Governance and Well-being in Academia: Negative Consequences of Applying an Agency Theory Logic in Higher Education

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This study examines the relationship between alternative university governance practices and staff well-being. Specifically, it investigates how people in academic and professional services roles are managed and how various governance mechanisms such as the use of performance measures and targets influence their sense of vitality and stress. Drawing from agency theory and stewardship theory research, the authors expected universities to align their governance practices to the nature of their employment roles to enhance well-being. Based on data collected in the UK, the authors find that, for some academic roles, there is a misalignment between the responsibilities and job demands and the way institutions govern people in such roles, which is shown to affect their well-being. These results suggest that well-being responses to governance mechanisms change, depending on the role an employee performs and the position he or she occupies. Interestingly, these data suggest that the governance and well-being experiences of academic leaders are more closely aligned with those of professional service leaders than with those of academics without leadership positions. Taking these data together, this investigation notes several shortcomings in the internal governance practices of higher-education institutions that can have unexpected consequences and require close attention and further research.

Introduction

Management researchers have long recognized that it is beneficial for organizations to align their governance practices to the tasks and responsibilities of their employees (Adler and Borys, 1996; Adler and Chen, 2011; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Cardinal, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1985; Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013; Ouchi, 1979; Rousseau, 1978). Scholars have premised this contention on the notion that the characteristics of an employee’s work environment (i.e. autonomy, task identification, variety and feedback) affect the nature of the employment contract, including its obtainability and the stated utility of the desired rewards (Eisenhardt, 1989). As suggested by Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson (1997), it is necessary for an organization to synchronize its governance practices to meet particular conditions...
of the organization’s employment roles. Failure to do so can have wide-ranging negative implications for the employee’s relationship with their organization (Caldwell et al., 2008; Miller, Wiseman and Gomez-Mejia, 2002).

While this notion of governance–employee alignment is endlessly discussed in the management literature (Hernandez, 2012), whether this guidance is observed in public institutions that have recently transitioned their governance practices to reflect more of a ‘private sector business-like’ governance approach, such as the case in higher education, is uncertain (Kezar and Eckel, 2004). Over the last twenty-plus years, reform-minded institutions in Western societies have instigated sweeping institutional changes in the way universities conduct their internal governance practices (Birnbaum, 2004; Decramer et al., 2012). This governance reform movement has long advocated more ‘accountability’ and ‘transparency’ in public-sector investments for higher education (Barry, Chandler and Clark, 2001; Burrows, 2012; Martin, 2012; Zusman, 2005). As a result of these pressures, a series of government policies have been implemented in countries such as the UK (Bryson, 2004), the US (Zusman, 2005), the Netherlands (Schimank, 2005), Finland (Kallio and Kallio, 2014; Kallio et al., 2016), Australia (Field, 2015) and New Zealand (Waitere et al., 2011).

In most countries, these internal governance changes have taken place alongside a contentious debate regarding the role of faculty in higher-education institutions. Political pressure has coerced many institutions to adopt measures that attempt to hold faculty more accountable for performance in areas such as teaching and scholarship. For example, over the last few decades, the performance of UK faculty has been subject to national evaluation exercises that use performance measures and targets (Burrows, 2012; Franco-Santos, Rivera and Bourne, 2014; Morrish and Sauntson, 2016; ter Bogt and Scapens, 2012; Townley, 1997; Willmott, 1995). In the US, the situation is similar. For instance, the Texas A&M Board of Regents developed business-like metrics for faculty productivity, reporting how much faculty ‘made’ or ‘lost’ for the university by calculating the number of courses taught, student enrolment in each course, and the amount of grant dollars awarded (USA Today, 2013). This trend towards more measured outcomes across academia has met fierce resistance. From 2012 to 2013, presidents of 12 of the 35 leading public research universities in the US quit or had been fired because of performance-related disputes (USA Today, 2013). However, while such governance changes have been perceived as controversial, an increasing number of universities worldwide are still adopting ‘business-like’ governance practices that emphasize cost-effectiveness and centralized control including hard performance measures, targets and appraisals (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007; McLendon, Hearn and Deaton, 2006; Milliken and Colohan, 2004; Rhoades 2005; Sporn, 1999; Toma, 2007).

As a result of these changes, there has been a polemical debate among academics and policymakers regarding their overall effectiveness (Briner, 2015; McNay, 2015). This type of control-oriented governance is argued to capture individual and department-level performance better than collegial-oriented governance practices that historically dominated universities (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007; ter Bogt and Scapens, 2012). As a consequence of these mandated governance changes, the traditional collegial approach characterized by a disbursed or horizontal power structure, long-term mission and an emphasis on self-organizing and self-management is being eroded (Birnbaum, 2004; Shore, 2008; Toma, 2007).

Scholars have begun to question the soundness of this governance transition (e.g. Morrish and Sauntson, 2016; Prichard and Willmott, 1997; Townley, 1997; Welpe et al., 2015; Willmott, 1995). Some have suggested that the stated goal in a corporate setting of maximizing shareholder value by meeting hard output measures is vastly different from the educational, research and social fulfillment goals set by universities and their faculty (Schmidtlein and Berdahl, 2005). Other scholars contend that employment roles of educational faculty are misaligned with the hard performance measurement techniques found in control-oriented governance practices (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar and Eckel, 2004). Our research attempts to provide further insight into this phenomenon. Drawing from existing governance theories, we investigate the extent to which people in different employment roles and positions working for UK universities experience the use of collegial or control governance practices, and the extent to which these experiences influence their well-being.
Considering the institutional pressures that are instigating governance changes in the higher-education sector, this study facilitates a better understanding of the effects that different internal governance practices have on the well-being of staff. Our investigation finds several shortcomings in the governance practices used by UK universities. In particular, the extent to which institutions of higher learning align their governance practices to their different employment roles is low. This misalignment appears to be having consequences for the well-being of staff, in particular of academic staff without leadership responsibilities. This finding is critical, as staff well-being has been found to relate to increased learning (Duckworth and Cara, 2012), innovativeness (Huhtala and Parzefall, 2007), creativity (Ohly and Blewdow, 2015), helping behaviours (Grant and Kinman, 2014), socially responsible acts (Crilly, Schneider and Zollo, 2008) and productivity (Briner and Dewberry, 2007), all of which are considered drivers of success in education and research environments (Welpe et al., 2015). Therefore, our study provides evidentiary information that it is hoped will enable further discussion regarding the design and implementation of internal governance systems in higher-education institutions.

