AN INVESTIGATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN JOB SATISFACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY OF LECTURERS AT A TVET COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated links between job satisfaction and performance at a South African College. Quantitative research was undertaken and a questionnaire used to ultimately determine levels of morale and job satisfaction, which impact on performance. The objective of the study was to assess the factors that contributed to low morale levels. Findings proved that job satisfaction levels at the institution are dismal and levels of morale extremely low, resulting in unmotivated staff and poor performance. Possible remedies include aspects such as transformation, diversity and transparency, communication, and improving job satisfaction, to bring about a feeling of belonging and appreciation.
Keywords: Diversity; Staff morale; Transformation; TVET colleges.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are the most important asset of any organisation. The ability of the organisation to maintain its competitive edge and to be able to grow largely depends on the high quality of its employees. Therefore, it is imperative that the Human Resource (HR) Department and management select and place the best candidates in critical positions. The use of online technology to attract a wider pool of quality applicants is gradually replacing the traditional methods of recruitment and selection. Studies show that online recruitment is growing at a rapid pace, is making the recruitment and selection process more efficient and is part of the recruitment and selection practices of many companies globally. Given that online recruitment is a relatively new and contemporary phenomenon, research on the topic is in its infancy. This research study sought to add to the relatively limited body of literature on the use of online technology to improve recruitment and selection processes. More specifically, the research explored the use of online technology in the context of improving recruitment and selection processes at a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in KwaZulu-Natal. The research focused on staff attrition at a five-campus TVET College in KwaZulu-Natal. According to a quality assurance team, lecturers at the college suffer from low levels of motivation and morale and are not able to function optimally resulting in decreased levels of performance. Human capital is an organisation's most important asset and it is of vital importance for any for organisation to optimally manage its employees. Organisations rely on employees for survival and prosperity. It is thus important to ensure the wellbeing of employees by looking at the various aspects of job satisfaction, organisational culture, and the goals set by the leaders and the individuals that follow (Turner & Michael 2013).

1.1 Background to the study

The college was established in 1985 by the Department of Education and became one of the 50 colleges after a merger of 152 technical colleges. All legislation and policy implementation processes were driven by the Department of Education in order to provide an empowering environment for these institutions that were from different historical backgrounds. This was done to consolidate resources, overcome duplication, and bring about new innovation (National Education Policy Act, 1996 (no. 27 of 1996). In 2001 these colleges were transformed into nine Further Education and Training (FET) institutions. A wide range of national business and engineering programmes are offered and include National Certificate (Vocational) and N4–N6 Diploma programmes. In order to meet the fast demand for skills training, the college offers an extensive selection of skills programmes to ensure training at grassroots levels, for example, welding, bricklaying, garment making, to mention a few. SETA accreditation has been acquired in various modalities. On 1 April 2016, after a long tormenting period of transition, FET Colleges migrated from the Basic Education sector to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). After the transition colleges were known as TVET Colleges, (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). Staff were timeously informed of the transition. However, they were not directly involved in decisions that had an impact on their jobs, or in the process as a whole. Although the transition is still in its infancy, employees felt from the initiation that the transition might prove to be to detrimental to their working conditions.

1.2 Statement of the problem

According to a report submitted by Human Resource Development (Smith & Noble 2016) an increasing number of employees are leaving the college and thus the education sector. The reasons behind the resignations, according to the exit interviews, are amongst others, low levels of morale, job satisfaction, and remuneration. A Monitoring and Evaluation Report (M&E) compiled by the Quality Department, revealed that there has been a steady decrease in morale and job dissatisfaction over the last few years. This contributed to a negative impact on employee's behaviour, high rates of absenteeism, high staff turnover, and a definite drop in results. When vocational lecturers leave the college it is very problematic, due to the fact that only trade tested personnel can lecture the practical components of vocational subjects. According to Chukwuba (2015), professionals are the most influential asset in an organisation and when low levels of job satisfaction are experienced, the individual experiences unpleasant emotional states at work and symptoms result in adverse effects for the college, students, lecturers' community, business, and other sectors. Due to the fact that the TVET education sector concentrates on the delivery of vocational skills, resignations prove to be an enormous problem. South Africa has a massive shortage of skilled artisans, hence replacing suitably qualified staff is a huge challenge. Artisans earn huge salaries in the private sector, and DHET is unable to compete with these salaries.

1.3 Research questions

- What issues impact job satisfaction at the college according to academic staff?
- In the opinion of academic staff what could be done by the college to improve job satisfaction?
- How does job satisfaction influence the morale of staff?
- What recommendations can be made to College HRM regarding the improvement of job satisfaction and morale?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology provides a systematic approach to problem solving. It encompasses different methods to collect, scrutinise and analysis data. Research methodology elaborates on the procedure the researcher use to describe their work and it enables the researcher to clarify and predict phenomena Research methods comprise of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. For the purpose of the study it was deemed appropriate to use a quantitative research approach. Questionnaires were used to gather data to determine what the post level one lecturing staff's ethic (point of view) was regarding job satisfaction and morale levels.

