The multiple-case study compared staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the point of view of criterion sampled four public and three private universities’ Returnee Lecturers, respectively. In terms of similarities, the study found out that public and private universities had monetary and non-monetary staff retention strategies. It also observed that both public and private universities were found to have some conditions of service which served as part of retention strategies in those universities. With respect to differences, the study observed that public universities tended to offer better conditions of service in terms of salaries and bonuses, even though both conditions of service lag behind what international universities offer. The study concluded that staff retention strategies in public and private universities tended to differ on paper and implementation approach, but in practice they tended to yield similar results. Also, public universities tended to offer more allowances than private universities because of the support they receive from the government. Private and public universities need to have knowledge of what other local, regional and international competitors offer in terms of staff retention strategies through salary surveys and benchmark to effectively retain their staff.

Key Words: Staff, staff retention, staff retention strategy, university, public university, private university

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that universities of staff retention strategies to retain staff, research in Zimbabwe has shown that developing countries’ higher education institutions (HEIs) are experiencing brain drain challenges in the form of staff turnover. Zimbabwe’s HEIs are grappling with a massive exodus of senior academics with extensive teaching and research skills experience, as well as other upcoming academics (Mushonga, 2005). Their staff retention strategies for example, the University of Zimbabwe at one time employed over 1000 professors (Kotecha and Perold, 2010), but, by 2007 only 627 faculty members remained, leading to the closure of some departments (Kotecha and Perold, 2010). To compound the problem, due to the erosion by hyperinflation of the remuneration packages offered to academic staff, these institutions have failed to attract equally experienced lecturers as replacements for staff who have left their university posts (Chetsanga, 2010). The aforestated research findings are confirming early research findings by (Mushonga, 2004; 2005). First, the author observes that 23 000 lecturers in African universities leave the continent annually for greener pastures. The author also indicates that the University of Zimbabwe had only 370 lecturers available out of the expected 1 200 in 2005. Third, Mushonga (2004) in the action web retrieved on 14/12/05 notes that Zimbabwe’s State Universities’ Staff Development 70 fellowship programmes are fast becoming training grounds for universities within the region and beyond. Lecturers were leaving their jobs because of lack of staff retention strategies such as poor conditions of service, low pay, lack of research and staff development facilities to name a few (Adi, 2012; Mushonga, 2005). It is not surprising that universities are expected to play a major role in employing staff retention
retention strategies that make them an employee of the moment. Other researches in Zimbabwe focusing on staff retention strategies have also established that lack of opportunities for staff development fellowship (Mushonga, 2004 in interaction web.retrieved 14/12/05), and contact and sabbatical leave (Mupemhi and Mupemhi, 2011) have complicated efforts to retain staff in the local universities. To underscore, the preceding position, according to Mushonga, one of the few academic staff who had been privileged to go on Staff Development fellowship leave had the temerity to write: 

... I have been here for six months now. My fellowship is for one year, with the possibility for extending... The story of Zimbabwe is discouraging (Mushonga, 2004 in interaction web. retrieved 14 December 2005).

In the same vein, Mupemhi and Mupemhi (2011) were unhappy with the way how the Midlands State University’s staff representatives were handling the issues of contact and sabbatical leave. The studied universities were not making a deliberate effort to root their staff retention strategies to the needs of the staff and the universities at large.

The question whether or not university managers and Human Resources Managers care about the role of staff retention strategies is subject for empirical investigation. Research has also shown that managers and employees usually have many shared expectations that affect retention (Dreyer-Hadley et al., 2008: 285). The same authors go on to give some examples of such expectations as the desire for:

1. Recognition of work done.
2. Open communication about the firm’s goals and values.

While Dreyer-Hadley et al.’s (2008), findings originated in North Carolina, they seem to confirm previous research findings by Salopek (2000) in cited by Netswera, Rankhumise and Mavundla, (2005) in South Africa who states that retention leaders need to do the following in order to avoid brain drain (encourage staff retention) (in no order of priority):

1. Managing people and not retention.
2. Having a culture of caring, balanced with a tradition of excellence.
3. Never soliciting employee feedback and then ignoring it.
4. Keeping an eye on the high performers and rewarding outstanding performance.
5. Viewing people management as a strategic management issue.

The foregone findings focused on challenges faced by higher education institutions in retaining staff. They did not particularise staff retention strategies universities employ to retain staff. Furthermore, they did not compare staff retention strategies in the context of public and private universities. They also did not specify the research participants. It is on account of such research gaps that the current study is conducted to compare staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the Returnee Lecturers’ perspective.