Background literature

Internal governance practices

Originating from the ideological differences concerning the behaviour of man, as actors that can be either trusted and nurtured or opportunistic and controlled (Argyris, 1973a, 1973b), there are two theories that are used to explain differences in the governance practices within organizations. The first theory is agency theory, which assumes that the two parties involved in a working relationship – a principal (e.g. owner or top management) and an agent (e.g. employee) – exhibit opportunistic or self-interested behaviours (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976). These opportunistic behaviours give rise to the so-called 'agency problem', specifying that each party may have conflicting interests. Agents may focus on actions that optimize personal gains to the detriment of organizational goals. Thus, to minimize the agency problem inherent in any agency relationship, agency theorists propose that the principal should use monitoring (e.g. performance evaluation) and incentive mechanisms (e.g. performance related pay) to reduce agents’ opportunistic behaviours, increasing their goal alignment (Fama, 1980; Fama and Jensen, 1983).

These practices have been described as control-oriented governance practices (hereafter labelled as ‘control governance’) as they attempt to regulate and control employees’ behaviour and performance (Eisenhardt, 1988). Control governance practices are likely to be associated with formal levels of hierarchical structures with a clear differentiation of power and flows of information (Fama and Jensen, 1983; Hoskisson and Hitt, 1988). Additionally, these practices tend to limit employees’ information freedoms and encourage short-term and financially driven decision-making (Eisenhardt, 1985; Fama, 1980). Agency theorists predict that the use of this type of governance approach will be beneficial for principals as well as enhance agents’ well-being because it takes into consideration individuals’ preferences (Heath, 2009).

The second theory that is often used to explain internal governance practices is stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997). Stewardship theory contrasts with agency theory, as it is not concerned with controlling agents. This theory assumes that the interests of the two parties are already aligned so incentives and monitoring are not necessary for performance to occur (Hernandez, 2012; Tosi et al., 2003). According to stewardship theory, pro-organizational, collectivistic behaviours have higher utility than self-serving, individualistic behaviours (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997). Therefore, when people act as stewards they strive to protect and maximize the principals’ interests by facilitating the delivery of organizational outcomes; and, in doing so, they also maximize their own interests and satisfaction.

Stewardship theory can be associated with collegial-oriented governance practices (hereafter labelled as ‘collegial governance’) that complement the notion of ‘clan control’ (Ouchi, 1979), including a disbursed power structure that emphasizes high trust, self-control and self-management. A collegial governance approach supports such a power structure by incorporating governance mechanisms focused on greater employee empowerment and well-being (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Hernandez, 2012; Segal and Lehrer, 2012).
Thus, elements of a collegial governance approach underscore inclusive and collaborative actions rather than ‘top-down’ command and control approaches. Collegial governance additionally emphasizes long-term performance defined primarily in non-financial terms rather than financial, such as pursuing the delivery of ‘an overarching mission, the furtherance of a distinctive concept, or a vision of some idealized future state or condition’ (Graham and Organ, 1993, p. 490).

**Internal governance practices and employment roles**

Previous research has prescribed the need for organizations to adapt their governance practices to the conditions associated with different employment roles (e.g. Adler and Borys, 1996; Adler and Chen, 2011; Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Eisenhardt, 1985; Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013; Ouchi, 1977, 1979; Rousseau, 1978). The nature of employment roles can significantly influence both the efficacy of control governance and the organizational commitment and subjugation of self-interest associated with collegial governance. The distinctive nature of employment roles may be understood in terms of their task characteristics and their position within the organization.

Regarding their task characteristics, at one end of the spectrum are low-structured roles distinguished by tasks that have low programmability. Eisenhardt (1989, p. 62) defines programmability as ‘the degree to which appropriate behaviour by the agent can be specified in advance’. Low-structured roles are characterized by work assignments with high uncertainty that require operational flexibility and discretion. In these roles, the employee is expected to figure out the scope of the work. Job functions with low-structured roles often encompass specialized tacit knowledge involving shared understanding and high inter-and intra-organizational collaboration to complete assignments successfully (Hess and Rothaermel, 2011; Turner and Makhija, 2006). Performance in low-structured roles is difficult to measure and manage owing to low observability, greater ambiguity, low outcome predictability and the long-term orientation of these roles (Hernandez, 2012). Consequently, the nature of low-structured roles tends to invalidate many forms of incentives and monitoring that are essential for the viability of control governance practices focused on minimizing opportunism and enhancing alignment (Eisenhardt, 1989; Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013; Levinthal, 1988; Ouchi, 1979). Therefore, most researchers suggest that using control practices for low-structured roles may be inappropriate (Bouillon et al., 2006; Eisenhardt, 1985, 1989; Makri, Lane and Gomez-Mejia, 2006) or even dysfunctional (Eisenhardt, 1985, 1989; Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013).

At the other end of the spectrum are high-structured roles involving tasks that are highly programmable (Eisenhardt, 1989). Responsibilities in these roles are explicit and described in detail (Eisenhardt, 1985). Thereby, in this type of role, appropriate behaviours for performing well in a job are codified and specified in advance. An employment role in which the nature of the task is well specified tends to produce lower information asymmetries (Levinthal, 1988). As such, performance in high-structured roles is more easily observable and measurable (i.e. it is time-bound and often produces tangible or ‘hard’ outcomes) (Eisenhardt, 1988), so control practices such as monitoring and incentives for minimizing opportunism are recommended (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Employment roles can also be described in terms of their position. Research often highlights the importance and particularities of leadership positions (e.g. Hambrick, Nadler and Tushman, 1998). When employees are selected for a leadership position (e.g. CEOs and heads of major subunits) the composition of their role changes. Despite their functional background, people in these roles become generalists whose main responsibilities involve the management of other people’s work. Leadership roles are responsible for setting the goals that mark the direction of the organization, as well as accountable for their achievement (Hambrick, Nadler and Tushman, 1998; Simon, 1964). Furthermore, leadership roles have the authority to introduce or transform internal governance systems and structural forms aimed at facilitating organizational success (Hambrick, Nadler and Tushman, 1998). For example, leadership roles are usually in charge of establishing cost-reduction programmes, quality improvement programmes, performance appraisals and incentive payments (Yukl, 2008).

