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## Job and career satisfaction in higher education institutions: a case study of university “A” in South Africa

### Abstract

**Orientation:** This article focuses on the job and career satisfaction of a higher education institution in South Africa. The findings from this investigation will assist employees and management alike to understand factors that can improve career and job satisfaction, in order for university “A” to be an employer of choice that will attract, develop and retain suitably qualified employees.

**Research aim and objective:** This study investigates job and career satisfaction amongst university “A” employees. The objective that was set for this research was to determine the level of job and career satisfaction within university “A” and therefore make recommendations to university “A” management on how to purposefully improve the job and career satisfaction and quality of work life (QoWL) of its employees.

**Motivation for the study:** Job and career satisfaction is a challenge in higher education institutions. For organizations to achieve their strategic objectives or goals, employee’s satisfaction should be at a high level.

**Research design, approach and methods:** The quantitative approach was employed where structured questionnaires were distributed to the population size of 160 of which 142 were completed, with the response rate of 89%. The reliability score of (0.896) was reached. This indicates a high degree of acceptable consistency. The qualitative data were collected by open ended questions that were presented to the participants and these were analyzed by N-VIVO N10. The researcher also observed the participants and recorded information relating to the research in a field diary.

**Findings:** The findings of this research suggest that career advancement is one of the main reasons identified to lead to job and career dissatisfaction. Even though a high majority of the study participants agree that they have a clear set of goals and aims that enable them to do their job, only a marginal number agree that when they have done a good job it is acknowledged by their line manager. The findings furthermore indicate that employees are not satisfied with the training they receive. Other factors that lead to job and career dissatisfaction include poor organizational culture, disintegrated systems, lack of communication, poor facilities, poor registration processes, remuneration, unfair allocation of duties, work overload and division amongst departments. The finding also show that there are other considerations that may not be regarded as the principal functions of the employees, but these may be very critical determinants of job and career satisfaction such as job insecurity, which was one of the prominent concerns of respondents.

**Practical/managerial implications:** The results from this research could be utilized by management and supervisors, in order to minimize the potential factors that could negatively impact on the job and career satisfaction of employees in higher education institutions.

**Contribution and value added:** Given the importance of job and career satisfaction, it is important to ensure a good QoWL for employees. The study will assist in identifying the critical dynamics of job and career satisfaction at university “A”, and highlight those that are a cause for concern and need to be addressed with a view of improving job and career satisfaction and QoWL of employees.

**Keywords:** higher education, job satisfaction, quality of work life.

**JEL Classification:** M12, M54, J81.

### Introduction

Higher education institutions in South Africa have undergone dramatic changes since the 1994 democratic dispensation in terms of academic restructuring, increased student populations, strategic planning, revision of academic programs, quality assurance, research output, capacity building and community engagements. These changes impact on almost all aspects within higher education work environments, including the careers and job

satisfaction of employees in higher education. Transformation of HEIs in South Africa is further reinforced by legislation and policies such as the White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education (1997). The White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education (S.A., 1997, p. 10) urges institutions of higher learning to re-evaluate their human resource strategies and practices with the objective of developing competent and motivated employees that are able to meet the expectations of stakeholders. A program for transformation of higher education is also underpinned by the White Paper on Science and Technology and National Research and Development Strategy, to provide strategic direction and to ensure that it is aligned with the needs of society (Du Prez, 2009, p. 32). Moreover, as a result of being marginalized before 1994, a majority of

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academic staff lacks the necessary skills, competencies and organizational support for the research output required. To adapt to the major educational, social, political and economic transformation challenges in South Africa, higher education institutions (HEI) should be very conscious of the need to operate efficiently and effectively.

In addition higher education institutions (HEI) in South Africa have to deal with the challenges of employment equity, which are regulated by the EEA 55 of S.A. (1998). The EEA 55 of S.A. (1998, pp. 10-11) requires that higher education institutions to meet certain employment equity goals and develop employment equity plans and committees. HEI management is mandated to drive the process that will impact on the human resources composition in terms of gender, race, and physical domination to balance the demographics and comply with the requirements of the EEA 55 of S.A. (1998) (Sebola and Khalo, 2010, p. 203). The EEA 55 of S.A. (1998, p. 7) also has to advance the mandate of affirmative action whereby groups from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have to be accommodated in order to enjoy equal opportunity and be equitably represented in the workforce. According to Portnoi (2003, p. 79), affirmative action in South Africa means that suitably qualified people from designated groups must be well represented in the public or private organization. The EEA 55 of S.A. (1998) faces challenges in the higher education institutions as universities employ employees with highly specialized skills both in academic, technical, and administrative fields.

