Universities and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Comparing Views about How to Address the Financial Impact

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Abstract

Universities were forced to move instruction online and send residential students home due to the pandemic, resulting in financial shortfalls. Governing boards, administrators, and governments made decisions including eliminating faculty and staff, and programs yet these decisions were rarely inclusive of university stakeholders or innovative. This study's purpose is to examine and compare viewpoints of stakeholders in relation to addressing the financial impact of the pandemic in hopes of capturing innovative and effective pathways for universities. Because the purpose involved describing and comparing these viewpoints, the researcher selected a unique mixed method, Q methodology [Q] for this study. In Q, participants sort statements related to the topic into a grid such that their Q-sort provides a snapshot of their subjectivity. Participants' sorts are grouped empirically into factors, each representing unique viewpoints. Three distinct viewpoints emerged: 1) *Focus on teaching mission and students*, 2) *University as a business*, and 3) *University as community*. Views 1 and 3 were dominated by university faculty while View 2 was dominated by non-faculty including administrators and staff. Q's determination of distinguishing statements within each view provides the ability to compare these views' uniqueness. The three views and consensus among the views represent rejection of decisions to lay off faculty or close programs, among others, in order to balance university finances. The importance of tenured faculty in relationship to shared governance and academic freedom is especially stressed by two of the viewpoints. Implications for higher education policy, innovation, democratic problem-solving, and governance are discussed.

Keywords Pandemic · Crisis · Finances · Governance · Distributed leadership · Shared governance · Q methodology

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On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization [WHO] declared the COVID-19 virus a worldwide pandemic. Universities were forced to move their face-to-face [F2F] classes online. Residential students were forced to leave their dormitories and return home. These actions were necessary to promote social distancing and deter the spread of the virus. Thus, administrators, trustees, and/or governments, in order to help flatten the curve regarding the spread of the virus, made decisions that created immediate change within their university communities (Shapiro, March 11, 2020). Major (2020) called these unprecedented times for higher education with other pressing crises also impacting higher education including climate change and racial unrest. The need for innovation and effective crisis management has been ongoing for well over a year.

ABC News (Fies & Hill, April 28, 2020), a major broadcast news organization in the USA, reported that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic could be devastating financially for American colleges and universities. Most of these monetary losses were due to the issuing of refunds for unused housing and dining plans (Seltzer, September 2, 2020). Some small private colleges were forced to close permanently whereas large public universities such as The University of Michigan anticipated losses of millions of dollars (\$400 M to \$1B) according to Fies and Hill (April 28, 2020). Therefore, public and private university leaders suddenly were on the hunt for budget reductions with numerous possibilities including the elimination of tenured faculty.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine, describe, and compare the divergent viewpoints of university stakeholders, especially faculty and staff, about how to best-address budget shortfalls at universities due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the hope that these stakeholders could provide innovative ideas for appropriate crisis management, especially in relation to finances. University trustees and administrators tend to embrace neoliberalism and may be viewed as disassociated with the traditional education mission of universities (Taylor, 2017). Yet other stakeholders are very possibly in the best position to offer balanced solutions to financial crises while preserving education-focused missions. Croucher et al. (2020) stressed that finding ways to make university governance and leadership more effective is especially important during the transformations present within the twenty-first century.

Background

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kezar and Holcombe (2017) declared that today's higher education leadership challenges necessitate new forms of leadership. Gigliotti (2021) found that there is a need for administrators to possess crisis leadership competencies especially in within the need for innovation and reinvention within higher education. Similarly, Trakman (2008) called into question using a twentieth century model for university governance in the twenty-first century. Expanding on

this idea, Spillane (2006) and Vuori (2019) stressed the need to extend the concept of leadership from an individual or set of individuals to concepts such as distributed leadership. The concept of distributed leadership is one where people (leaders in title and those in follower roles) work together to meet needs and goals of the organization (Gronn, 2008; Vuori, 2019). Without using the term distributed leadership, Rowlands (2017) and Trakman (2008) suggested that it is necessary for universities to find decision-making balance amongst faculty who best understand the institution and education mission and trustees who come from corporations and may better understand finances.

