face a similar situation of majority part time faculty employment.

The purpose of this study was to analyse how faculty engagement could be conceptualized in an international higher education context, where the majority of faculty are hired as part-time adjuncts. The following questions guided this study: (1) How do university presidents conceptualize and perceive part-time faculty engagement? (2) What are the characteristics that presidents associate with an engaged professor? And (3) To what extent do teaching, research, administration, and service (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's four dimensions of faculty engagement) apply to presidential perceptions of part-time faculty engagement in private universities in Panama?

Methods

This was a qualitative and descriptive context study that did not presume to generate causal inferences or generalizations; rather, it focused on finding links and associations in

the data that would lead to recommendations for future research and informed practice (Reio 2016). A qualitative and descriptive approach would produce rich data regarding potential causes of low faculty engagement, as well as possible solutions to the problem (Soriano 2013). Furthermore, this study applied the 8 criteria model for quality qualitative research: *topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics*, and *meaningful coherence* (Tracy 2010). The following sections detail the participants, research measures, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Participants

The participants for this study were university presidents of accredited private universities in Panama. University presidents were considered the key informants of this study as they hold access to most information needed to evaluate the target population, which were faculty (Soriano 2013). Furthermore, the link between employee engagement and performance should encourage organizational leaders – in this case, university presidents – to develop an understanding of what is faculty engagement and how it can impact the institution. The involvement of university presidents as participants in this study also contributes groundwork for future explorations of leader behaviour that affects employee engagement.

The study was focused on private universities, because they tend to be the institutions that employ faculty on a part time basis. Although public universities in Panama also employ part-time faculty, they do it to a lesser extent than their private counterparts. The available population sample was a factor that impacted study design (Reio 2016). At the time of data collection, there were 18 accredited private universities in Panama. Presidents of the 18 universities were invited to be a part of the study, and 9 consented to participate. Therefore, this study represented 50% of the total available population sample targeted in this study. Of the participants that consented to participate, 4 were female and 5 were male, ages ranging from 45 to 70. Notably, 4 out of 9 of the university presidents are also owners, co-owners, trustees, or stakeholders of the university. From an exploratory perspective, interviewing university presidents was a first step in the process that allowed us to gain an understanding of how engagement was conceptualized, and use the resulting themes to consider what might be some future directions for research.

Measures and instrumentation

Data were collected using semi-structured individual interviews with the participants. A semi-structured format was selected because it encouraged participants to provide fixed responses for key questions such as: 'What percentage of your faculty do you perceive to be engaged in their work?' This question was designed to produce a quantitative response that could then be presented in aggregate form. Alternatively, the semi-structured format included open-ended questions such as: 'How would you describe a professor who is engaged?' These questions were designed to elicit a greater range of unrestricted responses (Soriano 2013).

One pilot interview was conducted with a university president, who provided feedback regarding the nature of the questions, approach, and potential follow-up questions. The

pilot interview also helped reduce interviewer bias. These individual interviews sought to measure and obtain the perspectives of university presidents regarding their conceptualization of faculty engagement, and what percentage of faculty do they consider are engaged. The interviews also included questions regarding faculty hiring, promotion, and evaluation practices in each institution, benefits and resources made available to faculty.

Data collection

University presidents of accredited private universities in Panama received an email with an invitation to participate in the study. The university presidents who consented to participate then received additional communication with suggestions for meeting times and days. None of the university presidents that were contacted formally declined to be a part of the study; rather, they did not reply to attempts to establish contact or meet.

A pilot interview allowed the interviewer to better understand his or her influence over the direction, content, and tone of the interview (O'Leary 2017). For this study, a pilot interview was conducted with a university president not participating in the study. The pilot interviewee suggested minor recommendations for subsequent interviews, which included controlling facial reactions of responses to avoid perception of bias as well as suggestions regarding follow-up questions to keep the interview flow. After modifications were made, a second pilot interview was conducted with the same interviewee to confirm that the necessary modifications had been applied.

The audio of the meetings was recorded and saved into a password protected computer. The meetings lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. The original language of the interviews was Spanish, and the recorded audio of the interview was later transcribed and translated to English. It is possible that the Spanish to English translation will impact some of the participant's responses, because some participants used colloquialisms that were particular to the country and do not have the same meaning when translated to English. Furthermore, the construct of engagement does not have a literal translation to Spanish, and this caused different assumed translations among participants. In order to understand the real extent of their conceptualizations regarding engagement, participants were not provided with a definition of engagement until after they had described faculty engagement in their own words. Since engagement was often confused with concepts of motivation or commitment when translated to Spanish, the word *engagement* was always spoken in English. All of the participants agreed to a voice recording of the interview in their signed consent form. All of the interviews were conducted in the private offices of each participant.

