

Analyzing Faculty Retention Practices in Private Higher Educational Institutions with Special Reference to Stay Interviews

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Abstract

It is widely believed that faculty members are the most revered resource in any educational institution and shoulder the responsibility of shaping the future of both the students and the institute itself. However, the problem surfaces when this rich resource of talent leaves the institute and moves to the competing institutes, which affects the overall student development, teaching and training activities, brand and goodwill of the institute, cost of training and re-training of the new faculty members, lecture scheduling and administrative work etc. The above problem is seen to be quite acute in the private higher education institutes. This paper makes a modest attempt to explain the factors that contribute to faculty attrition and study the current practices of retention implemented by educational institutes. The paper also evaluates the new strategies related to Stay Interviews used by higher educational institutes to retain faculty members. The primary data, collected from fifty faculty members of different higher management education institutes of Maharashtra, have been analysed for achieving the study objectives.

Keywords: Faculty Attrition, Retention, Higher Educational Institutes, Stay Interviews

Introduction:

Today's education arena has changed radically in special reference to Higher Educational Institutes (HEI's) in India. Till recently, faculty members of HEIs used to be involved thoroughly in pure academics – teaching, research, course design, examination, and activities related to intellectual development of both self and the students. However, currently in most HEIs there is excessive pressure of administrative works related to daily routine works (mostly clerical) of the institutes. *Goyal, Shah, & Naidu (2015)* observed that with no proper retention policy in HEIs it leads to heavy costs on management for recruitment, talent management and training. *Ahmad and Makdoomi (2012)* stated that stress in higher education emanating from undue pressure of administrative and clerical work, if not addressed properly

on time, turns out to be vicious and dangerous at work. While a certain amount of stress is required for timely completion of work with quality, over mounting stress could lead to mental and physical hazard resulting in poor performance, decline in morale and motivation. *Maheshwari (2012)* has emphasised that high employee turnover leads to increased recruitment, selection and training costs. The author states the problem of attrition is due to occupational hopping to the high paying jobs in corporate and failure of management to be 'just and fair' in treatment of faculty, exploitation, family issues etc. *Jain (2013)* studied that the main causes of faculty turnover are no proper funds allocated for faculty research and development, overburdened with work load, no job security, lack of positive leadership at top management, no rewards and recognition, role erosion, poor compensation, etc. All these results in excess costs like recruitment, training, induction, poor decision making, lack of co-ordination, non-cohesive relations with colleagues, poor brand value, etc. which eventually ruins the organisation in all fronts.

The Concept - Stay Interview:

Stay interview is a type of interview conducted by employers with their current employees to understand what is driving their engagement, satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. Unlike exit interviews, which are conducted when an employee leaves the organisation, stay interviews are conducted while the employee is still with the organization to retain him/her for the benefit of the organisation.

The purpose of a stay interview is to identify areas of improvement that can help to retain valuable employees and prevent them from leaving. During a stay interview, the employer asks open-ended questions to understand the employee's motivations, job satisfaction, career goals, and concerns.

Some common questions that may be asked during a stay interview include:

1. What do you enjoy the most about your job?
2. What keeps you motivated to come to work every day?
3. Are there any aspects of your job that you find challenging or frustrating?
4. Do you feel that your work is valued and appreciated?
5. What are your career goals, and how can the company support you in achieving them?
6. Are there any benefits or perks that you would like to see added or improved?
7. Is there anything that the company can do to improve your work-life balance?

8. Have you ever considered leaving the company, and if so, what factors contributed to that decision?

By conducting stay interviews, employers can gain valuable insights into the factors that are driving employee satisfaction and engagement. This information can be used to make improvements in the work environment and introducing policies that can help retain valuable employees and reduce their attrition. Additionally, by showing that the organization cares about employee feedback, stay interviews can improve overall employee morale and commitment to the organization.

Review of Literature:

Reddy & Poornima (2012) stated that stressors include pressure of workload and deadline, research, change in educational set-up, change of management, reorganization and restructuring. Even factors like stress from co-workers not doing their part, lack of control and decision making, not informed about job description, work affecting home and personal life, low pay and benefits often cause stress. The consequences are decreased job satisfaction, reduced morale and deteriorated health of academic staff. Such consequences are generally reflected through emotional manifestations, feelings of undefined anxiety, dissatisfaction, depression, fear & frustration, low self-esteem, etc. coupled with behavioral problems such as appetite disorders, excessive smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, inability to sleep, and withdrawal symptoms like absenteeism, resignation, heart disease, psychosomatic illness, fatigue, palpitations, role conflict and role ambiguity.

As observed by Koshy & Babu (2012), there exists a positive relationship between a set of motivational factors (compensation, empowerment, training & development, appraisal systems etc.) and retention. The authors concluded that in order to retain them faculty members should be encouraged to participate in research activities, faculty development programs along with being provided with academic autonomy, sabbatical leaves, good working conditions and promotions / appreciations based on regular appraisals.

