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Full Length Research Paper

Career Development Challenges faced by Academic Staff of Uganda Colleges of Commerce

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The study was focused on specific objective of examining career development of academic staff in the Uganda Colleges of Commerce. The methodology used included questionnaires and interviews; questionnaires were administered to selected staff in the three Colleges. The Principals of these colleges were also interviewed and in addition, some Ministry Officials were also contacted. The findings of the study reveal that there is a positive relationship between government policy, environmental factors, political factors and career development. The recommendation put forward was that government policies be reviewed regularly particularly on recruitment, promotion and training; meanwhile UCCs management were encouraged to put more effort to develop their staff and finally the study concluded by urging all stakeholders to consider upholding career development activities which would empower the individual staff and eventually overall societal development.

Keywords: Career development, challenges, Uganda Colleges of Commerce, Staff development

INTRODUCTION

The international training institutions and universities especially in Europe, America and Asia offers a wide range of professional and post graduate courses to every prospective and current students who come from different countries and stages of working. This is in response to the universal need to develop human skills and capacities in order to meet the emerging challenges of the time.

The years since 1950 have been a veritable

Management development boom within a wider management boom. Today, it is no longer possible to count the number of companies that in one way or the other, work on the development of Management and Managers. To the extent that there is no Business school at University level without some form of Management development programme, (Druker, 2000).

According to World Bank, the critical requirements for sustained growth is knowledge economy (K.E), that is, availability of educated, creative and skilled people who can innovate, create, share and use knowledge well (Kamuzora and Baruch, 2006).

The analysis of the K.E benchmark at the global scale map ranked from 0 to 10. It reveals that the African

regions average is 2.03; Tanzania is 1.48, Uganda is 1.7 and Kenya is 2.29. This data explains the gap, which has to be addressed through systematic, planned training and development.

In the views of Kiessleg and Harvey (2006), the current K.E is a new competitive battle ground characterized by new Technologies, Globalization and ever increasing emphasis on the non –tangible assets (Human resources) of an organization.

Career Development looks at the long term effectiveness and success of organizational personnel. It requires workers to set realistic goals, determining strengths and weaknesses on their part and develop skills that will make them marketable (Lisa, 2003).

Today, training and development of staff in the UCCs is the responsibility of the mother Ministry of Education and Sports in liaison with Education Service Commission, the coordinating institution, Makerere University Business School and the respective UCCs.

Whereas Career Development is core and actually important in the overall human resource development of staff in any organization, emphasis seems not to be placed in the UCCs as evidenced by current stagnation in career ladders and can easily lead to frustration of staff in the colleges. In earlier research (Boerlist, 1994) as cited in Beatrice (2006), it was found that shortcomings on the part of supervisors seriously endanger the employability and mobility of most non-executives at higher levels of functioning and thus hypothesized that these shortcomings cause pitfalls in the careers of many highly positioned employees, limiting or hampering their (cognitive) development.

The researcher was therefore interested in establishing the challenges and prospects of developing careers for academic staff of Uganda Colleges of Commerce.

Studies of the early career problems of young managers typically find that those who experience frustration are victims of reality shock. They see a discrepancy between what they thought the organization was and what it actually is (Ivancevich, 1996).

Until recently, there was a ban on recruitment by the government and some staff left Uganda Colleges of Commerce for various reasons. Those who joined the Colleges many years back as Assistant lecturers or lecturers are being stagnated on their ladders at entry levels. Some staff went for upgrading courses but upon return could not be promoted due to limited resources at the centre (Lubega, 2004). Consequently, some Staff left the colleges and in response, the Governing Councils made some local recruitment.

The major objective of this study was to investigate and examine the challenges of developing career for academic staff of UCCs. The specific objective of this study was to examine the environmental factors, political and policy factors inhibiting successful attainment of career development of academic staff in the UCCs.

Literature review

Government Policies and Career Development

Kamuzora and Baruch (2006), defined policy as a purposive statement of intent at achieving specified objectives. Employment policy therefore becomes a practice when implemented. The primary role of Board of Education as a top Management is to develop policies while the role of Administrators is to implement those policies. Comprehensive school policies would help school Boards and Administrators to deal effectively with recruitment since it would give direction and eliminate confusion (Castallo et al, 1992).