Statement of the Problem

Different organisations offer different staff retention strategies (Adi, 2012; Bushe, 2012; Gwavuya, 2011). The extent to which staff development strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities has been compared from the Returnee Lecturers’ perspective is yet to be empirically investigated. The study is meant to address the following research problem:

- How well do staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities compare from the point of view of the Returnee Lecturers?

Objective(s) of the Study

The study has one objective. It comparatively establishes staff retention strategies that obtain in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the point of view of the Returnee Lecturers.

Sub-question(s)

The study was based on one sub-question, as is given below.

- How comparatively do staff retention strategies obtain in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the point of view of the Returnee Lecturers?

Importance of the Study

The findings from the study of this nature are of great significance to many stakeholders. These stakeholders include universities’ managers, MOHTE, the students, academia, industry and commerce, and the researcher. First, the study provides university managers’ with empirical data to arm them with possible standard and best practices to retain academic staff. Second, MOHTE would be provided with empirically tested information to help them improve policy decisions on staff retention strategies in the Zimbabwe’s public and private universities. Third, industry and commerce indirectly benefits from ‘quality’ graduates who they would employ, once they have been trained by satisfied, motivated, committed and retained lecturers. A fourth significance of the study concerned students. Students would be the greatest beneficiaries of the study because retention of qualified, skilled and experienced lecturers would ensure that students receive knowledge of the right quality. The fifth benefit of the study is that by
comparing staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities, the researcher generates new knowledge regarding staff retention strategies in the studied universities. The sixth benefit of the study pertained to the lecturers themselves. Findings from the study inform the lecturers about the role they play in making sure that their universities retain them in a motivational and satisfying manner.

**Delimitation of the Study**

The study was restricted to two public and two private universities in Zimbabwe which provided four and three criterion sampled Returnee Lecturers respectively. The study was a multiple case study whose data gathering was confined to the use of face-to-face open-ended interviews. The study’s data analysis was done using NVivo.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This part of the study reviews related literature on staff retention strategies as is in the world’s selected countries. In a German study, Jongbloed (2012) highlighted staff retention strategies obtaining in German universities. Professors were found to be generally civil servants with permanent lifelong positions that they have obtained after ‘habilitation’ a formal post-doctoral qualification usually earned after a publication of a major book and a public lecture. Jongbloed also found that other allowances are determined individually such as performance bonuses, or – as in this case of German professors – depend on individual’s skills at negotiating a good package.

In Malaysia, Hong et al. (2012) studied an effectiveness of Human Resources Management Practices in Malaysian Institute of Higher Learning. The identified employee empowerment, training and development, appraisal system and compensation are some of the staff retention strategies obtaining at the Institute of Higher Learning. By using a multiple regression analysis, Hong et al. (2012) found out that training and development, appraisal system and compensation were significant employee retention strategies.


Some Nigerian studies explored the effectiveness of staff retention strategies. Gberevbie (2009:226) found out that in the area of employee retention, the study found out that, “the Civil Service put in place good incentives to retain employees.” On the other hand, Gberevbie (2009) indicated that these retention strategies are however not adequate to retain competent personnel compared to what is provided by private organisations to retain its employees (p.226).

In another South African study, Curran (2012) assessed turnover in the Languages Services Sector of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and identified effective recruitment and selection training and development, adequate, external considerations, appreciation and support, and career pathing as staff retention strategies.

In another study, Mapolisa and Chirimuuta (2012) explored strategies to hire back former Zimbabwe Open University’s to the institution; and highlighted utilisation of lecturers’ expertise in quality assurance, staff development schemes, competitive salaries, and schemes to acquire houses, cars and start business as staff retention strategies.

Mupemhi and Mupemhi (2011) investigated internal strategies in state universities in Zimbabwe with a particular focus on the MSU. Observations from the above countries’ organisations and universities reveal that staff retention strategies were basically quantitative in nature, country and organisation specific. They were devoid of the comparative aspect of whether or not the organisations were public or private. Furthermore, they did not specify the type of research participants with respect to whether or not they were Retained or Returnee Employees/ Lecturers. It is against the background of such literature and methodological gaps, that this study is conduct to compare staff retention strategies that obtain in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the points of view of the Returnee Lecturers.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was a qualitative multiple case study of two public and two private universities in Zimbabwe. Qualitative study has been chosen for this study because of its ability to permit the research to read deep meaning of the phenomenon being studied from the people who are experiencing the effects of the phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, Silverman, 2014).

