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## AUTHORS

Solly Matshonisa Seeletse  
Joel Lehlaba Thabane

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Solly Matshonisa Seeletse (South Africa), Joel Lehlaba Thabane (South Africa)

## Foremost causes of high academic turnover rate at some South African universities

### Abstract

The paper focuses on experiences of resigning academics in higher education institutions (HEIs) of South Africa. The concern was the huge monetary cost involved, and student delays due to these resignations. The networks of the researchers benefitted this study by being alerted to resignations of academics in HEIs and arranging some of the interviews that were held. In some cases, exit interviews were also used. The study shows that these HEIs are negligent by failing to develop the appropriate policies for the new dispensation, and the bad practices of appointing managers. In addition, the improperly appointed managers lack skill and knowledge in management. As a result they discriminate, victimize and make job unbearable for some employees. Some of these employees who end up rising. Moreover, the decisions taken by the improperly appointed managers are also not monitored. Hence, the poor decisions made are not being over-ruled. The recommendations are that policies should be designed to align with the laws stated, and suitably experienced and qualified officials be appointed to enforce the policies. Also, interventions are needed regarding the powers given to improperly appointed managers.

**Keywords:** academic turnover, job satisfaction, recruitment, retention.

**JEL Classification:** I2.

### Introduction

South Africa's higher education institutions (HEIs) face exceptional challenges in academic staffing. They are expected to attract highly talented academics with potential in teaching, research and community engagement, among others. On the other hand, competition for the best academics is rife (King, 2007). Also, competition for talented individuals between private sectors and HEIs is high. Another intense competition is within HEIs. The laws of the country also bring their own pressures. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996*, the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1999*, the *Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998*, the *Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1997*, the *Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998* are some laws posing countless challenges on recruitment in HEIs. An HEI's Human Resources Department could offer expert advice on the recruitment process that aligns with government expectations. As the HEIs operate in a diverse environment, those with attractive policies can entice the best academics.

This paper was stimulated by discussions with colleagues and networks from various South African HEIs, with complaints and complements of good and bad practices affecting academics, and the high turnover that resulted in cases of bad practices. Govender (2008) also emphasizes the ensuing

academic staff shortage in South African HEIs. The study, then, focused on the bad practices and the good practices that could stabilize academics and enhance their high performance. Even though resigning academics were targeted, the study also allowed academics who had experiences to participate.

### 1. Academic staff employment and retention strategies

Employing academics consists of recruitment and retention. In-between recruitment, there are screening of worthy candidates and the selection of the best one(s). Notten (2003), however, points out that a common human resources practice in HEIs is to develop talent from leading students within HEIs and developing their career paths. Internal constraints and external attractions, coupled with students' preferences, compound to preventions of cloning and recruitment of internal talent.

**1.1. Recruitment.** Recruitment is a process of acquiring applications of available candidates qualified to fill vacant positions of an organization (Carrel et al., 2000). It requires a formal policy with proper guidelines and objectives. A recruitment policy provides rules for recruitment. It empowers management to attract competent candidates and to appoint the best applicant(s). The recruitment process should be exhaustive, and applicants should undergo competency-based interviews. This may help to avoid high turn-over rate. The policy should also compel the HEI to search for candidates with a range of skills and versatility. Also, it should distinguish between posts to be filled by external recruits and those that should be filled by internal promotions or succession. The South African

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Solly Matshonisa Seeletse, Ph.D., DBA, Professor, Department of Statistics and Operations Research, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, South Africa.

Joel Lehlaba Thabane, M.Sc., Lecturer, Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, South Africa.

general practice is that posts in a fixed establishment should be filled by transfers or promotions. If a suitable candidate is not available, posts can be filled through recruiting externally.

Recruitment should consider that some subjects have more shortages of academics, especially where demands are shared by various sectors. This general shortage of leading academics ensures competition in HEIs to attract and retain their skilled resources (Notten, 2003). Some universities have judicious policies of compensating scarce skilled academics with a scarce skill allowance to keep them.