According to Philpott (2005), many lower and middle income workers, in turn, are finding their pay pockets squeezed by an inability to work longer hours(as a result of Government policy), the effect of which is to depress consumer demand and other worker expectations.

Recruitment

Cole (2000) argues that one of the first steps on planning for recruitment of employees into the organization is to establish adequate policies and procedures. Further he stated that a recruitment policy represents the organization's code of conduct and failure to secure proper procedure may lead to undesirable consequences.

Herman (1994) cautioned about the Universities and other Colleges as major sources of attracting applicants; advised that before an Organization decides to do so, it should take into consideration the kind and quality of Education in different institutions of higher learning. Therefore, subjecting the applicant to be inadequately qualified for the job if no further induction training is done. Trainees are therefore required to undergo orientation for effectiveness.

Career development programmes may provide significant benefits to the sales manager and the firm. First, such programmes may effectively reduce turnover, and secondly, since qualified sales representatives are often difficult to find and recruit, career development programmes may increase retention of key sales personnel. In addition, the components of a career development programme have not been systematically dealt with in the sales management literature, (Donald et al, 2006). This means that the recruiting team should be able to identify the required gap.

Staff promotion

Ivancevich (1996), states that career planning results in placing an individual into first, job of a sequential in

series, and maintained that capacity of future workforce depends on the projected passage of individuals through the ranks. A study of relationships between life stages and career stages reveal that successful career evidently is a result of achieving certain career stages at certain ages. In the UCCs stagnation is the case as of now.

Loss of the most experienced employees could reduce the knowledge base which the remaining work group members used to recognize. Such opportunities to improve are based on accumulated experience, (Ashwarth, 2006). The UCCs have experienced significant loss of staff due to wastage and this could reduce the capacity to provide effective training.

Training

Namara (2001), defined policy as a communication tool, which conveys a powerful message about learning and development of staff including career development. There should be an objective policy on staff training for proper functioning of the organization.

Cooper (2001) gave a warning as a government advisor that the appalling state of British further Education system, coupled with lack of training by the companies, could turn the UK into a sick man of Europe. This could be a good reminder to government concerning staff development in the UCCs.

Johnson (1996) believed that through training, people get motivated and upgrades their career development and contributes to better performance.

Isabella B (2006), on the other hand contends that nobody knows with any precision what knowledge and skills are needed in the long run, because nobody knows what the organization and, on a larger scale, society, will be doing in future. She believed that individuals with higher degree of initiatives are willing to invest time and money, and even sometimes to use holiday time, to participate in career activities.

Management commitment and career development

Decenzo and Robins (2002), advises that management should consider the value of group workshops to facilitate career development. He contends that by bringing together groups of employees with their supervisors and managers, problems and misconception can be identified and hopefully resolved.

Lamb (2002) observed that until recently people leaving the United States navy was often ill equipped to obtain civilian life qualifications, despite their services training in the military. This kind of inadequacy is common to many workers who retire after long service of work in one particular field.

Reward Management

According to Loerestein (1978) as reported by Aaker (2006), a person's future interests are incorporated into current decisions by the feelings derived from anticipating the future consumption. Concluded that variation in people's intertemporal decisions depend on their propensity to hold on the future in active thought. These considerations are pertinent to the work life of the college Academic staff. Vroom (1964); in his expectancy theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the effectiveness of the outcome to the individual.

This explains the common practice across the UCCs where their governing councils are to determine the type and rate of incentives to be paid to staff. Some staff seems therefore to be left out.

Lisa et al (2003), posed a question that if the high performers are not taking more courses than their peers, how are they different? This suggests that workers be provided with incentives so that they are motivated to perform better. Workers can be encouraged to achieve higher.

Ivancevich et al (1996) argues that salary and position are the usual indicators of career progress. Systematically, the more ones salary increases and advances up the hierarchy, the higher the level of career performance. The salary scale for Academic staff in UCCs ranges from U1 to U4.

Career Programmes

Torrington (1998) stated that occasionally immediate managers will be involved in career counseling in terms of drawing out the strengths, values and interests of their staff. He also cited that workshops are usually, but not conducted off-site, and offered as a confidential programme to help individuals assess their strengths.