A multiple case study is deemed suitable for this study because it useful when new knowledge and theories are being sought or created (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2009). Criterion sampling was used to select four Returnee Lecturers and three Returnee Lecturers from Zimbabwe’s
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the research participants (N= 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants' characteristics</th>
<th>Case 1 No.</th>
<th>Case 2 No.</th>
<th>Case 3 No.</th>
<th>Case 4 No.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Belonging to Public University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Belonging to Private University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Male Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Female Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Returnee Lecturer Participants’ Age in Years</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Participants’ Professional Status and Highest Educational Qualification:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professors</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD Holders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturer Participants with Master’s Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Returnee Lecturer Participants’ Relevant Work Experience in Years</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Areas of Specialisation for the Returnee Lecturer Participants:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutritional Bio-Chemistry</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Leadership</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology of Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Anthropology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Tenure Status of Returnee Lecturers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-tenured</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

public and private universities, respectively. Criterion sampling involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion (Kombo and Tromp, 2009). It suited this study in that returnee lecturers possess a wealth of staff retention experiences they had gained locally and internationally. The main research instrument for this study was an open-ended interview. Interviews permitted diversity of stakeholder perceptions that deal with day-to-day staff retention issues worth capturing. In-depth face-to-face interviews involve direct contact with the participants who are asked questions and provided participants with the opportunity to comment on widely defined issues (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995). Thus, the Returnee Lecturers who participated in this study enabled the researcher to obtain thick descriptions of staff retention strategies obtaining in the studied universities from the point of view of the participants. Research data were analysed using NVivo data analysis software. In order to make sense of field data, my research data were analysed using NVivo, a software programme for Windows PC which combines efficient management of non-numerical, unstructured data with powerful processes of indexing, searching and theorising (Creswell, 2012). After analysing data regarding staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities, the researcher resented data using main themes and sub-themes drawn from the Returnee Lecturers’ viewpoints. In order to derive meaning from the data, the researcher used direct quotes meant to give the ‘reader’ a sense of being present at the research sites (Thomas and Nelson, 2001).

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data presentation, analysis and discussion constitute a two-fold presentation namely, demographic characteristics of the research participants, and actual research data presented in tables to pave way for discussion. The discussion includes reference to literature, direct quotes and relevant documents were possible. Three categories of participants comprising seven participants were interviewed. Their profiles are presented in Tables 1 to 7.
The participants consisted of seven Returnee Lecturers (3 from Case 1, 2 from Case 2; 1 from Case 3; and 1 from Case 4). Returnee Lecturers were selected using criterion sampling.

Six participants (3 from Case 1, 1 from Case 2, one from Case 3 and 1 from Case 4) were male, while one was female (1 from Case 2). These findings corroborate early research findings by Billingsley and Cross (1992), Ngo and Tsang (1998) and Whan (1998: 256-268) all in Curran, (2012:22). The preceding authors found out that higher education institutions had more male lecturers than female ones, thus, reflecting a gender imbalance in the staff composition in those institutions and the universities under study.

Two participants were aged at least 40, implying that they were middle-aged. Five participants were aged at least 60, an indication that they were mature and settled. The findings largely agree with Okpara (2004: 327-338) in Curran (2012:21) who observed that there is a relationship between age and job satisfaction. Curran (2012: 21) cites two relevant literature observations to consolidate the preceding finding. First, she quotes Martocchio (1989: 409-414) who established that research shows that older people are more generally satisfied with their jobs than younger people. Second, she cites Martocchio (1989: 409-414) who found out that older employees are more content and satisfied with their jobs for reasons which include commitment to their families. Thus, the study intended to find out whether level of maturity of lecturers was among other strategies to retain lecturers in the studied universities.

Public universities (Cases 1 and 4) provided four participants, while private universities (Cases 2 and 3) provided three participants. In spite of the uneven distribution of participants in the targeted three categories, the researcher was convinced that at least one key informant in each Case was interviewed to provide one with the study’s sought findings centred on staff retention strategies offered in the universities. The study, being a qualitative study, was not about numbers (Berg, 2010), but the quality and richness of data gathered mattered most (Gray, 2009).

The researcher was privileged to interview participants with very rich academic profiles. Seven participants were PhD holders five of whom were from public universities and the rest from private universities. What is evident from the participants’ qualifications in the studied cases is the fact that all participants consulted held some functional knowledge about staff retention strategies sought by the current study. They responded to the interview questions regarding staff retention strategies offered in their universities from an informed position consequent upon their qualifications.

In terms of professional status, the researcher also had the privilege to interview very senior professionals. Two Professors (one male and one female from Cases 1 and 2 respectively) were interviewed. Also, all participants from the two categories of the universities were PhD holders who were at least senior lecturers. By implication, all the participants were assumed to be conversant with HR issues inclusive of staff retention strategies currently on offer at their universities.

Two Returnee Lecturers across the studied universities had a working experience of less than 4 years, while one had a working experience ranging between 5 and 9 years, and four (the majority) Returnee Lecturers had a working experience of at least 10 years at their present stations. However, the Returnee Lecturers possessed valuable experience and knowledge gained from working in other universities locally, regionally and internationally and the private sector. Such rich experiences enabled them to meaningfully contribute to the study’s staff retention strategies’ data generation process.