2.1 Quantitative research

Loganathan (2013) stated that quantitative research is mainly centred on the collection of numerical data that quantifies the respondents' attitude, opinions behaviours and other defined variables. Analysis is based on mathematical methods in order to generalise across groups of people or alternatively explain the phenomenon at hand. According to Cresswell (2013) the statistical analysis is based on close-ended, predetermined data. This data includes: attitude data, census data, and observational data. The advantage of a quantitative research that is allows the researcher to do large scale needs assessments.

2.2 Population and sample

The population can be defined as an identifiable substantial group from which the researcher can pick a sample and further extract the results that could be generalised depending on the representative nature of the population (Lawrence & Tar 2013). The population of this study was the TVET College's post level one lecturers. According to Aina and Ajifruke (2002), the process of sampling includes the selection of a suitable representation of the population with the aim of determining the characteristics of the whole population. This is crucial for quantitative research if it is to be generalisable. A non-probability strategy in the form of convenience or accessibility sampling was used for the purpose of collecting the data from the respondents. A sample of 10 respondents per campus were the target. Each campus would therefore have equal opportunity to voice their feelings.

2.3 Validity

It is important in quantitative research not to look at results only, but to pay close attention to the rigor of the study. Validity is another important measurement instrument in quantitative research. Validity determines whether the instrument used measures what was supposed to be measure and is the performance according to the set performance. In order to validate the process data is collected and analysed for to determine the accuracy of the instrument. Thatcher (2010:125) defined validity as: "the extent to which the concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study." A pilot test was conducted to test validity. Ten questionnaires were provided to management that were all previously post level one lecturers.

2.4 Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency of the research instrument. Hence if the instrument measures job satisfaction the respondent ought to provide the same response each time the test is completed. In order to determine whether the findings of research should be implemented, it is imperative that the rigour is determined through an evaluation of the validity and reliability.

2.5 Ethical considerations

The main purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of the participants of the research. According to Pickard (2013) ethical strategies and procedures include informed consent, anonymity, and protection of the respondents. He further states that it is imperative that ethical strategies are included in the research proposal and procedures in place to ensure that the research is being conducted ethically. Adequate information was provided to the participants in order to make coherent decisions, and there was no forced participation (Fassinger & Morrow 2013). The rights of the respondents were explained in detail, as well as advising that they were free to withdraw at any time and anonymity was guaranteed.

3. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

53.3% males and 46.7% females participated the study sample, the majority were Black (62.2%), followed by Indian (20.0%), and White (17.8%). 42.2% had 6 to 10 years of service with the dominant age group 36-45 years. 18 respondents have 6-10 years' experience in the sector. Respondents were particularly unhappy with the quality of equipment (computers, software and IT systems), which they use on a daily basis to perform their duties (only 20.0% indicated that they were satisfied). 60% of the respondents felt that their supervisors did not spend quality time with them and did not listen to their concerns or supported reasonable suggestions from them. Respondents felt that their jobs did not provide them with opportunities to learn new skills and develop new talents to allow for personal growth. Less than 50% agree there is a satisfactory work environment. Safety issues had the best approval rating of all the questions (53.3%). 20% of the respondents indicated that team members are appropriately involved when decisions are being made while only 15.6% agreed that promotion is given to the best qualified and deserving candidate. 20% felt that team members were appropriately involved when decisions were being made. 13.3% felt that the college was transparent in its operations. Respondents felt that Transformation and Diversity was not on par with their expectations as all the rankings were below 50%.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What emerged from the study was that lecturers are faced with increasing stress levels, erosion of autonomy and creativity, which cumulates in the profession being labelled as being voiceless. Feelings of despondency leading to unmotivated, demoralised educators, results in ineffective teaching and therefore poor results and demotivated students. The most crucial factors that impact on morale was that respondents felt that they did not have an opportunity to grow and develop new skills, that managers did not clarify misunderstandings, and that they could not reach their full potential, promotion was not transparent, and employees did not to learn more about one another's culture.

4.1 Suggestions for further research

After the transition in April 2016 to the Department of Higher Education (DHET) no studies have been done in the sector in this regard. It is therefore recommended this study be repeated in the future and be used as a comparative analysis study. As this research used an explorative qualitative approach it is suggested that a more in-depth quantitative study be done to enable a greater understanding of exactly how job satisfaction impacts on morale and how these factors influence performance.

4.2 Conclusion

The recommendations made addressed the shortcomings at the college. If they are soundly addressed there should be an improvement in job satisfaction which will positively influence the morale and commitment to performance of the lecturing staff. Management should propose pro-active plans that incorporate the input from all levels in order to get buy-in from the various campuses. If these recommendations are to be implemented elsewhere, such organisations would need to rigidly monitor the situation and intervene if the desired results are not achieved.

4.3 Recommendations

Communication is critical to bring about awareness of changes within the college. Staff should be informed about what the Department of Higher Education is visualising and planning for the sector and how it intends to deliver on commitments made. This will decrease the possibilities of nasty surprises causing high levels of stress. Workshops on emotional intelligence were provided many years ago and should once again be implemented. It will allow staff to have a better understanding of their own strong and weak points in emotional situations and how to handle them better. It is imperative to give recognition, promote within, and contribute to making the college an enjoyable place to work.

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