The psychological contract of academics: Satisfied with what they’ve got and not what they want?
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Abstract
This paper focuses on the psychological contracts of academics in two universities, one in the UK and the other in Ghana, West Africa. 161 academics (51 from Ghana and 110 from the UK) completed a questionnaire which asked respondents about the importance of aspects of their job and the extent to which these were provided by their university. Relational aspects of the psychological contract were found to be a better predictor of job satisfaction than transactional aspects. Levels of job satisfaction were found to be predicted by academics’ actual psychological contracts as opposed to their ‘ideal’ psychological contracts for UK academics.

Procedure
A questionnaire was developed based on an earlier questionnaire Psychological Contract Type Inventory (Gaffney and George, 2006) which was itself based upon Rousseau’s (1998) Psychological Contract Inventory. The questionnaire also took elements from a questionnaire derived from the Herriot, Manning and Kidd (1997) study and from Guest and Conway (1998). The final questionnaire was in four main sections. The first section asked respondents how important aspects of their job were such as ‘adequate induction and training’. In the second section they were asked the extent to which these aspects were provided in their university; the third section was comprised of a question assessing respondents’ overall job satisfaction. The final section comprised of biographical information such as current academic role, length of service, contract of employment, trades union membership, research activities, ethnicity, gender and age. The questionnaire was completed on-line in the UK but both on-line and in hard copies in Ghana. For the on-line version a link was sent with an accompanying email. The hard copies were handed out by members of the research team whilst they were in Ghana. Interviews were also held with a range of academic staff in both universities. These in-depth interviews which were mainly carried out face-to-face focussed on a cross section of participants across hierarchy, responsibility, age, gender, ethnicity/nationality and length of service. 24 of these interviews were carried out, 12 at each university. The interviews were all semi-structured using standardised interview schedules, one for academic managers and one for non-management academic staff. All interviews were taped and later transcribed verbatim.

Analysis and Results
The hard copies of the questionnaire were entered manually on the survey site. The quantitative data was downloaded from the survey site and entered into an SPSS file. There were 161 questionnaire respondents in all, 51 from Ghana and 110 from the UK. There were 78 female respondents (51%) and 75 male respondents (49%). Ages ranged from 28 years to 70 years with an average age of 46.8 years (SD = 10.6). The majority were Senior Lecturers (38.3%). Most (n = 104, 67.5%) stated that their primary role was teaching. Length of time in their current job ranged from two months to 40 years with an average of 7.58 years (SD = 9.4). The majority were trades union members (n = 97, 64.2%).

A series of multiple regressions were carried out to identify the key predictors of job satisfaction levels:

1. Relational and transactional psychological contract scores: - The results of the multiple regression show that over a third (36%) of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained with the predictor variables, and that the best unique predictor of job satisfaction is the relational psychological contract score.

2. ‘Actual’ and ‘ideal’ psychological contract scores: - found a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and the actual psychological contract, but that the correlation between the ideal psychological contract and job satisfaction is weak. The results of the multiple regression show that 22% of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained with the predictor variables, and that the best unique predictor of job satisfaction is the actual psychological contract.

3. When cultural differences were taken into account the results of the multiple regression show that 38% of the variation in job satisfaction for the UK sample can be explained by the predictor variables, and that the best unique predictor of job satisfaction is the actual psychological contract. However the predictor variables do not predict job satisfaction for the Ghana sample.