*1.1.1. Recruitment policy.* Recruitment of staff is crucial in HEIs. According to Metcalf et al. (2003), HEI's recruitment policy should be fair and consistent, be non-discriminatory with regards to sex, race, age, religion, or disability, and should conform to statutory regulations of the country, and agreed best practices. The most effective strategies for attracting, motivating and retaining leading academics should be applied. For South African HEIs, policies and procedures should align with the *Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1995* (Carell et al., 2000).

*1.1.2. Recruitment strategies.* Attracting and retaining the right talent in HEIs is a key strategic objective. The old recruitment focus on skills and knowledge has changed to focus on values and culture fit. There are internal and external factors that affect recruitment.

**Internal factors:** Common internal factors involved in academic staff recruitment in HEIs are organizational plan, organizational policy, organizational culture, organizational image, organizational structure, and organizational requirements (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Crook et al. (2008) view the *organizational strategic plan* as the basis for short-term period, in which recruitment initiatives are based.

Vallaster (2004) advises that an *organizational policy* should enable promotions of internal academics. Applying this restricts external recruitment to the junior or entry posts cases. Existing academics that are offered priority in promotions can stabilize the HEI. It also creates a sense of security for the academics. Also, this policy needs to be clear. In South African HEIs, for example, this may include affirmative action, promotion from within or employment of the handicapped (Sen, 2005). Also, all the relevant HEI stakeholders must participate to determine the policy. Mokoditsoa (2011) enlightens that non-promotion of high performing academics and the recruitment of outsiders in an HEI create a low morale, depression and demotivation. Bad practices of caution are unjustified promotion, nepotism, and employment due to being of the same

community/clan. Thus, recruitment policies and practices must be clear.

An ideal *organizational culture* combines high quality with refusing a conformance culture. Standards are lowered, and quality is difficult to achieve by taking popular decisions, pleasing people, doing what the managers are expected to do, being pressurized into appointing people, overlooking poor performance, allowing poor standards, failing to discipline offenders, breaking rules, ignoring sensitive problems, and victimizing minority high performers who reject managerial poor standards (Van Dyk, 2008). Some HEIs do not create a culture of transparency, openness, mutual trust and respect where all relevant stakeholders are involved, contribute opinions and play a role in the culture experience. Molotsi (2012) informs that an HEI image entails what an HEI does. According to Alkire and Deneulin (2009), the quality of job applicants depends highly on the image of an HEI. Worthy applicants tend to shun controversial HEIs and apply for positions in reputable ones. The latter HEIs have shown significant growth over the years. Thus, the image has an impact in attracting and retaining staff. Also, the HEI is responsible to build its own reputation and image.

Regarding *recruitment requirements*, organizational requirements of recruits have a determining influence on the recruitment program (Arnkil, 2004). Abnormally high requirements may impede the program. Thus, it is essential that effective job analysis, job descriptions and job conditions are used to determine the requirements for the job and for the smooth running of a recruitment program.

An *HEI structure* is the arrangement of an HEI for operational purposes (Molotsi, 2012). There is an organogram which defines the protocol for reporting. One extension of this organogram is trade unionism in an HEI. A trade union is a formal association formed for continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. Carrell et al. (2000) define trade union as an organization of workers formed to further the economic and social interests of its members. Among other purposes of the existence of a trade union are job security and regulation. Thus, insecurity is often a driving force of unionization. Most employees join unions as a means of protecting their jobs. Members are, in most cases, expected to be protected from dismissal, retrenchment and unilateral action by management in changing job descriptions and working conditions. A registered trade union, in terms of the Labor Relations laws, is sufficiently representative of the employees in a workplace, under the *Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1995*, and continues to be a body corporate (South Africa, 1995).

