

The essence of deanship:
18 long-tenure Latin American and Caribbean
theological seminary deans

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and Caribbean theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The study was designed to hear deans' voices and gain a deeper understanding of deans who had decided to continue in the same institution even in the midst of challenging situations. By hearing the deans' perspectives, and based on their descriptions, the researcher identified and discovered shared patterns of recurring themes that had contributed to their proven longevity in academic leadership. Through Appreciative Inquiry discovery phase questions, the researcher collected stories to identify strengths and form an intentional list of affirming, positive and desired outcomes to improve their own institutions. Responsibility, integrity, intentionality, and trust remained invariable in the lived experiences of Latin American and Caribbean theological seminary deans who were studied.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and Caribbean theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The study was designed to hear deans' voices and gain a deeper understanding of deans who had decided to continue in the same institution even in the midst of challenging situations. By hearing the deans' perspectives, and based on their descriptions, the researcher identified and discovered shared patterns of recurring themes that had contributed to their proven longevity in academic leadership. Through Appreciative Inquiry discovery phase questions, the researcher collected stories to identify strengths and form an intentional list of affirming, positive and desired outcomes to improve their own institutions.

The literature has focused on attrition and turnover of academic leaders such as deans, principals, and superintendents due to the challenges of the positions. In the context of theological education attention has also been placed on the challenges of being a dean and on the effects that short tenures have on the institutions. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) asked Dr. Keller (2001) to speak on the topic of the *Continuing Challenges of Being a Dean* in a conference for new deans. Before addressing the meeting, Keller (2001) conducted an informal phone survey of 14 seminary deans. She posed the following question: "How do you experience the continuing challenges of being a dean?" Her findings can be summarized in the following sentences: It is extremely taxing for seminary deans to keep a sense of their

vocation. It is also very hard to maintain a sense of calling in the midst of difficulties with faculty members, presidents, changes within the constituency, and their own personal needs. Studies done by Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, and Hermanson (1996), Volkwein and Zhou (2002), and Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) shared similar conclusions, stating that intrinsic satisfaction, interpersonal satisfaction, and balance directly predict overall job satisfaction and long tenure.

Dan Aleshire, former Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), used the four-five-year figure for the average tenure of a dean at an ATS school. Two surveys of academic deans conducted in 1939 and 1996 concurred with Aleshire by reporting that the median tenure of academic deans was five years (Gmelch et al., 1996; McGrath, 1936). During October 1993, McLean (1999) completed a survey of chief academic officers of 219 ATS-related theological schools and reported that their average length of service was close to four years. The purpose of this study was to explore why academic deans of theological seminaries remain in their positions versus finding out about their challenges and reasons for leaving an institution.

Rhodes (2001) mentioned that,

University trustees, deans, provosts, and especially presidents must become the challengers of complacency, the voices of institutional conscience, the patient advocates for change, the champions of excellence, the midwives of new alliances and partnerships, the facilitators of teamwork, and the untiring exemplars of a new level of commitment. (p. 243).

Rhodes's observations regarding American university leaders could be applied to theological seminary leaders as well. For more than two centuries protestant theological seminaries in the

United States have been training future pastors, priests, teachers, missionaries, professors, lay church leaders, business leaders, and directors of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Naylor (1977) argued that from its beginnings to the present, professional preparation has been the major task of seminary education. More than 40 years later this key focus has remained the same, but seminaries have reoriented and readapted to address the current needs of the church and the society at large (González, 2015).

The role of theological institution deans is crucial in providing bridges among students, faculty, staff, and administrators in positively responding to the demands of current changes. The role of a dean is vital because he or she is mostly responsible for identifying and resolving current or potential problem. His or her abilities must be seen in settings such as planning, organization, leading, directing, mediating, and speaking. These issues address about the importance of seminary deans regarding their essential roles in understanding what gives them hope to be able to attain permanence in the midst of so many challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Turbulent times, difficult positions, political roles, and impossible demands are some of the phrases used in the context of deanship not only in North America but in Latin America and the Caribbean as well. If deanship is so complex, it is easy to understand why the median tenure of deans has been fewer than five years (Association of Theological Schools [ATS], n.d.). Surveys of academic deans conducted in 1936, 1993-1995 and in 1996 concurred with the fewer than five-year figure (Gmelch et al., 1996; McGrath, 1936; McLean, 1999). The effects of this high turnover not only affected the dean involved, but it disturbed the life of the institution and its members: students, faculty, and staff. When a dean leaves, no matter the root cause, no matter the

region, no matter the country, the institution will suffer financial as well as structural distress during the transition period. Since the situation is critical and the role of a dean is critical, institutions must find ways to retain academic leaders who possess certain leadership, managerial, pastoral, and academic characteristics that will allow them to face the challenges of the position bringing stability and consistency to the role. The management literature shows that “high levels of employee turnover are found to be both the cause and effect of problematic conditions, and low performance in organizations” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 7).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The study was designed to hear their voices and gain a deeper understanding of deans who had decided to continue in the same institution even in the midst of challenging situations. By hearing the deans’ perspectives through Appreciative Inquiry discovery phase questions, and based on their descriptions, the researcher identified, and found shared patterns of recurring themes that had contributed to their proven longevity in academic leadership. These patterns included characteristics such as, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, dreams, guiding metaphors, and qualities that had enabled them to remain in their leadership positions.

Research Questions

This research study explored the experiences of long-tenure Latin American and Caribbean seminary deans to find out if they shared characteristics, attributes and stories that had factored to their longevity. The research questions were:

- RQ 1. What is the situational context of the LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 2. What are the common characteristics among LAC theological seminary deans with proven longevity? Characteristics would include attitudes, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, dreams, guiding metaphors and qualities.
- RQ 3. Are there moral imperatives/life giving properties that enable theological seminary deans to remain in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 4. To what do LAC theological seminary deans attribute their long tenure?

Significance of the Study

Theological schools have traditionally dedicated themselves to educating people who will exercise leadership in a variety of religious and non-religious institutions. They have been training future pastors, priests, teachers, missionaries, professors, business leaders, directors of governmental and non-governmental organizations, and lay church leaders. ATS membership includes theological seminaries closely related to large research institutions or very small seminaries whose mission statements clearly delineate the more practical aspects of ministry (ATS, n.d.). The current millennium presents new challenges that will require openness, flexibility and adaptability on the part of seminary leaders as they equip students for their future and inspirational roles in the world of the 21st century. Rigorous and current qualitative and quantitative educational research of theological schools in the United States of America and the

rest of the world will prove highly desirable, necessary and useful to understand their present situation and prepare them for the future.

This study will be of tremendous value to the educational field because no current study is available to recognize and understand the essence of Latin America and the Caribbean theological seminary deans. The research observed and described how LAC theological seminary deans value their own contributions to the institution, to the lives of the students and to the various external constituencies they serve. This study has considered essential aspects of LAC theological seminary deans who have remained committed to the lives of students and the good of the same institution for more than five years.

McDaniel (1978) mentioned that an academic dean's major responsibilities are to serve, advise, communicate and lead. Kenneth Gergen, director of the Taos Institute (<https://www.taosinstitute.net/>), expressed similar opinions to Rhodes (2001) when he said that "the demands of an increasingly complex and rapidly shifting environment bring about new demands for flexibility, coordination, and the sharing of opinion...these changes call for new practices of leadership" (Schiller et al., 2001, p. viii). Academic deans of Latin America and the Caribbean are also subject to the demands of an increasingly complex context.

There are two major surveys of academic deans that were key to this dissertation: The 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in Higher Education by Wolverton et al. (2001) and the one by McLean in 1999. The 1996 study surveyed more than 1,300 academic deans in four-year institutions of the United States and was sponsored by the Center for the Study of Academic Leadership. McLean (1999) carried out the second relevant survey of theological seminary deans from 1993-1995: her findings concurred with the fact that the median tenure of deans was less than five years (Gmelch et al., 1996; McGrath, 1936; McLean, 1999). The 1996 survey

received information from 800 participants (a 60% response rate) and the one performed from 1993-1995 gathered data from 164 theological seminary deans (75% response rate).

The present study considered some information provided by the two surveys. It also collected data from 18 Latin American theological seminary deans using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) strategies. The 18 deans were currently working in the region and in the same institution for more than five years. The results of the research were relevant since there are 200 theological seminaries in Latin America affiliated to AETAL. These schools serve approximately 12,000 Spanish-speaking students and around 40,000 Portuguese-speaking students making a total of 52,000 students (Associação Evangélica de Educação Teológica na América Latina [AETAL], n.d.). AETAL leaders estimated that there are at least another 800 theological institutions serving a population of 200,000 students, but their estimations have not yet been substantiated by formal data. Institutional members of the Association for Evangelical Theological Education in Latin America (Associação Evangélica de Educação Teológica na América Latina - AETAL) represent a wide range of theological educational institutions. Besides AETAL, the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA), and the Agencia cubana de estudios teológicos (ACET) are also accrediting agencies present in the region. They serve schools that offer educational opportunities to a wider audience within the LAC region.

Through Appreciative Inquiry (AI) questions, the researcher explored how LAC theological seminary deans perceived and performed their functions. AI is a value-based philosophy that stresses a belief in others, the human spirit, and the goodness of people. AI builds trust through personal honesty, learns from and with people honoring difference of ideas. AI uses questions to find out positive and constructive aspects of the existing reality (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). This study provided the opportunity for current practicing long

tenure LAC theological seminary deans to reflect on their own values, competencies, behaviors, and beliefs. The researcher considered that it would very important for the field of higher education and academic leadership, to understand the moral imperatives that have kept the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans in their positions. Through AI questions, the researcher brought to light stories of hope that had invited seminary deans to remain loyal, committed and energetic in their positions for more than five years.

The researcher hoped that theological seminary deans would pause, discover and discern why they remain in their positions given the current challenges and difficulties. AI provided a space for careful dialogue, critical reflection and review of current practices. It helped the deans value their own jobs and envision what might be. It was the decision of the researcher to focus on the positive of a dean's position and his or her tasks instead of concentrating on the challenges and problems as most of the studied literature.

Definition of Terms

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) - It is defined by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) as

the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system 'life' when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential (p. 17).

It is based on social constructionist theory and positive psychology.

Appreciative Leadership (AL) – AL is grounded in the field of AI. Appreciative leaders have “the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power—to set in

motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance—to make a positive difference in the world” (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010, p. 3).

Dean – A dean is the head of a division, faculty, college, or school of a university. Within the LAC context a Dean can also be referred to as Academic Director, Assistant to the President, Director or Vice-president of Academic Affairs.

Essence - It refers to the permanent as contrasted with the accidental element of being.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) – LAC is an English language acronym that refers to an extensive region from the Bahamas to Argentina; it includes 33 countries and 15 dependencies or other territories.

Longevity - The number of consecutive years or the length of time worked in the same position in the same institution.

School culture/climate - “The current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential” (Rankin, n.d.).

Tenure (as a synonym for longevity) - The length of time that a position is held. Status of a person in a position (i.e., length of service or permanence of position).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter Two includes the review of the literature relevant to this study. The sections of the literature review are: a) the critical role of an Academic Dean in a secular and in a particular theological setting like the Latin American and Caribbean contexts; b) the sustained academic and non-academic leadership practices found in longevity studies and in appreciative leaders; and c) Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the theoretical foundation for the study.

Chapter Three presents the methodology used in the study. It contains a description of AI as the theoretical framework used and the four research questions that guided the study. It also includes the 16 exploratory essay questions used, a description of the process of how the LAC long tenure deans were selected, the procedures followed for the data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four incorporates the 16 themes found in the answers to the questionnaire and the corresponding essence for research questions one to four. Chapter Five offers conclusions from the findings using a three-lens methodology: Appreciative leaders, longtime leaders and a quote from Chiara Lubich. The chapter concludes with research recommendations for practitioners and academics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The subheadings of the literature review include: a) the critical role of an Academic Dean in a secular and in a particular theological setting like the Latin American and the Caribbean context; b) the sustained academic and non-academic leadership traits and practices found in longevity studies and in appreciative leaders; and c) Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the theoretical foundation for the study.

A critical role.

Deanship emerged in the late nineteenth century “when presidents began to feel the need for someone to relieve them of record-and housekeeping chores” and deans functioned as their assistants (Gould, 1964, p. 6). In the 20th century a role began to develop but no standardized deanship as of yet; so, a wide variety of administrative functions were added to the position and deans were caught between the expectations of their departments and central administration (Baldrige, 1971; Fagin, 1997).

The 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in Higher Education, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Academic Leadership, continues to be one of the most important sources for data regarding academic deans. The instruments that were used in the survey were: The Dean’s Stress Inventory (Gmelch et al., 1996), Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Questionnaire (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970), the Dean’s Task Inventory (Gmelch et al., 1996), Satisfaction with Dean’s Role (Gmelch et al., 1996) and the Dean’s Leadership Inventory (Rosenbach &

Sashkin, 1995). The overall random sample size of the study was of 1,370 deans from four-year institutions, with 800 deans participating, which was a 60% response rate. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) organized the findings into five core areas: a profile of the academic dean, self-defined job descriptions, perceptions of leadership, the stresses (ORS) of the post, challenges, and trade-offs both personal and professional. The search of the literature suggested that this survey has been the most influential study of the last years since the deans' responses were used as the basis for a series of papers and follow-up research. Some of the themes studied were: The challenges that deans have faced over time (Montez & Wolverton, 2000), the importance of building relationships (Reason & Gmelch, 2003), the significance of mentoring (Nies & Wolverton, 2000), and the impact of role conflict (Wolverton et al., 1999). According to the scholars cited, the tremendous value of the research done by Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) was the fact that it specifically focused on academic deans.