Kirumira (2007) confirms that there is absence of good career guidance right from the University to the extent that job seekers and fresh graduates lack the salary negotiation skills and career guidance, when they go for an interview and are asked on how much they could earn, they simply say anything. Further he said that Government, through the ministry of labor, has done little to bring about just salary structure and this has made employers exploit employees by giving them peanut salaries.

The main advantage of running an assessment centre is that it greatly increases the chances of finding a suitable candidate and reduces the risk of making wrong decision (Murray, 2005). Career centers are therefore essential as a focal point for the provision of

organizational and external career information. This seems to be lacking at the UCCs.

Environmental factors and career development

Professionals must be able to accept the psychological state of dependence; some professionals cannot cope up with a situation of being placed in a situation similar to that which they experienced while in school. They find that they are still being directed by an authority figure after anticipating that their first job would provide considerably more freedom (Ivancevich, 1996). Work assignments in the UCCs require one occasionally to get involved in community work and extracurricular activities. Some staff may find it unrelated to the field of specialization.

Greerlings and Kees Van Veen ;(2006) supported that one of the main Human Resource policy is finding the right individuals with suitable skills and qualities for a given position, cautioned that it can be particularly serious if a structural imbalance arises between the workforce and the job structure. He concluded that organization should pay sufficient attention to the long term composition of their workforce when formulating and implementing selection policy.

Political

James (1923) noted from the book of Ecclesiastes, 9:11 and reported by De Rond (2007) that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them. Hence career development of staff is subjected to some other forces which influence them either to proceed or retard.

Bianco (2007) describes how employees are threatened with job loss, through store closure if the union wins an election or termination, if the union losses. These are not idle threats; some workers seek to aspire for political jobs or are influenced by some politicians which may affect their career progress.

Mussie T. and Soeters L. (2006) described that the current decade is of declining real incomes, deplorable working conditions, political interference and poor management and have created cadres of civil servants in many developing countries who are chronically demoralized and demotivated.

Harrison (1998), asserted that this disengagement of individuals whether arising from the wish of employees or the need o f the business should be achieved with fairness, with mutual respect and be aided by supportive and consistent processes. In other words, staff require economic support in order to develop their careers.

Recent studies in Uganda show that 200 instructors in private institutions are training without academic qualification (New Vision newspaper of June 26, 2007), only shillings 25.5 million was allocated to tertiary Education, less than 1% of the allocation from national budget for the year.

Many countries for example China invest massively on skill development and failure or lack of it as illustrated above may frustrate the future Human Resource Development and can lead to compromising standards.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study entailed the use of longitudinal and survey research of both qualitative and quantitative aspects to collect data between the periods 1995 to 2006. According to Amin (2006), a combination of both survey and non – survey methods are important to generate meaningful data and was therefore the preference of the researcher.

The survey design involved the collection of first hand information from selected staff, college administration and also Ministry officials.

Non – survey was done through data collected from text books, journals, Newspapers, Government publications and internet search.

Study Population

The study population was constituted by academic staff in the UCCs including those who left the UCCs. Taken together, the different categories of Academic staff comprised; Assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, principal lecturer and senior principal lecturer.

College administration (principals) and ministry officials (commissioners) were surveyed as displayed in the following table.

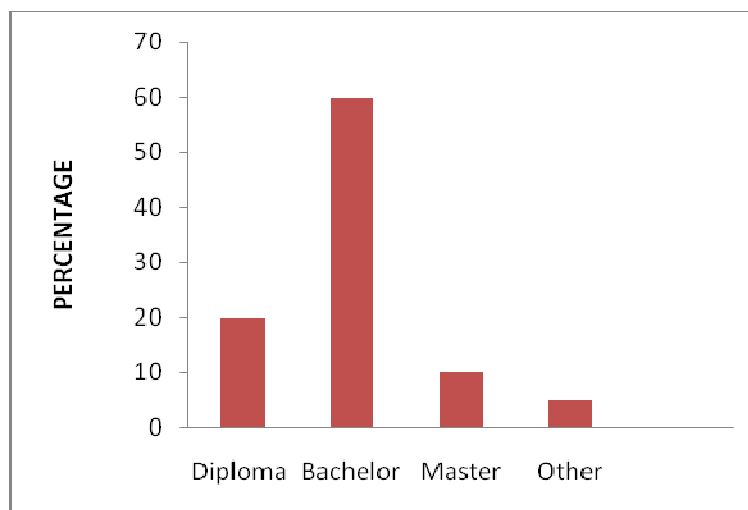
Sample Selection and Size

The target population was selected from each of the different categories of Staff above. A random sample of sixteen assistant lecturers and lecturers per college, four senior lecturers, three assistant principal lecturers, two principal lecturers, and one senior principal lecturer.