From an agency theory perspective (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976), it could be argued that leaders behave as principals acting on behalf of their dominant stakeholders when establishing internal governance mechanisms. Despite
the apparent differences between leadership and non-leadership roles, it is interesting to note that the promoters of both agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Hernandez, 2012) have not made distinctions regarding the most appropriate governance mechanisms for each group. These theories assume that their proposed governance practices are appropriate for all employees, regardless of their position.

Hypotheses

Employment roles, governance orientation and well-being in higher education

Educational institutions worldwide are experiencing significant changes in their internal governance practices. As noted earlier, whereas a collegial governance approach was previously the norm in many institutions, now elements of control governance are firmly rooted in universities (Kezar and Eckel, 2004; Morrish and Sauntson, 2016; Welpe et al., 2015). Among other consequences, this transformation is likely to influence employees’ well-being (Birnbaum, 2004; Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1992; Hernandez, 2012). Specifically, employees in low-structured employment roles, such as those employees involved in research and teaching, may perceive this change as dysfunctional or misaligned with their scholarly values (Hernandez, 2012).

Employees in these roles are involved in tasks that require high autonomy and creativity, and operate in unstable environments (i.e. low-structured roles). Occupants of such roles often perform activities under great constraints and face uncertain and highly variable performance outcomes. Individuals that perform well in these low-structured roles tend to be described as highly skilled, knowledgeable, intrinsically driven and passionate for the overall mission of the university (Merton, 1996). People in academic roles usually have strong professional identities and values that highlight collaboration, trust, self-governance and stewardship (Hernandez, 2012; Kallio et al., 2016). Based on these conditions, academic employees may expect governance practices that are informal, flexible and enabling to support the nature of their employment role as well as their internalized scholarly values (Abernethy and Lillis, 1995; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Rousseau, 1978). Thus, people in academic roles may perceive a collegial approach as more appropriate, as it allows them to operate with minimal interference, build a trusting relationship with their institution and colleagues, and maintain their intrinsic motivation (Hernandez, 2012). Because collegial governance practices facilitate the type of tasks performed by people in academic roles and are more aligned with traditional academic values, we expect that collegial governance practices will positively influence the well-being of academics. We therefore hypothesize:

\[ H1: \text{For people in academic roles, collegial governance practices will be positively related to personal well-being.} \]

Conversely, when faculty perceives that they are being managed with control governance practices, this governance incongruity may engender a negative individual sentiment affecting their well-being (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997). Specifically, previous research suggests that control governance practices may mollify intrinsic motivation, owing to their rigidity (Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013; Welpe et al., 2015). Increased rigidity decreases the autonomy and flexibility that academics perceive as needed to fulfill their role responsibilities; and this reduced sense of autonomy and freedom may lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and demotivation, creating a lower sense of well-being (Adler and Borys, 1996; Caldwell et al., 2008; Cardinal, 2001; Deci and Ryan, 2010). Because people in academic roles often perform tasks that have low programmability and are strongly socialized into professional values that resemble stewardship beliefs, we posit that, when they perceive they are being governed under control governance practices, they will express greater negativity. Thus, we suggest the following hypothesis.

\[ H2: \text{For people in academic roles, control governance practices will be inversely related to personal well-being.} \]

While we expect employees in academic roles working in higher-education institutions to react negatively to control governance practices, we do not anticipate the same negative reaction from professional services staff. In universities, professional services roles such as secretaries, marketing professionals or registry administrators usually involve relatively programmable and observable tasks with performance that can be more accurately evaluated.
and predicted. People performing these roles have not experienced the same professional indoctrination and socialization as people in academic roles. Many professional services individuals come from private sector organizations and are experienced working within formalized control governance structures.

Owing to the characteristics of their roles and their backgrounds, professional services staff are more likely to respond positively when experiencing control governance practices. This could be the case because control governance practices provide them with direction, transparency, a more stable and predictable work environment, and clear expectations and responsibilities (Eisenhardt, 1989; Hernandez, 2012). Therefore, because control governance practices provide the appropriate direction and extrinsic motivation for staff whose job roles are characterized by programmed tasks with low uncertainty, we expect that people in these roles will react positively to higher levels of control governance (Eisenhardt, 1989). We thus suggest the following hypothesis.

**H3:** For people in professional services roles, control governance practices will be positively related to personal well-being.

Because control governance practices provide a more stable and predictable environment in employment relationships with high-structured roles, we believe that control governance practices will be more suitable for professional services staff than collegial governance practices. Adler and Chen (2011) suggest that there are negative implications when there is a misalignment between governance systems and certain employee characteristics. They argue staff involved in high programmability tasks face strain without a formalized environment. Collegial governance can be associated with less formalized contexts, owing to a diminished official power structure, which causes a sense of indeterminate expectations and undefined workplace boundaries. Less formalized power structures, such as those found in environments with collegial governance practices, can result in low authoritative direction, decreased transparency and increased peer evaluations, which can cause tension among some employees (Tuomela, 2005). Therefore, as control governance practices provide a sense of stability for people in professional services roles with high-structured tasks, collegial governance practices may not satisfy their needs in the same manner, which may lead to less well-being.

**H4:** For people in professional services roles, collegial governance practices will be less positively related to well-being than control governance practices are.

The logic of our argument so far suggests that the employment role in terms of task structure will have an important effect on how different governance practices relate to staff well-being. However, as mentioned earlier, employment roles can also be described in terms of their position. Little attention has been paid to the understanding of how the position an employee occupies influences the way in which governance practices are experienced and the effect they have on the person’s well-being.

People in university leadership positions (e.g. vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellors, heads of faculties, schools and departments) are now responsible for setting direction and selecting the goals of their institutions (Buckland, 2009). They act on behalf of university stakeholders and are expected to define and implement the internal governance practices that facilitate the achievement of institutional goals. In recent years, there has been a shift from administration and political duties to ‘management of activity and of strategy’ (Buckland, 2009, p. 531). Professional services leaders and academic leaders are now managing individuals and are accountable for performance results (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007). With this sense of accountability comes the need to control and be in control (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007).