McDaniel (1978) mentioned that a dean's major responsibilities are to serve, to advise, to communicate and to lead. A series of intellectual, personal and administrative qualities such as clarity of vision were also listed by Fagin (1997) and Wisniewski (1998), but Wisniewski placed major emphasis on deans as change agents. This characteristic was perceived as a requirement for the position, but the deans' responses indicated that the implementation of changes was a source of anxiety and conflict for the faculty and staff when asked to go through these changes (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). The authors mentioned compiled a list of deans' responsibilities that fall under the following categories: academic personnel management, resource management, internal productively, personal relationship, leadership, and external/public relations. The composed list represented not only a wide variety of tasks that needed to be performed, but it was mentioned that they often needed to be done at the same time. Fagin (1997) noted that the

ability to reconcile disparate demands was related to “the individual’s clarity of what others see and value, recognition of the vital aspects of the role and responsibilities of dean in a particular university, and a honed balancing act” (p. 97). Academic deans in the context of theological education carry similar roles and responsibilities to their non-religious counterparts.

Wolverton, Wolverton, and Gmelch (1999) confirmed that deans are “confronted with situations requiring them to play roles that conflict with their value systems or that conflict with each other. In a sense, they face the dilemma of trying to serve two masters” (p. 82). The 1996 National Survey of Academic Deans in Higher Education found that role conflict and ambiguity were significant in explaining 22% of the variance in overall job satisfaction among responding deans. It also affected the dean’s perceptions of their effectiveness.

Since deans are constantly confronted with a variety of situations, Montez, Wolverton, and Gmelch (2003) understood that deans are creatures of their context and that they must comprehend their contextual determinants to succeed. Their core professional value derives from their scholarship, while their primary responsibilities are associated with the administrative responsibilities. These cultural differences have defined the leadership context of academic deans. Conflict between these two coexisting cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) is inevitable and some tension in the value systems of academic deans has exists as well. Reason and Gmelch (2003) as well as Glotzbach (2001) concluded that positive relationships and collaboration among the dean, administration and the faculty is essential. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) also highlighted the importance of personal and professional relationships among deans or peers to foster mentoring and networking.

Nies and Wolverton (2000) affirmed that most academic deans have received very little formal training for their role. The researcher of the current study examined the research carried

out by the following North American associations interested in supporting the needs and the work of academic deans. The Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences provides networking opportunities and their mission focuses on deans helping deans to dean (Abrahamsen, 2005). Since 1945, the American Conference of Academic Deans has tried to create both formal and informal opportunities for deans to meet and network. It also published the *Resources Handbook for Academic Deans* (Behling, 2014) to help deans navigate through challenging circumstances.

Since the mid-1970s other institutions have been concerned with matters related to new deans: The American Educational Research Association, the American Association for Higher Education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and the Association of Chief Academic Officers and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). They have planned seminars, workshops and conferences to promote networking and mentoring. The Association of Theological Schools formed a group called Chief Academic Officers Society (CAOS) to address the specific needs and challenges of seminary deans.

Keller (2001) conducted her informal phone survey of 14 seminary deans, asking: How do you experience the continuing challenges of being a dean? She concluded that it was extremely difficult for most of them to keep a sense of their vocation. A sense of calling was also hard to maintain in the midst of difficulties with faculty members, presidents, changes within the constituency and personal needs. Studies done by Gmelch et al. (1999), Volkwein and Zhou (2002), and Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) shared the conclusions that intrinsic satisfaction, interpersonal satisfaction and balance directly predict overall job satisfaction.

A survey of the literature about academic deanship in the theological education context suggested that they generally carry out the same functions and responsibilities of an academic dean in a non-Christian higher education institution (Bryan, 2011; Ferris, 2008; McLean, 1999).

The research brought to light two areas that presented some differences: deanship as ministry and denominational expectations. The type of leadership that an academic dean of theological seminaries practices must align with the purpose of theological education (Ferris, 2008).

McLean (1999) said that this type of education “should prepare students in various forms of religious ministry in the church and the world” (p. 20). Deininger (2017) expressed that there is a “sacred aspect to the work” in the dean’s position as he or she has to fulfill the vision and mission of an institution created for the extension of God’s work in this world.

The multiplicity of functions performed by the deans is very similar in nature, but some of the expectations placed on them by the constituencies may be different. Theological seminary deans must understand the different concerns, points of view and theological perspectives presented by denominational leaders, pastors, and leaders from an array of faith traditions (Childers, 2011; Ferris, 2008; Smith, 1996). Honesty, reliability, integrity (Deininger, 2017; Ferris, 2008), and humility (Smith, 1996) are qualities deemed necessary for deans to better serve their institutions. Members of the Evangelical Seminary Deans Council who answered a survey sent in 2011 (ESDC, 2011) believed that communication skills, organizational skills, relational skills, and diplomatic skills were very valuable to someone in the position. They specifically listed the following character qualities: honest, sincere, patient, trustworthy, gracious, fair-minded, optimist, disciplined, servant-hearted and confident calmness. Being good organizers, good at keeping confidences, good delegator, respectful, cooperative and good at prompt but thoughtful decision-making were among the listed competencies and abilities.

Theological seminary academic deans act as bridges by playing a pastoral role among the different constituencies, and within their educational communities (Ferris, 2008; Graham, 2011). They carry out pastoral and administrative roles within and outside of their institutions. Phrases

used to describe this aspect have been: “Leading from the Center” (McLean, 1999), “standing in the middle” (Riebe-Estrella, 2011, p. 252) or “so, the dean is at the center, but at the center of what?” (Galindo, 2014). McLean (1999) noted that each sphere of responsibility brings considerable demands because it is in this office “where relationships converge” (p. 4). Galindo (2014) stated that the context of a theological seminary, the denominations and the constituents will influence and have an effect on the work of a dean.

A critical role in a critical context.

Most literature regarding deanship has focused on theological institutions in the United States and Canada. The following section will provide the necessary background to the study as it explores trends and perspectives found in the theological education context of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The geographical extension and the cultural characteristics of Latin America and the Caribbean were taken into consideration when discussing the realities of theological education within this context. The researcher’s lived experiences in the region corroborates the fact that Spanish, Portuguese, French, English or Papiamento speaking countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are all different and unique. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to discover some trends and influences that have permeated throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and have had an effect on theological education. The following section will not provide a historical perspective but will include research by educators and theologians whose works are still influential during the second decade of the 21st century.

Corrie (2015) pointed out that,

There is also significant variation in religious and ecclesial identity, although there are some general trends in Latin America as a whole, such as the dramatic increase in

evangelical and protestant churches in the last 20/30 years corresponding to a steady decline in Roman Catholic allegiance. Pentecostals have done particularly well, whereas the historic churches such as the Anglicans and Methodists have grown much more modestly. Within Protestantism, there is also an ecumenical movement which has spawned a number of interdenominational seminaries. (p. 282)

Comments made in this section refer primarily to the majority cultures in each country. They not apply to the many indigenous cultures that have been oppressed by European invasions and by the discrimination practices of the present political powers.

González (2015) mentioned that “most observers agree that North American theological education is in crisis. This crisis is multidimensional. Some of its elements are more readily apparent than others” (p. 131). The same words have been used to describe theological education in the Latin America and the Caribbean context. Preiswerk (2011) identified several issues that have affected theological education in the region: identity crisis, cultural and contextual crisis, spiritual, theological and pastoral crisis. The majority of the schools are suffering a marked decrease in enrollment in the second decade of the 21st century and there is a disconnect from the local church. It is in this general context that the dean of a theological institution in Latin America and the Caribbean must provide visionary and relational leadership.

The hermeneutics of suspicion, emphasized by Ricoeur (Robinson, 1995), has been one perspective that has impacted theological education. Through its practice, Latin American and the Caribbean theologians discovered that absolute objectivity did not exist, and that every approach is influenced by the worldview of each individual. Ricoeur's Biblical hermeneutic influence has been studied by Althaus-Reid (1993) and her research concluded that his impact is observed in the work of three influential hermeneuticians from Latin America: J. Severino

Croatto from Argentina, Juan Luis Segundo from Uruguay, and Clodovis Boff from Brazil. Ricoeur's writings contributed to the search for the Latin American identity, the actual praxis of liberation, and the development of a concept of positive utopia (Althaus-Reid, 1993).

Despite the heavy influence of Euro-centric and North-American theology with its concomitant emphasis on objectivity, Latin American theological education has demonstrated that each theology is permeated by the subjectivity of each approach. It is in this context that “Latin American theologians called for a drastic revision of the curriculum of theological education during the 1960s which had been up to then patterned after the Anglo-Saxon system” (Corrie, 2015, p. 284). Escobar (1996) believed that theological education needed to be shaped by “the missionary nature of the church in their own contexts” (p. 284). Most Latin American and Caribbean theological seminary deans have had to re-visit and re-write the curricula, because most curricula used until the second decade of the 21st century by most theological education institutions were developed in another culture and with different world views. Deans are confronted with the need of flexibility and discovery to guarantee transformative education. Sacristán (1991) invited educators to distinguish between the formal curriculum adopted by the institution and the hidden curriculum, in order to arrive at the real curriculum.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, also had an impact on education and theological education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Freire (1999) was very critical of a type of education that applied the “banking method” or whereby a student is viewed as an empty receptacle that receives information. This method sees a student as a bank where money (content, information, knowledge) is deposited, and as such, the student does not participate as an active agent in the educational process. Freire emphasized dialogue or conversations as means for transformative education. He said that “dialogue is the encounter between men,

mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (Freire, 2000, p. 87). Education, according to Freire must be transformative and must engage in dialogue. Dialogical education instead of univocal education can be considered a contribution of Latin America to the rest of the world.

Another relevant perspective in the Latin American theological education context has been incarnational theology. José Míguez Bonino, an Argentine theologian, stated that “every theology must be faithful to the totality of the revelation of God in Christ and to the catholicity of the people of God while at the same time, communicate that totality in the concrete “flesh” of language, time, culture” (Miguez Bonino, 1997, p. 89). This theological approach mentioned the following key elements: the totality of the revelation of God in Christ, which avoids using isolated texts in order to propose a theology; the catholicity of the church so as to avoid using only one sector of the Christian community; and communicating the incarnational aspect of theological education which includes language, time and culture (Roldán, 2013, p. 81).

Different styles and models of leadership also permeate the Latin American and the Caribbean context. Stott (2002) expressed concerns regarding leadership models when he said, Our model of leadership is often shaped more by culture than by Christ. Yet many cultural models of leadership are incompatible with the servant imagery taught and exhibited by the Lord Jesus.....In Africa it is the tribal chief, in Latin America the machismo of the Spanish male, in South Asia the religious guru fawned on by his disciples, in East Asia the Confucian legacy of the teacher’s unchallengeable authority and in Britain the British Raj mentality – the overbearing pride associated with the period of British rule and Indian independence in 1947. (p. 113)

The researcher cannot speak for every cultural model mentioned by Stott (2002), but she has observed the effects of *machismo* on the lives of Latin American and Caribbean men, women and children.

Being able to observe, know and understand who the LAC men, women and children are is intimately related to a style of leadership who sees the other. Leaders will not only have to observe to be able to see the other person in his or her context, but will also have to self-observe, self-reflect to be able to dialog with others. Freire (2000) once said:

We are all used to the conscience blow we take when we walk past street children. We have already built our defenses, one way or another. A long time ago, I met an elderly lady begging for money and was astounded by her resemblance to my mother. That was a deep shock, but then I was surprised with myself: The anonymous human being is not supposed to hurt. (p. 27).

Richard J. Leider, in his writings about leadership styles, asked: “How can leaders build such effective relationships unless they have effective relationships with themselves, through self-leadership?” (as cited in Hesselbein et al., 1997, p. 189). Freire (1994) used to go back to the *mango tree* of his Brazilian backyard for comfort, solitude, refuge, and self-reflection.

As the researcher observed and reflected on perspectives impacting theological education in Latin America and the Caribbean, she followed a method prescribed by Preiswerk (1995). He said that a method is a:

system of relations as a structure of thought and action, as inspiration that takes on ruptures, the phase shifts, the differences between the subjects with their own desires and needs, as goals that are to be reached, the processes that are involved in reaching a defined set of goals, and the obstacles that are placed by the very context. (p. 283)

Critical leadership traits and practices.

This section contains sustained academic and non-academic leadership traits and practices found in longevity studies and in appreciative leadership. Longevity studies of school superintendents were studied because they shared similar roles and figures related to their longevity and turnover. In the case of school superintendents, longevity has been determined by using the five-year or more figure in the same institution as a marker (Alsbury, 2008; Arlt, 2016; Kamrath & Brunner, 2014; Rohlfig, 2011; Simpson, 2013; Talbert, 2011). The researcher found essential components that lead to longevity in academic leadership are: communication, commitment, relationship building, training and support and context.

Longevity Studies.

Rohlfig (2011) considered leadership styles when studying the longevity of five women superintendents. Rohlfig (2011) described the superintendents' leadership styles as caring, interactive, relational and power sharing. Talbert (2011) found that commitment to the district was one component towards longevity. Prezas (2013) used the Organizational and Leadership Effectiveness Inventory (OLEI) to explore factors that had influenced superintendent tenure. He found that leading by example and dependability were strong factors for tenure. Individuals with good communication skills, emotional stability, high integrity and the capacity to build and maintain solid relationships with the different constituencies and stakeholders influenced their longevity (Milver, 2011; Prezas, 2013). Female superintendents attributed their longevity to relationships and to their own capacity for self- reflection on their major decisions (Sampson, 2017-2018).

Chen (2014) and Giaquinto (2011) analyzed traits and skills of superintendents and correlated them with the superintendents' longevity. Chen (2014) used the five competency

domains listed by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA, n.d.) to justify the traits: organizational strategies, resource management, communication, collaboration, and school district advocacy. The top two traits common to veteran superintendents were: being an excellent communicator and being able to combine planning with flexibility. Giaquinto's (2011) key finding related to traits or skills of long tenure superintendents was that they were cognizant of the political role they played within the district. The data also showed that their sense of satisfaction, which influenced their decision to stay in the position, emerged from seeing accomplishments in the lives of the students.

