

Factors influencing the recruitment and retention of faculty at the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, Bugando, Mwanza, Tanzania

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Background. Attracting and retaining faculty is essential for the success of any higher learning institution, especially in the newer medical institutions in Tanzania.

Aim. To determine the factors favouring the recruitment and retention of faculty at the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS), Bugando, Tanzania, between November and December 2011.

Methods. Using standardised self-administered questionnaires, respondents were asked to rank a range of factors that might influence their recruitment and retention on a 4-point Likert scale.

Results. Of the 55 questionnaires distributed, 42 (76%) were returned. Opportunity for professional growth, support from colleagues, opportunities for promotion, support for scholarly activities, and staff collegiality were the top 5 factors that made the faculty take up CUHAS positions and remain at CUHAS. Salary was the most important factor for recruitment, and retention in 7.1% of the faculty surveyed.

Conclusion. The majority of the academic staff surveyed were junior; they cited opportunity for professional growth as the most important factor in recruitment and retention at CUHAS.

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The University of Health Sciences in Tanzania plays a critical role in the training and development of new health workers.^[1] Currently, Tanzania has 7 medical schools: The Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS), the KCMC Medical College (KMC), the Hubert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU), the International Medical and Technical University (IMTU), the College of Health Sciences of Dodoma (UDOM), and the Saint Francis College of Health and Allied Sciences (SFUCHAS). The increase in the number of medical colleges is not proportional to the increase of faculty members in the country. A review of these institutions reveals that the total number of faculty in all the medical schools is about 431, with about 59 faculty members teaching at more than one institution.^[2-7]

Most of the medical schools have a sub-optimal number of academic staff, and newer colleges have so far been dependent on visiting faculty for basic and clinical teaching.^[1] In addition, most medical schools in Tanzania have been increasing the intake of medical students while the numbers of faculty have remained almost the same. The current medical student-to-fulltime faculty ratio is 6, 8, 9, 18, 24 and 26 for MUHAS, KCMC, CUHAS, HKMU, UDOM and IMTU respectively. This disproportion may compromise the quality of teaching, and of future health professionals and, ultimately, the country's health system.

CUHAS is 10 years old and, as do other medical schools in Tanzania, faces significant shortages of both clinical and basic science faculty. CUHAS started in 2003 with 10 students and 20 faculty members.^[2] Currently, the admission is about 150 students but the increase in faculty has not been

proportional to increases in student admissions. At present, the number of full-time academic staff teaching the MD programme is 83,^[8] which is half of the number of faculty required. At CUHAS alone, more than 20% of advertised funded posts are unfilled. Most medical graduates in Tanzania are employed by the government to work in its hospitals or in public academic institutions. A small number of graduates are employed by private hospitals or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to work in different capacities. However, a significant number of those employed by government either report and work briefly or do not report, owing to low pay and poor working conditions, and instead join NGOs or migrate abroad to seek better-paid work. Of those employed by government, 60 are sponsored each year for various MMed programmes in the country.

The factors contributing to the low recruitment rate at CUHAS have not been critically investigated. In addition, there are no clearly stipulated retention strategies in place. Intervention strategies to address the faculty shortage should be tailored to the needs of institutions, departments and individuals. It is therefore necessary to conduct a critical needs analysis of factors that influence recruitment and retention at CUHAS, as this will help in planning and implementing faculty development plans.

Methods

This survey was conducted between November and December 2011 at CUHAS. The target population included all full-time faculty members from the rank of tutorial assistant to professor. The main tool for data collection was self-administered questionnaires, developed after focus group discussion^[9]

with the faculty. The survey included demographic variables (gender, academic rank, number of years at CUHAS) and other questions to measure the faculty's experiences of and attitudes to university policy regarding recruitment and retention strategies, promotion criteria, workload, remuneration, other sources of funds, research opportunities and faculty development strategies. Respondents were asked to rank each factor that might influence recruitment and retention on a 4-point Likert scale of: 'very important', 'important', 'less important' and 'does not apply'. Data were analysed using SPSS computer software, version 10. Tutorial assistantship was separated in the analysis as this position is a training post, and these participants' responses were likely to be very different from other faculty in other positions.

Results

Of 83 faculty, 55 consented to participate in this anonymous survey and, out of the 55, a total of 42 (76%) were returned and analysed. Of 42 academic staff at CUHAS, 32 (76.6%) were male. The posts were tutorial assistants (16), assistant lecturers (3), lecturers (16), senior lecturers (5) and associate professors (2). Opportunity for professional growth, support from colleagues for creative ideas, opportunities for promotion, financial support for scholarly activities and staff collegiality were the top 5 factors

that influenced faculty in their decision to take up a CUHAS position. The top 5 factors that were 'very important' and 'important' for faculty to remain at CUHAS were the opportunity for professional growth, opportunities for professional contributions, opportunities for promotion, staff collegiality, and that the position was still the best available. All tutorial assistants admitted that opportunity for professional growth and opportunities for professional contribution were important/very important factors in their decision to accept CUHAS employment (Table 1). The most important factor for faculty to take up a CUHAS position and remain there was opportunity for professional growth, which was mentioned by 73% of the faculty. Salary was found to be very important/important for recruitment and retention by 66.7% and 73.8% respondents, respectively. Regarding the one most important factor for participants, salary was mentioned in only 7.1% of the faculty surveyed.

