ACADEMIC STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION AT THE TECHNIKON FREE STATE[1]: ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The recruitment and retention of academic staff members is emerging as one of the biggest challenges facing all higher education institutions, including the Technikon Free State (TFS). The TFS is also faced with statutory requirements to increase the equity numbers at the institution. The aim of this article is to examine the academic staff problem at the TFS by means of a SWOT analysis and questionnaires, sent to all academic staff. The SWOT analysis was used to determine the current situation at the TFS, while the questionnaires provided valuable information in driving and restraining forces in managing academic staff issues.

The article is concluded with a list of recommendations that could assist management in the process of human resource planning.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Free State is a large geographical region with much of the population located in rural and semi-rural areas. As in the case of similar regions in South Africa, this province faces huge challenges in meeting the social and economic development needs of its people. In this context the Technikon Free State (TFS), as one of the higher education institutions in the region, plays a crucial role in providing access to higher professional and career-focused and work-oriented training and development in the region.

The TFS was a historically White higher education institution, established in 1981 to provide career-oriented education in the central region of South Africa. From humble beginnings it has since grown into a well-established, medium-sized institution with over 8000 students of which 72% is Black. This is a fair reflection of the population profile of the region. The staff profile, however, has not changed. In fact it has remained the same, particularly in the case of the academic staff.

Accordingly, the Principal/Vice-Chancellor mandated a task team on academic staff recruitment and retention to review existing practices and to recommend practical strategies to attract new academic staff and encourage existing academic staff to remain in the employ of the TFS. The serious issue of equity will also have to be addressed. The task team should also consider initiatives that have been successful elsewhere and consult widely within the institution.

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[1] Although the Technikon Free State has been awarded university of technology status, the context of the research was the Technikon. The article will therefore refer to the institution as a Technikon and not by its new name.

## 2.	OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to examine the academic staffing problem at the TFS and to formulate recommendations that will enable the institution to comply with the expectations of government, the staff, the students and the broader community.

The study has a twofold significance:

- to identify and analyse the forces impacting on human resources planning at the TFS, and
- to make recommendations that could lead to possible strategies and actions for the recruitment and retention of academic staff.

## 3.	NATIONAL DOCUMENTS

South African higher education has experienced a process of change in its national identity like no other country in the world. The Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa has set its goals and standards through numerous government documents.

Within the National Plan on Higher Education, which was approved in February 2001, the Minister states: *The staff composition of higher education has not changed in line with the changes in the student composition. Blacks and women remain under-represented in academic and professional positions, especially at senior levels.*

- *Institutions will therefore be expected to develop employment equity plans with clear targets for rectifying race and gender inequities.*
- *The National Plan supports the view that, to achieve the transformation goals of the White Paper, the higher education system must be differentiated and diverse* (p.2).

The Education White Paper 3 states the following:
Higher education in South Africa is characterised by the following deficiencies: There is an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along lines of race, gender, class and geography. There are gross discrepancies in the participation rates of students from different population groups, indefensible imbalances in the ratios of Black and female staff compared to Whites and males (p.3).
In its report to the Minister of Education on the restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa, the National Working Group states the following:
The South African higher education system is in competition not only with the international education system, but also with government and the local business and commercial sector. Qualified academics are recruited by the private sector, which often has higher rates of remuneration. In this competitive environment, strategies have to be developed to recruit and retain

not only young academics, but also seasoned and experienced professionals (p.66).

It stands to reason that the TFS should formulate its human resource strategy within the framework of these and other government documents.

4. STAFFING PROFILE

In order to emphasize the importance of the study, the following tables of the staffing profile at the TFS as on 31st December 2001 are presented:

	Lecturing staff				Non lectu-	Total
	Perm	Fixed-term	Total	Part-time	ring staff	(excl. part-time)
Management	56	13	69	112	28	97
Engineering	31	12	43	31	11	54
Human Sciences	27	7	34	41	10	44
H & E Sciences	23	11	34	69	6	40
	137	43	180	253	55	235

The use of part-time lecturers at the TFS is very high, because it is very difficult to find full-time academic staff in the labour market. Although the TFS buys in good skills for quality lecturing, the high proportion of part-time staff does impact negatively on government's view of demonstrating capacity.

Academic staff qualification profile

Academic staff - (M's & D's)	M's	D's	Total lectu-ring staff	% M's & D's	2006 Target	DoE Target
Management	19	4	69	33%		
Engineering	14	3	43	40%		
Human Sciences	9	4	34	38%		
H & E Sciences	8	7	34	44%		
	50	18	180	38%	50%	35%

As a Technikon, on its way to become a university of technology, the TFS needs to improve the percentage of masters and doctoral degrees to enable it to face the challenges of both its vision and the future.