Kriesky (2018) studied long-serving superintendents to find behaviors that had contributed to their longevity. This study was important because much of the literature does not examine behavior or characteristics of long-serving superintendents. The superintendents recognized the importance of trustworthy communication and relationships with their constituencies as foundational to their longevity. Lehman (2015) researched superintendent longevity from a servant leadership style positions. He discovered a correlation between superintendents who held characteristics common to servant leaders and longevity. The 10 characteristics of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community (Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017) had been present in their style of leadership and had impacted their tenure.

Lewis and Harrison (2016) interviewed and sent a questionnaire to leaders who had enjoyed successful and long careers. They received 140 responses from those leaders and after the answers were examined, they found 12 traits that Lewis and Harrison placed under four categories: a) trust, b) endeavor, c) aim, and d) motivate. Longtime leaders who placed trust in others created transparent, honest environments. Their endeavor was observed in how they

endured and worked hard because they had found a purpose bigger than themselves. The third characteristic of aim, allowed them to stay focused, seek mentors and create a circle of friends and supporters. The study also revealed that long time leaders motivated by building collaborative communities and they were good listeners. “Listening with genuine inquiry expresses humility” (p. 191).

Appreciative Leadership.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) found that academic deans make a difference in their colleagues. Their leadership or lack thereof will increasingly influence the effectiveness and well-being of the colleges they lead and wherever they work. Challenges and leadership practices are also mentioned by Kenneth Gergen, director of the Taos Institute, when he wrote:

The demands of an increasingly complex and rapidly shifting environment bring about new demands for flexibility, coordination, and the sharing of opinion. Further, with increased sensitivity to the ways in which organizational viability depends on the values and voices of many different groups, concerns with the democratization of the workplace have become paramount. These changes call for new practices of leadership (as cited in Schiller et al., 2001, p. viii).

Appreciative Leadership (AL) has been described as a positive and life-affirming “worldview” (Schiller et al., 2001, p. 158). It is a way of seeing the world, people and situations. But it is more than a worldview, “it is a way of being - a set of strategies and related practices- that makes things happen and get results” (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 9). Appreciative Leadership (AL) was developed on the foundation of Appreciative Inquiry, Whole Systems Thinking and Action Research. An organization is seen “as a relationship to be explored and developed, teams as communities of purpose and practice, and individuals assume the role of thinkers and

innovators” (Tierney-Moore, & MacNeill, 2014, p. v). Appreciative Leadership brings out hope because it identifies strengths in the organization and its staff.

Schiller et al. (2001) approached 110 people and invited them to interview and write about a person they considered to be an appreciative leader. The result of the invitation was that 28 leaders were interviewed, 43% were women and 11% were international appreciative leaders from Europe, New Zealand and Latin America. The answers captured the characteristics of appreciative leaders and are an important contribution to the literature because it addresses issues related to leadership in changing environments. The themes that emerged from the study were:

- Appreciative leaders are belief-based, with an explicit spiritual orientation and practice.
- Leadership lives in the group and not in any one person.
- Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being.
- Appreciative leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others.
- Appreciative leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems. (Schiller et al., p. 162)

Appreciative Leadership (AL) believes that the success of organizations resides in the relationships among the individual and not on individual actors. Whitney et al. (2010) identified Five Core Strategies of AL: a) inquiry, b) illumination, c) inclusion, d) inspiration and e) integrity. These strategies will guide the practices of the leaders, and will have an effect on people. a) When appreciative leaders begin to inquire, they will lead with positive questions; the process lets people know that the leaders value them and their contributions; b) The practice of illumination helps people understand how to contribute by discovering their own strengths; c)

When inclusion is present, people experience a sense of belonging and it opens collaboration; d) Inspiration provides a sense of direction and that gives hope and energy in people; e) The practice of integrity sets the standard for others to follow and a sense of trust develops.

(Corporation for Positive Change, n.d.)

Appreciative leaders understand that challenges will be and leading practices will affect those with whom they work. When the five strategies are put into practice people will:

- know they belong;
- feel valued for what they have to contribute;
- know where the organization or community is headed;
- know that excellence is expected and can be depended on; and
- know that they are contributing to the greater good. (Corporation for Positive Change, n.d.)

A critical theory.

Appreciative Inquiry is defined as “a collaborative and highly participatory, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the ‘life-giving forces’ that are present when a system is performing, optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms” (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 14). Appreciative inquiry’s underlying assumption to emphasize the positive can be compared to Jesus’ words when he said: “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14, New International Version) or with the advice written by the Apostle Paul: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8, New International Version).

Jesus and the apostle Paul had a greater emphasis on positive elements or values, in contrast to negative ones such as darkness, lies, ugliness or impure thoughts. There is a biblical positive approach to life when individuals are urged to consider things that are good or deserve praise. AI's positive approach has been effectively used by colleges, business, nonprofits and faith-based communities as a method to strengthen ideas and infuse change. AI seemed like the appropriate theoretical framework to use when finding the essence of deanship as shared by long tenure theological seminary deans from Latin America and the Caribbean, because of the interest it places on developing healthy and meaningful communities.

The researcher's interest for AI was sparked by Dr. Edward "Chip" Anderson, when he spoke and taught about its philosophy at a workshop held at Azusa Pacific University in 2001; his enthusiasm was contagious. Dr. Anderson was one of the leading researchers of the *StrengthsFinder* (now CliftonStrengths), and was a professor of educational leadership in the UCLA Graduate School of Education. During the workshop he mentioned that the possibility of using words of encouragement instead of focusing on deficiencies or problems also fitted with teachings found in the Bible: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it might benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29, New International Version).

The concepts found in Appreciative Inquiry were developed by David Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) in Case Western Reserve University in the mid-eighties. The term AI was coined by Cooperrider and Srivastva in 1987 and "it involves the art and practice of asking unconditional positive questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential" (Cooperrider et al., 2003, p. 3). Their work has remained current because the founders have continued working with varied organizations.

Santina (2008) described AI as a process or philosophy that engages individuals within an organizational system in its renewal, change and focused performance. The process pays attention to peoples' personal excitement, commitment and care. It utilizes positive questions that ask people to think about when things are working at their best thus aiming to build upon the positive to enhance successes. AI assumes health and vitality when used to evaluate organizations.

AI evaluates organizations through a variety of practices to lead to organizational creativity and learning, the process includes the following:

- Discover the “best of what is” - appreciating what is working well.
- Dream “what might be” - envisioning possibilities for improvement
- Design “what could be” - dialoguing and designing
- Create a Destiny based on “what will be” – innovating. (Hammond & Royal, 2001, p. 13)

It asks questions and envisions the future through positive reinforcement of what is good within the organization instead of focusing on the problems. These types of questions make connections through empathy. They consist of dialogues, not monologues. Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) challenged the deficit-based modalities and began to think about the importance of recognizing the best in people. He appropriated the concept of an appreciative eye from his artist's wife; she had been trained to see something beautiful in every piece of art. This notion was then applied to business or organization thus trying to find something beautiful in every one of them. His basic premise was that organizations will grow in the direction of the questions they pose.

AI was chosen to be used in the study with LAC deans because of the types of questions that could be asked from the participants. The purpose of the questions was to encourage them to answer the questions and for the researcher to find shared meaning in their answers. It focused on moments of high performance in order to ignite transformative dialogue and action within the organization. The process of collecting information through stories to identify strengths and form an intentional list of affirming, positive and desired outcomes to improve their own institutions. In the case of this study, every contribution was acknowledged and valued.

AI has been used as a strategy for change because it helps individuals and institutions to focus in understanding habits and attitudes. Since 1987 AI has been applied to small localized changes in a school setting (van Buskirk, 2001), or neighborhoods (Foster, 2001), universities (Mellish, 2001), churches (Santina, 2008), organizations throughout the world (Odell, 2001), and its visibility as increased dramatically (Dick, 2004).

The researcher hoped that theological seminary deans would pause, discover and discern why they remain in their positions given the current challenges and difficulties. AI provided a space for careful dialogue, critical reflection and review of current practices. It helped the deans value their own jobs and envision what might be. It was the decision of the researcher to focus on the positive of a dean's position and his or her tasks instead of concentrating on the challenges and problems as most of the studied literature. The conclusions of the study used an asset-based and not a deficit-based language.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The study was designed to hear their voices and gain a deeper understanding of deans who had decided to continue in the same institution even amid challenging situations. By hearing the deans' perspectives, and based on their descriptions, the researcher identified, and found patterns of recurring themes that had contributed to their proven longevity in academic leadership. Qualitative research was chosen for this study because of its concern with recognizing "the complexity of everyday life, the nuance of meaning-making in an every-changing world and the multitude of influences that shape human lived experiences" (DeLyser et al., 2010, p. 6). As the deans described their experiences within their respective institutions a list of values, competencies, behaviors, and beliefs began to emerge (Volkwein & Zhou, 2002). These lists were analyzed to find common themes within their longevity stories.

Theoretical Framework

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) organizational theory informed the phenomenological qualitative research study; AI is based in social constructionist theory and positive psychology. A social constructionist philosophical approach considers that meaning, what people deem real, true, and important, emerges through social interaction and discourse (Heylighen, 1993; Whitney, 1995). Heylighen (1993) explained that social constructivism "sees consensus between different subjects as the ultimate criterion to judge knowledge. 'Truth' or 'reality' will be accorded only to those constructions on which most people of a social group agree" (p. 2). AI

provided the necessary framework to explore, understand, and discover the best of what exists in the lived experiences of the selected theological seminary deans. It offered the possibility of discerning the socially constructed and generative knowledge of those LAC theological seminary deans to find common themes regarding longevity among them.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) shaped and guided two aspects of this qualitative research: a) the type of questions used in the questionnaire to discover the essence of deanship; and b) the five strategies common to Appreciative Leaders (AL) that were used for comparison purposes in Chapter Five. The deans were asked questions about context, purpose, personal strengths, metaphors, and relationships. The answers provided by the respondents offered insights into the world of LAC deans with proven longevity. Through AI questions the researcher sought to discover “what causes the human systems they are part of to come alive faster, to be at their best, to play to their strengths, to play to their strengths, to drive innovation from all levels within and from outside, and to naturally cultivate a deeper sense of purpose” (Berghoff, n.d.). The answers to the AI positive questions revealed deeply held values that provided meaning to deanship.

The researcher expected that LAC theological seminary deans who embodied characteristics of appreciative leaders would also experience longer tenure. A new practice of leadership is observed in appreciative leaders who understand and share with their coworkers the following knowledge: they know they belong, they feel valued for what they have to contribute, they know where the organization is headed, they know that excellence is expected and can be depended on and they know that they are contributing to the greater good (Whitney, 1995).

Research Design

This research study used a questionnaire that included 16 exploratory essay questions to gain insights about the essence of LAC theological seminary deans who had worked in the same institution for five or more consecutive years. A questionnaire facilitated the collection of valuable data for this study; the open-ended questions gathered in-depth data from respondents from a specific population of individuals. The instrument was designed, tested and distributed. It included ontological questions to capture the present realities of the participants and epistemological questions to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. Both types of questions followed recommendations taken from Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and were carefully drafted to address the four research questions that guided the study. After the first set of draft questions was completed it was sent to four experienced deans for feedback. Minor adjustments were made after the questionnaire was reviewed.

Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the essence of LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than five years. The questions were designed to discover shared internal and external factors that had enabled these deans to persevere as academic leaders.

- RQ 1. What is the situational context of the LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 2. What are the common characteristics among LAC theological seminary deans with proven longevity? Characteristics would include attitudes, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, dreams, guiding metaphors and qualities.
- RQ 3. Are there moral imperatives, life giving properties that enable theological seminary deans

to remain in their positions longer than the five-year average?

RQ 4. To what do LAC theological seminary deans attribute their long tenure?

Instrument and Protocol

An electronic survey (Appendix C and Appendix D) consisting of 16 essay questions in English and in Spanish was distributed via Qualtrics. The questions sent to the participants corresponded to each of the four research questions that guided the study.

The following questions were designed to provide data and insight for RQ 1:

1. Why did you become a dean? Can you describe how you learned to be a theological seminary dean?
2. How would you describe what it means to you to be a theological seminary dean today?
3. What are some of the challenges you face as a theological seminary dean? How did you overcome them? Can you share a specific example of how you overcame a challenging scenario?

The following questions were designed to provide data and insight for RQ 2:

4. What would be a guiding metaphor for you as dean? Which one is it and why did you choose it?
5. What is important to you as an ideal dean? Is there a deeper purpose in your work?
6. In what specific ways do you think your long tenure has contributed to or influenced your effectiveness as dean?
7. What are some characteristics or attributes that a successful theological seminary dean must possess?

The following questions were designed to provide data and insight for RQ 3:

8. Identify and describe a time in your experience as dean when you felt most effective and engaged. What were the circumstances? Who was involved? Why did it make you feel effective and engaged?
9. When your heart is alive at work, what kinds of things happen to you and those around you? What makes your heart come alive at work?
10. How does being connected to your core spiritual values make a difference in your job?

The following questions were designed to provide data and insight for RQ 4:

11. What is your value to the institution? In what ways do you contribute your best? What are your personal strengths?
12. Was there ever a time when you thought about leaving? Why did you not leave?
13. What is your understanding of the concept of a long tenure deanship (more than five years)? How would you describe what it means to you to be a long tenure dean?
14. Can you describe how the theological seminary has impacted your long tenure?
15. What do you believe contributed or impacted the most to your long tenure?

Is there anything else you would like to add? was question 16. It was not included to provide an answer to a specific research question but to give the respondents the opportunity to add or comment on the research or on their particular situation.

Field Test

Four experts reviewed the questionnaire designed by the researcher, answered the questions, and provided feedback before its distribution. These experts had served as deans longer than the five-year average and they had held deanship positions in the Philippines, France,

Lebanon, Argentina and the United States. Once the questionnaire was validated and answered by the four experts, the researcher made minor revisions and translated the questions from English into Spanish before its distribution. One of the goals of the field test was to determine the approximate time it would take for the participants to answer the 16 questions; they estimated that it could take about two hours to complete it. The approximation was correct because according to the reports generated by Qualtrics, 1 hr. 50 min. was the average time spent by the respondents.