The shortage of skilled and qualified employees in tertiary institutions is a major challenge in the public sector. The purpose of the Skills Development Act (SDA) 97 of S.A. (1998, p. 2) is therefore to provide an institutional framework to forge and implement national, public and private sector workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce. The SDA 97 of S.A. (1998, pp. 8-9), underpins the job and career dimension of quality of work life (QoWL) which seeks to understand if employees are encouraged to develop new skills and if they are satisfied with the training they receive to perform their jobs effectively. Furthermore, the HEIs will face challenges implementing the SDA 97 of S.A. (1998) because it is labor orientated and therefore academic staff will be excluded because they are perceived as people who are well skilled with top academic credentials.

According to Portnoi (2003, pp. 82-84), the shortage of qualified and competent employees from the previously disadvantaged groups has led to another phenomenon called "poaching". Designated group applicants are being attracted by lucrative salaries

and other employment benefits, and this phenomenon of poaching impacts on universities and the private sector. Moreover, the financial crisis that the universities are undergoing makes it more difficult for universities to attract and retain quality employees. Universities require higher qualifications such as Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees than most organizations in the private sector, hence it is even more challenging to acquire suitably qualified candidates for university positions. These issues make it detrimental to the implementation of the EEA 55 of S.A. (1998).

Although teaching and research demands cut across in all other countries, the South African context is further compounded by democratic transformation and mergers of higher education institutions. A study that was conducted by Schultz (2010, p. 1) at a merged higher education institution that aimed to determine the human resource competencies and to establish the satisfaction of academics, administrative staff and management regarding human resource competencies. It was discovered that business knowledge and human resource practices, personal skills and management skills are critical human resource competencies in the higher learning environment. In addition employees were not satisfied with Human Resource (HR) competencies and this required urgent attention to close down the identified gaps to gain advantage over their competitors.

In addition, Rothman, Barkhuizen and Tytherleigh (2008, p. 418) state, that academics in the South African context have been exposed to stress that is associated with transformation with mergers, high teaching and research demands, multicultural student profile, and a majority of students are coming from a poor primary and secondary education background. These changes affect both academic and academic support staff, which collectively contributes to the effective functioning of the organization (Barkhuizen and Rothmann, 2008; Mostert, Rothmann, Mostert and Nell, 2008; Rothmann and Essenko, 2007 as cited in Viljoen and Rothman, 2009, p. 67).

A study by Field and Buitendach (2011, p. 1) in a tertiary institution in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) that attempted to evaluate the link between happiness, work engagement and organizational commitment of support staff revealed a significant positive relationship between wellbeing and organizational commitment. It is therefore critical for institutions of higher learning to take into consideration the level of happiness of their employees to address the issue of retention. A study by Viljoen and Rothman (2009, p. 67) that aimed to investigate the relationship between the perceived organizational stressors, the levels of commitment and ill health of staff in a South African university of technology, revealed that job

security and job control were the greatest stressors in the institution. From the same study, the findings showed that a number of work related stress factors correlate with the employee's psychological ill health and organizational commitment. Moreover, the research indicated that the employee's experience of a particular occupational stressor resulted in lower levels of organizational and individual commitment and also higher levels of physical and psychological ill health.

In a study by Goldman (2013, pp. 41-42) academics from the former Technikon Witwatersrand in South Africa criticized their management as being incompetent and dictatorial with poor leadership and no vision and strategy to build capacity in terms of research. In addition they felt that they were exposed to immense workloads and support services were dysfunctional and this led the author to believe that the levels of job satisfaction tendered to be low at that institution.

Nonetheless, employee QoWL as well as their job and career satisfaction seems to have been taken for granted. Satisfaction with the terms and conditions of service and the job satisfaction they experience from their work is likely to affect their commitment to the quality of service they render (Mammen, 2006, p. 467). Higher education institutions must be transformed to utilize the skills of both academic and non-academic staff to benefit the organization and society.

Taking into account the aforementioned background in the South African context, it affirms that university employees operate under unsatisfactory working conditions that affect their QoWL. This has significant implications as it negatively affects the commitment of employees to the organization and their job satisfaction. Furthermore, HE sector in South Africa is affected and shaped by the inception of a number of pieces of legislation during the democratic transformation. Makgoba (1996, pp. 183-184) stated that transformative conditions affect the experience of students and staff in institutions of higher learning to embrace the notion of equal access, accountability, development and quality. What the author suggests is that work must be transformed through accessibility, liability, and productivity to give rise to QoWL and job satisfaction.

