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Factors leads to attrition and retention of academic staff at higher educational institutes in Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The competition for top academics across the higher education and research landscape of Uttar Pradesh has assumed a prominent dimension and this phenomenon has resulted in the ever increasing attrition of this category of employees from one institution to the next. This paper seeks to identify and evaluate factors that facilitate the attrition and retention of senior academic employees in Uttar Pradesh universities. The study adopted survey research method using quantitative research design. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather primary data from respondents. The study examines the influence of certain work attributes on the retention of 150 senior academic staff in 10 universities across Uttar Pradesh. Results of the study indicates that most of the respondents place greater importance on challenging work, inter-personal relationship, access to research resources and job security. Results are discussed in terms of the implications for retention practices in the universities.

Keywords: Skills shortage, sustainable economic growth, binding constraint, qualified academic, university education

1. Introduction

Demand for senior academic staff in higher education and training landscape of Uttar Pradesh has been increasing and may be expected to continue to increase given the government's resolution that participation in higher education should increase substantially, leading to the al-most concluded plan to establish two additional public universities in the country (by 2014). However, at the heart of this expansionist programme is the general problem of skills shortage in the country, particularly in the higher education sector. The problem of attrition and retention of academic employees in developing countries has not been sufficiently documented in literature as distinct from that of brain drain. The problem, as noted by is subsumed under the general category of brain drain with-out particular attention being devoted to it. For example, qualified academic employees have resigned from public universities in Lucknow in order to take up better paying jobs abroad. Similarly, there is concern about the adequacy of the future supply of academics in Uttar Pradesh due to better service attraction in the public and private sectors. The pressure is also heightened in Uttar Pradesh due to the establishment of additional university in Uttar Pradesh, and the expansion of academic programme by the UP Government. These neighboring institutions of higher learning consider Uttar Pradesh as a catchment area to attract highly qualified academic staff. All these factors will continue to put a lot of pressure on existing academics thus facilitating their attrition. At the same time, global recruitment and retention problems have been growing in prominence and there has been a long-standing concern that the higher education sector faces a 'retirement bulge', as academics from the 1960s expansion reach retirement.

Nwadiani and Akpotu (2002) ^[15] note that university education in contemporary times the world over, is becoming an exceedingly complex enterprise. This complexity requires a high degree of competence and proven scholarship from the university academic staff in particular and the entire staff in general. This is so because universities, by their unique nature are expected to be a repository of the most specialized and skilled intellectuals. They serve as storehouses of knowledge for nurturing the manpower needs of the nation and hence, for satisfying the aspirations of the people for a good, and humane society. Central to the realization of the university education goals and objectives are the academic staffs whose roles are crucial.

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The number and quality of academic staff, coupled with their effectiveness make the difference in university education production function. As surmises, “the escape route from the mass poverty now endemic in most Asian countries is improved income. This means invention and reinvention, innovation, and reverse engineering. Such processes require skills that can be produced only in higher education programs.” Unfortunately, the universities themselves do not seem capable of mobilizing the intellectual strength needed to drive these processes. Indeed, “staff development/retention remains a major challenge”.

Background to the Study

Attracting, motivating and retaining knowledge workers have become important in a knowledge based and tight labour market, where changing knowledge management practices and global convergence of technology has redefined the nature of work. While individualization of employment practices and team-based work may provide personal and organizational flexibilities, aligning HR and organizational strategies for competitive advantage has become more prominent.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD 2006), the changing demographics of the labour market, enduring skills shortages and employee demands for work-life balance have created a so-called ‘war for talent’. In this ‘war’, successful organizations look to improve their strategies, policies and practices for the attraction, development, deployment and retention of talent vital for their business needs. Superior talent is increasingly recognised as the prime source of sustainable competitive advantage in high performance organizations. Underlying this trend is the rapidly changing business environment and the growing need for globally aware managers and professionals with multi-functional fluency, technological literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and the ability to operate in different cultures, structures and markets (Chambers *et al.* 1998) [6]. At the same time, the signs are that attracting and retaining talented employees is becoming harder. In fact, a number of surveys suggest that many large organizations are already suffering a chronic shortage of talented people. In the US, for in-stance, three-quarters of the 400 corporate officers recently surveyed said their companies had ‘insufficient talent sometimes’ or were ‘chronically talent-short across the board’ (Chambers *et al.* 1998) [6]. Similarly, alluded to the growing problem of talent shortages in most European countries. In France, for example, the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies statistics show that the proportion of manufacturing organizations experiencing difficulties in recruiting all categories of staff rose from 25 per cent in 1976 to nearly 50 per cent by 1989. According to, the greatest problems are in the managerial and technical labour markets, where the channeling of investment into new computers and machinery, increases in production capacity and new organization methods have all been associated with a growing requirement for talented people.