In the meantime, university governance has been a worldwide concern (Goedegebuure & Hayden, 2007; Rowlands, 2017). The importance of faculty having primary oversight of academic matters such as curriculum, instruction, research, and faculty status, including retention, tenure, and dismissal is stressed by organizations and researchers (American Association of University Professors, 2020; Buff, 2020; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). However, it needs to be stressed that shared governance does not mean that faculty are simply consulted for input on various decisions to be made by the administration and board of trustees (DeCesare, 2017). As changes to leadership in higher education are considered, shared governance consistently emerges as a means for institutions to better adapt, innovate, perform, and address challenges (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017) such as the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the current trend in higher education is corporate-style governance which increases the governance gap between faculty and administrators (McDaniel, 2017; Messier, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Within this model, leaders are only those with specific administrator titles (Rodela & Bertrand, 2018). DeCesare (2017) explains that administrators and trustees do not understand the basic attributes and core principles of shared governance. Rhoades (2005) argues that for sustainability of institutions of higher education, institutions' administrators and trustees must move their approaches toward democratic accountability and true shared governance. Current research demonstrates that a top-down model is counterproductive to today's higher education landscape (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Nevertheless, top-down decision making has been the norm regarding dealing with the impact of the pandemic at universities (e.g. Ma et al., 2021). Referring to higher education in the US, Buff (2020) calls the current situation a protracted financial crisis that has its basis in decades of public disinvestment in higher education and administratively imposed austerity measures. Similarly, in relation to China, Ma et al. (2021) discuss a situation where hierarchical authority and crisis rhetoric also led to a loss of shared governance and academic voices. This description also fits into what Buff (2020) calls the managed campus, rather than the governed campus. In other words, the voices of faculty, staff, community members, and students have not been included in the decisions related to the pandemic including decisions that had a direct impact on academics.

The university financial 'solutions' to the pandemic are well documented including faculty layoffs in what some called a bloodbath (Flaherty, July 16, 2020), university reorganizing academic colleges and departments, (Goist, May 29, 2020), the use of furloughs for faculty and staff (Whitford, September 2, 2020), and upper administrators taking voluntary pay cuts (Hale, July 31, 2020). Nevertheless, Seltzer (September 2, 2020) clarified that it is auxiliary services that lost money as instruction moved to online and students moved back home. Remote instruction generated the same revenue

as F2F while auxiliary revenue like student housing and dining halls lost millions. In the US, auxiliary services range from 5 to 30% of operating revenue for the higher education sector with a median of 13%.

In sum, universities and colleges sought various solutions to address budget shortfalls and decreases in revenue due to the coronavirus pandemic. Trustees and upper administrators made these decisions, yet it remains unclear what others, including faculty and staff, see as the best solutions to the financial issues related to the pandemic especially when focusing on the education mission of universities. Taylor (2017) described administrators and trustees as seeing shared governance and unionized faculty as hindrances to their top-down management style. This study seeks to examine and compare the divergent viewpoints about how to handle financial problems due to the pandemic at universities, primarily those in the US, by stakeholders such as faculty and staff. Specifically, Q methodology was developed to offer a unique yet scientific means of exploring and comparing viewpoints on any topic (Brown, 1980; Stephenson, 1953).

Method

William Stephenson (1935, 1953) created Q methodology [Q] to scientifically and systematically study subjectivity. Q consists of a specific set of procedures, theory, and philosophy of science related to the study of subjectivity, meaning people's viewpoints (Brown, 1980; Stephenson, 1953). Although Q has existed for over 85 years, its methodology resides within the qualitative-quantitative continuum of mixed methods research resulting in at least a somewhat idiosyncratic status within social and behavioral research communities (Ramlo, 2016). Yet Q has been applied to research in diverse disciplines including education, political science, environmental studies, psychology, and marketing in order to investigate, describe, and compare subjective viewpoints amongst a set of participants (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). It is worth noting that Q offers the kind of generalizability that centers upon phenomena (Brown, 1980; Thomas & Baas, 1993) rather than statistical generalizability associated with quantitative studies that use large numbers of randomly selected participants. The generalizability in Q is a qualitative type, rather than quantitative type, of generalizability (Thomas & Baas, 1993).