Pabla (2014) emphasises that retention is one of the major areas of concern and a daunting challenge in the higher education institutes. A large numbers of teachers consider teaching as a time pass and do not involve in it wholeheartedly. Committed teachers should be treated

well with dignity, recognition and compensation while uncommitted ones would leave the institution. The study focuses on measures to retain committed old faculty members.

According to a report by Mckinsey & Co. 'Closing the Talent Gap', the main reasons behind the intention of faculty to leave the organisation are: excessive burnout, lack of respect, extreme working conditions with excessive work hours, non-cohesive colleagues, poor co-working conditions, loss of domain knowledge, bossism of management, very low or no benefits and perquisites, medical reasons, burden of clerical and non-academic work load, etc. The report suggests a few tools to retain faculty members which include exit interview, retention surveys, mentoring, benchmarks, training, faculty development programs, job security to all core faculty members and a strong back-up in career development like Ph.D, NET, feedback mechanism, family gatherings, awards for performance, group insurance schemes, loans at reduced or no interest, etc.

Research Issues and Objectives:

Faculty attrition is a common problem faced by higher education institutes in India. After reviewing the existing literature related to faculty attrition it is found that dissatisfied and demotivated faculty members often leave their current jobs in search of better job opportunities, either in academia or in the industry and mostly they prefer to go to their competitors where they are treated well. Now the question is how the higher education institutes, especially in the private sector where the problem is rampant, can retain the valuable faculty members. Research studies suggest attractive compensation packages, opportunities for career growth and professional development, and a positive work environment as the major ways to retain the faculty members in such organisations. Also, faculty members in India often work on a contractual basis, with limited job security and no confirmed jobs in the higher education sector. Could the higher education institutions retain them by providing job security, such as tenure-track positions, confirmation, less probations, and also providing health & accidental benefits, research support, etc. in order to retain the faculty members? Some major concerns are with also poor working conditions, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of resources, and high workloads, can lead to job dissatisfaction and faculty attrition. Additionally, workplace harassment is a serious problem in India. In view of this, should the higher education institutes introduce policies and procedures to address and prevent harassment to retain faculty members? Lastly, Faculty members may leave their jobs for personal reasons,

such as family obligations, health issues, or relocation. All the above issues should be considered seriously in the stay interviews and implemented as a tool for retention of faculty members for benefit of the institute.

In line with the issues discussed above, the present study tries to attain the following objectives:

1. To identify the factors that lead to faculty turnover in private higher educational institutions in Maharashtra State
2. To evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of faculty members towards stay interviews
3. To examine the potential benefits of stay interviews as a tool for retaining faculty members
4. To investigate the impact of stay interviews on faculty retention rates in private higher educational institutions
5. To develop a framework for implementation of stay interviews as a retention strategy for faculty members in higher educational institutions in Maharashtra State

Research Methodology:

The present study is based on data collected from faculty members from Higher Education Institutes in India. A structured questionnaire comprising of multiple-choice questions were circulated to faculty members in Private Higher Education Institutes. Primary data was analysed using simple tabulation and frequency distribution. Structured Interviews were conducted with questions related to faculty retention, attrition & Stay Interviews in Private Higher Educational Institutes in Maharashtra. Using an interview guide, qualitative data were gathered through personal interviews. In order to verify and complement information, an informal discussion was also held with the informant where required during and after the interview. For the sake of upholding research ethics and standards, confidentiality was maintained.

A consistent track and strategy of posing questions to the respondents was used to ensure substantial trustworthiness. The collected data were subjected to content analysis in order to rationally comprehend the numerous aspects of faculty retention in a higher education institute.

Summary of Findings:

As stated earlier, the main focus of the study is to find out the factors that impact the faculty attrition and retention with a special emphasis on Stay Interview as a tool of faculty retention in private higher education institutions. Results of the survey clearly show that 43% of the faculty Members from Private Higher Education Institutes had thought of leaving their current institute at least 4 to 5 times in past 6 months which is quite alarming for the institutes. Not being valued, low esteem, not being recognised and appreciated for good work, lack of faculty development activities, very low research support, poor work culture, low salary, poor organisational policies, insecurity, work stress, unnecessary interference of management, huge administrative work burden, bad bosses are the main reasons behind faculty members urging to leave their institute. It was found that 33% of the faculty members do not feel valued at work which creates an urge to leave the organization. About 90% of faculty members feel that institutes do not invest in recognition and appreciation, training, development and research support. Poor work culture, low salary, poor organisational policies, job security, work-stress, excessive management interference, administrative work, no research support and bad reporting authority were cited by about 80 per cent of respondents as the main reasons for them to leave the job.

