Full Length Research Paper

The effectiveness of an HR code: Staff development and training at the Polytechnic of Namibia

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Policies adopted by tertiary educational institutions play a key role in determining the future of an institution. When they are applied and monitored effectively, most of these policies bear positive results for the institution. Therefore, assessing the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) policy and practices are imperative. The HR Code is a policy document of the PoN and the main objective of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the HR Code: Staff Development and Training (SDT) of the institution. The research has established motivating factors for drafting the HR Code: SDT and analysed its weaknesses in order to trace whether staff development is linked to strategic goals of the PoN. The researchers have also made an earnest attempt to find out reasons why staff members resign after attending development programmes, which would assist the institution to map out retaining strategies, as it prepares itself to become a leading university of technology that requires more and better qualified staff. The enquiry adopted a case study approach because it dealt with a specific institution in Namibia. A triangulation research method was utilised to solicit information from academics, administrative and support staff, by conducting semi-structured interviews with top management, Head of Departments (HoDs), sectional heads and ex-staff members. A closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to 230 staff members of which 130 responded, which gave a considerable satisfactorily response rate of 65%. Institutional documents were also reviewed to corroborate empirical data that was collected. Research revealed that the aim of drafting the HR Code: SDT was to improve qualification levels of Namibian staff members and to improve work performances of staff members within the PoN. However, research proved conclusively that there were no measurable mechanisms established to evaluate and monitor that the objective was achieved; there were also no staff development plans linked to strategic goals of the institution; staff members' work performance was not assessed after training and there were no retention strategies in place. It is evident from the research findings that the desired results of the HR Code: SDT will not be achieved and therefore, recommendations are proposed that the PoN effectively communicates objectives of the HR Code to staff members; develop a comprehensive and complimentary staff development policy; a staff development plan; an innovative retention strategy and appoint a staff development officer to monitor and ensure that desired goals are achieved as means to save the institution from an unnecessary waste of financial, material and human resources. The research focus is on Namibians and permanent resident staff that have been employed at the institution until July 2008 and hence excluded non-Namibians, who are appointed on contract bases. It will be in the best interest of PoN to conduct a study the concerning effectiveness of academic staff development programmes that are offered by the CTL because tertiary educational institutions rely on quality of staff to deliver effective services to students. An investigation into the perceptions of non-Namibians regarding staff development and training at the PoN should also be studied. The value of this paper is that, by investigating the effectiveness of the HR Code: SDT, recommendations have been postulated to improve training and development initiatives in order to enhance staff members' work performance and qualification levels, which will enable the PoN to realise its vision of becoming one of the most powerful institutions to be reckoned with within Namibia and the African continent, in general.

Key words: Staff development, training, effectiveness, evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary educational institutions are labour intensive and are largely dependent on their employees for efficient delivery of services in order to achieve their goals. Therefore, most contemporary organisations place much emphasis on training and development in order to enhance employee knowledge, skills and ability (KSA), which will ultimately lead to work performance improvement and achievement of organisational goals (Millmore, Lewis, Saunders, Thornhill and Marrow, 2007: 346). Furthermore, a majority of these organisations have begun to introduce staff development policies, procedures and departments to ensure that staff members are equipped with necessary competencies. However, in order to improve work performance in any institution, training and development policies and practices should be evaluated to determine its effectiveness (Goldstein and Ford, 2002: 138). Institutions that are capable of effectively implementing their policies and practices could gain substantial benefits such as staff retention, profit increases and an increase in customer satisfaction (D'Netto, Bakas and Bordia, 2008: 4). However, a capable employee should be appointed to oversee implementation. Tertiary educational institutions employ training officers or staff development officers to monitor and ensure that policies are effectively applied. The institutions' culture should also support transfer of training and development activities (Scaduto, Lindsay and Chiaburu, 2008: 159). Therefore, senior management should understand the importance of training and development in organisations, while those who identify training needs should also be trained on how to conduct it (Gupta, Sleezer and Russ-Eft, 2007: 14).

The Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) is one of the tertiary educational institutions in Namibia. In 1996 the Council formulated the PoN's vision and mission statement, which was followed by the formulation of policies, rules and regulations including the Human Resource Code and Grievance Procedure in 1998. It is therefore, in the interest of the PoN to pay attention to their current staff's training and development. If set goals should be achieved, current staff should be equipped with the necessary KSA, which are required for a university. As mentioned by Fisher (2005: 1), people are the sum of employees' efforts that create wealth to allow organisations to achieve their vision. There is a need to scrutinise the effectiveness of the PoN's HR Code, which was established in 1998. Some of the issues, which are not addressed in the HR Code section include staff development and training plans; mentoring programmes for junior academic staff and retention strategies for staff that have

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attended the institution's development programmes. Development is an acquisition of skills, knowledge and behaviours that improve staff ability to meet changes in job requirements (Holland, Sheehan and De Cieri, 2007: 248). Effective staff development and training programmes will improve staff performance, which in turn may result in more students enrolling at the institution.

Staff development and training

Previously, organisations' source of competitive advantage was their physical or financial capital (popularly known as assets), while human resources were regarded as a cost (Millmore et al., 2007: 364). The current global economic, social, political and rapidly accelerating rate of technological innovation has forced organisations to invest more in human resources as sources of comparative advantage (Ukpere, 2009: 9). Organisations can only survive in the global market if their business strategy is designed around building a human resource foundation because people are the key drivers of today's business successes, (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhard and Wright, 2006: 20). Therefore, higher education institutions should as well focus on developing competencies of their staff to adjust to changes that have been triggered by globalisation forces, owing to the fact that staff members in higher education institutions are key resources. McNaught and Kenedy (2000: 95) commented that quality and quantity are both important considerations for universities in the 21st century. The quality that service staff members deliver has an impact on student learning. There is a need to continuously enhance staff skills, whilst providing them with resources to consider new ways to design learning, which will enhance student learning. Staff development involves "all activities, actions, processes, policies, programmes and procedures employed to facilitate and support staff to enable them to improve their performance that would result in the institution achieving its goals", (Webb, 1996: 194). The objective of staff development efforts should be to facilitate and support staff to increase their performance and to serves the institutions needs (Webb, 1996). Staff development gained increased attention in higher educational institutions in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, New Zealand and Netherlands, when respective governments intended to make the universities more efficient, effective and accountable (Partington and Stainton, 2003: 475). The importance of training cannot be overemphasised. The provision of training, mentoring and effective review of training and development activities will enable universities to achieve their goals (Blackmore, 2003: 7)

Higher educational institutions have mostly been concerned with academic staff development. Academic staff provides core business activities, which consist of teaching, learning and research (Thackwray, 1997: 13). In

some academic fields such as engineering and information technology (IT), human knowledge doubles every five or ten years. Therefore, most educational institutions would have units or centres that deal with academic, educational or professional development (Webb, 1996: 10) to provide developmental activities that support core business activities and to ensure that they stay abreast of technological changes. Hence, academic staff remained the focus of staff development efforts within a university setting (Fielden, 1998: 7). Owing to rapid changes in management process and technology, administrative and support staff also require development (Fielden, 1998: 8). As a result, higher educational institutions have developed staff development programmes for all staff including academic, administrative and support staff because they all play crucial roles in assisting students to learn and create an environment that facilities learning (Fielden, 1998: 8).

Higher educational institutions that are in a climate of change should introduce a coherent staff development policy that is aligned to the university's "corporate vision" (Barnes, 1994: 139). McNaughty and Kenedy (2000: 98) posited that "effective staff development should be positioned at the centre of university functioning and yet needs to retain connections with the needs and perceptions of teaching staff". Therefore, staff development programmes will be successful if they are strategically supported by the university. Presently, organisations strategically plan their training and development activities by linking it to its business strategy (Opperman and Meyer, 2008: 21). Most training and development programmes that are linked to strategic goals and the business strategy of an organisation can yield positive results for the organisation (Dierdorff and Surface, 2008: 21). Therefore, by linking training and development programmes, one determines business needs that are essential to assisting the organisation with meeting its goals (D'Netto et al., 2008: 7). Organisations that examine their current and future organisational needs in terms of position and position requirements will equip their employees with necessary competencies. Organisations should focus on questions such as "where" and "why" training is necessary to determine their training and development needs (Dierdorff and Surface, 2008: 22). Once the business' needs have been identified, organisations would then integrate it into the training and development needs. Training Need Assessment (TNA) is defined as a process of identifying a problem, collecting, analysing and interpreting data and then using this to select or design an appropriate human resource development intervention to address the problem (Opperman and Meyer, 2008: 35). The TNA process should answer questions that relate to "what, where, when and who" should be trained (Goldstein and Ford, 2002: 220). Goldstein and Ford (2002), as well as Gupta et al. (2007) agreed that training and development programmes should start with a needs assessment process. The