The present study seeks to make a contribution to higher education by focusing on the job and career satisfaction as constructs of QoWL. Saari and Judge (2004) concur that employees who are dissatisfied and demotivated are likely to encounter low levels of commitment in the workplace, and thus negatively affect performance and attainment of organizational objectives. Therefore higher education institutions

(HEI) management should understand the interaction of job and career satisfaction and QoWL factors amongst their employees in order to increase performance and reach organizational goals.

### 1. Quality of work life

The International Labour Organization (ILO) stated that there is not one commonly accepted definition of QoWL (World Labour report, 1989, p. 193). Hackman and Oldhams (1980 as cited in Muftah and Hanan 2011, p. 110) define QoWL as the by-product of the relationship between the work environment and personal needs. In line with Hackman and Oldham's (1980) definition, Lawler (1982 as cited in Rethinam and Ismail, 2008, p. 59) defines QoWL in terms of work conditions and job characteristics. Solmus (2000; as cited in Koruca, Stowasser, Ozdemir, Orhan and Aydemir, 2011, p. 102) states that QoWL can be described as the degree of covering the important personal needs of workers' lives in the organization. Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee (2001, p. 241) affirm that QoWL is determined by employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace. Hackman and Oldhams (1980), Sirgy et al. (2001) together with Solmus (2000) concur in terms of basing their definitions of QoWL on the 'needs' of employees. Lau, Wong, Chan and Law (2001, as cited in Rethinam and Ismail, 2008, p. 59) define QoWL as the favorable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security and career growth opportunities. Supporting the view of 'satisfaction', Serey's (2006, pp. 8-9) definition relates to meaningful and satisfying work. Schemerhorn, John, Hunt, James, Orsborne and James (1994, pp. 56-57) suggests that QoWL offers fair pay, a safe working environment, opportunities to learn and utilize new skills, career progression, upholding individual rights and pride in the organization. Kiernan and Knutson (1990, p. 105) define QoWL as methods which serve the individual's needs and the organizational effectiveness.

QoWL can therefore be seen as a 'partnership' or a symbiotic relationship between the organization and the employees. Literature reviewed indicates that there are many different interpretations of QoWL. There seems to be an agreement amongst the different authors that QoWL covers employee's needs, satisfying work environment, and meeting certain goals of the organization. The definition of QoWL appears to be dependent on the perception, objectives, experience, point of view and the circumstances of the individual or group. It can be suggested that QoWL is a multi dynamic concept that has varying constructs and dimensions that can be determined by the interests of the researcher.

## 2. Job and career satisfaction

According to Robyn and Du Preez (2013, p. 5), job satisfaction is a dynamic, multidimensional phenomenon with a number of determinants, which includes satisfaction with the job itself, remuneration, promotion opportunities, supervision and colleagues. Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) maintain that job satisfaction is an attitude employees have towards their jobs, a summary assessment of their work, of which the level of satisfaction can vary from one individual to the other as a result of personal or job related factors that employees use to determine their level of satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be described as the satisfaction that employees receive from the internal and external factors of their career including pecuniary and non-pecuniary needs such as fair remuneration, training, development opportunities, management style and organizational culture (Chitakornkijasil, 2009, p. 215). It is the feelings and attitudes of how people perceive their work psychologically and it is a known fact that job satisfaction results in qualitative and quantitative improvement in performance. When people are satisfied with the job that they are performing they tend to be motivated and are more interested in the job, which in turn gives them the psychological satisfaction (Ganguly, 2010, p. 210). Lim (2008) differentiates between conceptual and operational definitions in which determinants of job satisfaction are given, such as job autonomy, career progression opportunities, role identification and a sense of belonging. It seems as if different authors reach a consensus that job and career satisfaction is a multifaceted phenomenon that may be perceived differently by various employees, furthermore it appears that the authors agree that job and career satisfaction is influenced by factors such as career advancement opportunities, the level of job control and the relationship with the co-workers.

Rethinam and Ismail (2008, p. 63) argue that job satisfaction of individuals is different in importance and meaning, according to the work circumstances. Competencies now can be developed by the nature of the job that one performs and if that job provides stimuli for skills development, motivation, knowledge and opportunities for career or organizational development. According to Marshall (2002), smart organizations are the ones that are making workplaces great places to work in. This statement was based on the Financial Mail's top 100 companies to work for. The author investigated the factors that contributed to various companies to be regarded as the best companies to be employed in, and it was revealed that it was the way in which they manage and treat their employees, these organizations spent time and money on their

employees. Training, development and a good working environment seem to be high on the agenda of management and in turn work is enjoyable and employees are productive. In addition those organizations are performing well financially.

