The Influence of Work- Life Balance for Staff Retention in the University Of Education, Winneba

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ABSTRACT
Work-life balance is a process in which people seek to find alternative working situations in accordance with changes in their own priorities, physical, psychological or both and these can be triggered in their turn by factors such as: age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management. This article therefore examines the influence of work-life balance for staff retention in the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana; to ensure that staff benefit through having a greater responsibility and a sense of ownership; having better relations with management; avoiding bringing problems at home to work, and vice versa; having the time to focus more on life outside work; and having greater control of their working lives. The authors used a deductive approach, applying focus group discussion in which two separate age groups were involved. A structured interview was carried out as a key source of research into existing work-life balance policies, along with personal views and opinions on the interviewees. The secondary research was performed through the academic review of various management theorists', to compare and contrast and to ascertain the rhetoric of such theories against the reality derived from the primary research. The results show that institutions are now beginning to understand just how crucial it is to provide staff with improved work-life balance policies to encourage job satisfaction. It is important therefore to demonstrate the association between work-life balance policies and employee retention. It is also essential to explore the notion of job satisfaction and work-life balance in order to create policies that encourage staff to stay within the institutions. The main conclusion was that employee work-life balance does or does not affect staff retention. Through the recommendations made, achievement of better work-life balance can yield dividends for employers in terms of: having a more motivated, productive and less stressed workforce that feels valued; attracting a wider range of candidates, such as older part-time workers and careers; increased productivity and reduced absenteeism; gaining the reputation of being an employer of choice; retaining valued employees; achieving reduced costs; and maximizing available labour. Overall, it is important to encourage staff to be self-aware about their own personalities and tendencies, empowering staff to take control over their work and home lives and performance management to do what is best and most effective for the University.
KEY WORDS: Employee Retention, Family, Policies, Staff, Staff Influence, University, Work Life Balance
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I. INTRODUCTION

University education has been expanding in recent years with the introduction of various modes of study. Currently universities ran regular programmes, distance programmes, sandwich programmes, evening and weekend programmes. This means that university workers will have to work for extra hours to ensure that these modes of study are sucessful. Working extra hour, puts so much stress on staff and the most affected ones are the Junior and Senior staff of the University. Thus the extra working hours obviously affect the private life style of these workers since they may not have enough time for personal welfare. This therefore calls for the implementation of effective work life balance policies. Work life balance is defined as a situation when a person experiences balance and satisfaction in his role as a worker and in the family (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw 2003). According to Schermerhorn (2005) work life balance is a person's ability to balance work demands with personal and family needs. For Delecta (2011) work life balance is defined as the ability of individuals to fulfill their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities.

The purpose of this write up is to review a variety of published materials on work-life balance and flexibility of work in order to develop understanding as to whether universities in Ghana, especially, the University of Education, Winneba should increase staff retention. The study will also create an effective hypothesis which can be tested through the means of a range of primary research methods to draw conclusions on the effect of work-life balance policies on staff retention. Striking that perfect balance between career and

family has always been a challenge for Ghanaian workers. Our schedules are getting busier than ever before, which often causes our work or our personal lives to suffer. Work-life balance involves juggling workplace stress with the daily pressures of family, friends, and self. Modern staff demands greater control over their lives and a bigger say in the structure of their jobs. According to a *Business Information Review* publication (2005), "The search for work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change things in accordance with changes in their own priorities, physical, psychological or both, and these can be triggered in their turn by factors such as: age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management." When staff feels a greater sense of control and ownership over their own lives, they tend to have better relationships with management and are able to leave work issues at work and home issues at home. Balanced staff tends to feel more motivated and less stressed out at work, which thereby increases company productivity and reduces the number of conflicts among coworkers and management.

Companies that gain a reputation for encouraging work-life balance have become very attractive to workers and will draw a valuable pool of candidates for new job openings. These companies also tend to enjoy higher employee retention rates, which result in less time-consuming training, more loyalty, and a higher degree of in-house expertise. Studies have shown that staff who have a positive work-life balance do a better job at work, so promoting this balance is beneficial to individuals and the company. This is a practical guide for employers who want to promote a healthy work-life balance for their teams.

Brief Background of UEW

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) was established by the University of Education, Winneba Act 2004, (Act 672) on May 14, 2004. It was originally established by PNDC Law 322 (1992) as the University College of Education of Winneba (UCEW) through the amalgamation of the following seven diploma awarding institutions: the Specialist Training College, the Advanced Teacher Training College, the National Academy of Music – all located at Winneba; the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako; College of Special Education, Mampong-Akwapim; St. Andrews Training College, Asante Mampong, and the Advanced Technical Teacher College, Kumasi. The University is charged with the responsibility of producing professional educators to spearhead a new national vision of education aimed at redirecting Ghana's efforts along the path of rapid economic and social development. UEW is expected to play a leading role in the country's drive to produce scholars whose knowledge would be fully responsive to the realities and exigencies of contemporary Ghana and the West African sub Region.