Sampling Design

The researcher used a purposeful sampling design. According to Patton (1990), the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169). The goals of this type of sampling is “to discover, understand, and gain insight” (Merriam, 1998, p. 48). When sampling those persons, they “will provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 181).

The population studied included theological seminary deans of proven longevity, who were currently working in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, and whose institutions were connected to the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE, 2019). Every LAC theological seminary dean selected had a tenure of five or more consecutive years in the same institution and he or she were the ones who provided the answers to the research questions. The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region includes nations from Mexico and the Caribbean to Argentina; the LAC population mostly speak Spanish,

Portuguese, Nahuatl, Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní, Miskito, Sumo, Rama, English, Dutch and French, but many other indigenous languages are still spoken in the region.

The participants were identified and selected as being essential to the purpose of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Gal, Gal, & Borg, 2007; Patton, 2002). Geographical location, role and length of tenure were the starting points for the selection. Once the criteria elements for the selection of the participants were determined, the identification and selection process began. The researcher contacted executive directors and leaders of evangelical organizations and associations dedicated to the promotion of excellence in theological education in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. These organizations and organizations were also affiliated with the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). These leaders and directors had the knowledge and the current data needed to provide the researcher with information-rich contacts to the phenomenon to be studied. ICETE's network is comprised of nine associations connected and cooperating with 1000 theological schools in 117 countries with a total of 100.000 students. Associations connected to ICETE desire for “a renewal in form and in substance, a renewal in vision and in power, a renewal in commitment and in direction” (ICETE, n.d.). The organizations and accreditation agencies originally contacted were: Overseas Council-Latin America and the Caribbean region (OC-LAC), the Association for Evangelical Theological Education in Latin America (AETAL), the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA), and the Agencia cubana de estudios teológicos (ACET).

Overseas Council is a ministry of the United World Mission and its website states that their mission is to “equip Christian leaders by partnering with vital seminaries worldwide to advance God's kingdom” (Overseas Council, n.d.). The Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) region is one of the nine areas where OC operates. OC-LAC partners and equips leaders

from 66 theological schools functioning in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica and Mexico. AETAL has 160 affiliated theological schools in 12 Latin American countries. CETA membership includes 48 theological schools in seven Caribbean countries. The ICET is a network of 14 Cuban theological schools.

The leaders from the previously mentioned organizations provided the names of 41 possible candidates that met the criteria established. There were three cases of snowball sampling among the possible candidates. Eleven out of the 41 possible candidates were no longer working as deans or were working in institutions not related to OC-LAC, AETAL, CETA, ACET or ICETE. The 30 LAC theological seminary deans finally selected were knowledgeable and experienced; out of the 30 LAC theological seminary deans who met the set criteria, 20 agreed to participate. Two participants did not complete the full survey and their results were not included in the analysis. Eighteen participants comprised the sample because they were available, willing to participate (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979), and able to communicate their experiences in a clear manner. The actual population of 30 had a high response rate of 56% and the resulted sample size of 18 was appropriate for the current study.

Data Collection Procedures

From June 2018 to January 2019, the leaders and directors of organizations and associations working in the LAC region began to provide the information of the possible candidates via email. Each one of them received a thank-you note for their willingness and for the help provided. Once the list of the 30 possible respondents was finalized, the researcher asked the same leaders to write an e-mail informing the candidates about the research and about their possible involvement. At the beginning of February 2019, each potential respondent was contacted via e-mail regarding his or her participation using the Bethel University Consent Form

for Questionnaire in English (Appendix A) or The Bethel University Consent Form for Questionnaire in Spanish (Appendix B). The form informed the participants of the goals of the study and promised them confidentiality.

The researcher translated the 16-essay questions from English (Appendix C) into Spanish (Appendix D). Both questionnaires were placed in Qualtrics for their distribution. Since the respondents were from the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, respondents were provided the option of completing the questionnaire in their preferred language: English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. The questionnaire was sent to 30 possible candidates at the beginning of February 2019 and 18 answers were received by April 5, 2019.

Data Analysis

The data was collected, compiled, analyzed, and manually coded according to precise guidelines on how to identify the themes within the answers received. Theme identification in open coding was essential to the study and categories began to emerge once they were clustered according to similar patterns (Saldaña, 2013). The reports produced by Qualtrics were analyzed to find words and phrases that produced data to discover the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions longer than five years.

Every response was read a minimum of four times for word frequencies and connections. As the 18 deans described their experiences within their workplace a list of values, competencies, behaviors, and beliefs began to emerge from their answers. The responses were read to find out how words interacted with each other when they referred to the conditions, actions, interactions and consequences of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Lists were compiled and analyzed by the researcher to find common themes within their longevity

stories. Common themes emerged from similar words and expressions mentioned by a minimum of 13 respondents.

Limitations and Assumptions

The study was designed to hear the voices and to gain an in-depth understanding of current Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The criteria selection of five years in the same institution limited the number of participants. The positive aspect of the electronic questionnaire was that it could reach deans from every corner of the LAC region and that they could answer the questions at their convenience.

The electronic essay questionnaire used for the study did not allow for follow-up questions that could have enriched the narrative or elicited further responses. It did not allow for questions of clarification in case of the possibility of ambiguity or in cases when responses were not clear or difficult to interpret. This limitation was lessened by the initiative taken by eight participants who contacted the researcher via e-mail to ask if she needed additional information or clarification; a total of 22 e-mails were exchanged with the eight deans, and they proved to be very beneficial in clarifying responses to questions four and fifteen of the questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

The questions asked were designed to understand the settings and lived experiences of LAC theological seminary deans. Sociologist John Lofland (1971) suggested that there are certain mandates that need to be followed when collecting qualitative data: “The commitment to get close, to be factual, descriptive and quotive constitutes a significant commitment to represent the participants in their own terms” (p. 4). The background of the researcher allowed for the type of protocol used since she knew very well the LAC context of the participants. The

researcher had participated of meetings, workshops, and conferences where LAC theological seminary deans had shared about their needs, concerns, and realities. The findings of this study included direct quotations from the participants to insure clarity and transparency when describing the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2002).

Researcher Positionality.

The researcher worked for more than 30 years in a variety of teaching and administrative positions in theological institutions in the United States of America and in Latin America and the Caribbean. These experiences allowed for the possibility of working alongside theological seminary deans to observe firsthand how their decisions and actions impacted the lives of students, faculty, administration, and the institution at large.

During the past 20 years the researcher participated of several Association of Theological Schools (ATS) evaluation committees. These committees visited the different schools as one of the steps towards ATS accreditation. “Serving on an evaluation committee is often described by participants as ‘one of the best forms of professional development,’ not only because of what is learned about best practices from the Standards but also because of interaction with peers” (ATS, n.d.). Some of these visits included ATS schools located not only in the United States but also in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The researcher’s knowledge of English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French provided opportunities for teaching and facilitating educational workshops throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. It was during those teaching opportunities that she observed and dialogued with academic leaders about the significance of deans in the life of theological institutions. Those conversations also highlighted the key role that deans played both in the North American and the Latin American and Caribbean theological education context.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of current Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) theological seminary deans who had remained in their positions five or more consecutive years. The qualitative methodology was chosen to hear, explore, analyze and understand the meanings (Creswell, 1998) behind the experiences of deans with longevity in academic leadership. The researcher sought to find the implicit structure and the meaning of their continuous experiences working for the same institution even in the midst of challenging situations. The long-tenure deans' self-reflective descriptions of their roles and how they had arrived at that junction were the basis for the study. Through open coding, a list of shared values, competencies, behaviors and beliefs began to emerge (Volkwein & Zhou, 2002); the codes were later organized into themes to gain insight into LAC deanship.

Discussion of the Sample

The main criteria for the selection of the respondents was their permanence as deans in the same Latin American and Caribbean institution for a minimum of five years. Only one of the 18 deans who responded to the questionnaire did not meet the criteria; the researcher made an exception because she had been a dean for three years, but she had worked in the same institution for seven years. The 18 respondents are currently working in theological seminaries of different evangelical denominations located in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico; their years of service range from three to 20 years. The deans spent an average of 1 hour and 50 minutes responding the questionnaire and their answers were written in English, Portuguese or Spanish. The researcher is knowledgeable,

conversant and fluid in those three languages, so it was not necessary to hire a professional to translate the answers into English. Toward the end of the dissertation process and due to time limitations, the researcher requested the help of a professional translator. As a professional translator she worked in full confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants was ensured. Of the sampled deans five were female and 13 were males; gender was not part of the questionnaire, but since the questions were answered in Spanish or Portuguese the researcher was able to determine gender by the nouns or adjectives used. Each participant was assigned a number in the Qualtrics report and the researcher used the same number to identify their respective responses. To ensure confidentiality their answers were acknowledged with personal descriptors from D1 to D18. Throughout the study direct quotes identified the insights provided by the participants; the quotes were used as evidence of the findings.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the essence of LAC theological seminary deans of tenures longer than five years. The questions were designed to discover if the selected deans shared common internal and external factors that had enabled them to persevere in academic leadership.

- RQ 1. What is the situational context of the LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 2. What are the common characteristics/attributes among LAC theological seminary deans with proven longevity? Characteristics would include attitudes, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, dreams, guiding metaphors and qualities.
- RQ 3. Are there moral imperatives or life-giving properties that enable theological seminary deans to remain in their positions longer than the five-year average?

RQ 4. To what do LAC theological seminary deans attribute their long tenure?

Sixteen essay questions were sent to the participants. RQ 1 and RQ 4 were designed to stimulate answers from a personal perspective whereas the responses for RQ 2 and RQ 3 would be more general in nature. Question 16 did not correspond to any of the four research questions in particular, but it was analyzed because 80% of the respondents took the time to answer it. It had been the hope of the researcher that this question would promote self-reflection and it did so in 80% of the participants.

Introduction to Themes

Through thematic analysis the researcher studied 18 sampled cases to be able to construct what remained invariable in the lived experiences of these deans. Since the qualitative data for this study was collected electronically, the researcher was able to begin the coding process as soon as answers were received. There were 18 answers for each of the 16 questions so the researcher worked with a total of 288 responses. Each answer corresponded to a research question and they were read four times, analyzed, and coded in Spanish; once the coding was completed the responses were translated into English to be included in the study. The researcher highlighted sections of the document that represented a thought or an idea related to the research question and gave it a code name. Code names were clustered, question by question and section by section to find themes according to the research question.

Data and themes discovered and analyzed for RQ 1.

What is the situational context of the LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than the five-year average?

Personal invitations.

Fifteen out of the 18 deans mentioned that they did not compete or applied for the post: They were invited to be deans and they responded to the invitation extended by the institution to become deans. Two elements elicited and generated a sense of assurance and responsibility among the chosen ones: The invitation and a spiritual prompting.

D5 and D11 clearly indicated both aspects of the theme when they wrote: “I was invited to become dean, and I believe that God extended the invitation for me to fulfill that educational responsibility.” “I decided to be a dean to fill an institutional need, it was not really in my plans to do what I am doing right now, God placed me there.” Similar expressions were used by D6: “I did not choose to be an academic dean” or by D16 and D13 when they said that they had not personally decided, they had been invited.

D17 stated that he accepted the invitation because he remembered his own educational path:

It was not my idea to become a dean; rather, I was invited to be one. Yes, I decided to accept the invitation because education is one of my passions, and because at some point, when I was a student at this seminary, I thought that some things in academic life could be different. (D17)

D2 accepted the invitation because the job fitted with his life goals:

When I was invited to be a part of the academic world, I decided to accept the invitation because I considered that from that position, I could consolidate the pastoral vision as a minister with the academic vision, in leadership development. (D2)

The words of D18 added a thought-provoking element to the invitation. He did not choose to become a dean, either; his invitation did not come from an institution (since it did not exist at that point) but it was prompted by a theological education crisis in his own country:

I did not actually decide to be a dean. It was the crisis of theological education in my country that led me to develop proposals to overcome such crisis, and that is how a spontaneous leadership in the area of theological education was born. At the same time, a recognition of this leadership by pastors, ministers, and leaders of different churches emerged. Our proposals then served to help some churches in organizing their training programs. That is how the Seminary I lead nowadays came to be. (D18)

Personal career paths.

Preparation and learning from previous academic and administrative experiences.

Dr. Contreras Flores, in her doctoral dissertation, mentioned that:

The short tenures of academic deans and the need for intentional preparation and training are factors that are also present in theological higher education within this context (Latin America and the Caribbean). I have frequently observed and identified these factors as needs, through personal interaction with academic deans in this context, through work done as an accreditation commission member and through serving as an academic dean in a theological institution in the Caribbean for five years. (2016, p. 6)

Ten of the long-tenure deans who answered the questionnaire believed that their previous experiences and opportunities had prepared them for the job. They felt confident when accepting the challenge:

When I was invited to the deanship position, I felt I was prepared for the job through pastoral and administrative experience. When I started working as dean I felt completely

at home, 'like a fish in water', and I was able to freely and adequately develop strategies and processes that would help me do my job very well. (D14)

D2's experience arose from within the same institution: "When I was invited to become a dean, I decided to accept because I had previously held several positions in the institution: professor, admissions director, registrar, associate dean and internships coordinator" (D2). The same was true for D10: "It was a decision made by the institution, and I personally accepted with joy but understanding the challenge. I knew what the position entailed because as an Extension Director I was a member of the Academic Committee;" D13: "I had directed one program at the institution;" and D7 said: "I was a professor in the school when I received the invitation to be a dean; this has been my school since 1987." The previous academic and administrative experiences mentioned by D4 are a summary to this section:

I have a Master's in Educational Administration, so when I entered the Seminary, I was asked to collaborate in the area of School Services as part of my student service assignment. At that time there was a lot of restructuring in the school, so during that period I was named interim department director; I was later called to be the director. At the time of my graduation from seminary, I was invited to be the Academic Coordinator as part of my ministerial assignment. I was able to combine my previous knowledge with my recollection of how I had felt as a student. I have been able to apply to my current position the knowledge attained from most of my previous jobs and assignments; that has really helped me. (D4)

Mentors and learning by doing.