## 3. Factors influencing job and career satisfaction

A study by Liebenberg and Barnes in HEI (2004, p. 14) identified areas of employee dissatisfaction as opportunities for career progression, high workload and poor remuneration, the implementation of organizational policies and the amount of praise employees received for performing a good job, and all these appear to be intrinsic factors. The participants that were involved in the research by Pienaar and Bester (2009, p. 376) in a HEI identified better remuneration, effective performance management, training and development, assistance in career management, elimination of discrimination practices, improving working conditions, the need for transformation, networking opportunities, support regarding research projects and insurance of job security as career obstacles that impacted negatively on their job and career satisfaction and performance. In another study by Johnsrud and Rosser (1999, as cited in Johnsrud, 2002, p. 390) that determined the university administrative staff's QoWL in relation to morale, identified nine work related aspects that define the morale of the administrative staff as follows career support: working conditions; discrimination; review/intervention; diversity; recognition for competence; gender/race issues; intra-department relations and external relations.

Another significant factor that hinders job and career satisfaction in the higher education environment is lack of skills, such as personal skills and management skills which are critical human resource competencies. Ezenwafor (2013, p. 431) highlighted the lack of competencies and skills among university secretarial staff, which are detrimental to the achievement of organizational goals and job satisfaction. Some employees feel satisfied about their career and job if they are able to accomplish their set goals at work, when they are trained and developed, and are given the opportunity to be able to utilize the newly acquired skills.

Furthermore, recognition and acknowledgement from the supervisor will make one feel satisfied and appreciated at work (Li and Yeo, 2011, p. 40). The authors state that employees view their career development in the organization as a way of improving their QoWL. This includes opportunities to learn and training that will contribute towards professional development; increased competency levels and expertise. Furthermore, when employees

enlarge and enrich their job through training and professional development, they will attribute QoWL to a time period where they will see themselves progressing as more valuable employees (Li and Yeo, 2011, p. 42). The institutions that give career developmental opportunities and support will reap more benefits by ensuring that employees realize how to proactively manage their own career (Coetzee, Bergh and Schreuder, 2010, p. 2). Learning opportunities and skills development have been proven to have a positive effect on job and career satisfaction and less job stress which result in better QoWL (Rethinam and Ismail, 2008, p. 64). Workers feel valued when they can make use of their acquired skills and alternate from their normal duties and avoid monotonous work. University "A", as a public organization, can influence employee job satisfaction if it focuses on employee development which appears to be neglected in the higher learning environment.

Van Zyl, Van Eeden and Rothman (2013, p. 75) showed that affective job insecurity was related with detachment from the organization, while cognitive job insecurity was linked with low identification with the organization. Experiences of affective job insecurity, job-related stress, and low organizational commitment were associated with the use of avoidance coping strategies. In terms of attitudinal outcomes, De Witte (1999, as cited in Dachapalli and Parumasur, 2012) state that job insecurity has a significant negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of the individual. It leads to health related outcomes such as psychosomatic complaints and it reduces the level of job satisfaction. When employees have fear of losing their jobs they will tend to be less committed to the organization, they will come to work because they are bound to come to get to work for them to get paid, but the enthusiasm and keenness to perform on the job is no longer there.

The relationship between job and career satisfaction and QoWL is very important, because employees feel a sense of satisfaction if they receive training at work, appreciated for their work, feel that their employment is secure and when they are offered opportunities to use their skills to advance their careers.

#### 4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors impacting on the job and career satisfaction of employees at the university "A" with the aim of improving the QoWL. It is envisaged that the results will provide valuable feedback to enhance the workplace environment where employees feel that they are valued, and also assist in mapping out a retention strategy for the institution.

