

Pathways for Measures to Mitigate Staff Retention Challenges in Selected Zimbabwe's Public and Private Universities: Retained Lecturers' Perceptions

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Abstract

The study assessed pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in purposely selected Zimbabwe's two public and two private universities from the perceptions of Retained Lecturers. Three Retained Lecturers and one Retained Lecturer were selected using criterion sampling from the public (Cases 1 and 4) and private (Case 2) universities, respectively. One private university (Case 2) had no Retained Lecturer participant of at least five years' experience at that station. The study generated data using open-ended interview method. Research data were analysed using NVivo data analysis software. The study found out that Retained Lecturers in public and private universities agreed that the key measures to mitigate staff retention challenges were stakeholder involvement, housing and car loans among other measures. They however differed on how sources of funds and external partners could be measures to mitigate staff retention strategies. The study concluded that provision of adequate funds and engagement of diverse strategic partners can mitigate staff retention strategies. The study recommended that the Government needs to be involved in the funding operations of private universities in the similar manner it does to private schools by paying lecturers' salaries and giving grants and scholarships because it is the government's duty to educate its citizens.

Keywords: Retained Lecturer, Public University, Private University, Staff Retention, Staff Retention Challenges, Retained Lecturers' perceptions

Introduction

This paper is a third excerpt from the researcher's thesis (in press) entitled, 'A Comparative Case Study of Zimbabwe's Public and Private Universities' Staff Retention Strategies' submitted for examination to the Zimbabwe Open University late in 2014. There are many measures that organisations inclusive of universities can employ to mitigate staff retention challenges. Research has document some of the measures to alleviate staff retention challenges as: improvement of working conditions, offering attractive salaries, opportunities for contact and sabbatical leave, opportunities for staff development and study leave (Adi, 2012; Blair and Jordan, 1994; Higgins, 2012; Jongbloed, 2012; Mupemhi and Mupemhi, 2011). In an effort to retain staff in some South African organisations, Botha, Busin and Lukas de Swardt (2011) studied an employer brand predictive model for talent attraction and retention. Botha et al's. (2011) findings confirm early research observations by Cheese, Thomas and Craig (2007), Crous (2007), Michington (2010) and Willock (2005) who contend that a growing body of research

evidence supports the relationship between employer brand and the attraction and retention of talent. Botha et al. (2011) also adopt Dell, Ainspan, Bodenber, Troy and Hickey's (2001) opinion that even though it is fairly customary among larger companies to use employer brand to attract and retain talent, they also subscribe to Cheese et al., (2007) and Minchington (2006) who found that companies are ineffective in developing, maintaining or realigning their employer talent attraction and retention tool. Also, recent studies have demonstrated that job embeddedness as standing for the collective, generally non-effective reasons an employee will not leave a job (Van Dyk, Coetzee and Tevele, 2013). Van Dyk et al. (2013) also cite Lee, Mitchell, Burton and Holtom (2004) who perceive job embeddedness as a retention construct that reflects employees' decisions to participate directly both on and off the job. Moreover, Van Dyk et al. (2013) adopt Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez's (2001) suggestion that when individuals have multiple attachments related to their sense of job embeddedness in an organisation, these attachments are likely to retain them, even if they think about leaving as a result of particular circumstances (such as getting a better offer or a company relocation to a non-preferred location). Research studies for a twenty year period 1994-2014 show that most of the studies focused on building quality staff, brain drain, staff turnover, staff retention in schools and isolated universities, job embeddedness, employer brand and the influence of leadership and management on staff retention in the universities. There has been little or no attention given to research on pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the universities. Attention was also given to the influence of staff development fellowship, contact and sabbatical leave on staff retention in the universities, but not on a comparative basis from the point of view of the Retained Lecturers in Zimbabwe.

Statement of the Problem

Many organisations and universities have suggested some measures to mitigate staff retention challenges from lens of the managers, especially, the Human Resources' personnel (Gberevbie, 2009; Van Dyk et al., 2013). Staff retention experiences held by academic staff have been overlooked (Botha et al., 2011). In light of such staff misgivings, the present study investigates possible measures to mitigate staff retention challenges from the perspective of the Retained Lecturers in Zimbabwe's public and private universities. The study's main research problem is as follows:

What are the pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities from the Retained Lecturers' perspective?