needs assessment is a process of establishing whether training is necessary (Opperman and Meyer, 2008: 36). Opperman and Meyer further maintain that poorly conducted needs assessment could lead to training not achieving its expected outcomes. Training needs assessment should be conducted on a proactive basis (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; Millmore et al., 2007; Opperman and Meyer, 2008). Once institutional needs and TNA are conducted, the next issue will be to evaluate training and development effectiveness. After training has been conducted, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the training programme to ensure that it has address the problem or shortcoming identified. According to Goldstein and Ford (2002: 138), training effectiveness is defined as the "systematic process of collecting subjective and judgemental information" to determine if training was effective. Training and development effectiveness is furthermore defined by D'Netto et al. (2008: 2) as the extent to which training and development programmes and activities yield desired results. If training is effective it should lead to productivity increases, improved job performance, higher job satisfaction, reduced labour turnover, less difficulty in filling vacancies and less stress from skill inadequacy (Grugulis, 2007; Opperman and Meyer, 2008). If training and development is a process of updating knowledge, skills and abilities of employees to improve their job performance, then training and development should be evaluated. According to Goldstein and Ford (2002: 138), evaluation "is the process of appraising something carefully to determine its value". Most companies and higher educational institutions have shown their support for staff training and development. However, few can demonstrate the value of investments that they have made (Tuckwray, 1997; Sels, 2002; Goldstein and Ford, 2002). One of the reasons could be because they do not evaluate the impact that training has on business results (Aragon-Sanchez, Barba-Aragon and Sanz-Valle (2003: 956). Large investments in training (input) do not necessarily mean that learning is achieved (output) (Sels, 2002: 1279).

Goldstein and Ford (2002: 138) identified some barriers that might affect the evaluation of training, namely top management, lack of emphasis on training evaluations, lack of skills amongst those responsible to evaluate training programmes, lack of organisational criteria to set training goals, failure to understand what should be evaluated, lack of planning and a perception that training evaluation is expensive and risky (Wickramsinghe, 2006; Lien, Hung and McLean, 2007). Helen Milner, Executive Director of Learn Direct (cited in Millmore et al., 2007: 352) has stated that training investment is a waste if learning is not evaluated as a result of inadequate information and if the purpose for evaluation is not made clear (Thackwray, 1997: 174). Despite these barriers, evaluation cannot be avoided. Evaluating training and development activities will indicate whether the provided training was beneficial to the organisation in terms of per-

formance improvement of those who attended the training (Meyer et al., 2003: 238). External training providers do not conduct follow-ups and monitoring to assess if training has actually contributed to improved job performance. Therefore, organisations are encouraged to regularly evaluate their training programmes (Wickramasinghe, 2006: 243). Evaluation is viewed differently in higher educational institutions owing to the fact that all development is not related to teaching and learning of their subject matter. Therefore, evaluating academic staff once they have attended development programmes may be difficult to attain (Thackwray, 1997: 178). Different models have been developed over the years to evaluate effectiveness of training and development programmes One of the most widely discussed models is the Kirkpatrick and Phillips' evaluation model (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003; Wickramasinghe, 2006; Lien et al., 2007), which consists of four levels, namely reaction and planned, learning evaluation, application and implementation and business impact (Philips, 2003: 12). The last level is regarded as the most important level because it measures changes that transfer of learning has on the businesses with regard to output, costs, time and customer satisfaction, although it is difficult to assess (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003: 957). Opperman and Meyer (2008: 205) argue that Kirkpatrick's model failed to assess the readiness of training and only shows basic performance results of an organisation, although it is simple and easy to understand. Brinkerhoff, Swanson and Hiltorn and Phillips build on Kirkpatrick's model (Aragon-Sanchez et al., 2003; Brinkerhoff, 2005; Lien et al., 2007; Opperman and Meyer, 2008). Phillips (2003: 13) evaluation model, demonstrated the cost benefits analysis well known as the return on investment (ROI) of the training programme that needs to be determined before approving it, in order to ensure that bottom results are achieved. Phillips however noted that ROI cannot be calculated if transfer of training does not take place. Transfer of training refers to the extent to which trainees can successfully apply their KSA to the job (Goldstein and Ford, 2002: 86). Hence, understanding transfer of training is vital for the success of the organisation. A regular follow-up evaluation should be conducted with employees after training to give them a chance to apply their new knowledge and skills in the workplace (D'Netto et al., 2008; Scaduto et al., 2008). Studies have been conducted by Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons and Kavangh (2007), D'Netto et al. (2008) and Scaduto et al. (2008) on the transfer of the training process. Their findings revealed that training will be effective if the work environment, organisational climate and culture supports the answer of training. Support from management has an influence on the transfer of training and development efforts. Training and development will be effective once there is support from line and senior managers (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; D'Netto et al., 2008). Supervisors can show support by providing performance feedback to em-