Unregistered unions may enter into agreements with employers, but have no statutory rights. Unions aim to improve conditions such as wages and other benefits at the workplace, to defend the status quo and to protect members from dismissal, retrenchment and even cuts in pay. The presence of a trade union can have significant implications for the structure of an organization and for the management of human resource. For union employees, Human Resources' procedures and policies are shaped by a written agreement between the management and the union.

A common practice in HEIs is managers being afforded more importance in deciding who they wish to appoint, at times even disregarding excellent applicants (Molotsi, 2012). These included experiences where the heads of departments (HODs) would be asked to state their support for candidates. Unfavored ones are often not given the deserved preference, while the favored ones would be supported even when they are mediocre. In many such cases, the managers involved were themselves unjustifiably placed in the top positions.

**External factors:** External factors include government policies and competition. Mokoditsoa (2011) states external factors as Government legislation, while competition for best candidates is an obvious factor in any sector. Government Acts (*Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1995, the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998, the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997*) influence recruitment as follows:

*The Labor Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 (LRA):* The purpose of this Act is to advance economic development, social justice, labor peace, and the democratization of the workplace. This is to give effect to, and regulate the fundamental rights stated in Section 27 of the Constitution of South Africa, in that every person shall have the right to fair labor practice. Since its inception in 1996, the *LRA* has brought about fundamental revisions to the employment relationship in South Africa. Venter (2003) states that the *LRA* gives effect to constitutionally entrenched rights such as the right to strike, freedom of association, equality, and others. The Act applies to most employees and employers in South Africa, and creates new rights, structure and procedures. The HEIs are covered by the *LRA*. In mature and progressive HEIs, the *LRA* has avital effect in standardizing labor rights and labor relations processes, resulting in greater opportunity for consistency, efficiency, social justice and equity.

*The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (EEA):* The purpose of this Act is to achieve equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment, by eliminating unfair discrimination; implementing Affirmative Action measures to redress the imbalances in employment experienced by the designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace. The EEA stipulates that no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee in any employment policy or practice, on one or more of grounds including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language, and birth.

*The Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 (SDA):* The purpose of the *SDA* is to encourage development of skills for the South African workforce; to increase levels of investment in education and training in the labor market and to improve the return on that investment; inspire employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment, provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills, to provide new entrants to labor market work experience, and employ persons with difficulty to be employed; encourage workers to participate in learnerships and other training programs; improve the employment prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, and to redress those disadvantages through training and education; ensure the quality of education and training in and for the workplace; and provide and regulate employment services.

*The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (HEA):* The purpose of this Act is to control HEIs; provide for the establishment, determine the composition and functions of the Council of HEIs (CHE); provide for the appointment and functions of an independent assessor; provide for the registration of private HEIs; provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in HEIs; provide for transitional arrangements and the repeal of certain laws; and provide for matters connected therewith.

*The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997 (BCEA):* The purpose of this Act is to advance economic development and social justice, basically to enable the right to fair labor practices by establishing and making provision for the regulation of the *BCEA*. The Act applies to most employees and employers, including the HEIs (Venter, 2003).

It is desirable to restructure and transform programs and institutions to respond better to the Human

Resources' economic and development needs of the country, since it will help to provide optimal opportunities for learning and the creation of knowledge.

**Competition:** Competition entails rivalry between two or more parties striving to gain a specific end by following certain standard rules of participation (Cook, 2008). Competition in South African HEIs has intensified for skilled academic workforce and reputation. Employee engagement is an important issue. Former white HEIs have an edge in the competition, based on the resources accumulated over the years and the reputation amassed also during their past privileged years. Some of the former black HEIs have historical bad legacies and current management weaknesses at various divisions that still hold them back.