Academic staff (FTE) per student (FTE)

Academic staff/ student (FTE)	Lecturers (FTE's)	FTE Students	Ratio FTE/Staff	2006 Target	DOE Target
	185.6	5791	31.20	25	25

This ratio indicates that the TFS does not have enough academic staff members for the number of students. As the student intake grows, this ratio will worsen.

Equity tables

Equity	Male (White)	Female (White)	Male (Black)	Female (Black)	Total	% Ex w/m	% Black	2006 Target	DOE Target
Management	32	30	4	3	69	10%	54%		
Engineering	27	6	9	1	43	23%	37%		
Human Sciences	13	13	5	3	34	24%	62%		
H & E Sciences	10	18	3	3	34	18%	71%		
TOTAL	**82**	**67**	**21**	**10**	**180***	**17%**	**54%**	**55%**	**50%**

Ex w/m means: Excluding White males

5.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to paint a comprehensive picture, information in this paper has been drawn from several different sources, including national, regional and institutional reports as well as literature in the public domain on the Internet. The primary research however, comprises a SWOT analysis and questionnaires (appendix 1) sent to all the academic staff. The SWOT analysis was used to determine the current situation at the TFS. The questionnaire was used to identify a prioritised list of driving and restraining forces and whether these forces could influence the human resource planning process.

6.   DISCUSSION OF ACADEMIC STAFF ISSUES AT THE TFS

A SWOT analysis was done to determine the situation at the TFS, which included all the permanent full-time academic staff (138) employed by the Technikon during May 2002. The analysis mainly dealt with the environment and working conditions of academic staff. The recruitment and selection processes, the retention of academic staff and the possibility of retirement packages were also investigated.

This section deals with the outcomes of these investigations.

6.1   SWOT analysis

Respondents were requested to list (at least) two of each of the following with regard to the academic staff environment and working conditions at the TFS. The results are discussed in detail with regard to the following components:

STRENGTHS

62 respondents completed this section.

Physical facilities
- Own offices and office equipment / access to e-mail and Internet / sufficient lecture halls / buildings and gardens maintained (15)
- Safe working environment / good security / friendly working environment / pleasant physical environment (10)
- Good infrastructure (5)

- Well-stocked library / ample support from library (4)

Academic environment and staff relations
- Support and co-operation amongst lecturers, heads and deans / good interpersonal relations amongst staff members / loyalty amongst staff / well-qualified staff / enthusiastic, dedicated personnel (26)
- Opportunities for self-development/further studies/short courses (14)
- Well-organised, professional, stimulating academic environment (7)
- Academic freedom / creativity allowed / work independently (5)
- Good quality of programmes offered (4)
- Opportunities for research (4)
- Growing student numbers (4)

Other benefits
- Good fringe benefits / flexible hours / leave benefits (11)
- Fixed income / financial security (5)

The aspect mostly indicated by respondents as being a strength of the TFS was the support, co-operation and good interpersonal relations amongst academic staff members (lecturers, heads and deans) (42%). Good physical facilities like offices and office equipment, e-mail facilities and the neat buildings and lecture halls scored the second highest percentage (24.2%). Opportunities for self-development was another factor frequently indicated (22.6%).

These qualities and strengths of the TFS should be taken into consideration when recruiting academic staff and marketing the TFS.

WEAKNESSES

62 respondents completed this section.

Physical facilities
- Insufficient and outdated equipment / inadequate (small) offices and lecture halls (Genmin) (in some cases 2 lecturers share one office) / restricted access to modern technology (lack of high tech) / not enough computer labs (or inoperative) (21)
- Support services section "across the street" (3)

Academic environment and staff relations / Management
- Heavy workload / too many administrative tasks / too much contact time, leaving insufficient time for research / high student:lecturer ratio / not enough provision for lecturing positions / too many vacancies (e.g. due to equity) (22)
- Management is autocratic / too little or no delegations / clumsy committee system / centralised decision making / poor communication between management and academic staff / management see academic staff as a burden (18)
- Little or no opportunities for promotion (especially for White men) (12)

- Low morale amongst academic staff (e.g. due to uncertainties, changing HE environment, job loss due to EE) / little recognition / unprofessional conduct by some staff members (leaving early, no research, etc.) (12)
- Lowering of standards due to too many evaluation opportunities (exams) / students granted access too easily (7)
- Support services staff not always supportive enough / too many support services staff members compared to academic staff members (6)
- Part-time staff component too large (4)
- Not enough opportunities for self-development and courses (3)
- Not enough academic freedom (2)
- Duplication of subjects (2)

Other weaknesses
- Salaries not market related / little monetary acknowledgement (13)
- Too many policies and procedures / policies and procedures that change too often / too many meetings / too much administrative red tape and paperwork at institution (8)
- Bloemfontein and TFS far from industries and mines (3)
- The way in which the TFS deals with industries and the corporate world

The main *threat* indicated by respondents was *heavy workload* (35.5%), followed by *insufficient physical facilities and equipment* (33.9%).