At the end of 2018 Strategic Plan Period, student enrolment was 61,711, comprising 38,768 (122%) full-time, 18,821 (21%) distance learning. Sandwich enrolment was 4,122. The University had a total staff strength of 1,983 (28% female), comprising 502 research and teaching staff and 1,481 non-teaching staff. (UEW Corporate Strategic Plan 2018-2023) pp2).

II. REVIEW OF THEORISTS

The Hawthorne Studies

Work carried out at the Western Electric Company (1920-1930) in America, the Hawthorne studies, developed a new school of thinking on motivational needs. This suggested that employee's social needs are as important as economic needs. The Hawthorne effect describes a temporary change to behaviour or performance in response to a change in the environmental conditions. This change is typically an improvement. Others have broadened this definition to mean that people's behaviour and performance change following any new or increased attention.

The study concluded that 'social relationships were significant in the satisfaction of the human need for social contact' (Mullins 2002 p64). The Hawthorne studies made an impact on the understanding of employee motivation by focusing employer's attention on the design of jobs and tasks with the social relationships of staff in mind. The Hawthorne studies has made a major contribution to job design, developing tasks to make them more interesting and attractive, and focusing on the needs for social relationships.

The Flexible firm

The concept of a 'flexible firm' developed by J. Atkinson (1985) 'claimed that firms were increasingly seeking and achieving greater flexibility from their workforce' Redman, T. (2001), to meet ever evolving market and competitive pressures. The 'flexible firm' model contends that organisations can design workforces to proactively meet their business needs through flexible staffing arrangements. Atkinson's model analyses the segmentation of the workforce by using 'core' workers and 'peripheral' workers. By identifying different forms of labour flexibility Atkinson developed the idea of Numerical flexibility and Functional flexibility; and referred to as adjusting levels of labour in line with demand. The expansion and contraction of labour, 'covers such practices as the employment of part-time, temporary or contract workers' (Redman, 2001). Redman (2001) again pointed out that, functional flexibility on the other hand, is the ability to train and deploy labour to a

number of tasks, and to match the skills of staff to the required tasks. Therefore functional flexibility is 'concerned with the ease with which staff can move or be moved between tasks or jobs'. Numerical flexibility would primarily impact 'peripheral workers' such as part-time or contractual workers, and functional flexibility would impact 'core' workers by moving skilled staff in response to emerging technological, industrial or product changes. Atkinson's flexible firm model contends that organisations need to develop a structure based on a stable core of full-time permanent staff, 'who undertake the organisation's key, firm specific activities and with emphasis on functional flexibility' (Mullins, 2002).

The core workers should therefore be supported by peripheral workers through numerically flexible groups. 'The peripheral workers provide a 'buffer' that protects core workers from external market pressures. When faced with a dip in demand for its product, the firm will cut peripheral jobs while retaining core workers' as contended by Beardwell et al.,(2004). The flexible firm model offers a starting point for examining flexibility in the workplace and provides evidence that organisations can offer flexible working arrangements to their core staff while still meeting production strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

The primary research was undertaken through a deductive approach using focus group discussion (Junior and senior staff of University of Education, Winneba) in which two separate age groups were used to support other forms of research by providing questions that could be developed into a questionnaire if necessary. A structured interview was carried out as a key source of research into existing work-life balance policies, along with personal views and opinions on the interviewees work-life balance. The main conclusion was that employee work-life balance does or does not affect staff retention. Secondary research was performed through the academic review of various management theorists', work which were compared and contrasted with to ascertain the rhetoric of such theories against the reality derived from the primary research. Institutions are now beginning to understand just how crucial it is to provide staff with a work-life balance to encourage job satisfaction, it is important therefore to demonstrate the association between work-life balance policies and employee retention. It is also essential to explore the notion of job satisfaction and work-life balance in order to create policies that encourage staff to stay within the institutions. The study of motivation which indicates the fundamental reasons for high staff turnover and why people behave in certain ways was considered. From the 19th century to the present day there have been many in-depth studies on the idea of motivation, and from these initial studies, work based theories of flexibility at work and work-life balance was developed.