**1.2. Screening.** Some advertised jobs struggle to secure many applications due to scarcity of the subjects serving as requirements or criteria. In such instances, only few applicants submit the applications, and there are also cases where no single application is received. Cases of lack of submissions or fewer than required submissions may require job re-advertisement, while some few applications may proceed for interviews. Such cases can be handled in the interviewing. However, in subjects where there are unenviably many applications, a smaller sample of application may be needed to manage the process. Screening, also known as shortlisting, is a process which starts when a sufficient number of applications for a specific job has been received (Mampana, 2015). This process disqualifies unqualified applicants and ranks the leading ones based on the information they submitted after the verification processes for qualifications and previous experiences. Candidates are filtered on merit for inclusions and exclusion in the selection process, reducing the smaller number of applicants to a manageable leading group who will then have better chances of competing to be selected.

**1.3. Selection.** After screening, fewer applicants who qualify for the advertised job are invited for an interview where the best candidate is appointed after convincing a dedicated panel that he/she is the most suitable candidate. According to Nel, van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono and Werner (2004), applicant selection is the process of trying to determine the individual who best matches a particular job in the organizational context, considering individual differences, the job requirements and the organization's internal and external environment. This stage of the selection process also ranks the candidates on merit, and also, in the process, classi-

fies appointable ones. Unsuitable ones are discarded, and among the suitable ones, a contingency plan is made such that, if the top ranked ones reject the job offer made, others in the queue are then appointed until the vacancy is filled. If refusals occur until the last suitable one, the job can, then, be re-advertised.

**1.4. Retention.** The HEI's Human Resources intention is to retain only the top academics, which is the point of reference in this paper. Mediocre ones are usually wished to resign and retrenched. When they falter, they usually become easy targets to dismiss (Metcalf et al., 2003). In the case of this study, retention of academic employees is to sustain their employment in an HEI. Strategies to hold on to top-class academics are needed, since competitor HEIs can poach them with convincing benefits and rewards for high performance. Retention strategies include remuneration, reward system, fringe benefits, promotional activities for performance, and conditions of service.

*1.4.1. Remuneration:* According to Molotsi (2012), higher paying HEIs are more preferred than low paying ones. Experience shows that the former HEIs are more effective recruitment and poaching arenas for high performers than the former ones. Some of the low paying HEIs realized that their programs are disrupted when they lose top academics, and that they also lose funds during recruitment. In the long term, such losses could be offset by paying market-related salaries. Hence, some have decided to develop remuneration structures that can appeal to high performers. Well-structured salary packages could attract top academics and serve as a good retention strategy for the HEI (Nel et al., 2004). In addition, academics should be remunerated based on their performance, and the scarce skills categories should be considered. A benchmark for development can be taken from leading nations that used special higher remuneration for scarce skills (Greenbag, 2004). In addition to standard remuneration, other incentives could be the reward or remuneration for performing duties outside the scope in the job description.

*1.4.2. Reward/compensation system:* The objective of the reward system includes attracting, motivating and retaining staff at all academic levels (Barney, 2001). To realize this objective, management considers several critical policy issues such as pay incentives to reward individuals or group behavior, performance bonuses and scarce skill allowances, among others. Compensation also enhances an improvement of both employer and employee performance. Where performance is rewarded accordingly, the employees are usually motivated.

In addition, the reward system serves to attract and retain employees, and helps to provide for the personal needs of high performers. Carrell et al. (2000) state that effective staffing can retain the Human Resource highly likely to serve an HEI's need. They, further, indicate that the reward system should enhance efforts to retain productive academics. This system can assist to attract and retain good academics, and brings job satisfaction for the institution to achieve its goals. The benefits that the institution offers to employees fall within the reward system. Compensation is vital in job satisfaction and staff retention. Pay satisfaction leads to desirable behavior value, increases employee effort and decreases absenteeism and turnover (Muchinsky, 2005).

*1.4.3. Fringe benefits:* Du Plooy and Snyman (2006) state that some reasons to remain in the HEI employ are due to the study benefits granted to both the staff members and their dependants, housing allowance, transport assistance, and medical benefits, among others. When these are included in the salary package, then, it is a high salary package that counts. Many academics decide to continue in an HEI because of these. However, for many academics study benefit is a temporary bait, because some academics, and their dependents may not necessarily need it.