Aim of the Study

The study's purpose is to recommend pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in Zimbabwe's public and private universities from the Retained Lecturers' perspective.

Objective of the Study

The study seeks to recommend some pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges on the basis of the Zimbabwe's public and private universities' Retained Lecturers' perceptions.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- How different are pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges between the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities?
- How similar are pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges between the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities?

Significance of the Study

The current study has three values. First, the study provides university managers with empirical data to arm them with possible standard and best practices to retain academic staff, especially, after learning about the Retained Lecturers' perceptions on the measures to mitigate staff retention challenges. Second, on the basis of Retained Lecturers' perceptions on the measures to mitigate staff retention challenges, MOHTE would be provided with empirically tested information to help them improve policy decisions on staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe's public and private universities. Third, industry and commerce indirectly benefits from 'quality' graduates who they would employ, once they have been trained by satisfied, motivated, committed and retained lecturers.

Review of Related Literature

Staff retention challenges are a world-wide organisational problem. Organisations that face staff retention challenges often fail in talent management (Adi, 2012, Bushe, 2012). In this section, the authors review selected research findings regarding measures to mitigate staff retention challenges. In Europe, in the context of this study, there is paucity of studies related to measures to mitigate staff retention challenges. When comparing the attractiveness of the academic professions between European countries, salaries are naturally a key place to start (Jongbloed, 2012). When we compare European countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Germany with the United States, and take into account international difference in purchasing power, Italy displays the widest salary range between, entry level, medium level and top level positions (Jongbloed, 2012).

In America, Scott (2012, p. 11-12) suggests “bonuses, competitive compensation plan, communication and counter offers as some of the measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in Chicago.” In another North Carolina study, Dreyer-Hadley (2008) identified training opportunities and learning for professional development, performance appraisal and professional development and effective supervision as other measures to mitigate staff retention challenges.

In Asia, Sohail, Muneer, Tanveer and Traiq (2011, p. 904) made two recommendations to mitigate staff retention challenges in Pakistan namely:

- Organisations need to understand the value of their employee and reasons to retain them because greater turnover means that employees are using organisation as a stone to step further and the professional experience they are gaining from the organisation is important.

To retain employees, the organisations must review their career plans and recognise those plans according to the market so that intelligent and talented employees could serve more and be beneficial in the long run.

In Africa, Ng’ethe, Iravo and Namusonge (2012, p. 301) recommended leadership style as a measure to mitigate staff retention challenges in public universities in Kenya in the following manner, “The leadership in these institutions embraces favourable leadership practices to enhance retention of academic staff in their institutions since leaders have an influence on a plethora of organisational factors which affect retention.” It is common knowledge that leaders who respond to staff issues are regarded as sensitive to their employees’ needs. They are worker-centred (Ng’ethe et al., 2012). In Zimbabwe, Mhlanga, Matope, Mugwagwa, Phuthi and Moyo (2013, p. 127) made two recommendations indicative of measures to mitigate staff retention challenges. First, the authors mention that, “Recommendations on the methods to train staff development fellows upon returning to local country were given which looked at creating a conducive environment and conditions of service instead of using contractual obligation which has always been defaulted. Second, Mhlanga et al. (2013) also recommended that, “The long term strategy would be south-south collaboration which would involve investing in local universities that match counterparts in the Southern African region (p.127).”

The foregoing previous research findings pin-pointed measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in organizations and isolated university cases; they did not specify the origin of the reviewed perceptions. Also, in the universities, the reviewed studies were largely from outside Zimbabwe. Furthermore, they did not compare the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in public and private universities on the measures to mitigate staff retention challenges. On the basis of such theoretical gaps, the present study focuses on the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities on the pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges.