Case 1’s Returnee Lecturers specialised in Nutritional Bio-chemistry, Monitoring and Evaluation in Educational Management, and Geography, respectively. Case 2’s female Returnee Lecturer participant specialised in Public Health while one male Returnee Lecturer specialised in Educational Psychology with a specialty in English Literature. Case 3’s Returnee Lecturer specialised in Social Anthropology. Case 4’s Returnee Lecturer was a specialist in Organisational Leadership. The diverse areas of specialisation were a rich source of the nature of staff retention strategies employed at the universities to retain the Returnee Lecturers.

Six Returnee Lecturers were tenured by virtue of their high qualifications and they were already holding senior positions as indicated earlier on. One was not tenured because of one’s lack of research and publication record. The researchers were keen to determine the extent to which tenure was among staff retention strategies in the studied universities.

**ACTUAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Staff Retention Strategies Obtaining in Zimbabwe’s Public and Private Universities**

The first strategy used in the universities under study was monetary which was made up of various payments. The themes and their sub-themes are presented and analysed in Table 2 (a) (See separate pages after references).

A cross section of the participants’ responses reveals some striking similarities and differences regarding the various payments offered to lecturers as a form of retaining them in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities. Universities used various payments such as monthly allowances, staff allowances, retention allowances, salaries, and housing allowance.

**Various Payments**

The realisation that lecturers needed more than their basic
Table 2. Theme(s) and sub-themes regarding staff retention strategies that obtain in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities in the form of various payments on a comparative basis from the multi-perspective of HR, Retained and Returnee Lecturer participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Substantiating statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Various payments</td>
<td>1. Monthly allowances</td>
<td>1…this university offers an additional two hundred and fifty dollars per month to its lecturers (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Staff allowances</td>
<td>1…we do not give staff allowances (Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Retention allowances</td>
<td>1…we do give…retention allowances (Case 2 Returnee Lecturers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Salaries</td>
<td>1…we do give…basic salaries (Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1). 2…Case 3 has subsidised or provided some allowances to top up their basic salaries (Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Housing Allowance</td>
<td>1…lecturers get subsidised accommodation in the campus (Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

salaries appeared to be common to all the universities in the study. Also, to underscore the preceding observations, the following two participants’ responses suffice:

First, the allowance was appreciated by the lecturers as shown below by Case 1 Returnee Lecturer:

... so this university offers and additional two hundred and fifty dollars per month to its lecturers, although it doesn’t come in time, but it is something that people appreciate.

Second, Case 2 also offered a similar allowance to its lecturers, as indicated by Returnee Lecturer 2:

...we do give staff allowances. These are a form of a retention allowance. We do give retention allowances but they are dependent on one’s level of seniority.

In agreement with the last finding, the researcher observed that at Case 1 monthly allowance varies according to one’s seniority or status level. For example, Deans obtain a higher monthly allowance than senior and junior lecturers. This experience has also been expressed by Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 2. It follows that universities’ systems perceive that one’s holding of a post of special responsibility is important because of the effort required to achieve such status like Professor or Doctor. The foregoing findings indicate that public and private universities use a monthly allowance to motivate lecturers to stay on their jobs. Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1 said it all by indicating that:

... Case 3 has subsidised or provided some allowances to top up basic salaries.

By implication, the allowances are context specific, but they tend to differ nominally, yet they serve the same purpose. These findings appear to be consistent with previous research observations (Mubatsi, 2012; Mupemhi and Mupemhi, 2011) who observed the use of allowances as a means of empowering staff financially.

Allowances come as a relief to lecturers working in countries that have very high tax bands. What is clear about taxation in Zimbabwe is that salaries are so heavily taxed that lecturers’ take home pay is drastically reduced. The allowances act as a boost to the lecturers’ disposable income. To a very large measure, the preceding findings seem to indicate that public and private universities’ ability to retain lecturers is somehow determined by the competitiveness and attractiveness of the allowances that the universities offer.

