

Employee Retention Strategies: Issues, Challenges and Perspectives in Kano State Universal Basic Education Board (KNSUBEB)

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Abstract

Securing and retaining competent, skilled and motivated employees played a key role in the growth and survival of any organization. One of the biggest challenges facing Kano state Universal Basic Education Board (KNSUBEB) today is effective retention strategies of its manpower. The purpose of this paper is to examine the issues, challenges and perspectives of retention strategies in KNSUBEB. This study adopted documentary research. Data were obtained from purely secondary sources from circulars, publications, journals, magazines and government gazettes especially as it relates to Kano SUBEB. This method was justified on the premise that information needed for the study is sufficiently available to provide a reasonable ground and arrive at valid conclusion. The study discovered inter-alia that there is strong relationship between retention strategies adopted by management of KNSUBEB and teachers performance. Issue like poor recruitment process, poor compensation packages, delayed promotion, mismatch in training opportunities were the major challenges affecting employee retention strategies in KNSUBEB. It is therefore recommended that the management of KNSUBEB should give more priority to merit based recruitment, issues of political patronage and party affiliations that characterized recruitment process should be jettisoned. Compensation packages should be improved to cope with current economic realities, Promotion should be timely as at when due, and training opportunities should be given based on training needs assessment.

Keywords: Retention, Human Resource, Organization, Retention Strategies, Employees.

Introduction

The extent to which goals and objectives of an organization could be achieved is largely determined by strategy put in place by an organization to recruit and retain competent staff in its employment. It has been argued that the quality of manpower in terms of brains capacities, technical expertise and scientific disposition determines how effective the utilization of other resources could and what results would be, (Embugus 2005; Dessel 2013). The nature of modern organizations today sequel to the unprecedented technological and scientific advancements, coupled with the intense

competitions that characterized modern business environment especially in the 21st century, make it necessary for organizations to put in place adequate strategies capable of not only recruitment, training and development of a competent workforce, but also designing effective strategies to retain and maintain them for the realization of their goals. Hence, creating effective retention strategies to decrease turnover is one of the most important instrument of enhancing workers performance in an organization, and a critical functions of a personnel manager (Gberevbie, 2008). In addition, there is direct positive relationship between retention strategies, motivation, work satisfaction, and organizational performance (Okoh 1998). Thus, hiring and keeping key personnel is obviously essential to the productivity of workers, the long-term survival and profitability of any organization.

In the global spectrum, retaining qualified employees in a labor-intensive, demanding, and fast-paced work environment is a major challenge for many organizations. Statistics from Willis Towers Watson Study Centre based in US in 2016, shows that about 20% of all organizations globally have difficulty in retaining some of their most valued employee groups. The statistics also shows that for example, more than 25% of employees in the US are in a high-retention-risk category. The major concern here is not just the number of employees who leave, but the types of employees that have left (Dickson, 2019). If an organization lost an employee, he goes together with all the skills and knowledge that could be valuable to the organization. According to Hale (1998), the cost of recruitment of a new employee is presumed to be about 50-60% of the first year's remuneration and up to 100% in case of a specialized high-skilled position.

In Nigeria, employee attrition and turnover has become one the most critical challenges affecting the performance of many organizations most especially among the teachers of public primary schools. According to research conducted by UNESCO Institute of Statistics, (UIS 2015,), the level of turnover among public primary schools teachers in Nigeria has reached over 48% annually. This is very alarming indeed. In similar research conducted by British Council in collaboration with Mac Author Foundation on Teacher Education, Teacher Practice, Approaches to Gender and Girls' Schooling Outcomes in five states of Nigeria, it was discovered that 35% of public primary school teachers are in a high-retention-risk- category.

The Kano State Universal Basic Education Board Act (2005) had categorically empowered the board to draw up effective strategies to ensure that best people with best brains, best skills, and competencies were not only recruited, but also retained in order to achieve the predetermined goals and objectives of the board. However, it has been observed over the years that low

and declining motivation among teachers at government schools in Kano State has become a major challenges amongst the key stakeholders including government, parents, teachers themselves, and the society at large especially bearing in mind the crucial role that education plays in the national development. According to a report by Kano State Education Sector Strategic Plan (KESSP, 2018), the overall level of commitment of teachers to their duties is low, morale is weak, productivity is below expectation. In addition, the deployment of teachers across the government schools in Kano State is neither efficient nor equitable. Many schools are facing major problems in attracting and retaining qualified and experienced teachers, which culminated in low level of performance. Statistics from the Kano State Annual School Census (ASC) available on Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows that between 2015 and 2019, over 4,192 staff have completely resigned or transfer from the board, and took appointment with other agencies where they have higher pay, good working condition as well as greater opportunity to grow. The statistics shows that in the year 2015, 1,240 staff left, in 2016, the number increased to 1,388. Although it dropped to 486 in 2017, but in 2018 and 2019, the number increased to 1,213 and 980 respectively. In 2020, over 1,792 staff has resigned their jobs with the board (SUBEB Annual Report, 2021).