*1.4.4. Promotion of present employees:* Promotion is an important source to attract candidates for vacancies on positions that need to be filled by promotion or transfer of existing personnel. Also, promotions improve the staff morale as they know that their good work is acknowledged (Sawyer, 2002). Career move for academics is identified by promotion opportunities when criteria are fulfilled, and encourages hard work to reach the criteria for higher academic ranks. Experience shows that some managers lack this knowledge, mostly because they were favored to obtain higher ranks they did not deserve.

*1.4.5. Job satisfaction:* Job satisfaction describes how content an individual is with his/her job (Weiss, 2002). Generally, happier academics are more satisfied from their jobs. For academics, job satisfaction is a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of the job, an affective reaction to the job, and an attitude towards the job. Job satisfaction increases motivation. Enhancers of job satisfaction include the management style and culture, employee involvement, empowerment and autonomous work position. Job satisfaction is an important attribute which is frequently measured by organizations.

*1.4.6. Succession planning:* Effective internal staffing plans, policies and procedures promote the

achievement of both organization and employee's personal goals. For instance, effective staffing can retain the human resource most likely to serve an organization's needs (Carrell et al., 2000). An organization may look internally (within) to fill vacant posts. Succession planning is a system in which internal employees are developed for senior positions in order to fill higher positions with relative ease when senior ones leave the employer (Walshe, 2008). HEIs are warned that some academics refrain from succession planning in order to continue working after retirement age. This is an obstacle for increased research in HEIs.

## 2. Nemeses of retention

Symptoms of academic depression include that some hardworking academics do not feel recognized or appreciated for the good work they do. Many talented and valued staff members leave their HEIs, and others rebel, merely following rules and doing only up to where their job descriptions prescribe (Judge, Thoresen, Bono & Patton, 2001). Absenteeism, frequent lateness of arrival at work and poor performance are some of the results of demotivation of academics.

**2.1. Discrimination.** Discrimination pertains to treating people unequally, unreasonably, and Carrell et al. (2000) warn against it. The EEA explicitly forbids unfair discrimination (South Africa, 1999). This act aspires to ensure that institutions recruit the best candidates. There is no difference between expected or required performance of temporary and permanent employees. Therefore, the same care and attention must be given to every appointment. In academia, discrimination problems include cases where unsuitable candidates are appointed to senior positions. Such appointees are insecure. Also, many of them fail to develop to fit the positions they occupy. They also treat subordinates unfairly as well. Instead of working to earn academic trust, they ill-treat independent thinkers who have different opinions from them.

**2.2. Victimization.** Victimization of an employee refers to persecution for acting in a way that senior personnel do not approve. This would usually expose the weaknesses of senior personnel occupying the positions they do not deserve (Mokoditso, 2011). Many employees are victimized for opposing undesirable decisions, and for having opinions that differ from superiors. Others are victimized for reporting dishonesty, or for supporting cases where exploitation is being mistreated. The EEA stipulates that no employee must be victimized for lodging a complaint or allegation of discrimination, or for acting as a

witness in connection with proceedings under the Act, or has been involved in any other way or intends to get involved in any of these actions.

### 3. Methodology

The study used two research methods with a view to gather as much relevant information as possible, namely, interviews and documentation. The researchers designed a questionnaire to collect data. Qualitative research design was used to generate possible leads and ideas in order to formulate realistic results from fact-finding with the support of demonstrable facts from the resolutions of the study problem (Walliman & Bousmaha, 2001).

The study investigated the experienced causes of the high turnover rate; the non-retention of the academic staff at the university; and possible solutions to curb the problems by investigating that could have encouraged the academics to remain with their HEIs.

**3.1. Participants.** The direct participants included resigned employees who could be identified, and those who had willingly volunteered to participate by sharing their experiences. The study stretched from 2008 to 2015 using the convenience approach of purposive sampling. One hundred and thirty-six (136) academics participated directly in the study by being interviewed, and 56 others provided copies of their exit interviews.