In the face of the above situation 33% of the Private Higher Education Institutes do not even care to conduct any retention activities at all for their faculty members. It was found that challenging and innovative work, conducive work environment and supportive colleagues were the major attractions for faculty members to come to the institute daily for work. Majority of the faculty members surveyed (77%) know about Stay Interviews and are ready for accepting Stay Interviews as the Retention Tool while 44% of faculty members feel that Stay Interviews can help the Institutes to retain their highly talented faculty members.

When asked about what would make them stay in their current institute, 85% of respondents were of the opinion that teaching and learning, research opportunities, additional perks, leaves, recognition, conducive environment, honesty, proper communication, and integrity are the main factors which would make them stay long and serve their Institute. Further 60% felt that recreation facilities, career advancement, work-life balance also additionally play a role for them to stay in the organisation.

In private institutions of higher learning, HOD/Director/Principal emerged as the most important determinant in faculty retention. It has been noted that Directors/Principals and other academic leaders who are approachable and comprehensive, excite and stimulate the faculty members at academic institutions, which gives them a reason to want to stick around. Therefore, HOD/Principal/Director is crucial for faculty retention in private institutions of higher learning. On the other hand, most of the faculty members can be tempted to leave their organisation due to Bad Boss/Reporting Head/HOD/Director/Principal. The most favoured leaders are those who encourage independence in functioning, provide encouragement, and are approachable. According to a study, effective leadership enables faculty to take responsibility for their decisions and to be engaged and devoted to the institution's mission. Institutional culture, which honours faculty contributions, ensures their financial and psychological security, and treasures high moral standards, motivates teachers to align their work with the goals of institutional education are able to retain good talent in the institute. This suggests that competent faculty prefer working in situations that are efficient and give due respect and recognition to their faculty members.

Offering employees opportunities for training and development often results in a higher retention rate. Mutual respect, teamwork on work-related tasks, the presence of motivated and hardworking co-workers, a peaceful relationship, mentoring, and routine assistance are all expected to lead to a longer engagement with institutional education. Faculty members want to work with people who think and act similarly to them. Therefore, a positive working relationship between faculty and administration seems to be one of the key elements in keeping excellent faculty in institutional education.

Recommendations:

Institutes of Higher Education should conduct various retention activities to make their good talent stay in the system. Faculty members should be given challenging work assignments that could challenge their calibre and interest. Faculty members should be encouraged with regular rewards, recognition and awards, and should also be encouraged with facilities of research and development.

To address these issues, the following solutions can be implemented:

1. Improve work culture: The company should promote a healthy work culture that fosters teamwork, open communication, and employee engagement. Encouraging

- positive interactions between employees and providing opportunities for skill development can help to create a positive work environment.
2. Offer competitive salary packages: Reviewing salary packages can help to attract and retain talented employees. Conduct market research to understand what competitors are offering and adjust salaries accordingly.
 3. Revamp organisational policies: If employees feel like they are being treated unfairly, it can lead to dissatisfaction and high turnover rates. Reviewing and updating company policies and procedures can help to ensure fairness and transparency.
 4. Ensure job security: Job insecurity can cause anxiety and stress among employees, which can negatively impact their job performance. Implementing job security measures like offering long-term contracts, performance-based promotions, and employee development programs can help to retain valuable employees.
 5. Address work stress: Providing support services like counselling and mental health programs can help employees manage work stress. Encouraging work-life balance and implementing flexible work arrangements can also help employees manage their workload and reduce stress.
 6. Minimize excessive management interference: Over-management can cause frustration and a lack of autonomy among employees. Encouraging employees to take ownership of their work and providing clear guidelines and expectations can help to reduce excessive management interference.
 7. Reduce administrative work: Reducing administrative workloads can free up time for employees to focus on their core job responsibilities. Implementing technology solutions like automation can also help to reduce the time spent on administrative tasks.
 8. Increase research support: Providing research support to employees can help to improve job satisfaction and attract highly skilled employees. Investing in research and development programs and providing adequate resources can help employees to achieve their professional goals.
 9. Address bad Reporting Head/Director/Principal/HOD: If a bad Reporting Head/Director/Principal/HOD is causing issues, it's essential to address this problem directly. Providing training and development programs to improve leadership skills or removing the problematic person from their position can help to improve employee satisfaction and retention.

Winding-up:

Overall, addressing the above issues requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of employee dissatisfaction. By implementing the solutions suggested above, organisations can create a positive work environment that attracts and retains talented faculty members. Stay Interviews can be adopted as a tool to retain faculty members in the Higher education Institutions. More over a congenial environment to work is of high importance which leads to growth of students the institute itself. Stay Interviews could act as a successful measure to help understand the requirements of the old, committed and productive faculty members and retain them for the benefit of all the stakeholders of the institute.

Though the present study made a comprehensive analysis of factors leading to faculty attrition in private higher education institutions on one hand and highlighted retention practices of the institutes on the other, yet it is not all pervasive. The study is limited to only the state of Maharashtra and has not considered factors like job satisfaction, motivation and job rotations.

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