Mentoring is considered one of the most effective ways to keep new teachers in the profession (Steelman, 2018). Mentoring is defined as a professional relationship in which an

experienced person assists another in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defined mentor as a trusted counselor or guide. Thirteen LAC deans wrote about the important role mentors played in their personal and professional lives. The mentors had guided the deans' development by modeling, allowing them to observe, providing opportunities to practice, or by giving advice and support when needed. These mentors seem to fully embody Ki Hadjar Dewantara's leadership and educational principles: "'ing ngarso sing tulodho' (in the front giving examples), 'ing madya mangun karso' (in the middle giving encouragements), and 'tut wuri handayani' (in the back ready to give assistance)" (Santi & Purboningrum, 2004, p. 3). D12 understood that the opportunity to observe and learn from experienced deans was not only beneficial for him but for the entire institution.

These deans specifically mentioned how important it was for them to have developed solid relationships with previous deans: they had helped them in becoming deans and in remaining as deans. LAC deans and their mentors had been able to build and maintain open, trusting and emotionally rich relationships (Carter, 1994). D6 said, that "the academic dean at that time hired me to be his assistant. So, I learnt from him. When he became the president of that seminary, he appointed me to be the academic dean at his place;" or "I learned to be a dean by observing models. I was able to closely observe the work of various deans, and be mentored by others in academic leadership" (D2); or "once I started the job, I maintained constant dialogue with the previous dean" (D10); or "I worked alongside the previous dean for several years before I replace him" (D3). D12 fully described his relationship with other deans:

I observed the experiences of the deans who preceded me and I always stayed close to the previous deans; we have an excellent relationship. I gained insights from working with

them and also from conversations with highly respected university deans from my country. I received a lot of guidance from a very important dean in my life, Brother J, who at that time was the dean of another seminary. We are friends and he has helped me a lot in this task. (D12)

As mentioned above, 13 LAC deans stated that learning on the job included being mentored, or observing and working alongside former deans. Learning by attending workshops offered by LAC accreditation agencies, like AETAL, or by organizations like OC-AL were also noted by ten deans. The following comments made reference to the fact that knowledge was gained from experience: “learning over time” (D11), or “I learned by doing” (D13), or “I got experience in the field” (D16), and “ever since my years as a student I understood what the position entailed” (D4).

D17 received guidance and training from various sources but he specifically stated that having a clear understanding of the position imposed more challenges and did not make things easier:

I did not get to the position of dean having been previously prepared for it, so I had to address the responsibilities with some advice from the previous dean and engaging in dialogue with the director of the institution. Later, I was blessed when I participated of a training program for deans held at a seminary close to where I lived. The training took place one week per year during four years. In addition to this, I hold a Master’s degree in Education and I am in the process of getting a Doctorate in theological education.

Despite all this, I cannot say that everything is easier now, on the contrary, it poses even more challenges. (D17)

Relevant leader.

To become a dean of a LAC theological seminary in today's society was described as a challenge, a tremendous responsibility, and a privilege. The vision for deans in today's society not only included being responsible for the good academic functioning of the institution but also being attuned and relevant to their societal and church related context: "A dean must have the necessary vision to make sure that theological education is contextual, accessible, prophetic, with excellence and relevant to the mission of the church" (D12). A dean who understands the context can also be an influencer: "An opportunity to influence from the perspective of ministerial formation" (D13). The requirements and demands are endless said D6 and D3:

For me, being a dean of a theological institution in today's society means having theological knowledge, and an understanding of the spiritual, religious, educational, social and economic contexts of our society. (D6)

Being in charge of the educational issues, specifically the academic affairs of the institution; the interaction with faculty members and students, the pedagogical orientation, curricular design, the faculty's ongoing professional development, the granting of equivalences to incoming students from other institutions, the admission of students, etc. (D3)

D5 and D2 mentioned that a relevant leader not only needs to understand the social context but he or she must also recognize the needs of their professors and students:

I have discovered what it means to be a Dean by paying attention to the formative needs of teachers, confirming a calling as a teacher, asking God which direction He wants the institution to walk towards, seeing students with a deep sense of priority, love, care and

great responsibility, seeking for an education that is transformative by the Holy Spirit, relevant, academic and Christ-centered. (D5)

To be a dean means to interpret the reality of the church and the reality of society, so that the faculty is able to contribute to the needs of the environment with a biblical and theologically sound educational proposal. (D2)

D1 believed that it was crucial for a relevant dean to be able to anticipate the future: “The challenge felt is tremendous because our society has a great mix of ideologies; so, a dean must look for suitable programs for future ministers and provide the tools for them to strive in the midst of it; it is a constant challenge.” A dean who can anticipate the future does so with “the necessary biblical and theological competencies to review the various course programs in place, and make the corresponding suggestions. He possesses certain creative ability to develop programs that meet the needs expressed by the churches” (D15). Anticipating the future, D8 said, includes “thinking of programs, and how they can contribute to the formation of individuals so they can have the character of Jesus; they will, be the ones contributing to the growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God in the world” (D8).

Besides the economic, financial and political crises common to the LAC region, current deans have to deal with issues related to the following factors: multiple delivery systems, a variety of accreditation options, the need for qualified professors, students belonging to different ethnic groups and whose heart language is not either Spanish or Portuguese, and the pull between academic excellence and spiritual formation. The following deans talked about those realities:

Knowing how to identify and interpret the demands of the global society to provide relevant guidelines, propose strategic development actions in a timely manner, achieve a balance between academic training per se with the formation of character. Some actions

that can contribute significantly to overcome these challenges is establishing dialogue with other counterparts, receiving advice from educational authorities from other seminaries who are or were in office, reviewing current literature containing opinions of Latin American educators or theologians, and seeking consensus with the academic staff. (D17)

My main challenge was the process of revalidation with the Office of Public Education and to find the right group of instructors to work towards the new curriculum for six month that would meet the governmental requirements. (D1)

D12 and D18 poetically described what was required from a relevant dean: “From the mountains to the valleys, from the beaches to the cities, a dean must make sure that viable theological education reaches all students and maintains excellence” (D12). “Being a Dean today in an institution of theological education is a very important task; the first thing that must be very clear to a person who manages theological education, in my opinion, is that we are producers of meaning” (D18).

Summary of RQ 1 themes.

Deans accepted the invitation extended by the schools; if they lacked previous administrative experience or if they needed more tools to fulfill their jobs, they sought guidance from mentors. A relevant academic leader will understand his or her context, will dialog with the various communities, and will find qualified faculty to address the needs of the students and who embody the mission and vision of the institution. The themes described by the LAC theological seminary deans in this section funneled to the following essence: responsibility.

Data and themes discovered and analyzed for RQ 2.

What are the common characteristics/attributes among LAC theological seminary deans with proven longevity? Characteristics may be found in attitudes, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, guiding metaphors and qualities.

Deans as octopus.

The researcher believed that the question about a guiding metaphor would deepen the findings about the shared essence of deanship among these 18 LAC deans. Ortony (1975) indicated that “metaphors, and their close relatives, similes and analogies, have been used as teaching devices since the earliest writings of civilized man.” (p. 45). He advocated that “a metaphor is an essential ingredient of communication and consequently of great educational value.” (Ortony, 1975, p. 45). The metaphors enabled the deans to think about their roles and possible outcomes in terms of direction, alignment, commitment (McCauley, 2011) in complex situations; the task of the researcher was to discover practices and beliefs in the shared metaphors. Deans vividly tapped into their personal experiences when answering this particular question, “metaphors are closer to emotional reality for the same reasons that they are closer to perceptual experience” (Ortony, 1975, pp. 50-51).

Seventy-percent of the metaphors mentioned by the deans were related to multitasking or the multiplicity of responsibilities attached to the position: multi-pin connector, computer hub, band director, chef, octopus, rock and a hard place, brain and plate spinning. D13 believed that just as “a chef knows what the menu is, he organizes everybody to provide the food on time. The dean, also knows what is on the menu and how to distribute the tasks, but everything has to be organized for it to be ready at the right time.” The dean, whose words provided the title to this section said:

I could say that the dean is an octopus that has multiple limbs to execute the different responsibilities related to the job. It is not a one-directional function but it has many facets; the dean must understand how everything functions and it is in working conditions. It is not about trying to do it all but to know that we are part of the good functioning of the institutions and its programs. (D14)

D7, D14 and D18 spoke about a key component of multitasking when mentioning that everyone needed to be connected to one another when working in an institution: “Sometimes I feel like a circus performer who deftly spins plates or bowls to keep them moving and upright. Sometimes things are very synchronized but if one plate stops or falls one has to pick up and start again.”

I will use the hand metaphor: I am like the thumb, that is, the only one capable of touching the rest of the fingers at the same. I have to admit that I have been able to summon and bring together an important group of people and institutions to work as a team and to develop our proposals and projects. (D18)

There were three metaphors from the animal world that were associated to personal characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and hard: an ant, a bear and a cockroach. “A bear can survive on his own and an ant works little by little but builds great things” said a person who had been a dean for more than 20 years (D15). According to D2 the cockroach metaphor referred to the fact that just as a cockroach in a bakery keeps coming back, he stays in the position because he was “stubbornly faithful to the call.” Three other examples of metaphors were connected to deans as models: light and torch to guide the students and a column to embody teamwork and interdependency.

Integrity in deanship.

Whitney and Cooperrider (2000) asked, “what is it about the experience of wholeness that brings out the best in people, teams and organizations?” (p. 14). According to them, “it satisfies the human need to be part of a larger community.....it establishes credibility in outcomes” (p. 15). Thirteen LAC deans affirmed that integrity, as the inner sense of wholeness, is the path towards an integrity that touches every aspect of the person and of the entire community. According to them, integrity not only should include transparency, integrity, humility, dependency God, passion for the job and a service attitude but it should be combined with academic excellence. They believed that this aspect is key to the position:

Another piece is integrity that includes transparency, sincerity, love, and firm but kind character. Integrity and humility are very important to be a model, one must appreciate people, learn from others; we cannot pretend we know it all, one must acknowledge the work of others. (D12)

Examples of humility were present in the words of D6: “to be a model dean, one should love his/her task and examine himself/herself all the time.” D16 said,

That is why what I do is a labor of love and respect for my students and colleagues, recognizing that sometimes I am wrong and make mistakes, but I am not afraid to ask for forgiveness and make the necessary corrections.

D3 ascertained that a dean with integrity will “be guided by his personal vocation, extremely dedicated and more concerned about academic excellence than numbers, marketing or hegemonic models.” According to D1, integrity is essential due to the profoundness of the position: “I believe that the work I do is meaningful and transcendent in nature, if that were not

true my deanship would be superficial.” D7 observed that there is an implicit need for change, for leading change with integrity:

A disposition towards change is needed; if our bodies, our lives are in a cast, there is not a chance to thrive and the significance of our job becomes superficial. Being in a cast does not allow us to deeply dive into meaningful modifications.

Depth in continuity.

Fourteen LAC deans mentioned several elements regarding continuity. They agreed that continuity provided the opportunity to have an in-depth knowledge of the tasks and responsibilities of the job and also about the content of the programs offered. Continuity gave them more experience and they were able to solve problems more rapidly; most changes could be made without destabilizing the institution. Permanence generated stability and it helped them avoid institutional memory loss. Having the time to work on the curriculum for an extended period of time provided a type of stability mixed with flexibility because it allowed them to rectify mistakes; continuity also gave them the time to strengthen internal and external relationships.

The institution where D1 went to work had experienced high turnover before his arrival; the changes had affected professors and students alike: “Before I became dean there had been four deans in four years; that brought instability to the teaching and learning process.” For D2 and D6 continuity provided opportunities for strengthening relationships and accomplishing tasks, but the demands were also felt:

It implies that there is continuity in the long-term processes, in the relationship with churches and with different organizations, one is able to assess the curriculum, finds new

ways to accomplish the different tasks. At the same time, it can lead to weariness because of the demands of the job. (D2)

I believe that my permanence in this position of dean gives me the opportunity to learn more and more about understanding my position, acquiring more knowledge about Scriptures, people and the future. (D6)

D14 believed that continuity includes “permanence and functional constancy, in that way, it can generate security and development processes in every dimension.” Not destabilizing processes was also important for D13: “It has helped me maintain continuity in the job and not make abrupt changes that could destabilize processes.”

The words of D12 also affirmed, like 14 of his LAC colleagues, that learning and doing deanship takes time:

Nobody can really be a dean in a year or two; they need time and stability to be more effective, this is true in every area. In my own case I saw that after a few years I had: a) A better command of my position, it took me time to learn the dynamics of the academic world, and I'm still learning. b) More opportunities for correcting mistakes and explore new educational horizons. c) Experience helped my ability to make decisions. d) A long stay allows for a better development of the dean's work and a more effective and clear assessment and visualization of the future. (D12)

Passionate newness.

Fifteen LAC deans mentioned their desire for offering an excellent academic training and formation. For them, the training had to be motivated by a passion for life-long learning combined with a passion for serving and doing. They are open to a type of innovation that

brings newness to and within the institution. In the case of 12 LAC deans, the process of innovation and renewal began in their personal lives and then it extended to their places of work. Being committed to their own personal formation has allowed them to confront difficult interpersonal situations with grace. Fifteen LAC deans mentioned throughout their responses that a profound and intimate love and dependency on God will be expressed in love towards students, institution, church and society. Passionate newness also included the ability to listen, accept grace when needed, see the value of students and colleagues, and learn from others.