While there were differences in monthly in the studied universities, the allowances offered in the two sets of the universities differ nominally but achieve similar results in practice. For example, Case 1 offers a monthly allowance, while Case 2 offers a retention allowance, and Case 3 offers staff allowances. The allowances are somehow the same, but they are using different names to reflect a brand (Sokro, 2012) associated with the university. Because of the different brands universities have, their allowances differ from one university to another in terms of competitiveness and attractiveness. These findings largely concur with Johnson’s (2012) findings citing (Chenoweth, 2009; Ferguson, Hackman, Hanna and Ballantine, 2010; Jackson and Bruegmann, 2009; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003) who observe that surveys and qualitative case studies by various researchers document the ways in which differences among schools influence teachers’ opportunities and innovation for success. Critical observation in the preceding empirical evidence is the fact that teachers enjoy associating with success. In underlining these observations, the researcher is content that allowances, coupled with opportunities for success and innovation would go a long way in determining how well Zimbabwe public and private universities would manage to retain lecturers. Allowances by their competitive nature, largely...
Table 3. Intellectual development’s role in enhancing staff retention in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the plural perspective of HR, Retained Lecturers and Returnee Lecturers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sub-theme(s)</th>
<th>Substantiating Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Intellectual development</td>
<td>1.Provision of scholarships</td>
<td>1...those with Masters Degrees ...the university has arranged scholarships so that they can do PhDs with other universities (Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Provision of tuition waiver</td>
<td>1...staff dependents enroll for degree qualifications for which they qualify and they have tuition waived (Case 2 Retained Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2...if you have a family member who wants to do courses with the university they can do so free of charge (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Contact leave and sabbatical leave</td>
<td>1...after 6 years sabbatical leave is given to staff on pay and attachment...is done after 3 years (Case 2 Retained Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Research publishing and attending seminars</td>
<td>1...we need a university farm... a research station ...research facilities...research funds... (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2...opportunities for research are there and there is encouragement for doing research... (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3...staff doing research need support (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4....for staff with PhDs, there are opportunities for doing research (Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

attract and retain lecturers in private and private universities.

Salaries

Findings of this study reveal that salaries are a standard obligation that private and public universities need to meet every month. They all agree that university lecturers earn salaries that are slightly above the poverty datum line, notwithstanding their high qualifications, expertise and experience. The following examples of some of the participants’ interview responses help to expand this subject.

In a bid to cushion private universities’ lecturers from low salaries, Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 2 pointed out: 
... we do give staff allowances, retention allowance, as well as their basic salaries...
A comparison of lecturers’ salaries in private and public universities shows that in general public universities offer better salaries.

Housing Allowance

The provision of transport, cell phones and laptops are among key retention strategies presently being appreciated across the universities investigated. However, although housing allowance is also an integral strategy, the study found out that some have discontinued this aspect.

Given the background of such accommodation challenges, it can be argued that in both public and private universities, Zimbabwe, provision of facilities of accommodation and increasing opportunities for lecturers to get decent accommodation is an unquestionable pathway to staff retention enhancement and promotion in those universities. In regard to how housing allowance can be used by the universities to improve staff retention, Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 1 sums it up all in a very practical and realistic way:
For example, the organisation can simply offer hundred percent bond that is if the staff member finds a house in which he wants to stay with his family and without paying any deposit on the agreed amount the staff member moves in with his family with the university as a surety that the funds generated by this staff member will actually be used to pay for the accommodation. In other words, the organisation becomes a guarantor.

The point raised in the above opinion is the need for universities to prioritise staff members’ accommodation needs if ever they are going to succeed in retaining them. A university that prioritises its staff members’ accommodation needs has a big heart for its employees. It shows how well the universities regard employees as their greatest resources.

Intellectual Development

One other emerging theme from the study indicated how Zimbabwe’s public and private universities tried to promote staff retention is intellectual development. Just like the theme of various payments payable to lecturers in the universities, intellectual development and its emerging sub-themes are presented in the Table 3 showing plural participant perception regarding the role
of intellectual development in retaining staff.

Among other sub-themes of intellectual development that emerged from the study in the public and private universities’ quest to retain staff were provision of scholarships, staff development, study leave, tuition waiver for staff dependents and research, publishing and attending seminars. In an attempt to demonstrate the participants’ appreciation of intellectual development obtaining at their universities to retain staff, the following excerpts put their appreciative into its proper perspective:

Scholarships, according to Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1: The first one is that those with Masters Degrees who are permanent staff, the university has arranged scholarships for them so that they can do PhDs with other universities. This observation is in contradiction with the researcher’s observations at Case 1 where staff members are encouraged to pursue PhD studies with the university free of charge. Both are useful staff retention strategies. However, in support of Case 3’s position, Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 2 remarked:

...members are encouraged to undergo some postgraduate training so there is provision of staff development.