**3.2. Data collection instruments.** The interviews were based on an interview guide and the necessary probing to answer the research questions: "What influenced you to leave this HEI, and what would have made you to stay?" The other source was documentary review through the copies of the exit interviews.

**3.3. Data collection.** The respondents were asked to determine the times and places for interviews, and interviews were held at their convenience. The researcher interviewed the respondents. The other data were collected from the exit interviews for data triangulation, which is to obtain information from multiple sources and to ensure credibility through engagement and reflexivity (O'Boyle, 2009).

**3.4. Ethical considerations.** Ethical considerations related to this study were based on beneficence, respect for human dignity and justice, including consent, confidentiality and anonymity (Michael, 2006). The participants were fully informed about the investigation, its purpose, and why they were selected. The issue of confidentiality and voluntary participation was stressed. The right to confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that the participants' names and addresses were not disclosed and no information was linked to an individual. Furthermore,

the researcher respects the participants' right to privacy by allowing participants to discuss issues that they felt comfortable with.

### 4. Results

**4.1. Interviews.** The following issues were raised as primary causes of academic resignations of the 136 academics. Close to 85% (116 of 136) resigned after serving the HEIs for between 6 to 10 years. Over 90% (123 of the 136) indicated that the managers to whom they reported were not knowledgeable about academic work. Also, their (executive) deans and (executive) directors were unsupportive, discriminated against them, had been improperly appointed, and were the causes of mediocrity in their working environments. A few of them (over 36%  $\approx$  49 of 136) also indicated the favour of executive deans and directors giving presentations to outline their vision of the positions and answer questions to the relevant publics/stakeholders. They believe that failure to do this is one cause for the weakness in handling criticism and adapting when advised. Over 68% (93 of 136) respondents also stated that many such improperly appointed deans and directors were neither high performers nor exemplary to other academics prior to their placement. Rather, many of them were identified by their superiors for reporting other academics, and even for general gossip with them.

Relative to where they were working, the 136 resigned academics stated that they felt unworthy in the eyes of those to whom they were reporting. Over 71% (97 of 136) had thoughts of not resigning, but could not trust the promises of future change when nothing had been done in the past. In particular, the appointments of some line managers had been based on favoritism. Then, some practices of these line managers included discrimination and victimization by being refused promotions when less deserving ones were promoted. In some cases, colleagues in other departments were being promoted with less strict rigidity to criteria, while, in theirs, some were refused promotion even when they satisfied all the criteria set in the adverts.

The service conditions in the HEIs they were leaving did not please or attract these academics. However, the conditions were not the main cause, but the disparate treatment by line managers and the failure by top management to override the unfair decisions taken by some line managers. The academics felt that the conditions of service anywhere are long-term issues that could be rectified in time. The problem was bad practices of appointing undeserving line managers who ended up being their impediments and causes of their stress. In the end, the main problem was dissatisfaction of their job, as expe-

rienced by over 81% (111 of 136) of the respondents. These respondents were also convinced that line managers and middle managers either lacked experiences in what job satisfaction could enhance performance or they did not know the concept.

Most respondents (over 96%  $\approx$  131 of 136) indicated that academics were not satisfied with the strategies affecting them. About 45% of respondents mentioned that there were no proper remuneration and reward strategies, and the succession planning practices were at the discretion of some authorities who were biased towards some academics. Almost 84% (114 of 136) of respondents mentioned that competency of performing academics was not taken into consideration. Also, over 87% (119 of 136) complained that incompetent academics were not dealt with, as they obtained equivalent benefits as the competent and dedicated ones. This issue of incompetent academics was found to be demoralizing high performing ones.

According to over 97% (132 of 136) of the respondents, the practices of line and middle managers also went to the extent of overloading the high performers that they did not like with more work, and giving less and/or easy work to the underperformers they were fond of.