In the process, consideration was taken to cater for the differences in Status of employment and gender making a total of 80 academic staff from the colleges. Included in the sample were also 15 former staff, three principals and three ministry officials. The detail of which were captured in table 1 as adopted from Morgan (1970) and cited in

Table 1. Sample size and techniques

Sample category	Target Population	Sampled population	Sample size
Assistant lecturers	125	75	48
Lecturers	25	15	12
Senior lecturers	20	12	09
Principal lecturers	15	09	06
Senior principal lecturers	10	06	03
Former staff	50	30	15
Principals	05	03	03
Ministry officials	03	03	03
Total	235	153	95

**Figure 1.** Qualification of Academic staff in the UCCs

Amin (2006).

Sampling Techniques

In selecting three colleges out of five, the researcher used convenient sampling and also stratified sampling in the belief that the remaining colleges had characteristics already exhibited by the sample.

Both probability and non – probability techniques were employed as shown in the above table.

The probability -based ones included Simple Random Sampling which was applied to all staff. This was because it takes into account the heterogeneous nature of the population sampled.

However, non-probability techniques such as purposive and convenient sampling were also employed when sampling the Ministry officials and principals.

It was an attempt to include a range of people with varying characteristics and experiences.

Snowball was also applied when sampling the former staff who were contacted through an established contact

available in their former work places.

Data presentation and Analysis

This was handled both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative, descriptive analysis techniques, such as tabulation of responses and frequency tables, for easy comparisons of relationships including percentages. Tables of coefficients and correlations were generated which were useful in illustrating the strength of relationships.

Quantitative techniques was also employed particularly Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the modal summary to illustrate the relationships by using the available statistical tools in place.

Measurement of Variables

Independent and dependent variables were ranked using the numerical scales. This was to facilitate data input and give way to meaningful data analysis.

Table 2. Government policy and career development in UCCs**Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence interval for B		Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1										
(Constant)	1.426	1.320		4.457	.000	.786	2.066		.313	
GOVTPOL	.270	.107	.313	2.533	.014	.057	.484	.313		.313

Coefficients²**KEY:****GOVTOL:** Government Policy. **DEPT:** Dependent (Career Development)**Table 3.** Government policy and career development in the UCCs
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R square Change	F Change	Df1	df2	Sig.F.Change	
1	.313	.098	.083	.4922	.098	6.416	1	59	.014	1.674

a. Predictors : (Constant), GOVTPOL
B. Dependent Variable: DEPT**KEY:****GOVTOL:** Government Policy. **DEPT:** Dependent (Career Development)**Research Findings****Staff qualifications**

A closer look at the qualification of staff also reveals that many staff are diploma and bachelor degree holders as illustrated in the following table.

Figure 1 reveals that, 20% of academic staff are diploma holders and most of the staff (nearly 60%) have bachelor degree. Few academic staff (10%) have masters and other higher qualifications. Diploma holders therefore risk losing their jobs as assistant lecturers.

According to government policy (ESC2004), diploma graduates are to be phased out and those holding them were urged to train and upgrade. The 60% who have plateaued at bachelor level needed to upgrade in order to be promoted to senior level positions. Nearly 10% of academic staff have other professional qualifications such as ACCA and CPA.

A further look at the status of employment of academic staff in the UCCs reveals that government is the major employer.