It is indisputable that the aforementioned three findings highly value the attainment of higher qualifications by the studied universities, especially the PhD qualifications which will in the mind of the researcher increase universities’ institutional visibility. The programmes that are offered and products of universities with many lecturers with PhD qualifications tend to gain more acceptance, credibility and fame in the local market and beyond. Again, the researcher is of the opinion that when the staff of the universities have been enhanced through high qualifications, lecturers tend to stay at such university in search of fame, status and success, as well as prestige. Moreover, the lecturers’ dependents also have their academic stock raised by the tuition waiver and indication that the university will be deeply concerned about the living standards of not only its staff members, but their families as well. The universities want to associate with successful lecturers and their families. Such findings are in agreement with Seehra (2013, unpublished) who found out that staff can be recruited and retained by creating a culture of serendipity based on continuous development for the academic faculty. A culture of serendipity in the context of this study and Seehra (2013, unpublished) means an accidental pleasant surprise experienced by managers in their bid to implement staff retention strategies. For example, some lecturers offered a pleasant surprise for university managers when lecturers stood by their universities by remaining loyal and committed to their jobs during Zimbabwe’s economic downturn between 2000 and 2010. It was pleasing to note that both public and private universities under study shared the desire to upgrade their staff’s qualifications with the hope to retain them.

**Provision of Staff Development**

Allied to the provision of scholarships, is the provision of staff development opportunities as another emerging sub-themes of intellectual development. Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1 earlier on dealt with this subject by indicating that those with Masters Degrees are supported by the university to pursue PhD studies with local or foreign universities. Furthermore, Case 4 Returnee Lecturer 1 pointed out that his university pays fees for its lecturers undertaking PhD studies. These findings tend to concur with the researcher’s observations made at Case 1 where three Faculties had at least two assistant lecturers between 2008 and 2013 and to date whose qualifications were upgraded between 2012 and 2013. Also, most of Case 1’s lecturers are undertaking PhD studies with the university. Such findings make the researcher to view that the concerned Case 1 is beginning to appreciate challenging its assumptions on the make-up of today’s academic workforce (Blass, 2013, unpublished).

From the findings above, most cases except Case 2 appreciate the role of staff development in retaining staff. Therefore, one can argue that the vision and organisational set up of the public and private universities determine how staff development could be useful to retain staff. In this study, it appeared that public universities valued staff development in retaining staff to a larger extent than their private university counterparts. The support given to private university lecturers for staff development was comparatively less than that given to their public university counterparts.

**Study Leave**

From the study, it appeared that there is some link among study leave, staff development and scholarships. Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1 earlier on indicated Masters holding lecturers have opportunities for them arranged by their university to do PhD studies with other universities even outside the country. The same perception was upheld at Case 4, while at Case 2 it was reported that lecturers can go on sabbatical leave or study leave without pay. Blass’ (2013, unpublished) observations that universities should challenge their assumptions on the make-up of today’s academic workforce become unacceptable in regard to Case 2’s circumstances. The researcher qualifies the preceding view using what Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1 said about the subject:

...there are no clear staff development opportunities like you get at UZ or ZOU.

These findings are an indication of varied university circumstances meant to improve lecturer quality. Most
studied cases, with the exception of Case 2 appreciate the efficacy of study leave in retaining staff at the university. Hence, the researcher’s observations made at Case 1 indicated that lecturers pursuing PhD studies are offered staff development leave to assist them complete their studies. The study leave is dependent on the university Council’s and senior management’s support given to lecturers in line with the university’s vision and mission in regard to staff retention.

Contact Leave and Sabbatical Leave

It also came out from the study that intellectual development of staff in the studied universities can also be achieved through opportunities for contact leave and sabbatical leave. However, the actual situation on the ground is that provision of contact and sabbatical leaves tends to be scarce in the studied universities. What is coming out from the above observations is the fact that universities face challenges of sending deserving lecturers for sabbatical leave due to financial constraints. This feeling is echoed by Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1 who said:

…as you may be aware sabbatical also has its challenges…

In supporting the two foregoing views, the researcher hardly observed lecturers going for sabbatical in the studied cases, save for Case 1, which recently, started showing efforts to send senior staff for sabbatical leave in local universities. As a result, the researcher’s observations at Case 1 indicate that lecturers who are due for sabbatical leave and contact leave may now go for the two kinds of leave subject to the availability of funds. However, despite the existence of related literature on contact leave and sabbatical leave, Mupemhi and Mupemhi (2011) found out that MSU staff representatives seem not to be very happy with the benefits as some of the contractual benefits such as contact and sabbatical leave have not been fully honoured.

From the findings, the researcher observes that what universities seem to play down is the critical role of contact and sabbatical leave in enhancing intellectual development of their staff. Both kinds of leave provide staff members with opportunities to gain or share knowledge and experiences with others. Also, through work they do during the sabbatical leave, they get extra income. Most universities in this study have been found wanting on the aspect of providing increased opportunities for staff to go for contact leave and sabbatical with the intent to retain them. While the universities were not forthcoming in this regard, they need to consider Mapolisa and Mubika’s (2013) recommendation that universities should send deserving lecturers for sabbatical leave for their professional growth.

