

The Influences Impacting Staff Turnover in Higher Education

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Abstract

So what is happening within Higher Education where the turnover impacts have contributed to workplace costs in 2008 of 68 million dollars? This review will focus on the multiple influences of staff turnover within Higher Education Institutions and those that are affected. The research findings provide evidence of multiple impacts associated with administrative turnover. This phenomenon crosses all institution types, disciplines, genders, races and ethnicities. Some of the hidden influences can be found among the existing employees that stay behind. As a result these employees experienced the sense of a shared loss and a decrease in their work productivity.

This review hopes to provide clarity on the issues which are impacting organizational structures within Higher Education Institutions resulting in low administrative and faculty retention. The implications for practice are significant and the solutions offered will strengthen the internal operations for Higher Education institutions.

Keywords: turnover, staff Retention, job Satisfaction, workplace productivity

1. The Institutional Costs of High Staff Turnover in Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) have allowed the phenomenon of high turnover among administrators and faculty to become a cultural norm within business practice. Too often institutions are deferring to the state of the economy as the blame for downsizing or budgetary cuts. As departments continue to shrink in size the institutional operations become comprised. Staffing shortages have caused work demands to increase across the disciplines resulting in either burnout or poor employee retention (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010). In order for organizations to counter the move towards disorganization they need to gain more control of their environment (Burke, 2002).

This research review is aimed at illustrating how turnover within Higher Education impacts administrative staff, faculty and operations. My intent is to show how using research based theories and models as a tools can help to provide valuable insights and solutions for practice. Higher Education Institutions are a resource for producing skillful workforces. It is within this environment where we teach our young to become knowledgeable, productive and capable professionals. Our universities are teaching our young theory and practical frameworks for best business practices. However, those ideals are often not being put into practice within the same environment where instruction is being held. There are some administrators that remind me of an old expression, "Do as I say and not as I do" which implies that they are absolving themselves from having to apply the principals of good practice. This research review hopes to stimulate discussions about improving organizational practice.

It is estimated that an employee will change jobs seven times in a career lifetime (Jo, 2008). In Higher Education the turnover rates have been disruptive and costly. It is projected that 68 million dollars is spent as a result of turnover in the workplace (Jo, 2008). Some of the hidden costs are the reduction of productivity, skill drain, and poor morale for the remaining employees. Additional costs can also be found in the time and efforts taken to search and train new employees. The silent thief that robs your bottom line is called turnover (Jo, 2008). The impacts of turnover within HEI's are experienced in multiple areas within industry. There are multiple factors that are influencing the challenges of turnover within Higher Education. The following qualitative research questions seeks to articulate a deeper understanding of the variables involved in this phenomenon;

- 1) What are the factors influencing administrative staff and faculty turnover?
- 2) What are the influences on workplace productivity?
- 3) What are the impacts on milieu of the institution?

4) What are some of theoretical frameworks being used for solutions by HEI's? (Agee, 2009)

Turnover and its influences cross all races, genders, disciplines and institutional types (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). The relevance of this study is to increase our understanding on the multiple human and operational impacts that are experienced by this phenomenon. The general significance of this problem is its disruption to the workplace, its impact on employee retention, and productivity. The local significance of this problem is how turnover physically, mentally and emotionally impacts the employee (Takawira et al., 2014).

This review also intends to contribute to industry by providing clarity on the issues which are impacting the operations within Higher Education Institutions resulting in low job satisfaction and low employee retention. Presented in the review are multiple theory based frameworks for consideration. The implications for practice are significant as the solutions provided will strengthen internal operations and employee retention within Higher Education institutions.

2. Administrative Turnover

In a study conducted by Sturges & Guest (2001) their research explored the factors influencing employed graduates and their decisions to stay or leave their first employer. This study used a conceptual framework to assess organizational commitment. The results provide a deeper understanding of employee relations and how leadership can maximize organizational retention. Their research suggests that organizations have averaged a 50% retention rate from employed graduate students who were within five years of their career. The best organizational review had retained 86% of their graduate trainee's and the worst was found to be 4% (Perry & Jagger, 1998). This qualitative study sought out to obtain the graduate students perspective and the factors that affect their decisions to remain with their employers.