Lewis and Harrison (2016) wrote that “those who are most passionate bring the most to their work and lives” (p. 117). The following quotes are examples of a type of passion in the lives of the deans that includes internal yearnings and external expressions: “Being open and ready for new things, particularly when knowing that I am in the place where God has placed me” (D7). “Passion for what I do, but always examining myself, to see if my intentions are correct or the correct ones” (D9). “Disposition for new challenges will include having the grace to accept them” (D11). “I have learned a lot from others and that has helped my personal growth. I became passionate about learning how to work with others, what it means to listen and, in several occasions, learning to accept criticism” (D18). “Passionate for biblical, theological and pastoral education. If one is not passionate about this function the job will get done, but it will lack the devotion needed” (D14).

D16 believed in innovation but did not forget her team nor the students:

Be innovative but always thinking that students are the most valuable element, because without them it is not possible to carry out any educational process. I cannot forget my colleagues; I have to stay close to give them confidence and to help them do their work efficiently and with joy. (D16)

D15 was passionate about his job and his own renewal; he clearly understood the why of his position: “Passion for the job and always renewing myself. I believe that what I do is transcendental because I can have a positive influence on the students and to encourage them to keep on,”

Summary of RQ 2 themes.

Multiplicity of tasks and believing in connectedness and teamwork were discovered through the metaphors shared by LAC deans: multi-pin connector, computer hub, band director, chef, octopus, rock and a hard place, brain and plate spinning. Being open to change, willing to listen, learning from others, knowing that they are in the right place, and understanding the context with hope were some of the shared characteristics mentioned by the deans. The themes described by the LAC theological seminary deans in this section funneled to the following essence: integrity.

Data and themes discovered and analyzed for RQ 3.

Are there moral imperatives/life giving properties that enable theological seminary deans to remain in their positions longer than the five-year average?

Fullan (2001) stated that leaders who understand the moral imperative will make a difference, develop strategies that enable others to solve problems, find ways to measure accountability and stir the commitment of those under their responsibility. Fifteen LAC deans believed that a moral imperative had an effect on their own personal commitment to their institutions, and not just on those working with them. The questions related to RQ 3 were AI in nature and the deans shared stories that had brought them enthusiasm, hope or had produced change.

The “present” matters.

LAC deans felt encouraged when they sensed that they were working towards a higher calling and for things that mattered: investing time and energy in people's lives was worth it. D1 stated that, "I am strengthened in my faith and in the knowledge of God when knowing that I am not only in the right place, but that I am doing what is right in that place." Responsibility and efficiency went hand in hand for D9. He acknowledged the people and the programs that had been entrusted to him by God and the institution, and responded accordingly.

The "present" generated a sense of accomplishment in D17:

I believe it is the present moment. Today I have greater confidence when I present proposals to the faculty, or when we have to make curriculum revisions. Today, and through a mentoring program I can help students develop their character. Today, I have presented projects that have been accepted not only by the president but by our church council.

The present moment found D18 struggling between certainty and doubt. He tried to strike a balance between professional recognition and personal pride:

It is difficult for me to describe a specific moment when I felt "more efficient and connected", something that is, without a doubt, important to recognize. I say this because my experience as director of theological education has always been in the logic of dialectics between certainty and doubt. In other words, always aware and certain that what I do is good, but at the same time doubting such certainty thinking, how good is it? This attitude as always kept me alert not to fall into professional narcissism because that would not help at all.

Students matter.

Seeing the spark in the students' eyes and believing that they were God's children matters to 12 LAC deans. For D7 "it makes all the difference. We are doubly committed to our work: because we are children of God and because we are forming people to lead the Kingdom." "When I work, I want to make sure that people understand that as human beings we are created in God's image, and at the same time God became one like us" were the words used by D18.

Students made D16 come alive when researching, writing or teaching because she could see God in them:

My greatest passion is research and communicating the results to my students. When I research a topic that poses a challenge to be addressed, I take it on with much love, and then communicating its results either in an article or in class makes me very happy; I feel that I am really being used by God for His purposes. The ending of an educational process makes me come alive, when I hand a diploma or professional degree to my students, I see it as giving birth: they are born as theologians, through an arduous educational process. And then I see them doing graduate studies, growing and growing... that is seeing God in them. (D16)

Modeling and being an example to the students makes a difference in the life of D6:

I think when one is connected to his/her basic spiritual values, that makes a great difference in his/her work. You are living what you are teaching and you can impact, more and better, those who are observing or following you. (D16)

D16 feels alive and connected when "students value the educational space that is generated as positive and constructive of liberating theological knowledge." Later she added that she "felt efficient and connected because there is nothing more beautiful than seeing that a

student re-engages with theology and with the study of the Bible, and feels that the approach helps him to face life and support his/her congregation” (D16).

LAC deans found joy when investing in the students’ lives and being able to see in them the fruit of academic programs and processes. Observing the lives of the students gave them strength and the motivation to continue even in the midst of hardship.

Teamwork matters.

When a LAC dean assigned value and was enthusiastic about teamwork, he observed that challenges were overcome, no matter the stumbling blocks. D10 felt comfortable working with his team and knew how to convey the belief that everything that one does is ministry. “When I am more enthusiastic, my superiors and my team cooperate with me with greater passion,” said D5. Every day things happen to D1, and these things affect everyone around him. Every day there are challenges that can be overcome as a team with God’s help and “that brings life to the position (D1).

For D18 recognition, accomplishments or criticism are for the team, not just for the dean:

I am greatly encouraged by the critical recognition that others have of our work. This happens to us as a team, as a Seminary. It can be positive criticism or not. In any case, it is always an acknowledgement and for me it is important; it is a sign that we are of interest, and that gives us life.

The same is true for D5 and D16 when they extended goodwill to those working with them; he wrote that “when cheerfulness, creativity, joy, and gratitude are shared, everyone works harder and with passion. Together we grow in dependence on God” (D5).

I get very happy when I see that my personal efforts and those of my team are really recognized. I was with the president of the seminary when he expressed this

appreciation, but I immediately communicated it to the rest of the teachers and administrative staff. (D16)

D12 felt alive when seeing his team moving forward in spite of many obstacles, and when they rose “above thousands of needs of all kinds, and I am also very encouraged by seeing pastors with more than 50 years of age in our classrooms, learning. This makes me keep on going, pushing ourselves to be more excellent in what God has commanded us to do.”

Common goals matter.

Thirteen LAC deans felt energized when planning and change become a reality and programs are effective. Ten deans mentioned that when the institution agreed to pursue government accreditation the process strengthened them as a team. Generating new programs, designing alternative delivery systems, securing government accreditation of different programs, mentoring programs, expansion of the seminary were some of the goals set and accomplished by D1 and D2. “When the mission and objective for which I am in this role is fulfilled, that is when I feel very excited and encouraged” (D12).

For D5 having common goals meant that as an institution we “have clear convictions, purpose and harmony. I also believe that an institution must be centered on Christ and the Kingdom, not on private agendas or only on meeting urgent needs.” D2 felt energized and effective when they finished checking documents, testing assessment tools, and evaluating the curriculum to receive approval and accreditation from the Ministry of Education of his country. As an institution they had agreed that they wanted to go through the process of verifying the quality of their work: “During those months, everyone in the seminary works as a team towards a common goal” (D2).

Relationships matter.

Ten LAC deans defined work as relational and that relationships brought about more professionalism and dedication. Relationships mattered because being with others conveyed enthusiasm and enthusiasm is contagious. According to them, relationships encouraged fellowship and collaboration and challenges were easier to overcome. Developing solid and authentic relationships with other theological seminaries and organizations outside of the institution was also important because it encouraged collaboration. But, as mentioned by Fullan (2001), relationships are not an end in and of themselves. It was vital, for D15 and D13, to develop a strong relationship and dependency upon God: “It is vital because what comes first, before starting anything, is seeking God’s leading and dependency on Him at all times. If we do something right, it is because He guides us and blesses what we are able to do.” “Obviously, we know that ultimately, we serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; therefore, we must walk connected to Him” (D13).

The connection between relationships and spiritual values is mentioned by D12 and D14 because of the belief that life is relational:

That is everything in our ministerial life; the Holy Spirit and the Word of God must rule everything. When we walk away from that, everything becomes a failure. Our daily life is relational, how are we going to do it effectively if the spiritual values are not present?

They make a difference in our lives and in our institutions. (D12)

The basic values of the Christian faith are the drivers of what we do. All these values are hermeneutical cross-cutting elements that must be reflected in relationships in every possible sense. (D14)

Spiritual values matter.

Pursuing a moral purpose is proposed by Fullan (2001) as one essential component of leadership; the component is accompanied by self-reflection on the part of the leader to evaluate his or her intentions. Moral purpose has been perceived as a value that appeals to the sense of what is good or worthwhile. Fifteen LAC illustrated most aspects of this essential element and added spiritual elements due to the nature of their jobs: “Believing in moral imperatives is essential; that is why I am collaborating here. I believe it is the foundation of what I do and why I do it” (D4). “I think when one is connected to his or her basic spiritual values, that makes a great difference in his or her work. You are living what you are teaching and you can impact, more and better, those who are observing or following you” (D6). “It gives me a deep conviction and pleasure when doing my work as a leader. It makes me humbler and more dependent on the Lord. I feel more productive. (D8)

D3, D7 and D11 explained that when they understood the spiritual value of their work, it helped them “establish priorities, give focus, and be persistent through time.” “It makes all the difference! We are doubly committed to our work: because we are God’s children and because we are forming people to lead the Kingdom” (D7). D11 specifically mentioned the need to align his intentions to his actions: “That what I do, I don’t do it specifically for personal interest at the expense of any means. That God has his eyes fixed on me in everything I do and He knows my heart, intentions and attitudes” (D11).

Summary of RQ 3 themes.

The words of D1 inspired the summary of RQ 3. When deans have a clear roadmap, they know what they are doing they can move forward. Teams understand that the institution is making progress and that proposed goals are met. Deans observed that there is a need to convey and maintain a cordial and respectful work environment. Even when hard times occur, they do

not lose heart because of their belief in a higher calling. The essence of LAC deans funneled from the various themes of RQ 3 is: intentionality.

Data and themes discovered and analyzed for RQ 4.

To what do LAC theological seminary deans attribute their long tenure?

“Appreciative questions are a ready source of positive power. All you have to do is ask, and a wealth of information, ideas, and knowledge unfolds” (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, p. 28). Appreciative questions were used in the questionnaire to discover best practices and insights for RQ 4. Deans were asked to reflect on their own value to the institution, yet, their answers also reflected on how they felt valued by their institutions. The three themes for this section present observations regarding their long tenure in deanship. They are: a) feeling valued, b) being transparent, and c) trusting the institution.

Feeling valued.

Deans’ sense of value originated from different people and sources: students (D15, D18), mentors (D2), self (D16, D14), and presidents and top administrators (D2, D11). Through words or actions the different parties helped deans understand their own significance and the significance of their jobs. For deans D15 and D18, their sense of value originated from the students:

I wanted to quit, but I did not do it. Why? Because I am constantly reminded of the positive changes that the students have experienced with the contributions from the various classes and the relationships they built while in the Seminary. (D15)

Once I thought about leaving, but I did not do it because the students reacted against it, and made me see the importance of my job. Since that time, I decided to keep moving forward, no matter what happens. (D18)

Voices of encouragement for D2 came from mentors:

Various mentors helped me see that my work and my training did make a significant contribution, it also helped me feel the support of the president. I have a sense of belonging and being a part of a valuable project. (D2)

For D14 and D16 feeling valued arose from their own self-awareness:

Many times, I have thought about leaving because having a position of responsibility is a situation that generates a lot of stress. But then I reconsider and tell myself: Self, who will have the patience I have for this position? What will happen to my institution and my students and colleagues if I am not there to do what needs to be done? Also, the trust and encouragement of my colleagues and superiors helped me gain strength to move forward. (D16)

I know that the biggest contribution I can give to my institution is my life, and I need to take care of my life. I owe it to myself; I know that I must be faithful, and I need to be careful not to disappoint myself and my institution. (D16)

I think that this is more than a job, I often hold pastoral roles by often includes pastoral accompaniment to various groups. (D14)

Presidents and top administrators were important influences for D1, D12, D14 and D16:

“the most important influence I received to be able to stay for more than five years has been the understanding of God’s purpose, seeing the fruits of the work that has been done and the president’s validation” (D12). I could not have done it alone, “the president and his very special way of acting and relating. He is a man of peace” (D14). “The trust of the board and of my colleagues has been essential, without that I would not have lasted long” (D16).

Being transparent.

Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) noted that trust is not only created through integrity, but also through transparency and honesty. For LAC deans, transparency is key to the possibility of longevity. They were honest and transparent when responding about several issues. They were honest about providing reasons for thinking about leaving their positions, or when listing their strengths or areas of personal growth. Fifteen deans answered yes when they were asked if they had ever thought about leaving their post. D1 said: “I felt quite pressured by the work in the seminary, the ministry in my church, and the lack of time I had to spend with my family.” But their strong desire to serve the students, their sense of responsibility and their commitment to the institutions contributed to their decision to remain: “I understand it as a relationship of trust and transparency with the institution” (D8).

When the workload increases and misunderstandings happen, there is a natural tendency to want to quit. I began to think about ending my long tenure when family pressures, ministerial demands, and academic expectations produced anxiety. I did not do it for three reasons: God, love for the ministerial role that God gave me, and for the encouragement I received from the current president. (D12)

The following deans had a clear understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses: “I am honest and responsible, I always give more than what is asked of me; those are my strengths” (D1); or “my personal strong points are: faithfulness to the Scripture, loyalty, perseverance, and eagerness for teamwork” (D8); or “I am disciplined, I try to fulfill all my assignments as they have been established; I am punctual, I have good relationships with the faculty and the students. I like to take on responsibilities and I am creative.” (D11). “My strengths are the experience that 14 years in the position has generated, and my knowledge of the educational field and administrative leadership” (D17). “I believe in me and in my abilities and skills even in difficult

time. If they recommended me to be here, I cannot let them down. They trusted in my capacity” (D8).

On the other hand, some deans understood that “there are things that I need to keep learning of myself, of the ministry, and of my brothers and sisters” (D8). “I have been training as a dean through time. I know that I am not the best, but I am learning more and more each day” (D16).

