

# Factors Influencing the Retention of Academic Staff at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi

■ Laddawan Someran



**Abstract.** The purposes of this study were to investigate the factors that influence academic staff at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabhumi (RMUTSB) to stay or leave the university, and to create a retention strategy model. This study applied a mixed methods research design. The participants, for both quantitative and qualitative methods, were randomly selected from academic staff working at four campuses. The researcher generated a questionnaire to obtain a quantitative representation of the data. There were 191 respondents who were 82.33% of all the University's academic staff. Next, the researcher supplemented the quantitative data using in-depth interviews of 16 participants. Based on manual coding, there were 7 categories which were important criteria for staff in their decision to stay at or resign from RMUTSB. The retention strategy created from the quantitative data and supplemented by the qualitative data included four main components: (1) Benefits; (2) Organizational Culture; (3) Personal Satisfaction; and (4) Strategy. This study drew two implications: (1) Practical implications and guidelines for the university and campuses administrators and (2) Practical implications for educational policy makers.

**Keywords:** Retention, Turnover, Job Satisfaction, Retention Strategy, Academic Staff, Higher Education.

## Introduction

For the past few years, scholars and human resource (HR) managers have been putting more effort into investigating employee turnover in their organizations. On the other hand, there are also many scholars and researchers considering how to increase "employee retention" (Chou, Chich, Yuan & Hsiao, 2005; Douglas, 2005; Dahm, 2006; Sanchez, 2007; Wang, 2006). In the current climate of economic uncertainty, the retention of current employees has become an important strategy for HR professionals in most organizations (Findley, 2007).

Therefore, the quality of teaching and transferring knowledge and moral principles to our next generation is a vital consideration, as it affects the quality of learners and the educational system. The development of policies and procedures for retaining educational personnel also requires a thorough review and increased funding to support them in participating in relevant seminars or extending their own higher education. For this reason, the Office of the National Education Commission under the Ministry of Education proposed the National Education Act B.E.2545 (2002), one of the objectives was to improve the compensation system, including other benefits, allowing academic and educational personnel sufficient incomes, commensurate with their social status and profession. Moreover, a Fund for the Promotion and Development of Teachers, Faculty Staff and Educational Personnel was established in 2002 to be used as grants for innovations, outstanding achievements and rewards in honor of teachers, faculty staff, and teaching personnel, as stipulated in the ministerial regulations. However, it challenged them to create or review attractive programs for those people. The educational research reported by Office of Education Council (2004) identified some problems concerning the insufficient numbers of teachers and the quality of teachers. Due to a lack of teachers in some subject areas, there were found to be many unqualified teachers, particularly

in rural institutions. It was found that the teaching profession had been losing members due to factors such as the talented who people choosing other careers with higher compensation and allowing them to live in urban rather than in rural areas. Attrition refers to teachers leaving the profession altogether, either to take another job outside of teaching for personal reasons, such as a better salary and working conditions, or health problems, family moves, and retirement. Whether employee turnover occurs through migration or attrition, it is a serious problem to solve, as academic staff play a crucial role in developing the human resources of the society.

The significance of this study is to learn how organizations or educational institutions can create a retention strategy for their staff, as well as finding out which factors influence their staff to stay or leave their positions. A retention strategy model was produced to recognize and reward university faculty members' abilities. In addition, the findings of this study may be applied to further research and policy development in the field of human resource development (HRD) in the higher education sector.

### **Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study were to examine policies about how to retain as many of the high performing academic staff of RMUTSB as possible. It examined the effects of policies that influence academic staff in higher education to stay or to leave their current positions and to examine how to retain the academic staff of RMUTSB by proposing a retention strategy model.

### **Research Questions**

The three research questions of this study were: (1) What factors influence academic staff to stay in their positions at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabumi? (2) What factors influence staff to resign from their positions at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnabumi? (3) What are effective retention strategies for academic staff?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Retention and Turnover Concepts**

Staff retention is important because it is related to ensuring customer satisfaction, increased product sales, satisfied coworkers and reporting staff, effective succession planning and organizational knowledge amongst employees. Therefore, employee retention is beneficial to the organization and to the employee (Agri Marketing, 2009). In addition, the organizational costs related to turnover are the inverse of the gains an organization receives from retaining quality employees (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007) because employee turnover and retention are opposite sides of the same coin (Chung, Chieh & Hsun, 2005). In that event, any retention study has to have a turnover study simultaneously for understanding the issues profoundly. For that reason, the researcher reviewed the research on the concepts of retention and turnover.