P The situation is not very much different in Uttar Pradesh. The Uttar Pradesh labour-market suffers from a dearth of skilled manpower and a continuous brain drain suggesting that Uttar Pradesh organizations are under pressure to retain available talent. The retention of talent has however become a major challenge to human resource practitioners since; according to talented job candidates in the global skills

market have the luxury of choice. This is affecting Uttar Pradesh organizations since they have to compete not only with one another, but with organizations abroad. The situation has tremendously increased com-petition for talent in Uttar Pradesh with many organizations going to great length to retain their best employees. Competition has therefore put skilled employees who are already in short sup-ply under pressure as they are being attracted by more than one organization at a time with various kinds of incentives. This scenario is becoming increasingly noticeable in the higher education institutions and research landscape of Uttar Pradesh where universities and research institutions are competing with one another in the recruitment of top academics and researchers. This has particularly become necessary due to the emphases placed on research outputs and teaching excellence by the departments of higher education and training and science and technology respectively. All over the world, universities are rated based on, amongst other criteria, their research outputs (demonstrated in terms of publications in referred journals, number of postgraduate outputs (particularly doctoral), and the quality of academic staff (doctoral).

Although the science of employee selection is very well developed, the science of attraction and retention is less so; Taylor and In particular, despite the fierce battles being waged for talented employees in today’s competitive labour markets, very little is known about the ways in which high ability and high achieving applicants differ from others in terms of what they are seeking in the work environment. Despite the fact that many managers provide their talented employees with competitive remuneration and stimulating work environment, organizations that could be referred to as employers of choice still experience persistent turnover of their talents. This phenomenon has therefore presents a compelling curiosity amongst researchers as to what actually motivate this category of employees to constantly change their employers.

Against this background, this study is designed to investigate variables that facilitate the attrition of high performing academics and researchers, particularly from the universities in Uttar Pradesh that are generally referred to as ‘previously disadvantaged’. The findings will go a long way in assisting these institutions in their recruitment and retention practices.

Objectives

Identify and evaluate the factors that facilitate the attrition and retention of senior academic employees in Uttar Pradesh universities Considering the objective of the study as stated above, and deducing from existing literature, the present study hypothesized that:

There is a significant positive relationship between identified attrition and retention variables and actual attrition of senior academic employees in universities. For the purposes of this study, senior academic staff was defined as jobs in higher education and research institutions (comprehensive universities, universities of technology and specialized research institutions) whose main function was academic teaching or academic or specialized research, with doctoral degrees. Thus, lecturing (for example, Professors, senior lecturers and Lecturers) and research staff (for example, Post-doctoral Fellows and Senior Research Fellows) are included.

Review of Related Literature

The problem of attrition among high performing academics is a global phenomenon. According to, the problem of academic staff retention is a global one which affects both developing and industrialised countries. The difficulties within Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are well documented. In the United States, for example, about 7.7 per cent of all full-time academic staff left their institutions for other places within one academic year - from Fall 1997 to Fall 1998. Of these, only 29 per cent were retirees; the remaining 71 per cent left for a variety of reasons (National Centre for Educational Statistics 2001). A 2000 survey of full-time faculty members in the US showed that more than 40 per cent of them had contemplated changing careers. In Canada, it has been argued that one of the challenges that universities will face over the next decade or so is academic recruitment and retention (Carleton University 2000; The Laurier Institution 2000). Similarly, "it has been suggested that early in the 21st century there will be a crisis in Australian higher education with an estimated academic labour shortage of 20,000 if this trend is not addressed" (Mathews 2003:313) [14].

A staff survey conducted for the Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions (Bett 1999) [3] in the United Kingdom, pointed to a considerable increase in recruitment and retention difficulties for both academic and support staff since 1998. Around one in five institutions reported experiencing difficulties filling academic positions in 2001 (18 per cent), compared to one in twenty in 1998 (six per cent). The subject areas causing the most problems, according to the report included computing/IT, business subjects (accountancy/finance, business/management, law and economics), engineering, science subjects (biological sciences, chemistry and physics), nursing/midwifery and professions allied to medicine, and education.