Bias may have been present in the collection and analysis of the data. Therefore, measures were taken to reduce bias through the use of pre-established questions that were revised through a pilot interview, where no problems were reported.

Data analysis techniques

The data were analysed through content analysis, using an inductive approach that allowed the findings to 'emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in the raw data, without restraints imposed by structured methodologies' (Thomas 2006, 238). The interviews were arranged in a spreadsheet for easy text searches,

where each row was a participant and each column the different questions and topics of the interview.

During the first cycle of coding, codes were generated from expected key words found in the analysed texts. These were also analysed by frequency. Interview responses were gathered and considered individually, and data were compared across interview participants to ensure consistency and clear trends, which increased the likelihood of reliable and valid findings (Soriano 2013). InVivo coding style was employed, because it honours the voice and the original words of the participant (Saldaña 2009) and can help detect cultural nuances in the language. During the second cycle of coding, codes were generated from recurrent phrases that had not been initially expected to appear but were frequent in appearance. These codes were also analysed using Saldaña's (2009) procedure for InVivo coding style. Both the expected and emergent codes became a landscape of how participants conceptualized faculty engagement within the context of Panamanian higher education. Themes were generated from the codes in the first and second cycle of coding. These themes provided structure to the data and aided in presenting the trends that were identified.

Results

This section presents the results based on the data analysis.

Part-time status and faculty engagement

First, it was important to establish that the majority of faculty who teach for universities in Panama were employed on a part-time basis. This was relevant because it unveiled a potential link between part-time employment and employee engagement, with an expected high percentage of part-time adjuncts and low engagement levels. Employees who work more hours are likely to have higher levels of performance (Avolio, Bass, and Jung 1999). This premise aligned with research that suggested that part-time faculty have lower levels of performance than full-time faculty (Umbach 2007), and that involuntary part-time faculty were less satisfied than voluntary part-time faculty or full-time faculty (Eagan, Jaeger, and Grantham 2015). The following explanation from a participant illustrated part-time faculty work in Panama:

> What we have is a permanent part time professor and a temporary part time professor. The permanent professor is the professor that regularly teaches classes in his specialty, and the other is at a request, a mechanism for . . . to put it this way: value the professional quality of the professor.

University presidents were asked to provide a rough estimate of the percentage of faculty in their institution hired on a part-time basis, with a weighted mean result of 92.6%. Another question asked as part of the interview with the university presidents was: 'What percentage of faculty (regardless of whether they are part-time of full-time) do you consider are engaged?' The general perception of university presidents resulted in a weighted mean of 36.6% of engaged faculty. These two results illustrated a problem of high percentage of faculty employed part-time and low faculty engagement in private universities in Panama. These findings also highlighted the importance of a continued exploration of the problem, its underlying factors, and potential interventions.

University presidents reported a difference in engagement between professors that had a full-time dedication and those with a part-time dedication. Below are some of the statements that explained this situation.

> It's clear that the professor with full time dedication feels more engaged with the institution because he is only dedicated to the university. Each time we need them they are there. They are very responsible and those will be a 100%. If you ask the others (part-time faculty), you will get 10-15% participation. The difference is very marked.

Another participant noted:

> None of the responsibilities of an engaged professor is the responsibility of an adjunct professor. They do it by sheer will . . . The reality is that the professor in Panama teaches a class and that's it. Few of them are engaged. The fault is also ours because we don't look for mechanisms to engage them, so the professor who looks at dollars and cents sees it as a transactional relationship.

University president conceptualizations of faculty engagement

Participants had diverse conceptualizations of faculty engagement, which demonstrated that there was little familiarity with the concept from a human resource management and organizational development perspective. Table 2 presents the conceptualizations held by university presidents regarding faculty engagement.

Expected themes

As previously discussed, existing conceptualizations of faculty engagement identified four areas of the academic profession in which faculty can engage in: teaching, research, outreach, and administration (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003). Furthermore, when participants were asked what characteristics comprised an engaged professor, part of the analysis objective was to look for mentions of Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's four areas of engagement. The following narrative captures how university presidents included some (but not all) of these expected areas:

> I measure engagement in three important elements. In their development and training, and more in my case because I have the opportunity to offer it to my faculty for free. Two, everything that has to do with extracurricular activities, and by extracurricular, understanding that it is community outreach. And third, the topic of research. So in those three areas I measure it. And I have to say that even though there's a good disposition to participate, the levels are barely insipient.