Two focus groups from among the Junior and Senior staff of the College of Technology Education, Kumasi of the University of Education, Winneba were conducted to gather understanding into work-life balance policies, and to help indicate appropriate questions for a survey. The focus groups consisted of seven people from two age groups. Focus group one was made up of two participants aged 45-55, and focus group two consisted of five participants aged from 35-59. The focus groups were semi-structured using a range of open questions and probing questions that were answered by all group members. Even though the focus groups did have a planned structure they were still fairly free-flowing so that further insight into the responses of participant's questions could be analysed. Saunders et al (2003) acknowledged that encouraging participants to discuss particular questions may reveal data that provides you with important insight. One of the main focuses of the group's discussion was to decide whether their personal benefits were work-life balance enhancing or whether they were more financial or time based. The results of the focus groups formed a basis for many of the questions in the questionnaire and it helped to gain further understanding towards the findings of the literature review.

Focus Group 1 – Senior Staff
Good afternoon my name is ***Richard Kwadwo Mprah***. I will be conducting this focus group into the preferred work-life balance programs of UEW and your opinions on the job satisfaction that these programs provide you with. (Interviewee 1: A, Interviewee 2: B)
Q1. What are the work-life balance schemes you are aware of that your organisation has in place?
Interviewee 1: Annual Leave Policy
Interviewee 2: Staff holidays – 20 days per year plus bank holidays.
Q2. Could you please state which of these polices affect you and create a better Job satisfaction?
Interviewee 1: The Pay is still the main reason why I like to work, but I only tell my friend about all the perks not the pay so yes, It does mean better Job Satisfaction.
Interviewee 2: If my organisation had any of the schemes like the ones everyone else does it would motivate me a lot and my job would be a lot better.
Q3. What work life balance schemes would you like to be established in your organisation?
Interviewee 1: I don't think there could be anymore, maybe more parental leave.
Interviewee 2: Additional allowances when family members are ill.

Q4. If your organisation had these schemes in place would it encourage you to stay in the organisation?
Interviewee 1: Yes definitely, I would think more of the firm.
Interviewee 2: Yes and make me want to go to work as well.
Q5. Are there any added points that we haven't covered in relation to work life balance issue?
Interviewee 1: No
Interviewee 2: Not really

Focus Group 2 – Senior Staff
Good afternoon my name is **Charles B Campion**. I will be conducting this focus group into the preferred work-life balance programs of your organisation, and your opinions on the job satisfaction that these programs provide you with (Interviewee 1: C, Interviewee 2: D, Interviewee 3: E, Interviewee 4: F, Interviewee 5: G)

Q1. Could you please state the work-life balance schemes you are aware of, that your organisation has in place?
Interviewee 1: Over-time is paid during weekends and holidays.
Interviewee 2:   One weekday off a week as well as weekends, I asked if I would be able to work a four day week when I started and they were very reasonable on all the benefits that they offered.
Interviewee 3: Not aware of many junior staff polices, as only a temporary employee.
Interviewee 4: Company expenses, Company car is able to be used for social use, mobile phones are also allowed to be used for social use.
Interviewee 5 There's a store discount, ability to change working days.

Q2. Could you please state which of these polices affect you and create a better Job satisfaction?
Interviewee 1: Finishing a few hours earlier on Friday to beat traffic, is very helpful and I feel like I can start the weekend off much better. Other polices do make the work more satisfying.
Interviewee 2: Knowing that all the company polices are in place makes me feel safer at work, rather than other places that I've worked, where you feel undervalued with what polices you are offered.
Interviewee 3: The main job satisfaction comes from the colleagues around me who are helpful and talkative.
Interviewee 4: I get to plan my own time at work and so that is great, knowing that I can make social arrangements and start work a little bit earlier.
Interviewee 5: Don't know really, they haven't really affected me yet but it does make me happier about moving from my previous employer knowing better polices are in place.
Q3. What work life balance schemes would you like to be established in your organisation?
Interviewee1: Something that creates better communication, away from work, maybe voice mail when away on holiday.
Interviewee 2: fewer hours some days and more hours other times, rather than normal hours and overtime.
Interviewee 3:   Flexitime would be good and maybe working from home one day a week or more facilities for doing activities with work colleagues.
Interviewee 4: Anything that cuts down stress! Working at home, and being able to leave early some days.
Interviewee 5: Part days and better use of organisations facilities for car insurance and health cover.
Q4: If your organisation had these schemes in place would it encourage you to stay in the organisation?
Interviewee 1: I wouldn't leave at this point anyway, but yes it would help.
Interviewee 2: Well I moved here due to the better work-life balance for me and so yes it has made me stay as they have kept to their promises.
Interviewee 3: Yes if they increase my salary at the same time I would.
Interviewee 4: Yes, definitely.
Interviewee 5: Same for me really stayed in same type of organisation but changed due to better money and work-life balance I guess, so yes.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The essay title '*improving work life balance policies of UEW for staff satisfaction*' was changed into a testable hypothesis after secondary research that stated 'Improving the work-life balance of staff' will increase retention'. This hypothesis was tested with the focus groups to find the correlation and whether the hypothesis was correct. Secondary research including large scale surveys also indicated that if an employee had a good work-life balance they would be more likely to stay in the organization. However, there are many questions that the hypothesis didn't answer fully, for instance do work-life balance benefits really increase loyalty and performance over monetary rewards, and are organisations with good work-life balance schemes more attractive for prospective staff. All these aspects need to be tested further to fully understand the benefits of offering work-life balance polices. There appears to be a new social thinking about employment, with individuals now trying