Managerial responsibilities become part of the day-to-day job of most academics moving into leadership positions. These management tasks usually overshadow their scholarly endeavours and ultimately define their role behaviour. Over time, the needs and experiences of academic leaders become more similar to those of professional services leaders than to those of their fellow scholars. For them, control practices are likely to be perceived as useful and relevant, because they provide information and incentives to help encourage the performance of others. Nevertheless, owing to their backgrounds and fundamental knowledge of academic work, they also value the benefits that collegial governance practices can bring. Thus, following this logic, we posit that the relationship between both governance practices and

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well-being will be positive for people in leadership positions.

H5: For people in leadership positions, both collegial and control governance practices will be positively related to their personal well-being, regardless of the nature of their task structure.

Methods

Research setting, research process and sample selection

The population for this study consists of staff working in UK universities. Over the last decades, the UK university sector has undergone a significant transformation concerning the way institutions implement their internal governance practices (Pollitt, 1987). As shown in previous research (e.g. Bolden et al., 2012), some universities function in a ‘business-like’ way (with a high emphasis on control, accountability and financial efficiency), while others continue to be run according to the collegial and high-trust traditional academic values system. This diversity is particularly important for our research, as it provides the variability required for the examination of internal governance practices. It must be noted that the work presented here forms part of a larger study involving mixed research methods, which aim was to explain the governance mechanisms currently being used in UK universities (Franco-Santos, Rivera and Bourne, 2014). The data used in this research have been extracted from the survey of this larger study.

The survey was conducted in the last three months of 2012. It was addressed to a sample frame of 3650 employees working in the UK’s 162 universities, representing approximately 1% of the population (HESA, 2012). We adopted a stratified random sampling process to develop our sample frame. Within each university, we focused on staff working for the vice-chancellor’s office and central services (e.g. states, IT), and on staff employed at different parts of the institutions. We made special efforts to include people from four schools or faculties (management/business, education, math and performing arts/cultural studies) to increase the variability of responses, but allow for potential controls according to the various disciplines. Information about the individuals included in our sample frame came from publicly available data (e.g. names, job titles and email addresses).

Some examples of job roles included in our work are: lecturers, senior lecturers, researchers, professors, deans or heads of schools/faculty, pro-vice-chancellors, director of finance, director of HR and administrative support. We sent an email to our sample frame individuals inviting them to participate, along with the web-link to our survey. These individuals also received two follow-up messages. In total, we received 1342 survey responses. After cleaning the data, we extracted 1017 usable responses. However, after discarding responses that had missing information in key items used in this research, we obtained 975 valid responses (27% response rate). Our responses came from 141 universities, representing 87% of the overall UK university sector. In Table 1, we present the descriptive information of our survey respondents.

Measures

The literature was thoroughly examined to develop survey items capable of measuring our constructs: control governance, collegial governance and employee well-being. We also conducted a series of interviews with key informants (mainly academics and senior staff from seven different UK universities) to refine the wording of our survey items and ensure their relevance and validity in the context of UK universities (Franco-Santos, Rivera and Bourne, 2014). Table 2 presents the items used to measure each of our constructs.

Exogenous variables

Control governance practices. We created a multi-item scale to measure this construct. We examined agency theory research (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Baiman, 1982) and extracted the key mechanisms highlighted as essential for aligning the interests of principals and agents at the lower levels of an organization. The key mechanisms proposed by agency theorists for the governance of organizations are: monitoring through performance measures and targets and performance-contingent compensation (Baiman, 1982; Eisenhardt, 1989). Based on these insights, we developed a seven-point Likert-type scale assessing the extent to which individuals perceived these governance mechanisms were being used in their universities. Our scale ranged from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 ‘strongly agree’. Table 2
Table 1. Sample description

| Variables                                      | N  | %   |
|-----------------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Respondents’ role                             |    |     |
| Academic (e.g. Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer, Senior Researcher, Lecturer, Researcher) | 573| 58.8|
| Academic leader (e.g. Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Head of Faculty/School/Department) | 136| 13.9|
| Professionals services manager and Support (e.g. Head of Training and Development, Head of Student Affairs, Head of Planning and Policy, Personal Assistant, Secretary, Administrative, Technician, Officer) | 202| 20.7|
| Professional services leader (e.g. Registrar, Director of Finance, Director of Human Resources) | 64 | 6.6 |
| Respondents’ gender                           |    |     |
| Male                                          | 462| 47.4|
| Female                                        | 513| 52.6|
| Respondents’ age                              |    |     |
| Less than 35                                   | 92 | 9.3 |
| 36–45                                         | 209| 21.5|
| 46–55                                         | 390| 40.0|
| 56–65                                         | 267| 27.4|
| More than 66                                   | 17 | 1.7 |
| Respondents’ employment contract              |    |     |
| Full time                                     | 853| 87.5|
| Part time                                     | 122| 12.5|
| Respondents’ university peer group            |    |     |
| PG_A: Russell group (excluding LSE)           | 210| 21.5|
| PG_B: All other institutions with research income of 22% or more of total | 168| 17.2|
| PG_C: Institutions with research income 8–21% of total | 86 | 8.8 |
| PG_D: Institutions with research income 5–8% of total and total income >£120m | 268| 27.5|
| PG_E: Teaching institutions with a turnover of £40m and £119m | 103| 10.6|
| PG_F: Smaller teaching institutions           | 114| 11.7|
| PG_G: Specialist music/arts teaching institutions | 26 | 2.7 |

Total sample = 975.

provides the full text, description and background literature of the items used and Table 3 presents our descriptive statistics. In Appendix S1 (Table SB), detailed information about the validity and reliability of this measure is presented.

Collegial governance practices. To measure this construct, we reviewed previous stewardship theory research (e.g. Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Hernandez, 2012; Segal and Lehrer, 2012) and extracted suggestions from this literature that pertained to governance mechanisms. Stewardship theory suggests governance mechanisms that encourage participation, communication, resource provision, recognition of excellence, and continuous learning and autonomy. Using previous research conducted on UK universities (e.g. Bolden et al., 2012; Franco-Santos, Rivera and Bourne, 2014; ter Bogt and Scapens, 2012) and a set of interviews with key informants, we contextualized these mechanisms and created a seven-point Likert-type scale. The scale had six items ranging from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 ‘strongly agree’. Table 2 provides the full text of the items used for this measure, and Table 3 the descriptive statistics. In Appendix S1 (Table SB), detailed information about the validity and reliability of this measure is presented.

