

**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES AMONG  
SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

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**Abstract**

*Turnover is a problem within the senior administrative and professional staff category of the University of Cape Coast. Information gathered from the University's Personnel Section indicates that, over the decade 1987-1996, the University recorded an annual turnover rate of 8.9%. This study was therefore carried out to find out the factors affecting the attraction, retention and the general turnover of senior administrative and professional staff in the University. A simple descriptive survey was carried out using a combination of the census and sample survey research designs on a population comprising serving senior administrative and professional staff and those who had resigned from the service of the University since 1987. From the study, it was found among others, that, opportunities for self and career development, prestige attached to jobs in the University and prospects for accelerated promotion were major pull factors for senior administrative and professional staff of the University. The continued existence of these factors greatly influences retention of staff within the category. Improvement in the opportunities for self and career development and in compensation package, as well as the prospects for promotion, and the institution of welfare schemes for staff are likely to enhance the attraction and retention of the senior administrative staff in the University.*

**Introduction**

It is generally acknowledged that the success of any human endeavour, and for that matter any human entity, is closely related to the quality of the personnel who perform tasks necessary to the achievement of purposes and objectives of that entity (Casterter, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Indeed, it is no gainsaying that human capital constitutes the single most important factor which combines other factors in order to create wealth be it for organisations or for nations. The realisation that the accomplishment of organisational goals depends heavily on people has led to a high premium being placed on the human resource in organisations in recent times. Organisations are seeking not only to be able to attract the best personnel to join their service but more importantly, to make such personnel remain in their service for as long as possible.

Retention is important not just because recruitment, including selection, is an expensive undertaking but because turnover constitutes a big loss. One cannot help but agree with Silcock (1954) that change through turnover is a vital characteristic of the world of work. It needs conceding, however, that such change creates difficult problems of planning and

hinders the smooth flow of work. Indeed, whether change is regarded as a luxury, a necessity or an evil, the fact still remains that it is expensive.

Against the background of the difficulties posed by turnover, this study was carried out with the aim of investigating the challenges of recruitment and retention among senior administrative and professional staff in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study sought to explore:

- a) factors that tend to attract senior administrative and professional staff to the University of Cape Coast (pull factors);
- b) factors responsible for the turnover of the staff (push factors); and
- c) factors necessary for their retention.

### **The Turnover Situation at the University of Cape Coast**

While the University of Cape Coast was set up to train the much needed skilled manpower to man educational as well as other key institutions particularly in Ghana, the University itself has had problems attracting and retaining the critical mass of senior level staff into its Departments and Sections. Even though the University depended, to a large extent, on expatriate staff to fill the teaching positions during its early years which coincided with the immediate post-colonial period, and gradually strengthened the local staff, most of the senior administrative and professional positions have, since the very beginning of the University been filled mostly by local staff.

With the exception of the period of mass exodus of teaching staff in the early 1980s, turnover within the teaching ranks in the University has relatively not been a major problem. This could, perhaps, be attributed to an age profile of the University teachers that is skewed towards the elderly, as staff in this category normally tend to remain in service till retirement. Out of a total of 231 teaching staff, 78 (about 32%) will be retiring by the year 2005. Within the senior administrative/professional category however, turnover has been rather high, perhaps, due to the relatively young age profile. Out of 52 personnel in this category, only 11 (about 21%) will be retiring by the year 2005.

A study of records at the Personnel Section of the University indicated a low rate of entry of personnel into teaching positions in the University. This phenomenon may, perhaps, be due to reluctance on the part of many a young person to enter teaching. But once they enter into the teaching Departments, the rate at which teaching staff leave the University is equally low. Entry of young senior administrative and professional staff into the service of the University, on the other hand, is relatively high. These personnel, however, leave the service of the University just at about the same rate that they enter it.