In recent years, scholars have been directing much effort to investigating employees' retention intentions towards their organizations. Many research studies that relate to retention issue can help the researcher to understand more about the influences on retention in their organization. Efforts to improve retention strategies must be informed by an understanding of the factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The job satisfaction has been found to be positively related to retention and turnover. Hence, the researcher provided a theme analysis of studies investigating factors that contribute to job satisfaction. Lambert and Hogan (2009, p.99) supported that the view that *"the work attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are important in shaping employees' intentions to stay or leave"*. The researcher reviewed factors that have empirical support as influencing job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction, turnover and retention among university staff. However, while the concept of job satisfaction has been studied in a great variety of industrial settings, few studies have dealt with job satisfaction in institutions of higher

education (Winefield, Boyd, Saebel & Pignata, 2008; Wright & Cropanzano, 2007; Kim, Tavitiyaman, & Kim, 2009). In Southeast Asia, the studies on job satisfaction have been carried out in various industrial sectors, such as companies, colleges, institutes and universities which seek evidence for developing policies to reduce turnover in each organization that produces the optimal level of cost benefits (Azalea, Omar & Mastor, 2009). In Thailand, very few job satisfaction studies have focused on academic staff. Most studies have been undertaken in the private sector (Homchan, 2006; Gimsia, 2004).

The definition of job satisfaction is based on the perception of the researcher who surveys the field. For instance, Homchan (2006) found that there are two main factors that affect job satisfaction: personal background and working conditions for Thai staff. In terms of personal background factors, according to Nicolescu, Dima, Anghel, and Paun (2009), satisfaction refers to a person's feelings regarding the nature of the work and can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the quality of the relationship with the supervisor, the quality of the working environment, the motivation system and its efficiency for the organization. Job satisfaction was found to have a significant influence on Thai employees' customer service behaviors and cooperation by Kim et al. (2009).

The above articles demonstrate that the role of the teacher and the work environment or relationship between colleagues and managers are the most important factors that contribute to the job satisfaction of Thai academic staff.

### **Research Design**

A mixed methods research design, sequential explanatory approach was employed as the research strategy. In the quantitative part of this study, the researcher used a survey method by administering a mailed questionnaire to a stratified random sample of the academic staff of RMUTSB. In this sequential explanatory design, quantitative data was collected and analyzed, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. For the qualitative part, the researcher used purposive sampling to choose the participants for in-depth, semi-structured interviews to achieve a deep understanding of some issues arising from the quantitative part of the study. Eventually, the researcher interpreted data from both approaches to answer the research questions.

### **Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **Population and Sample**

To select the sample size for this study, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used as a guideline. After using a stratified random sampling technique, the sample of this study was set to be 232 people from 584 academic staff at RMUTSB.

A questionnaire was administered as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into seven parts, as follows: background information, benefit, organizational culture, personal satisfaction, strategies influencing, and career plans by using a five-point Likert rating scale, a check-list, and an open-ended question.

For the data analysis, the researcher used the SPSS program to analyze the data which were divided into six sections: For gender and marital status, the researcher used t-tests to analyze the differences between males and females, single and married staff responses. For age, employment status, educational level, faculty, salary and period of time in the position of the participants, the researcher used one-way ANOVAs and then the researcher compared the differences in pairs by the least significant difference (LSD) method.

### **Qualitative Approach Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher selected participants who were currently working at RMUTSB. They were selected based on the information gathered from the quantitative analysis about what was necessary to explain the findings in order to give deep information, based on the research objectives of this study.

There were 16 participants working in RMUTSB. The researcher constructed semi-structured questions in advance of data collection. The researcher used manual coding to analyze the information by using the guidelines generated by Saldana (2009)

### **Rigor of the Study**

#### **Rigor for the Quantitative Approach**

1. The researcher invited three subject matter experts to check the content validity and the questionnaire's language by using the index of item objective congruence (IOC) by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977).

2. The researcher had to translate the questionnaire from English into Thai by using the back translation technique (Brislin, 1970).

3. The researcher made adjustments to the final version and pilot tested the questionnaire with 30 participants who are working in RMUTSB and who are not chosen to be members of the sample of this study, prior to administering it to the participants of this study. The researcher collected the completed questionnaires and calculated the various subscale reliabilities by using the Cronbach Alpha method at the Cronbach alpha coefficients at 0.73 can be relied upon.

#### **Rigor for the Qualitative Approach**

In this study, the researcher used many ways to build trustworthiness throughout the study. To assure the credibility of the study, the researcher kept detailed reflexive notes throughout the study. This study provided descriptive characteristics of the key participants, methods and techniques used in the study. The researcher paid close attention to collecting and analyzing carefully all the data and was ready to verify the hypotheses when necessary.

More importantly, the researcher applied several triangulation techniques as follows:

(1) methodology triangulations by quantitative and qualitative approaches; (2) method triangulations by survey and in-depth interviewing; and (3) triangulated with 16 participants in terms of time and place during the interviewing process.