Employment role. For assessing employment roles, we created four different groups. In our survey, we used a categorical variable, and every respondent was asked to select the group that best reflected his or her role. Our first group represented academic roles without leadership responsibilities. This group included traditional scholarly roles such as researchers, lecturers and professors without leadership responsibilities. People in these roles are expected to deliver highly diverse and abstract goals such as research excellence, education excellence and societal contributions. The fulfilment of these goals involves tasks with a
long-term orientation, vague or unknown ‘means–ends connections’, high uncertainty and low programmability (Campbell, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1988; March and Simon, 1958). Academic roles are ‘low-structured’ in nature, so we used them to designate this variable. In our tables, we designate this group using the abbreviation ‘AC’. Our second group was formed by professional services roles without leadership responsibilities, such as secretaries, register officers, human resource or marketing professionals. People in these roles are expected to perform administrative tasks, mainly involving activities that are short-term with a low degree of uncertainty and high programmability. These professional services roles were used to represent ‘high-structured’ roles. In our tables, we designate this group using the abbreviation ‘PS’. The third and fourth groups in our analysis were formed by university leaders including academic leaders (e.g. vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor and heads of schools, faculties and departments) and professional services leaders (e.g. finance director, directors of professional services of schools and faculties). The group of academic leader roles is designated with the abbreviation ‘ACL’ in our tables; in the case of professional services leader roles, we use ‘PSL’. Our group classification is reflected in Figure 1.

**Endogenous variables**

**Employee well-being**  Previous research has suggested that, when assessing well-being, it is crucial to include measures of positive as well as negative well-being (e.g. Huppert and Whittington, 2003). In our research, we measured well-being in terms of vitality to capture the positive aspects of well-being, and stress to represent the negative aspects of well-being. Vitality has been defined as the sense of being alive, passionate and exited (Spreitzer and Porath, 2013). We measured it using a four-item scale extracted from Spreitzer et al. (2005), which has already been validated in previous studies (e.g. Porath et al., 2011). This scale ranged from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 ‘strongly agree’, and its full text is presented in Table 2 (its descriptive statistics appear in Table 3). Stress was assessed with a one-item scale (see Tables 2 and 3) representing...
Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

| Variable                          | Mean | SD  | CON1   | CON2   | CON3   | CON4   | COL1   | COL2   | COL3   | COL4   | COL5   | COL6   | PWB1   | PWB2   | PWB3   | PWB4   | NWB1   |
|----------------------------------|------|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| **Control governance**           |      |     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     |
| CON1                             | 4.81 | 1.63|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **CON2**                         | 4.36 | 1.71| 0.71***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **CON3**                         | 3.71 | 1.69| 0.29***| 0.35***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **CON4**                         | 4.41 | 1.75| 0.21***| 0.28***| 0.23***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **Collegial governance**         |      |     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     |
| COL1                             | 3.64 | 1.97| 0.35***| 0.28***| 0.24***| −0.03 |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **COL2**                         | 3.18 | 1.68| 0.37***| 0.33***| 0.30***| 0.06* | 0.64***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **COL3**                         | 3.45 | 1.78| 0.27***| 0.25***| 0.24***| −0.05 | 0.62***| 0.63***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **COL4**                         | 3.32 | 1.85| 0.29***| 0.27***| 0.27***| −0.04 | 0.63***| 0.71***| 0.67***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **COL5**                         | 4.33 | 1.72| 0.31***| 0.25***| 0.21***| 0.02  | 0.55***| 0.54***| 0.58***| 0.57***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **COL6**                         | 3.99 | 1.68| 0.08** |        | 0.03   | −0.15***| 0.45***| 0.37***| 0.46***| 0.40***| 0.37***|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **Positive well-being**          |      |     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     |
| PWB1                             | 4.22 | 1.87| 0.25***| 0.19***| 0.19***| −0.05 | 0.43***| 0.42***| 0.45***| 0.47***| 0.45***| 0.34***|        |        |        |        |        |        |
| **PWB2**                         | 4.52 | 1.80| 0.25***| 0.17***| 0.16***| −0.04 | 0.42***| 0.40***| 0.43***| 0.43***| 0.44***| 0.31***| 0.86***|        |        |        |        |        |
| **PWB3**                         | 4.79 | 1.60| 0.22***| 0.15***| 0.16***| −0.01 | 0.34***| 0.32***| 0.37***| 0.36***| 0.37***| 0.25***| 0.70***| 0.74***|        |        |        |        |
| **PWB4**                         | 3.89 | 1.86| 0.19***| 0.14***| 0.15***| −0.04 | 0.44***| 0.42***| 0.46***| 0.44***| 0.43***| 0.34***| 0.75***| 0.75***| 0.64***|        |        |        |
| **Negative well-being**          |      |     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     | **     |
| NWB1                             | 4.82 | 1.71| −0.07**| −0.03  | −0.06  | 0.09* | −0.31***| −0.28***| −0.37***| −0.30***| −0.26***| −0.23***| −0.32***| −0.34***| −0.27***| −0.41***|        |

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.10.
negative health. In Appendix S1 (Table SB), detailed information about the validity and reliability of this measure is presented.

**Control variables**

When creating our survey, we included a number of demographic and contextual variables to control for potential individual and university related characteristics that could influence the relationships studied. In terms of individual characteristics, we controlled for respondents’ gender (female and male), age and type of employment contract (full-time, part-time), because previous research has found that these aspects influence people’s perceptions of well-being (Diener *et al*., 1999; Gutierrez *et al*., 2005; Porath *et al*., 2011). In terms of university characteristics, we controlled for respondents’ university peer group (HESA, 2012). In the UK, university peer groups were created as a way of classifying institutions for policy-making decisions. These classification criteria are mainly associated with their founding sources (e.g. research, teaching, special activities). Our interviews with key informants highlighted that some of these variables, including the primary source of funding (research or teaching), could significantly influence the governance mechanisms used and staff well-being. Prior to conducting our survey, we did not hypothesize about how any of these controls could affect the relationships studied.

