Abstract

This study explores the academic staff turnover and its impact at the Coastal KZN TVET College in KwaZulu Natal. In the higher education landscape Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) exist to serve the purpose of providing vocational orientated programmes to the youth of RSA. As with all Higher Education institutions these colleges require appropriately skilled and qualified individuals to deliver the programmes offered at the colleges. The TVET sector has experienced many obstacles with retaining skilled and qualified staff; the reasons for academic staff turnovers are explored and discussed. Issues of staff dissatisfaction with working conditions and remuneration to staff development and training became apparent in the study.

The research design was quantitative in nature where structured questionnaires were used for the collection of data. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15 for Windows was used to analyse data and tables were used to present the results. A pre-coded closed ended questionnaire using 5 point Likert scale was administered to the target population. Only academic employees of Coastal KZN TVET College participated in this study. The survey method was employed in this research due to the small number of respondents. The personal method of data collection was used to administer the questionnaires to all 83 respondents in the Coastal KZN TVET College and a high response rate of 100% was obtained.

The study concludes with findings on the major factors that affect TVET staff with regard to turnover.

Keywords: Turnover, Impact, Dissatisfaction, Academic staff, Technical Vocational Education and Training.

1 INTRODUCTION

The vision for South Africa’s public Further Education and Training colleges was to create institutions that offered general vocational qualifications (the NCV) and more focused occupational qualifications, mainly to young people. The Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] (2012) Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training defines vocational education as the middle level of education which provides knowledge and skills to enter the economy, while occupational education refers to educational programmes that are focused on preparation for specific occupations, as well as ongoing professional development and training in the workplace.

The DHET (2012:1) Green Paper proposed a name change from Further Education and Training (FET) colleges to Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET), which was implemented in 2015. The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) described the purpose of the TVET College sector as being located within “a vision for a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school education and training system. This PSET system is supposed to “contribute to overcoming the structural challenges facing our society by expanding access to education and training opportunities and increasing equity, as well as achieving high levels of excellence and innovation” (DHET, 2012).


Under the national legislation and expectations of the TVET colleges it is of national importance to identify and addresses any matter that compromises the integrity of the colleges in achieving their goals. The National Development Plan (2012) outlined goals such as a national throughput rate of 75% by 2030 and to produces 10 000 artisans annually.
1.1 Employment at tvet colleges

Employee turnover is a complicated, continuous issue that affects the stability of the organizational climate, performance, productivity and the retention of qualified employees. The high cost of employee turnover comprises human resources (HR) expenses such as recruiting, hiring and training costs and is connected with measures of productivity and performance of organizations. Organizations could minimise expenses, maximise profits, expand productivity and deliberately plan to retain workers with the end goal to stay competitive in an unstable economy. Excessive employee turnover negatively influences organizations by delaying services and minimising profits as organizations attempt to recruit new workers; in addition innovation is decreased as qualified workers leave. Most likely, excellent, talented workers are key employees. If they quit their jobs, then their organizations may not be able to finish key business transactions. However, employee turnover opens doors for newcomers who may carry with them experience, knowledge and innovation.

Organisational reasons that could result in an employee voluntarily leaving include unfair treatment of other employees, being passed over for promotion or being asked to do something that is contrary to the person’s values or beliefs. The necessity to attract and retain high-performing employees is both a concern and a challenge for organisations in general. Given the effort and expense that go into recruitment and retention, organisations, including higher education institutions (HEI’s), should pay more attention to employees who leave the organisation.

1.2 Problem statement

Coastal KZN TVET College is one of the TVET Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal which plays a vital educational role in the lives of people. The researcher has worked at Coastal KZN TVET College for the past ten years. Over the years the researcher has observed the high rate of employee turnover. The reasons to this pattern were unknown to the institution or the researcher. Chabaya, Tshephe and Molotsi (2014:71) state that pay is defined as the wages, salary or compensation given to an employee in exchange for services the employee performs for the organization. Furthermore, most employees feel that they are worth more than they are paid and there is a natural disparity between what people think they should be paid and what organisations spend in compensation.