### **Quantitative Approach Findings**

#### **Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

For the university staff sample as a whole, 191 questionnaires were completed and collected, a response rate of 82.33%. The demographic characteristics of the sample of academic staff are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	88	46.1
	Male	103	53.9
Age	20 – 30 years	34	17.8
	31 – 40 years	94	49.2
	41 – 50 years	36	18.8
	51 – 60 years	27	14.1
Marital status	Single	88	46.1
	Married	103	53.9
Employment status	Government officer	101	52.9
	University officer	62	32.5
	Short- term contract employee	28	14.7

Variable		Frequency	%
Educational background	Bachelor's degree	24	12.6
	Master's degree	158	82.7
	Doctoral degree	9	4.7
Faculty	Faculty of Industrial Education	21	11.0
	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	35	18.3
	Faculty of Sciences and Technology	27	14.1
	Faculty of Agricultural Technology	15	7.9
	Faculty of Liberal Arts	30	15.7
	Faculty of Business Administration	63	33.0
Salary	Less than 10,000 Baht.	31	16.2
	10,000-25,000 Baht.	114	59.7
	More than 25,000 Baht.	46	24.1
Work time period	Less than 1 year	7	3.7
	1-10 years	90	47.1
	More than 10 years	94	49.2

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Benefits, organizational culture, personal satisfaction and strategies score

sectors	$\bar{X}$	SD	Result
Benefits	4.07	0.70	Somewhat important
Organizational culture	3.41	0.74	Agree
Personal satisfaction	3.59	0.68	Somewhat Satisfied
Strategies score	3.99	0.58	Somewhat important

Table 2 shows the work benefits subscales. It was found that, overall, the staff were of the opinion that work benefits were somewhat important ( $= 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). The overall opinion about the University's organizational culture was at the "agree" level ( $= 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). It was found that the overall personal satisfaction opinion scores were at the somewhat satisfied level ( $= 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ). The main result was that the overall opinion about strategies for improving retention was that they are somewhat important ( $= 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ).

### Inferential Statistics

The hypothesis testing for the demographic characteristics of employees found differences in levels of job satisfaction according to their age, marital status, employment status, monthly salary and work experience that were significant at or below the 0.05 level. More specifically, employees aged from 20 to 40 years had a higher level of total job satisfaction than employees aged from 51 – 60 years, and employees who were of single status had higher job satisfaction than employees who were married. Employees who were university officers had a higher level of total job satisfaction than employees who were government officers. Employees whose monthly salary was less than 10,000 Baht and between 10,000-25,000 Baht had higher total job satisfaction than employees whose monthly salary was more than 25,000 Baht. Finally, employees with work experience of 1-10 years had higher job satisfaction than employees whose work experience was more than 10 years.

### Qualitative Approach Findings

The researcher used purposive sampling based on the results from the quantitative approach. In the quantitative approach, it was found that the demographic characteristics of the academic staff related to job satisfaction were age, marital status, employment status, monthly salary and work experience. Then, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with 16 academic staff of RMUTSB in order to investigate these differences more intensively.

The findings emerged from the responses of the participants who were chosen using purposive sampling. The findings were initially open coded and then developed as categories. There were 7 categories. Each category is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Abbreviations for each coding category

Coding Categories	Abbreviation
Income	IC
Welfare	WF
Organizational culture	OC
Organization management	OM
Organization environment	OE
Personnel satisfaction	PS
Strategies	SG

In addition, the academic staff who were interviewed were generally satisfied with their income, welfare, relationship between academic staff and their supervisor, their relationships with colleagues, had good opinion toward their profession, stability, and opportunity to develop in their career. On the other hand, they were dissatisfied with the work environment, organization management, premises, instability of working status, and with their job performance evaluations.

### Research Question One: *“What factors influence academic staff to stay in their positions at RMUTSB?”*

In responding to this research question, , the researcher will begin with the findings from the quantitative part which had four important components and will follow with the data that emerged from the qualitative supplementary part. The answer was divided into nine interesting issues, as shown in Figure 1.