Although Likert-format scales to investigate viewpoints are more popular, these types of scales present aggregate results that fail to differentiate, compare, and describe viewpoints about a topic. Thus, the power of Q is that it provides more detail about what multiple views exist along with the ability to describe, in more qualitative ways, those views. As McKeown (2001) asserted, alternatives to Q result in a loss of meaning. Additionally, the Q-sorting process provides a measurement tool such that participants provide their internal viewpoints for examination (Brown, 1980). The processes of Q include development of the concourse (a universe of items, usually statements), the selection of the Q-sample from the concourse, the selection of participants, the collection of Q-sorts, analysis of the Q-sorts, and interpretation of the resulting analyses (Newman & Ramlo, 2010). The application of these processes within this study follow.

Concourse and Q-sample

In Q, the set of initial statements is called the concourse (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). In this study, the researcher used news stories about universities coping with the financial impact of the pandemic as a source of statements for the concourse. In order to examine how participants felt about university financial decisions, the concourse included actions and proposed actions from administrators, governing boards, and governments as a result of the pandemic. A theme analysis revealed seven key themes within the concourse in this study: Athletics, Faculty, Academic Programs, Staff, Administrators, Students, and General Finances.

The Q-sample is selected from the concourse and contains the items to be sorted by participants. The goal of the Q-sample is to have representation of all types of communication on the topic (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Newman & Ramlo, 2010). In order to preserve this inclusiveness, items were selected across the seven themes of the concourse. As can be seen in Table 1, each theme may have different numbers of items. This is necessary to preserve the types of communications present in the concourse. The Q-sample contained 40 statements for this study.

Participants

The P-set represents the set of participants who completed sorts within a Q study. In this study, participants were recruited via snowballing as well as posting requests to participate in the study on social media sites such as *Higher Ed and the Coronavirus* and *Pandemic Pedagogy* on Facebook. The goal was to have a diverse set of participants across multiple institutions of higher education primarily within the USA. Posts on these sites included an invitation to participate and a link to the website hosting the Q-sort. Eighty-three individuals completed a Q-sort. This is relatively large for a Q study; however, the researcher wanted to ensure the study included a diverse P-set in order best investigate divergent viewpoints. In Q, the sample size is the number of items in the Q-sample not the number of participants. Relatedly, Q

Table 1 Distribution of Q-sample items across themes

Theme	Number of items selected for Q-sample
Athletics	4
Faculty	12
Academic Programs	5
Staff	3
Administrators	5
Students	7
Finances	4
Total =	40

requires only small sets of participants in alignment with qualitative studies rather than the doctrine of large numbers associated with quantitative studies (Brown, et al., 2015).

Q-sorts

For this study, participants sorted a Q-sample of 40 statements related to university finances as the result of the pandemic. Q-sorts were collected online using HtmlQ, which uses freeware database hosting coordinated with a cloud computing company that offers hosting for web applications. The pandemic alone did not create the need for online Q-sorting. The researcher wanted to reach a broad, geographic constituency and offering participation online helped ensure that diversity of the P-set. Most typically, Q-sorts are done face-to-face.

Like the process done face-to-face, each online participant distributed the Q-sample into a sorting grid. Participants could move the individual statements into the various columns of the grid until they were satisfied that their arrangement reflects their viewpoint on the topic. The Q-sort allowed each participant to provide their internal viewpoint via their sort (Brown, 1980; Newman & Ramlo, 2010; Stephenson, 1953). The sorting process is reflective and self-referent (Brown, 1980; Stephenson, 1953). Yet it is important to stress that there is no dependence upon constructed effects or operational definitions in Q. Certainly, validity is not at issue because there is no outside criterion for a person's own point of view (Brown, 1980).

Analyses

The Q-sort data and demographic information was uploaded into specialized software for analyses, KenQ (Banasick, 2019). Analyses group similar sorts into factors, each representing a unique viewpoint, and provide the detailed tables necessary to describe those viewpoints (Newman & Ramlo, 2010). The factor analytic solution seeks the best theoretical solution, characterizing the viewpoints that exist (Brown, 1980; Thomas & Baas, 1993). The factors that emerge are grounded in concrete behavior, reliable, and easily replicated. When a factor represents five or six persons, the factor scores are highly reliable. Calculations for reliability coefficients are contained in Brown (1980) and performed within KenQ (Banasick, 2019).

The researcher selected KenQ (Banasick, 2019) for the analyses because it allows for typical choices for factor extraction and factor rotation to group similar sorts into factors (viewpoints) and provides the necessary tables to describe and compare the divergent viewpoints. KenQ also creates composite Q-sorts for each factor to assist with interpretation and comparison of the views. Only those sorts identified as represented by a factor (rather than multiple factors) are used within the analyses and results (Brown, 1980; Newman & Ramlo, 2010).