It has made me deeply appreciate what theological formation does for leaders and pastors. It has taught me discipline in approaching the realities of theological education and has forged my character and my thinking. D2

Trusting the institution.

Saphier and King (1985) wrote that consistent, significant and continuous school improvement depends on enhancing the following 12 aspects of a school culture: collegiality; experimentation; high expectations; trust and confidence; tangible support; awareness of new knowledge; appreciation and recognition; caring, celebration, and humor; participatory decision-making; protection of vital interests; tradition; and honest, open communication. Fourteen LAC deans mentioned 10 out of the 12 aspects listed by Saphier and King (1985). Their answers implied that the seminaries have been able to retain them by providing and maintaining a strong, energized and healthy institutional culture. The institution has been a key influence to their long tenure by showing trust and confidence in moments of struggles and triumphs. Deans knew that they could trust the institution because it had provided tangible support and care when investing in their own professional training and development.

Deans had observed collegiality when working in teams; the school had provided stability when pursuing long term planning and protecting its vision and mission. “First I serve out of my

love for God and then for the institution that opened its doors for me to serve. I enjoy what I do and I give everything I have for the benefit of the institution, whether it is time, effort or any other aspect that may be necessary” (D11). “Working for this institution has taught me that any challenge can be overcome with the help of God and of the people he places around me” (D1)

I have to admit that I love this institution. In this place, being still a student, I have precious moments with the Lord; I trust in the Lord and in His love for this Seminary. Here, I have learned that, as the Word of God says: “iron sharpens iron”, and I believe that living in community is an experience filled with learning, an experience of walking the extra mile, but also an experience of great joy. (D4)

D6 and D12 trusted the institution and its mission: “I believe that the theological seminary has a noble mission. I know that many other people have largely contributed to it and I believe that I should also do my best for that institution, which is serving my people and my country” (D6).

To achieve permanence in my position for more than five years, the seminary has influenced me as follows: The help provided by the president and the excellent team we have achieved in these years, people who are very versatile in their functions as coordinators of the centers and of the campus. Watching the flourishing work that has been done and how expectations and goals have been exceeded. (D12)

Summary of RQ 4 themes.

The institution has been a key influence to the deans’ long tenure. Deans felt valued when presidents, board members, faculty and students trusted them whether in moments of struggles or triumphs. Deans knew that they could trust the institution because the school had invested in their own professional training and development. The entire school benefits when leaders create an environment where honesty, transparency and trust are present. The themes

described by the LAC theological seminary deans for RQ 4 funneled to the following essence: trust.

Summary of findings.

These are the findings about 18 deans who were chosen and received a personal invitation from an institution. Eighteen deans were invited and they accepted the invitation; the fact that they had been chosen brought a sense of responsibility. There were situations when the deans had had previous academic and administrative experience that made them feel prepared to accept the role, while others had to learn on the job. The position required that the deans understand the context, dialog with the various communities, and find qualified faculty to address the needs of the students and who also embody the mission and vision of the institution. The themes described by the LAC theological seminary deans for RQ 1 funneled to the following essence: responsibility.

Multiplicity of tasks and believing in connectedness and teamwork were discovered through the metaphors shared by LAC deans: multi-pin connector, computer hub, band director, chef, octopus, rock and a hard place, brain and plate spinning. Being open to change, willing to listen , learning from others, knowing that they are in the right place, understanding the context with hope were some of the shared characteristics mentioned by the deans. The themes described by the LAC theological seminary deans for RQ 2 funneled to the following essence: integrity.

The words of D1 inspired the summary of RQ 3: When deans have a clear roadmap, they know what they are doing they can move forward. Teams understand that the institution is making progress and that proposed goals are met. Deans observed that there is a need to convey and maintain a cordial and respectful work environment. Even when hard times occur, they do

not lose heart because of their belief in a higher calling. The themes described by the LAC theological seminary deans for RQ 3 funneled to the following essence: intentionality.

Three themes emerged for RQ 4 regarding the long tenure of the selected 18 LAC deans: a) feeling valued, b) being transparent, and c) trusting the institution. The themes described in this section funneled to the following essence: Trust.

The following figure summarizes the findings for RQ 1 – RQ 4. Eighteen LAC deans who believe in acting with transparency, who can multitask because they value teamwork, they share the goals of their institutions and are perseverant because they know they are in the right place and in the right time. RIIT is the acronym of the essences funneled for each of the research questions: responsibility, integrity, intentionality and trust.

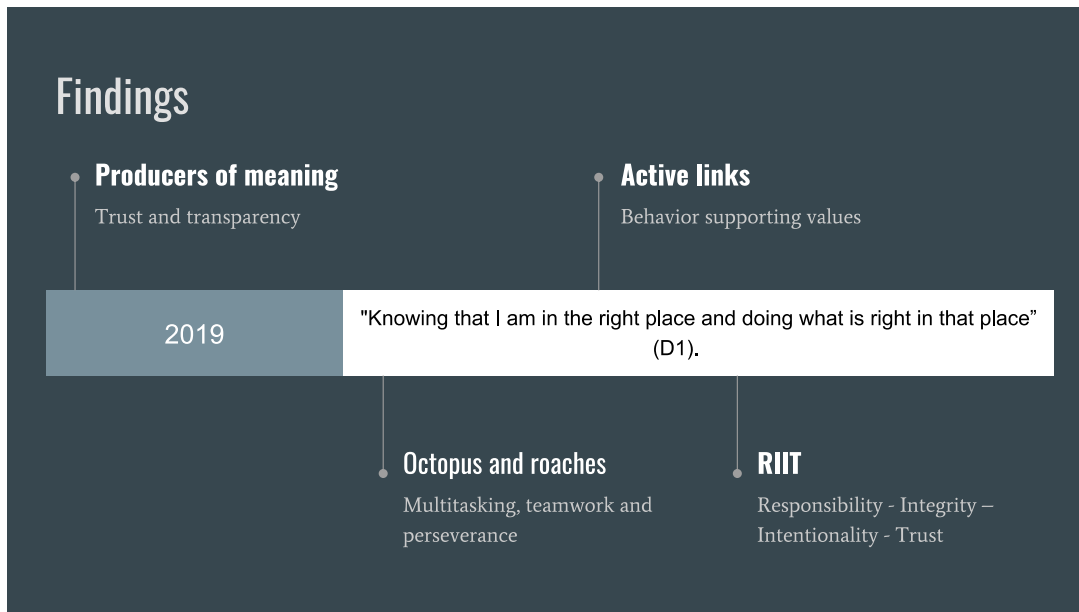


Figure 1. A summary of findings for RQ 1 – RQ 4.

Chapter 5: Discussion, recommendations

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the essence of lived experiences of a purposeful sample of long tenure theological seminary deans from Latin America and the Caribbean. The study was designed to hear their voices and gain a deeper understanding of the selected deans with staying power (1993- second decade of the 21st century) in the midst of challenging situations. As the deans shared their stories and perspectives, they revealed common patterns of recurring themes that had contributed to their proven longevity in academic leadership. Responsibility, integrity, intentionality and trust were identified as essential for the longevity of Latin American and Caribbean theological seminary deans who were studied.

Research Questions

The questions were designed to discover shared internal and external factors that had enabled these deans to persevere as academic leaders. The questions elicited answers that contained experiences, opinions, values, feelings and knowledge from the participants.

- RQ 1. What is the situational context of the LAC theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 2. What are the common characteristics among LAC theological seminary deans with proven longevity? Characteristics would include attitudes, competencies, dispositions, beliefs, values, dreams, guiding metaphors and qualities.
- RQ 3. Are there moral imperatives, life giving properties that enable theological seminary deans to remain in their positions longer than the five-year average?
- RQ 4. To what do LAC theological seminary deans attribute their long tenure?

Conclusions

Eighteen LAC deans, 16 questions, and 288 responses were the foundation of this study. The researcher followed strict coding guidelines and had to use Spanish, Portuguese or English according to the preferred language of the participant. Sections of the report that represented a thought or an idea related to the four research questions were given a code name. Code names were clustered, question by question and section by section to find themes according to the research question. After careful analysis the 288 responses turned into 16 themes: For RQ 1 the themes were: personal invitation, personal career paths and relevant leaders. The essence for this section was responsibility. For RQ 2 the themes were: deans as octopus, integrity in deanship, depth in continuity and passionate newness. The essence for this section was integrity. For RQ 3 the themes were under the umbrella of things that matter: the “present”, students, teamwork, common goals, relationships and spiritual values. The essence for this section was intentionality. For RQ 4 the themes were: feeling valued, being transparent and trusting the institution. The essence for this section was trust.

The conclusions of this study are presented through three different lenses to enrich the findings regarding the essence of deanship as seen by long tenure deans:



Figure 2. Three lenses: A holistic approach to the conclusions

The five areas of relational practices of appreciative leaders (Corporation for Positive Change, n.d.) will provide the first lens for presenting the conclusions. Essential qualities of longtime leaders (Lewis & Harrison, 2016) provide the framework as a second lens for presenting the findings; and the third perspective will surface from words of Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement. The three lenses provide a holistic approach to the conclusions about long tenure in academic leadership: a theoretical framework, practitioners' perspectives and a spiritual dimension.

It was very interesting for the researcher to discover that through their lived experiences the 18 LAC theological seminary deans expressed, understood, and embodied the five areas of relational practice identified by Appreciative Leadership experts.

Each of the Five Strategies meets a different need that people have for high performance: know they belong; to feel valued for what they have to contribute; to know where the organization or community is headed; to know that excellence is expected and can be depended on; to know that they are contributing to the greater good. (Corporation for Positive Change, n.d.)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based paradigm of thought and understanding used to transform organizations into affirmative systems. AI points to Six Freedoms towards positive change. "They are the freedoms to Be Known in Relationship, to Be Heard, to Dream in Community, to Choose to Contribute, to Act with Support, and to Be Positive" (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, p. xvi). AI experts became aware that leaders who chose to bring this approach to their organizations had certain common characteristics; these observations were the basis for Appreciative Leadership (AL). The list of Six Freedoms plus the five areas of relational practice provided one of the frameworks to reflect on the findings of this study:

- LAC theological seminary deans knew they belonged. This aspect was observed when D3 imagined himself as a column, his role could be considered fundamental for the institution but it was not the only one. A sense of belonging gave D16 the freedom to relate to his colleagues, learn from them and yet not feel infallible.
- LAC theological seminary deans felt valued for their contributions: “My suggestions for new programs were accepted by the president and the faculty”, said D12. “My most important contribution has been the monitoring of the curriculum and of the institutional processes with the government and the Ministry of Education. That experience enriched the curriculum” said D2. Ten deans felt valued when they contributed by securing academic status by getting government approval and accreditation of their programs. Every dean who participated of this study was pleased that through the years they had been able to: create centers of learning outside the confines of the mother institution; offer both formal and informal educational programs, generate sustainable project, and provide opportunities for faculty development.
- LAC theological seminary deans know where the organization or community is headed: Fifteen out of the 18 deans specifically mentioned that they had been invited by the institution to become deans. They accepted the invitation because they were in full agreement with the institutional mission and vision presented by the board or the president of the institution. Once they became deans, they protected the vision and the mission of the institution by developing or creating courses that fully engaged heart and mind. It was necessary, for 11 LAC deans, to know how to identify and interpret the global demands placed on the institution. They also needed to provide relevant guidelines, propose strategic development actions in a timely manner, and achieve a

balance between academic training per se and character and spiritual formation.

- LAC theological seminary deans know that excellence is expected and can be depended on; D3, D6 and D12 believed that pursuing excellence is closely related to personal vocation and a desire to please God. They will work hard at providing quality programs regardless of classroom size. Deans want to make sure that their schools prepare leaders who can welcome people from all walks of life, teach about holiness by being holy and preach to reach every stratum of society. LAC deans feel encouraged when their work becomes evident in the lives of pastors trained at their institutions, and churches are impacted by their ministry. D12 said, “this makes me want to keep on going, pushing myself to be more excellent in what God has commanded me to do.”
- LAC theological seminary deans know that they are contributing to the greater good. The vision of a dean in today’s society includes being responsible for the good academic functioning of the institution as well as being attuned to her particular context of church and society. When D17 used a person’s brain as a guiding metaphor, he saw himself as a thinking organ. As such he was responsible for making the right decisions, deciding which direction the institution would take, engaging with the context, determining how to overcome difficulties and designing his own tasks in artistic and creative ways.

In *Longevity in Leadership* by Lewis and Harrison (2016), the researcher found four essential qualities present in longtime leaders. As the authors explored the ways of thinking, being and acting of leaders with long and productive careers they created the acronym TEAM with the essential qualities of longtime leaders: Trust, endeavor, aim, and motivate. These qualities provide the framework as a second lens for presenting the findings:

Trust

Lewis and Harrison (2016) wrote that “leaders with staying power create and benefit from an environment of trust, which increases confidence, reliance, expectation, and hope” (p. 21). The institutions, through presidents, board members, faculty, students and pastors have placed their trust on the deans. Likewise, deans have placed their trust in them. Trust was based not just on words but on concrete ways when schools invested in the deans’ professional training and development. The entire community benefits when leaders create an environment where honesty, transparency and trust are present.

Endeavor

Deans who endure must have a strong work ethic, ability to handle criticism, and feeling that they are working for a cause bigger than self (Lewis & Dean, 2016). Deans who lacked previous administrative experiences and accepted the position of deans found they had to work hard at seeking guidance and knowledge. “I am honest and responsible; I always give more than what is asked of me; those are my strengths” (D1).

Aim

Deans who aim are dreamers who know where they want the institution to go and do. The words of D1 used as the summary for RQ 3 is a good example of this quality:

Having a clear roadmap. Knowing what we are doing and how we are moving forward in matters of processes. When this happens, the team has a strong feeling that we are making progress with purpose and that we are meeting the goals proposed in the plan. It is necessary to maintain a cordial and respectful work environment; and even during hard times we should keep our sanity and never lose heart because everything we do is in God’s hands.