Efforts to optimize the utilization of the teaching staff are frequently hampered by high rates of absenteeism and attrition among teachers which can be considered as a waste of scarce resources and a threat to instructional quality. The draft of Education Sector Operational Plan (ESOP) for 2015 indicates the intention to develop and implement a Teacher Development Strategy to include annual in-service training in pedagogy, teaching and learning methodologies, implementation of the curriculum, classroom management, guidance and counseling. The policies and management systems used in the posting, transfer, promotion, utilization and redeployment of teachers were given particular attention in order to stem the tide. But in spite of that, the trend of employee turnover in the state continued unabated. The major objective of this paper therefore, is to examine the issues, challenges, and perspectives behind employee retention strategies and how it affects workers performance in KNSUBEB.

Literature Review

Employee Retention in Organizations

Employee retention is the process by which organizations keep, maintain, and retain its productive and talented employees by building a greater work environment to boost engagement, showing appreciation to employees, providing competitive compensation and benefits, and supporting

a healthy work-life balance. Mathimaran and Kumar (2017) described employee retention as an employer's systematic process of establishing and maintaining an environment that encourages employees to stay with the organization through the establishment of effective organizational policies and procedures that cater for the various needs of workers, both sociological and psychological needs. "A sound retention strategy provides an effective instrument for recruiting an employee. Retention of employees is a condition in which people choose to remain with their current employer rather than swiftly seeking alternative job opportunities elsewhere". The opposite of retention is turnover, where employees leave the company for a variety of reasons. Retention is defined as the process by which a company ensures that its employees do not quit their jobs. Every company and industry has a varying retention rate, which indicates the percentage of employees who remained with the organization during a fixed period.

Employee retention is very important because it addresses organizational concerns like lost knowledge, insecure employees, expensive candidate searches, and training time and expenses. Therefore, losing a critical employee can be extremely expensive for a company. Additionally, when a talented employee leaves to work for a competitor, they take with them not only their skills but also their ideas that were really meant to contribute to the success of the company they were previously employed (Mathimaran & Kumar 2017). Employee Retention involves taking measures to encourage employees to remain in the organization for the maximum period of time, (Embugus 2005).

A key determinants of organizational performance depends first of all on how it manages its employees, and, secondly, on the active and correct involvement of the employees in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the organization. Gberevbie (2008) discovered a link between staff retention strategies and organizational performance. He identified issues like good salary structure, good condition of service, free medical services for staff, spouse and four children; staff recognition in decision making on issues affecting their welfare, provision of staff bus, ability of management to fulfill promises made to staff, end-of-year bonus, extra pay for meeting sales targets, conducive working environment, confirmation of staff appointment in six months after successful confirmation interview, prompt payment of pension and gratuity, international exchange programmes and adequate training as part of employee retention in organizations.

Employee Retention Strategies

Organizations used different strategies to retain and maintain their employees. The importance of developing a strategy for achieving an

organizational objectives and objectives cannot be emphasized. The method used by an organization to retain competent personnel will impact positively on how well the organization's goals are met. In this light, Okoh (1998) asserts that there is a link between rewards, work satisfaction, motivation, and organizational performance. He maintained that the greatest influencer of employee performance is reward.

Organizational rewards may be an important component to motivating employees in the workplace, which may eventually lead to improved organizational performance. In their study on rewards systems, Heneman and Judge (2003) find that for a business to retain its workers for improved performance, its reward systems must be tailored to employee preferences. They contend that job satisfaction is caused by a match between the rewards requested by employees and those provided by the business. And work happiness, in turn, ensures an organization's personnel retention.