to combine work with other elements of their life. Work-life balance policies have been developed to reflect this, but whether organisations are getting equal return for what they offer staff; the answer remain to be known.

Organisations such as University of Education, Winneba must research, the requirements of their staff before establishing work-life balance policies, by administering an organizational survey, the benefits most important to staff can be found. After implementation of work-life balance programmes it is critical that management monitor their effectiveness by gathering data. Information on the reduction of sickness rates could be taken along with, retention of parent workers, staff turnover and savings in recruitment costs. A pilot or trial period could be carried out to prove which benefits are preferred by staff. However, Organisations do need to be aware that it can take time to learn about the needs of their staff and to establish the level of work-life balance that would satisfy them as each employee is unique and has very different needs that change at different stages of their lives.

Organisations generally need to be effective in demonstrating commitment to work-life balance, for staff need to be shown that they can both have a good work-life balance and progress within the organisation. A sincere attitude of caring towards staff needs to be established. Management could encourage staff to get involved in the planning and decision making of new work-life balance initiatives. This would enhance the employee's knowledge on what flexible benefits are available to them and how they can be most effectively used. Organisations need to be much more open-minded about work-life balance policies as the government and staff will soon be demanding a better work-life balance. It is important that staff have knowledge of work-life balance policies so that they can relate their needs to their managers who can then be influential in changing hours and implementing work-life initiatives within their organisation.

Commitment to multi-skilling should be highlighted so that many more staff can cooperate in more skilled or alternative activities instead of only a minority of staff within the organisation being able to perform them. By doing this the long hours that skilled staff may have to work can be reduced helping many of them, who may have partners and children, to enjoy a balanced life. Relieving the workload that these key workers perform would enable these organisations to support those most essential to them. The Job Characteristic approach believes that lower skilled workers would have an increased motivation due to the new task identity and skill variety. Support and commitment from management is a rare commodity in today's workplace, by offering flexible working practices staff can feel integral to the organisation and so increase their performance output in line with what they have received from the organisation. Through the implementation of the recommendations discussed below, the University should have some degree, increase retention of staff.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS
From the study, the following recommendations are made to promote work-life balance in the University without compromising productivity or efficiency:

**1.	Exercise Access**
One of the most positive ways to reduce stress is exercise, and every able-bodied adult should be getting at least 30 minutes of it per day. Staff who eat healthily and exercise are less at risk of getting sick and missing days from work, which could ultimately detract from the institution's. It is recommended that the University should form keep fit clubs that could exercise on weekends and holidays.
The University may have a gym facility within the campuses to encourage the staff to use it regularly. If not, the University could consider offering staff membership discount at a local gym.

**2.	Childcare Services**
As parents, childcare duties don't always stop when we leave for work in the morning. A family-friendly work environment has proven to benefit both employers and staff in a variety of different industries. It is also recommended that the University considers providing an onsite childcare facility that employs a trusted staff and takes the guesswork and frustrations out of other babysitting and daycare services. If this is not possible, we may want to offer our staff a childcare service discount to alleviate the stresses of caring for children during the workday and reduce the amount of missed work. The University Basic School with the crèche should be opened as soon as possible. If neither one of these options is feasible for business, the University could allow staff at least some flexibility to care for their children. This can include the ability to take time off to pick up a sick child from school, the ability to see a child's school play at lunch time, or flexible start/end time for parents who drop off or pick up kids from school.

**3.	Institution/Departmental Outings**
One of the best ways to boost employee morale and help workers get to know each other in a non-stressful capacity, is by offering an occasional institution/departmental outing. This type of outing can be as low-key or as extravagant like, depending on the culture of the University and whether there is budget for such things. Each department or directorate should include annual review of their activities outside the confines of the University.