*Table 1**Employment and Turnover of Senior Administrative and Professional Staff of the University of Cape Coast from 1987 – 1996*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total No. of Staff</i>	<i>No. of Staff Employed</i>	<i>No. of Staff That Left The Service</i>	<i>Turnover Rate %</i>
1987	27	1	2	7.4
1988	28	3	3	10.7
1989	26	1	2	7.7
1990	30	5	2	6.7
1991	32	4	3	9.4
1992	38	7	3	7.9
1993	38	3	3	7.9
1994	39	4	2	5.1
1995	41	4	4	9.8
1996	42	5	7	16.7

*Source: Compiled from UCC Personnel Section Records*

The picture of the employment and turnover rates of senior administrative and professional staff within the decade preceding 1997 (Table 1) shows that while attrition may not be a problem within the senior administrative and professional staff category because the staff strength has, relatively, been growing from year to year, the problem of turnover nevertheless has not been spared in any year. During the decade 1987 – 1996, a total of 37 senior administrative and professional staff were employed by the University, giving an average of about four new recruits per year. Over the same period, a total of 31 staff in the category left the service of the University. This gives an average of three persons per year. On an annual basis therefore, while four new staff were added to the existing stock of senior administrative and professional staff, three from the stock left the service of the University. This translates into an average annual turnover rate of 8.9% using the form of measurement recommended by the British Institute of Management which defines labour turnover as the number of employees leaving an organisation during the course of the year (or other standard period) expressed as a percentage of the average size of the labour force during the same period (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). The number of staff in the category who left the service of the University during the period consists of persons who resigned or simply vacated their posts, excluding persons who proceeded on retirement.

### **Methodology**

A combination of the census survey and sample survey techniques was used in this study. In all, the population comprised 78 persons made up of 43 serving officers (referred to as Category A Respondents) and 35 others who had voluntarily resigned from the service of the University (referred to as Category B Respondents). The Vice Chancellor, also a serving officer, was the only respondent who was interviewed. For the purpose of the study therefore he was considered as a Category C Respondent.

The study sample consisted of all 43 members of the first group within the population (i.e., all serving senior administrative and professional staff) and 15 members of the second group (i.e., senior administrative and professional staff who had resigned from the service of the University since 1987) selected by using the non-probability accidental sampling method. This latter group consisted of all staff within the category who could be easily located and were willing to be a part of the study. A questionnaire and an interview guide developed personally by the researchers were used for the collection of data.

*Analysis of Data*

The study focused on three categories of turnover, and for that matter retention, namely: personal, work-related and external. These constituted the basis of analysis of the data.

*Personal Characteristics of Respondents*

Background information on respondents offers an understanding of the responses given and therefore shapes the extent to which the data provided could be relied upon.

*Age Profile of Respondents*

The age profile of all respondents as given in Table 2 reveals that overall, 67% of respondents were above the age of 40 years. This represents more than double the number of staff who were 40 years or below. Sixty-five percent (30) of the respondents fell within the middle age group (31 – 50 years), while 35% of them were either below 31 years or above 50 years. The age profile suggests a normal age distribution as there was a concentration of respondents within the middle age groups.

**Table 2: Respondents' Age Profile**

Age Group	Responses	
	No.	%
21 – 25	-	-
26 – 30	3	7
31 – 35	8	17
36 – 40	4	9
41 – 45	10	22
46 - 50	8	17
51 - 55	7	15
56 – 60	6	13
TOTAL	46	100

**Factors Influencing Entry into the Service of the University of Cape Coast**

Opportunities for self and career development as a reason for entering the service of the University enjoys the highest ranking factor responsible for attracting respondents into the service of the University of Cape Coast (see Table 3), having been ranked first by 60% of respondents. On the other hand, salary and job perquisites enjoy the least ranking, having been listed in fifth or sixth place by 34% of respondents in each case. Job perquisites include free medical care for self, spouse and up to eight dependants, guarantees for housing with

abated rental, a year's paid sabbatical leave after six years of uninterrupted service, access to the use of official cars (in some cases) and grant for travel in Africa every four years on application.

*Table 3: Reasons for Entering the Service of UCC*

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Opportunities for Self/ Career Development	1	27	60
	2	13	29
	3	4	9
	4	1	2
	5	-	-
	6	-	-
Prestige attached to careers in the University	1	14	31
	2	9	20
	3	8	18
	4	7	15
	5	4	9
	6	3	7
Prospects for Accelerated Advancement/ Promotion	1	2	4
	2	9	20
	3	11	24
	4	12	27
	5	3	7
	6	8	18
Job Perquisites	1	1	2
	2	4	9
	3	6	13
	4	6	13
	5	15	34
	6	13	29
Working conditions/Facilities	1	-	-
	2	4	9
	3	8	18
	4	13	29
	5	14	31
	6	6	13
Salary	1	1	2
	2	6	13
	3	8	18
	4	6	13
	5	9	20
	6	15	34

Other factors listed by the respondents as having influenced their choice of UCC but which were not ranked include job security, proximity to hometown/spouse, opportunities for children's education, staff welfare, esprit de corps among staff as well as the conduciveness and stability of the atmosphere on campus and in the Cape Coast municipality.