In this example, the university president considered that participation in training and development, outreach, and research were the main areas of faculty engagement. Outreach and research represented two out of four of Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's areas of engagement, while the participant also mentioned training and development, which can be considered an emerging theme (more in the following section).

University presidents believed that the most important characteristics that defined an engaged professor were teaching and outreach, where teaching was mentioned by six of the nine participants, and outreach was mentioned by seven of the nine participants.

Table 2. University president conceptualizations of faculty engagement.

Participant	Conceptualization of Faculty Engagement
Participant 1	We observe it when you ask them to attend a meeting. In these universities where the majority doesn't have full-time it's hard for them to attend . . . The professor that honours your invitation despite the fact that they don't have class that day that is an element that we notice of a professor that has a commitment to the institution, which are very few, because of the nature that they are not full-time.
Participant 2	Well, I think there are two things. One is the non-negotiable aspects, where I mean permanent attendance to classes, being on time, which is part of the hiring but also part of the respect for the university and work, and unfortunately, it's not as common as we would like . . . To me, a professor that is really a mentor has always been important because he has to want that his students be better than him. He has to be concerned for his students to actually go to class. When there is that concern of improvement and of responsibility in the classroom, the professor is engaged. And second, a professor who sees as an opportunity the different activities that they university does. It's very difficult to accomplish the attendance of faculty for activities because the schematics of the job. They have three or four universities, so they have the time to come to the hour of class and then they leave, but really we want them to grow professionally, and that means participating in projects. We have many projects and sometimes we don't get the quorum of participation for them. So a professor who is there sees that we have technological support, that we have a faculty portal, from an app on your cell phone, so many things that really make their life easy. So that they have that willingness to do new things, a project worth making an effort for, to have that visibility, is also a professor I think is engaged.
Participant 3	An engaged professor, under the concept that we're talking about an adjunct professor, because we have to start from that. It's a professor that does additional field trips, a professor that does some mentoring, a professor that complies with the schedule, which is a problem here in the city. It's a professor that places enough evaluation tests and that, for example, updates his/her slides. The one who isn't engaged did it one time, 20 years pass and the slides and PowerPoint presentation are from yesteryear. The engaged professor, and they are out there, is a professor that writes. It's a professor that when there's an ad hoc meeting, he/she attends. An adjunct professor can't be forced to attend.
Participant 4	In essence, we can measure the proactivity of a professor in several scales. Evidently, with the model of an institution with face-to-face programmes, the professor must have a permanent commitment in complying with and honouring the courses and with the students. This is one of the main engagements the professor must have. At the same time, the level of commitment is also valued in the active participation in all of the curricular topics related to the specific formation that the university provides. Then you have the institutional extracurricular life where you evidently have professors with a higher level of belonging with the institution who try to participate in the different activities of the institution. This implies greater time availability in many cases. In the measure that we have a professor for more years teaching courses, they will have a greater sense of belonging with the university.
Participant 5	I believe an engaged professor is one that is clear with the model of the institution. We have a particularity that we want our courses to have some elements of knowledge transfer or teaching, a lot of research, and for that research to be applied in solving a real problem within the community. The professor that can understand that, which involves a bit more work, because its not just repeating a story or developing a conventional class, is the professor that is truly engaged.
Participant 6	Well, first they have to have proven work and at a high level, that is essential above any diplomas. It's one of the things that characterize them the most, and it's a professor that's willing to participate in activities. It's a professor that is always active and creating activities with the students. A very, very passive professor generally does not stay with us or is not hired back, so we are left with what I call my 'faculty team'. They are the best of the best. But they have to identify with the institution, have a capacity to produce work, and be able to transmit what they are going to teach.
Participant 7	Adjunct faculty, when they have several years of working for the institution, participate a lot. The permanent part-time faculty participate a lot as well, their sense of belonging is high with what is being done at the university. You can go to them, and even though they may not be working during a particular semester, they still participate in forums, conferences, whatever is going on.
Participant 8	The professors who are committed in supporting the students. They really want to help the students, and coordinate activities so that the students have the necessary hours of outreach to graduate. Those who do not participate, work during the day, teach courses at night, and the rest of their time is dedicated to their family.
Participant 9	I measure engagement in three important elements. In their development and training. Two, everything that has to do with extracurricular activities, and by extracurricular, understanding that it is community outreach. And third, the topic of research. So in those three areas I measure it. And I have to say that even though there's a good disposition to participate, the levels are barely insipient.