Methodology

The study was based on a qualitative research methodology. The researchers used qualitative research to carry out this study because qualitative research means studying selected phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interrogating phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). It employed multiple-case study research strategy comprising two public and two private universities in Zimbabwe. The researchers used a multiple-case study research strategy because the basic idea is that one case, (or perhaps a small number of cases), will be studied in detail, using whatever methods that seem appropriate (Punch, 1998, p. 150 in Silverman, 2014, p. 114).

The section of two public universities (Cases 1 and 4) and two private universities (Cases 2 and 3) was purposive, and was based on the varied nature of institutions in terms of their contexts and assumed levels of development (Hopkin, 2003 in Mhlanga, 2008). The choice of Case 1 and Case 4 as public universities provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore staff retention strategies that obtain in the country's state universities. The choice of Case 2 and Case 3 as private universities was pertinent on the grounds that they were both privately-owned universities. Case 2 was also church-owned university, while Case 3 was owned by private individuals. Also Case 2 and Case 3 offer conventional and parallel programmes. Criterion sampling enabled the researcher to select four Retained Lecturers from public universities, that is, (two from Case 1 and one from Case 4), and one from private universities, that is, (one from Case 2). The researchers use the codes; Case 1 Retained Lecturers 1-2 and Case 4 Retained 1 Lecturer 1 to refer to participants who belong to public universities to aid data presentation and discussion. The researcher also uses codes Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1 to refer to participants who belong to private universities to aid data presentation and discussion. Criterion sampling involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion (Kombo and Tromp, 2009). It suited this study in that the retained lecturers were selected for participation in this study because they possess worthwhile experience regarding how well their universities have managed to retain them to date. Both sets of retained lecturers have lived experience of staff retention strategies. Such experiences enabled the researchers to compare pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

The study's main research instrument for data generation was the open-ended interview. Data generation took place between September 2013 and December 2013, the period for which data for the whole thesis (from which this paper was derived from) were gathered. The choice of open-ended interviews in this study enabled the researcher to identify other relevant sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). Such sources included strategic plan documents, staff exit interview forms, annual reports, to name a few. The interview question evolved from the sub-problems:

- How different are pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges between the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities?
- How similar are pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges between the perceptions of Retained Lecturers in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities?

These sub-problems had some probing questions which sought clarification of the phenomenon under study.

Researchers for this paper used NVivo to analyse thick descriptions of the studied phenomenon of pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges from the point of view of the Retained Lecturers in Zimbabwe's public and private universities. Leedy and Ormroyd (2012) observes that NVivo is one of the database programmes which provide ready means of storing, segmenting and organising lengthy field notes, and it is designed to help researchers to find patterns in their notes. The researchers were able to manage voluminous sets of data by creating separate folders to file different participants' responses, observation and documentary analysis. A lot themes emerging from the study were analysed, categorised, segmented and summarised to provide themes, sub-themes and substantiations in one table (Table 1, under findings and interpretation) for data presentation in search of interpretation of findings. The format for the table was adopted and adapted from Chisaka and Kurasha (2012).

Findings and Interpretation

Retained lecturers' views on measures to mitigate staff retention challenges

Retained Lecturer participants also came up with their perceived pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the context of their workplaces. Their lines of thought are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes regarding measures to mitigate staff retention challenges faced by Zimbabwe's public and private universities

Themes	Sub-theme(s)	Substantiating statements
	1.Adequate funds to support	1. Provision of adequate funds to support doctoral studies,