It is interesting to note that some staff members indicated the physical facilities and equipment as one of the strengths of the institution, while others referred to the poor facilities and equipment under "threats". It is possible that the provision of office and other facilities and equipment is not spread equally amongst staff members. The same applies for *academic freedom* and *opportunities for self-development and courses.*

OPPORTUNITIES

56 respondents completed this section and indicated they saw opportunities for:

- Personal development and further studies (26)
- Research (19)
- Attending workshops, conferences and seminars (7)
- The development of students (6)
- Developing academic programmes and e-learning programmes (5)
- Community service (3)
- Promotion (3)
- Consultation work and short courses to top up income (3)
- The development of entrepreneurship – both students and lecturers (2)

Under this section, not such a large variety of responses were given as was the case with *strengths* and *weaknesses.*

Nearly half of the respondents who completed this section rated opportunities for personal development and further studies quite highly (46.2%). Second in line were opportunities to conduct research (34%). These answers correlate well with the responses given under *strengths.* Opportunities for promotion were mentioned by only 5.4% of the respondents, which also correlates well with responses under *weaknesses.*

The opportunities for personal development, further studies and research should be highlighted when recruiting academic staff for the TFS.

THREATS

62 respondents completed this section.

External threats
- The employment equity policy of the government (which leads *inter alia* to job insecurity) (17)
- Competition from other institutions (e.g. Damelin) and the private sector (6)
- Other policies of government (e.g. funding) / slow national decision-making processes / changes in the higher education environment (4)
- Restricted funding (2)

Academic environment and facilities and support
- Lack of support and communication from management / lack of support by support services staff (10)
- Lowering of (academic) standards and quality of students (6)
- Too many part-time lecturers / part-time lecturers not evaluated efficiently / part-time lecturers not committed (5)
- Heavy workload / high student:lecturer ratio / too many administrative tasks (5)
- Lack of equipment, especially laboratory (3)
- Lack of acknowledgement and promotion opportunities (3)
- New teaching methods / OBE (2)

Other threats
- Salaries not market related / threats that fringe benefits will be taken away / disparities with regard to salaries (10)
- Appointment of academic staff on a 2-year probation basis without benefits
- Language policy
- The impact of HIV/Aids
- Residence facilities

From the responses it seems that the employment equity policy of the government (27.4%), a lack of support from support services staff and Management (16.1%), low salaries and salary disparities (16.1%) and competition in the form of other institutions (9.7%) received the highest priority with regard to *threats*.

It should be noted that non-market-related salary packages, employment equity, as well as support from the support services staff not being up to standard, are three of the factors that came to the fore in most of the sections of the questionnaire.

The fact that people can work in a higher education environment is rated as the one of the highest attributes of the institution (42%). This would include good interpersonal relations, opportunities for development and a stimulating academic environment. The opportunity for personal development and further studies is also seen as an opportunity that the institution can expand

The opportunity for academic development at the TFS was rated the highest amongst the respondents (46%), while the higher education environment was seen as a strength (42%). Physical facilities such as having one's own office, sufficient office equipment and a good infrastructure, as well as a well-stocked library, can be rated as a strength (24%), but the lack thereof can be experienced as a weakness (34%). The academe listed a heavy workload, (as a result of) too many vacancies, an autocratic management and lack of acknowledgement (35%) as weaknesses. Government policies like the employment equity policy, the language policy and the merging of institutions (which leads *inter alia* to job insecurity) (36%), as well as that fact that salaries are not market related and there is a lack of support from Management and support services staff (21%) are seen as threats to the TFS.

6.2   RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The increased competition expected over the next decade means that it is crucial for the TFS to address a number of issues that have emerged during the investigation. Issues that came to the fore during the literature study will also be discussed here.

Current recruitment processes at the TFS

In general, the current recruitment and selection processes at the TFS appear to have been designed with the expectation of an adequate supply of qualified candidates. Accordingly, while the current processes may have functioned well in a "buyer's market," changes should take place in the recruitment approach to ensure the Technikon's success in the current and emerging conditions.

The academic staff responded as follows when requested to select their three main reasons for taking up a position at the TFS.

76 respondents completed this section.

Options	Option No.	No. of re-sponses	%
Prefer to work in an HE academic environment	**6**	**59**	**84.3**
Study benefits for dependants	**3**	**41**	**54.0**
Adequate fringe benefits	**2**	**37**	**48.7**
Only job available at the time	4	16	21.1
Market-related salary	1	16	21.1
Ample opportunities for promotion	5	9	11.8
Other a) Opportunity • for personal development/study opportunities (5) • to work with students/youth/previously disadvantaged / to work with people / contribution towards country (5) • to commence academic career (2) • to conduct research b) • Good working conditions / improvement in salary / good job proposition at time of appointment (7) • Security of permanent position (2)	7	22	28.9

The three main reasons why academic staff members chose the Technikon Free State as their employer were indicated as being a preference for working in a higher education environment (84.3%), the study benefits for dependants of employees (54%) and the adequate fringe benefits (48.7%) of the institution. It became clear from the survey that it is of crucial importance to keep the study benefits and good fringe benefits for employees in place. Although market-related salaries did not score a high rate, the fringe benefits played a major role in selecting the TFS as employer. The study benefits (for self at TFS and dependants at TFS and UFS) and other fringe benefits overshadowed the factor of low salaries.