Table 2 Demographic information about the participants in the study

Demographic			
Sex	Female = 63	Male = 12 Other = 4	Refused = 4
Associated with researcher's institution?	Yes = 10	No = 73	
Role	Full-time faculty = 55 Administrator = 9	Part-time faculty = 5 Community = 3 Grad student = 5	Staff = 6
Age	Mean = 46 years	Standard deviation = 11 years	

Results

Demographic information was collected at the time of the Q-sort for the 83 participants. Participants were predominantly female (76%) and full-time faculty (66%) with an average age of 46 years. About 13% were from the researcher's home institution indicating she had reached the goal of differentiating the P-set as far as institution. Demographic data about the participants is shown in Table 2.

A three-factor solution was selected as best representative of the participants' views based on impressions and insights from reading the post-sort written comments, as suggested by McKeown and Thomas (2013). Each factor has more than six participants associated with it, thus ensuring that each factor is highly reliable (Brown, 1980). As can be seen in Table 3 below, for this study the average reliability coefficient is 0.8 for each factor and the composite reliabilities are at least 0.978.

Table 4 contains the factor array for each factor. Distinguishing and consensus statements are indicated in this table. Interpretations of each factor are based on the factor arrays, including distinguishing statements, as well as the comments provided by the participants associated with specific factors (viewpoints). These comments assist in further clarifying and describing the views. KenQ also creates a composite Q-sort for each factor. These composite sorts are visual representations of what is found in the factor arrays of Table 4. Descriptions of each viewpoint follow and include the associated visual composite sort.

Table 3 Factor characteristics

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Number of Defining Sorts	21	11	11
Average Reliability Coefficient	0.8	0.8	0.8
Composite Reliability	0.988	0.978	0.978

Formulas for calculating the average reliability coefficient and composite reliability can be found in Brown (1980)

Table 4 Factor array for each of the three factors (viewpoints)

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	Reduce the money going to athletics.	2	4	3
2	Eliminate tenured faculty.	-5	-3	-5
<u>3</u>	Eliminate academic programs.	-2	-3	-3
4	Invest in growing programs.	2	0	1
<u>5</u>	Reorganize the academic structure of the university.	0	0	-1
6	Reduce the number of vice presidents.	4	3	1
7	Have president and vice-presidents take major reductions in salary.	5	5	0
8	Eliminate football.	0	4	2
9	Reduce the number of colleges.	-1	-2	-2
10	Reduce the number of administrative and secretarial staff.	0	-5	1
<u>11</u>	Increase the number of students in classes.	-2	-3	-3
<u>12</u>	Reduce the university's level of research.	-1	-1	-1
13	Combine academic departments.	0	-1	-1
14	Furlough coaches (athletics).	1	3	1
15	Furlough administrators.	1	0	0
16	Furlough non-academic staff.	-1	-5	-1
<u>17</u>	Close the university library.	-3	-2	-2
18	Close campus and only have remote workers.	-4	0	3
19	Recruit more students to stay at your local institution.	4	2	0
20	Increase the number of online degrees.	-1	1	1
21	Increase the number of online classes.	-1	2	3
22	Reduce the number of university athletics' sports teams.	0	3	0
23	Replace tenured faculty with temporary full-time faculty.	-4	-2	-5
24	Reduce the number of full-time instructional faculty, non-tenure track.	-3	-2	-2
25	Eliminate tenure for faculty.	-5	-1	-4
<u>26</u>	Wait it out and hope for the best.	-2	-3	-3
<u>27</u>	Make full time faculty teach more (e.g. reduce release time for research & service).	0	0	-1
28	Make administrators teach / teach more.	1	1	0
<u>29</u>	Reduce faculty salaries.	-2	-1	-2
<u>30</u>	Furlough faculty.	-3	-4	-4
31	Refocus on the university's teaching mission.	3	-1	5
<u>32</u>	Create ways to improve student retention especially if the crisis continues.	3	2	2
<u>33</u>	Push the federal and state governments to provide special, additional funding to public higher education.	3	2	3
34	Increase the number of full-time faculty (reduce the number of adjuncts).	2	-4	2
35	Break union contracts to improve flexibility.	-3	0	-3