*Table 4: Summated Attraction Factor Scores*

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>%</b>
Opportunities for Self and Career Development	246	26
Prestige Attached to Careers in the University	193	20
Prospects of Accelerated Promotion	151	16
Working Conditions and Facilities	125	13
Salary	119	13
Job Perquisites	111	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>100</b>

Results of a factor analysis that entailed the assignment of weights to the ranks indicated in Table 3, in their descending order (with rank 1 assigned a weight of 6 while rank 6 was assigned a weight of 1, see Table 4) were quite revealing. With 26% and 12% ratings respectively, respondents ranked opportunities for self and career development and job perquisites first and sixth in terms of their influence on their attraction into the service of the University. Concerning the influence of people's perception of careers in the University on their decision to work in the University, respondents mentioned, in particular, the intellectualism thought to be associated with careers in the University system. In the case of prospects for accelerated promotion, respondents drew a positive relationship between this factor and opportunities for self and career advancement (i.e., if opportunities exist for self and career development then, invariably, the prospects for accelerated promotion were high).

The low rating given to salary in terms of its influence on respondents' decision to enter the service of the University seems to suggest that pay contributes less to job satisfaction and for that matter job attraction. This is consistent with the view that the presence of the hygiene factors of motivation such as money may not necessarily lead to job satisfaction although their absence is likely to bring about dissatisfaction with the job (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snydernab, 1995; Steers & Porter, 1991).

A number of reasons were assigned by Category B respondents as being responsible for their decision to quit the service of the University (see Table 5). Forty per cent of them said that they quit to enable them better pursue their career objectives elsewhere. They were of the view that opportunities did not exist at UCC for the achievement of their long term career objectives (i.e., rising to the top in a relatively short period of time and being independent). Fifty per cent of them said they quit in order to take up higher positions with better conditions of service elsewhere while the remaining 30% said they quit for personal reasons. Thirty percent of the respondents also said they quit because the factors that earlier attracted them to UCC no longer existed.

**Table 5: Reasons for Quitting the Service of UCC**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
To realize career objectives	4	40
For a higher job/position	5	50
Personal Reasons	3	30
Erosion of factors of attraction to the University	3	30

It is noteworthy that a large majority of the Category B respondents (70%) who had left the service of the University were not prepared to return to take up appointments in the University if they were given a second chance. Their main reason was that, from their observation, the conditions that compelled them to quit either remained the same or had worsened. Thirty percent of them stated that they could consider coming back to the University if only they would be appointed to positions higher than those they enjoyed in their current jobs. Such positions should also be accompanied with commensurate remuneration. While 70% of the Category B respondents indicated that they would quit their current jobs if better opportunities became available elsewhere, 20% stated that they would not quit because they were close to retirement.

The Vice-Chancellor corroborated the reasons listed by the Category B respondents for quitting the service of the University. On efforts he had made to dissuade staff from quitting, he indicated a rather low rate of success. He noted that of every four people who decided to quit, he was able to impress upon only two to stay. Of the two staying staff, one did so only temporarily and finally quit. On the average therefore, he achieved a 25% success rate or less. He observed that those he was able to persuade were usually those who, either felt frustrated or had personal problems and once the sources of these frustrations and problems were addressed, the staff concerned stayed on.

### **Conclusions**

From the study, it was observed that personal characteristics of respondents have moderate to significant influence on the attraction and retention of senior administrative and professional staff. In particular, a negative relationship between age and turnover was observed. That is, the older the person, the less likely it was that he/she would quit the service of the University and vice versa.

There is high premium placed by respondents on opportunities for self and career development, prospects for advancement and promotion in the University as factors influencing their attraction to the University. Together, these factors enjoy a 62% rating among respondents. The observation suggests that, to be able to attract senior administrative/professional staff, the University would have to aim at restoring or maintaining these factors as they tend to enhance people's perception about the University.