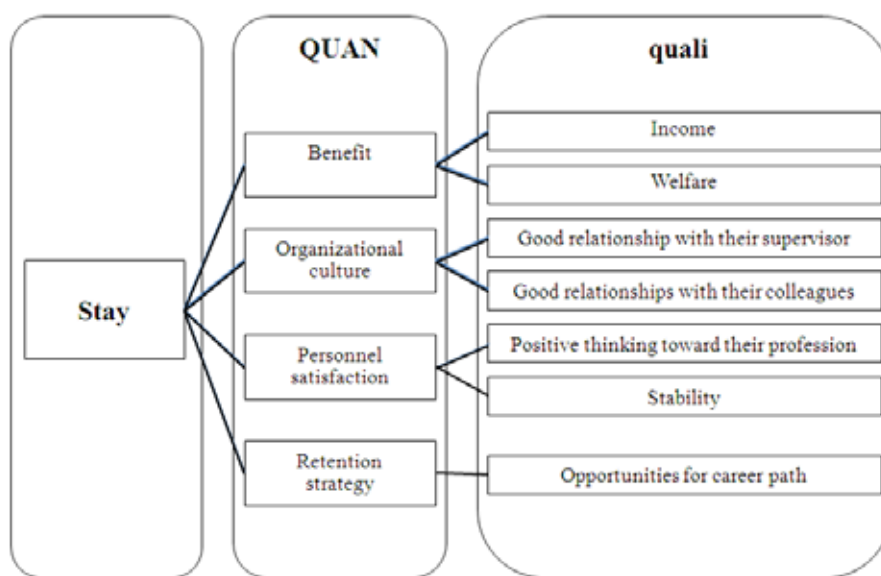


Figure 1. Diagram describing the answers to research question one

As shown in Figure 1, the factors that influence academic staff to remain at work in the university are numerous. In order to clarify these findings, the researcher divided them into four main important sections: (1) benefits, (2) organizational culture, (3) personnel satisfaction, and (4) strategy. In each section the researcher presents her findings from the quantitative study first, and then follows up with the results from the qualitative study.

### 1. Benefits

The academic staff were of the opinion that work benefits were somewhat important ( $= 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). Three specific benefits scores at the very important level were salary ( $= 4.58$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ), health or health insurance benefits ( $= 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) and long-term care insurance ( $= 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ). Moreover, no demographic factors were related to job satisfaction. These benefits were important to all staff, regardless of the age, marital status, employment status or faculty. This finding indicates that salary and health were the most important benefits for staff at the University.

From the qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, some of academic staff at RMUTSB expressed their satisfaction with their work benefits, especially the two issues of income and welfare.

#### 1.1 Income issue

The findings that emerged from the interviews about benefits found that some academic staff at RMUTSB were satisfied with their incomes, especially the academic staff who were in the government officer status with a high salary, as they had worked for the University for a long period of time. For example, P3 said that:

*"... I worked for the government for long time and my salary is getting higher. But if you ask other people, they may not be happy because salary will be raised according to how long you work for the government. For me, I work for a government more than twenty-five years, so my salary is too high"* (P3-IC1)

Furthermore, the researcher also found that many academic staff had an additional income, such as extra payment from their workload, extra payment from special programs in the Summer



session, cooperative education-students, academic position, administrative position, annual bonus, personal business, tutoring, and other jobs related to their professional lives. This kind of income made academic staff more satisfied to stay working at the University, as they are receiving additional income to their monthly salary.

### 1.2 Welfare issue

The data that emerged from interviewing found that academic staff who were government officers felt satisfied to stay working at the University, because the government provided very good welfare benefits which covered their spouse, family members and their parents. One participant, P15 said that:

*"... I think welfare is important to all. In the past, there are many kinds of welfare for government officers. It can support our parents, husband, children, and everything. It is very important that welfare is one of the motivations... It is about the welfare and security in life and family. I receive welfare for my child's education, medical welfare for me and my parents."*  
(P15-WF2)

In summary, the findings from both questionnaires (i.e., quantitative data) and supplementary data from interviewing (i.e., qualitative data) demonstrated that the academic staff at RMUTSB paid more attention to their work benefits, especially their incomes and welfare benefits that made them satisfied with their jobs and influenced them to stay working at the University. These findings are consistent with those from the studies of Henke, Choy, Chen, Geis and Alt (1997), Miller, Brownell, Smith (1999), and, more recently, of Odland and Ruzicka (2009) and Bhurtun (2009). These studies found that compensation and benefits were the main factors that influenced job satisfaction. The next issue is organizational culture.

## 2. Organizational Culture

From the results in the survey, the quantitative approach found that the overall opinion about the University's organizational culture was at the "agree" level ( $= 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.744$ ). The three items where opinions about organizational culture were most positive were, first, when bosses discussed their development plans with their staff at least every six months ( $= 3.94$ ,  $SD = 0.898$ ), second, often being given the opportunity to be part of task groups ( $= 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.888$ ), and, third, when the boss has a style that empowers people to take responsibility and authority ( $= 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.020$ ). Moreover, the tests of the differences between employees' age, employment status, monthly salary, and work experience and organizational culture were significant at the 0.05 level of significance. It was found that there were differences between three pairs of employees: 1) employees aged 20 – 30 years, 31 – 40 years, and 41 – 50 years had higher job satisfaction in terms of organization culture than employees age 51 – 60 years. So, the researcher sought to explain these differences of opinion by using in-depth interviews.

From the results of the qualitative interviews with 16 academic staff, they described six issues that were related to their organizational culture. These issues were communication, signing, pressure from employment status, organizational adherence, equality, and feelings toward their bosses. Good relationships with their supervisors and good relationship with their colleagues made them most satisfied with their jobs.