Participants described teaching as an area of engagement in different ways: faculty concern over student success; importance of mentoring; and presenting students with updated material and resources in class. The following examples illustrate how the participants considered teaching as a part of faculty engagement:

> . . . it´s not just repeating a story of developing a conventional class . . . The professor who understands that is truly engaged.
>
> . . . be able to transmit what they are going to teach.
>
> . . . Professors who are committed in supporting their students.

Participants also described community outreach as an area of engagement in the following ways: participation in cultural activities; problem-solving applied to real issues in the community; and coordination of student volunteer activities necessary for the student to graduate. The following excerpts illustrate how participants considered outreach as a part of faculty engagement:

> . . . those who are always there and generally attend to the different invitations you extend for cultural events of the university.
>
> Then you have the institutional extracurricular life where you evidently have professors with a higher level of belonging who try to participate.
>
> They really want to help the students and coordinate activities so that the students have the necessary hours of social service to graduate.

Four out of nine university presidents mentioned research as an area of faculty engagement:

> . . . we want our courses to have some elements of knowledge transfer, a lot of research.
>
> The engaged professor, and they are out there, is a professor that writes and does research.

Finally, only two participants mentioned administrative duties as a characteristic of faculty engagement:

> . . . we observe it when you ask them to attend a meeting.
>
> It's a professor that when there's an ad-hoc meeting, he/she attends.

The unique definition provided by each participant demonstrated that the conceptualization of faculty engagement varies depending on the leader. Notably, participants tended to allude to specific situations within their context to explain why they believed certain behaviours or attitudes were related to the engagement of a professor. Although not all faculty presidents mentioned Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's four areas of engagement, all participants mentioned at least two of the four areas in their description of an engaged professor.

Additional to the four expected areas of engagement, the interview data were also explored to look for presence of the three subdimensions of employee engagement: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. This analysis aligned to the purpose of the study seeking to explore the relationship between existing conceptualizations of faculty engagement and employee engagement.

All of the participants mentioned behavioural aspects of engagement in their narratives. The majority of the codes for this subdimension overlapped with codes for the four

areas of faculty engagement. Below is an example of a university president who referred to behavioural expectations from engaged faculty:

> I mean permanent attendance to classes, being on time, which is part of the hiring but also part of the respect for the university and work, and unfortunately, it's not as common as we would like. Normally, there are professors that miss class, easily postpone it, make up for it another day with only two students, but they still report that they attended and that the work was done.

In this case, the university president expressed the behaviours expected from faculty as well as behaviours that were discouraged, but nonetheless occurred. Another example of how participants expressed the behavioural subcomponent of employee engagement can be found here:

> The professor that honours your invitation despite the fact that they don't have class that day is an element that we notice of a professor that has a commitment to the institution, which are very few, because of the nature that they are not full-time.

It is notable how often participants expressed behaviours of faculty engagement referring to part-time status as a factor that influenced behaviour and behavioural expectations. Finally, the following example displays how university presidents also considered willingness and effort of faculty as desirable engagement behaviours:

> So that they have that willingness to do new things, a project worth making an effort for, to have that visibility, is also a professor I think is engaged.

The sub-dimension of emotion in employee engagement did not appear frequently in the codes that were generated. Two participants referred to a sense of belonging to the institution, which was related to the emotional sub-dimension, because it implied that professors will be engaged to the extent that they feel a sense of belonging to the institution. In both cases, participants related sense of belonging directly with time of dedication to the institution, as seen below:

> The permanent part-time faculty participate a lot as well, their sense of belonging is high with what is being done at the university.

> In the measure that we have a professor for more years teaching courses, they will have a greater sense of belonging with the university.

Another expression of emotion in employee engagement occurred when faculty expressed concern over their students. One participant explained:

> He has to be concerned for his students to actually go to class. So when a student doesn't go to class it has to be a professor's problem, not just the student's problem. When there is that concern of improvement and of responsibility in the classroom, the professor is engaged.

Finally, the cognitive sub-dimension was rarely characterized, except for a few mentions related to the focus and attention applied to teaching activities with the students. For example, two participants noted:

> It's a professor that is always active and creating activities with the students.