The percentage increase in retention difficulties was of a similar magnitude, with 7.6 percent re-reporting retention difficulties 'most of the time' or more in 2001, compared to 2.2 per cent in 1998. Departments most frequently mentioned as having a turnover problem were: computing and computer science; law; accountancy and finance; business management and information systems; engineering (including electrical); and education (European Union Control Association (EUCA 2002) [20]. Institutions reported that lecturers were the most difficult to recruit, with almost 60 of all institutions reporting difficulties. The percentage reporting difficulties in recruiting lecturers was similar in new and old universities, but lower in colleges. More old universities than new found it difficult to recruit professors and research assistants. Recruitment and retention problems were particularly acute in areas which had to compete with the private sector, such as law, IT and engineering (EUCA 2002) [20]. The result of this was that Higher Education Institutions reported difficulties attracting many candidates and those that they did attract were often not of the requisite quality. More-over, they also reported that it was difficult to recruit good young academic staff as a result of low starting salaries.

In fact, the triggers identified for brain drain, in general, are identical to those behind academic staff attrition. While brain drain suggests movement of skills across borders, this study is concerned with intra and inters skills movement

within the higher education and research institutions in Uttar Pradesh.

Factors Affecting Recruitment and Retention of Organizational Staff

High performance organizations are consistently out-performing their competitors on a number of human resource factors, including the level of teamwork and openness between co-workers, the training and development opportunities they offer to employees and the degree of pro-activity in HR planning. Developing this capability begins with the realization that effective human resource management underpins the competitiveness of organizations (Hiltrop 1999) [12].

According to, recruitment and retention is affected by the whole employment package (the rewards and disbenefits of the job) relative to other employment. These include pay and fringe benefits, intrinsic aspects of the job (for example, for academics, teaching and research), job security, work organization, autonomy, progression, family-friendly practices, congeniality of colleagues and the working environment etc. The more attractive the overall package, the more likely it will attract applicants and retain employees. The relative importance of these factors differs for recruitment and retention, due to informational differences between those in a job and potential recruits.

As the retention of talent with critical skill sets is acknowledged by organizations as vital for achievement of business growth and the building of organizational competencies, some organizations strive to be the 'employer of choice' by creating a positive environment and offering challenging assignments that, foster continued personal growth. An 'employer of choice' (Eoc) is an organization that out-performs its competition in the attraction development and retention of people with business, required aptitude, often through innovative and compelling human resources programmes (Dessler 2000; Clarke 2001) [9, 7].

The growing priority given by individuals to work -life balance (Kersley *et al.* 2004; Bonney 2005) [13, 4] also has implications for the design and implementation of talent management strategies. A shift in employers thinking and policy development from considering hours spent at work to the quality of contribution made while at work will do much to ensure as wide and diverse a talent pool as possible is accessed within their organizations. One example, according to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is the alignment of flexible working policies with career development schemes. Some career schemes may appear closed to those employees who don't work full time or have continuity of employment, so underutilizing organizational talent.

Research Methodology

Methodology

The study adopted survey research method using quantitative research design. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather primary data from respondents. The survey research strategy is an effective tool to get opinions, attitudes and descriptions as well as getting cause-and-effect relationships. Describe surveys and questionnaires as among the most popular data collection methods in business and social science research.

Sampling/Research Participants

Since it was not practicable to get the sampling frame of academic staff in the universities that were surveyed, convenience sampling was used in selecting the research participants. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003) [8] convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Academic staff with doctoral degrees was targeted since that category of staff has a higher attrition tendency than other academics with lower qualifications. It is believed that this category of participants is knowledgeable about the subject of investigation because some of them must have either been attracted from their previous employment, or has lost some of their colleagues to attrition.

Measuring Instrument

A 52-item self-developed survey questionnaire was used as a data gathering instrument for the study. The 52-items were factored into seven (7) components using principal component analysis as follows: stimulating academic environment/challenging work; work autonomy; individual basic pay and related financial benefits; job security/employment tenure; work flexibility; availability of research resources; and inter-personal relationship. The questionnaire was developed after a comprehensive review of the literature had been undertaken, thus enriching the construct validity of the instrument. The research questionnaire had an overall Cranach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, thus confirming its reliability.

Questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert-Scale ranging from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). Example of questions asked under each sub-head include: "I left my previous employment because the work environment is not stimulating enough". "I did not find new challenges in my previous job". "I left my previous employment because I did not have total freedom to do my job". "The principle of academic freedom is compromised in my previous employment". "The basic pay and fringe benefits in my previous employment was not competitive enough". "My previous employment did not guarantee a long-term tenure". "I left my previous employment because I could not conveniently schedule my working hours". "My previous employment could not provide me with sufficient resources for teaching and research".