### 2.1 Good relationship with their supervisor issue

Having a good relationship with their supervisors was an issue that academic staff mentioned repeatedly. It was important in motivating academic staff to stay working in this organization, as P2 and P4 said that:



*"... I am OK with my boss (supervisor). We receive good taking care and good suggestions. But for the top management, I don't know them well. "(P2-OC2)*

*"... I feel that my boss (supervisor) loves us. He treats us equally. For example, we are paid equally for the work load. "(P4-CO2)*

## **2.2 Good relationships with their colleagues issue**

Good relationships with their colleagues was another issue that academic staff at RMUTSB often mentioned. They felt satisfied with their colleagues. Especially young academic staff would like to work with their same their age peers more than the senior ones. For instance, P12 and P5 said that:

*"... It is easy to understand each other if we are in the same age group. We are based on reason than emotion to talk. For the elder colleagues, it is hard to explain. Umm.. how can I say... Someone may think that I have high ego. I don't know how to say about this. "(P12-OE2)*

*"... People here are friendly and I feel comfortable and familiar with the environment, the teachers and other co-workers. "(P5-OE2)*

The findings from the survey and supplementary information from interviewing the 16 participants revealed that demographic factors had significant job satisfaction levels and differences between age, employment status, monthly salary, and work experience. Homchan (2006) found that there were two main factors that affected job satisfaction: personal background and working conditions for Thai staff. Organization culture is also an important factor that was found to contribute to job satisfaction in this study.

It should be noted that this University has four campuses. Each campus is unique in its culture, because of the different locations, different programs, and staff work experience and status. For instance, young academic staff felt more satisfied with their organizational culture than the senior academic staff. This finding resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between age and job satisfaction and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is a negative relationship between the age of the employees and their level of job satisfaction.

In summary, good relationships with their supervisors and good relationships with their colleagues are factors which influence job satisfaction for academic staff at RMUTSB. Regarding relationships with their supervisor, Swars, Meyers, Mays and Lack (2009) found that a teacher's relationship with the administrator was one theme in retaining teachers at a professional development school. Moreover, Rajabhat Institute Thonburi studied the level of satisfaction of lecturers and personnel by using 203 questionnaires and demonstrated that relationships between colleagues and managers were important factors that contributed to the job satisfaction of Thai academic staff (Chandrashtitya, 2002).

## **3. Personal Satisfaction**

From the quantitative approach, it was found that the overall personal satisfaction opinion scores were at the somewhat satisfied level ( $= 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.678$ ). A total of 15 items had personal satisfaction scores at the somewhat satisfied level, with the most satisfied item being "having people to talk to and work with on the job" ( $= 3.92$ ,  $SD = 0.845$ ). In second place was "the chance to help other people while at work" ( $= 3.88$ ,  $SD = 0.793$ ) and the third most satisfied area was "safety of your work environment" ( $= 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.922$ ). Moreover, no demographic factors were related to job satisfaction in this area, meaning that personal satisfaction was an important source of job satisfaction to all staff, irrespective of their age, gender, employment status or faculty.

From the interviews it was found that in the personal satisfaction section, there were two main issues which related to job satisfaction: positive thinking toward their profession and stability in their position at a public university, as described below:

### 3.1 Positive thinking toward their profession

This theme refers to all participants' perceptions, that they had very positive thoughts and feelings about their productivity by being an instructor. Positive thinking about their profession is one of the important factors to retain staff at RMUTSB. Even though there is less payment than at another university or in the private sector, they have more freedom, particularly about checking their time-in and time-out at work. There is also less control in this career, as one of participants, P16, expressed it:

*"... When I became a teacher I think it is more independent. When I took early retirement, I have no problem about money."* (P16-PS4)

Indeed, all participants in this study felt pride in their opportunity to offer service and support the community. P5 said *"... I think this job provides social benefit to community. We can create academic profession."* (P5-PS4) and P10 *"... I think being a teacher can turn back good benefit to society. At the same time, we can support other people in the community. We can teach farmers and villagers."* (P10-PS4)

### 3.2 Stability

Stability was one of the most important issues to make participants in this study to stay and work at the University. According to the data, two trends emerged here. One is the participants who were government officers working as lecturers and the other one is the person who works as a lecturer, but he/she is not a government officer.

(1) Stability. Working as a government officer is more stable than the private sector, as one participant expressed how she/he felt:

*"... Stability is important. It is a future. If we work in a company with high competition and we make some mistake, we will get fired. And it will be worse if we are unemployed when we are 40-50 years of age because it is difficult to find new jobs when we are older."* (P1-PS5)

(2) Stability as a Government officer who can work until retirement. P13 stated that *"... In my opinion, the good point of being a government officer is the security. I see some people, they have their own business which earns more income than government salary but they do not resign from government officer because they need security in life. Running business gets more money but there are many risks also."* (P13-PS5)

In conclusion, good feelings toward their profession and stability were issues that influenced academic staff to stay in their positions at RMUTSB. Having good feelings toward their positions is a factor that was confirmed by Hannay and Northam (2000) and Horstmann (2005). They studied staff turnover and pointed out that autonomy can decrease staff turnover which is consistent with the findings of this study. Similarly, Sook Han, Ja Moon and Kyoung Yun (2009) found that permanent nurses had higher levels of job satisfaction than temporary nurses. Furthermore, Sucaromana, Choochom, Haemaprasith and Supapon (1997) studied job satisfaction in Srinakharinwirot University personnel, finding that those staff who had the highest levels of satisfaction were government officers, which is the most stable employment status.