All the respondents stated that the legislation is not followed in the HEIs they were leaving. There were also no strategies to implement the laws, long-term academic own spaces and control them, the trade unions were ineffective, top management was not in control of poor performing middle managers, and no policies were implemented consistently.

**4.2. Exit interview forms.** The exit interviews were available in documented form from 56 academics who had resigned from the HEIs. The reasons for leaving the HEIs varied from unsatisfactory salary packages (82%  $\approx$  46 of 56), unsatisfactory working conditions (78%  $\approx$  44 of 56), leadership factors (67%  $\approx$  38 of 56), workload (72%  $\approx$  41 of 56) and lack of resources (58%  $\approx$  33 of 56), discrimination (88%  $\approx$  50 of 56), victimization (85%  $\approx$  48 of 56), frustration with unsuitable line managers (91%  $\approx$  51 of 56) and middle managers (94%  $\approx$  53 of 56). Quotes from the files included: “an individual’s contribution towards the HEI is neither considered nor appreciated until one decides to leave”, and “workload and staffing situation is not considered”. Potential and hardworking staff members are disadvantaged, in most instances”.

## 5. Discussion

The HEIs losing most academics, generally, lack retention strategies for academics. Therefore, the

turnover rates were high, but management did not intervene. Recruitment strategies such as recruitment policy, job profiles, clearly defined organizational culture, job knowledge and competencies were also lacking. Due to lack of human resources planning strategies for academics, some academic posts were advertised on *ad hoc* bases. In addition, the study observed that the lack of management support to academics was accelerating the problem and increasing the inefficiency of academic retention.

The resignations were caused by unsatisfactory salary packages, unsatisfactory working conditions, workload and lack of resources contributes to demoralizing the staff. The academics also resigned, because they felt unappreciated by superiors. They were also frustrated by lack of support by superiors as well, and, in some cases, they were victimized and/or discriminated against.

Most academic staff members resigned after they had worked in the HEI for 6 to 10 years due to factors such as lower than market-related salary packages, having ineffectual managers, unsupportive managers, lack of adequate resources, unsatisfactory working conditions, and workload. The resignations were sometimes triggered by losing hope that unsuitable managers were not improving to change the situation. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were also lacking.

## Recommendations

The HEIs that struggle with high academic turnover should:

- ◆ develop policies in line with the acts affecting HEIs by soliciting help of their attorneys;
- ◆ appoint compliance officers with experience to enforce execution of the policies;
- ◆ develop monitoring and evaluation policies and also implement them;
- ◆ develop academic retention policies, incentives, and incorporate scarce skill allowances in line with the HEI markets;
- ◆ limit the influence of trade unions to fair labor practice where meritorious appointments of academics are made.

## Conclusion

High HEI academic turnover rate in South Africa seems to be due to negligence, top management failure to appoint line and middle managers suitably, and lack of consistent monitoring and evaluating of practices at operational level, among others. Premature academic departure in HEIs often disrupts smooth student management. Hence, reduction of resignations is a desirable step in HEIs.

There was a clear indication that HEIs lose top academics at high turnover rates, managements were not intervening effectively, and, then, the HEIs affected are bound to recruit. Recruitment and planning strategies also seemed to be lacking. There were also evidences that the problem was escalating and amassing the inefficiency of academic retention. Low salary wages were also experienced in some of these HEIs.

Employees were apparently demoralized, as caused by unexceptional salary packages in some of the HEIs. These low salaries were not helpful in alleviating poor staffing. Most academics in the study

had been in a long service. Despite this, many of them were still on the low salary packages. Consequently, many opted to resign.

Some managers in the HEIs were failing to support some subordinates in work and in personal growth. In some HEIs, there were claims of cases in which managers tried to victimize subordinates and/or discriminated against them. Discretions of the managers, as well as their word, were given more importance by top management, mainly because the HEIs did not have any monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the authenticity of managers' claims.

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