#### 5. Research methodology

A probability sampling technique in a form of stratified random sampling was utilized to draw the sample of 142 from a total population of 550 employees at the university "A". This type of sampling technique requires small numbers to get valid results (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005, p. 62). Of the 142 respondents 55.8% were administrative, 21.8% academic support and 25.4% were academic, this ensured fair representation since the different strata differ significantly in their functionality. Academic staff consisted of lectures and senior lectures, administrative staff was made up of employees from departments such as finance, student affairs, marketing, human resources and maintenance and academic support consisted of librarians and laboratory technicians. All the groups and departments were included in the study. There were (57%) female and (43%) male respondents. The gender representation closely resembles that of university "A". About 85.2% of respondents were black, 7.7% were Indian, 5.6% of the respondents were white while 1.4% were coloured. It is important to differentiate gender and race groups in this study as they impact on QoWL as indicated in a study by Rosser (2004, p. 304) that female faculty members tend to be less satisfied with certain aspects of QoWL such as workload, benefits, compensation and job security than their male counterparts. About 35.2% of respondents were between the ages of 26-34 years old, which means they are more likely to remain employed at university "A" and QoWL will have a great impact on their career and job satisfaction. About 87.3% of the sample had a qualification and the fact that most employees are in possession of a qualification is consistent with the fact that this is an academic environment. Almost 36.6% have a service length of 1-3 years, that may imply that if they experience higher levels of job satisfaction, then they may be more likely to remain longer in the institution.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire to the sampled population. The nominal scale was used for the biographical profiles, whilst the Likert scale was used with a scale of 1-5 for all the dimensions of QoWL. The tool that was utilized was a questionnaire adopted from the 23-item Work Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale developed by Van Laar, Edwards and Easton (2007) to measure six factors of QoWL: job and career satisfaction; general wellbeing; stress at work; control at work; working conditions and work-home interface in order to analyze them and to seek measures to control them. All responses in the six sub-scales were recorded on a five point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (Edwards et al., 2009, p. 209). After the

questionnaires were completed, responses were summed to create groups of items measuring either negative, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” or positive “strongly agree” response to a statement, with a middle point of “undecided” as a neutral option (Wikipedia, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the author focused only on the job and career satisfaction as a factor of QoWL.

The qualitative data were collected by unstructured questions formulated around open questions that were presented to the participants. Qualitative data offered the respondents the option to express themselves without any constraints or limitations which enriched the data. Firstly, the researcher set up an appointment with the respondents. The researcher then established a rapport by introduction and expressing appreciation to the respondent for making the time. The researcher introduced the purpose of the study and also the importance of the involvement of the respondents. The informed consent was explained and confidentiality and anonymity assured before the interview commenced. The respondents were then asked open-ended questions to respond to. The open ended questions were based on QoWL which included job and career satisfaction. The researcher took down notes during the interview. The researcher observed the participants and recorded information relating to research observation in a field diary, and also kept a record of the participant’s verbal and nonverbal expressions and feelings.

## 6. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20 and the Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was utilized to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to describe patterns and trends in the data set.

The study used N-VIVO N10 for qualitative data analysis. N-Vivo allowed the researcher to organize and analyze open-ended questionnaires to assess the correlations that may exist in the data. Different themes in the form of nodes were used to categorize and analyze the qualitative research findings.

The Cronbach’s Alpha scores of (0.896) for job satisfaction factor was greater than the suggested value (of 0.70). This indicates a high degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for the different categories of the ordinal variables for this research.

Table 1. Quantitative data

	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
I have a clear set of goals and aims that enable me to do my job	17.1%	9.3%	73.6%
I have the opportunity to use my abilities and skills at work	24.5%	10.8%	64.7%

When I have done a good job it is acknowledged by my line manager	31.9%	20.3%	47.8%
I am satisfied with the career opportunities available to me here	42.1%	22.9%	35.0%
I am satisfied with the training I receive in order to perform my present job	50.4%	18.0%	31.7%
I am encouraged to develop new skills	37.9%	23.6%	38.6%
I think that my job is reliable and secure	35.2%	24.6%	40.1%
I am growing as a professional in my current job	34.5%	22.5%	43.0%

## 7. Clear set of goals

Notably 73.6% of the study participants agreed that they have a clear set of goals and aims that enable them to do their job, 17.1% disagreed with this statement and 9.3% were undecided. This could be attributed to clear job descriptions and end results of job processes. Michie and Williams study (2003, p. 3) showed that the key work aspect that is linked with psychological ill health was unclear management and work role. Moreover, employees at HEI were uncertain about how to do their work and the quality of their job (Scultze, 2006, p. 333).

## 8. Opportunity to use abilities

A high majority of respondents (64.7%) indicated that they agreed that they have the opportunity to use their abilities and skills at work, 24.5% disagreed with the statement and a further 10.8% were undecided on the question. Schemerhorn, John, Hunt, James, Osborne and James (1994, pp. 56-57) suggest that QoWL offers employees opportunities to learn and utilize new acquired skills. It was noteworthy that a high majority of respondents (64.7%) indicated a positive perception by agreeing that they have the opportunity to use their abilities and skills at work.