ployees on a regular basis; giving them necessary resources to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills and encouraging employees to attend training programmes (D'Netto et al., 2008: 8). The work environment also has an impact on the transfer of training. Once the work environment is not supportive of the use of newly acquired skills and knowledge, transfer training might not take place (Wickramasinghe, 2006: 229). Someone should be appointed to oversee how transfer of training takes place so that employees can receive the necessary support and this will depend on the effective role played by staff developer. In academic institutions staff developers are mainly responsible for administrative functions of staff such as organising training and development activities with the purpose of enhancing staff competencies as means to improve their performance. Academic developers are responsible for developing competencies of academic staff in areas of teaching and research (Webb, 1994: 11). Academic developers should assist academic staff with teaching problems that they experience and provide well-designed workshops, mentoring and orientation programmes (ibid). They should further, identify institutional needs and incorporate them with the staff development plan. This will ensure that goals set in the strategic plan are achieved in a focused and systematic manner (Scollaert et al., 2000: 35). Organisations' policies play a key role in the future success of the organisation. Therefore, a policy should comprise a plan of what should to be achieved. Policies should state long-term and short term objectives, as well as attainable goals (Hariss, 2007: 3), which might provide guidance for clear monitoring to ensure that intended results are accomplished. Staff development policy should have career development opportunities. (Baruch, 2006: 126; De Vos, Dewettinck and Buyens, 2008: 157). As a result, career development becomes a responsibility of both the employee and employer because enhanced individual performance contributes to the success of the organisation. Therefore, it should be address from both perspectives. A balance approached to career development, namely mentoring becomes important to the future growth of an organisation.

Mentoring in higher educational institutions is defined as "a process whereby an experienced senior faculty member helps to develop a less experienced junior faculty member" who is called the "protégé" (Dawn and Palmer, 2009: 126). The purpose should be to acquire skills that have been described as: "understanding the underlying values, traditions and unwritten behaviour Codes of academics; effectively managing a productive career in academics and establishing and maintaining a network of professional colleagues" (Leslie, Lingard and Whyte, 2005: 693). In today's knowledge economy, the status quo has changed and higher educational institutions are making mentoring more comprehensive and reachable by introducing formal mentoring programmes (Dawn and Palmer, 2009: 126). This makes it possible for