"I did not enjoy good working relationship with my colleagues in my previous employment". "My colleagues in my previous employment relate with me on the basis of my nationality/ ethnicity".

Statistical Analysis

Correlation statistics using Chi-Square technique was used to establish whether there is any relationship between the selected variables and attrition of academic staff as hypothesised in the study. The normality of the data was determined by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

The significance of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was greater than 0.05 in all the tests. This implies that the normality of the data can be assumed. The pair wise deletion method was used to treat missing values. Principal component analysis was used to group the questionnaire items into 7 factors.

Research Findings

The Chi-square value for stimulating academic environment/challenging work was $\chi^2(4) = 11.41$ with an associated P-value of 0.03 (Table 1). The result provided strong evidence of an association between this variable and actual attrition of academic staff. There was no evidence of association between work autonomy with a Chi Square value of $\chi^2(4) = 22.32$ with an associated P-value of 0.13 and actual attrition of academic staff. Although individual basic pay and related financial benefits provided evidence of association between this variable and actual attrition of academic staff with a Chi Square value of $\chi^2(4) = 9.61$, the level of association was not significant (P-value of 0.08). Job security/employment tenure attracted a Chi-square value of $\chi^2(4) = 19.71$ and an associated P-value of 0.01 thus demonstrating a strong association between the variable and actual attrition of academic staff. Work flexibility attracted a Chi-square value of $\chi^2(4) = 39.61$ and an associated P-value of 0.21 suggesting lack of association while availability of research resources had a Chi-square value of $\chi^2(4) = 18.36$ with an associated P-value of 0.02. The result provided strong evidence of an association between this variable and actual attrition of academic staff. Academic staff were also significantly influenced by inter-personal relationship with a Chi-square value of $\chi^2(4) = 21.93$ and an associated P-value of 0.04. The research results provided significant positive relationships between attrition variables and actual attrition of academic staff (inter-personal relationship, job security/tenure, availability of research/teaching resources, stimulating academic environment/challenging work), on one hand, and negative correlation between other variables (work flexibility, basic pay/related benefits, work autonomy/workload), on the other hand. The research hypothesis (as stated) can therefore neither be accepted nor rejected.

Table 1: Levels of significance between attrition/ retention variables and actual attrition of academic staff from their present employment

S. No.	Attrition/retention variable	P -value	χ^2 value
1	Inter-personal relationship	0.004	21.93
2	Job security/tenure	0.001	19.71
3	Availability of research/teaching resource	0.002	18.36
4	Stimulating academic environment/challenging environment/ challenging Work	0.003	11.41
5	Work flexibility	0.21	39.61
6	Basic pay/related benefits	0.008	9.61
7	Work autonomy/workload	0.13	22.32

$P < 0.05$ level of significance

The seven factors were further confirmed by the rotation sums of squared loading after Vari max rotation. The seven factors are presented in Table 2.

Discussion

Attrition Factor - Inter-personal Relationship

Inter-personal relationship in this study goes beyond the usual lack of co-operation and collegiality amongst colleagues as reported in many previous studies. Many respondents in the instant research alluded to hostile behaviour from colleagues, behaviours that were informed by ethnic and national affiliations. It should be re-ported here that universities in Uttar Pradesh attract good number of expatriates from other African countries, and indeed the world over. Although the biographical section of the

measuring instrument in this research does not include ethnicity/nationality of respondents, their response to some questionnaire items suggests that many of them were expatriates and others be-longing to other races/ethnic groupings within Uttar Pradesh. Some respondents reported what has become known in Uttar Pradesh as 'xenophobic' abuses, a trend which is supposedly strange to academic community. This reported behaviour is inimical to healthy teaching, learning and research environment. Finally, The Panel encourages the University to investigate the extent of xenophobia and intolerance between local and foreign staff and ur-gently develop appropriate interventions to create an environment in which tolerance and appreciation of diversity are regarded as essential values by the University community.