Recruitment barriers

The following recruitment barriers were listed in the responses from the academic staff:

External barriers that impact on the ability of the TFS to recruit academic staff (direct competition, but also beyond that) are listed and discussed, based on the answers of the 60 respondents who completed this section.

A.   External barriers

- Better salaries and salary packages outside the TFS, especially the private sector (34)
- Government policy of affirmative action and the Employment Equity Act and the over-emphasis on employment equity at the TFS (9)

- Government policies with regard to higher education / uncertainty regarding the role of technikons in future (2)
- Low availability of skilled and suitably qualified candidates from the previously disadvantaged groups (4)
- Geographic location of Bloemfontein (far from larger centres, industries, etc.) / academic isolation (3)
- Negative perception of the TFS (a technikon) in the community (7)

B.   Internal institutional barriers

A few respondents misinterpreted the question (which stated external factors explicitly) and indicated a few <u>internal</u> barriers under this section.   These were, inter alia:

- Heavy workload / high student:lecturer ratio (3)
- Marketing of the institution can be improved / marketing poor compared to that of other higher education institutions. Exhibitions on open days not well organised (3)
- Requirements for posts at the TFS sometimes too high (2)

From the responses to this statement, it became clear that the offering of better salary packages outside the Technikon was being viewed as the main external barrier to recruitment by the TFS (56.7% of respondents).

Respondents also viewed employment policies of the government, as well as other government policies regarding higher education, as external barriers that impact on the ability of the TFS to recruit and retain academic staff (18.3%).

<u>Recruitment and selection process</u>

Results of the questionnaire on aspects/strategies that could improve on the recruitment and selection process are the following:

Recruitment
This section was sent to all permanent full-time academic staff members, 55 of whom responded.

- Recruit qualified and/or suitable candidates for the position – not necessarily equity candidates (11)
- Indicate salary package and job description in advertisement (8)
- Extensive advertising / advertise nationally in newspapers and electronic media / advertise in professional-specific periodicals (7)
- Personal recruitment / direct contact with suitable candidates / headhunting (7)
- Make use of a subject specialist to assist in the recruitment process (7)
- Improve promotion possibilities / improve the image (status) of the TFS/ make internal advertising and promotion a priority (6)

- Offer better or market-related salary packages / offer fringe benefits from the start to new academic staff members (5)
- The recruitment and appointment process must be accelerated (3)

Interestingly, 14.5% of the respondents believe that the intended salary package and job description of an advertised position should be reflected in the advertisement (this could save a lot of time and effort). Once again the issue of employment equity came to the fore, as 20% of the respondents indicated that only qualified/suitable candidates should be recruited for a position, and not necessarily equity candidates. More extensive advertising, as well as personal recruitment and headhunting, were recruitment strategies recommended by 12.8% of the respondents.

Heads of departments/schools and deans experienced the following problems in recruiting academic staff members. In total, 16 (of 17) heads of departments/schools and/or deans responded to this section of the questionnaire:

- Pool of suitable equity candidates limited / employment equity policies of the government make it difficult to recruit skilled and qualified employees (8).
- Salary packages not market related (6)
- Qualification requirements too high / years of working experience not taken into consideration (2)
- Time of recruitment procedures too long (2)
- Not enough support from Human Resources Department
- Academic isolation of Bloemfontein – not many candidates available here

It is clear that respondents see the availability of enough qualified *equity* candidates as the largest problem in this regard (50%). The view that TFS's salary packages are not market related was indicated as problematic by 37.5% of the respondents.

Selection
This section was only completed by 52% of the respondents. They indicated the following suggestions for the improvement of the selection processes at the TFS:

- Select and appoint the most suitable, qualified person / select on merit, not colour (equity) (11)
- Speed up the selection process / make the selection process as simple as possible (9)
- Make use of the head of the department/professionals in that subject area to select the most suitable candidate (5)
- Make use of standardised tests, selection matrices and job-fit theories (4)
- Attach more value to reports from previous employer (3)
- Give constant feedback to candidates with regard to the selection process / transparency with regard to selection at the workplace (3)
- Keep the standards high (2)

27.5% of the 40 respondents indicated that the most suitable, qualified person should be selected according to merit, not colour or race (equity). This is an indication that the importance of selecting new employees according to the government's policies on selection and appointment (employment equity) could be communicated more clearly to TFS staff members. Noteworthy is the response (12.5%) that the institution should make more use of the heads of departments and/or professionals in the subject areas concerned during the selection process (decentralisation).