> It's a professor that places enough evaluation tests and that for example, updates his/her slides. The one who isn't engaged did it one time, 20 years pass, and the slides and PowerPoint presentation are from yesteryear.

Emerging themes

A second cycle of coding revealed various emerging themes that had not been considered as part of the expected characterization of faculty engagement. All participants characterized faculty engagement as a professor who desires to improve and takes advantage of professional development opportunities provided within the institution. The consistent mention of continuous self-improvement and professional development as an area of engagement suggested a possible fifth area of faculty engagement, specific to the context explored in this study, but potentially present in other contexts as well.

Although all university presidents considered that professional development was integral in defining faculty engagement, they admitted that faculty interest in professional development was not always present in their institutions. One participant expressed:

> I believe that this type of professional growth, through projects of professional development that can generate an immediate impact in academia, that is one of the biggest problems we have. They (the faculty) take a course, but it stays there, it doesn't permeate in academia, they go and learn a few things, but their class stays the same, so there is where we have a problem, a gap.

Another participant described professional development as a benefit or resource that universities should offer faculty as a mechanism to increase engagement:

> Periodically, we make sure they receive opportunities for professional development, about 16 hours per year. And some go to take courses outside of Panama, and through requests, we send professors (even if they are adjuncts) to conferences and conventions.

Professional development as an area of engagement for faculty may be a product of the role that self-efficacy plays on work performance (Bandura 1986; Walumbwa et al. 2005). The lack of faculty with terminal degrees may also impact efficacy regarding the definition of scholarship (Tiffin & Kunc 2008). Professional development emerged as a theme to faculty engagement with specific relevance in contexts with a low proportion of faculty who held terminal degrees.

Five out of nine university presidents mentioned part-time dedication in their description of faculty engagement, usually as an explanation for the lack of engagement among faculty. Their conceptualization was based on the expected level of engagement from a part-time adjunct, suggesting that part-time professors have different levels of engagement than their full-time counterparts.

Two university presidents defined faculty engagement as being on time and honouring the commitment to the students. Although this wasn't mentioned by a majority of the respondents, it aligns with Montoto's (2013) depiction of the Panamanian academic culture in which it was normal for faculty to arrive late to class. The responses provided by the participants made it look like a professor who came to class on time was an engaged professor, highlighting the existence of low standards regarding the conceptualization of faculty engagement in higher education in Panama.

Finally, four out of nine university presidents mentioned time availability of faculty as a limiting factor for engagement. As one participant summarized: ' . . . those who do not participate, work during the day, teach courses at night, and the rest of their time is dedicated to their family.' This theme goes back to the part-time dedication that framed the context in which faculty perform their roles. Xu (2019) reported time availability as

a limitation for adjunct faculty to participate in professional development, suggesting that this issue is not limited to the context present in Panama.

Discussion and recommendations

This section discusses the theoretical contributions, practical implications, strengths, limitations, and future research directions provided by the results of this study.

Theoretical contributions

This study found that faculty engagement has greater conceptual similarity and overlap with employee engagement than with other forms of engagement, such as work engagement or organizational engagement. Table 1 depicts how existing definitions of faculty engagement employed the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural sub-dimensions of employee engagement. This alignment also gives way to potential measures for faculty engagement that are aligned to existing instruments for employee engagement.

Furthermore, this study posits the beginnings of how employee engagement can be applied to faculty engagement, through the different conceptualizations presented by university presidents. Their narratives exposed how the four areas of faculty engagement each contained the three sub-dimensions of employee engagement. For example, faculty can be engaged in teaching their students, and they can express this engagement through feeling concern for their students (emotional), place importance in evaluation and update teaching content (cognitive) and be on time and honour their commitment to their students (behaviour). Figure 1 illustrates how existing conceptualizations of faculty engagement and employee engagement work together to create deep characterizations of engagement within the realm of faculty work.