Table 4 (continued)

Distinguishing statements that differentiate a factor (view) from the others are shown as shaded; consensus statements, representing consensus among the factors (views) are indicated by having the statement number bold and underlined

36	Embrace shared governance - partner with faculty in all decisions pertaining to instruction, programs, academics.	3	1	5
37	Work with the unions to find best solutions for all bargaining unit members (whether faculty or staff).	2	1	4
38	Draw on the financial reserves of the university to help get through the crisis at hand.	1	3	4
<u>39</u>	Lower tuition to improve student recruitment.	1	1	0
40	Eliminate corporate style perks for upper administrators like car and house allowances.	5	5	2

Factor 1: Focus on the Teaching Mission and Students

Those represented by this view include 19 females and two males. Based on stakeholder role, 16 are full-time faculty, two are part-time faculty, one is an administrator, and two are community representatives. Figure 1 provides a composite Q-sort representing this viewpoint. This view rejects both firing tenured faculty (statement 2 at -5) and eliminating tenure (statement 45 at -5). Similarly, the Factor 1 view rejects replacing tenured faculty with temporary full-time faculty (#23 at -4). Regarding replacing tenured faculty, participant 23 stated, “This strikes me as taking advantage of the crisis with the attempt of eliminating tenure.”

Participant 76 expanded on this idea as well as the importance of tenure,

For starters, currently tenured faculty have entered into a bargain with the university, and that bargain should be preserved. I don’t think there are no limits to tenure, but it is a central feature of higher education and should be preserved--not only for a sense of permanence, or even because some small number of faculty do controversial research, but also because it is the tenured faculty to who do much of the work of shared governance, and who have the permanence to be able to speak truth to power when need be.

This espousal for tenure appears connected to a focus on the education mission of universities (distinguishing, #31 at +3). Those on this view support recruiting students to remain at their local university during the pandemic (distinguishing, #19 at +4) and support an improvement to student retention (#32 at +4) to address this crisis. With this focus on the education mission, it is not surprising that this view rejects the need for administrators to receive corporate style perks such as cars and

Fig. 1 Composite Q-sort for Factor 1

housing (#40 at +5). Those on this view also believe upper administrators should take substantial pay cuts during the financial crisis (#7 at +5) and there should be a reduction in the number of vice presidents (distinguishing, #6 at +4). Alternatively, this view embraces shared governance as the best way to solve university problems (distinguishing, #36 at +3). Participant 12 captured this within the following statement,

The shared governance model has proven to best leverage the expertise of the entire community and is key to all but the most emergency decision making.

Thus, this view is focused on the importance of tenured faculty to the education mission of the university which is also interconnected with the importance of shared governance. This view believes in supporting students in multiple ways including recruiting to stay local during the pandemic as well as improving retention. To save money, those on this view support substantial decreases in the expense of the upper administrator including reducing the number of vice presidents, significant cuts to the remaining administrators' pay, and the elimination of corporate style perks for these administrators. The researcher named this view *Focus on the teaching mission and students*.

Fig. 2 Composite Q-sort for Factor 2

Factor 2: University as a Business

This factor is primarily female (10 females, 1 refused to answer). There are three full-time faculty, a graduate student, two administrators, and four (out of the 6) staff members represented by this view. Thus, this view is predominantly (73%) non-faculty. Figure 2 provides the composite Q-sort for this viewpoint. Those on this view believe their universities should draw on their reserves during the pandemic crisis (distinguishing, #38 at +3). This view rejects both furloughing non-academic staff (distinguishing, #16 at -5) and eliminating staff (distinguishing, #10 at -5). Yet this view is neutral about breaking union contracts, whether faculty or staff contracts (distinguishing, #35 at 0), which may indicate that those on this view may not be part of bargaining units. The participants identified with Factor 2 are also somewhat neutral about shared governance which is typically associated with full-time faculty (distinguishing, #36, +1) as well as the administration working with the various unions to help solve financial problems (distinguishing, #37, +1) Fig. 3.