aspiring academics to received mentoring support from a number of different people within the institution (ibid). Academics are more interested in developing their own careers. Advantages of introducing formal mentoring are: increased career success; increased retention; increased knowledge creation and sharing; offers great commitment; increased research income and publication rate (Leslie et al., 2005; Bryant and Terborg, 2008; Gardiner (2005), cited in Dawn and Palmer, 2009). There are also benefits for both mentees and mentors. A mentor will receive extrinsic rewards such as "enhanced professional recognition when mentees perform well," and for a mentee it provides a great opportunity for networking. However, there are also challenges when implementing mentoring programmes, especially during matching mentoring partners because not everyone identified is a competent mentor (Dawn and Palmer, 2009: 126). There could also be cross cultural issues, especially when the mentoring programme adopts a traditional approach (Kalamas and Kalamas, 2004: 78), because people come from diverse backgrounds. However, this can be eased by establishing formal mentoring programme and circles, which has been recommended for use in university environments (Spenser, 2005 cited in Dawn and Palmer, 2009: 127). Therefore, higher education institutions that support individual development should formalize mentoring programmes to ensure fair access to mentoring for all members (Leslie et al., 2005: 698). This will be beneficial for both the institution and staff members, while those who are developed through mentoring programmes should be retained. With growth in the global research market, higher educational institutions are competing for highly qualified and experienced staff members. Their competitive advantage depends on competencies of their people. The Strategic Plan Report (2004 - 2008: 19) acknowledges that the PoN has a high staff turnover. Even the World Bank Report (2005: 66) noted that PoN finds it challenging to recruit and retain staff members and lose them owing to high salaries that are offered in the private and public sector, which tempts the best brains from the institution. In order for institutions to retain their staff members, they should first find out what motivates workers to work. By paying attention to what motivates them to work, one will be able to develop strategies to retain them. Academic staff may enter the profession merely for altruistic reasons such as helping students to succeed; their desire for teaching and to help society develop (Mayer, 2006: 63). However, the younger generation might enter academia for varying reasons.

The young generation, called generation Y (Gen Y), are people who were born between the years 1980 onward. Some of them might enter the teaching profession for extrinsic reasons such as pay, status and holidays (Mayer, 2006: 63).

Non-professionals might also have extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, which are stated in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt, 2007: 144). Gen Y might look for organisations that can offer them flexibility,

autonomy, support for personal growth and ability to learn new things (Edgar, 2001, cited in Mayer, 2006: 58). Therefore, finding out the reasons why people leave is indeed important, as it will identify challenges that employees face. Some researchers have investi-gated factors that influence staff members to leave (Mayer, 2006; Abraham, 2007; Holland et al., 2007; De Vos et al., 2008; De Vos and Meganck, 2009) and have realised that employees' decisions to leave are influenced by factors such as salary, work-life balance, or career opportunities. However, people resign for different reasons. Reasons for high labour turnover in higher education institutions include dissatisfaction with the relationship between seniors; working conditions; few hours spent on research; excessive workload; financial rewards; lack of career opportunities and work-life ba-lance (Metcalf, Rolfe, Stevens and Weale, 2005: 20; De Vos and Meganck, 2009: 50). A study conducted in Australia by Mayer (2006) revealed that young academic staff members' reasons for leaving are quite different and range from workload; lack of input in decision making; lack of challenging jobs; teaching out of field; insufficient autonomy; poor salary and personal circumstances (Mayer, 2006: 65). The study found that workload was mentioned as the highest, while salary was the least motivating factor for resigning. Millmore et al. (2002) Mayer, (2006) and Holland et al. (2007) noted that there should be retention strategies developed to retain staff because replacing them can be costly and destructive to services delivery. The research conducted by these aforementioned scholars within the training and development domain from developed countries perspective should be an eye-opener for higher institution in Namibia, which have limited empirical research and hence paucity of literature on training and development within Namibia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: SAMPLE AND RESEARCH PROCESS

The purpose of the research was to examine effectiveness of the current HR Code: SDT of the PoN. A case study approach was utilised. The targeted population included 511 staff members, of which a sample size of 252 using probability random sampling was selected. A total of 230 closed ended questionnaires were distributed online and hard copies were delivered. In addition, 22 members of staff were interviewed. The questionnaire was compiled in a user friendly manner. A pilot study was undertaken before distributing it to large participants. The aim for using a self-administered questionnaire was to the views and opinions of staff members on issues relating to staff development and training. Those selected in the sample size were Namibian staff members and permanent resident holders, because they would be in a better position to answer questions pertaining to the HR Code: SDT practices and policy. Staff members that were appointed from the month of July 2008 to 2009 were not included in the study because the researchers are of the view that they may not have a clear and better understanding of the research problem, which may hinder an objective response. In addition to the questionnaire, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior staff drawing from their experiences in terms of their opinions and knowledge. The interviews took approximately 20 min to complete depending

Table 1. Frequency of staff training and development and assessment of their performance before and after training.