Table 2: Rotated factor loading for attrition variables

Attrition variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
Interesting academic curriculum				0.715			
Interesting students				0.538			
Availability of infrastructure				0.563			
Freedom to design task					0.441		
Degree of supervision by superior					0.348		
Nature of workload					0.444		
Competitive salary						0.44	
Merit pay						0.441	
Salary commensurate with experience/qualification						0.404	
Other financial benefits						0.458	
Non-financial benefits						0.346	
Permanent appointment			0.698				
Fixed-term contract			0.489				
Option of working from home							0.491
Can influence working hours							0.433
Work schedule permit other engagements							0.501
Research incentives			0.666				
Research funding			0.568				
Modern teaching technology			0.583				
Research networking			0.585				
Co-operation from colleagues	0.598						
Frustrated relationship with colleagues	0.601						
Experience ethnicity	0.682						
Experience racial discrimination	0.483						
Hostile relationship with	0.783						

Attrition Factor - Competitive Salary/ Fringe Benefits

Individual salary and other financial fringe benefits was the only variable that does not positively influence academic staff to move from their previous employment. This result is inconsistent with many other studies which found salary and financial incentives to be positively related to employee retention.

However, the instant research result concurs with the findings of other studies which argue that money has not remained as good a motivator as it was in the past, the efficiency of money as a motivator for skilled employee is quite low. Hays (1999) [11] advises that if managers reward performance with only money, they will be losing the substance of retention because there are other more powerful ways of motivating quality employees and these include freedom and flexibility in the organization.

However, salary differential would, perhaps be a significant factor if the emphasis in this study was movement of academic staff from universities to the private sector. This sector

(private) has been known to have used money as a major

variable in attracting academics. In their comparison of jobs in the Higher Education (HE) sector with similar jobs in the public and private sector, the Hay study in Bett (1999) [3] found that not only did academic jobs compare unfavorably with similarly 'sized' jobs in the private sector, but also with other public sector employment. For the Independent Review on Pay and Conditions, Hay Consulting (in Bett 1999) [3] conducted a job evaluation of academic jobs and compared these jobs with other jobs in the public and private sectors of similar content or 'size'. The conclusions of the study are that there were indeed large pay differentials between the HE sector and elsewhere. These were largest at the top and bottom of the scale (that is, professors and senior lecturers, or equivalents).

And in London and the South East, the most competitive wages were to be found at the Lecturer level in the old university sector and at the Senior Lecturer level in new universities and colleges. The study also conducted an exercise in order to take into account other non-pecuniary factors (for example, the length of the working week, holidays, cars, pensions and other fringe benefits) that might

offset or amplify these differences in salary. The results of this exercise were that the picture remains broadly the same, with tangible rewards lower for academic jobs. Indeed, for some more senior roles, rewards were even less competitive when the broader pack-age is taken into account.

Attrition Factor - Stimulating Work Environment / Challenging Work

Stimulating academic environment and challenging work provided a strong evidence of association with attrition of academic staff in our research. This variable has over the time remained a strong motivating factor for employees generally to remain or leave their present organization. The nature of the job has an important influence on employee satisfaction and-hence the balance of the positive and negative factors will impact upon the ability of the higher education institutions to retain current and to attract new staff. It is certainly believed that academics experience substantial intrinsic job satisfaction (Oshagbemi 1996; Bryson and Barnes 2000a) ^[16, 2]. Some staff may not wish to undertake all three of these tasks and forcing all academic staff to undertake all three will push dissatisfied staff out of the sector. According to the Association of University Teachers in the UK, 'There is no reason why staff should not, as an informed career choice, concentrate substantially in any one of the three major components of academic work' (AUT 1995) ^[1]. Moreover, it appears that the positive aspects of academic life are being squeezed by burdens in areas which staff dislikes, such as bureaucratic administration (Bryson and Barnes 2000a) ^[2].

Attrition Factor - Job Security/Tenure

Job security is an important influence on job satisfaction and the use of fixed-term contracts has been identified as important factor causing academics to leave the sector. The result of our study is consistent with this statement as job security/tenure was found to have a strong association with attrition of academic staff. There are essentially three types of contract: permanent, fixed-term and hourly paid (time on task). Indications from the respondents suggest that most of them left their previous employers because they could not get permanent appointments. Those of them who are on fixed-term (con-tract) appointments are considering leaving as soon as they have opportunity to move to a more secured employment. This consideration seems to have been necessitated by the age of this category of senior academics who, on the average are in their middle-age with family responsibilities and would want some sort of stability in their employment and family-life. This result is supported by a similar finding by in a turnover survey of selected public and private sector organizations in Uttar Pradesh. We found widespread dissatisfaction and demoralisation among contract researchers, some of whom have been employed on 20 different contracts in as many years. For many researchers there is no career structure and little hope of obtaining a permanent position....Many researchers are either new in position or searching for their next contract. Research is left unfinished or unpublished.. However, evidence from other studies contends that job security is not a retention antecedent for the new generation of skilled employees. To this category of employees, job security is a positive feedback of their labour market worth and this makes them look for a daily proof that their work matters to the organization. This provides employees with a sense of

security because, to them, if they are doing a good job, they are secured, if not with their present employers, then with another one.