## 4. Retention Strategy

The results from the quantitative approach for the retention strategy section found that the overall opinion strategies score was at the "somewhat important" level ( $= 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.578$ ). Two items of opinion strategies that were at the very important level were "educational opportunities" ( $= 7.29$ ,  $SD = 0.850$ ) and "training opportunities" ( $= 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.782$ ). Moreover, no demographic factors were related to job satisfaction, indicating that these retention strategies were important for all staff irrespective of their demographic status.

The results from the qualitative approach confirmed that academic staff at RMUTSB paid more attention to educational opportunities, because it is a career development (CD), and also that continuing education of staff may develop the organization. One of the interesting issues from the in-depth interviews was that university officers felt more satisfied with opportunities for further study at the doctoral degree level. On the other hand, academic staff that have government officer status, especially the senior academic staff, paid more attention to their academic position. The results from the qualitative approach were that the opportunities for a career path were one of the retention strategies which supported the survey results in this study. For example, *"The University will support 30,000 baht for teachers to do academic research and in order to create new researchers."* (P3-SG1)

One of the participants, P6, who used to work with another university before transferring to work at RMUTSB, stated that *"... I think working here is easy to do as an Associate Professor, because they have a budget for supporting staff"*. (P16-SG1)

In summary, the opportunities for continuing education at higher levels and for higher academic positions were very important to retain the academic staff in the University. It is related to the study of Development Dimensions International (2010), where they demonstrated that skills development opportunities for employees can reduce turnover rate in their study. Also, Ketter (2008) surveyed employee retention in China and found that a lack of growth and development opportunities and the availability of better career opportunities are the main factors that increased employee turnover. Hence, if the University wants to retain its employees, it needs to consider providing career opportunities for the academic staff.

The results from the two approaches, quantitative and qualitative, found that the important factors that influence academic staff to stay in their positions at RMUTSB were income, welfare benefits, good relationships between academic staff and their supervisor, good relationships with colleagues, good opinions toward their profession, stability, and the opportunity to develop in their career. Furthermore, the location of living near their family is one of the influential factors for academic staff to remain working at the University. Economic uncertainty was the other issue in terms of the stability of work at RMUTSB, as this university is in the government sector.

### **Research Question Two: "What factors influence staff to resign from their positions at RMUTSB?"**

In answering this research question, the researcher refers to research question one's four important components: benefits, organizational culture, personal satisfaction, and strategy, and uses the supplementary qualitative data, as shown in Figure 2.

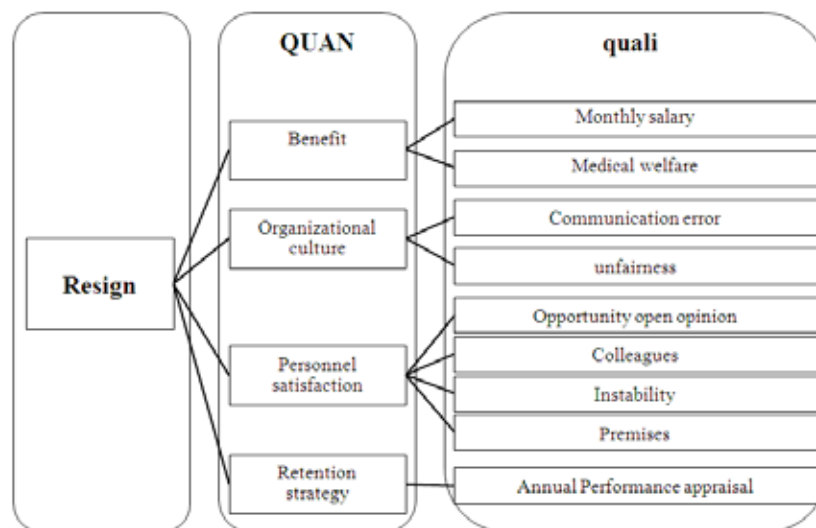


Figure 2. Diagram describing the answers to research question two

According to research question one, benefit factors are very important for academic staff to stay working at the University. On the other hand, the lower salary base payment rate can make them dissatisfied, especially in the group of temporary staff who receive a low pay rate under the government pay rate system. Also, this applies to staff who are not covered for medical welfare or health insurance.

The researcher found that most academic staff in the age groups between 20-30 and 31-40 were temporary employees or academic staff who did not have government status (Kla-Racha-karn), and received a lower salary. It was less than 10,000 baht per month. Miller et al. (1999) found that special educators with higher paying jobs were more likely to stay in their positions than those with lower paying jobs. In addition, Azalea, Omar and Mastor (2009) found that many studies of job satisfaction have been carried out in various industrial sectors, such as companies, colleges, institutes and universities, which seek evidence for developing policies to reduce turnover in each organization that produces the optimal level of cost-benefits.