While it was important to establish the theoretical alignment between employee engagement and faculty engagement, research on faculty engagement should continue to develop faculty engagement as a stand-alone concept, related to employee engagement, but with its own particularities. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) have

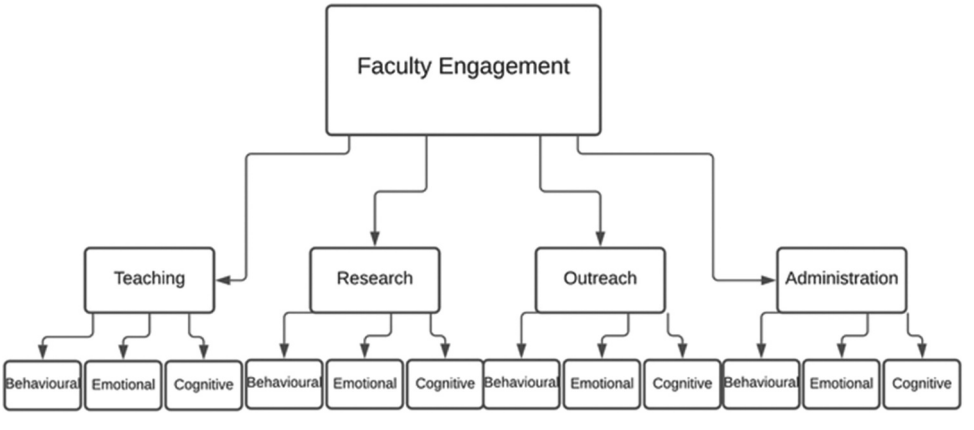

Figure 1. Theme map for faculty engagement.

already suggested this in their research, detailing the different areas in which faculty can be engaged, thus recognizing that the work roles of faculty demand separate considerations for the conceptualization and operationalization of engagement in an academic work environment. Not only will this lead to more accurate measures of faculty engagement, but it may also increase the relevance of future research directions, as well as acceptance in academia.

Practical implications

Contracts, hiring and promotion practices

In Latin America, not only are faculty salaries low, but the compensation structure for this profession is rigid and offers little space for growth (Elacqua et al. 2018). Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) have established that employees who work more hours are likely to have higher levels of performance. Part-time adjunct faculty face challenges regarding quality and productivity that reflect similar challenges in other industries (Ran and Xu 2019). The results from this study confirmed these statements because university presidents perceived a low level of engagement from their faculty and alluded to the fact that these levels of engagement were due to the part-time nature of employment of their faculty.

The results from this study also highlighted the necessity to generate and implement institutional policies that clarify expectations of the faculty role in carrying out the university's mission. Literature has suggested that this course of action may have an impact on faculty engagement. Promotion has been found to be the strongest incentive for faculty to conduct research (Reyes-Cruz and Perales-Escudero 2016; Ruscio 1987). Only 2 of the 9 institutions that were a part of the study had policies in place that situated professors within a category or classification. The other institutions were in process of developing or implementing these policies. Lack of policy and policy implementation regarding faculty contracting, hiring, and promotion practices may be a driver to the problem of low faculty engagement. The normalization of faculty policy around performance is a practice that has been widely implemented in developed countries, and it in process of implementation in other countries who have sought to follow suit (Uzuner-Smith and Englander 2015, 63). As Rhoades (2020) stated: 'Teachers' working conditions are central to quality.'

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (Association for the Study of Higher Education 2002, 128) reflected on the alignment of institutional policy with institutional expectations of faculty responsibility, more specifically with 'the scholarship of engagement.' Institutions need to reconsider the way they conceptualize faculty roles within the institution, and recognize the interdependent nature of faculty as teachers, researchers, and service providers (Boyer 1990; Association for the Study of Higher Education 2002). ASHE stated: 'For a faculty member, the work that counts is ultimately the work that is rewarded, by retention, promotion, tenure, and monetary rewards' (135).

Leadership and faculty engagement

Results from this study also revealed that university presidents lacked a complete grasp of the conceptualization of employee engagement and faculty engagement, as well as why this was important for their institutions. If university presidents to do not have an integral understanding of engagement, efforts to engage faculty will not occur, or if

they do, they will be insipient. Therefore, the topic of leadership is relevant in the discussion of faculty engagement. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that many researchers have associated with engagement. Furthermore, transformational leadership overlaps and has similarities with other leadership styles, such as charismatic, ideological and pragmatic leadership (CIP), servant leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and distributed leadership (Anderson and Sun 2017).

There is a connection between perspectives on engagement and transformational leadership theory (Shuck and Herd 2012). The combination of both frameworks proposes a leadership process that is possible to achieve for everyone, not just leaders who possess certain traits or characteristics (Shuck and Herd 2012). Furthermore, an abundance of evidence has established a positive correlation between engagement and transformational leadership (Avolio, Bass, and Jung 1999; Aryee et al. 2012; Breevaart et al. 2016; Bayram and Dinç 2015; Lee, Idris, and Tuckey 2019; Walumbwa et al. 2005;).