Specific questions relating to the decentralisation of authority regarding recruitment and selection had the following results:

76 respondents completed this section.

Options	No. of "No" answers	%	No. of "Yes" answers	%
Deans should have the delegation to activate a position	**2**	**2.6**	**70**	**92.1**
Deans should have the delegation to appoint all staff members in their faculties	8	10.5	64	84.2
Deans should have the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the TFS budget	0		64	84.2
Deans should play a larger role in decision-making at the TFS in general	0		66	86.8
The Senior Appointments Committee should meet according to need and not only once in three months	3	3.9	59	77.6
Greater involvement by Human Resources in the recruitment process	16	21.1	44	57.9

In response to the question of whether deans should have the delegation to activate a position, an overwhelming 92.1% answered "Yes", only 2.6% answered "No" and 5.3% were undecided. 84.2% of the respondents answered that deans should have the delegation to appoint all staff members in their faculties, 10.5% did not think so, and 5.3% were undecided. A very high percentage (86.8%) of respondents thought that deans should play a larger role in the decision-making processes at the TFS, while 13.2% remained undecided. With regard to the statement that the Senior Appointments Committee should meet according to need and not only once in three months, 77.6% indicated a "Yes", 3.9% a "No" and 18.4% remained undecided.

More than half (57.9%) of respondents expressed the view that Human Resources should be more involved in the recruitment process; 21.1% voted "No" and 21.1 % were undecided.

Recruitment support

The type of support that heads of departments/schools and/or deans require in fulfilling their responsibilities with regard to the recruitment and appointment of personnel is tabled below.

16 respondents (heads of departments/schools and/or deans) completed this section.

Options	Option No.	No. of responses	%
Constant feedback from Management and Human Resources on progress and blockages with regard to recruitment and appointment of personnel	**3**	**12**	**75.0**
Continually updated information on human resource policies and recruitment strategies at the TFS	4	9	56.3
Role clarification with regard to recruitment of personnel	1	8	50.0
Role clarification with regard to the appointment of personnel	2	7	43.6
Other : • Consider differentiation of qualifications for specific positions, e.g. for a lecturer. In some subject areas lecturers are hard to find.	5	2	12.5

The majority of respondents (75%) indicated that they would like to receive constant feedback from Management and Human Resources on progress and blockages with regard to the recruitment and appointment of personnel in their respective faculties.   The same applies to constantly updated information concerning human resource policies and recruitment strategies at the TFS (56%).   It seems that heads of departments/schools and deans also need clarification with regard to their roles in the recruitment (50%) and appointment of personnel (43.6%).   Once again the need for greater decentralisation was given prominence.

Marketing of TFS and Bloemfontein

In this section specific aspects within Bloemfontein and the Free State that could play a role in recruiting and retaining academic staff are discussed.

31 respondents completed this section.

A. Positive factors

- Safe and tranquil living environment (9)
- Relatively low cost of living in Bloemfontein (6)
- The central geographic location of the city is an asset (4)
- Good schools for children of prospective employees (2)

B. Negative factors

- Salaries better in other regions (like Gauteng) (2)
- Relatively few industries in the region / Bloemfontein isolated - far from other centres / also academic isolation (7)
- Academic isolation / restricted number of academics available in the Free State (2)

This question was only answered by 40.3% of the respondents. Most of them (29%) responded that the safe and tranquil living environment in the city of Bloemfontein and the Free State could play a positive role in recruiting and retaining academic staff. Respondents also referred to the relatively low cost of living in Bloemfontein (19.4%) in this regard. These positive aspects of Bloemfontein and the Free State should be exploited when recruiting employees and/or marketing the TFS.

Amongst the negative aspects indicated (32.3% of the responses) were the isolated site of Bloemfontein, the relatively few industries (low economic activity) in the region, as well as the fact that better salaries are being paid in other regions, like Gauteng.

6.3   Retention

Every current academic staff member who decides to remain at the TFS reduces the forthcoming recruitment challenge. Accordingly, this study began by examining the factors that influence faculty retention. Some factors that are included came to the fore as a result of the questionnaires, while others that are discussed resulted from the literature study.

Factors that influence retention
The main reasons why academic staff members prefer to remain in the employ of the TFS were listed as follows in order of preference:
Respondents were requested to select their three main reasons.

76 respondents completed this section.