Discussion

The human resources to teach medical doctors at CUHAS are more limited than other universities, such as KCMC, MUHAS, Makerere and Nairobi School of Medicine, in East Africa.^[10] Some departments at CUHAS depend entirely on visiting lecturers, which might have a negative influence on

Table 1. Percentage of respondents indicating that each reason was 'very important' or 'important' in their decision to accept a CUHAS employment offer and to remain at CUHAS

| | Recruitment | | | Retention | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| | All respondents (N=42) | TA (n=16) | Other (n= 26) | All respondents (n= 42) | TA (n= 16) | Other (n= 26) |
| Opportunity for professional growth | 95.2 | 100 | 92.3 | 88.1 | 93.4 | 84.6 |
| Support from colleagues for creative ideas | 92.9 | 87.5 | 96.1 | 85.7 | 93.7 | 80.7 |
| Opportunities for promotion | 85.7 | 81.2 | 88.5 | 80.9 | 75.0 | 84.6 |
| Financial support of scholarly activities | 78.6 | 93.8 | 69.2 | 69.0 | 81.3 | 61.5 |
| Staff collegiality | 73.8 | 68.8 | 76.9 | 76.2 | 68.8 | 80.8 |
| Opportunities for professional contributions | 69.0 | 100 | 84.6 | 88.0 | 81.2 | 92.3 |
| This was my best offer | 66.7 | 81.2 | 40.0 | 73.8 | 87.5 | 65.3 |
| CUHAS reputation | 64.3 | 62.5 | 65.4 | 66.6 | 43.8 | 80.7 |
| Benefits | 64.3 | 87.5 | 50.0 | 61.9 | 68.8 | 57.7 |
| Salary | 61.9 | 68.8 | 57.7 | 52.4 | 50.0 | 53.8 |
| Location in Mwanza city | 61.9 | 81.3 | 50.0 | 35.7 | 37.5 | 34.6 |
| Opportunity for a mentor | 59.5 | 62.5 | 57.7 | 69.0 | 62.5 | 73.0 |
| Classroom and laboratory facilities | 57.1 | 50.0 | 61.5 | 61.9 | 62.5 | 61.5 |
| Library resources | 57.1 | 56.3 | 57.7 | 54.8 | 50.0 | 57.7 |
| Professional manner in resolving conflict | 57.1 | 50.0 | 61.5 | 57.1 | 50.0 | 61.5 |
| Student attitudes toward academics | 54.8 | 56.3 | 57.7 | 71.4 | 75.0 | 69.2 |
| Social attitude of CUHAS community toward minorities | 54.8 | 43.8 | 61.5 | 50.0 | 43.8 | 53.8 |
| Technical support | 52.4 | 50.0 | 53.8 | 61.9 | 43.8 | 73.1 |
| Housing costs | 50.0 | 56.3 | 46.1 | 47.6 | 50.0 | 46.2 |
| Committees on which I am expected to serve | 42.8 | 43.8 | 42.3 | 40.4 | 31.5 | 46.2 |
| Social attitudes of CUHAS community toward majority | 28.6 | 43.8 | 19.2 | 45.2 | 37.5 | 50.0 |
| Number of persons of colour in my department | 14.3 | 12.5 | 15.3 | 09.5 | 06.3 | 11.5 |

TA = tutorial assistant.

the development of these departments and ultimately affect the quality of education offered.

Shortages of academic staff in Tanzania's medical schools are endemic, problematic and worsened by the emigration of academicians.^[1] In the present study, different factors were found to influence recruitment and retention in a newly established medical school in Tanzania. Previous studies found that small salaries, limited career options, heavy teaching loads, growing enrolment and the absence of equipment and support staff were the main barriers to retain faculty staff.^[11] These factors have been confirmed by the study at CUHAS, where the most important factor influencing faculty to accept a CUHAS position and remain at CUHAS was opportunity for professional growth; this was especially important for young academic staff with the rank of tutorial assistant and assistant lecturer. In contrast to previous studies,^[12] which reported that academic salaries severely restricted the recruitment and retention of faculty staff, salary was reported in the present study as the most important factor influencing recruitment and retention in only 7.1% of respondents. Consequently, though salary is perceived as important, other factors such as opportunity for professional growth, support from colleagues for creative ideas, opportunities for promotion, financial support for scholarly activities, and staff collegiality should also be considered when universities draft policies for recruitment and retention.

Conclusions

At CUHAS, Bugando, opportunity for professional development, personal contribution and support of scholarly activities are important factors that

influence recruitment and retention of the best academic staff. The university should focus on these factors to attract and retain more academic faculty members, and urgently needs a clear faculty development policy to ensure recruitment and retention. Further in-depth analysis of posts and surveys in other universities is warranted so that generalised recommendations can be made to the management of universities in Tanzania.

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