## 9. Acknowledgement by line manager

About 47.8% agreed with the statement “When I have done a good job it is acknowledged by my line manager”, 31.9% disagreed and 20.3% were undecided. A study by Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua and Stough (2001, p. 53) identified inadequate recognition and reward as a one of the major causes of stress in universities. Moreover, Khoza and Kanjere (2014, p. 72) deduced that lack of recognition can add to the elements of job dissatisfaction in the workplace.

## 10. Career opportunities

About 42% of respondents disagreed that they are satisfied with the career opportunities available while 35% agreed and a further 23% were undecided. Career development was identified as one of the aspects that impact on job satisfaction and QoWL (Pienaar and Bester, 2009). It is noteworthy that 42% of the respondents are not satisfied with the career opportunities available for them. Coetzee, Bergh and Schreuder (2010, p. 2)

agree that institutions that give career development opportunities and support to their employees will reap more benefits from their employees.

### **11. Training**

More than half (50.4%) of the respondents disagreed that they were satisfied with the training they receive at work to perform their functions while 31.7% agreed and 18% were neutral or undecided. The findings of the study indicated that employees are not satisfied with the training they receive are confirmed by Pantit and Pant (2010, p. 173) that work related training as one of the QoWL issues that impact job and career satisfaction. Furthermore, the results obtained from a study by Schulze (2005, p. 768) identified intrinsic factors such as lack of funding to attend conferences as causes of job dissatisfaction amongst employees. Potgieter and Coetzee's (2010, p. 1) research affirms that there is a link between the competencies and the level of training required for these competencies.

### **12. New skills**

A proportion of 38.6% agreed that they are encouraged to develop new skills, however 37.9% disagreed with this statement and 23.6% were neutral. This showed that the respondents' views were divided on the issue of being encouraged to develop new skills as 37.9% and 38.6% respectively disagreed or agreed on that question. According to Rethinam and Ismail (2008, p. 64) learning opportunities and skills development have been proven to have a positive effect on job and career satisfaction and less job stress which results in better QoWL. Schemerhorn, John, Hunt, James, Orsborne and James (1994, pp. 56-57) also confirm that QoWL offers opportunities to learn and utilize new skills and career progression.

### **13. Job is reliable and secure**

It was noteworthy that 40.1% of respondents agreed that their job is not reliable and secure, 35.2% disagreed and 24.6% were undecided. It was interesting to note that 40.1% of respondents agreed that their job is not reliable and secure. Schultz (2005, p. 768) confirms that job insecurity is a matter of concern in universities.

### **14. Growth as professionals**

About 34.5% of the participants disagreed that they are growing as professionals in their current job, while 43% agreed that they are growing as professionals and 22.5% were undecided. Lau, Wong, Chan and Law (2001, as cited in Rethinam and Ismail, 2008, p. 59) attest that QoWL that supports and promotes job satisfaction by providing employees with career

growth opportunities. Tabassum, Rahman and Jahan (2012, pp. 52-53) also identified career growth as one of the negatively perceived factors that affect QoWL at universities.

It seems as if job and career satisfaction is not given the attention it requires to improve QoWL in public institutions. In addition a study by Mammen (2006, p. 475) indicated that employees from a HEI are more likely to seek employment elsewhere if they experience job dissatisfaction.

### **15. Discussion**

The nodes that relate to the negative factors that impact on QoWL were divided into 3 categories, namely, organizational factors covered (63%), departmental factors (26%) and finally personal (11%). Organizational factors included poor organizational culture, disintegrated systems, lack of communication, unsafe and unhygienic offices, poor facilities, poor registration processes and remuneration. Departmental factors revolved around unfair allocation of duties, work overload and division amongst departments. Personal factors included silo mentality, time management and taking credit for other people's job.

The negative factors that impact on QoWL and job satisfaction that were raised by respondents are similar to previous research by Michie and Williams study (2003, p. 3). Those key negative factors that impact on QoWL and job satisfaction were; work overload and pressure, and unclear management and work role as it is demonstrated by this quote from an employee: "There are some university employees who do not have clear job descriptions for the work that they are performing, in some cases where job descriptions are available one would find that they are not updated". There seems to be a lack of feedback and information sharing as certain employees do not know certain aspects that involve their work tasks, they feel they should be well informed about their job descriptions.