Options	Option No.	No. of responses	%
The study benefits for me and my dependants	**3**	**40**	**52.6**
Adequate opportunities for development and growth	9	29	38.2
Pleasant working environment	4	25	32.9

Loyalty to the TFS	5	25	32.9
The fringe benefits	2	24	31.6
Not member of designated group, hence limited job opportunities	10	19	25.0
Too old to find another job	6	12	15.8
Market-related salary	1	9	11.8
Contractual obligations	7	2	2.6
Management is democratic and transparent	8	1	1.3
Other: • Entrepreneurship is being promoted • Opportunities for research • Prefer to work in HE environment / enjoy lecturing (4) • Safe working environment / low cost of living in Bloemfontein • Do not like to move around	11	8	10.5

Most respondents indicated that the main reason why they prefer to stay with the TFS is the study benefits for their dependants (52.6%) (for study at TFS and University of the Free State). Adequate opportunities for development and growth (38.2%), and the pleasant working environment (32.9%) together with loyalty to the TFS (32.9%), were rated second and third respectively as reasons for staying with the TFS, with the fringe benefits offered by the institution fourth at 31.6%

It became clear that the study benefits for dependants of employees and the fringe benefits are crucial factors in retaining academic staff. Respondents also made ample reference to the opportunities for development and growth offered by the Technikon.

Historically, TFS has not addressed academic staff retention in a systematic way across the institution. The responses from the academe indicated that the current situation calls for immediate attention to avoid further deterioration.

Factors that influence recruitment and retention
Another questionnaire on the main factors/aspects/determinants that play a role in recruiting as well as retaining academic staff at the TFS brought the following interesting results to the fore:

76 respondents completed this section

Options	Option No.	No. of responses	%
Salaries should become more market related	**1**	**64**	**84.2**
Reduced teaching time for good researchers	12	47	61.8
Student:lecturer ratio to be realistic	13	45	59.2
Adequate facilities and equipment	14	44	57.9
Excellence should warrant additional recognition	4	43	56.6

Reduced administrative responsibilities	11	40	52.6
Greater management autonomy given to departments	21	34	44.7
The career aspirations of staff members should be realised	10	33	43.4
Fringe benefits should be improved	2	31	40.8
More opportunities to attend and/or participate in national conferences	18	28	36.8
A performance management and evaluation system should be implemented	12	28	36.8
More academic support from support services staff	23	25	32.9
More opportunities for development and growth	8	24	31.6
Leadership potential should be identified early in a staff member's career for development purposes	9	24	31.6
Empowerment in the workplace	6	23	30.3
More opportunities to attend courses presented by industry	17	21	27.6
More opportunities to attend and/or participate in international conferences	19	21	27.6
More recognition for community service contributions by staff members	20	21	27.6
Innovation and prudent risk should be rewarded	7	19	25.0
Better orientation for new personnel	22	17	22.4
The TFS Language Policy	16	10	13.2
Other (Specify): Better support by support services staff / improved administration (2) Better usage of internal skills (rather than paying fees to consultants) Ensure job security Departments that can generate extra money should be allowed to appoint extra part-time personnel/apply business principles Decentralise. Give more authority to deans to manage their faculties.	24	8	10.5

The main factors that require the most urgent attention to ensure the recruitment and retention of employees are more market-related salaries (indicated by 84% of respondents), the reduction of teaching time to leave more time for research (61.8%), a more realistic student:lecturer ratio (indicated by 59.2% of the respondents), as well as the offering of adequate facilities and equipment (e.g. multimedia, modern technology) (56.6%) for lecturing. Respondents also rated reduced administrative responsibilities (52.6%), and greater management autonomy for departments (44.7%) quite highly (See also "decentralise" under *Other*). Fringe benefits were indicated to be an important determinant by 40% of the respondents. Linked to the reduced administrative responsibilities of academic staff were the 2 responses under *Other* indicating that more/better support could be rendered by the support services staff.

6.4 Retirement

6.4.1 Retirements at the TFS

The expected retirement schedule for the next 10 years with regard to academic staff is listed below:

Academic retirements over the next 10 years

	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	TOTAL
2002					
2003			1		
2004					
2005	2				2
2006			1		1
2007	1				1
2008	3				3
2009	2				2
2010					
2011	3	1			4
2012	1				1
	12	**1**	**1**		**14**

From the above it can be deduced that the diversity and equity profile of the TFS will not change dramatically through natural attrition over the next 10 years. To accelerate the process a voluntary severance package is proposed. This could also be viewed as an opportunity for renewal.

6.4.2 The proposed situation

All indications are that it would be very difficult for the TFS to achieve its employment equity goals. Educated black staff members, on the other hand, are being offered good positions at other institutions. This contributes to the fact that it would be difficult to achieve the goals, should they be pursued only according to the normal/natural processes.

To hasten the process it is proposed that white staff members be granted the opportunity to voluntarily leave the employ of the Technikon at an earlier stage. To make this possible for any such staff members, the TFS would have to offer them voluntary severance packages.

Naturally, the TFS would not be able to afford an uncontrolled flow of skilled personnel from the institution. Staff members would therefore have to apply for such voluntary severance packages in a controlled/supervised way. Apart from the problem of a possible outflow of skills from the institution, the TFS would also have to make sufficient funds available for such packages. It is foreseen that such applications would eventually have to be approved by an informed executive committee.