The link between transformational leadership and engagement is present in the context of education as well. Most studies were conducted in schools (Choochom 2016; Iyer 2016; McCarley, Peters, and Decman 2016; Sayadi 2016), and one study was conducted in the higher education context (Bayram and Dinç 2015). Other studies sought to establish the multicultural transcendence of the link between transformational leadership and employee commitment and job satisfaction (Walumbwa et al. 2005). These studies highlight the feasibility of transformational leadership interventions that could have potential impacts on engagement in an international higher education context.

Impact on policy regarding faculty

Faculty regarding policy that seeks to have an impact in future professors are imperative to confront the issue of low faculty effectiveness in the region of Latin America (Elacqua et al. 2018). Although there are many factors that have been previously studied as detrimental to faculty effectiveness, such as the low prestige given to the teaching profession and insufficient preparation, this study suggested that decision makers may also turn to faculty engagement as a desirable psychological state that could impact institutional outcomes.

Strengths, limitations, and future directions

This study is unique in that is explored conceptualizations of engagement from a leader's perspective, and in the context of higher education. Also, this study was conducted in Panama, where the majority of faculty who teach are hired as part-time adjuncts. This inherent hiring practice is not unique to Panama, and thus contributes to regional and international literature that seeks to contextualize certain phenomena that may have a broader occurrence. The main limitation of this study was participant sample size, which limited the generalizability of the findings.

The results and subsequent discussion of this study open the door for a variety of future directions of the research regarding faculty engagement, laying the theoretical groundwork to build a faculty engagement measure that is based on current employee engagement conceptualizations and instruments. Shuck, Adelson, and Reio's (2016) Employee Engagement Scale (EES), if adapted to the higher education context, could

effectively measure faculty engagement. Furthermore, the EES could be paired with other instruments to better understand potential underlying factors that have an effect on faculty engagement, such as faculty identity (Crane and Hartwell 2018; Kezar and Sam 2011; Levin and Montero Hernandez 2014), satisfaction (Eagan, Jaeger, and Grantham 2015), academic capitalism (Montoto 2013; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), and culture (Maxey and Kezar 2015). This would allow researchers to measure actual levels of engagement and relate faculty engagement to other areas of organizational development.

In the future, this study could also be applied in other contexts and countries to pinpoint the cross-cultural differences that may arise in conceptualizations of employee engagement and faculty engagement. Since the results from this study argue that there is a difference between how faculty engagement is conceptualized in Panama and the United States, this could also be true for other countries. Although this study addresses a significant problem, the scope is narrow as it specifically addresses part-time faculty, and future research is required to better understand the implications for all faculty. However, this study portrays leader (university president) perspectives on the engagement of their employees (faculty), an approach that argues that for engagement to occur, we must also look at the leaders of the organization and their leadership styles (Shuck and Herd 2012). Possible research directions include the exploration of professional development and adult learning opportunities in transformational leadership, and the effect that this may have on employees. Using constructive development theory, 'transformational leadership and its corresponding behaviours can serve as a mechanism to encourage developmental movement within an employee and increase mental complexity' (Crane and Hartwell 2018, 236).

Conclusion

This study recognized the relevance of the existing conceptualizations and applications of engagement in the context of higher education and suggested that more attention should be paid to better understanding faculty engagement. Through an exploration of university president perceptions, we conceptualized faculty engagement within an international higher education context where the majority of professors are part-time adjuncts. Furthermore, this study reducec gaps in the literature regarding studies of engagement in international higher education contexts.

Participants held incomplete characterizations of faculty engagement and held their faculty to low standards and expectations for engagement. Some participants considered that faculty who arrived on time to class were engaged. University presidents considered that faculty engagement levels in Panama are low, and that this – in part – is the result of a higher education context where the majority of faculty part-time adjuncts. The majority of participants mentioned teaching and outreach as areas for faculty engagement; Research and administration were mentioned with less frequency. Participation in professional development arose as an area in which faculty can demonstrate engagement.

This article proposes that faculty engagement should continue to be studied as a concept that is aligned with employee engagement, but also one that merits its own measures and explorations. The development and implementation of university policies regarding hiring and promotion of faculty could produce positive results in faculty

engagement. Transformational leadership practiced by supervisors of faculty – such as deans – could also have positive results on faculty engagement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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