The findings of the study also indicate that employees are not satisfied with the training they receive. Jiang (2012) affirms that even non-financial benefits such as job-related training also impact on employee job satisfaction. These findings are congruent with a study by Chengedzai (2014, p. 116) which identified opportunities to learn and utilize new skills that enable career progression as one of the main contributing factors to job satisfaction. According to Rethinam and Ismail (2008, p. 64) learning opportunities and skills development have been proven to have a positive effect on job and career satisfaction and less job stress which results in better QoWL. The lack of being presented with the opportunity to utilize abilities and

skills gained is evident in this response: “Even though we are sent for training, we are not being offered the chance to fully utilise the knowledge and skills we have acquired”. Workers feel valued when they can make use of their acquired skills and alternate from their normal duties and avoid monotonous work. Job dissatisfaction may prompt employees to leave the organization.

The following quote informs us how an employee feels about being encouraged to develop new skills: “I am often told that there are insufficient funds when I want to attend a course or conference, this makes me think that there are limited funds for staff development”. It is therefore, critical to identify whether poor performance university “A” is attributed to lack of skills, this will assist in determining skills deficiency and address them through proper funding. The lack of management recognition is reflected in this quote: “I want to have a clear job description that outlines my responsibilities, so that my supervisor can approve the workload that I have done. I keep getting a lot of work but no rewards”. There is also a need to clarify management work role to ensure that there is no conflict in reporting between supervisor and subordinate.

The following quote demonstrates that there are also motivational facts that influence the job satisfaction and QoWL of employees as one lecturer expressed: “I get motivated by compliments from former students who are now employed, student progress until graduation, especially students who excel such as a student who obtained 12 distinctions”. Another employee acknowledged: “This is a good institution with a lot of potential”. These remarks indicate that employees are deriving job satisfaction from the institution and they are aware that the institution has got a potential to grow and develop in the future.

The researcher also recorded information relating to the research observation in a field diary, to keep a record of the participant’s verbal and nonverbal expressions and feelings. Various groups of employees were observed in the study to ensure representatively of the University population. Employees generally felt dissatisfied about their remuneration and an increase in compensation will have a positive effect on their QoWL and job satisfaction. This will enable employees to meet their needs, those of their families and also to pay off debts.

Other staff members felt that they are stuck in one place as they do not see any prospects of growing within university “A”, and this affected both their work commitment and their QoWL, as one staff member stated: “The university is still growing and therefore there are limited career development opportunities for me here”. Furthermore it is

noteworthy that 42.1% of the respondents were not satisfied with the career opportunities available for them. This could be attributed to unclear promotion policies for some departments. University employees are career orientated, and they should therefore be provided with opportunities for career growth and advancement as well as personal development. There appears to be unfair treatment of the various employee groups pertaining to opportunity to grow as a professional, as the employee expresses his frustrations: “Academic staff has a structured staff promotion policy, but no policy provision is made for other staff in terms of providing career development opportunities”. When an organization lacks career development plans, then employees will look for external development opportunities as this influences their QoWL in terms of career growth, consequently the organization will not be able to retain its employees.

The study findings also revealed that there are other considerations that may not be regarded as the principal functions of the employees, but these may be very critical determinants of job satisfaction, such as job insecurity, which was one of the prominent concerns of respondents. Employees felt that their employment prospects are threatened and are therefore confronted with feeling of job insecurity. A respondent commented on the negative feelings that reduce the job security: “I fear to raise my grievances because I feel that might jeopardize my employment”. They are reluctant to raise issues that impact on their job satisfaction because they fear they might lose their jobs. Viljoen and Rothmann (2009, p. 67) confirm that job insecurity is prominent in universities. Management must ease employee’s feelings of uncertainty about their jobs and ensure them that their jobs are reliable and secure.

Some employees were simply conforming and have stopped to make any attempts to bring about changes because they felt that some of their concerns are being ignored and they are of the opinion that their initiatives are not being supported. Other employees felt that there is pressure to register a high quantity not quality of students and this brings about more workload for employees. Some employees’ leave is not approved besides having leave credit. Employees mistrust the workers of representative union because they feel that the union does not consult them before making decisions that impact on their QoWL.

In spite of all the negative aspects that affect QoWL, the organization has a potential to be top class and there is a sense of unity amongst some members of the organization. There is some satisfaction with the benefits that employees receive such as study grants for dependants, pension fund and medical aid because



they feel they are better than other organizations. In view of the findings discussed and the highly dynamic kaleidoscope of South African higher education, the following recommendations were proposed.