Sturges & Guest (2001) research builds on the earlier findings of Arnold et al. (1999) which provided a longitudinal view of graduates during their first 10 years. Their findings provide an understanding of the key antecedents of organizational commitment among hired graduates. Such results have been beneficial for managers responsible for recruitment and staff development. Also suggested is the notion that the ability to retain employees depends on their level of commitment. Research has consistently shown that those who are highly committed are less likely to think about leaving an employer (DeCotiis & Summer, 1987; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Jaros, 1997). In addition, turnover intentions were found to be the strongest at the beginning of one's career when the commitment is still being developed. This study focused on the affective commitment of the employee to the organization. Their findings also build on Porters research on 'relative strengths' of an individual's identification with involvement in a particular organization (Mowday et al., 1979).

2.1 Method

The approaches used for this research study were qualitative. The aim was to identify the factors related to graduates commitment to their organizations and their intentions to stay or leave (Sturges & Guest, 2001). The study involved surveying five organizational types; Technical, Financial, Service, Public Sector and Food Manufacturing. All of the involved organizations were members of the Association of Graduate Recruiters. The study involved 50 graduate employees of which 38 were men and 18 were women. The ages ranged from 23 to 35 and the administered surveys were coded by numbers for confidentiality purposes (Sturges & Guest, 2001). Each organization was instructed to select 12 graduate employees' that were still working for the company. Past graduate employees were not part of the research survey. It was determined in controlling the samples that it would be too difficult to collect the data of past employees. The research tools used were semi-structured interviews surveys. This approach was decided because the researchers sought to produce authentic results from the graduate student perspective. The goal of the interviews was to assess what would be influencers of past, present and future commitment (Sturges & Guest, 2001).

The researchers asked four core questions in an effort to answer the following; what were their expectations about work? What factors influenced them to stay? What critical events lead to their career commitment? What views they held on the organizations commitment to their professional development? (Sturges & Guest, 2001). These interviews were recorded, analyzed and coded in order to the conduct a content analysis in an effort to find themes and issues.

2.2 Findings

The qualitative methods used for interviews faced some challenges. One of the organizations had experienced some difficulty collecting the data. This was largely due to their organizational structure having multiple locations and various shifts. The researchers found the following antecedents of organizational commitment and identified the following factors;

- Biological characteristics (ex. age, education)
- Structural Features (ex. organization size, hierarchy)
- Prior Experiences
- Expectations of Role and Self Development
- Human Resource practices (Sturges, & Guest, 2001).

The results suggest that if the graduate experiences are related to career development the graduate student's organizational commitment will be higher (Arnold et al., 1999). Also identified was how new graduates were more likely to focus on achieving career successes rather than gratification at the workplace (Sturges & Guest, 2001). An employer can exploit this can by providing challenging tasks, suitable staff training and development. Another influencer was the perception of career opportunities. Sturges & Guest (2001) presented the term 'expectation gap' which refers to a disconnect that occurs between the graduate expectations and organizations. It is suggested that this can cause a psychological violation between the employee and the employer. This study also found three significant areas from the survey results; pre-joining, career management and future decisions (Sturges & Gust, 2001). The 'pre-joining expectation' is when graduates may have preconceived notions prior to employment. There information may come from recruiters or what they hear from other students. The 'career management' of graduates is where the organizational administrative teams have the opportunity to provide direction, guidance and mentorship. The influencers of 'future decisions' is where an organization can display an environment that supports work life balance, recognition, reward and career progression (Sturges & Guest, 2001).

In another research study conducted by Victoria Jo (2008), she focused on volunteer turnover among women in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). Her findings suggests that women change jobs more frequently than men and for different reasons. The studies results identified that these women experienced the following challenges within HEI; difficulty negotiating, not feeling valued, disrespected, being looked down upon, no growth opportunity and no flexible schedule (Jo, 2008). The study also suggests that younger women who have children have different committal interests. Such as, interests in a flexible work schedule in order to spend more time with family. The study as obtained data from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the analysis suggested that there was a higher percentage of turnover for women than men (Jo, 2008). This difference was attributed to women experiencing the challenges of managing work life versus family.