One of the most common reasons given by employees leaving their current employment is the availability of higher paying jobs. This reason can only be assumed as one that also applies to Coastal KZN TVET College employees. The researcher sought to investigate the cause of high rates of employee turnover. Pay is the most critical outcome of organizational membership for employees. On a similar note, one of the major causes of friction between the employers and their employees is a real or perceived lack of fairness in the distribution of wages. It is further argued that when the difference becomes too great and another opportunity occurs, turnover can result.

Job dissatisfaction has been found to lead to employee turnover. The employees who were dissatisfied with career growth opportunities and the organizational environment such as physical as well as meaningless work coupled with strenuous rules and regulations and poor relationships with especially management tended to leave the public sector in Pakistan. The relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover is reciprocal and this relationship is high when the unemployment rate is low in a society and similarly low when the unemployment rate is high. South African higher learning institutions have undergone many rapid changes, and faced numerous predicaments which have contributed to high levels of stress experienced by their employees.

1.3 Rationale of the study

This study investigates the causes of academic staff turnover and the consequence of employee turnover on the institution. It also attempts to identify the strategies that can be used to reduce high levels of employee turnover. This will therefore assist Coastal KZN TVET College and other TVET Institutions in future with measures to decrease the high level of academic staff turnover. The lack of literature on the subject of employment in the TVET sector is justification for this study.

1.4 The aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate academic staff turnover and its impacts at Coastal KZN TVET College
1.5 Objectives of the study

The study has the following research objectives:

- To investigate the causes of academic staff turnover at Coastal KZN TVET College.
- To examine the impact of academic staff turnover at Coastal KZN TVET College.
- To identify the strategies that can be used to reduce high levels of academic staff turnover at Coastal KZN TVET College.

To achieve the research objectives the following research questions were asked:

- What are the major determinant factors for academic staff to leave their jobs?
- What are the effects of academic staff turnover on the institutional day to day activities?
- Which departments or campuses experiencing more academic staff turnover?

1.6 Research questions

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

- What are the causes of academic staff turnover at Coastal KZN TVET College?
- What impacts does academic staff turnover have at Coastal KZN TVET College?
- What strategy can be used to reduce high level of academic staff turnover?

1.7 Significance of the study

Once the study was conducted and the findings were at hand the researcher suggested the strategies that could be used to reduce high levels of academic staff turnover through recommendations. This would therefore assist Coastal KZN TVET College and other TVET Institutions in future to decrease the high level of academic staff turnover.

1.8 Scope of the study

The Institution is located in various areas within South Africa’s Province of KwaZulu Natal, which include the central office in KwaMakhutha, the uMbonbulo Campus and other seven campuses namely As-Salaam (Ixopo), Appelsbosch (Ozwathini), Umlazi V, Umlazi BB, Swinton, Durban, Umbumbulu Campus, UbuheleBogu (Umzinto). The study focused on top management, middle management, academic staff and administration staff. The study is an in-house investigation at the Coastal KZN TVET College. The findings of this study will be useful in addressing problems associated with academic staff turnover at Coastal KZN TVET College. Quantitative questionnaires were utilised to collect data from all campuses of Coastal KZN TVET College. This was based on practical reasons and availability of resources.

2 METHODOLOGY

An extensive literature review was conducted with the intention of obtaining a thorough understanding of the topic being researched, gathering evidence and appraising and applying the evidence to support all assertions. The literature review included electronic media in several databases, published papers, conference papers, newspaper articles, journal articles, dissertations and books.

Quantitative technique was also used to collect data. Questionnaires were used to collect data.

The target population for this study was permanent employees of Coastal KZN TVET College. All levels, for Head of Department (HOD), senior lecturer and junior lecturer were represented in the sample. Based on the statistics provided by Human Resource Director (HRD) of Coastal KZN TVET College, the institution had eight campuses with current academic staff members of 200, the study included 80 of these academics. Ten academics from each campus participated to ensure the equitable representation of each campus.

The data was gathered from heads of department (HOD), senior lecturers and junior lecturers from all eight campuses of the institution.