Irshad (2011), Mtoi (2013), Mathimaran & Kumar (2017) have identified issues like pay, flexible working hours, awards and recognition for outstanding performance, chances for advancement, and stability of employment to be particularly essential strategy for reducing turnover in organizations. Similarly, Fox (2012), Das and Baruah (2013) found that good quality management, remuneration, and respect for work were the three most essential factors of employee retention in a survey conducted and compared with trade journal articles on staff retention challenges and concerns in the hotel industry. According to Mtoi (2013), employee engagement has been shown to increase the likelihood that they will stay with the organization longer. Therefore, staff retention techniques are beneficial and should be prioritized in contrast to other approaches and regulations (Kim & Christopher, 2015; Twium, 2015).

Work environment, work-life balance, career development, and supervisor support are some of the elements that Armstrong (2010) and Chapman (2004) examined and found to have a significant and favorable impact on employee retention strategies. According to a study by Paul and Vincent (2018), hiring and keeping competent workers in a labor-intensive, high-pressure, fast-paced workplace is a significant challenge for businesses of all sizes, but it's especially difficult for start-ups. As startups attempt to offer a new product/service in the market, it brings along a lot of challenges for the employers such as problems in dealing with competition, uncertainty about future of the product, irregular earnings at early stages, changes in tax policies and regulatory framework, high salaries paid by competitors etc., all of which contribute to the challenges in retaining employees in start-ups. Thus, proper motivational strategies for retaining employees are imperative.

Messmer (2000) found that a key component of employee retention strategy is providing funds for career development and staff training. The organization is always investing in the training and development of those personnel who will provide a return on investment.

Methodology of the Research

This study adopted documentary research approach. Data were obtained from purely secondary sources from circulars, publications, journals, magazines and government gazettes especially as it relates to Kano SUBEB. This method was justified on the premise that information needed for the study is sufficiently available to provide a reasonable ground and arrive at valid conclusion. This is corroborated by Scott (2006) and Balihar (2007) who pointed out that documentary research involves analysing, conceptualizing and assessing available information to support a viewpoint or argument of an academic work.

Discussion

Getting deeper understanding of the reasons behind employee turnover and attrition under KNSUBEB is very critical to understanding how to prevent it. Perhaps, there is no one universally accepted approach to staff retention problems in all organizations. Nevertheless increasing retention is the result of all of the organization's efforts, which are shaped by the actions of leaders and the workplace atmosphere. These are, of course, supported by the organization's strong plans and effective policies. The important findings from our retention research are discussed in greater depth in this paper. Over the past decades, the SUBEB's efforts to enhance the usage of teaching personnel are regularly complicated by high rates of absenteeism and attrition among instructors, which can be ascribed to a lack of effective retention techniques. It has been established that the likelihood of an employee to leave an organization depends upon the weak strategies put forward to by the organization to retain him. Factors like satisfaction with rewards and recognition, task identity, followed by lack of growth and development of employees, feedback, number of positions, age, and satisfaction with position offered by the organization played prominent role (Ramlall 2003; Twum 2015).

Issues and Challenges of Employee Retention in KNSUBEB

The problems of high absenteeism and turnover have their roots in the recent history of education systems development of the state. Even at a time when many states were facing severe economic and fiscal difficulties, KNSUBEB as an organization is central to the delivery of basic education to the people of Kano state. According to SUBEB Annual Report (2021), the

board has a total staff of 57,521. The UBE Act (2004) and SUBEB Law of 2005, mandated the board with the responsibility of managing all primary, junior and Nomadic schools in the state. It also has the responsibility of appointment, promotions, transfer dismissal and discipline of all teaching and non-teaching staff on Grade Level 07 and above. Similarly, the board is charged with the duty of ensuring proper training and retention of all teaching and non-teaching working under it. This responsibility for providing in-service development opportunities for pre-primary, primary and junior secondary teachers lies with SUBEB under the UBE Act (using 15% of the joint FGN-State intervention fund for UBE implementation).

Over the years, the board has designed several methods of personnel retention strategies with a view to enhancing organizational performance. For example, they use methods like career development through in-service training, good work environment, fair reward, work life balance, innovative thinking, sense of belongingness, job security, promotion-based performance, work autonomy, flexible work arrangement, good terminal benefits, group incentive plan for increasing productivity, education facilities, and host of others. But even with those there is turnover. The costs of high turnover in the KNSUBEB cannot be underestimated. Many top education officials see it as a major constraint on efforts to improve educational quality (as experienced teachers leave the field) and efficiency (as the investment in teacher training is lost). But things are in fact more complicated. For example, from the key efficiency argument, the benefits of money invested in recruitment and training is lost if graduates leave for jobs in other organization because the benefits of teacher training may be lost to the education system. The problem, of course, is that the organizational performance may be negatively affected because the KNSUBEB ends up spending on where it cannot reap. Indeed, every worker desires a competitive salary and benefits from their position. These expectations are growing more and more demanding every day. Therefore, staff is constantly looking for highly paid organizations to move.