Motivate

Motivation has been defined as the “creation of a state of tension and disequilibrium that causes the individual to move in a goal-directed pattern toward need satisfaction and equilibrium” (Lewis and Harrison, p. 24). Motivation will have personal and collective effects. Most of the guiding metaphors chosen by the deans illustrated the above-mentioned aspects: multi-pin connector, band director, chef, octopus, brain and plate spinning.

The third lens through which the researcher will discuss the findings is related to the spiritual dimensions of leadership in the workplace (Meng, 2016). Throughout the 288 responses the researcher found spiritual values and behaviors that provided a framework where deans exercised their deanship. Integrity, trust, humility and transparency were some of the values mentioned and they played a pivotal role in terms of how deans engaged their teams in accomplishing mutual goals. There was also a strong connection between transparency and dialog among the different constituents of the life of the 18 theological seminaries. The 18 deans who participated of the research had a clear vision of their own core values and they understood the importance of these spiritual components.

“We have an inner and an outer life. One is the flowering of the other. One is the root of the other. One for the other brings forth the foliage of our tree of life. Our inner life is fed by our outer life” (Lubich, 2008, p. 71). The researcher believed that the essence of Latin American and Caribbean deans could also be observed through those words. Lubich’s words will be the third and last lens through which the researcher will analyze the findings. Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, sought to build peace and unity not only in her native Italy but throughout the rest of the world. The desire of the Focolare movement is to “to love

everyone, without discrimination, to take the initiative and love other people the way we love ourselves, to exclude no one, not even our enemies. There are three elements upon which the Movement is based: the art of loving, community and dialogue” (<https://www.focolare.org/en/>). These three elements invite people to ponder, understand and experience a type of spirituality particularly suited to the reality of leaders of the 21st century.

After reading and coding the 288 responses, the 18 LAC theological seminary deans became living links between their inner essence and their outer expressions, or between their inner and outer life. The following section presents how these deans are in a continuous dance between their supporting values and their behaviors:

When a dean is humble, he or she will seek mentors to guide him or her:

Inner: Humility — Outer: Mentoring

•

A dean will feel responsibility when he or she has been chosen to become a dean. The responsibility arises from the knowledge that someone saw qualities deemed excellent for the job:

Inner: Responsibility/acceptance/belonging — Outer: Selection process of invitation

•

When a dean has an understanding of his or her role and expectations, he or she will act with integrity and observe and adhere to the clearly stated institution’s mission and vision statement:

Inner: Understanding — Outer: Clear institutional mission and vision statements

•

When a dean is visionary, he or she will fulfill the vision by intentionally designing a curriculum that is appropriate to his or her situational context:

Inner: Visionary — Outer: Adequate programs

•

When a dean reflects, he or she does it through the lens of the reality of the church. He or she will lead not only from the comfort of a balcony (teología del balcón) but by being involved in the daily challenges faced on the road (teología del camino):

Inner: Reflective — Outer: Reality of the church

•

When a dean is relational, his or her work will not be done in isolation. He or she will create a network of colleagues and friends. These colleagues at times will challenge him or her and they may come from areas and denominations outside of his or her comfort zone:

Inner: Relational — Outer: Lives of students, faculty, staff, administrators, pastors, colleagues from all areas.

•

When a dean is a watchdog, he or she will make certain that the quality of the institution is ensured, by choosing the best possible faculty. The process of selection may be arduous but worth it :

Inner: Watchdog — Outer: Good faculty

•

When a dean believes in dialog, he or she will provide the space for positive conversations. These should include everyone who is a participant of the educational process.

Dialog generates enthusiasm among faculty, administrators and students because they appreciate being valued:

Inner: Dialog — Outer: Create an open environment

•

When a dean cares, he or she may spend months trying to get government accreditation because he or she is concerned about the future of the students:

Inner: Caring — Outer: Government accreditation

•

When a dean is sensible, he or she will keep a balanced life that does not forget any aspects of his or her being and wellbeing:

Inner: Sensible — Outer: Balance heart, mind, hands and feet

Recommendations for practitioners.

The researcher desired that this study would be received as a message of hope for administrators, pastors, board members, associations and organizations involved in theological education in the LAC region. Future studies could be developed from the current ones among leaders who are in the “business” of building strong theological education leaders in and for the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Some recommendations for practitioners are: a) develop mentoring programs that connect veteran deans with new deans; b) offer training workshops on how to develop an organizational culture that fosters permanence and commitment. Schools that desire to retain qualified academic leaders could receive the necessary tools to strengthen or develop that type of culture; c) provide opportunities for deans to come together and weave their ideas, perspectives, principles and practices into the fabric of

theological education. A best practices handbook or a toolbox kit for new deans could emerge from those opportunities.

The ideas for these recommendations mainly arose from the answers to question #16 of the questionnaire. Deans used question #16 to express gratitude for the opportunity to participate of the research and to share their ideas for future developments. They felt a need and requested opportunities for continuing education in the fields of leadership and deanship. They also recognized that there was still a lot to learn, and that learning could take place if they took the time to share experiences and theories about the responsibilities and challenges of being a dean.

Recommendations for academics.

Academia would benefit by research dedicated to study the search and selection processes, and the strategies used for finding the right dean for the position (Contreras Flores, 2016). The importance of this type of research has been observed by other experts; schools need to identify what type of dean they need and how to find him or her to guide the institution into the future (Schieffler, Farrell, Kahn, & Culbertson, 2017). Further research related to selection policies could study the correlation between procedures or processes and long tenure. This study possibility emerged from the answers provided by the LAC deans to question #1 of the questionnaire.

A researcher could design a comparison analysis between the findings of this study related to the LAC region and long tenure theological seminary deans from other regions of the world. The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) and its nine regional associations of theological schools could be a possible link for this type of research. Future comparison studies could consider differences between academic deans according to years of experience in the position.

Concluding comments.

The researcher never had the title of dean, but she was the director of an adult college degree completion program. As such she performed roles very similar to the ones described in the study and during those years, she learned the tremendous value of relationships in the midst of hardship. The researcher shares with the readers a poem-like words that she wrote for the last graduation ceremony of that adult college degree completion program. To the courageous participants of this study who embody responsibility, integrity, intentionality and trust (RIIT), the poem may be a call to continue serving within their unique contexts. To the general reader, the poem may be an invitation to newness:

So where do I (they) go from here?

To return to where I (they) came from but as midwife (midwives), moved by the mystery of life,
moved by the mystery of new creation.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To get to know myself (themselves) more fully,
to understand the mystery of my (their) own life.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To find Jesus in each other's faces, to be the bearer of good news,
by touching, listening, feeling and speaking.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To my (their) own fears; the fear of leaving the familiar, the fear of moving,
the fear of change, the fear of the unknown.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To face reality, to ask questions

and to know that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To see life with new eyes.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To believe that together with my (their) loving God, the best is yet to come.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To be the expression of God's love.

So where do I (they) go from here?

To say: Precious Lord, take my (their) hand.

If I (they) am (are) not going anyplace new, I (they) do not need anybody to take my (their) hand...I (they) just skip my (their) merry old way.

But to go where I (they) never dared to go before, then Precious Lord, take my (their) hand.

Together, let's go places I (they) have never been before.

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Appendix A

Bethel University Consent Form for Questionnaire

Dear Dean:

You are invited to participate in a study of theological seminary deans who have remained in their positions longer than five years: "The Essence of Deanship." You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your trajectory, for the fact that you have remained in your position longer than five years and because leaders from accrediting agencies (AETAL, CETA, ACET) or organizations (OC) involved in theological education in Latin America and the Caribbean provided me with your name.

The findings will be used in my doctoral dissertation to fulfill one of the requirements of the EdD degree at the Bethel University Graduate Program. The researcher hopes to find some factors that have enabled theological seminary deans to remain in their positions longer than five years. The study desires to provide trustworthy insights and practices common to long-tenured theological seminary deans. The questionnaire includes 16 open-ended questions (some of them based on an appreciative inquiry methodology); you will receive a summary of the answers that may provide trustworthy insights into the deanship.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented. The data will be kept in my own password-protected computer and I will be the only one reading your answers. There are no risks involved in this study.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel University or me in any way. This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights, please call Maria Elena (Mariel) Deluca Voth (619) 536-5082 or Dr. Pauline Nichols (619) 729-0555.

By completing the questionnaire, you are granting consent to participate in this study.

Thank you very much,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MDV', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mariel Deluca Voth

February 2019

Appendix B

Bethel University Consent Form for Questionnaire in Spanish

Estimada/o decana/o:

Le invito a participar de un estudio sobre decanos de instituciones teológicas que han permanecido en sus puestos por más de cinco años: "The Essence of Deanship". Fue seleccionado como un posible participante en este estudio por su trayectoria, por el hecho de que ha permanecido en su puesto por más de cinco años y porque líderes de agencias de acreditación (AETAL, CETA, ACET) u organizaciones (OC) involucradas en la educación teológica me facilitaron sus datos.

Los resultados de la investigación se utilizarán en mi tesis doctoral para cumplir con uno de los requisitos del EdD (Doctorado en Educación) de Bethel University. El investigador espera encontrar algunos factores que han permitido a los decanos de seminarios teológicos a permanecer en sus puestos más de cinco años. El estudio desea proporcionar conocimientos y prácticas confiables comunes a decanos de larga permanencia en instituciones teológicas.

Le estoy enviando el siguiente cuestionario donde podrá contestar 16 preguntas abiertas (algunas de ellas basadas en una metodología de indagación apreciativa); se ruega que responda todas las preguntas. Recibirá un resumen de las respuestas que podrían brindar datos confiables sobre el decanato. La información obtenida en relación con este estudio que pueda identificarle permanecerá confidencial. En cualquier informe o publicación escrita, no se identificará ni se podrá identificar a nadie y solo se presentarán datos agregados. Los datos se guardarán en mi

propia computadora protegida con contraseña y seré la única que lea sus respuestas. No hay riesgos involucrados en este estudio.

Su decisión sobre su participación no afectará de ninguna manera las relaciones futuras conmigo o con Bethel University. Este proyecto de investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado de acuerdo con los niveles de revisión de Bethel para este tipo de investigación. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre la investigación y/o los derechos de los participantes de la investigación puede llamar a María Elena (Mariel) Deluca Voth (619) 536-5082 o a la Dra. Pauline Nichols (619) 729-0555. Al completar el cuestionario, otorga el consentimiento para participar en este estudio.

Quedo a la espera de su pronta respuesta y desde ya muchísimas gracias,



Mariel Deluca Voth

Febrero 2019

Appendix C

Questionnaire

The Essence of Deanship

1. Why did you become a dean? Can you describe how you learned to be a theological seminary dean?
2. How would you describe what it means to you to be a theological seminary dean in today's society?
3. What are some of the challenges you face as a theological seminary dean? How did you overcome them? Can you share a specific example of how you overcame it?
4. What would be a guiding metaphor for you as dean? Which one is it and why did you choose it?
5. What is important to you as an ideal dean? Is there a deeper purpose in your work?
6. In what specific ways do you think your long tenure has contributed to or influenced your effectiveness as dean?
7. What are some characteristics or attributes that a successful theological seminary dean must possess?

8. Identify and describe a time in your experience as dean when you felt most effective and engaged. What were the circumstances? Who was involved? Why did it make you feel effective and engaged?
9. When your heart is alive at work, what kinds of things happen to you and those around you? What makes your heart come alive at work?
10. How does being connected to your core spiritual values make a difference in your job?
11. What is your value to the institution? In what ways do you contribute your best? What are your personal strengths?
12. Was there ever a time when you thought about leaving? Why did you not leave?
13. What is your understanding of the concept of long-tenure deanship (more than 5 years)? How would you describe what it means to you to be a long-tenure dean?
14. Can you describe how the theological seminary has impacted your long tenure?
15. What do you believe contributed or impacted the most to your long tenure?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D

Questionnaire in Spanish

The Essence of Deanship

1. ¿Por qué decidió ser decano/a? ¿Podría describir cómo aprendió a ser decano/a de un seminario teológico?
2. ¿Cómo describiría lo que significa ser el decano/a de una institución teológica en la sociedad actual?
3. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los desafíos que enfrenta como decano/a? ¿Cómo los supera? ¿Podría dar un ejemplo específico de cómo superó una situación difícil?
4. ¿Hay alguna metáfora que podría guiar su función de decano/a? ¿Cuál sería y por qué la elegiría?
5. ¿Qué piensa usted que es importante para ser un/a decano/a modelo? ¿Halla que su trabajo tiene un significado más profundo?
6. ¿De qué maneras específicas cree que su permanencia (más de 5 años) en su puesto ha contribuido o influido en su efectividad como decano/a?

7. ¿Cuáles son algunas características o atributos que definirían a un/a decano/a teológico fructífero/a?
8. Identifique y describa un momento en su vida de decano/a en el cual se sintió más eficiente y conectado/a. ¿Qué ocurrió? ¿Quién/es estaba/n con usted? ¿Porqué se sintió eficiente y conectado/a?
9. Cuando se siente animado/a en el trabajo, ¿qué cosas le suceden tanto a Ud. como a las personas que están a su lado? ¿Qué cosas le hacen cobrar vida en su trabajo?
10. ¿De qué maneras marca una diferencia en su trabajo el sentirse conectado/a a sus valores espirituales fundamentales?
11. ¿Cuál es su aporte a la institución? ¿Cuál es su contribución más importante?
¿Cuáles son sus fortalezas personales?
12. ¿Alguna vez pensó en abandonar su puesto? ¿Por qué no lo hizo?
13. ¿Qué entiende por el concepto de larga permanencia (más de 5 años)?
¿Cómo la describiría?
14. ¿Puede describir la influencia que ha tenido el seminario teológico en su larga permanencia?

15. ¿Qué o quién ha contribuido o ha sido la influencia más importante en su larga permanencia?

16. ¿Desea agregar algo más?