This study employed probability random sampling.
SPSS was employed to analyse the data and the research instrument. Cronbach’s Alpha is a value used to indicate reliability when using SPSS. A value of > 0.7 is not considered reliable where a value of < 0.7 is considered reliable. The questionnaire yielded a value of 0.833 which indicates that the research questionnaire employed in this study was reliable.

The data was analysed by means of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 for Windows. The services of a statistician were employed to analyse the statistical information.

3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In conclusion it was noted that a larger number of staff were female which was a good indication that the institution was aware of gender equality practices, it is hoped that the institution would continue in this manner. A high number of the respondents (50%) were between the ages of 20 and 29; this is an indication that the institution is attracting young academics that are enthusiastic and willing to learn and they should be supported with their future endeavours. The highest level of academic qualifications amongst the respondents was a bachelor’s degree, the second was a bachelor’s degree and teaching qualification, and the institution should strive to increase their master’s degree qualification which currently sits at 3.6 percent.

The study concluded that most staff who responded were not motivated by monetary incentives as they were current not satisfied with their salaries or fringe benefits offered by the institution, it is understood that the institution was not the employer and DHET was responsible for these decisions.

The study further concluded that although the institution provided minimal support to staff development, job satisfaction was not a motivator for staying at the institution which is why there was a high number of employees who had been at the institution for a period of six to ten years. However, a majority of these employees were not engaging in any form of development due to the institution not providing opportunities or recognizing achievements.

The institution had no clear plan to address the current high academic staff turnover experienced at the Coastal KZN TVET College. The high academic staff turnover rate disrupted service delivery and led to a wastage of resources for the organization. Employee turnover caused a reduction in work productivity and staff were reluctant to assist in the situation as they were not properly compensated for the additional duties they took on.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the empirical analysis of results, the following recommendations are made for the Coastal KZN TVET College:

- In order to minimize academic employee turnover and its impact on the institution’s performance, the senior management have to consider all the causes and co-relations of academic employee turnover.

- Since the senior management of the institution are aware of turnover and its impacts, it could strongly work on retention mechanisms like encouraging employees to participate in decision making, giving promotions, sharing benefits based on their performance, and giving clear paths for career advancement. They should develop training and development mechanisms as much as possible to increase the retention rate through well-developed training programs and reduce the impacts of their.

- The institution’s management have to consider qualifications and experience in promoting employees.

- Senior management should develop employee assistance programmes in the organization to assist employees with problems to eliminate absenteeism or staff turnover. Top management should also make sure that employees are aware of these programmes in the organization.

- Senior management should give recognition to employees. Appreciation is a fundamental human need. Employees respond to appreciation expressed through recognition of their good work because it confirms their work is valued. When employees and their work are valued, their satisfaction and productivity rises, and they are motivated to maintain or improve their good work.

- Senior management should consider creating opportunities for career growth and advancement for employees. Employees normally feel more engaged when they believe that their employer is
concerned about their growth and provides avenues to reach individual career goals while fulfilling the company’s mission. Provide visible academic development opportunities for willing academic staff.

- Senior management should reduce academic staff turnover in order to improve institutional productivity by retaining the best employees. Thus, quality of service delivery will be improved within the Coastal KZN TVET College.
- Senior management should design affordable attractive salary packages that will attract most talented employees and thereby ensure that their talented employees are retained. Employees who feel that they are paid what they are worth will stay engaged for longer with an organisation.
- Consider standard operating procedures (SOP) for departments with regard to staff leaving and new staff entering.
- Consider employees who must adapt their workloads due to staff leaving.

5 CONCLUSION

The main focus for this study was to investigate the reasons for the turnover at the Coastal KZN TVET College. A further focus was the impact of this turnover on the institution as well as on current staff. The study and data show that there are causes for concern at the college and maybe at other similar institutions. The manner in which TVET academics are recognized by their institutions and DHET needs to be reviewed. Whilst the study recognized the causes for turnover and the impacts of turnover, it is important for the institution to not only address the issues presented but also to recognize the conditions under which employees at the college must work on a daily basis.

REFERENCES