4.   Spotlight on: Seniors

Reducing stress to increase performance in all aspects of life including one's job is the ultimate goal of work-life balance. Adapting the institution's, benefits to address the needs of the work force, and which will reduce stress and thereby enhancing work-life balance. The best way to retain an awesome workforce is to serve the needs of staff so that they can best serve the University. With some simple tweaks, work-life balance can be sustained to meet the needs of aged staff and keep them employed. Things that can be done for aged staff include: free medical screening and counseling before retirement. The best part however, is that, all of these benefits can be made to serve all staff, directly and indirectly.

- **Provide good health coverage for all staff, even part-time** – The University could find out from the staff the services they would like to see improved about the health policy of the University and act on it. Take the staff' health and wellness seriously, and they will return the respect.
- **Flexible hours** – The perfect complement to working remotely is also offering flexible scheduling. In addition to pursuing what they want to do this gives staff the option to take care of their needs – such as doctor's visits.
- **Encourage employee training, workshops, and education.** The fast rise of social media and new technologies can render everyone's knowledge base quickly outdated. There is the need to constantly support staff to master new technologies through training and workshops.

5.   Maintain Structural Consistency

It is important to maintain a sense of consistency and organization in the institutional structure because staff generally feels less anxious if they know what to expect day-to-day as often as possible. There is therefore no need to be afraid to shake things up from time to time, but a steady and reliable work environment can counteract stresses that staff feels at home.

6.   Allow Schedule Flexibility

Not every business is well-suited for a virtual workforce, so the University should not compromise with output if staff have to be there in-person. However, it is another thing entirely to give staff the option to work remotely when they really need to, because of an emergency that requires them to make up time later. For example, if staff child is sick, consider offering the person the opportunity to work from home that day or come into the office over time on weekend to make up for lost time. This way staff will not worry about missing work and all deadlines can still be met.

7.   Engage in Team-Building Exercises

Team-building exercises may sound too cheesy for the University environment, but some of them really do foster a much-needed sense of team work around the office. If staff feels like they can depend on each other for support, they will feel like they have someone to go to when feeling stressed out or overwhelmed by some unexpected situation or new development in the University.

8.   Encourage Staff to take their leave

One way to reduce stress in institutions is to encourage the staff to take their annual leave for their own benefit. In this regard, the University can implement a "use it or lose it" leave policy, whereby staff' allotted leave days expire at the end of the year if left unused.

9.   Encourage Short Breaks Throughout the Day

On a smaller scale, it's important for workers' mental and physical health to take breaks throughout the day. The human body was not designed to sit still and stare at a screen for eight hours, and doing so can lead to a wide variety of health issues. Management of the University need to encourage the taking of breaks at work to make staff better at their jobs, as they would be more focused, less burned out, and more productive in the long-term.

10.   Ask Staff for Guidance

Paradoxically, it is better to consult staff on what they truly need than the staff asking guidance themselves. If staff are struggling with work-life balance, it is better to ask them what changes around the workplace might help. It might be surprising what could come out to collaborate on some mutually beneficial strategies together as a result. To facilitate those discussions having regularly scheduled meetings, either as a group, department, or as one-on-one discussions to talk about balance issues, could be helpful. These types of meetings could be held quarterly, semi-annually or annually depending upon the size and individual needs of the workforce.

11.   **Be a Good Model for Balance**

No one likes to take life advice from a hypocrite, so management should make sure that their words and actions are in line. If Deans and Heads of Department are responding to emails while on vacation, it sends a message to staff that they are expected to do well too. The need to respect the balance and privacy of staff and avoid contacting them after normal work hours unless it is an absolute emergency is also paramount.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the forgoing, the long-term benefits of encouraging staff to find a balance between their work and home lives greatly outweigh any temporary inconveniences and policy changes. However, it is also important to recognize the early warning signs of burnout, which is a continual state of physical and mental exhaustion. According to an *American Journal of Nursing* publication, a state of burnout can cause staff to become disconnected from both work and home because they do not have enough energy to sustain both lives. Staff who feels unrecognized or dissatisfied at work can lead to burnout and this type of exhaustion at work can be a health and safety hazard. On the whole, it is important to encourage staff to be self-aware about their own personalities and tendencies, as some people are more prone to imbalances than others. Through words, actions, and example, emphasize the need to continually assess one's goals to determine what brings satisfaction, inner peace and balance. Empowering the staff to take control over their work and home lives can have a profound impact on their job satisfaction and performance management to do what is best and most effective for the University.

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