The following criteria would be applicable:

1. White staff members who have already reached the age of forty (40) years, but not the age of sixty-five (65) years, may apply for voluntary severance packages. People younger than 40 years may be considered if they have completed at least 10 years' service at the TFS.

2. The Principal/Vice-Chancellor would approve the severance packages on the recommendation of the first-line manager concerned. The Principal would not, however, be bound by the recommendation of the first-line manager and could in his discretion decide whether he would approve such applications. The decision of the Principal would be based on the availability of skills, as well as the availability of funds.

3. Employees who would like to leave the employ of the TFS on a voluntary basis may annually apply for such packages during the first quarter of the year.

4. The voluntary severance packages offered may be composed as follows:
4.1 Full-time/permanent employees with at least five (5) years' but less than ten (10) years' service at the TFS would receive from the Technikon the gross remuneration (cost to company) of one year as a single-amount payment.
4.2 Full-time/permanent employees with at least ten (10) years' service would receive from the Technikon the gross remuneration (cost to company) of two years as a single-amount payment.
4.3 Full-time/permanent employees with at least fifteen (15) years' service would receive from the Technikon the gross remuneration (cost to company) of three years as a single-amount payment.

5. Employees older than 55 years whose applications have been approved would retain their medical aid benefits, as applicable with regard to retirement.

7.   RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discussion it is evident that the TFS has a staffing problem with regard to its academic staff. The following recommendations could lead to strategies for addressing the problem:

Environment and working conditions of academic staff:
7.1.1 Maintain the
- Good interpersonal relationship among academic staff;
- Opportunities for growth of academic staff within formal teaching and research

7.1.2 Address the
- heavy workload of academic staff;

- lack of support from management and support services;
- physical facilities and equipment;
- low salaries and salary disparities

7.1.3   Reassure job security where affirmative action is seen as a threat.

7.1.4   Recruitment and selection

- Market the study benefits and good fringe benefits of academic staff at the TFS. It overshadows the factor of low salaries.
- Make salaries market-related, since candidates can get better salary packages outside the TFS.
- Include salary package and job description when advertising a vacancy.
- Select the best qualified person according to merit, not according to colour or race.
- Communicate government policies on selection and appointment more clearly to academic staff members.
- Make heads of departments and/or professionals in subject areas part of the selection process.
- Deans should have full responsibility for recruiting and selecting academic staff.
- Deans should play a larger role in the decision-making processes of the TFS.
- Academic staff would like to get constant feedback from management and/or human resources regarding the appointment of personnel in their faculties.
- Exploit the tranquil living environment and low cost of living in Bloemfontein in recruiting academic staff.

7.1.5   Retention

Maintain the

- study benefits for dependents;
- adequate support for academic development and growth;
- pleasant working environment.

Pay attention to

- more market-related salaries for academic staff;
- the reduction of teaching time to leave more time for research;
- a more realistic student : lecturer ratio;
- the reduction of the administrative responsibilities of academic staff;
- greater management autonomy for heads of school and department;
- monetary and other incentives (such as funding to attend conferences and time to complete doctorates) to encourage academic staff to remain at the institution (such as funding to attend conferences and to complete Doctorates).

7.6   Establish a formal Staff Development and Retention Programme with the following components:

- Monitoring of new academic staff by pairing them and senior staff, who is paid to work with new academic staff.
- Providing frequent feedback to new academic staff about their progress in teaching, scholarship and service.
- Providing funds to new academic staff for research and attending professional meetings.
- Adjusting teaching loads so that new academic staff has the time and opportunity to develop and initiate their own research agenda.
- Monitoring progress of new academic staff.   This would include monitoring how they are "fitting in".
- Encourage all academics to work closely together. A culture of inclusivity and understanding need to be built.

7.7   Retirement

- A voluntary severance package should be offered to academic staff in order to improve the diversity and equity profile of the TFS.

8.   CONCLUSION

The research for this article was done between 2001 and 2003. Many of the recommendations have been implemented or form part of our new Corporate Strategic Plan; others still need attention. What the TFS must do over the next few years, is to continue and improve our recruitment and retention efforts, especially with regard to a diverse and representative group of academic staff members. Successful recruitment of diverse staff requires genuine commitment, persistent effort and active planning. Better retention is as important as recruitment and can be accomplished by promoting a Technikon environment that is consistently reinforcing scholarship and welcoming all members of the community.

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APPENDIX 1 - SWOT analyses and questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

TO: ALL ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS AT THE TFS

RE: THE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF
       MEMBERS AT THE TECHNIKON FREE STATE

BACKGROUND: The recruitment and retention of academic staff members is emerging as one of the biggest challenges facing the Technikon Free State. The Technikon is also faced with statutory requirements to increase the equity numbers at the institution. The aim of this study is to review existing practices and to recommend practical strategies to attract new academic staff and to encourage existing academic staff to remain in the employ of the Technikon Free State.