The factors that influence academic staff to resign from their positions at RMUTSB include several issues in the organizational culture component, such as communication problems and perceived unfairness. Some staff were especially unhappy with the "Working time checks", the time-in and time-out signing as a daily working practice was a factor that influenced academic staff to resign, as they felt it to be unfair treatment.

There were some supplementary concerns that emerged from individual interviewing, such as the work environment, organization management, premises, colleagues, and instability. One of the participants shared that:

*"There are many aspects that related to politics. Even if you are the head; you can do nothing if the executive management does not support you. You will be like a servant. "* (P15-OC1)

Henkin and Holliman (2009) explored relationships between teachers' organizational commitment and interpersonal conflict, participation activities beyond the classroom, and innovation in schools. They suggested that organizational commitment was important to the teachers' work performance and the stability of the professional workforce. In this study, the researcher found that many issues, such as personal conflicts, instability of working status, and dissatisfaction with job performance evaluation, influence academic staff to resign from their positions at RMUTSB. One of the participants shared about his friend who had just resigned:

*"The reason he resigned was because he become a full time teacher at Kasetsart University and become a university officer. He thinks it a better choice for him and security in his life. "* (P2-PS5)

Hannay and Northam (2000, p. 72) pointed out that "a work environment that provides challenge, opportunities, autonomy, respect and variety is not easily found and can be even harder to leave". Bhurtun (2009), who investigated the determinants of job satisfaction among nurses working in a hospital, found that a clean working environment and sufficient salary were mentioned as the main factors that affected their job satisfaction. On the other hand, organization culture and job satisfaction were factors that influenced each other. Limvattana (2003) showed that the personnel of his university had high levels of satisfaction in accountability, relationships with their colleagues and their supervisor, work achievement, and work characteristics. However, academic staff were dissatisfied with their salaries and welfare benefits.

The results from the two approaches, quantitative and qualitative, demonstrate that the factors that influence academic staff to resign from their positions at RMUTSB consist of four main components: benefits, organizational culture, personal satisfaction, and strategy. There were some specific issues that emerged from individual interviewing, such as the work environment, organization management, and premises. The researcher also found that other factors, such as personal conflict, instability of working status, and dissatisfaction with job performance evaluation influenced academic staff to resign from their positions.

### Research Question Three: “What are effective retention strategies for academic staff?”

In responding to this research question, the researcher begins with the overall findings from the quantitative part. The researcher then supplements them with insights from the qualitative part and draws a tentative model of retention strategy by integrating the results of this study and other relevant literature, especially the literature on retention models that relate to the study.

### Quantitative Findings

Testing the demographic characteristics of employees found significant differences in levels of job satisfaction according to their age, marital status, employment status, monthly salary and work experience. More specifically, employees aged from 20 – 30 years and from 31 - 40 years had a higher level of total job satisfaction than employees aged from 51 – 60 years, and employees who were single had higher job satisfaction than employees who were married. Employees who were university officers had a higher level of job satisfaction than employees who were government officers. Employees whose monthly salary was less than 10,000 Baht and between 10,000 - 25,000 Baht had higher total job satisfaction than employees whose monthly salary was more than 25,000 Baht. These findings may be related to the earlier finding that older employees were less satisfied than younger ones. Finally, employees with work experience of 1-10 years had higher job satisfaction than employees whose work experience was more than 10 years.

### Qualitative Findings

The findings were initially open coded and then developed as categories. The coding categories of the meanings which emerged from interviews appeared as follows: 1) income, 2) welfare, 3) organizational culture, 4) organization management, 5) organization environment, 6) personnel satisfaction, and 7) strategies issues. Briefly summarize your main qualitative findings.

In this study, the researcher reviewed several retention models. For example, the SUCCESS model (Howatt, 2008) identified an employee retention model, where no one retention strategy works for all situations, given all the competition and world change. Companies need to be proactive and are advised to improve and grow as the economy grows (Howatt, 2008). Furthermore, the researcher adapted the retention model of Capon, Chernyshendo and Stark (2007) to this study.

As mentioned earlier, the factors that influence academic staff to continue working in the University consist of four main components. After reviewing the relevant retention models, the researcher proposes a model that has been developed from the findings of the present study (See Figure 3).