There are a few theories to consider when reviewing workplace turnover. Labor market based theory acknowledges that the state of the economy as being a driving force. If the job market is tight and it is difficult to find work the employee may stay longer even when dissatisfied. The market sets the stage for job options and governs the employment relationship (Jo, 2008). The study also suggested that most often the salary benefit was the first attractor for the employee. The resignation influencer was identified to be the dissatisfaction with the supervisor. Rational economic choice theory acknowledges the availability of job opportunities. This is where employees make decisions based on available options (Jo, 2008). The following reasons were suggested to influence high turnover;

1. Relationship with supervisor, dissatisfaction
2. Lack of recognition
3. Limited advancement
4. Job satisfaction
5. The state of the economy (Jo, 2008)

The research study further identified areas that were impacting the employee attrition rates within Higher Education. There were individuals that resigned for monetary reason and nonmonetary. It was suggested that institutions seek to create financial incentives for those seeking an increase in compensation. This can be done through performance bonuses based on outstanding job performance. For those seeking nonmonetary rewards institutions can assign special projects that are aligned with the universities goals and mission (Jo, 2008). Intuitions can also establish periodic recognition ceremonies as a way of acknowledging employees outstanding job performance.

3. Antecedents of Turnover

In a research study conducted by Takawira et al. (2014) focused on the influences of turnover intention and the dynamics involved at a South African Higher Education Institution (HEI). The study was aimed at exploring the

relationship between job embeddedness, work engagement and turnover intentions within HEI's (Takawira et al., 2014). The research findings suggest that the phenomenon of turnover within HEI has an affect the human capital within institutions. Also affected by the turnover is the interruption of productivity within the practice. Mitchell & Lee (2001) suggest that employee embeddedness can have both formal and informal connections to an employer. If an employer builds on these connections they will have a greater chance of retaining their employees (Takawira et al., 2014). Embeddedness is defined as a combination of forces that can keep a person from leaving his or her job. It also has two dimensions; community and organizational. Their research findings suggest of the two dimensions organizational is the better predictor of employee embeddedness (Takawira et al., 2014).

Mitchell et al. (2001) suggests that the perception of a persons 'job fit' can be a significant contributor to job embeddedness. The 'job fit' refers to the employee's perceived compatibility with the organization. This study found that a high job fit correlated to a higher retention rate of an employee (Takawira et al., 2014). Another influence on employee embeddedness was their perceived cost against leaving the organization. This is labeled at the organizational 'sacrifice' (Takawira). The research suggest if an employee perceives the cost of leaving to be too great a consequence the decision will be to remain with the employer. The factors of this risk could be either in the form of monetary or psychological (Takawira et al., 2014).

3.1 Method

The research study used a cross sectional quantitative survey to collect the perspectives of the employees. The survey was self administered reducing any influence from the researchers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This involved establishing a survey which was disbursed to participants from a South African Higher Education Institution. This quantitative study sought out to analyze 182 female managers who were ex-employees. The response yielded a low 46 with the median age of the managers being 37. The sample size was 153 of which 61% were female. The demographic samples included race; 52% African American, 37% White, 8% Asian, 3% mixed race. The age range was 26-45 and 54% of the participants were married. Lastly, the survey collected questionnaires only from employee's that had at least five years of service.

3.2 Findings

The study results also suggest that high embeddedness can also lead to employees feeling stuck in unfavorable jobs. They may experience frustration or lose motivation due to the fear of losing workplace connections. Another correlation drawn from the study results was the embedded connection between the employee and the institution. This suggests that the employee may have a need to find belonging and a connection to others at the workplace (Takawira, et al. 2014). One of the differences identified between embeddedness and turnover was that embeddedness focuses on the retention factors which can lead to the predictions of turnover (Takawira, et al. 2014).

Their research also identified how embeddedness is connected to work engagement. This is where an individual is engaged in positive and fulfilling work related activities. This is an affective cognitive state of being and is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Takawira, et al. 2014). Vigor is defined by the levels of energy and resilience an employee exhibits. Dedication is where pride in ones work is displayed showing a sense of significance and passion. Sak's (2006) research suggests that an employee's work engagement can be associated with the individual attitude, intensions and behavior. This research study also supports the notion of work engagement as negatively related to turnover intensions (Du Plooy & Roddt, 2010; Harter, Schmidt & Haryes, 2002). This suggests that if an employee is not connected mentally or by tasks they are more likely to leave their employment (Takawira, et al. 2014). The study also included the research findings from Harter et al. (2002) which surveyed 7939 business units and 36 companies, which found a significant relationship between work engagement and business outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, profitability and turnover (Takawira, et al. 2014).

4. Faculty Turnover

In a research study by Sabharwal & Corley (2009) they sought out to find how job satisfaction for faculty members differed by gender and discipline using a quantitative research approach. In reviewing faculty satisfaction across the academic disciplines Ward, et al. (2000) found that women had an increase satisfaction within the area of the engineering disciplines and less for the social sciences. This was opposite for males within the same disciplines (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009).