Based on the discussions above, this study discovered that there are quite a number of challenges affecting workers retention strategies, which by extension affected performance of SUBEB. They include the following:

i. Poor Recruitment: Recruitment of best, competent, value added and motivated staff is very crucial in retaining him. However, where organizations have recruited staff that are not willing, not qualified to serve, there is every tendency that he will leave the organization. The problem of recruitment is critically evident in KNSUBEB for the past many years. Complaints about the competence of newly appointed teachers are commonplace. There are growing concerns about the quality of graduates

from the teacher training colleges and universities who are joining the teaching profession. According to a data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) between 2003 and 2015, more than 40% of teachers that were recruited at public primary schools were considered not fully qualified to teach. Only 10.7% of teachers are graduate with teaching qualification, 23% were graduate without teaching qualification, According to EMIS 2016, only 22.9% of teachers at public primary schools possessed the National Certificate on Education (NCE) or had a university education degree. A right candidate hiring will give a good future and a wrong candidate hiring will give a bad future. And problems arise whenever a right candidate is into a wrong job. In addition, there are cases of lack of objectivity in the recruitment process. Party affiliation and political patronage has permeated the recruitment, selection, posting, and transfer process in the board especially from 2000 to 2019 when.

ii. Poor Compensation Packages: This is one of the major challenges affecting staff retention and performance of KNSUBEB. Indeed, every employee needs to adequately compensate for a job done. That includes salaries, allowances, bonuses, paid time off, health benefits, retirement plans and all the other packages that can distinguish one workplace from another. Qualified teachers leave teaching job at the point when compensation differs significantly from what they could get in other organizations. Almost 80 to 90 % of the employees under KNSUBEB have complained that their take home pay can no longer take them home.

For example, the average monthly salary of a teaching staff at senior cadre GL 07/1 with Bsc Degree stood at ₦47,250:00K to ₦49,000K, while those at junior cadre ranging from GL 02/1 to GL 06/1 ranges between ₦25,000 to ₦32,00:00K. However, when compared with other colleagues working in organizations like Senior Secondary School Board, the average monthly salary of teaching staff at senior cadre stood at ₦56,000:00K while those at junior cadre ranges between ₦30,000 to ₦40,000 respectively. Furthermore, record has it that workers under KNSUBEB were discriminated against the minimum wage increase. For example, in 2011, the state government increased the minimum wage from ₦7, 000 to ₦11,800. All workers in the state benefitted from the increment in the same month as approved by the state government, except primary school teachers who started benefitting after three months and no arrears were given to them. Similar incident happened in 2015 when the state government increases salary to ₦18,000. The primary school teachers were excluded from benefitting until after four months. This scenario made a lot of teachers feel demoralized and de-

motivated, thereby prompting their intention to quit their job with KNSUBEB.

iii. Delayed and Irregular Promotion: it is quite worrisome to point that promotion and career advancement has remained one of the nagging challenges affecting the staff of KNSUBEB over the past decades. The promotion and advancement in KNSUBEB has been characterized with delays and irregularities over the past years which created a lot of frustrations, negative feeling and low morale among the staff. There was only one promotion exercise from 2011 to 2017 in the board. It is regrettable to point that the state government owes the staff promotion arrears to the tune of ₦1.2 billion between 2012 and 2021. There were a lot of promotion backlogs. For example, in 2017, the SUBEB submitted proposal to the state government to settle the outstanding promotion backlog for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 which the state government has approved and settled in 2017 fiscal year (KNSUBEB Annual Report, 2017). However, as at 2022, the board is back to square one having pending promotion cases covering the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. The SUBEB chairman recently revealed that no fewer than thirteen thousand (13,000) teachers were in need to be promoted as a result of skipping of some years without promotion. Speaking anonymously, a primary school teacher in Kano disclosed that, after almost 13 years of employment, he was paid a paltry ₦40,000 per month with no opportunities for growth, no promotion, no advancement and no annual salary increment.