Those on this view promote eliminating sports teams (distinguishing, #8 at +4; distinguishing #22 at +3), furloughing coaches (distinguishing, #14 at +3), reducing the money going to sports (distinguishing, #1 at +4), substantially reducing the pay of upper administrators (#7 at +5), eliminating corporate style perks for upper administrators (#40 at +5), and reducing the number of vice presidents (distinguishing, #6 at +3). There is a sense of promoting educators while disparaging

Fig. 3 Composite Q-sort for Factor 3

administrators. This is made clear by Participant #26, a female full-time professor, who wrote the following (where LMS stands for Learning Management System),

Teachers - tenured and adjunct - are the ones who actually provide the education that students come to college for, not an army of decision makers who last set foot in a classroom in 1995 and wouldn't know how to use an LMS if their lives depended upon it.

Yet there is also a sense that those on this view do not embrace the tenets of tenure, especially not in the way those on Factor 1 do. The placement of statements pertaining to tenure and tenured faculty are not as salient with this view as they are with the other two views. However, the sense of privilege associated with tenure for this view is made clear by Participant 58, a staff member, who stated that,

No one else in any other industry, as well as the staff at the university, have tenure. Faculty have many other perks including higher wages, 22 weeks off per year, and sabbaticals. Tenure allows faculty to do what they want, including not do their job. No one else has that luxury and it allows room for decreased productivity.

Another staff member, Participant 81, expressed a similar view of faculty by stating, "Faculty are disengaged from reality. They live in their own bubbles. We have

a business to run.” Participant 49, self-identified as a community member, made the case for the importance of staff to universities. “Non-academic staff are critical to everyday operations of the university. There is no way for an institution (which is a business after all) to run without people working in staff roles.”

Thus, this view embraces cost saving measures such as cutting athletics and the expense of administrators while supporting maintaining staff and at least not furloughing faculty. They see faculty as providing the key service of teaching, yet this view does not embrace specific characteristics associated with university faculty such as shared governance and tenure. There is a sense of a focus on accountability for employees, especially tenured faculty. Thus, this view sees education as the product of the university, staff as key stakeholders, and believes the university is a business. Therefore, the researcher named this factor *University as a business*.

Factor 3: University as Community

This viewpoint is represented primarily by females (eight females, two males, one refused) and full-time faculty (nine with one graduate student and one administrator). This view sees the need for the university to refocus on its education mission (distinguishing, #31 at +5) and to draw on its financial reserves (distinguishing, #38 at +4). Additionally, those on Factor 3 believe shared governance is necessary for overcoming the financial issues of the pandemic and that the administration should partner with faculty in all decisions pertaining to instruction, programs, and academics (distinguishing, #36 at +5). Those on this view also see a need for the administration to work with the faculty and staff unions to find the best solutions (distinguishing, #37 at +4). Although those on this view reject the idea of furloughing faculty, they are relatively neutral about furloughing others including staff, administrators, and athletic coaches.

Participant 25 stated that “Change will be needed. To get everyone on board, you need open communication.” Participant 72 wrote, “Unions protect workers, and working with them will afford the best possible solutions that build in protections.” This view promotes closing campus and having only remote workers while the pandemic is active (distinguishing, #18 at +3). Participant 45 stated that, “In order to deliver better online and blended courses during a crisis, we need smaller classes and more faculty. Those faculty creating new approaches and materials need to be fairly compensated.”

Like those on Factor 1, this view embraces the importance of tenure and tenured faculty. Statement 2, about eliminating tenured faculty, is located at -5 for this view like it was for Factor 1. Similarly, Statement 23, replace tenured faculty with temporary full-time faculty is at -5 (distinguishing; #23 was at -4 for Factor 1). In relation to the importance of tenure, Participant 72 wrote,

Tenure is a fundamental element of academic freedom and research program stability. Replacing tenured faculty with temporary faculty erodes the foundations of academic freedom and the research mission of the university.

Participant 51 talked about what the word university literally means by stating,

The word university is derived from the Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, which roughly means "community of teachers and scholars." It is about community rather than hierarchy and it is about learning.

Thus, those on this view embrace the importance of tenure and the education mission of the university, like Factor 1, yet only this view promotes the need to close campus and only have remote workers (distinguishing, #18 at -4, 0, 3). As Participant #71 stated, "It is about keeping everyone safe." Similarly, Participant #13 stated, in response to reducing the expense of athletics, "the money could be used to ensure every student has the means to take classes remotely and every instructor has the means to teach remotely." In this way, there is a sense of 'we are in this together as a community' for those on this factor which is also a rejection of the neoliberal university. Therefore, this viewpoint was named *University as community*.