This study focused on analyzing faculty job satisfaction across genders and disciplines within Higher Education. The study examines workplace turnover and how it can decrease productivity and quality of the employee's

work. It is common for employees to spend a significant amount of their day at work so it makes sense that addressing one area will affect another. Leaders will find that in addressing workplace dysfunctions you also affect the wellbeing of the employees (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). Sabharwal & Corley study also examines the gender differences across academic disciplines. They suggest that the discipline differences are similar to those of ethnic distinctions in groups alike that have a shared common attribute or culture (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). Their results of gender variables found that males tend to have a higher job satisfaction rate than women in the areas of benefits and salary. Males also experience a higher satisfaction rate in the obtaining promotion opportunities.

4.1 Method

Their research sample represented 900 academic institutions at Scottish Universities. The data source was from the National Science Foundation's 2003 survey of Doctorate recipients. The method of this research study was a quantitative inquiry examined and presented by Sabharwal & Corley (2009). Their approach captured the demographic variables which also included other research studies. In addition, their research also captured the faculty perspectives by using of a rated satisfaction scale (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). The Science foundation data set was deemed by the team to be most comprehensive showing trends and multiple variables in a longitudinal study. The study participants all received their degrees before 2002 from either engineering, science or social science disciplines. The survey participants were 40,000 doctorate candidates. The original unweighted sample size was 29,915 and the weighted size was 685,296 (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). This controlled study was aimed at full time academic scientists and only those who worked at a four year college or university during 2003. This further reduced the sample size to 238,674. Further filters were added to remove the Post Doc's from the sample which brought down the sample to 223,424 (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). The participants in the study were from the following disciplines; Biology, agriculture, environmental science, computer information science, mathematics and statistics, physical sciences, psychology, social science, engineering and health science. Finally, the researchers grouped the disciplines into four categories; science, social science, engineering and health science (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009).

4.2 Findings

Women and minority faculty within the universities were found to encounter more barriers when they attempted to advance up the academic ladder. Ward (2000) also found disparities in salaries across the disciplines between men and women. Peterson et al. (2004) also found that minority faculty within medicine in particular experience ethnic bias resulting in a lower overall job satisfaction when compared to others. Sabharwal & Corley's research also found in a UCLA study, Antonio et al. (1997) that faculty of color typically were less satisfied when compared to Caucasians faculty. Another identified area of significance was for the faculties that were married with children. Carr et al. (1998) found mixed results between men and women (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009). Most of the married faculties were found to have a higher percentage of job satisfaction. However, the women with children experienced a lower rate in publications and career progression.

One of the key factors found as an institutional variable were the conflicts among teaching verses research. Olsen et al. (1995) found that faculties were less satisfied when teaching dominated their career verses research. In addition to this conflict within education it was also identified that there were higher rewards granted for those that participated in research activities. Most University systems link research to ranking and tenure tracks. As a result of this link job satisfaction and security can be tied to research. Job satisfaction has history of being linked to workplace productivity. This study provides the evidence for high rates in satisfaction when faculties were engaged in research (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009).

5. Urban Public Universities

Are there unique differences for Faculty Turnover in Urban Public Universities? A research study conducted by Daly & Dee (2006) examined some of the unique challenges faculty experience highlighting some of the contributing factors. This study uses the casual model by Smart (1990) which is based on the expectancy theory. This theory believes as people engaged with organizations they bring with them a set of expectations and values. Organizations that meet these expectations are more likely to retain their employee's longer (Kim et al., 1996). The expectation theory suggests ways to address questions about work conditions and environment features that are significant to faculty's expectations (Dee & Daly, 2006). The expectation theory can be examined by three variables; structural, psychological, and environmental. This theory suggests that among structural expectations there are following; collegial communication, equitable rewards, work autonomy, job security and a role in the decision making (Austin, 1990, 2002; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Research continues to support when these structural expectations are fulfilled the faculties organizational commitments

were found to be higher (Dee & Daly, 2006). The faculty's perception of both their work and environment are linked to their psychological expectation. In addition, individual financial pressures and the job market and how it is perceived may also influence faculty's commitment to stay or go (Dee & Daly, 2006). The job market is an example of an environmental variable which can influence faculty commitment. If the labor market has few opportunities the employee may stay longer unwillingly due to their financial commitments. The expectancy theory identifies five work structural variables; autonomy, communication openness, distributive justice, role conflict and workload. The psychological variables identified were; job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Dee & Daly, 2006). The job market is an example of an environmental variable which can influence faculty commitment. These identified areas are significant for leadership to recognize because they are also areas for potential intervention.