		Performance assessment before and after training		Total
		Yes	No	
Number of times	Never	4	29	33
staff was sent	Some times	26	52	78
on training	Often	3	3	6
	Total	33	84	117
	Missing system	13	00	13

(n = 117).

on the person that was interviewed. Open-ended semi-structured questions were used. Informants who were interviewed included top management, sectional heads and Head of Departments (HoDs). The purpose for interviewing top management was to find out what were motivating factors for formulating the HR Code: SDT and to check if their set objectives had been achieved. The reason for interviewing sectional heads and HoDs were because, one of their responsibilities is to identify training needs and to ensure that their subordinates are equipped with necessary competencies and skills to effectively perform their job (HR Code: 1998: 19). Documents of the institution were also reviewed to support empirical data. The reason for reviewing minutes was to establish if changes were made to the HR Code since it was drafted in 1998. The Higher Education Quality Councils' Audit report (HEQC) of 2007 and the World Bank report (2005) were also consulted to establish if any changes or reviews were made to the HR Code, since the report was audited and the published. Ethical considerations played a major role in terms of analysing the data.

Data analysis

In assessing effectiveness of training and development at the PoN, the researchers posed questions and made statements to ascertain whether the HR Code: SDT has been effectively implemented and to identify any weaknesses thereof. The responses to the closed-ended questionnaire were as follows:

How frequently were staff sent on training and development and were their performances assessed before and after training?

The rationale for this information was to measure if staff members were sent on training and development programmes and to assess whether their job performances were assessed before and after they returned from training. A reason for this statement was to establish whether staff members' job performance was assessed and whether training and development needs were identified, as stated in the HR Code: SDT.

The cross tabulation (Table 1) shown states that from the 130 respondents, 33 of the respondents had never been sent on training and development programmes, while 78 of the respondents were sometimes sent and 6 were often sent on training and development programmes. The statement that respondents had to reply to was: 'my job performance is assessed before and after I went on a training and development programme'. While 33 of the respondents replied yes, 84 replied no. This gave a total of 117 respondents, while other respondents chose not to answer the statement. During the interview, HoD's and sectional heads responded that they do assess performance after training, although,

there are no formal methods in place for assessing work performance. This shows that there is a contradiction between what takes place in practice from the statement of sectional heads and HoDs.

Training and development section in the HR Code: SDT is well-designed

The rationale for this information was to determine whether the HR Code: SDT is well-designed in order to obtain a proper understanding of training and development objectives and to meet the needs of individuals and the institution.

Table 2 indicates that of the 130 respondents, 3.8% of them strongly agreed and 24.6% agreed, which gives a total of 28.4% (3.8% plus 24.6%) who believe that training and development in the HR Code is well designed. The other 39.2% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed, which give a total of 69.2% (39.2% plus 30%). A total of 2.3% of respondents chose not to respond to the statement. HoD's and sectional heads interviewed noted that there is a need for a comprehensive staff development policy that will address the needs of each faculty and departments respectively. They further noted that there are no staff development plans, because it is only when a plan is established that a person can measure if objectives have been achieved.

Future vacancies

The PoN intends to employ at least 10% professors, 10% associate professors, 40% senior lecturers and 20% junior lecturers by 2012, according to their strategic plan of 2009. These are operational business needs for PoN to operate successfully as a university. In order to meet their goals, they should close the divide between current staff qualification levels and desired levels for a university. It is within this context that the following statement was made: the institution trains and develops staff to occupy future vacancies. The table below reveals a different point of view.

Table 3 shows that 6.9% of respondents strongly agreed, 23.8% agreed, which totals 30.7%, (6.9 plus 23.8%) of respondents who agree with the statement, while 36.9% of respondents disagreed and 29.2% strongly disagreed, which totals 66.1% (36.9 plus 29.2%) who disagreed that the PoN trains and develops staff to occupy future vacancies. This reflects a negative response for training and development of staff for future vacancies. A total of 3.1% of respondents chose not to respond to the statement. This reflects a negative response for training and development of staff for future vacancies.

A total of three (3) top management staff members were invited and all responded to the interview request. Each member was interviewed individually. The following questions were posed:

Table 2. HR Code is well-designed.

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Strongly agree	5	3.8	3.9	3.9
	Agree	32	24.6	25.2	29.1
	Disagree	51	39.2	40.2	69.3
	Strongly disagree	39	30.0	30.7	100.0
	Total	127	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	2.3		
	Total	130	100.0		

(n = 130).

Table 3. Training and development of staff for future vacancies.