### Data analysis

Our survey data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which is a second-generation multivariate method that enables the simultaneous analysis of observed and latent variables (Jöreskog, 1993). Alternative multivariate statistics methods such as regression analysis (Cohen *et al*., 2002) were considered. However, SEM was deemed more appropriate for this research because some of the assumptions required for regression analysis were not met; and because SEM allows the identification of potential interaction effects through multi-group analysis (Bollen, 1989; Jöreskog, 1971). Additionally, SEM permits the simultaneous evaluation of all the variables in the model rather than separately and sequentially. It also provides measurement errors without aggregating them in a residual error term (Fornell, 1984). In this research, we used MPLUS 7.11 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2012) and EQS 6.2 (Bentler, 1995–2008) to estimate our SEM models. All the variables in our research were assessed using a seven-item Likert scale and individual responses were associated with the university they belonged to. In our analysis, the assumptions of normality and independence were not met (Muthén and Satorra, 1995; Rivera and Satorra, 2002; Satorra, 1992, 2003; Satorra and Bentler, 1994). As a result, the general estimation method we used was MLR (maximum likelihood parameter estimates with standard errors and a chi-square test statistic that are robust to non-normality and non-independence of observation) (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2012). We adopted the robust chi-square, RMSEA, SRMR and CFI indexes as indicators of model fit (Bollen, 1989; Browne and Cudeck, 1993; Hair *et al*., 2006; Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Before proceeding to test our hypotheses, we conducted a set of preliminary data analyses to investigate the quality of our measures and the nature of the main relationships studied. For the sake of simplicity and completeness, we have included the results of these analyses in the Appendix. For these preliminary analyses, we first calculated the descriptive statistics of the items in our measures and conducted ANOVA and Duncan tests comparing the responses of our different employment roles (Appendix S1, Table SA). The purpose of this analyses was to examine the extent to which responses were significantly different across the
employment roles studied. Next, we used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the dimensional structure of the theoretical constructs involved in our hypotheses. We conducted CFA for our total sample and across the different employment role sub-samples (Appendix S1, Table SB). The main relationship presented in our hypotheses suggests that the orientation of the governance practices used is related to the degree of well-being experienced by university staff. Therefore, before testing our moderating hypotheses, we analysed the extent to which this main relationship exists for the total sample including our control variables, the different employment roles and the two types of governance practices. Appendix S1, Table SC shows the results of these analyses.

Results

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix of all our observed variables. Table 4 shows the results of our different structural models. As it is common in regression analysis, we present the standardized coefficients showing direct effects between the variables studied. Given the goodness-of-fit statistics for structural equation models, these models fit the data reasonably well as shown in Table 4.

Hypothesis 1 proposes that collegial governance practices will be positively related to the well-being of people in academic roles (without leadership responsibilities). Our model suggests (Table 4) that this is the case for the academic roles investigated. When people in academic roles experience collegial practices they also experience high levels of vitality or positive well-being ($\beta_{AC}^{\text{Collegial} \rightarrow \text{PW}} = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$) and low levels of stress or negative well-being ($\beta_{AC}^{\text{Collegial} \rightarrow \text{NW}} = -0.36$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported by our data.

Hypothesis 2 posits that control governance practices will be negatively related to the well-being of people in academic roles (referring to those academics without leadership responsibilities). Our

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Table 4. Governance practices and well-being across groups of employment roles

| Direct effects | Academic ($\beta_{AC}$) | Academic leader ($\beta_{ACL}$) | Professional services ($\beta_{PS}$) | Professional services leader ($\beta_{PSL}$) | Differences |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Control governance $\rightarrow$ positive well-being | 0.04 | 0.31*** (0.23, 0.39) | 0.36*** (0.28, 0.44) | 0.14 $\beta_{AC} = \beta_{PSL} = 0$ | $\beta_{ACL} = \beta_{PS} > 0$ |
| Control governance $\rightarrow$ negative well-being | 0.10** (0.02, 0.18) | 0.01 (0.23, 0.07) | $-0.15***$ (0.49, 0.65) | 0.03 $\beta_{ACL} = \beta_{PSL} = 0$ | $\beta_{AC} > 0 / \beta_{PS} < 0$ |
| Collegial governance $\rightarrow$ positive well-being | 0.53*** (0.45, 0.61) | 0.61*** (0.53, 0.69) | 0.57*** (0.49, 0.65) | 0.47*** (0.35, 0.59) $\beta_{AC} = \beta_{PS} > 0$ |
| Collegial governance $\rightarrow$ negative well-being | $-0.36***$ (0.44, 0.28) | $-0.23***$ (0.31, 0.15) | $-0.36***$ (0.44, 0.28) | $-0.11$ $\beta_{ACL} < \beta_{AC} = \beta_{PS} < 0$ |

$R^2$ Positive well-being | 0.29 | 0.10/0.37 | 0.12/0.33 | 0.02/0.22 |

$R^2$ Negative well-being | 0.12 | 0.00/0.07 | 0.02/0.13 | 0.02/0.01 |

$\beta$: Standardized coefficients.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

$R^2$: Control Governance / $R^2$: Collegial Governance.

AC: Academic, $\chi^2$ [49] = 111.0, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.03 and CFI = 0.98.

ACL: Academic Leader, $\chi^2$ [12] = 24.9, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.04 and CFI = 0.96/$\chi^2$ [33] = 38.4, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04 and CFI = 0.99.

PS: Professional Services, $\chi^2$ [12] = 25.6, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.03 and CFI = 0.98/$\chi^2$ [33] = 68.5, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.05 and CFI = 0.97.

PSL: Professional Services Leader: $\chi^2$ [12] = 17.2, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.05 and CFI = 0.99/$\chi^2$ [33] = 33.2, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.06 and CFI = 0.98.

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1We have included within parentheses the standardized coefficients ($\beta$) resulting from our analysis and their significance level ($p$ value) to facilitate comprehension. The $\beta$ superscript indicates the employment role, and its subscript indicates the path. For example, in ($\beta_{AC}^{\text{Collegial} \rightarrow \text{PW}} = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$), AC refers to Academics without leadership responsibilities, Collegial $\rightarrow$ PW refers to the relationship between collegial governance and positive well-being (vitality), and $p < 0.01$ means that the likelihood that the phenomena tested occurred by chance alone is less than 1%.
data analysis shows (Table 4) that this relationship is partially supported. We find that when people in academic roles perceive the use of control governance practices, this perception is positively related to their stress levels. That is, those that experience high levels of control governance also experience high levels of negative well-being ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{AC}} \rightarrow \text{NW} = 0.10, p < 0.05$). However, the effect of control governance practices on vitality (positive well-being) is not statistically significant ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{AC}} \rightarrow \text{PS} = 0.04, p > 0.10$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Hypothesis 3 postulates that people in professional services roles (without leadership responsibilities) will experience positive well-being when they perceive the use of control governance practices. Our data show (Table 4) that, when people in these roles experience control governance practices, they appear to feel better in terms of high vitality and low stress levels ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{PS}} \rightarrow \text{PS} = 0.36, p < 0.01; \beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{PS}} \rightarrow \text{NW} = -0.15, p < 0.01$). These results suggest that Hypothesis 3 is supported by the data.