Traditionally the Public University are known for their affordable education, research and community outreach. In a study conducted by Kinston-Mann & Sieber (2001) they suggest that there has also been a historical tension between institutional priorities and scholarly practice (Dee & Daly, 2006). The frustrations for faculty have been in the areas of poor communications, due to the large institutional size/setting; challenges of the diverse student body, multiple cultural and language differences and the significant expectations for public service (Dee & Daly, 2006). Also identified in the study was how the faculty experienced frustrations with time constraints and heavy workloads which can diminish levels of faculty commitment. Although other universities may have experience similar challenges due to the typical size of the Public Universities their issues are often more dominate.

5.1 Method

Their research was a quantitative study which used a Likert 5 point scale questionnaire as the data collector. The surveys were sent out to 15 randomly selected Urban Public Universities in the United States. The sample size was 1500 full time faculty/research staff whose primary responsibilities was teaching (Dee & Daly, 2006). The researchers focused on the universities in the largest metropolitan districts reported by the U. S Census identifying 69 out of 276 areas. Each university used in the study obtained permission from the CEO. There were 100 random faculty members selected per university. The majority of the respondents 61% were male and 75% were white. The study does not mention the response rate. However, it does mention that 48% of the samples were full time professors and 30.1% were associate professor's. All of the sampled universities had a tenure system and 74.8% of the respondents were tenured. The average years of service to the institution was 14.7% and the average years in practice was 18.6%.

5.2 Findings

Using the expectancy theory model their research study reviewed the variables influencing faculty's intent to stay. The four identified variables were; autonomy, communication openness, role conflict and distributive justice. These variables were found to have a significant influence on workplace commitment. Their study also found it common for faculty to expect academic freedom, shared governance and non hierarchical leadership within practice (Dee & Daly, 2006). Autonomy was found to provide a sense of comfort and professional latitude for the faculty which contributed to high levels of commitment. The variable communication openness was found to have a high significance on participation, ownership and collegiality. This connection contributes to an affective disposition towards the university. It is also suggested that leadership should consider assessing the extent to which faculty members are connected by communications to assure that no groups are unintentionally being left out (Dee & Daly, 2006). Role conflict was found to be detrimental to job satisfaction and organizational commitment which influences faculty's intent to stay. This can however be prevented by providing faculty with clear expectations and goals (Dee & Daly, 2006). The variable distributive justice and its perception was found to be highly significant and linked to faculty's organizational commitment. In this area institutions could establish policies which outline and inform organizational members about potential opportunities and reward systems. The findings for the environmental variables were that they are linked to the job market. Dee & Daly (2006) suggests that even if the faculty were satisfied with their institution they may still depart if they perceive the job market is strong. Lastly the psychological variables, job satisfaction and organizational commitment were found to be intervening variables that have a positive effect on intent to stay.

6. Conclusion

Higher Education Institutions continues to be a resource for producing a skillful and knowledgeable labor force. It is within this setting that my research identifies some of the challenges experienced by administrators and faculty in order to present opportunities for leadership to embed strategic organizational change. Their positions are influential and adds to the continuity of educational services within Higher Education. . It is to our advantage

to address the administrative challenges faced by institutions in order to prevent further disruption of the organizational milieu.

So what is happening in practice that is affecting both the administrative staff and faculty? The longitudinal studies indicate that for the administrative staff low retention remains to be a challenge for institutions. The antecedents identified for administrators were; low engagement, low organizational commitment, poor sense of value, little growth opportunities, a void of staff development and low compensation. For faculty the research show slightly different outcomes because the institutional engagement is more scholarly based. The identified challenges for faculty were; disparities in income between genders, work conflicts, time constraints, heavy workload and poor communications with the institutions administration. Women and minority faculty also reported unique challenges with opportunities for career advancement. These concerns are valid and are worthy of continued research inquiry in order to further identify opportunities to embed organizational change. This review provides leadership with the necessary theoretical frameworks for organizational inquiry and change. It is my intention to present steps that can lead to good principals of practice to prevent organizational inertia.

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