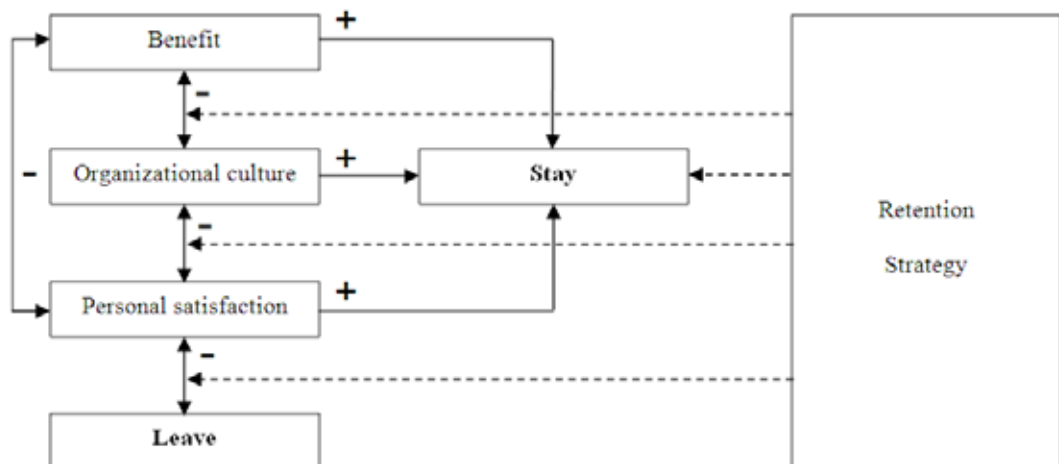


Figure 3. A tentative retention strategy model Source: Generated by Laddawan Someran (2011)

As shown in Figure 3, the factors that influence academic staff to stay in or leave their positions at RMUTSB have four main important components: (1) benefits, (2) organizational culture, (3) personnel satisfaction, and (4) strategy. However, there are several sub-components, such as income, welfare, good relationships with their supervisor, good relationships with colleagues, good opinions toward their profession, stability, and opportunity to develop in their career. Also important are living near their family as one of the factors for academic staff to remain working at the University. Uncertainty of the economic situation is the other issue in terms of the stability of working at RMUTSB, as this university is in the government sector.

In order to clarify the tentative retention strategy model of this study, more details are presented below:

A “+” indicates a positive perspective toward each component. In other words, this means the academic staff feel satisfied to stay working at RMUTSB.

A “-” indicates a negative perspective toward each component. In other words, this means the academic staff feel dissatisfied to work at RMUTSB.

A “ ” indicates an effective strategy needs to consider this issue in order to satisfy the academic staff, so that they can have a positive perspective toward the organization.

A “ ” indicates an effective strategy may need to consider this issue in order to retain support of the academic staff, so that a positive perspective toward the organization will be sustained.

A “ ” indicates a sequential form of linking between each component in order to move forward to stay at the organization. In other words, this linking will support the retention strategy in this model.

To develop an effective retention strategy for academic staff at RMUTSB, the researcher discussed the overall findings from the quantitative data, supplemented with the qualitative data. The researcher constructed a tentative model of retention strategy. There are four main important components of this model: (1) benefits, (2) organizational culture, (3) personnel satisfaction, and (4) strategy. In addition, there are interesting sub-components, such as income, welfare, good relationships with their supervisor, good relationships with colleagues, good opinions toward their profession, stability, and opportunity to develop in their career. The model in this study indicates the relationships in each factor. However, the process and implementing may need to generate to be improved for implication and evaluation further research.

### **Practical Implications for the University and Campus Administrators**

This study found that employee retention is very important for the university. The academic staff are important employees, as they carry out the teaching function of the University. In other words, they are the human capital of the University. Academic staff in this study means “Teacher”, in Thai called “Kru”, which is a very important career in Thai society, as Thai people give high honor and respect to their teachers who are the ones teaching them.

Several findings from this study support this positive attitude of the teachers at RMUTSB, such as being proud and honored to be a teacher, even though they receive a lower salary compared to another career. On the other hand, there were findings of negative attitudes on such issues as welfare, unfairness, instability of working status, and less opportunity to continue their education at the higher degree level. The researcher in this study is confident that the result of the study will provide useful information for campus administrators to produce policy guidelines for the university in order to find ways to retain their employees for the future.

### **Practical Implications for Educational Policy Makers**

Nowadays, Thailand is facing big problems in its educational system. Indeed, there are factors influencing success and/or failure in educational policy implementation. One of the main factors is policy makers. An organization’s policy makers or leaders play an important role in the policy implementation process. Suitable and competent policy makers or leaders will lead to successful implementation of the education system.



## Conclusion

One of the interesting issues that emerged in this study is about organizational structure. Since there are regulations in force from the Ministry of Education, the four institutes (the four campuses in this study in the past were independent institutes) must merge together to become one university. It is very good for these institutes to be upgraded, but it is difficult and complicated in terms of the different organization culture in each campus that needs to be adapted as the organization structure is changed to be more centralized and more hierarchical.

According to the data that emerged from this study, there are several complicated issues, such as the unique context and location of each campus, the chain of command of each campus, and the complex communication system. To be upgraded, with more complex organizational structures, the administrators and policy makers need to be aware of the effects on staff job satisfaction.

From the literature review and the data, the researcher in this study believes that the implementation process requires responsible people to participate in the process rigorously. Ideally, successful implementation should begin with the encouragement of employees to be fully aware of existing policy. The greater the number of participants means the more suggestions and alternatives in finding solutions to solve problems, increasing the chances for successful implementation. Thus, the researcher hopes that this study's findings will be useful for the educational administrators and educational policy makers.

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