The government policies and career development in UCCs

The purpose of the study was to examine the employment policies and their influence towards developing the careers of academic staff of the UCCs. The respondents were the academic staff namely the assistant lecturers, lecturers, senior lecturers, principal lecturers and senior principal lecturers. The information provided was cross examined with those given by the Ministry of Education and Sports' officials and the principals through interviews. The record was entered on data sheet and displayed as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 indicates that there is a positive relationship between government policy and career development in the UCCs with coefficients of 0.484. The stringent government policy will retard career development of staff while favorable policy will promote career development of staff in the colleges. However, data across the colleges revealed that in terms of government policy; Training policy impacted more compared to recruitment and

Table 4. Government policy and career development in UCCs ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1.554	1	1.554	6.416	.014 ^a
Residual	14.293	59	.242		
Total	15.848	60			

a. Predictors: (Constant), GOVTPOL

b. Dependent Variable: DEPT

KEY:GOVTOL: Government Policy. **DEPT:** Dependent (Career Development)**Table 5.** Environmental factors and career development Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	95% confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error				Lower bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	2.150	.218		9.864	.000	1.714	2.587
ENV.TAL	3.576E-02	.096	.049	.374	.710	-.156	.227

Dependent variable: DEPT

Table 6. Model summary on Environmental factors and career development in UCCs**Model Summary^b**

a. Predictors: (constant), ENV.TAL

B. Dependent Variable: DEPT

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate					
					R square Change	F Change	df1	df2	S
1	.049 ^a	.002	-.015	.5184	.002	.140	1	58	

promotion policies. Also statistics revealed that UCC Pakwach (0.439 from table 8) was affected much by government policy followed by Tororo and Aduku.

From table 3 showing the model summary on government policy and career development in UCCs, the adjusted R Square of .083 shows that government policy is very significant in determining the level of career development in the UCCs, that is, 90% level of significance.

By implication the model summary reveals that Government Policy is responsible for 90% of the factors that affect Career Development of academic staff in the Uganda College of Commerce.

Table 4 on ANOVA between Government Policy and Career Development in UCCs indicates that the level of significance is 0.014, that is 90% level which is a confirmation of the data provided in tables 8 and 9 above. It illustrates that government policy is very crucial in

determining the level of career development of academic staff in the UCCs.

Recruitment in the UCCs

The recruitment in the UCCs are the responsibility of ESC after the vacancy is declared by the Ministry of Education and Sports (ESC Report 2004). Some local appointments are also made by the governing councils and in which case reward is less as compared to that by the government. Results across colleges show that recruitment policy affected many staff and the worst affected was UCC Pakwach (0.474) followed by UCC Tororo (0.432) and UCC Aduku (0.161), making an overall average for recruitment at 0.326.

Some staff in the UCCs have served for long period of time waiting for their appointment to be regularized but up to this time in vain. This implied that they have to

stagnate at this level until further notice.

Environmental factors and career development

Here the objectives was to identify any environmental factors such as political or otherwise which do inhibit successful attainment of career growth of academic staff in the UCCs. The respondents were to indicate whether political situation of our country affects career growth of staff in the UCCs. They (respondents) were also required to mention some specific examples of such cases and also the circumstances under which they do occur.

A general consensus was tabulated and coded using the nominal scales then inputted by use of SPSS as displayed in the following table:

Table 5 shows that there is a positive correlation between environmental factors and career development with Beta coefficient of 0.049. This means that some environmental issues are responsible for the career development of staff in the UCCs. Some environmental factors such as insecurity, poverty and family size causes some impact on the level of career development in the UCCs.

Table 6 also confirms that environmental factors at the two levels of predictors (political and/or economic) are both significant at 99%, with standard error of 0.335 for political and 0.0075 for economic. It further reveals that these factors are influential into shaping the nature of the career development in the UCCs.

This revelation was also confirmed by Garam (1996), who believed that essentially career is something that an individual experience but not solely his/her own making. The way in which the organizations are organized and the way in which the employment relationship is organized define the type and scope of career an employee may have.

Political factors in UCCs

Some UCCs have been insecure due to the wars in the north which took a long time. The staff therefore feels that they got entangled in the confusion and therefore could not progress. A section of staff believe that there is favoritism in appointment although there seems to be no evidence. However, staff are expected to work anywhere in the country, some fear transfers and would opt out of the job when shifted to an insecure region.

Some other factors were also reported to have retarded the progress of staff in as far as career development is concerned. Some staff believed that their pay is so low to fund their studies while others say it is not regular.