Tuition Waiver

It has emerged from the study that tuition waiver targets specific people. Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 2 indicated that tuition waiver only benefits staff members with young dependents. The participant pointed out in their interview responses that their children had not benefited from the practice because their children were educated abroad. Again these findings reveal that tuition waiver is more beneficial in retaining staff in public universities than in private institutions.

Research, Publishing and Attending Seminars

The last set of sub-themes of intellectual development from the studied universities’ participants was; encouragement for research and no support for research. Pertinent revelations are shown in Table 4 (See separate page after references).

Intentional Institutional Encouragement for Research

The study revealed that public and private universities’ approaches to research activities differ despite the fact that research justifies the existence of the universities. Notably, public and private university participants from Cases 1 and 3 pointed out that their institutions intentionally encourage and financially support staff to conduct research publish and attend related seminars/conferences within and outside Zimbabwe. One pertinent interview responses that their children had not benefited from the practice because their children were educated abroad. Again these findings reveal that tuition waiver is more beneficial in retaining staff in public universities than in private institutions.

Table 4: Intellectual development’s role through research in enhancing staff retention in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities from the perspective of Returnee Lecturer Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme(s)</th>
<th>Substantiating Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research</td>
<td>1. Intentional institutional encouragement for research</td>
<td>1. ‘…the vast opportunities…available for intellectual development because…’ (Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff retention strategies in Zimbabwe’s public and private Universities: Returnee lecturers’ perspective
Provision of Employees’ Welfare/Safety Nets

Table 5 shows the sub-theme that has been derived from the provision of employees’ welfare/safety nets was universities’ organisational loans.

Universities’ Organisational Loans

It also emerged from that some of the universities went an extra mile in trying to retain their staff by offering organisational loans to their staff. Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1 was a recipient and beneficiary of an organisational loan called installation, as the excerpt below confirmed that:

...when I arrived they also offered what they call installation loan for you to buy whatever it is that you want to buy to help you settle...it’s a loan given at a very low interest rate.

Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1 was received that loan even though it was subject to the availability of funds Cases 1, 3 and 4’s institutions still owe the lecturers the funds yet at the same time they could be absolved of such obligation to the members. Failure to pay this loan could be a disincentive to the Returnee Lecturers because the universities appeared to be reneging on their promises.

Enabling Work Environment

Enabling work environment that obtains in the universities as another emerging theme associated with staff retention in the studied universities. Relevant sub-themes and their substantiations are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 presents the sub-theme that fell under enabling work environment was availability of appropriate/relevant resources (including equipment) to use for work.

Availability of Appropriate Office Accommodation

Appropriate offices constitute one of the greatest desires
of an every academic. Two participants indicated that provision of appropriate office accommodation was a basic need. Their views are given below.

Similarly, Case 3 Returnee Lecturer 1 said:

*In terms of connectivity, the university is well connected.*

The above views confirm early research findings by Blair and Jordan, (1994); Amrein-Beadsley, (2007) and Mubatsi (2012) who argued that facilities help to retain staff in institutions at that time. Case 2 (Yearbook, 2013) consolidates these observations by indicating that the university had a good state of the art laboratories. Also, the entire infrastructure …., had excellent ICT facilities ranging from desktop to WiFi and wireless connection within the campus, and telephones. The same case had good staff accommodation at the campus at reasonable rates.

An opposite opinion to the above findings emerged from Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 3 who retorted;

*Facilities, do I know of any?*

This opinion confirmed Case 2’s infrastructure challenges mentioned earlier on under this subject. The preceding findings depict mixed feelings about participants facilities offered at each university. It was not surprising to find participants from the same university contradicting as was the case with Case 1’s participants.

In the light of the preceding findings, participants who lacked spacious office space were sharing offices and their ethical rights to privacy and confidentiality were violated. These findings dovetail with researchers at the Consortium on Chicago School Research (Allenworth et al. in Johnson, 2012:115) who studied one hundred Chicago schools with chronologically high rates of teacher turnover and found out that organisational characteristics other than demographic characteristics explained the mobility. In this study, organisational characteristics best explain how resources are made available to retain staff. Within the framework of this study, organisational characteristics include university managers who mutually reach a compromise with staff members on how best to avail resources. It has been realised that where universities pursue a people-centred brand, they provide resources more than in institutions where management seeks to best protect their own interests, as was indicated by most of the study’s participants.

### Table 7. Sub-themes under the theme ‘no staff retention strategies’ all in the minds of other studied universities’ participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Substantiating statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No staff retention strategies at all</td>
<td>1. No policy to support research</td>
<td>1,…no policy to support research… (Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. …no research funds set aside… (Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Unenunciated retention policies</td>
<td>1…the they haven’t been clearly enunciated as far as I know (Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### No Retention Strategies

A surprising, unexpected and final theme under staff retention strategies obtaining in the studied universities is ‘no retention strategies’ at all.