From the study, it was observed that there seemed to exist an organisational commitment crisis within the senior administration and professional staff category. That 46% of serving staff were not sure of remaining in the University's service till retirement while 20% who were certain of quitting in the near future indicated the University's inability to win the total commitment of its senior administrative and professional staff. This is further reinforced by 30% of Category B respondents (i.e., resigned senior administrative and professional staff) who knew, while they were still with UCC, that they would quit the service of the University. This observation would seem to suggest that some senior administrative and professional staff tend to use employment in the University as a stepping-stone for landing at higher and better remunerated jobs.

Yet another observation from the study is that one and the same factor can contribute significantly to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This observation is at variance with Herzberg's two-factor theory which says that the factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that lead to job dissatisfaction. For instance, while the job itself contributes the most to satisfaction with the job, the same factor can contribute to dissatisfaction as a result of the lack of basic equipment/tools with which to carry out one's work. The implication of this observation is that while a factor can contribute to satisfaction for some workers, the same factor can contribute to dissatisfaction for others if certain conditions are not met. As in the example given, those who have the requisite and appropriate equipment will enjoy their work and therefore achieve satisfaction while those without the requisite equipment, will feel disillusioned. After all, it is difficult to enjoy what one is unable to accomplish owing to the lack of basic equipment/tools for doing so.

One of the important findings of the study is that as much as 69% of serving senior administrative personnel find their jobs either not quite satisfying or not satisfying at all. In the same vein, 70% of those who had quit the service of the University indicated that they did not find their jobs at the University quite satisfying. This observation implies a barely average level of job satisfaction among serving senior administrative personnel of the University.

It is, again, observed from the study that turnover among senior administrative/professional staff will continue to pose a challenge as long as conditions of service remain uncompetitive. This conclusion is supported by the observation that 50% of those who left the service of the University did so in order to take up higher positions or better remunerated jobs. This position is further reinforced by the 70% Category B respondents who indicated that their return to the service of the University would be predicated on their being offered positions higher than their current ones with commensurate conditions of service. The problem is further exacerbated by the University's lack of control over staff compensation packages as it becomes difficult to formulate intervention policies aimed at managing retention and, for that matter, turnover of staff.

Finally, government is seen as a major player in the University's effort to attract and retain senior administrative personnel. This view is not at all misplaced as the government continues to be the provider of the bulk of the operating funds of the University. The success or otherwise of the University's efforts in this regard therefore depends to a large extent on the government.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

On the basis of the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, a number of recommendations are made for practice. Opportunities need to be created which would enable staff to advance beyond the current career grade of Senior Assistant Registrar, or its equivalent, to the level of Deputy Registrar or equivalent. This implies that there should be no limitation on staff advancement except to the position of Registrar which is, obviously, determined only by

establishment (i.e. one Registrar at a time). It is worth mentioning here that the long period of time required to rise through the ranks to the position of Deputy Registrar or equivalent will ensure that the position is not unnecessarily crowded as a result of the removal of the limitation.

The University itself needs to provide special incentives to staff from funds generated internally. Such incentives could take the form of half-yearly or yearly bonuses for staff in recognition of performance. It is further recommended that every effort should be made by the University administration to make available the basic equipment required for performing tasks or providing replacements for faulty ones in timely fashion.

Opportunities for self and career development came up for strong mention by respondents as contributing to both their attraction and job satisfaction. To ensure that this factor remains relevant at all times in the University's efforts at attracting and retaining senior administrative personnel, it is recommended that no discrimination is made between teaching and non-teaching senior members as to who gets the opportunity to do a terminal degree programme abroad. In this regard, senior administrative and professional staff should be given the opportunity to enjoy government scholarship for embarking on doctoral studies. They should also be made to benefit from the equivalent of the book allowances paid to teaching staff since they also need to consult books and journals in order to keep abreast with new developments in their chosen professions or areas of specialisation.

A major expectation of many a worker is to be able to, within his/her working life, put up a house into which he/she will retire at the end of the day. It is therefore, recommended that the University institutes a loan scheme that will assist senior administrative personnel to meet this aspiration. A housing or personal loan scheme with a reasonable interest rate is advocated using, perhaps, a portion of members' superannuation contributions. Ownership of houses constructed with such loans could, initially, be vested in the University and only revert to the staff concerned when the full amount of the loan has been settled.

It is finally recommended that an open and transparent management and supervisory system be maintained at all levels of the organisation to foster trust. This can be achieved through regular interactions between Heads or Supervisors and subordinate staff as that will ensure that staff feel a part of the system and therefore identify with its objectives.

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