Consensus

A unique aspect of Q is that the analyses also reveal consensus among the viewpoints. There is considerable agreement across the three views in this study. Participants across all three views believe that improving student retention is important especially if the pandemic crisis continues (#32 at 3, 2, 2). This is further reflected in the agreement across the three views that furloughing faculty is a bad idea (#30, -3, -4, -4). There is agreement that academic programs elimination is not a financial solution (#3 at -2, -3, -3). Increasing the number of students in classes is also not considered a viable financial solution (#11 at -2, -3, -3). Thus, student retention can be seen as interconnected to retaining faculty and programs while maintaining class sizes. There is also support for maintaining the university library (#17 at -3, -2, -2). Finally, consensus includes the idea that universities should push the federal and state governments to provide special, additional funding to public higher education (#33 at 3, 2, 3).

Conclusions

Eighty-three participants completed the Q-sort using the 40 statements generated from relevant news stories about the effect of the pandemic on higher education as well as actions taken or considered by university governing boards and/or administrators. Over half of the participants (66%) self-identified as full-time faculty. Full-time faculty likely have greater levels of participation on the social media pages used to recruit participants. The predominance of female participants (76%) may also be a result of using social media to recruit participants. Other than the dominance of staff and other non-teaching stakeholders on Factor 2, demographic information was not an important component of describing and comparing the three factors (viewpoints) that emerged from the analyses.

The Factor 2 view is especially supportive of non-administrative staff and sees them as important contributors to the university. Factors 1 and 3 support retaining staff but are more focused on the importance of retaining faculty, each for slightly different reasons. Factors 1 and 3 are predominantly represented by faculty and, therefore, it

may not be surprising that these views are cognizant of the tenets of tenure, academic freedom, and shared governance in relation to higher education. Factor 3 especially appears to reject the neoliberal university and, instead, to embrace the idea of distributed leadership as described by Spillane (2006) and Vuori (2019).

Consensus exists among these divergent viewpoints, however. With agreement about retaining students, it is not surprising that there is also agreement about retaining faculty, academic programs, and current class sizes. This agreement is contributed to both financial considerations as well as student success during the pandemic, something that could also suffer. Thus, retaining students is seen as an important financial as well as institutional mission-based goal. Additionally, there is agreement that defunding public higher education is problematic and that universities should push the federal and state governments to provide special, additional funding to public higher education during crises such as the pandemic.

However, when comparing even the consensus among these three views with the actions taken by administrators and trustees, there is an obvious divergence in opinion. In contrast to the consensus as well as the divergent viewpoints from this study, administrators and trustees at a growing number of US universities made the choice to eliminate full-time faculty, sometimes including tenured faculty, to address the expense of the pandemic. Additionally, many administrators and trustees have cut academic programs, furloughed faculty, and increased class sizes (Whitford, September 2, 2020). Perhaps with greater communication across constituencies, different and innovative decisions would have been selected. Bornstein (2012) called on trustees, administrators, and faculty to respect each other's divergent viewpoints. Kezar and Holcombe (2017) and Bornstein (2012) agree that leadership from institutions of higher education must embrace new forms of leadership to address today's leadership challenges. More collaborative forms of leadership could provide improved adaptation, innovation, and performance for institutions of higher education, as suggested by Kezar and Holcombe (2017), and this could be especially important during a crisis such as the pandemic. Similarly, Trakman (2008) called on higher education leaders to move to twenty-first century thinking to address twenty-first century issues.

Collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators allows for improved, inclusive decision making and problem solving (AAUP, 1990; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017; Rowlands, 2017; Trakman, 2008). Finding balance amongst faculty who best understand the institution and education mission and trustees who come from corporations and may better understand finances is necessary according to both Rowlands (2017) and Trakman (2008). This study's findings are especially important because of the implications for democratizing decision-making in higher education in all countries, not just the US, as well as the ability to describe and compare divergent viewpoints. Although this study focused on institution finances due to the pandemic, Q could be used for other complex issues including social movements on campuses including Black Lives Matter and speech on campus – current issues that require innovative crisis leadership according to Gigliotti (2021). Within such social, political, and financial issues, the ability to find innovative ideas and viewpoints could lead to innovation in higher education.

Authors' contribution Sole author, 100%

Declarations

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