Sub-themes to demonstrate the non-existence of staff retention policies in the studied universities are no policy to support research and unclear retention policies are presented in Table 7.

### No Policy to Support Research

Related to the above observation, was the absence of policy to support research in the public and private universities. On that note, Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 1 pointed out that her Case had no policy to support research. Her sentiments were echoed by Case 1 Returnee Lecturer 1 who lamented the lack of research support at his Case because of the absence of block funding for research, no vehicle for research and research station. In view of such opinions, it can be argued that public and private university lecturers might hardly be retained in the absence of supporting policies for both micro and macro-research related activities.

### Unenunciated Policies

A fourth observation which emerged from the study to underline the theme; no retention strategy at all, was unenunciated retention policies. A confirming response for this view came from Case 2 Returnee Lecturer 2 who stated:

*…they haven’t been clearly enunciated as far as I know…*

This remark once again confirms Case 2 HR’s comment that there was totally nothing to talk about in terms of staff retention strategies. In view of the above four findings, the researcher is content that as long as there are no clearly written down retention policies, unclear staff retention strategies, no policies to support research and totally no retention strategies to talk

### SUMMARY

### Similarities

Despite the differences in contexts, situations, settings, ownership, practices and experiences between public
and private universities, some shared staff retention strategies emerged from the study. First, public and private universities had monetary and non-monetary staff retention strategies. Second, both public and private universities were found to have some conditions of service which served as part of retention strategies in those universities. Third, some of the allowances offered in public and private universities tended to differ nominally, yet in practice, they tended to yield similar results. Salaries were established to be a standard obligation that private and public universities needed to meet every month. Public and private universities used research publications to promote lecturers as a means to retain them (Chakanyuka et al, 2008). Contact leave and sabbatical leave were obtained on paper, rather than in practice in both categories of the universities. Both sets of the universities had the desire to use enabling working environments to promote staff retention. All the studied universities did not offer housing allowance, thus, disregarding Maslow’s observation in Bushe (2012) and Ng’ethe et al (2012) that accommodation is a biological or physiological need for employees. Both kinds of the universities lacked support for research and had unenunciated staff retention strategies.

Differences

A number of differences in staff retention strategies obtainable in Zimbabwe’s public and private universities were observed. Public universities tended to offer better conditions of service in terms of salaries and bonuses, even though both conditions of service lag behind what international universities offer. Also, the conditions of service were university-specific as they appeared to vary from one university to another, irrespective of the university category. Also in addition, opportunities for career growth, staff development, research and consultancy, as well as contact leave, study leave and sabbatical leave obtained differently in public and private universities and were university-specific. Public and private universities had different sources of income in which the former were government funded and the latter were funded by Board of Directors and or partnerships loans, but public universities did not have them.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING STAFF RETENTION STRATEGIES OBTAINING IN ZIMBABWE’S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

On the basis of the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

Similarities

In terms of similarities, here are the study’s conclusions.
• Staff retention strategies in public and private universities tended to differ on paper and implementation approach, but in practice they tended to yield similar results.
• Staff retention strategies in both kinds of universities were university-specific, notwithstanding the fact that the universities could be public or private.
• Any failure to reflect housing allowance on the lecturer’s pay slips every month is a clear indication that the universities’ leadership are not considering issue of staff accommodation as a priority.
• Both sets of the universities had no policies to support research.
• Both kinds of the universities had no clear and straightforward policies.

Differences

Regarding the differences, it can be concluded that:
• Public universities tended to offer more allowances than private universities because of the support they receive from the government.
• The opportunities for research work, staff development, career path growth, recognition, reward and promotion tend to obtain more in public universities than in private ones because of the existence of a culture of appreciation of lecturers’ efforts that characterize public universities.
• The existence of staff retention strategies in the universities distinguishes emerging universities from submerging universities in terms of being employers of choice that value the lecturers as one of the most important resources that the universities have.
• Finally, it can be concluded that funding is the rock adequate upon which all other resources are build upon as far as the availability of staff retention in the studied universities is concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF RETENTION STRATEGIES IN THE UNIVERSITIES

On the basis of the preceding findings, the researcher makes the ensuing recommendations.
• Private and public universities need to have knowledge of what other local, regional and international competitors offer in terms of staff retention strategies through salary surveys and benchmark to effectively retain their staff. The study recommends a starting salary of US$4 000 for a university lecturer.
• Performance-based pay for lecturers is the best strategy to retain lecturers in both kinds of universities. Universities should retain lecturers who actually work and have the capacity to actually pay themselves through hard work.
• Future research studies need to focus on what other universities in the SADC region offer as staff retention strategies for the sake of comparability.
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