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Strongly agree	9	6.9	7.1	7.1
	Agree	31	23.8	24.6	31.7
	Disagree	48	36.9	38.1	69.8
	Strongly disagree	38	29.2	30.2	100.0
	Total	126	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	3.1		
	Total	130	100.0		

(n = 130).

What was the purpose of drafting the HR Code: SDT?

All three staff members noted that the HR Code: SDT was drafted in 1998. The aim was to improve qualifications levels of Namibian academic staff so that they can become experts in research, teaching and learning in order to ensure that they stay abreast of education institutional best practices.

Were any objectives set?

When the policy was drafted, no measurable objectives were set. One interviewee noted that it was up to the department to set their own objectives. All interviewees agreed that the policy was drafted as a guide for anything pertaining to staff training and development.

What methods are used to evaluate training and development programmes?

All interviewees agreed that there are no formal methods in place to evaluate training programme effectiveness. However, one interviewee noted that staff members' work performance is assessed once they return from training programmes. He further noted that it was the sectional heads and HoDs' responsibility to measure staff performance to see to it that it has improved. Improvements in work performance, is used as a determining factor for training effectiveness.

What strategies are in place for retaining staff that attend on development programmes?

One interviewee revealed that the PoN has good promotional opportunities for staff members that attend developmental pro-

grammes, while is up to them to apply when an opportunity arises. Another interviewee noted that staff received notch increases when they obtained a vertical higher qualification. He further explained that there is also a staff development agreement that requires that staff work for the PoN for a number of years before the person can resign. Another interviewee noted that Namibia has a skills shortage and staff members who have Masters and PhD qualifications, are more in demand which makes it difficult for the PoN to retain members of staff who leave for better opportunities. The PoN may not be able to compete financially with the private sector and some public companies. He further explained that when a member fulfils his or her contractual obligations, it is up to the individual to decide.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The above analysis revealed that there were no measurable objectives set to evaluate and monitor that the objectives of the exercise were achieved. In fact, no performance assessments were undertaken after training as confirmed by staff members. Moreover, the HR Code: SDT: was also not well designed to meet the intended goals. Indeed, a staff development policy, which addresses the needs of each faculty and department, respectively, is required. Furthermore, the HR Code: SDT was described as inflexible and not encouraging. The HR Code: SDT does not make provision for mentoring programmes, although when research was conducted, it was discovered that there were informal mentoring programmes. It was further confirmed that the HR Code: SDT was not implemented as intended, in addition to this fact that no one was appointed to oversee its successful

implementation.

Moreover, the HR Code: SDT does not provide sufficient opportunities for development of non-Namibians. Training needs identification was conducted on an ad hoc basis, which mainly focused on job performance needs. Staff members are sent on development programmes on their own requests, provided that they meet stipulated requirements to be eligible for a scholarship, loan and study aid. As a matter of fact, there are no staff development plans linked to the strategic goals of the institution. In other words, training takes place on a reactive basis. Furthermore, there are no strategies to retain staff once they have been trained and developed. Staff members resign from the institution as a result of high salaries, better career opportunities and challenging tasks, which are offered at other organisations. Administrative members of staff felt that there were no challenging tasks, nor were they given any opportunities to apply their newly gained skills and knowledge to their jobs. In addition, it is argued that the PoN receives a lesser subsidy from the government, compared to other tertiary higher educational institutions.

Limitations and future research

However, for the benefit of the PoN, the researchers have proposed future research, which emanates from the limitations of the current study that can be of benefit to the PoN in the long run. A study should be conducted concerning effectiveness of academic staff development programmes that are offered by the CTL because tertiary educational institutions rely on quality of staff to deliver effective services to students. An investigation into the perceptions of non-Namibians regarding staff development and training at the PoN, should also be studied. In future when formal mentoring programmes are introduced, a study should be conducted regarding effects of mentoring programmes on junior staff members' job performance.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In order for the PoN to become a leading tertiary educational institution in Namibia, which could deliver effective services to students, it should establish a proper policy that will cater for needs of the staff members, as well as the institution. Tertiary educational institutions' primary goal is to generate and disseminate knowledge, therefore, they should effectively implement policies such as the HR Code: SDT in order to enhance the skills and knowledge of staff members, in order to achieve their goals. Realisation of the vision set by the PoN in their strategic plan reports is wholly dependent on staff members that are employed. Therefore, the institution should be able to train, develop and retain staff who have the appropriate calibre. However, as commented earlier, the current structure of the HR Code: SDT may not yield