1. Staff development	doctoral studies, conferences, contact and sabbatical leave	conferences, contact and sabbatical leave is necessary (Case 1 Retained Lecturer 2).
	2. Need to encourage support continuous learning	1. Need to encourage and support to facilitate continuous learning and production of knowledge and skills (Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1).
2. Research support fund	1. Research support fund for big research	1. Need for research support fund for big research (Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1).
3. Resources	1. Vehicles and computers are needed in addition to finance	1. Adequate vehicles are required to enable staff to make follow ups to Regions Enough equipment such as computers are well as part of creating an enabling environment for staff (Case 1 Retained Lecturer).
	2(a). Government grants (b) Capitalisation of universities to mobilise resources	1(a) Grants from government just like in schools. (b) Capitalising universities to look for consultancies (Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1).
	3. Income generation activities	1. Engage in income generating activities (Case 4 Retained Lecturer 1).
4. Remuneration	1. Salary parity with the region	1, The local universities ... need to have salaries at par with the region (Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1).
	2. Lobbying for better conditions of service by staff associations	1. Staff associations could actually lobby for better conditions of service... (Case 1 Retained Lecturer 2).
5. Governance	1. Practising institutional transparency	1. The institution to be more transparent in its operations (Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1).
6. Strategic Partnerships	1. Liaising with other academic institutions and private companies to retain staff	1... liaise with other academic institutions through specific programmes like research work. Other partners include private companies... (Case 4 Retained Lecturer 1).
7. Enabling work environment	1. Adequate equipment	1. Enough equipment such as computers are viewed as part of creating an enabling environment for staff (Case 1 Retained Lecturer).

Adopted and adapted from Chisaka and Kurasha (2012:7)

Data presented in Table 1 show seven themes, which are; staff development, research support fund, resources, remuneration, strategic partners, governance and enabling work environment. The sub-themes for staff development were; adequate funds to support doctoral studies, conferences, contact and sabbatical leave and the need to encourage and support continuous learning. The sub-theme for research support fund was; research support fund for big research, while sub-themes for resources included; vehicles and computers, finance, government grants, capitalisation of universities to mobilise resources and income generating activities. Sub-themes for remuneration were salary parity with the region and lobbying for better conditions of service by staff associations. The sub-theme for strategic partners was liaising with other academic institutions and private companies to retain staff.

Using staff development to retain staff

Staff development emerged as a key staff retention strategy as was demonstrated by a public university participant, Case 1 Retained Lecturer who indicated that:

...need to provide adequate funds to support staff development including doctoral studies.

To achieve the above, the same participant recommended two things. First, she recommended university support for lecturers to attend conferences for academic exposure. Second, contact leave and sabbatical leave should be supported. Another participant from a public university, Case 4 Retained Lecturer 1, backed the above findings by recommending the need to encourage and facilitate continuous learning and production of knowledge. Despite the fact that private universities' participants indicated staff development as one of the challenges they face in retaining staff, their Retained Lecturers did not suggest solutions. Public university participants aware of their work contractual privileges, like provision of staff development, felt that their employer needs to do more in this area in the search for the right university brand as noted by Botha et al. (2011). If private universities are to effect good

employee retention exercises using staff development, they then need to adopt Netswera, Rankhumise and Mavundla's (2005) findings that recruiting and training the best employees is a major investment. In the context of this study, investment in human capital is the key determinant to successful staff retention in public and private universities.

Using research support fund to retain staff

Complementing staff development in retaining university staff was the need to provide research fund for big research. This position was put forward by a public university participant, Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1, who said:

There is need for support fund for big research work.

She also suggested that reward and recognition should be a way of the university culture. These findings agree with Jongbloed (2012) who found out that lecturers can be expeditiously promoted through habilitation as a result of their research effort. Such promotions result in recognition and reward which produces staff motivation, commitment to the job and job satisfaction. It can be concluded that the use of research support fund is one of the critical pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Resources as a measure to mitigate staff retention challenges

Retained Lecturers made resource-based recommendations to retain staff. Case 1 Lecturer 2 at a public university indicated that, in addition to funds, adequate vehicles are required to enable staff to make follow ups to the regions. Case 1 participants at the National Centre need to visit Regional Centres to make themselves aware of the tutorial and learning challenges faced by tutors and learners, as well as knowing their tutors and students. This helps in improving the planning process to benefit the ODL students. Another public university participant, Case 4 Retained Lecturer 1 called for engaging the university in income generating activities in which he said 'For instance, the institution has a big piece of land and this could be used for farming.' He also suggested that universities with unused land could construct structures to let out. Some universities have big pieces of land which are lying idle and could easily be used for farming and constructing buildings to generate money.

Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1 came up with a different perspective. He said his private university should receive grants from the government in the same way as private schools. He also called for the need to provide the universities with opportunities to look for consultancies where they can earn money for themselves. It is coming out from the aforementioned findings that, while the issue of resources is expressed differently in terms of how resources should retain staff, it largely revolves around the issue of finances. Therefore, availability of adequate funds largely determines the provision of vehicles, equipment, human capacitation, funds to embark on other income generating projects to boost the existing ones, and buildings among other resources. Adequate funds help the universities to be self reliant, thus, underlining their fundamental role as one of the crucial pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Using remuneration to mitigate staff retention challenges

Allied to the use of resources as a staff retention mitigation measure, is remuneration. Two Case 1 participants gave their perceptions particular to their public university. Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1 said:

...The local universities need to have salaries that are at par with the region, within the region, and what the private sector offers.

Here is what Case 1 Retained Lecturer 2 said about the same subject:

...staff associations could actually lobby for better conditions of service for members of staff, for example, they could actually negotiate for hours at work, library hours and ...for allowances.

The two findings confirm Waswa and Katana's (2008) finding that the main causes of industrial action are poor remuneration and unfair disparity among employee grades in university and other civil service organisations. It also transpired that all participants do not make monthly subscriptions to their staff associations. As a result staff associations may not be fully committed to their lecturers' cause in the universities, because of lack of financial support from the members. Underlining the preceding view, Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1 proposed that:

If we start with say entry for a university is four thousand, they will come and stay. And that can be an attractive salary to retain staff.

Given the high taxable income bands in Zimbabwe, an amount of US\$4000 would leave the lecturers with reasonable disposable income such that they would not think about seeking alternative jobs. It can be deduced from the preceding observations and literature that attractive salaries for university lecturers are perceived as one of the key pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Governance: Practising institutional transparency to retain staff

The issue of governance emerged from private universities' Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1, unpacked this issue in this way;

...I think... the institution may be more transparent because it's a private university and some of the rituals within a private university...are not always under public scrutiny. That in itself may hamper retention of staff because when people say who represents lecturers countrywide came if they were really interacting with VC, with other important people, it will be easier for the university to have an appreciation of the expectations you see, and they might be able to go to their own staff to say we are able to do A,B,C and may be next year...

The revelation in the above findings is that the operations in regard to staff retention strategies of the private universities sometimes escape the public eye, at the expense of staff retention. Exercising institutional transparency is one of the core values that appears as a common component in the strategic documents of three of the studied universities. Cotton and Tuttle (1986), Griffith, Hom and Gaertner (2000), Porter and Steers (1973) and Spector (1985), all cited in Pitts, Marvel and Fernandez (2011), commend institutional transparency because of its ability to bring about benefits of satisfaction with opportunities for career growth and promotion which in their absence have been found to negatively influence retention. This kind of governance helps the university make its own brand in retaining staff, thereby, underscoring how practising institutional transparency compares favourably with other pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Strategic partnerships in retaining staff

Universities fall if they exist in isolation of community partnerships. They need strategic partnerships to help them retain staff. On this measure, Case 4 Retained Lecturer 1 pointed out that it was necessary for his private university to liaise with other institutions through specific programmes like research work. The participant further indicated that other partners include private companies who might be helpful in many ways to retain staff. These findings are not peculiar to private universities but to even some public Zimbabwean universities because of the economic environment in which they operate. This perspective alone is evidence enough to indicate that all universities need to diversify their sources of funds. It can be concluded that diversity of revenue sources is a significant pathway for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Enabling working environment to retain staff

Provision of enabling working environment emerged as another cornerstone for retaining staff in the universities. Below is a confirmation to that effect. Case 1 Retained Lecturer 1 hinted that at her public university:

They have to look at some of the facilities such as printers, photocopiers and make it conducive for us, for our workload too, for us to be able to work.

An apparent revelation in this recommendation is the improvement of the work environment. These findings agree with O'Neil's (2012:12) observations that;

Unless a leader causes people to share the ambition to prove that most people are really an organisation's most important resource by creating conditions in which they will never be hurt, you can get there. It is not only a measure of greatness, but it is one that I like because it is very hard for people to deny that people should not be hurt at work.