REQUEST: You are kindly requested to complete the following questionnaire with regard to the academic staff environment and working conditions at the Technikon Free State. **NB:** Please note that your **anonymity is guaranteed**. Do not identify yourself in any way – we suggest that you use a blue ballpoint pen.

After completion of the questionnaire, please return it to the following offices:
Faculty of Engineering: Office of Mr BW Jeremiah
Faculty of Human Sciences: Office of Dr RW de Lange
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences: Office of Dr EJ Smit
Faculty of Management: Office of Ms L Swanepoel

TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS (INCLUDING HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS/SCHOOLS AND DEANS)

A.   SWOT ANALYSIS

Please list (at least) two of each of the following with regard to the academic staff environment and working conditions at the Technikon Free State: Strengths (strong/good points), weaknesses (difficulties/problems), opportunities (possibilities/chances) and threats (potential future problems). Please print clearly.

Strengths:

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Weaknesses:

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Opportunities:

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Threats:

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B.   QUESTIONS ON THE ACADEMIC STAFF ENVIRONMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Please mark all applicable answers with an X.
Please read through all your options before making a choice/choices.

1.   Please select the three main reasons why you chose the Technikon Free State as your employer:

Market-related salary	1	
Adequate fringe benefits	2	
Study benefits for dependants	3	
Only job available at the time	4	
Ample opportunities for promotion	5	
Prefer to work in an HE academic environment	6	
Other (specify):	7	

....		

2. Please select the three main reasons why you choose to remain in the employ of the Technikon Free State

Market-related salary	1	
The fringe benefits	2	
The study benefits for me and my dependants	3	
Pleasant working environment	4	
Loyalty to the Technikon Free State	5	
Too old to get another job	6	
Contractual obligations	7	
Management is democratic and transparent	8	
Adequate opportunities for development and growth	9	
Not member of designated group, hence limited job opportunities	10	
Other (specify):	11	

3. Which of the following do you consider **important** determinants in remaining an employee at the Technikon Free State or to recruit suitable new employees?

Salaries should become more market-related	1	
Fringe benefits should be improved	2	
A performance management and evaluation system should be implemented	3	
Excellence should obtain additional recognition	4	
Empowerment in the working place	6	
Innovation and prudent risk should be rewarded	7	
More opportunities for development and growth	8	
Leadership potential should be identified early in a staff member's career for development purposes	9	
The career aspirations of staff members should be realised	10	
Reduced administrative responsibilities	11	
Reduced teaching time for good researchers	12	
Student:lecturer ratio to be realistic	13	
Adequate facilities and equipment	14	

Academic freedom	15	
The Technikon Free State Language Policy	16	
More opportunities to attend courses presented by industry	17	
More opportunities to attend and/or participate in national conferences	18	
More opportunities to attend and/or participate in international conferences	19	
More recognition for community service contributions by staff members	20	
More management autonomy given to departments	21	
Better orientation for new personnel	22	
More academic support from support services staff members	23	
Other (Specify)	24	

4.   What do you see as <u>external barriers</u> that impact on the ability of the TFS to recruit and retain academic staff (direct competition but also beyond that)?

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5.   Are there any specific aspects within Bloemfontein and the Free State that could play a role in recruiting and retaining academic staff?
....

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....

6.   Questions regarding recruitment and selection

6.1 (Select the applicable answer)	No	Yes
Deans should have the delegation to activate a position		
Deans should have the delegation to appoint all staff members in their faculties		

Deans should have the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the TFS budget		
Deans should play a larger role in decision-making at the TFS in general		
The Senior Appointment Committee should meet according to needs and not only once in three months		
More involvement by Human Resources in the recruitment process		

6.2
6.2.1   Which recruitment strategies do you think should be applied to recruit suitable candidates / How could the recruitment process be improved?

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6.2.2   Do you have any suggestions on how the selection processes could be improved?

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6.3   Are there particular universities/technikons that you feel are doing a very good job of recruiting? Please name the institution and the reason for your answer.

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If you are not a Head of a Department/School or a Dean, please return the questionnaire not later than 22 April 2002 to the applicable office as indicated on page 1. Thank you for your co-operation.

C.   QUESTIONS FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS/SCHOOLS AND DEANS:

1.   What problems do you experience in recruiting staff members?

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What problems do you experience in retaining staff members?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

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2.   What type of support do you require to fulfil your responsibilities with regard to the recruitment and appointment of personnel? Select the applicable answer(s).

2.1 Role clarification with regard to recruitment of personnel	1	
2.2 Role clarification with regard to the appointment of personnel	2	
2.2 Constant feedback from Management and Human Resources on progress and blockages with regard to recruitment and appointment of personnel	3	
2.3 Continuous updated information regarding human resources policies and recruitment strategies at the TFS	4	
2.4 Other (specify):	5	

We appreciate your co-operation.

Please return the questionnaire not later than 31 May 2002 to the applicable office as indicated on page 1.

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