Hypothesis 4 highlights that people in professional services roles (without leadership responsibilities) will perceive lower levels of well-being when they experience collegial governance practices than when they experience control practices. Our models suggest (Table 4) that perceptions of collegial practices are positively related to the well-being of people in professional services roles ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{AC}} \rightarrow \text{PW} = 0.57, p < 0.01$ and $\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{AC}} \rightarrow \text{NW} = -0.36, p < 0.01$). This relationship is stronger than the relationship obtained between perceptions of control governance practices and well-being. Therefore, our Hypothesis 4 is not supported by our data.

Finally, Hypotheses 5 proposes that people in leadership positions (academic and professional services) will feel good about the use of both control and collegial governance practices. For academic leaders, our models show (Table 4) that both control and collegial governance mechanisms are associated with a high sense of vitality ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{ACL}} \rightarrow \text{PW} = 0.31, p < 0.01; \beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{ACL}} \rightarrow \text{PW} = 0.61, p < 0.01$). This part of the hypothesis is statistically supported. However, the relationship between governance practices and stress is less clear. When academic leaders experience high collegial governance practices, they also experience low stress levels ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{ACL}} \rightarrow \text{NW} = -0.23, p < 0.01$), but the relationship between control governance and stress levels is not statistically significant. Further, the positive relationship between perceived collegial practices and well-being is stronger than the relationship between perceived control practices and well-being. For professional services leaders, collegial practices appear to positively affect well-being in terms of vitality ($\beta_{\text{Control}}^{\text{AC}} \rightarrow \text{PW} = 0.47, p < 0.01$). The rest of relationships for this group are not statistically significant. In sum, our Hypothesis 5 is partially supported by the data.

**Discussion**

Our analysis of the governance practices in universities reveals several interesting findings that have implications for management and higher-education research. Based on previous literature (e.g. Adler and Chen, 2011; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Eisenhardt, 1985; Ouchi, 1979; Rousseau, 1978), we expected universities to align their governance practices to the nature of their employees' roles to enhance their well-being. We examined these relationships by looking at the extent to which the association between university governance practices and well-being was affected by the conditions of different employment roles using agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Hernandez, 2012) knowledge. We find that the adoption of collegial governance practices underlined by stewardship theory research is beneficial for the well-being of staff regardless of their role. Perceptions of these practices are associated with high levels of vitality and low levels of stress. Control governance practices, which correspond to the framing of agency theory, appear to be beneficial to the well-being of people in academic leadership positions and professional services staff. However, they appear to be detrimental for faculty without leadership responsibilities. Our findings provide empirical support to Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson (1997) research, which conceptually asserts that an alignment or misalignment between the nature of the employment relationship and the governance orientation will fulfill or fail to satisfy the motivational dispositions of staff.

We also find that the governance experiences and sense of well-being of academic leaders are more closely aligned with those of professional
services leaders than with those of academics without leadership positions. As expected, despite their scholarly backgrounds, people in academic leadership roles do not seem to experience the negative effects of control governance practices that other academics feel. When academics ascend to leadership positions, it appears that the needs and expectations of the role position change their outlook and sentiment towards governance. This finding is in accordance with previous research suggesting that the constraints of a role become part of the decision-making ‘programme’ defining the behaviour of the role-holder (Simon, 1964).

Such that, the pressing needs for accountability and measurable outcomes required for external validation and legitimacy may become the focus of attention of academic leaders affecting their perceptions of governance practices and well-being.

**Implications for theory and future research**

Our research shows that the premises of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Hernandez, 2012), which are often seen as contradictory, can coexist within single organizations, resulting in the adoption of both control and collegial governance mechanisms. Our data show that people in the various roles examined, experience both control and collegial governance practices in their universities. Further research could explore the extent to which these governance practices can be complementary as well as the conditions favouring or hindering that complementarity. In addition to this, further work could examine the extent to which this observed coexistence is transitory or may be permanent.

Our study offers a deeper understanding of the congruency theoretical propositions presented by Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson (1997) in a non-for-profit sector. Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson (1997) argue that specific situations produce individual preferences towards either control or collegial governance practices; and that the congruence between individual preferences and governance practices will influence individuals’ well-being. In line with these ideas, our data suggests that the alignment between governance practices and employment roles in universities is associated with well-being perceptions. We have focused on employment roles as a way to designate individual preferences (Simon, 1964); however, in order to examine the extent to which different preferences and motivations influence the experience of certain governance practices, additional research could account for these individual differences.

**Implications for management practice**

Our findings are especially important for educational institutions and other innovation-focused organizations with a high volume of knowledge workers (i.e. low-structured roles). In universities, low-structured roles that include faculty research and teaching positions make up a large portion of the employment population and likewise help to fulfil an overarching social, economic, environmental and cultural mission. Evidence from this study adds to the growing chorus of scholars who assert that universities are mismanaging private-sector-inspired reforms (Briner, 2015; Burrows, 2012; Kallio et al., 2016; McNay, 2015; Prichard and Willmott, 1997; Toma, 2007; Willmott, 1995).

Specifically, considering the importance of well-being for individual and institutional results, our data suggest that the current transition towards enhanced control governance with increasing reliance on hard performance measures and targets for academics, (e.g. Diamond, 2015) may lead to dysfunctions rather than the intended improvements (Bryson, Forth and Stokes, 2014). UK data from the Higher-education sector is already showing that the overall well-being of people in academic roles is being eroded (Kinman and Court, 2010; Kinman and Wray, 2015). As shown here, a critical explanatory factor may be the control governance practices used by universities.