On the basis of the above observations, it can be perceived that work environment plays a big part in keeping staff satisfied. Thus, provision of an enabling work environment is an effective staff retention strategy. In the context of this study, observations made at the research sites reveal that universities have conditions of service and facilities of varying degrees. While they all report to have good internet connectivity, only one public university (Case 4) and one private university (Case 2) reported that they had reasonably good infrastructural technological facilities to retain staff. Case 1 (public university) and Case 3 (private university), on the other hand, lagged behind the other cases in infrastructure because they are multi-campus in nature. Against the background of the afore-stated findings and related literature, it can be seen that one of the essential pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

Summary

With respect to measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in public and private universities, staff development, research support, resources provision, attractive remuneration and good governance strategies were among measures the universities used to retain their staff.

Similarities

(a) Staff development

Pathways for measures to alleviate staff retention challenges faced by Zimbabwe's public and private universities called for the need for a concerted approach by all stakeholders to ensure that lecturers are staff developed in their areas of expertise. Provision of this support would keep lecturers largely satisfied, thereby, increasing their intention to stay.

(b) Research support funding

Increased funding for research increases promotional opportunities for lecturers emerged as one of the pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities. Lecturers who get support for research usually identify with their university.

(c) Resources

Provision of adequate resources in terms of time, money, materials, equipment, technology, facilities and offices go a long way in keeping lecturers satisfied was perceived as another pathway for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities.

(d) Using remuneration to mitigate staff retention challenges

Availability and provision of attractive remuneration was found to be among effective measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied public and private universities in Zimbabwe.

(e) Practising institutional transparency to retain staff

Retained Lecturers in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities concurred that good university governance largely acted as a pathway for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges through practising institutional transparency.

Strategic partners

The involvement of the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including other strategic partners such as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to name a few, can benefit the financial coffers of the studied universities very well if opportunities are properly explored and exploited.

Differences

(a) Sources of funds

One other pathway for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in the studied Zimbabwe's public and private universities was that although private universities had their sources of funds, they were in need of government funds to pay lecturers' salaries.

(b) Need for external partners

While public universities were funded by the state they also needed external partners to fund key university operations which the government cannot fund alone, especially, in the wake of the current macro-economic challenges the country is undergoing through.

Conclusion

In view of the forgone findings, one major conclusion is made with reference to strategies to mitigate staff retention challenges. Provision of adequate funds and engagement of diverse strategic partners can be one pathway for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied universities.

Similarities

Four conclusions based on similarities regarding pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied universities are as given below.

- Money, staff development, career growth and research opportunities are among critical pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities.
- Engagement of diverse strategic partners is one of the routes to effective pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities.
- Supportive university management through the practice of institutional transparency is a solid foundation upon which pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention strategies in selected Zimbabwe's public and private universities are built.
- Lastly, public and private universities, despite their contextual differences, need to find ways of providing lecturers with study, contact and sabbatical leave in order to retain them.

Differences

Two key conclusions based on differences between pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied universities are presented below.

- Public universities appeared more readily welcoming to external partners to fund their university business operations, while private universities considered proposals to receive government funding.
- Private universities seemed to be depriving their lecturers of staff development, research and career growth opportunities more than their public university counterparts.

Recommendation

The current study makes the ensuing three recommendations focusing on pathways for measures to mitigate staff retention challenges in the studied universities:

- The Government needs to be involved in the funding operations of private universities in the similar manner it does to private schools by paying lecturers' salaries and giving grants and scholarships because it is the government's duty to educate its citizens.
- The public and private universities, in spite of their different circumstances, need to practise institutional transparency in their operations such as promotion procedures, provision of resources and opportunities for staff development, study leave, contact and sabbatical leave to ensure that lecturers are kept satisfied and motivated.
- Quantitative surveys need to be carried out in this area in all Zimbabwe's public and private universities and possibly in the Southern Development Community (SADC) Regional universities in search of standard practices to retain staff since case studies are a precondition to large-scale research.

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