Crainer (1998) also advocated for a new career that creates balance between work and family life meaning that the career planners may have to take into consideration a number of factors that might affect career

development. Many staff who managed to progress had to part off with some of their assets and this is not an easy task to an entry staff.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Relationship between government policy and career development

The government policy was revealed to affect career development significantly at 99% level (Table 2). This was in line with what Donald et al (2006) and Philpott (2005) had earlier urged that stringent government policy may depress worker expectations, implying that government being the major employer may have to review their policies regularly. Namara (2001) also observed that policy is a communication tool which conveys a powerful message concerning staff development. Hence policies are vital in providing direction in as far as staff development is concerned. The government policy was found to be in place but there was a problem of implementation.

Government policies were found to have impact on career development in UCCs and by way of ranking as follows: Training policy, recruitment policy and then promotion policy. The college which was most affected by policy was UCC Pakwach followed by UCC Tororo then UCC Aduku. Some staff felt the policy was too stringent for example by requiring them to secure a leave before beginning the course. Statistics on table 10 also reveals that government policy is very crucial in shaping career development in the UCCs to a level of 90%.

The relationship between environmental factors and career development

The issues identified in regard to environmental factors were political and economic conditions of the country. The overall assessment reveals that there is a positive correlation between environmental factors and career development. The level of significance being 99% for both predictors, that is, political and economic factors. According to the respondents, many of them lack funds (economic) to upgrade and occasionally when such opportunity to train occurs, the UCC management selects according to their own merit, implying favoritism. Staff also complain of abrupt transfers which usually affect those with large families.

CONCLUSION

The study was about the challenges of developing career of academic staff in UCCs. The findings show that

government policy is positively related to career development of academic staff in the UCCs. However management commitment and employee commitment were found to have a negative relationship. Other factors such as political and economic conditions were found to be significant in transforming the career of these staff.

Government policies in UCCs

The policies which guide staff in UCCs are designed by the ministry of education and sports. The colleges' governing councils are also empowered to make some policies to guide staff. Training policy is believed to be stringent by staff and had much conditionality. However, due to the recruitment done by government, staff felt that the policy was not favorable, implying that many of the staff could not access government payroll and therefore could not afford to sponsor themselves. Also depending on availability of funds.

The policy on promotion was not being implemented and according to the Ministry officials, it was the work of the education service commission. The policies are to be reviewed from time to time but this was not done particularly on training, promotion and recruitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Career development as a human resource function should be given much attention in the UCCs. It is surprising to find academic staff join the colleges and served up to 15 years without any promotion along the ladder. It is important that the government administration of the UCCs and the affected staff takes the positive step in the right direction, some of which are elucidated in the following section.

The government policy and career development

Government being the major employer (60% from Figure 1), and also from the fact that these policies affect the academic staff significantly, there was need to review these policies regularly. The findings also show that there was no proportionate distribution of staff by titles, worst still some staff are holding titles (assistant lecturers) which had been previously phased out by the government. This should be regularized and those in such positions upgraded systematically. The study also revealed that the recruitment policy in UCCs is not gender sensitive thereby rendering the workforce over dominated by males. The results also indicated that academic staff had gained experience from four to over 15 years and yet there is no systematic plan to promote them across the ladder. The training policy by the government is considered stringent and inflexible, there

may be need to review some sections of it in order to warrant compliance.

Environmental factors and career development

This is found to be a big challenge to all stakeholders. The need to have a level ground for all academic staff such that whenever an opportunity comes in the form of training, promotion, reward, everyone is afforded as necessitated by his or her own right.

Management is encouraged to use modern approaches to decision making to avoid incidences of malice and preferential treatment exhibited in some cases. Some respondents who were from insecure areas (due to war) lamented that it was like government had ignored them or battered their fate. Affirmative actions need to be taken to help them and also given the fact that some of them are nearing exit.

Suggestion for further research

Further studies should widen in scope to cover all higher institutions of learning such as technical schools, teacher training colleges and other public universities. This would increase the variety of population and make it more statistically significant.

There should be more studies on the impact of insecurity to the staff in the affected areas. More researches should also be focused on the problems encountered by management in developing career of staff. May be they are not fully equipped and facilitated to deliver to the expectations of the academic staff or they are not interested or something else. Social factors should also be looked at especially family size of staff on transfer and other related issues.

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