Attrition Factor - Work Autonomy/ Work-Load/Flexibility

One benefit of working in academia has been the degree of autonomy of the hours and pat-tern of working. Recent evidence suggests that, at least with regard to the number of hours worked, this is no longer (if it were ever) the case. The results of our study show that respondents equally enjoyed autonomy of work and flexible working hours in their former employment. These factors do not therefore motivate them to leave. The suggestion therefore is that work autonomy and flexible working hours are prevalent factors in institutions of higher learning in Uttar Pradesh. It also appear that academic staff has come to term with the issue of work load and have considered that to be an important characteristics of academic work. Concur-ring, the Hays study concludes that academics had flexibility over their work patterns and that there was 'no reason to regard higher education work as radically more or less demanding than work in the rest of the economy' (Bett 1999) ^[3]. Indeed, they argued that the flexibility academics had in organising their work patterns compensated for the extra hours worked. Note however that there are negative aspects to this increased 'flexibility'.

Attrition Factor - Availability of Research/ Teaching Resources

There is a high correlation between avail-ability of teaching and research facilities and attrition of academics. In most universities in Uttar Pradesh, teaching and research constitutes an important component of academic work and promotions are essentially based on these factors. It is therefore imperative for academics to have facilities that will assist them achieve teaching and research excellence. However, most universities surveyed in this research lacked sufficient provision of these facilities, hence the attrition of their senior academics and researchers. This factor was clearly stated by as thus:

The focus on specific initiatives to support junior faculty stems from the fact that they are the more likely to leave their current positions and also because whatever is done right to retain junior faculty will provide the right signals that will attract others to the institution. Furthermore, when a department makes a new hire at the assistant professor level, it has invested one of its most valuable resources: a tenure-track faculty position. If the department does not nurture that new professor, it greatly reduces the probability of a good return on that investment. On the other hand, if the department facilitates access to good knowledge and resources required to develop a new faculty member's career, the pay-off is likely to be a valued colleague for many years.

Conclusion

The study found the following variables as providing significant grounds for the attrition of academic employees in the universities: interpersonal relationship, job security/tenure, availability of research/teaching resources, stimulating academic environment/challenging work. On the other hand, other variables such as work flexibility, basic pay/related benefits, work autonomy/workload could not be

associated with the attrition of academics in the universities. The study therefore concluded that university authorities should devise a retention strategy around the attrition variables in order to facilitate retention of senior academics in our institutions of higher learning.

Recommendations

Many of the challenges discussed above have put some universities at considerable risks of losing their senior academics and this will have serious implications for teaching and research excellence. These challenges also have the potential of negatively affecting institutional rating amongst top universities in the world. It is therefore important for universities to strategically manage the academic staff recruitment and retention push and pull factors. Senior academics with the potential of making the difference in terms of teaching and research should be considered for permanent appointments. This will significantly improve their job satisfaction and commitment to the university.

Inter-personal relationship, research collaboration and the spirit of collegiality is quite important for a successful academic career. University governing councils and management should initiate policies and programmes that pro-mote and sustain these practices with a view to completely eliminate xenophobic tendencies in our institutions of learning. Although academic staff have come to term with the issue of work-load as inherent in academia, management should, as much as possible avoid inordinate workloads which are not only morale-deflating, but physically and psychologically draining. Universities must find a pragmatic ways of balancing student intake with available resources in order to maintain the integrity and credibility of their programmes and credentials. Even though there has been a plethora of argument against using pay as a retention factor, the fact still remain that rewarding people based on their contributions to the organization will not be out of place. There is the need to implement some system of differential rewards if high performing academics are to be retained by individual universities.

Everything put together, attracting and retaining high performing senior academic staff is a HR function and as such, HR departments should put in place mechanisms that will enable them to track the reasons for the resignation of high performing academic employees. Such mechanisms could include exit interviews or a periodic job satisfaction surveys. Information collected through this process will be very useful in understanding the reasons why staff members leave the institutions, or have intentions to leave. This will assist the authorities in determining whether there are significant problems that need to be addressed so as to avoid unnecessary loss of senior academics. Sustainable retention practices in our universities (particularly the previously disadvantaged institutions) will assist in stabilizing the quantity and quality of academic and research programmes in the higher education and training sector of the economy.

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