desired results, which necessitated this research in order to ascertain it effectiveness so that a best way to retain staff who have been trained through development programmes could be identified. The researcher also made an earnest effort to analyse weaknesses in the current HR Code: SDT in order to trace whether the staff development plan is linked to strategic goals of the institution. Based on the above issues, the current researcher has made some relevant recommendations that would enable the PoN to create an organisational culture that encourages collaboration, effective development and training of staff so that the institutional vision can be realised. The recommendations are outlined below in the following text.

A) Effective communication of staff development and training objectives to staff members

There is a need to effectively communicate the objectives of the HR Code: SDT to staff members, so that everyone is aware of the objectives. Employees will not know and understand the impact that the objectives will have on the institution unless it is communicated to them. Therefore, management is encouraged to communicate objective to new staff members in a lucid language, especially during induction and opening of the academic season. Management should explain to new staff members how important it is for objectives to be achieved. They should also inform them how achievement of the objective will be beneficial both to them as individuals and to the nation, as a whole. They should ensure that employees fully understand the rationale of objectives in order for them to be committed to it, rather than having it only written down in the HR Code: SDT for employees to read. The objectives should also be effectively communicated to HoDs and sectional heads who are responsible for identifying training and development needs, since they work closely with employees and they can identify subordinates who have potential to be developed. Furthermore, there should be targets, which are set to measure whether progress is made towards achievement of objectives on an annual basis.

B) There is a need for a proper performance appraisal system after training

There is a need to introduce a formal performance appraisal system after training. This will ensure that staff members' performance is assessed once they return from training and development programmes. Assessment refers to a process of finding out from the individual how the training or development process has enabled them to improve their job performance and how it has benefited the employer and employee. This will ascertain whether the training and development programmes have been effective. The HR department, in consultation with HoDs and sectional heads, should conduct a performance appraisal system in order to ensure that staff members

transfer their new skills to their jobs. This can be done in the form of submission of reports for administrative and support staff members two or three months after staff have returned from training to the HR department. Students would have to complete performance appraisal forms for academics, which should also be submitted to the HR department three or four months after training. The performance appraisal forms should be place in their files for record purposes, which will ensure that both the employee and employer are committed to improving the job performance of the staff member.

C) There is a need for a comprehensive and complimentary staff development policy

There is a need to draft and implement a comprehensive staff development policy with guidelines of what should be done and procedures of how it should be done. The policy should be linked to the institutions' corporate vision. There is a need for a comprehensive staff development policy that would have clear objectives, roles and responsibilities because the current HR Code: SDT is merely a guiding policy. The policy should be followed by a staff development plan. More than that, the policy should take into consideration different development and training needs of staff. Hence, before the policy is implemented, those in charge of developing the policy, should identify the problem that should be addressed and then determine the necessity for the policy. This should be done in consultation with appropriate sectional heads, HoD and Deans in order to determine who should assist in development of the proposed policy.

D) Staff development plan should be effectively linked to the strategic objectives of the institution

Finally, in order to achieve the strategic goals of the institution and to improve qualification levels of staff members, there is a need to develop a staff development plan as part of the human resource strategy. In order for the PoN to become a recognised international university of science and technology, as stated in their vision statement, there is a need for them to train and develop staff members to meet human resource demands of the university. A staff development plan, in terms of this study, refers to a written document (action plan), which has set time frames that enable members of staff to improve their qualifications for the benefit of the institution. The staff development plan should serve as a guide when decisions regarding staff development programmes are to be made. The main objective of the staff develop-ment plan should be to meet the goals of the institution. The staff development plan should have measurable, realistic and achievable objectives that should be eva-luated after every five years as part of the strategic plan.

Adopting the postulated recommendations will enable the PoN to realise its vision and mission of becoming

Namibia's university of science and technology. More than that, the recommendations will help to improve training and development initiatives and enhance staff members' work performance and qualification levels, which will enable the PoN to actualise its goal of becoming one of the most powerful institutions to be reckoned with within Namibia and the African continent, in general.

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