## 16. Recommendations

As a result of being marginalized before 1994, a majority of HEI staff in South Africa seem to lack the necessary skills and competencies and organizational support to meet the required education transformation goals and challenges. In South Africa transformation can be seen as a way of improving the higher education quality, therefore HEIs should re-examine and change their human resource practices with the aim of developing competent and motivated employees that are able to meet the organizational goals. These changes should enrich the work environment and they allow the White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education (WPTHE) (S.A., 1997) public policy to have a greater influence on the job and career satisfaction. Workplace learning should be prioritized to promote career development and employee related matters must be taken into consideration when developing training programs. After being trained, employees must be offered opportunities to develop and use their acquired skills, in turn enrich jobs to stimulate knowledge, skills and competencies.

The SDA 97 of S.A. (1998, pp. 8-9) through the establishment of Sector of Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) seeks to determine the potential of the higher education sector for coherent occupational structures and career pathing of its workforce in accordance to the scope of the national strategies for economic growth and development. This underpins the job and career dimension of QoWL which pursues to understand if employees at university "A" are encouraged to develop new skills and if they are satisfied with the training they receive to perform their jobs effectively. In addition to ensuring that employees are able to perform in their current jobs, they need to be offered opportunities for career advancement by acquiring competencies that improve their ability to work in other areas or at other levels. Employees need to be trained in management development, in order to better prepare them for career opportunities that may arise within the organization in the future. Moreover, increasing job rotation and exposure employees to a wide range of job experiences is necessary. Therefore institution must create a nurturing environment with career opportunities for growth, but it is ultimately the responsibility of employees to seize these opportunities for personal development. It is further indicated SDA 97 of South Africa (1998) that the skills needs of the organizations should be drawn up and properly administered through the skills plan.

Therefore in line with the SDA 97 of S.A. in-service training workshops as well as 'personal development plans' (PDPs) at university "A" must be developed to assist employees to acquire new skills that will advance their career. Furthermore, this will enhance university "A" staff with opportunities for career growth and advancement, job enrichment as well as personal development.

Schultz (2010, p. 1) discovered at merged higher education institution in South Africa that business knowledge and human resource practices, personal skills and management skills are critical human resource competencies in the higher learning environment to enhance performance. To enable employees to perform their jobs effectively, they have to be trained and this is part and parcel of Total Quality Management (TQM). Hence, employees must be encouraged to perform above the set performance standards, recognising and rewarding individual or group efforts for accomplishing objectives of a work project is advisable. Employees can be rewarded in various forms such as paid leave, career progression opportunities and monetary incentives.

To adapt to the major educational, social, political and economic transformation challenges in South Africa, higher education institutions (HEI) should be very conscious of the need to operate efficiently and effectively. The organizational culture must be acknowledged and organizational culture and traditional factors that hinder the development of employees must be analyzed and controlled. The organization should build a culture that supports career development across all levels.

## 17. Future recommendations

The research was undertaken to assist to identify factors that significantly impact on the job satisfaction of employees at university "A".

- ◆ Even though the research covered the critical aspects of job and career satisfaction, it could however expand its scope to include remuneration factors and job content and context factors. For instance, if employees agree that they are acknowledged by their line manager, it must be further established if there are any rewards that are being offered.
- ◆ Furthermore, the research can utilize focus group discussions as data collection method and to better understand aspects of job satisfaction that impact on employees. This would give a more holistic depiction of the situation and in addition it would contribute more insight in understanding the job and career satisfaction and QoWL experiences of employees

## Conclusion

Attaining job and career satisfaction can assist employees to reach the organizational goals. It is critical for management to meet the job and career satisfaction needs of their employees to increase their performance and commitment. The results obtained from this study revealed that career progression was one of the main factors that led to job and career dissatisfaction, and if employees experience job dissatisfaction they are likely to leave the organization. These results are congruent with a study by Mammen (2006, p. 475) which showed that employees from higher education institutions may search elsewhere for employment if they experience job dissatisfaction. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) concur that the highly qualified employees who are dissatisfied with their job are the first ones who will try to leave the organization as soon as possible, because they have a higher likelihood of finding better employment elsewhere. Career advancement largely depends on management, and it is therefore the responsibility

of management to create a motivating atmosphere in which employees are encouraged to continuously develop themselves to the advantage of the organization.

Employees at university “A” seem to experience feelings of uncertainty about their job security, therefore management needs to make an attempt to tackle feelings related with these experiences. Moreover, to get a full understanding of the feeling of job insecurity more research must be conducted to provide additional information as to which factors give rise to these feelings. In addition, management must provide a supportive climate for employees that are confronted with feelings of job insecurity and unreliable jobs. University “A” retention strategy should include attractive fringe benefits, while a good remuneration package will satisfy employees, a challenging work project will provide career and job satisfaction. All these benefits might boost employee morale and job satisfaction thereby contributing their quota in propelling the university “A” forward.

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