Furthermore, our research shows that collegial governance practices are associated with high levels of well-being not just for people performing educational and research duties, but also for people in professional services roles. Previous research has shown that increased well-being is associated with enhanced performance at work (Bryson, Forth and Stokes, 2014) even more so for academic-related undertakings (e.g. Briner and Dewberry, 2007). Our findings suggest that for university employees, stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997) may be a more effective governance philosophy than agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen and Meckling, 1976). Indeed, stewardship theorists often use people in academic roles.
roles as exemplars of ‘stewards’ (e.g. Hernandez, 2012). Our work suggests that universities could benefit from paying more attention to the conditions that people in academic roles need to produce excellent education and research. This recommendation resonates with the views of recent Nobel laureates such as Peter Higgs, who has raised his concerns and argued that his discoveries would have not been possible now ‘as academics are expected to keep churning out papers [to meet specific research targets]’ (e.g. Aitkenhead, 2013).

Some scholars argue that the move towards control governance practices appears to be associated with a particular ideology coupled with legitimacy and funding pressures (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007; Diamond, 2015; Parker and Jary, 1995; Willmott, 1995;). This move seems to be ignoring or not fully considering the individual motives and working conditions required for the well-being and performance of university staff, in particular, of people in academic roles without leadership responsibilities. This move also appears to be driven by what Merton (1936, p. 901) calls the ‘imperious immediacy of interest’ as university leaders become concerned with the immediate consequences of visible performance outputs (e.g. rankings, national research assessments) excluding the considerations of the future impact of increased control.

Drawing from Merton (1936), these circumstances may be conducive to unintended undesirable consequences as it could be speculated that a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ may occur (Ferraro et al., 2005; Merton, 1948) with unknown results for science (Welpe et al., 2015) and the public mission of universities (Calhoun, 2011; Ortega y Gasset, 1944); meaning that people going into academia are often motivated to contribute to knowledge and to high-quality education (Hernandez, 2012; Merton, 1996), aspects that constitute the overall mission of most public universities. However, as agency theory suggests, the use of control governance mechanisms will affect people’s behaviour. Over time, the observed negative well-being effects, together with the well-known motivation and sorting effects of control mechanisms (e.g. Gomez-Mejia, Berrone and Franco-Santos, 2010), may alter people’s motivation and interests as well as attract new people with the characteristics presumed by the theory. This generally may make agency theory in this context self-fulfilling (Ferraro et al., 2009; Goshal, 2005) and the stewardship behaviours and motivation needed to contribute significantly to education and research less evident (Frey and Jegen, 2001; Frey, Homberg and Osterloh, 2013).

Limitations

Our research has several limitations that we should note. First, a limitation of the study is the grouping of employment roles into a reduced set of categories. For instance, within academic roles there are significant differences between, for example, a researcher and an associate professor. Although this procedure was done for ease of analysis and, indeed, the groups did show communalities, by not analysing employment roles separately there is a possibility that some employment roles are treated differently. Future research could group academic roles into those that are more teaching or research oriented as well as those that come from different disciplines. Roles could also be grouped according to seniority and task characteristics. It could also be revealing to distinguish between the short-term or long-term nature of different employment roles. For instance, the views of academic leaders in short-term appointments expecting to return to their normal academic role may differ from those of academic leaders who are permanently in a leadership role. The temporality of contracts (e.g. permanent vs. temporary staff) may also influence the relationships observed in this research as previous work in the sector has already shown (Fontinha, Van Laar and Easton, 2016). Then again, the current grouping of employment roles meets the purpose of our research, which was to focus on the moderating effect that two specific task characteristics (low and high structured) and two different role positions (with and without leadership responsibilities) can have on the relationship between governance practices and well-being. Further research could create alternative employment groups to gain greater granularity.

Secondly, our survey questions do not specify the organizational level at which the employee perceives collegial or control governance practices. Multilevel research would need to be conducted where responses to questions about the department, school or faculty, and university governance approaches are compared. As universities usually feature multiple layers of management, employees might experience more of a collegial practice at the department level and more of a control practice at...
the school/faculty level. Therefore, by not capturing these data, we are unable to identify the source of the perceived governance practice. Although, such information is important in understanding the specific origin of disagreement that leads to the perception of alignment or a misalignment of a governance practice. Because this study does not seek to reveal the origin of the disagreement, only if it was perceived at the individual level, we believe this assessment is outside the scope of this study. However, the above-mentioned multilevel data collection would be useful in future research.

Finally, in our work, we have not considered alternative theoretical perspectives that can contribute to elucidate our results. For example, the well-being response of academic leaders could be explained by the insights of previous identity research (Lok, 2010; Winter, 2009) conducted in environments with shifting logics, such as the UK university environment (Townley, 1997). It may be the case that some faculty are more likely to embrace current leadership roles emphasizing ‘calculative’ or ‘business-like’ discourses, as they appeal to their individual preferences (e.g. more extrinsic drives) using them to shape their identities, which then become more similar to those of professional leaders. Others resist this ‘managerial’ identity and prefer to remain in their traditional academic one (Mcgivern et al., 2015). In general, we know little about the conditions under which academics take leadership roles, how the roles influence their identity, and how these aspects influence governance and well-being perceptions. Another relevant perspective could be the analysis of how perceptions of justice (e.g. Greenberg, 2004) from different roles may be related to the implementation of different governance practices and how these perceptions may affect people’s well-being. These areas that could benefit from further research.

We consequently show that well-being among academic faculty, who are vital to higher-education institutions, is influenced by a congruence or incongruence with the type of internal governance practiced. We also show that academics in leadership positions do not experience governance practices in the same way as their fellow academics. Instead, they respond to governance practices in the same manner that professional services leaders do. In conclusion, our study lends support to critics who have claimed that the introduction of ‘business-minded governance practices’ in higher education is being mismanaged (Briner, 2015, p. 1) and may have unintended, undesirable consequences in the long run.

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Conclusion

This study indicates that, in the context of universities, the relationship between governance practices and well-being is affected by the role a person occupies. Despite the background and experience an individual might possess, governance practices are not always facilitated to meet the role demands of all employees in higher-education institutions.

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**Supporting Information**

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher’s website:

- **Appendix S1.** Word document.
- **Table SA.** Descriptive statistics across groups of employment roles.
- **Table SB.** Results of the measurement models across groups of employment roles.
- **Table SC.** Determinants of well-being in the total sample.