iv. Mismatch in Training Opportunities: While KNSUBEB offers possibilities for in-service training, several staff members were released to pursue training in disciplines and specialties other than teaching. Although, the staff's training chances have seen significant adjustments in the last few years. Even yet, there has been a serious mismatch and discrepancy between what the staff actually acquired and what is needed. Data, for instance, indicates that 15–20% of employees released for in-service training were not on the education line. This implies that after training, they finally depart from the organization. In the end, SUBEB invested funds in training that will not pay off. In addition, there is no critical training needs assessment by the management before giving the training opportunities. The selection criteria for the beneficiaries of training opportunities were not objective most especially the beneficiaries of seminars, workshops, and symposiums. Political patronage and party affiliation and other forms of favouritism were used in selecting training beneficiaries which constitute a serious challenge to the board over the past couple of years.

v. Inadequate and Poor Instructional Materials: Teachers retention in KNSUBEB has been crippled by lack of, or poor use of modern teaching and learning facilities. It must be recognized that good and effective workable instructional materials played a key role motivating a worker to give his best to the organization. This can influence teacher retention of a worker in two ways. First, textbooks do much to define the domain of instruction. Good instructional materials make the teacher's job easier by structuring, sequencing, and pacing instruction. Second, to the extent that good instructional materials lead to higher levels of student achievement teachers accrue much of the credit. This, in turn, can contribute to higher teacher morale and perhaps to greater recognition. However, a recent study from Kano Situational Analysis drawing on an assessment of primary four (4) and primary six (6) pupils suggests that currently, the number of available textbooks for all the subjects on the primary curriculum represent only 17% of the target of a Pupil Core Textbook Ratio (PCTR) of 1.00. Nevertheless, primary schools with a PCTR of 2.8 are better placed than Junior Secondary Schools. Teachers are also in short supply especially in the core subject areas of English, mathematics and science. Hence, teaching becomes boring and unattractive, and these culminate in teachers' attrition in KNSUBEB.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Organizations, especially public organizations like KNSUBEB were primarily established to achieve definite goals. These goals include for public organizations, social service delivery and infrastructural development for the improvement of the living standard of the people. The personnel or human resource is the most valuable asset in an organization for the realization of its goals. It has been established in this paper that there is a relationship between employee retention strategies put by KNSUBEB, labour turnover, job satisfaction, reward systems and organizational performance. However, key issues like poor recruitment and compensation packages, delayed promotion, discrepancy or mismatch in training opportunities as well as poor instructional materials constitute the major impediments for retention of employee in KNSUBEB over the past decades. The strategies for identifying higher-performing workforce and the right retention strategies put in place to retain them in the employment of an organization is therefore a catalyst for organizational performance. It is the dream of any organization that desires enhanced performance in its area of operation to retain in its employment high-performing staff to enable its goals to be realized. The desire to retain high performing staff for the realization of the goals of an organization, no doubt is a function of organizational decision. Although, it is the contention

of this paper that there is no single magical solution that will completely resolve staff retention issues in KNSUBEB, but improving retention is a result of the combined actions that are taken by the organisation, driven by the culture and actions of leaders. These are of course underpinned by robust policies and effective transactional processes.

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are relevant to Kano State Universal Education Board in order to ensure effective retention of its staff:

1. More priority should be given to merit based recruitment and the issues of political patronage and party affiliations that characterized recruitment process should be jettisoned. Effort should be intensified in ensuring that only competent, qualified teachers who have the zeal, passion and enthusiasm to teach were recruited. It is suggested that only candidates with cognate teaching related qualifications and working experience were employed to work under the board.
2. There is need to improve the compensation packages of the employees under KNSUBEB in order to cope with current economic realities of the country. This involves increase in not only their monthly salary and allowances, but also government should continue paying their leave grants, annual increments and promotion arrears. It is suggested government should introduce payment of special awards to best performing staff for appreciating their job well done. By doing that, employee retention and loyalty will be increased and the possibility that a staff will leave the organization has been blocked.
3. It is also recommended that the state government should urgently settle all the promotion and advancement backlogs. More effort should be put in making sure all those who are due for promotion were promoted without delay.
4. Furthermore, the board should ensure that only those who are going for in-service training in teaching and related disciplines were released for in-service training opportunities. The selection criteria for in-service training should be objective and strictly based on the training needs assessment by the board.

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